

Washington can't afford stumble against OSU

By TIM BOOTH
AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE — For all the hype that surrounded No. 17 Washington before the year began and the disappointment of being out of the College Football Playoff conversation by midseason, the Huskies still have a legitimate shot at a more than acceptable consolation prize.

The Rose Bowl still carries significant meaning in these parts. And with two more victories — beginning Saturday against Oregon State — the Huskies would find themselves in the Pac-12 title game playing for a chance to go to Pasadena as the conference champion.

That sounds straightforward but navigating the next few weeks won't be easy. Facing the Beavers would seem the easiest of Washington's three tasks. That's followed by a showdown against No. 8 Washington State in the Apple Cup on Nov. 23 to likely decide the Pac-12 North title. And if the Huskies win both, they'd still have to get past the Pac-12 South champ in the conference title game on Nov. 30.

While the quest for a divi-

sion title will take priority, Saturday is also a chance for Washington (7-3, 5-2 Pac-12) to say farewell to two of its most successful seniors in their final home game: quarterback Jake Browning and running back Myles Gaskin.

Browning is the school's all-time leader in yards passing, touchdowns, pass efficiency, and has won 36 of the 49 games he's started despite facing criticism from fans who have expected more.

Gaskin appears recovered from a shoulder injury that kept him out of games earlier in the season and needs 271 yards the rest of the way to become the ninth player in FBS history to have four 1,000-yard seasons in their career, according to the school.

They're two of the most important players to have come through Washington during coach Chris Petersen's tenure, part of a highly successful senior class.

"I hope that they are really focused on the game and not too wrapped up in the last one at Husky Stadium, because we have a lot more ball to play and practice here," Petersen said.

Oregon State (2-8, 1-6) has enjoyed few highlights most of the season — its



In this Oct. 6 file photo, Washington running back Myles Gaskin carries the ball against UCLA.

comeback win over Colorado the lone exception — but may be in position to give the Huskies headaches thanks to familiarity. The matchup will be a return to Seattle for head coach Jonathan Smith after spending the previous four seasons as Washington's offensive coordinator.

"I have some fond mem-

ories of that place," Smith said. "It's a great place to play a football game. Our kids will be excited to play there. We have some kids from that area who are looking forward to playing back home."

Here's what else to know about the 102nd all-time meeting:

Super freshman: One

BEAVER FOOTBALL



Washington Huskies
(7-3, 5-2)

Oregon St. Beavers
(2-8, 1-6)

Saturday, 1:30 p.m., at Husky Stadium, Seattle TV: PAC12

of the few upsidest in Oregon State's season has been the debut of freshman running back Jermar Jefferson. He needs just 53 yards rushing to topple Jacquizz Rodgers' freshman record at Oregon State. Rodgers rushed for 1,253 yards in 2008; Jefferson has 1,201. Jefferson is the eighth player in school history to top 1,000 yards, but just the second freshman. Jefferson hasn't scored a rushing touchdown since Oct. 6 when he had four TDs in a loss to Washington State.

Tackle machine: Because of the Huskies' bye last week, linebacker Ben Burr-Kirven lost his spot as the top tackler in the country. He's now third with 134 tackles on the season, but should have plenty of chances to regain the top spot and finish the season

as the national leader with the Huskies likely to have three and possibly four more games. Burr-Kirven is averaging more than 13 tackles per game.

Run away: Oregon State's defense has been mostly forgettable this season. The Beavers are giving up 542.8 yards per game, ranking next to last in the country. Of that number, 271 yards per game are coming on the ground. Every team they've faced this season has rushed for at least 100 yards against the Beavers, even pass-happy Washington State. That's not good when facing Gaskin and the rest of Washington's talented backfield.

Getting healthy: The one upside to Washington's late bye week is the chance to have a mostly healthy roster for the final stretch. The Huskies could see the play time of tight end Hunter Bryant increase and there's a chance left tackle Trey Adams could return for the final few games and not jeopardize his intent to return for a fifth year in 2019. Adams has missed the entire season with a back injury.

Washington may also get cornerback Jordan Miller back after missing the past two games.

USC, UCLA at historic low heading into crosstown showdown

By GREG BEACHAM
AP Sports Writer

PASADENA, Calif. — The annual crosstown showdown has arrived at a particularly low point in the football history of both Southern California and UCLA.

The schools' 13 combined losses are the most they've ever had in 88 editions of the game for the Victory Bell. Both the Trojans (5-5, 4-4 Pac-12) and the Bruins (2-8, 2-5) are out of the conference title race and playing for little more than

local pride.

That's still more than enough to motivate the players on both sides of Los Angeles' ever-roiling rivalry.

"It will mean sending out our seniors not having lost to UCLA," Trojans defensive lineman Brandon Pili said. "It will mean a lot to our seniors never losing to them, never giving up the Victory Bell. And it will also mean a lot to (underclassmen). Nobody at USC ever wants to lose to those guys across town."

While the result doesn't mean much outside the LA

metropolitan area, the stakes remain high inside the Rose Bowl on Saturday. The game is also the first in the rivalry for two major figures going forward: USC quarterback J.T. Daniels and UCLA coach Chip Kelly.

"A lot of our guys know their guys," Kelly said. "A lot of guys played high school football together, and then one went here and one went there. That's part of the uniqueness of the rivalry with the proximity of both schools. There's a real familiarity with this team more than any other we play."

A win would be the 50th in rivalry history for the Trojans, who have won the last three meetings. Clay Helton has never lost to the Bruins as a head coach, and keeping that streak alive would make the Trojans bowl-eligible while removing a modicum of the pressure currently weighing on him.

"Los Angeles is home to both of us, and I've thought this is such a cool rivalry because we all live together," Helton said.

"Los Angeles is the best city in the world, and we've got two great universities

PAC-12 FOOTBALL



USC
(5-5, 4-3)

UCLA
(2-8, 2-5)

Saturday, 12:30 p.m., at Rose Bowl, Pasadena, TV: FOX

that love to compete against each other."

Here's something else to know heading into the rivalry that began in 1929 with a 76-0 win for the Trojans:

Trojan stand

USC has lost three of its last four to fall out of contention in the Pac-12 South. The Trojans need one win to gain bowl eligibility, and they would be wise to get it this week with No. 3 Notre Dame traveling to the Coliseum next Saturday for the regular-season finale. USC's struggles have put heat on Helton's job security, particularly given Daniels' inconsistent play for the long-time quarterbacks coach in a struggling offense that managed only 14 points last week in a home loss to California.

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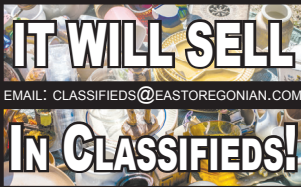
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