

Pac-10 play heats up once conference hits sixth week

Oregon State and California highlight Pac-10 play

By Hank Hager
Sports Editor

The Pacific-10 Conference heads into the sixth week of the season, and although not every game is a conference tilt, the Pac-10 is getting into the thick of league play.

Stanford, which has played just two games this season, is the only conference team taking the week off. The Cardinal next play Oct. 11 at USC.

Oregon State (4-1 overall, 1-0 Pac-10) at California (3-3, 1-0), 2 p.m.

Even though the game isn't being televised, it is easily the matchup of the week. California is coming off an upset of the Trojans, and the Beavers squashed Arizona State, 45-17, last week.

The Golden Bears lead the series 31-24, although Oregon State defeated Cal last season, 24-13.

Steven Jackson leads Oregon State and the Pac-10 in scoring with seven rushing touchdowns, while Cal's Geoff McArthur is fifth in the conference with six touchdowns.

"The USC game was just another game," Cal head coach Jeff Tedford said. "I know it was great for the alumni and for the university, but it's over. It is going to be a challenge getting the kids to focus in, because they are going to be around a bunch of people on campus telling them about how great the win was."

No. 10 USC (3-1, 0-1) at Arizona State (2-2, 0-1), 12:30 p.m., ABC

The Trojans are limping after their 34-31 overtime loss to California last week, but they could get well pretty quickly against a slumping Arizona State squad.

The Sun Devils have scored just 19 combined points in consecutive losses to Iowa and Oregon State. Quarterback Andrew Walter has slumped to fifth in the Pac-10 with 223 passing yards per game while the entire offense ranks last in the conference with a little more than 26 minutes of possession each contest.

"Andrew got to a great start our first two weeks," Arizona State head coach Dirk Koetter said. "He was sharp and did not play really well around him with some key guys out. I think what has happened to him the last two weeks is normally what happens with great players is as we struggle, Andrew takes way more blame than he needs to take."

Arizona (1-4, 0-1) at No. 14 Washington State (4-1, 1-0), 2 p.m.

This is a game featuring two teams going in two completely different directions. Arizona fired head coach John Mackovic Sunday — replacing him with defensive coordinator Mike Hankwitz — while the Cougars are coming off a 55-16 spanking of Oregon on Saturday.

The Wildcats rank at or near the bottom of the Pac-10 in each of the major offensive categories, including

scoring offense (ninth), pass offense (ninth), rushing offense (ninth) and total offense (10th).

On the other side of the ball, Washington State is third in the conference in total offense, and second in scoring offense with an average of 35.2 points per game.

"We certainly have a daunting task having to go up to Washington State," Hankwitz said. "Washington State is a team that is playing extremely well coming off a great season a year ago."

No. 18 Washington (3-1, 1-0) at UCLA (2-2, 0-0), 3:30 p.m., FSN

The first game for the Bruins should be a doozy. Washington, despite firing head coach Rick Neuheisel in the offseason, has become a power player in the Pac-10 this season.

The Huskies can owe their quick start to a well-oiled running game, something the team has been missing the past few seasons. Washington ranks third in the conference in rushing offense with 149.5 yards per game. Rich Alexis is the catalyst of the attack, ranking third in the Pac-10 with 85.5 yards per game.

UCLA's offense has stalled, ranking just ahead of Arizona for ninth in total offense in the Pac-10. Manuel White averages just 54 yards on the ground a game.

UCLA won last season's contest between the teams, 34-24. That may not be the case again this season.

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UTAH

continued from page 2B

and he is really fast. I think he will have a good game."

Establishing a solid presence at the quarterback spot is also crucial for the Utes. Junior quarterback Brett Elliot, a Lake Oswego native, broke his wrist in the final play of Utah's game against Texas A&M on Sept. 6.

Elliot is questionable to play against the Ducks.


If the Utes remain strong behind sophomore Alex Smith — who has led Utah in two straight wins over the past two weeks — they look to be all right.

In games against Colorado State and California, Smith looked like he had started games last season. The 6-foot-4-inch quarterback has completed 73 percent of his passing attempts and is averaging a 126.7 passing yards per game since replacing Elliot.

Utah is aware of Oregon's talent despite the Ducks' many mistakes last week. The Utes look to defeat Oregon in Salt Lake City for the first time since a 24-17 win in 1991.


"Oregon is fast, and their team speed is the advantage they have on us," Meyer said. "They also have guys at about 320 pounds on the defensive line."

Contact the sports reporter at jessethomas@dailyemerald.com.



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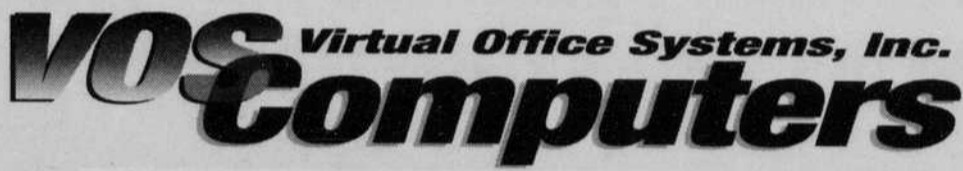
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