

# Utah beats Ducks for 1st Rose Bowl bid

By JOSH DUBOW

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — As the Utah players celebrated the Pac-12 championship surrounded by roses and confetti, the memories of two teammates who couldn't share in the moment was paramount.

The past year marked by tragedy following the deaths of Ty Jordan and Aaron Lowe will end with the long-coveted Rose Bowl bid.

Devin Lloyd returned an interception for a touchdown, Cam Rising threw for another score and No. 14 Utah clinched the first Rose Bowl berth in school history with a 38-10 victory over No. 10 Oregon on Friday night, Dec. 3.

"Our mantra after the tragedy was we're not going to get over it, but we'll get through it," coach Kyle Whittingham said. "I believe our guys really

## Ducks coach leaving for Miami

CORAL GABLES, Fla. (AP) — AP source: Oregon's Mario Cristobal accepts offer to take over as Miami football coach after Manny Diaz is fired.

did that and I couldn't be more proud of them."

Jordan died last Christmas from a self-inflicted gun shot wound. Lowe, who also played with Jordan in high school, was then shot and killed at a house party in September.

Their teammates used the memories as fuel for a season that ended with a title.

"We've got a lot of toughness in us and resiliency," said Lloyd, who was named MVP of the game. "But at the

## Ducks, Beavers in bowl games

**Oregon St. vs. Utah St.**  
LA Bowl  
Saturday, Dec. 18, 4:30 p.m. on ABC

**Oregon vs. Oklahoma**  
Alamo Bowl  
Wednesday, Dec. 29, 6:15 p.m. on ESPN

same time, I also believe that they were there guiding us throughout the whole season. They were able to help us create things that I don't think we ever would have done without them."

This game was a near carbon copy of the one in Salt Lake City two weeks ago when the Utes (10-3, No. 17 CFP) jumped out early and won 38-7.

While that game all but ended the playoff hopes for

Oregon (10-3, No. 10), the rematch delivered the Utes the Rose Bowl prize they had been seeking since joining the Pac-12 in 2011.

Utah had lost its first two trips to the conference title game, including two years ago to Oregon, but left little doubt this time.

"We've just been working away on it ever since we joined the league," Whittingham said. "This is the culmination of a lot of years of hard work and effort, not only by us, but everyone involved. It takes a lot of people to make this thing go."

Rising engineered a TD drive on the opening possession after converting a sneak on fourth down near midfield. Tavon Thomas capped it with a 2-yard run.

Lloyd then returned an interception 34 yards for a



Serena Morones for The Oregonian

Utah quarterback Cameron Rising (No. 7) runs on a keeper during the second half as the No. 17 Utes take on the No. 10 Oregon Ducks in the Pac-12 football championship game at Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas on Friday, Dec. 3, 2021. Utah won 38-10.

score later in the first quarter and Utah put the game away by scoring twice in the final 27 seconds of the first half.

Rising hit Dalton Kincaid on an 11-yard pass with 27 seconds left. Then Malone Mataele intercepted an ill-advised pass from Anthony Brown to set up Jadon Redding's 50-yard field goal on the final play

of the half to make it 23-0.

The Utes led the game two weeks ago 28-0 at the half.

"Honestly, it seemed kind of similar," Ducks safety Verone McKinley III said. "It's tough because we felt prepared. We felt we had a good game plan and then to let what happened happen again was a tough pill to swallow."

## COLLEGE FOOTBALL PLAYOFF

# Historic playoff: Alabama-Cincinnati, Michigan-Georgia

By RALPH D. RUSSO

AP College Football Writer

IRVING, Texas — As college football's postseason evolved from disconnected bowls to the BCS to the current four-team playoff, it never truly embraced the underdog the way the NCAA basketball tournament does.

From Tulane to Utah, Boise State to TCU and then UCF, the upstarts occasionally got a chance to play a blue blood in a big bowl game, but they never entered the postseason with a legitimate opportunity to win a national championship.

College football finally has its first Cinderella team: Cincinnati has broken the glass ceiling.

The Bearcats will play Alabama in the Cotton Bowl on New Year's Eve after being selected to the College Football Playoff on Sunday, Dec. 5. Michigan will face Georgia in the Orange Bowl semifinal on Dec. 31 and the winners will play for the national championship on Jan. 10 in Indianapolis.

Fourth-seeded Cincinnati is the first team to reach the CFP from a non-Power Five conference in the eight-year history of this postseason format. The Bearcats (13-0) won the American Athletic Conference and head into the postseason as the only unbeaten team in the country.

"It's an historic day. It really is. In the world of sports, this is history," AAC Commissioner Mike Aresco said. "This is something probably many, many people never thought they would see."

Previously, no team from a so-called Group of Five conference had ever even come close to making the playoff.

"We don't want to carry the flag for the non-big schools, so to speak. We just want to be us," Cincinnati coach Luke Fickell said.

When the Bowl Championship Series started in 1998, Tulane went unbeaten in Conference USA and didn't even get a spot in one of the glitzy bowl games. Former Tulane Presi-

dent Scott Cowen was among the first to attack the BCS as an exclusionary cartel.

Under then-coach Urban Meyer, Utah went unbeaten as a member of the Mountain West in 2004 and reached the Fiesta Bowl, but only got to play a so-so Pittsburgh team, meaning the Utes had no shot to finish No. 1.

Boise State created a brand out of being a potential BCS buster during its time in the Western Athletic Conference, winning a remarkable Fiesta Bowl against Oklahoma in 2007. TCU was in the Mountain West when it won a Rose Bowl against Wisconsin in 2010.

Utah and TCU ended up getting scooped up by Power Five conferences. If you can't beat them, ask them to join you.

The playoff doubled the number of teams that had a chance to win the national title from two to four in 2014, but it didn't seem to help the little guys.

UCF won 25 straight games over 2017 and '18 and never did better than eighth

in the selection committee's rankings. The Knights went so far as to declare themselves national champions after they were the only team in major college football to finish the 2017 season unbeaten.

Cincinnati set the foundation for this year's run by going unbeaten in the regular season last year before losing to Georgia on a late field goal in the Peach Bowl.

Aresco conceded this run has felt bittersweet at times for him. Cincinnati, along with UCF and Houston, will be leaving the American for the Big 12 soon.

The Bearcats made history with little debate. Playoff selection committee chairman Gary Barta said there was strong consensus for Cincinnati at No. 4 ahead of No. 5 Notre Dame, which had only one loss — at home against the Bearcats in early October. Ohio State finished sixth.

# Timbers down RSL 2-0 for conference title, MLS final berth

By ANNE M. PETERSON  
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Felipe Mora and Santiago Moreno scored and the Portland Timbers advanced to the MLS Cup final with a 2-0 victory over Real Salt Lake in the Western Conference final on Saturday, Dec. 4.

Fourth-seeded Portland will host the NYCFC on Saturday, Dec. 11. It is the first time that the Timbers have hosted the league championship.

The Timbers, who won the MLS Cup in 2015, also went to the final in 2018 but fell to Atlanta United.


"It was a very strong performance. The guys were motivated," Timbers coach Giovanni Savarese

said. "They understood the moment that was at stake and they performed very well today."

Seventh-seeded Real Salt Lake had appeared in the MLS Cup final three times, winning the title in 2009. It was the team's fifth trip to the conference finals since joining the league in 2005.

Salt Lake had won all three previous playoff matches against the Timbers, including the last meeting in 2019 when RSL won 2-1 at home in the opening round.

But the Timbers swept Salt Lake in their three meetings during the regular season, outscoring their opponent 12-4 in the three matches.

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