

Picking apples and roses

Washington State and Washington face off in the 95th playing of the Apple Cup

Game of the week

Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

It was 1982.

Washington strolled into Pullman as the unanimous favorite over Washington State.

The Huskies were ranked in the top five in the nation, whereas the Cougars were dead last in the conference after a disappointing season.

Washington went into the half leading 17-7, and looked to have its third-straight Rose Bowl appearance locked up. But Washington State scored 14 unanswered points and led in the final seconds 21-20. But the Huskies would not go away without a fight.

Kicker Chuck Nelson stepped on the field for Washington with 15 seconds left to try to propel the Huskies to victory with one final field goal. Nelson had made 30 straight kicks, an NCAA record at the time. He missed.

It was the greatest upset in Apple Cup history.

Twenty years later, the tables have turned. Washington State is ranked third nationally and looks to be headed straight for the Rose Bowl. The Huskies aren't dragging along the bottom of the conference, but aren't having the best year, either.

Washington State enters this

year's Apple Cup on a seven-game win streak, and a win over the Huskies will clinch at least a share of the Pac-10 title for the Cougars.

Quarterback Jason Gesser threw for four touchdowns in Washington State's last win, over Oregon, and moved into a tie for third on the Pac-10 career touchdown pass list with 66.

Running back Jermaine Green ran for a career-high 180 yards against the Ducks on 25 carries. The Cougars' defensive line has also been very solid, and will not make it easy for Washington to gain yardage on the ground.

Washington looks for a win in its last game to solidify an appearance in a bowl game. The Huskies' confidence is high after the destruction of Oregon last week, when Washington worked its way through the record books.

Quarterback Cody Pickett established a new Pac-10 single-season record in passing yards with 3,818 and completions with 305. With a solid performance against the Cougars, Pickett could become the first quarterback in Pac-10 history to throw for 4,000 yards in a season.

Wide receiver Reggie Williams took care of his business, bringing home 14 receptions for 198 yards and three touchdowns against Oregon.

With so much history in 94 meetings, this year promises to be no different. In the end, it looks to be a battle of who has the better arm.

Contact the sports reporter at jessethomas@dailyemerald.com.

Pac-10 standings

1. Washington St. 9-1, 6-1 Pac-10	5. Oregon State 7-4, 3-4
2. USC 8-2, 6-1	5. California 6-5, 3-4
3. UCLA 7-3, 4-2	5. Washington 6-5, 3-4
4. Arizona State 7-5, 4-3	9. Arizona 4-7, 1-6
5. Oregon 7-4, 3-4	9. Stanford 2-8, 1-6

Pac-10

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The Cardinal lead the series overall and have won the last seven, including the last three at Berkeley. But things are not going Stanford's way this year; they have only put two checks in the win column.

The Golden Bears will look for their first win in the Big Game since 1994 and to establish their first winning season since 1993.

Quarterback Kyle Boller has thrown seven touchdowns in the last two weeks and 26 this season, placing him second on Cal's history

charts. The Bears rank fifth nationally with a +16 turnover margin, leading the Pac-10.

Stanford comes off a depressing week, as they lost 31-21 after blowing a 21-3 lead to Oregon State. Cardinal running back Kerry Carter placed himself higher in the record books last week, reaching 2,000 rushing yards.

The only thing Stanford has on its side is history. The Bears and the Cardinal will head into Memorial Stadium with nothing but pride, which both desperately need, at stake.

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OSU

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basic lineups and shifting and motion and those types of things are similar, but they do some different things."

Defensively, Oregon State is just plain talented. Featuring the likes of senior cornerback Dennis Weathersby and sophomore safety Mitch Meeuwsen, the Beavers have a solid secondary, one of the best in the Pac-10, if not the nation.

However, that secondary could take a hit with Meeuwsen less than 100 percent healthy. However, Erickson said that he expects Meeuwsen to play "a lot" against the Ducks.

The Beavers are guaranteed a bowl game after failing to qualify last season. Normally, a victory over a I-AA school, such as Oregon State's 49-10 win over Eastern Kentucky,

would not count toward the seven wins required for bowl eligibility.

However, because of an NCAA technicality that allows for a team to bypass this rule once every four years, the Beavers are lining up for postseason play.

All that stands in Oregon State's way to the Las Vegas is Oregon. So, the 106th Civil War isn't just about the name.

"If you're a Beaver, you want to beat the Ducks every year," Erickson said. "That's the most important game; there's no ifs or ands about it. That's just how it is and how it always will be for us, and that's how it should be. It shouldn't be anything else. There's nothing more important during the season — or post-season or anything — than this football game."


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