

USC and UCLA reign in Pac-12 recruiting battles

By JOHN MARSHALL
AP College Football Writer

PHOENIX — Southern California has again become the epicenter of Pac-12 recruiting.

USC and UCLA had the conference's top two recruiting classes on national signing day, putting them among the nation's best.

Helped by two players who made last-minute decisions, the Trojans had the nation's No. 9 recruiting class, based on a consensus of the top four most popular recruiting websites. The Bruins weren't far behind their SoCal rivals, checking in at No. 12.

USC had a solid class going under new coach Clay Helton and bolstered it by luring two players away from other schools: safety Jamel Cook from Florida State and running back Vavae Malepeai from Oregon. The Trojans also beat out Michigan for Arizona linebacker Connor Murphy, catapulting a strong recruiting class into a top-10.

"You have a lot of battles that last night and there were some nerves, but I'm glad it worked out," Helton said Wednesday.

UCLA also had a strong class heading into signing day and got a big boost with the addition of Mique Juarez, one of the nation's top outside linebackers who had considered Alabama and Ole Miss before heading to Westwood.



Chris Pietsch/The Register-Guard
Oregon head football coach Mark Helfrich speaks during signing day, Wednesday, in Eugene.

The Bruins also signed a strong group of receivers to play with sophomore quarterback Josh Rosen.

"We've filled some needs, we've added depth to our team with quality football players and quality young men, so we're pleased," UCLA coach Jim Mora said.

A few more things from around the Pac-12 on national signing day:

STANFORD'S HAUL: Stanford's return to prominence last season led to its best recruiting class in four years. The Cardinal already had commitments from K.J. Costello, one of the nation's top pocket passers, and added a big target with one of the nation's best tight ends, Kaden Smith. Coach David Shaw added another notch to his recruiting belt when safety Andrew Pryts de-committed from Penn State to help the

Cardinal pull in the nation's No. 21 recruiting class.

GOFF'S SHOES: California has some big cleats to fill with quarterback Jared Goff headed to the NFL. The Bears took a couple of steps toward finding his replacement by signing a pair of midlevel recruits: Victor Viramontes from California and early enrollee Max Gilliam. Gilliam might have an advantage because he's already been on campus, but Viramontes is big, athletic and has a strong arm. Cal has three other quarterbacks on its roster.

ASU'S BIG GET: Arizona State coaches were frustrated the past two years as the state's top recruit left for SEC schools. The Sun Devils reversed that trend by signing N'Keal Harry, a five-star receiver from nearby Chandler High School who committed to the Sun Devils in November. Another

top in-state player spurned the Sun Devils, though; Scottsdale defensive back Byron Murphy left the desert to play at Washington.

AIR RAID FOUNDATION: Washington State has stocked up on the foundation of its Air Raid offense, signing six offensive linemen. The Cougars have record-setting quarterback Luke Falk coming back for his junior year and need players to help protect him — and whoever his replacement will be down the line.

DUCK FLIPS: Oregon has annually had one of the nation's best recruiting classes. A drop to No. 23 this year was precipitated by several players flipping their commitments and going to other schools, notably Vavae, who had verbally committed to the Ducks. Oregon still ended up with some quality players and a strong class, so coach Mark Helfrich didn't seem too concerned. "Part of life in the big city," he said.

LEACH SURPRISED: Washington State coach Mike Leach was able to build upon the Cougars' success last season by bringing in a solid recruiting class. He also did it without a lot of hassle; no players who committed to Washington State switched to new schools on signing day. "The most notable thing about this class is it went almost entirely as expected," he said. "That'd be the first time in history that's ever happened, at least for me."



Submitted Photo
Seaside's Paige Ideue, seated, signs her letter-of-intent to play softball at Centralia College. She is surrounded by (from left to right) coach Bill Westerholm, her father Darren, and coach Jon Hotchkiss.

Area softballers blaze a trail to Centralia

Other letters of intent signed around the area

The Daily Astorian

Seaside's Paige Ideue is the latest local prep softball player to sign a letter-of-intent to play softball at Centralia (Wash.) College.

A senior three-sport athlete for the Gulls, Ideue signed her letter last week, and will join a few other Lower Columbia region athletes on the Lady Blazers' roster.

Astoria's Bailey Haskell signed a letter-of-intent with Centralia last year, while others headed for Centralia in 2017 will be Astoria's Kelsey Wullger and Ilwaco's Jennifer Navarre.

Other area athletes competing at higher levels of competition this winter (including indoor track):

- ASTORIA**
Josh Long, Fr., Pacific wrestling
Jon Williams, Jr., Linfield swimming
- SEASIDE**
Lucas Clark, Jr., Western Oregon track
Kaitlin Lewis, Redshirt, Lower Columbia basketball
- WARRENTON**
Emmi Collier, Sr., Western Oregon track
- KNAPPA**
Tyson Burnard, Fr., Lower Columbia basketball
Devin Lewis-Allen, Fr., Eastern Oregon track
- BANKS**
Riley Gerlinger, Western Oregon basketball



Jennifer Navarre, Ilwaco



Kelsey Wullger, Astoria

- CLATSKANIE**
Codi Blodgett, Fr., Eastern Oregon track
- RAINIER**
Jenny Westlund, Fr., Lower Columbia basketball
- SCAPPOOSE**
Derek Anderson, Carolina Panthers
Kenny Klippel, So., Western Oregon track
David Mayo, Carolina Panthers
- TILLAMOOK**
Jordan Schriber, Sr., Western Oregon basketball

ANALYSIS

Ken Stabler's brain damage intrudes on Super Bowl fun

By TIM DAHLBERG
AP Sports Columnist

SAN FRANCISCO — For a guy who loved a good party, it's hard to imagine Ken Stabler ever thought he'd be crashing one this week.

Not at this Super Bowl, the 50th anniversary version that has been carefully choreographed to be a celebration of all things NFL. Not in the Bay Area, where Stabler has long been a cult hero of sorts for leading the Oakland Raiders to a Super Bowl win 39 years ago.

The Snake might have liked all the attention, had he lived long enough to be here. There wasn't much he didn't like in his life, which ended last year at the age of 69.

The official cause was colon cancer. Turns out that Stabler's brain was scrambled, too.

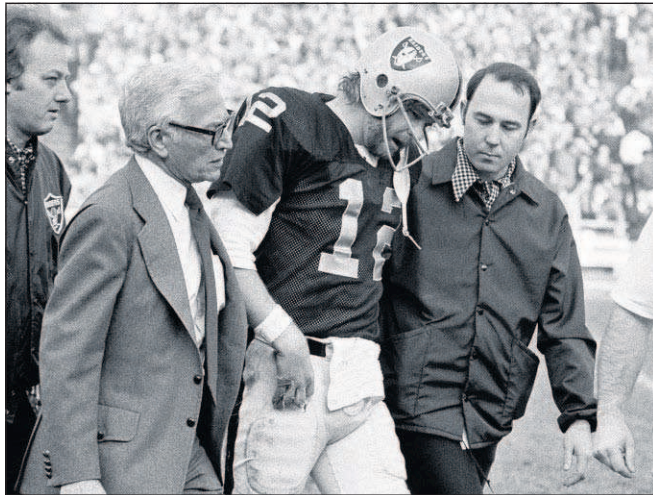
The sad — though not especially startling — news led to some awkward conversations Wednesday between reporters and players, both of whom would have rather been talking about the matchups between the Denver Broncos and Carolina Panthers. The biggest medical news this week, after all, was supposed to be Thomas Davis' attempt to play linebacker for the Carolina Panthers with a broken arm.

Besides, to a group of finely tuned athletes in their physical prime, the thought anything could happen to them seems little more than abstract theory.

Not enough to trade in the big paycheck for. Not enough to give up the sport they love.

"The game is so much a part of who I am, so I can't give up a big part of me," Denver linebacker Brandon Marshall said. "I just hope the game doesn't one day take away a big part of me."

Unfortunately, it has taken



AP Photo/File
Oakland Raiders quarterback Ken Stabler is helped from the field after a hard tackle by the Pittsburgh Steelers in the third quarter of the AFC championship NFL football game in Oakland, Calif., Dec. 26, 1976. Stabler, the late NFL MVP and Super Bowl winner who is a finalist for the Pro Football Hall of Fame, has been diagnosed with the brain disease CTE, Boston University researchers say.

a big part of some former players. Researchers at Boston University told The New York Times that CTE (chronic traumatic encephalopathy) has been discovered in the posthumous study of 90 of the 94 former NFL players it has examined. That includes former Giants safety Tyler Sash, who died in September at age 27 and whose diagnosis was made public last week.

The disease, which has been linked to repeated brain trauma, causes everything from memory loss to dementia. It can only be diagnosed after death, as was the case with Hall of Famer Junior Seau, who committed suicide at the age of 43.

"We've now found CTE in former NFL players who played every position except kicker," said Ann McKee, a professor of neurology at Boston University who is part of the study.



"While we know on average that certain positions experience more repetitive head impacts and are more likely at greater risk for CTE, no position is immune."

Incredibly, the NFL had to be dragged kicking and screaming into even having a debate on how head hits can damage a player's long term health. It wasn't until a few years ago that the league even acknowledged the possibility of a link between concussions and brain damage, and even now the NFL hasn't gone far enough to protect players, partially out of fear to what a real crackdown on head hits might do to the popularity of the game.

Meanwhile, there were 182 reported concussions during the regular season that just ended, a 58 percent increase from a year earlier.

There is no easy solution to the biggest problem the sport

faces, just as there is no sure way to tell which players will be eventually be affected by the hits they take. Immediate concussion symptoms are one thing, but it can take years for long-term issues to emerge and there is no way to diagnose CTE without cutting the brain open.

"That could be a game changer, if they can diagnose it early," said Margaret Goodman, a neurologist and former chief ring physician for the Nevada Athletic Commission. "The problem now is we have very little hard evidence to tell someone they shouldn't be playing."

That should be troubling to men who make a living launching themselves at other men on the field. It should be scary to parents who must decide whether to let their child play football when the risks are just starting to become known.

Even still, it may not have mattered to someone like Stabler, who led such a wild life off the field that anything that happened on it was tame by comparison. Now, though, the growing body of knowledge about head injuries did cause one modern day player to hang up his spikes last year after his rookie season with the 49ers.

Chris Borland studied the evidence before him and decided it simply wasn't worth the risk, no matter what fame and fortune he could gain plying his trade as a linebacker in the NFL.

Borland may never know whether it was the right decision. But at least he can sleep well at night knowing he didn't take a chance with the only brain he has.

"Will this change football forever?" asked Goodman. "I already think it has to some degree."

Lions overtake Jewell Blue Jays

Girls Basketball
Lions 41, Lady Jays 33

SALEM — Jewell led 20-17 at half-time, but a 16-5 run by Livingstone Adventist in the third quarter sparked the Lions to a 41-33 win over the Blue Jays in a Casco League girls basketball game Wednesday.

Gabi Morales scored a game-high 22 points for Jewell, and teammate Aly Littlepage added nine rebounds and five assists.

Boys Basketball
Lions 66, Blue Jays 43

SALEM — Nine players made the

scoring column for Livingstone Adventist, in a 66-43 win over Jewell Wednesday in a Casco League boys game.

Sean Hinson had 13 points for the Jays, while Ben Stahly added eight points, 10 rebounds and three assists. Nathan Kane had five points and 10 boards for the Blue Jays.

SCOREBOARD

PREP SCHEDULE		Championships, at Scappoose, 10 a.m.
TODAY	Girls Basketball — Ilwaco at Raymond, 7 p.m.	GIRLS BASKETBALL
FRIDAY	Girls Basketball — Banks at Astoria, 6 p.m.; Scappoose at Seaside, 6 p.m.; Riverdale at Warrenton, 6 p.m.; City Christian at Knappa, 6 p.m.; Country Christian at Jewell, 5:30 p.m.	Livingstone 41, Jewell 33 JWL (33): Gabi Morales 22, Guillen 7, A.Littlepage 2, A.Wammack 2, Olvera, R.Wammack, Kaczinski. LA (41): Emilie Hathaway 13, Beaver 9, Forshee 6, Bumgarner 5, Hasslen 4, Sanchez 4. Jewell 11 9 5 8—33 Livingstone 9 8 16 8—41
Boys Basketball — Banks at Astoria, 7:45 p.m.; Scappoose at Seaside, 7:45 p.m.; Riverdale at Warrenton, 7:45 p.m.; City Christian at Knappa, 8 p.m.; Country Christian at Jewell, 7 p.m.; Raymond at Ilwaco, 7 p.m.	Swimming — Cowapa League Championships, St. Helens, 4 p.m.	BOYS BASKETBALL
SATURDAY	Girls Basketball — Knappa at Nestucca, 4 p.m.	Livingstone 66, Jewell 43 JWL (43): Sean Hinson 13, Silva 10, Stahly 8, Kane 5, Ritchie 3, Meehan 3, Munk 2, Gerken. LA (66): Pierce Kroschel 16, Magee 15, H.Kroschel 12, Hermus 10, O'Dell 4, Rivera 2, Mendoza 2, Estrada 2. Jewell 9 7 12 15—43 Livingstone 12 19 25 10—66
Boys Basketball — Knappa at Nestucca, 6 p.m.	Wrestling — Cowapa League	

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