

Seattle Seahawks first in NFC West at midway point

The Seahawks snapped a three-game losing streak with wins against San Francisco and Carolina

BY JIM COUR
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

KIRKLAND, Wash. — Finally, the Seattle Seahawks' offense is generating yards like everyone figured it would.

The Seahawks finished the first half of their schedule with a 42-27 victory at San Francisco, good enough for sole possession of first place in the NFC West.

Following a three-game losing streak that jolted the confidence of the team and coach Mike Holmgren, the Seahawks have won two straight with consecutive 400-yard offensive performances.

Holmgren said Monday that his offense is clicking almost as well as it was at the end of last season when the Seahawks got back into the playoffs after a three-year absence.

"I would say it's close," Holmgren said. "I've been fairly pleased the last two weeks with our execution and how we've done things."

It doesn't matter to Holmgren that Seattle's consecutive wins have come against Carolina and the 49ers, two 1-7 teams.

"Yesterday, the 49ers were the 10th-rated defense in the league coming into that game," he said. "I was pleased with how we did things yesterday for the most part."

In completing a sweep over

their division rival, the Seahawks got a 17 for 28, three-touchdown game from their Pro Bowl quarterback, Matt Hasselbeck, and a 160-yard, two-touchdown performance from their Pro Bowl running back, Shaun Alexander.

Despite missing a week of practice because of a sprained right ankle, Darrell Jackson caught five passes for 114 yards and two touchdowns.

Holmgren is still marveling at the touchdown catches by Jackson, a third-round draft choice in 2000 who has developed into Seattle's receiving star. He leads the team with 45 catches for 670 yards and four touchdowns.

Alexander leads the NFC with 879 rushing yards and nine touchdowns.

"I think we're just at the beginning," Alexander said of Seattle's offense. "We're just getting hot and from here we want to carry on."

When the Seahawks started off 3-0 this season, Alexander asked backup quarterback Trent Dilfer, who quarterbacked the 2000 Baltimore Ravens to the Super Bowl title, if the team was good enough to win the Super Bowl.

"Trent said, 'Well, we've got the talent, but we've got to see how we respond to something bad happening like losing three games in a row,'" Alexander said.

Despite victory against CSU Utah's BCS standings decline

Though the Utes remain undefeated, a slip in the polls could cost them a spot in the Bowl Championship Series

BY RALPH D. RUSSO
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

A perfect record probably isn't going to be enough to get Utah into the Bowl Championship Series.

The unbeaten Utes slipped one spot to seventh in the BCS standings Monday, a drop that could cost them a berth in one of the four big-money bowl games.

The top five in the BCS stayed the same with Southern California, Oklahoma and Auburn leading the way, followed by California and Wisconsin.

The top two teams in the final standings will play in the Orange Bowl on Jan. 4 for the BCS national title.

Utah is trying to become the first team from a non-BCS conference (Mountain West) to play in a BCS game. The Utes can secure a spot in what probably would be the Fiesta Bowl — which delivers a payout of

about \$14 million — if they finish in the top six.

Just like two weeks ago when Utah moved up to sixth, Utes coach Urban Meyer heard from his wife that the team had dropped.

"She had a little reaction. I won't use the language she did," he said. "In three weeks we'll have a reaction. There's too much football to be played yet."

Meyer, when asked if the BCS system should be changed, said "Is the sky blue? Absolutely. And it will happen. Logical thinking will eventually take over."

Texas' 56-35 comeback victory over Oklahoma State on Saturday boosted its BCS grade to .7904.

The Utes aren't getting enough bounce in the polls and computer rankings because of their lopsided victories over conference opponents.

Their grade (.7511) went up slightly after a 63-31 win over Colorado State.

Utah held its positions in The Associated Press Top 25 (seventh) and coaches poll (eighth) this week, but the Utes dropped in the computer rankings from sixth to eighth.

Utah finishes its season with games at Wyoming on Saturday, and at home against BYU the next week. Two wins would ensure a second straight MWC title. The league champ gets a Liberty Bowl berth, which pays \$1.35 million.

But how the races play out in the Big 12, Pac-10, Southeastern Conference and Big Ten depend on where the Utes play in the postseason and their own games.

The AP media poll and ESPN/USA Today poll each account for one-third of a team's BCS grade. Six computer rankings make up the other third.

Texas is ahead of Utah in both polls, sixth in the AP, seventh in the coaches.

Utah is one of six unbeaten teams in Division I-A, along with USC, Oklahoma, Auburn, Wisconsin and Boise State.

IN BRIEF

Oregon's Carolyn Ganes to redshirt 2004-5 season

Forward/Center Carolyn Ganes decided to take a redshirt for the 2004-5 season, Oregon head coach Bev Smith announced Monday.

The junior from Saskatoon, Saskatchewan averaged 5.8 points and 2.6 rebounds last season in 28 games, including one start. Ganes tied for the team lead in scoring her freshman year, averaging 10.9 points per game, and was chosen as an honorable mention All-American Freshman by womenscollegehoops.com.

She had a career-high 25 points her

freshman year against Brigham Young.

Ganes ranks second all-time at Oregon in career free-throw percentage with 81 percent.

Oregon men's tennis team successful in Hawaii

During the first day of the Hilton Waikoloa Village USTA Futures Tournament, senior Manuel Kost won both of his qualifying draw matches and will advance to play in the main draw starting Wednesday.

Kost, ranked No. 30 in the nation, disposed of Billy Heiser of Vernon Hills, Ill., in three sets, 4-6, 6-3, 7-5. Then Kost defeated Blake Muller of Santa Barbara, Calif., in straight sets, 6-4, 6-4, to advance to the main draw of the tournament.

Junior Markus Schiller had a successful run at the tournament after defeating Travis Smith of the University of Hawaii, 6-1, 6-1, in the first round and then defeating teammate Chad Wilson 7-6, 6-1 to make it to advance.

Schiller's streak came to an end when he lost to Adrian Bohane of Ireland in straight sets, 6-1, 7-5. Bohane is ranked third in the tournament and registers a professional ranking of 1,027.

This tournament has both professional and amateur players in it. The top seed of the tournament, Frederik Nielsen of Denmark, is currently ranked No. 473 professionally.

— Clayton Jones

Heisman: QB Hopefuls battle for trophy

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He has led the Utes to wins over Texas A&M, Air Force and Colorado State.

The knock on Smith is the fact that Utah has played a much easier schedule than the likes of Oklahoma or Southern California. If Smith is to stay in the race, it is imperative that he finishes undefeated and in the top six in the final BCS standings. If Utah goes to a BCS bowl, Smith should get the Heisman. If they lose, gaudy numbers aren't going to sway any voters his way.

Matt Leinart, QB USC

If not for last year and the fact that USC is the top-ranked team in the

country, Leinart would be getting far less attention than he is. Leinart has thrown for 2,068 yards with 20 touchdowns and five picks. His numbers are comparable to Oregon's Kellen Clemens, who has thrown for 2,230 yards, 18 touchdowns and five picks.

So here is how I see it shaking out. Leinart will split votes with teammate Reggie Bush, who currently sits fifth in the race, nullifying both of them. Smith will receive an invite to New York, but even with a BCS berth, he won't be able to impress voters enough to forget about the two Sooners in front of him.

Finally, with Peterson questionable due to a shoulder injury, and White

heating up, White has the edge. Peterson will be given a fair shake, but in the end I don't see the voters giving a freshman the trophy, especially not when there is a senior quarterback right in front of him.

Now I only have about 840 hours to find out if I am right.

Just a note, Duck fans, be gentle with the Heisman Trophy on Saturday. We don't need White receiving the trophy with duct tape on it because an Oregon fan dropped it and snapped the head off.

Then again, it would be funny. So please, manhandle it with pride.

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