

# USC narrowly reclaims top spot in latest BCS standings

BY RALPH D. RUSSO  
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Texas had a short stay at No. 1 in Bowl Championship Series standings.

USC jumped over the Longhorns on Monday, returning to first place after a one-week absence. The margin between USC and Texas is still small — only .0038 — though up from last week when the margin separating first and second was the slimmest in the eight-year history of the BCS.

Third-place Virginia Tech gained on the top two, but the Trojans and Longhorns remain on course for a Rose Bowl showdown.

The top five teams in the BCS are unbeaten, with Alabama fourth and UCLA moving up a spot to fifth.

USC has been No. 1 in The Associated Press, coaches' and Harris Interac-

tive polls all season, but last week Texas inched ahead in the BCS standings because the computer rankings favored the Longhorns. It marked the first time in the past two seasons USC was not No. 1 in the BCS standings.

The coaches' and Harris polls each make up a third of a team's BCS average. A compilation of six computer rankings makes up the final third, with best and worst grades thrown out for each team.

Texas is tops in the computer rankings again this week, but USC's 55-13 victory over Washington State helped boost the Trojans' computer score enough for them to reclaim first. The Longhorns rallied from 19 points down to beat Oklahoma State 47-28 Saturday.

USC's BCS average is .9767. Texas is

at .9729, and for the first time the top two teams in the BCS standings flipped positions in consecutive weeks.

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

Virginia Tech is now .0435 behind second place. The Hokies get their best chance to change the minds of voters and up their computer grade on Saturday at home when they face Miami, sixth in the BCS standings.

Notre Dame (5-2), which needs to finish the season with nine wins and a top-12 finish in the BCS standings to be eligible for the Sugar, Orange or Fiesta bowls, is 14th. The Fighting Irish have moved up one spot each of the last two weeks.

Oregon dropped two spots to No. 13.

# Basketball: Fouls, turnovers keep game close in first half

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The undersized Thunderbirds showed why they are No. 3 among Canadian universities with their team's speed and shooting ability. Julie Little and Caitlin Haggarty both had 11 points and cut Oregon's lead to two late in the game after Oregon squandered a 41-35 lead going into halftime. The Ducks' nine turnovers and 11 fouls helped keep the game close, but Cicely Oaks and Kristen Forristall of Oregon both came off the bench in the second half to slow the Thunderbirds offense and preserve the win.

British Columbia went 20-22 from the free-throw line, but its lack of size proved its undoing. The Thunderbirds may have ended with just more than half as many rebounds (25) as the Ducks (43), but they were enough to make the

game uncomfortable for Smith.

"Even though they were an undersized team, they are a very seasoned veteran team who has already played eight games this year," Smith said. "They played really well together, which is what we expected."

Sealing the win for Oregon was the Ducks' outside play, highlighted by senior guard Chelsea Wagner and Carolyn Ganes. Wagner buried two jumpshots late in the second half to break the game open and Ganes drained a three-pointer with five seconds left in regulation.

Oregon ends preseason play before hosting the Women's Sports Foundation tournament with another exhibition Sunday against Northwest Sports at McArthur Court. Tip-off is at 2 p.m.

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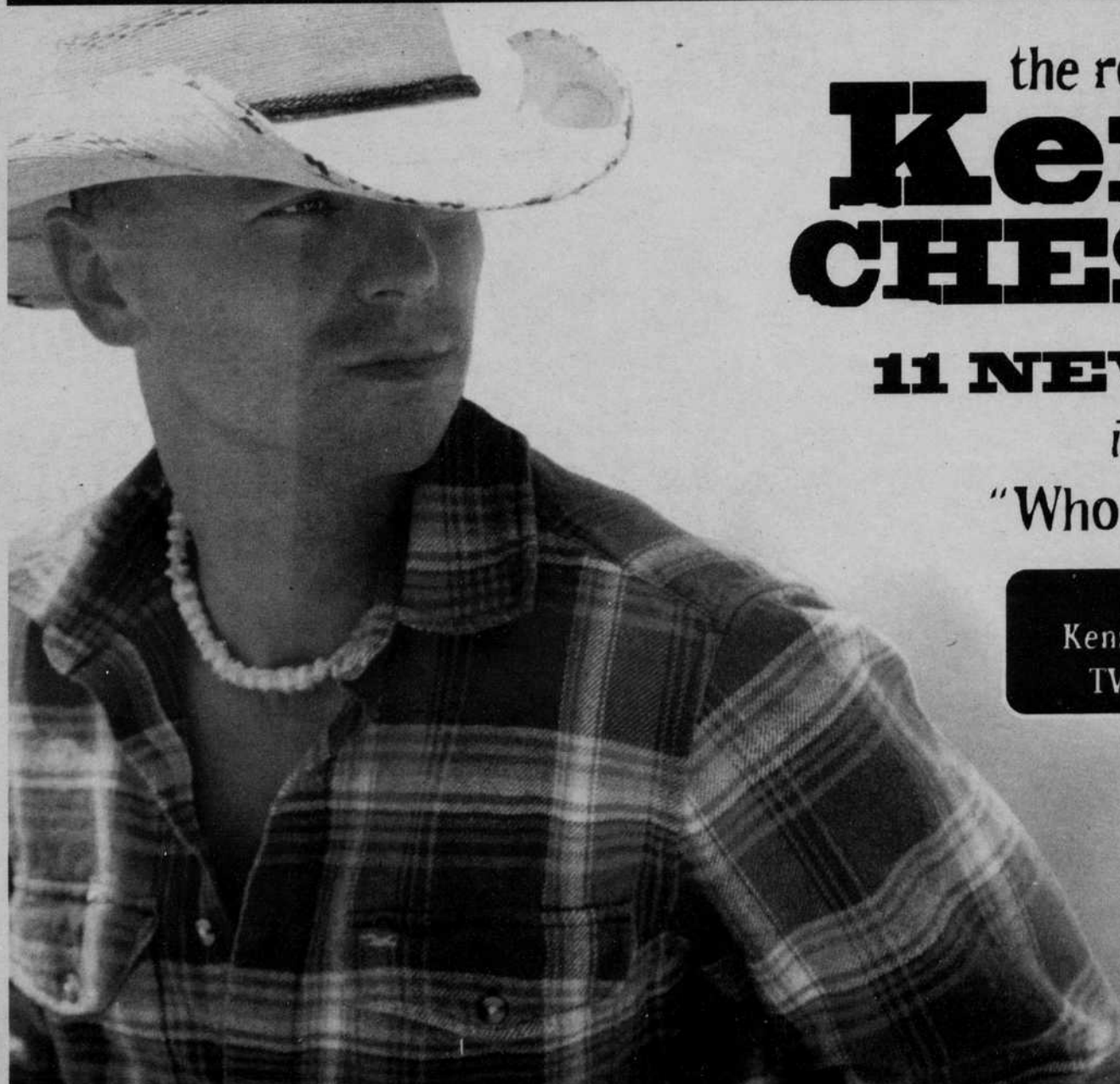
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