Rivalry week hits Pac-10

Postseason bowls are on the line when natural rivals take the field Saturday

By Scott Archer
Freelance Reporter

Rivalry week.

A week in which all records are discounted and all trends thrown out the window.

Both Washington schools face off in the Apple Cup. Bay area rivals look to continue one of the most storied competitions in college football with the Big Game. Meanwhile, both Arizona schools will wait one week before each is out to prove they aren't the Pacific-10 Conference's worst team.

Here is a breakdown of two rivalry games taking place this weekend.

California (6-6 Overall, 4-3 Pac-10) vs. Stanford (4-5, 2-5)

It's the 106th "Big Game" between the two Bay Area schools, the second-longest rivalry on the West Coast. Stanford leads the series 54-40-11, but a year ago, California snapped a seven-year drought by winning, 30-7. The Golden Bears look to continue their winning ways again. Last season's win gave Cal its first winning season in nine years.

Cal is coming off a stomping of Washington, while Stanford is trying to forget its 43-3 loss at Oregon State.

Stanford has been outscored, 78-3, in its last two Pac-10 road games. However, the team is unbeaten in its last two Pac-10 home games.

With a win, the Golden Bears become bowl eligible for the first time since 1996. California is 6-0 when scoring 31 or more points and winless when it scores less than 31. Cal wide receiver Geoff McArthur is the first Cal receiver to record four 150-yard receiving games in a season, and also owns the single season receiving record with 1,158 yards, and counting.

"You don't know what to expect until you go through it," California head coach Jeff Tedford said regarding the rivalry game. "It is a great experience, and I see how much it meant to everyone. It is just a very exciting game."

No. 8 Washington State (9-2, 6-1) vs. Washington (5-6, 3-4)

The battle for the Apple Cup will be hosted by Washington one week after one of its most embarrassing conference losses ever. Washington leads the series, 62-27-6, and is coming off an upset win in Pullman a year ago. The 29-26 triple overtime thriller hurt then No. 3 ranked Washington State in the Bowl Championship Series.

Washington receiver Reggie Williams set an Apple Cup record with 12 receptions for 169 yards in the game. Teammate Cody Pickett became the first Pac-10 quarterback to throw for more than 4,000 yards in one season last year.

"The Washington State-Washington game is a battle all the time, and I've said publicly all the time that kids are lucky to get to play in a game that is this highly contested," Washington head coach Keith Gilbertson said. "A lot of kids go through their collegiate career and never get to play in this kind of environment with this kind of excitement and intensity, kids are lucky to play in it, for both teams."

Both Washington schools are heading into the game with first-year coaches at their respective universities.

A year ago, Rick Neuheisel was at the helm for Washington and Mike Price was leading Washington State. Both Gilbertson and Washington State's Bill Doba were assistant coaches, but now find themselves leading on the sidelines.

A Washington State and USC victory and a loss by Ohio State would open up the opportunity for Washington State to play in the Rose Bowl, while USC would be playing for a national title.

Scott Archer is a freelance sports reporter for the Emerald.

Bruins, Trojans set for battle with national title undertones

No. 2 USC and UCLA square off in the 72nd city rivalry, with Sugar Bowl implications on the line

By Scott Archer
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It's more than pride on the line when rivals No. 2 USC and UCLA face off this weekend. While both schools will battle to be the toast of Los Angeles on Saturday night, a national title game appearance is on the line for USC, which has two games left in its regular season.

UCLA (6-5 overall, 4-3 Pac-10) will travel across town to USC (9-1, 6-1) in a fight for the Victory Bell.

USC has claimed ownership of the Victory Bell the last four years and looks to make it five in a row, something it has yet to do in the 74-year rivalry.

A year ago, then-No. 7 USC met No. 25 UCLA, amounting to a 52-21 rout by the Trojans.

UCLA is coming off a humiliating performance at home, courtesy of Oregon. USC rolled Arizona 45-0.

The game has many implications on the line. The conference bowl picture will become clearer when the dust settles.

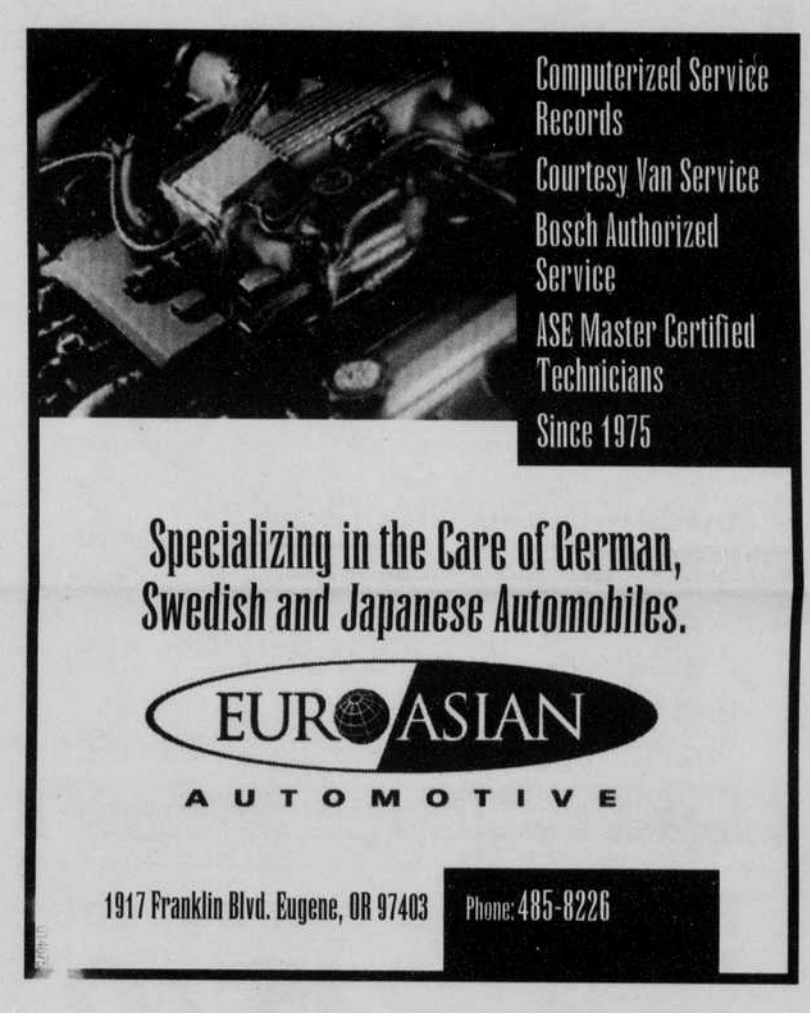
USC is fighting for a berth in the national title game, the Sugar Bowl. However, USC needs an Ohio State loss to assure a spot in the game. A quirk in the Bowl Championship Series would probably vault Ohio State over USC if the Buckeyes beat Michigan this weekend. It would give Ohio State a quality win, while also improving its strength of schedule, prompting the computers to push it ahead of No. 2 USC, which garners the ranking in both the Associated Press top 25 and the ESPN/USA Today Coaches Poll.

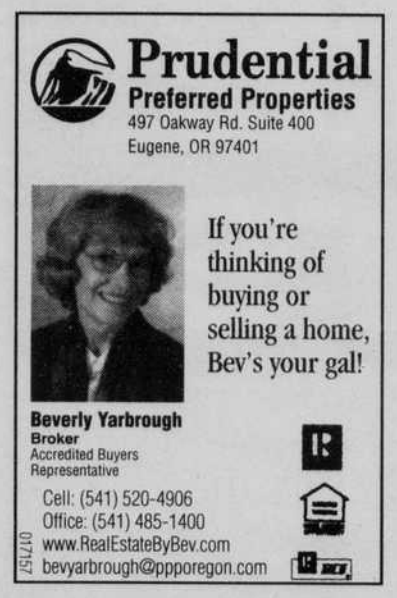
USC has not lost a game in November under third-year head coach Pete Carroll.

"I don't mind that it's different from other weeks" Carroll said. "There is just a special aspect to it that makes it cool. For the players, the one thing that they are reminded that they represent a great deal. They are representing a lot of people who love this university and love this rivalry that have been here before. They are those people. It's why they call it a rivalry."

Bruin receiver Craig Bragg became the first player in Bruin history to post two 50-reception seasons. He grabbed 10 passes against Oregon last weekend, a career best.

Scott Archer is a freelance sports reporter for the Emerald.





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