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Pac-10 respect, reputation tested with USC in Rose Bowl

USC, out of contention for the national title, looks to gain Pac-10 respect in the 2003 Rose Bowl

By Scott Archer
Freelance Reporter

Everyone knew it was coming. Here it is.

No. 1 USC will get a chance to defend the Pacific-10 Conference's pride, and while that is always an important venture, USC doesn't get to do it for the national title.

Top-ranked USC will stay in Los Angeles over winter break for a crack at No. 4 Michigan in the 2004 Rose Bowl.

Michigan gets the invitation by running the table on its opponents after the Wolverines suffered losses at the hands of Oregon and Iowa early in the season.

It is the 17th meeting between the schools in the Rose Bowl. The Trojans have won four of the previous six meetings.

The outcome on Jan. 1 may not be so different than the one in Eugene on Sept. 20.

How is that?

For starters, Oregon's defense shut down Michigan's Chris Perry, effectively shutting down the team. USC's run defense is even better.

USC arguably has one of the best defensive units in the nation. Its rush defense ranks as the second best in the nation, allowing only 61.1 yards per game. USC is led offensively by sophomore quarterback Matt Leinart, and receiver Mike Williams.

The Rose Bowl is a home field advantage for USC.

Scott Archer is a freelance sports reporter for the Emerald.

Pac-10 teams set to make up for lackluster 2003 season

Pac-10 teams head into the 2003 postseason with hopes of showing the conference season was a fluke

By Scott Archer
Freelance Reporter

There are similarities and there are differences in this year's version of bowl games. The Pacific-10 Conference will have pride and reputation on the line for the second time in three years. USC, ranked first in both the ESPN/USA Today Coaches Poll and the Associated

Press Top 25 Poll, will not play for the national championship.

USC and Michigan are featured in the Pac-10 bowl game of the year.

Insight.com Bowl: Virginia Tech (8-4, 4-3 Big East Conference) vs. California (7-6, 5-3 Pacific-10 Conference)

It doesn't get much more diametrically opposed than Virginia Tech and California.

Cal will undoubtedly air the ball out against Virginia Tech. The Hokies will respond by rushing and rushing and rushing.

Virginia Tech was at one point ranked No. 3 in the country, while Cal never entered the top 25.

Cal is led by quarterback Aaron Rodgers and running back Adimichino Echemandu, while Virginia Tech features highly-regarded running back Kevin Jones.

Las Vegas Bowl: Oregon State (7-5, 4-4) vs. New Mexico (8-4, 5-2 Mountain West)

It will be a homecoming of sorts for the heart and soul of both the Beavers' defense and offense, as senior line-backer Richard Siegler and junior running back Steven Jackson both hail from the City of Sin, as do six other Beaver players.

The bowl bid marks Oregon State's eighth all-time bowl appearance. It is 3-4 in its previous appearances, including a loss to Pittsburgh a year ago at the Insight Bowl.

Oregon State is led by Jackson, who ranks first in the Pac-10 in rushing yards and 12th nationally. The junior amassed 1,396 yards, an average of 116.33 yards per game.

Offensively, the Lobos feature running back DonTrell Moore. Moore is ranked just ahead of Jackson, with 119.83 rushing yards per game, good

Silicon Valley Football Classic: Fresno State (8-5, 6-2) vs. UCLA (6-6, 4-4)

It marks the fifth consecutive year Fresno State has appeared in a bowl game and the fourth year in a row Fresno State will play in the Silicon Valley Football Classic.

UCLA was the last Pac-10 selection, edging out Washington for the rights to play in the bowl game.

UCLA, with a Pac-10 record once at 4-0, lost its last four games to finish the season 6-6 overall. The team is led by running backs Maurice Drew and Tyler Ebell, along with wide receiver Craig Bragg.

Holiday Bowl: No. 15 Washington State (9-3, 6-2) vs. No. 5 Texas (10-2, 7-1 Big 12)

Quarterback Matt Kegel leads the Cougars. The senior, in his fourth year of eligibility, only started this year after sitting behind Jason Gesser the previous three years. In one season as the starter, Kegel amassed 2,744 yards and 19 touchdowns despite injuries late in the season.

Texas is led by running back Cedric Benson, who leads the nation with 20 rushing touchdowns.

Washington State is sixth nationally in rush defense while also earning 45 turnovers on defense.

Washington State is also 1-2 in its last three bowl games with no rushing touchdowns.

Scott Archer is a freelance sports reporter for the Emerald.

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