

# Washington State shakes up defense after back-to-back losses

By **NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS**  
Associated Press



AP Photo/Rick Bowmer

**Utah running back Devonta'e Henry-Cole, right, carries the ball as Washington State cornerback Marcus Strong (4) defends in the second half of an NCAA college football game on Sept. 28, 2019, in Salt Lake City.**

Washington State coach Mike Leach is shaking up the Cougars' underperforming defense in the wake of defensive coordinator Tracy Claeys' abrupt resignation.

The Cougars have made some personnel changes on a squad that is yielding 30 points per game, ranking it 10th in the Pac-12. Leach said they are also simplifying defensive schemes that he believes were too complicated.

"We didn't have any shortage of strategy," Leach said this week. "We had too much strategy."

Washington State (3-2, 0-2 Pac-12) had a bye last week and plays at No. 18 Arizona State (4-1, 1-1) on Saturday facing an urgent need to get the season back on track. The 0-2 start in league play is the worst for Washington State since 2012.

Claeys abruptly resigned last week after the Cougars gave up a total of 105 points in losing their first two Pac-12 games. Washington State

gave up 50 points in the second half of a 67-63 loss at home to UCLA, which rode the second-biggest comeback in FBS history to victory. The Cougars followed that with a 38-13 loss at Utah.

After the Utah game, Leach called his players "fat, dumb, happy and entitled." He also criticized his

defensive backs for playing "street ball."

"I think guys just run around and do what they want to do," Leach said.

But Leach has insisted he was surprised by the resignation and said Claeys, a former Minnesota head coach who had been with the Cougars only 1 1/2 seasons, was not

pushed out.

"He chose to resign for his own reasons, which he wasn't very specific about," Leach said. "It was sudden and it was in the middle of things, but we wish him the best."

Claeys sent a tweet Friday that read: "The defense has struggled and I am responsible. We couldn't agree

on solutions."

The Cougars defense is giving up 444 yards per game, ranking 105th nationally. They're giving up 178 rushing yards per game and have allowed teams to convert on 42% of third down situations. The one area where they excel is recovering opponent fumbles, where they lead the league with seven.

Leach has elevated Roc Bellantoni, the inside linebackers coach, to interim defensive coordinator and Darcel McBath, the cornerbacks coach, to co-interim defensive coordinator.

Bellantoni will call plays from the press box, while McBath will work down on the field, Leach said.

The Cougars held an all-team meeting after the Utah loss to discuss ways to improve.

Among the most effective speakers was Pat Nunn, a freshman who is moving into the starting lineup at nickelback, said offensive lineman Josh Watson.

"He's one of the younger guys around here, but I felt like he had a pretty good mes-

sage in his speech," Watson told The Spokesman-Review.

Watson said it is more effective when players hold each other accountable.

"It's powerful when a coach does it, but you think about it more when it comes from your peers," Watson said.

Leach said Monday the team would consider some personnel changes on defense, and sure enough there were several when the depth chart was released.

Safety Daniel Isom was moved into a starting position at cornerback. Skyler Thomas will replace Isom at strong safety. Nunn takes over for Thomas at nickelback.

Dallas Hobbs will start at nose tackle, while previous starter Misiona Aiolupotea-Pei is now the backup. Backup nose tackle Lamonte McDougle is no longer listed on the two-deep chart.

There were some additional changes among the backup defensive players.

Washington State needs to win at least three of the next seven games to become bowl-eligible for a team-record fifth consecutive season.

# U.S. women's hoops announces college exhibition games

By **DOUG FEINBERG**  
AP Basketball Writer

NEW YORK — The U.S. women's national basketball team's college tour is set to tip off next month.

USA Basketball announced Wednesday that members of the women's team will play exhibition games at Stanford, Oregon State, Texas A&M and Oregon in early November to prepare for the FIBA tournament later in the month.

"Historically speaking, it has been great for our program to have a college tour," U.S. coach Dawn Staley said. "All our past USA teams that had a college tour went on to win Olympic gold medals. So, if we can pull back into some histor-

ical times in which we had the opportunity to showcase our national team in this light, women's college basketball is at an all-time high as far as exposure. This will increase the exposure to women's basketball. And I'm excited. ... It's more prep time. The more time we have, the better we will perform in Tokyo."

Staley won't be coaching during the tour because she will be focused on her own college team, South Carolina. Olympic assistant coaches Dan Hughes and Cheryl Reeve will lead the team.

"I'm going to tell Cheryl and Dan, do what you got to do to win the game. Whether it's our stuff or their stuff. Instincts take over. We just want to win the games,"



AP Photo/Nick Wass, File

**In this July 14, 2012, file photo, U.S. women's Olympic basketball players Diana Taurasi (12) and Sue Bird (6) watch during practice in Washington.**

Staley told The Associated Press last month.

The Americans revealed at the WNBA All-Star Game that they would have an expanded training program to help prepare for the Tokyo Olympics, where they will be trying for a seventh consecutive gold medal. The exhibition games will be the first of five training periods leading up to the Olympics. As part of the expansion, a core group of players led by Sue Bird and Diana Taurasi will be paid \$2,000 a day at each of the training camps and games.

The two stars, going for their unprecedented fifth Olympic gold, are joined by Elena Delle Donne, Skylar Diggins-Smith, Sylvia Fowle, Chelsea Gray, A'ja Wilson and Nneka Ogwu-

mike in the core group. The game at Stanford will be a homecoming for Ogwu-

mike, who starred at the school. The roster for the November exhibition games will be rounded out by Seimone Augustus, Layshia Clarendon, Napheesa Collier and Kelsey Plum.

Gray will miss the game at Stanford and Plum will miss the first two games due to previous personal commitments.

This is the Americans' first extended college tour since training for the Beijing Olympics in 2008. The only loss came in 1999-2000 against Tennessee, with the U.S. winning the other 39 games.

The U.S. will play another series of exhibition games against colleges in February.

## PIGSKIN PICKERS WEEK 6

<b>Overall:</b>	34-16	34-16	32-18	32-18	31-19	29-21	29-21	28-22	26-24	<b>GUEST PICKER</b>
<b>Last week:</b>	7-3	6-4	6-4	5-5	4-6	8-2	5-5	4-6	4-6	
<b>Chiawana at Hermiston</b>	Hermiston	Chiawana	Chiawana	Chiawana	Chiawana	Chiawana	Chiawana	Chiawana	Chiawana	Chiawana
<b>Pendleton at LaSalle</b>	Pendleton	Pendleton	Pendleton	Pendleton	Pendleton	La Salle	Pendleton	Pendleton	Pendleton	Pendleton
<b>Union at Pilot Rock/Nixy</b>	Pilot Rock	Pilot Rock	Pilot Rock	Union	Pilot Rock	Pilot Rock	Pilot Rock	Union	Pilot Rock	Pilot Rock
<b>Mac-Hi at Kiona Benton</b>	Kiona Benton	Kiona Benton	Kiona Benton	Mac-Hi	Kiona-Benton	Kiona-Benton	Kiona-Benton	Mac-Hi	Kiona-Benton	Kiona-Benton
<b>Lock Haven at Millersville</b>	Millersville	Millersville	Lock Haven	Lock Haven	Lock Haven	Lock Haven	Lock Haven	Lock Haven	Lock Haven	Millersville
<b>Oklahoma at Texas</b>	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma	Oklahoma
<b>Montana State Northern at Eastern Oregon</b>	Eastern Oregon	Eastern Oregon	Eastern Oregon	Montana State Northern	Eastern Oregon	Eastern Oregon	Eastern Oregon	Eastern Oregon	Eastern Oregon	Eastern Oregon
<b>Texans at Chiefs</b>	Chiefs	Chiefs	Chiefs	Texans	Chiefs	Chiefs	Chiefs	Chiefs	Texans	Texans
<b>49ers at Rams</b>	Rams	49ers	Rams	49ers	Rams	Rams	49ers	Rams	49ers	49ers
<b>Eagles at Vikings</b>	Eagles	Vikings	Eagles	Eagles	Vikings	Vikings	Eagles	Eagles	Eagles	Vikings

**THANK YOU TO LAST WEEK'S GUEST PICKER STEVE HOFFERT (7-3)**

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