

Pac-12 North still undecided, a few rivalry games remain

By ANNE M. PETERSON
AP Sports Writer

The Pac-12 winds up the regular season this week with a few loose ends.

Like the Pac-12 North. Seventh-ranked Washington State hosts No. 16 Washington on Friday in the Apple Cup with the division's spot in the Pac-12 championship game on the line.

For Washington State, the stakes are higher. The Cougars still have a shot — however slim — of making the College Football Playoff. But they'll need to beat the Huskies, then beat Utah in the conference championship, and hope a couple of teams above them in the national rankings tumble.

If the Cougars win out and don't get selected, they're headed for the Rose Bowl.

But first things first. It will be the 111th Apple Cup, and the third in a row where both teams are ranked. Two seasons ago, the Cougars and the Huskies were both 7-1 in conference play going into the game in Pullman and Washington won 45-17 to earn a spot in the league championship. The Huskies went on to face Alabama in the CFP semifinals.

Washington has won the last five Apple Cups, but coach Chris Petersen isn't counting on recent trends for this one. This season has been too strange for that.

"I think you just look at what's happened around our league and every program in there. I think that says it all. It's very, very different year to year in college football," Petersen said.

Washington State coach Mike Leach played down the rivalry aspect of the game. He said "like most weeks the challenge is with ourselves."

"I think they're already focused," Leach said about his team. "The biggest thing is having a good week of practice. Have a good week of



Washington tailback Myles Gaskin (9) gets quarterback Jake Browning to wave to a photographer after an NCAA college football game against Oregon State on Saturday in Seattle.

practice and then duplicate that."

Other things to note heading into the final weekend of the season:

Bowl bound: Bowl season is quickly approaching, so here's a handy primer for the Pac-12's arrangements: The league has seven bowl partners, led by the Rose Bowl. The winner of the Pac-12 championship goes to Pasadena — unless it is one of the four national playoff teams, and then it would go to either the Orange or Cotton bowls. The Rose Bowl would replace the CFP-bound team with another league team to face an opponent from the Big Ten.

After the Granddaddy Of Them All, set for Jan. 1, the other bowls are: The Alamo Bowl against the Big 12 on Dec. 28, the Holiday Bowl against the Big Ten on Dec. 31, the Redbox Bowl against the Big Ten on Dec. 31, the Sun Bowl against the ACC on Dec. 31, the Las Vegas Bowl against the MWC on Dec. 15 and the Cheez-It Bowl against

the Big 12 on Dec. 26.

Let's take a moment to appreciate the bowl named after a popular snack cracker.

Currently, there are six teams in the league that are already bowl-eligible with one game left.

Rivalry week: In addition to the Apple Cup, there are two other conference rivalry games this weekend. Oregon and Oregon State meet Friday in the annual Civil War, which is essentially only for pride this season, and Arizona faces Arizona State on Saturday in the Territorial Cup. The game is important for Arizona because the Wildcats need one more win to reach six and secure bowl eligibility.

USC hosts Notre Dame in the 90th meeting of their intersectional rivalry, and Utah hosts BYU in the Holy War. Colorado visits Cal and Stanford is at UCLA for the other two regular-season finales.

Utah coach Kyle Whittingham isn't particularly fond of having the Holy War at the end of the season — and on Saturday — because the Pac-

12 championship is looming in the distance and the North's representative will be determined Friday.

"I guess ideally you'd like a bye this week so that you could prepare for what's coming up next. So we have the six-day turnaround where whoever we face has the seven-day turnaround, so that isn't ideal, but that is how it lays out," Whittingham said.

"Nothing we can do about it. I don't think the rivalry game is scheduled for the end of the year in the foreseeable future, I think it moves back to the beginning."

Speaking of Utah, they'll play for the Pac-12 championship for the first time since joining the league.

Hotseat update: Mike MacIntyre became the first Pac-12 coach of the season to fall when Colorado dismissed him Sunday. Clay Helton still has his job at USC as of Tuesday. This seems to be shaping up to be a quieter offseason than last year when there were five coaching changes.

NFL



New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees (9) passes during an NFL football game against the Philadelphia Eagles in New Orleans on Sunday.

Saints still on top of Pro32 poll

By SIMMI BUTTAR
AP Sports Writer

NEW YORK — Drew Brees and the New Orleans Saints just keep on rolling.

The Saints extended their winning streak to nine games with a 48-7 rout of the Eagles, handing them the most lopsided defeat for a Super Bowl champion.

And the Saints will also get an early start on trying to make it 10 wins in a row when they host NFC South rival Atlanta on Thanksgiving night.

Because of their impressive run, the Saints kept the No. 1 spot in the latest AP Pro32 poll. They received all 12 first-place votes and 384 points in balloting Tuesday by media members who regularly cover the NFL.

"The Saints' offense keeps rolling along, to the point where the NFC playoffs might very well go through New Orleans," Newsday's Bob Glauber said. "And if that's the case, can another trip to the Super Bowl be far behind?"

The Los Angeles Rams and Kansas City flipped spots after their 54-51 shootout on Monday night at the Coliseum. The Rams are No. 2 and the Chiefs are No. 3 as both teams enter their respec-

tive bye week.

Monday's game was the third-highest scoring game in NFL history and the first game in the NFL when each team had at least 50 points. There were 14 touchdowns, including three by defensive players. There were 56 first downs and 1,001 combined yards.

"(Rams) just won best game of the decade," Fox Sports' John Czarnecki.

The New England Patriots moved up two spots to No. 4 as they were on their bye week. The Patriots return to action when they face the New York Jets.

And despite overcoming a 16-0 second-half deficit at Jacksonville, the Pittsburgh Steelers slipped a spot to No. 5.

The Chicago Bears climbed four spots to No. 6 after their 25-20 win over Minnesota on Sunday. The Bears will open Week 12 when they travel to Detroit to face the Lions on Thanksgiving.

"The Bears are proving that defense, a running game and a league-leading turnover differential still matter in an era of wide-open football," said Ira Kaufman of Fox 13 in Tampa, Florida.

The surging Houston Texans, who have won seven in a row after an 0-3 start, gained two places to No. 7.

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