

USC and Oklahoma battle for National Championship

Only one team will walk away from Orange Bowl unbeaten for the season

BY ALEX TAM
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

When quarterback Matt Leinart graduated from Mater Dei High School in Santa Ana, Calif. more than four years ago, two schools beckoned for his services.

One was Southern California, the other Oklahoma.

Leinart eventually chose USC (11-0), which now looks to defend its split national championship against Oklahoma (12-0) in the 71st annual Orange Bowl in Miami, Fla., on Jan. 4.

Oklahoma's offensive coordinator Chuck Long told ABC Sports on Sunday that he is not at all shocked that Leinart has succeeded in his tenure as the Trojans' leader on offense.

"We were recruiting Matt Leinart a few years ago," Long said. "We liked him coming out of high school. It's really no surprise to us that he's done a good job at quarterback there."

This season, Leinart won his second consecutive Pacific-10 Offensive Player of the Year Award. In 25 games as USC's starter, the 6-foot-5, 225-pound quarterback has led the Trojans to a 24-1 record.

He also has 66 career touchdown passes, which is second in USC history only to former Trojan and current NFL quarterback, Carson Palmer, who had 72.

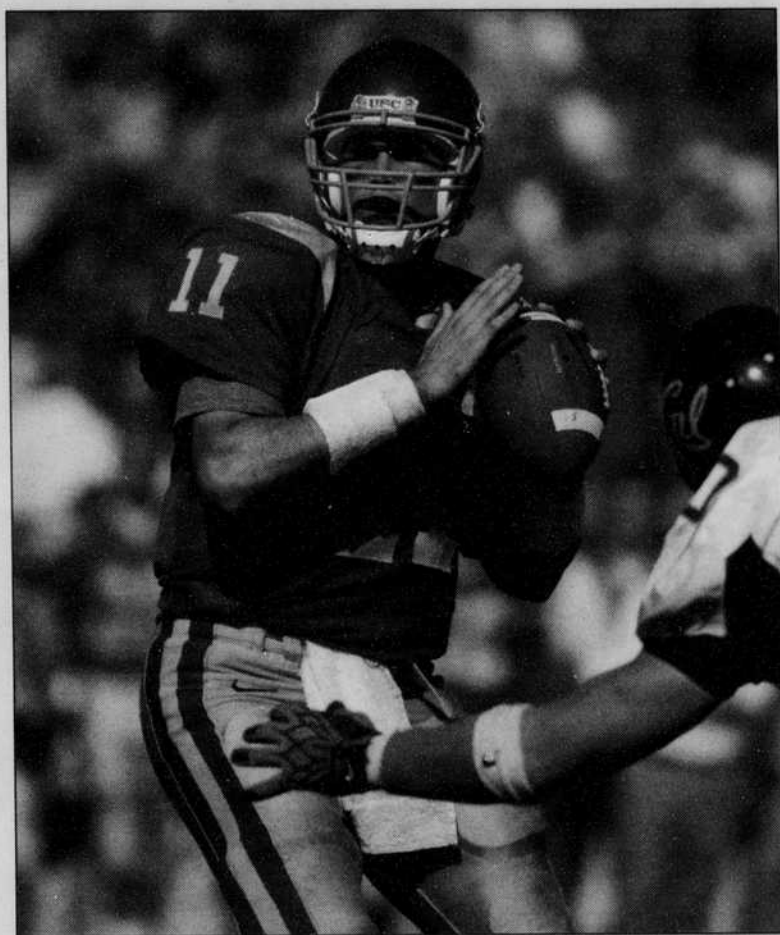
However, Long said his biggest concern entering the national championship game is the strong USC defense led by linemen Shaun Cody and Mike Patterson.

The Trojans have the second-leading defense in the nation, allowing a paltry 12.5 points per game.

"They're obviously aggressive on defense," Long said. "(USC head coach Pete) Carroll's background is defense, and they get after it against you."

Carroll said on Sunday that his team is probably "more complete" than it was last season when the Trojans became the co-national champions with Louisiana State.

"I think all phases of our game can



COURTESY | SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ATHLETIC DEPARTMENT

USC junior quarterback Matt Leinart has led the Trojans to a 24-1 record as a starter. The Heisman hopeful has thrown for 2,990 yards and 28 touchdowns this season.

be lethal on game day," he said. "We have a lot of elements that come together on this team."

A stingy USC defense will be severely tested by a high-octane Oklahoma offense, which ranks ninth in the nation in scoring. The Sooners average more than 36 points per game.

Oklahoma also has explosive players at each of the skill positions, including senior quarterback Jason White and freshman tailback Adrian Peterson.

This season, White has thrown for 2,707 yards, 30 touchdowns and just four interceptions. His freshman teammate Peterson has impressed everybody in college football by rushing for 1,671 yards and 12 touchdowns this season.

"They're a great group of guys, and they've been together for a long time

with the exception of Adrian," Long said. "He's brand new this year, but they've grown up together, and they're an unselfish bunch. (Oklahoma head coach Bob) Stoops is big on that and has taught that from day one."

Carroll said his team will ultimately be prepared to face its stiffest test of the season in the national spotlight.

"It's a great matchup in all ways and all areas for us, and we'll prepare for great excitement and great enthusiasm," Carroll said.

He added that it's been a tough challenge for his squad to stay focused on keeping its No. 1 spot in polls through the year.

A sense of relief surrounded the Trojans when they defeated rival UCLA 29-24 on Saturday in the

ORANGE, page 9B

Oregon State and Notre Dame heat up for Insight Bowl

The Beavers will get to enjoy some warm weather when they head to the Phoenix, Ariz. bowl game

BY SCOTT J. ADAMS
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

The 16th annual Insight Bowl features two of the nation's premier offenses as Notre Dame battles Oregon State. The 2004 version of the Insight Bowl is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. Dec. 28 at Bank One Ballpark in Phoenix, Ariz.

"This matchup has a chance to be one of the better games during the bowl season," Oregon State head coach Mike Riley said.

These two teams have not played each other since the 2001 Fiesta Bowl — a fond memory for Oregon State fans, whose Beavers

shellacked the Fighting Irish 41-9. Several current Oregon State players were redshirt freshmen on that Fiesta Bowl roster, including free safety Mitch Meeuwssen and tailback Dwight Wright.

Fourteen members of this year's Beaver squad are making their second trip to the Insight Bowl, where two years ago they found themselves on the losing end of a 38-13 game against Pittsburgh. The win was spear-headed by former Panther receiver Antonio Bryant, who now starts for the Cleveland Browns.

"We have enjoyed our two

INSIGHT, page 10B



Over 1500 items!
Specializing in low carb,
diabetic-friendly & sugar-free products.

10% off entire purchase!

expires 12/31/04

Delta Oaks Shopping Center
next to G.I. Joe's • 541-343-5151

SouthTowne Shoppes
28th & Willamette • 541-485-3010

Original Pancake House

Pancakes as you like them!

Located conveniently close to campus,
next to the Phoenix Inn!

THE ORIGINAL PANCAKE HOUSE

NEW Extended Hours:

Sat. & Sun. 6am—3pm

Mon.—Fri. 6am—2pm

Additional parking available behind
the building in Diamond parking lot
on Sat. & Sun. only!



782 East Broadway Ave., Eugene • 343-7523

Jones: Bowl game tops team's list

Continued from page 4B

we want to try and quench their thirst.
6) Not only that, we want to go to a bowl game.

Staying home for the holidays is a tough way to realize that a bowl game is a gift, not a right. Watching our rivals to the north beat us for that gift was hard, real hard.

Next year, a Las Vegas or an Insight Bowl would be great. But if something better comes along, we won't mind.

7) Finally, we want to come through and make plays at the end of the game.

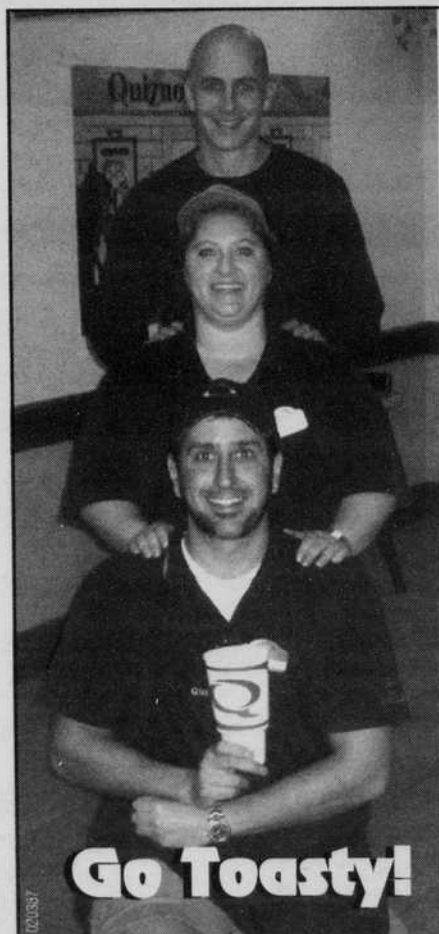
We came close this season in many games, including losses to California, Indiana and UCLA. In each, we had a chance to take the win or tie.

We have all the talent in the world coming back next season, and we just want to put it together for one good run and sneak up on the rest of the Pac-10 Conference.

Sincerely,

The Oregon football team

claytonjones@dailyemerald.com



Gary

Kelli

Flavio

The Captains of Team Quiznos

13th and Alder
(inside Starbucks)

Let us cater
your next event!
(541) 338-7098

Go Toasty!