

Sooners, 'Canes could be headed for Fiesta

Mike Huguenin
The Orlando Sentinel
(KRT)

We're less than a week away from the release of the first BCS poll of the season — hey, our palms are sweaty, too — but going off Saturday's results, right now you have to like a Miami-Oklahoma matchup in the Fiesta Bowl.

The Hurricanes have a far easier road to Tempe, Ariz., than the Sooners. OU plays four teams that can beat them: Iowa State, Colorado, Texas A&M and Texas Tech. UM has one: Virginia Tech (and that is at the Orange Bowl).

One point that's obvious after Saturday: Oklahoma's defense is better than Miami's.

Other teams remaining in the Fiesta Bowl mix are Oregon, Virginia Tech, Ohio State, Washington State, Notre Dame, Georgia and North Carolina State.

The biggest wild cards: Ohio State and NC State.

The Buckeyes should be favored in their remaining games, but there still are questions about their passing game and their secondary. Will the Buckeyes finish unbeaten? No.

NC State's schedule has been an easy one, so there are questions about how good the Wolfpack really are. NCSU still has games with Clemson, Georgia Tech, Maryland and Virginia, as well as Florida State. Will NC State finish unbeaten? No.

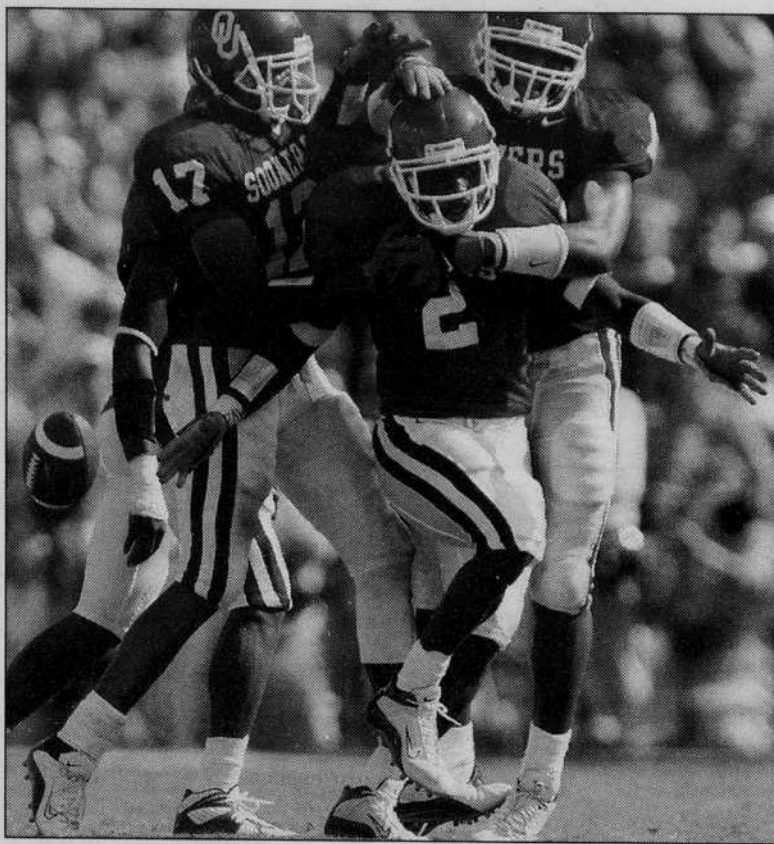
Washington State already has lost once, and the Cougars host Oregon on Nov. 9 in a game that would determine the Pac-10 title.

Notre Dame and Georgia have tough remaining schedules. Notre Dame will lose at least twice, Georgia at least once (and we wouldn't be surprised if the Bulldogs — who seem to play up, or down, to the level of their opponent — lose twice).

Because of its one-dimensional offense, Virginia Tech will not win at Miami, though it will be close.

Our BCS picks right now:

Fiesta: Miami vs. Oklahoma.



Tom Pennington Fort Worth Star-Telegram (KRT)

Derrik Strait(2) and the Oklahoma defense could lead the Sooners to the Fiesta Bowl.

Sugar: Georgia vs. Texas.

Rose: Ohio State vs. Washington State.

Orange: NC State vs. Notre Dame.

We can't wait.

South Florida looks as if it will be an immediate contender when it becomes a full-fledged football-playing member of Conference USA next season.

The Bulls upset future conference rival Southern Miss 16-13 on Saturday, the most significant home vic-

tory in school history and maybe as big a win overall as last season's upset at Pittsburgh.

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ESPN/Coaches Top 25

Team	Points
1. Miami Fla.	1,522
2. Oklahoma	1,457
3. Virginia Tech	1,386
4. Ohio St	1,320
5. Georgia	1,286
6. Oregon	1,203
7. Notre Dame	1,164
8. Texas	1,062
9. Michigan	993
10. No. Carolina St	965
11. Washington St	868
12. LSU	846
13. Iowa St	836
14. Florida St	674
15. Air Force	565
16. Iowa	553
17. Washington	531
18. Tennessee	528
19. Kansas St	453
20. USC	330
21. Penn St	257
22. Mississippi	165
23. Bowling Green	155
24. Florida	123
25. Colorado	92

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