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Conference play slows down as Pac-10 enters final weeks

UCLA and Washington State face off in a crucial game as both are searching for a top postseason bowl berth

Scott Archer
Freelance Reporter

Another week in Pacific-10 Conference play begins, where USC, UCLA and Washington are all sporting 4-1 records in conference play.

If anything, this season is far from over. However, with Oregon State and USC having bye weeks, the Pac-10 slows down a bit.

Arizona State (4-5 overall, 1-4 Pac-10) vs. Stanford (3-4, 1-4), 2 p.m.

How is this for parity?

A week after Stanford gets shutout at Oregon, it hosts Pac-10 co-leader UCLA and comes a way with its first Pac-10 victory of the year.

Meanwhile, Arizona State got pounded, 52-23, at the hands of California.

"There is no easy way for me to sit up here and sugar coat last Saturday's game," Arizona head coach Dirk Koetter said. "We got beat in all phases and, as I'm sure you can understand, for that reason we had no players of the week."

The teams have met 19 times with the Sun Devils victorious in 12 of those games, including a 5-4 ledger in the last

nine games at Stanford Stadium.

A year ago, Arizona State quarterback Andrew Walter made his first start of the season. He made the most of his opportunity against the Cardinal by throwing for 414 yards and five touchdowns. The Sun Devil defense also forced seven Stanford turnovers.

Washington (5-4, 3-2) vs. Arizona (1-8, 0-5), 3 p.m.

This game doesn't figure to be a defensive battle.

While Washington owns a 14-4-1 all-time record against the Wildcats — including winning the last four — it took three fourth-quarter comebacks by the Huskies in the last four games to help Washington win.

Washington is coming off a 42-10 dismantling of the Oregon defense, while Arizona was on the receiving end of a 52-23 pounding by Oregon State. The Huskies will continue to be without its starting running back Rich Alexis.

"I don't know if Rich Alexis will be back," Husky head coach Keith Gilbertson said. "He has a tear in the quadriceps. Usually it's a three to four week injury. So it will be tough for him to be back for any of the last games."

It was an 80-yard touchdown reception by wide receiver Reggie Williams with 2:03 remaining in the fourth that catapulted the Huskies to a 32-28 win last year. Williams also has a reception in 34 straight games while catching

219 career passes. He is within striking distance of the Pac-10 career receptions record of 248, set by Troy Walters of Stanford from 1996-99.

UCLA (6-3, 4-1) vs. No. 12 Washington State (7-2, 4-1), 4 p.m., ABC

Pacific-10 Conference surprise team UCLA is in a three-way tie with No. 12 Washington State and No. 2 USC for the conference crown. While the game may not have a huge national impact, it definitely has big Pac-10 Conference implications.

Both UCLA (6-3 overall, 4-1 Pacific-10 Conference) and Washington State enter the game with their first Pac-10 loss of the season, and both schools sit at the top of the standings with a 4-1 ledger.

Washington State (7-2, 4-1) won 48-27 last year behind 541 yards of total offense. The Bruins have won 16 of their last 28 games against ranked opponents.

A battle of offense and defense will collide when the two teams meet. Washington State has outscored opponents in the first quarter, 89-18, while shutting out its opponents in the first quarter in the last six consecutive games.

UCLA has allowed just three second-half touchdowns in its last five games. One of those streaks will be snapped on Saturday.

Scott Archer is a freelance sports reporter for the Emerald.



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