

■ Game of the week

UCLA and ASU face off after difficult losses

Both teams suffered losses to top-10 ranked teams, but only one will be able to stop the streak Saturday

BY ALEX TAM
FREELANCE REPORTER

The mood around the UCLA and Arizona State football teams is sheer disappointment after each suffered its first conference loss of the season last weekend.

Only one of these teams will get back on the winning track when UCLA (4-2 overall, 2-1 Pacific-10 Conference) travels to face off against Arizona State (5-1, 2-1) in Tempe, Ariz., at 12:30 p.m. Saturday.

The game will mark the 21st

meeting between the two teams and the first since 1999. The Bruins lead the overall series 13-6-1, but have lost the last two meetings, including a thrilling 28-27 loss five years ago.

UCLA is now coming off a 45-28 loss to No. 7 California, in which its defense surrendered a whopping 550 total yards of offense to the Golden Bears.

Head coach Karl Dorrell said the Bruins are treating last week's loss as

a learning experience amidst a very difficult portion of the schedule that will feature Stanford, Oregon and No. 1 USC to end the season.

"The teams we play at the end of the schedule are all very capable of doing great things in the conference," Dorrell said. "We have to make the improvement that is necessary to win these football games."

The one constant for the Bruins has been the play of their quarterback,

Drew Olson. In his past two games, Olson has been nearly flawless, passing for 533 yards, eight touchdowns and more importantly, zero interceptions. His eight touchdowns in two games tied a UCLA record set by Wayne Cook in 1993.

"He is doing exactly what we anticipated him doing," said Dorrell, who is his second season as head coach. "He is at a comfort level where his ability

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■ PAC-10

USC breaks away from pack to claim top spot in Pac-10

Arizona State, California, Stanford, UCLA, Oregon tied for second place in conference

BY SCOTT J. ADAMS
FREELANCE SPORTS REPORTER

Last weekend, the number of undefeated teams in the Pacific-10 Conference was reduced to one after No. 1 Southern California trounced No. 21 Arizona State 45-7, giving the Sun Devils a one-way ticket to second place in the conference.

Arizona State is now tied with No. 7 California, Stanford, UCLA and Oregon. The Pac-10 didn't feature any upsets last Saturday, and this weekend's matchups suggests a similar result. Regardless, the number of teams contending for second place will be cut in half.

No. 7 California (4-1 overall, 2-1 conference) at Arizona (1-5, 0-3)

Arizona squares off against its highest-ranked opponent of the season as Cal heads to Tucson, Ariz., fresh off of the Wildcats' home win last week over UCLA.

The seemingly challenging Wildcats' defense was torn to shreds last Saturday against Oregon and will have its paws full this weekend trying to keep pace with Cal's explosive offense. Cal senior tailback J.J. Arrington

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Roetman: A relaxed Clemens hits open receivers

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"I knew (Clemens) could do it, it just took time," Williams said. "He had to get comfortable, and he's real comfortable now. He's making great throws."

Clemens and company will face a tough test at Stanford Saturday. While the Cardinal ranks last in the conference in pass defense (228 yards per game), it has allowed the second fewest points per game at 16.2 a contest.

If Oregon is to move to 3-1 in Pac-10 play, the Ducks need to do more than just move the ball. They need to put the ball into the end zone.

That is exactly what Oregon will do. Head coach Mike Bellotti stressed execution with his players during practice this week and has the Ducks playing as a focused team. They know how important this game is and are not taking a much-improved Stanford team lightly.

Also, Clemens has shown more confidence in his receivers. Timing patterns with Williams that weren't

connecting earlier in the season are running like a well-oiled machine. Day has proven that if you throw the ball in his zip code — which at 6-foot-4 and 268 pounds is roughly the size of Springfield — he will catch it.

The Ducks will capitalize on their red zone opportunities, while Williams and Day will each walk away with a touchdown.

Whitehead will benefit from the success of the Oregon passing attack as Stanford is forced to drop eight men into coverage. The junior tailback will rush for 100 yards and a score.

Clemens will continue to make good decisions and stay interception free for the sixth straight week. Oh, and 300 yards and three touchdown passes aren't out of the realm of possibilities.

The Oregon offense will shine Saturday as the Ducks work toward separating themselves as one of the top teams in the conference.

And no plastic boot can stop that.

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