

SPORTS

Championship Showdown

Oregon, Auburn give BCS title game new look

(AP) — Change is coming to the national title game, though it has nothing to do with any of those BCS busters you heard about all season.

Southeastern Conference champion Auburn and Pac-10 champ Oregon each will be making their first trip to the BCS title game, a rarity for the biggest showdown of the bowl season.

The top-ranked Tigers and No. 2 Ducks will bring perfect records and potent offenses to Glendale, Ariz., for their Jan. 10 matchup.

All the Bowl Championship Series pairings were made official Sunday night, but the championship game announcement was just a formality after Auburn and Oregon completed their unbeaten runs through regular season Saturday.

Oregon players gathered with friends and family in a lounge at



Oregon tailback LaMichael James leads the nation in rushing.

the athletic complex on campus to watch as the BCS lineup was revealed on television. There wasn't a peep in the room when Oregon (12-0) popped up on the screen at No. 2 in the final BCS standings behind first-place Auburn (13-0). It was typical Ducks: all business.

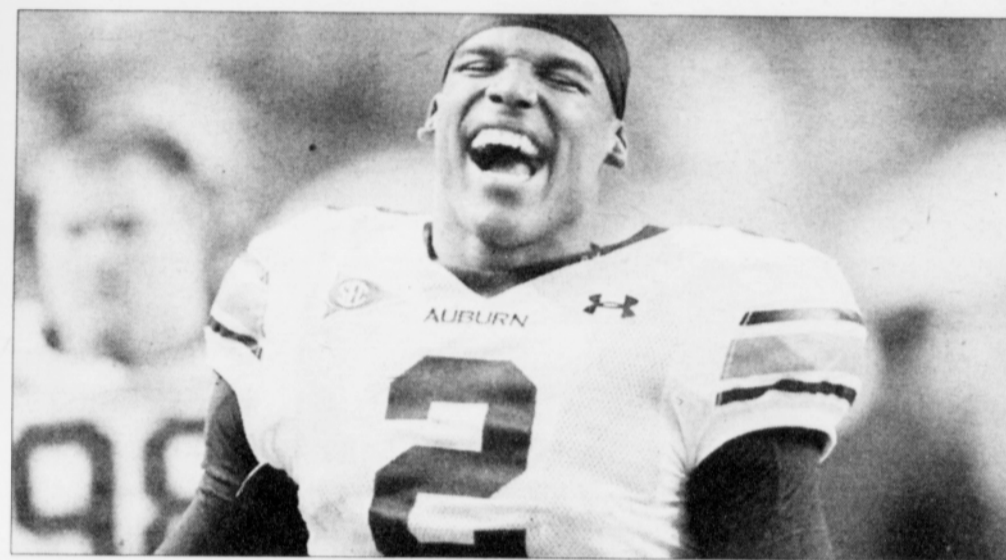
Across the country, Auburn linebacker Craig Stevens had trouble putting his emotions into words. "It's just an amazing feeling," he said. "We've put in all that hard work to see our dreams unfold."

The Tigers and Ducks represent a changing of the guard.

Since the BCS was born in 1998, its title game has almost always been stocked with college football's blue bloods and programs with championship pedigrees.

Auburn has one national title to its credit — and it came in

just the second, not including the inaugural BCS championship in 1998, with two teams that have never been there before. The other was in 2001, when Nebraska and Miami — not exactly a couple of upstarts — played for the crystal ball.



Auburn quarterback Cam Newton is the nation's top-rate passer and its 15th best runner.

1957. That's one more than Oregon has. In fact, the Ducks are just the second team in the 13-year history of the BCS to reach the championship game looking for the program's first national title. Virginia Tech was the first in 1999.

Also, this title game will be

Another first: Never before have two teams that started the season ranked outside the AP top 10, played for the BCS title.

The Ducks began the year ranked 11th in the AP poll, with questions at quarterback after

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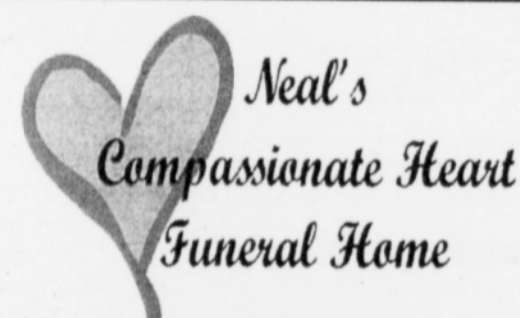
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