

Football's championship battle becoming confusing

Predictions by Rick Huls

It's been eight weeks since the major college football season began and three of the teams that kicked it off are still in the national championship running.

Back on Sept. 1, Penn State's Nittany Lions edged Temple 10-7, and have since progressed to the No. 2 position in the AP and UPI ratings.

In Birmingham, Alabama on Sept. 2, No. 1 pre-season rated Alabama knocked off 10th ranked Nebraska 20-3. Now, 55 days later, the Huskers are ranked fourth and the Crimson Tide third.

All three teams have a common fight—chasing top-ranked Oklahoma for the national title. But only one—Nebraska—will meet the challenge head on in a Nov. 11 date with the Sooners in Lincoln.

Should the Sooners defeat Nebraska for the seventh straight year, Oklahoma would earn the Orange Bowl trip (provided they don't stumble against another Big Eight school).

Bowl goal

Nebraska, with a win over the Sooners, would not be assured of an Orange Bowl trip. The Huskers must face Missouri, loser to only Oklahoma in Big Eight play, on Nov. 18 in Lincoln. If Nebraska beats Oklahoma and Missouri knocks off the Huskers, all three Big Eight schools would

have one loss. From all indications, Missouri would be the Big Eight's representative because the Tigers haven't earned an Orange Bowl trip as recently as Nebraska and Oklahoma.

At this point in the season Penn State looks like the Big Eight's logical opponent in the Orange Bowl.

Alabama appears headed for a return trip to the Sugar Bowl. The Tide could meet the Southwest or Pac-10 runner-up, possibly Southern Cal, UCLA, Arkansas, Texas or Houston. Alabama might even face the Atlantic Coast Conference champion, either fifth ranked Maryland or Clemson.

Outside chance

The remaining top ten members—Southern Cal, Texas, Michigan, Arkansas and UCLA—also have outside chances for the national title. However, with four of the top five teams yet to face each other (Maryland meets Penn State Nov. 4) at least two teams are likely to remain at the top. Confused now? Don't worry, it's only normal at this stage of the season.

Here's how the top five look this week:

Oklahoma at Kansas State—Sooners should have no problem with Kansas State, who is slowly returning to early season form. . .Oklahoma 52, Kansas State 21.

Penn State at West Virginia—The Moun-

taineers have given Paterno trouble in the past, but the Lions have too many horses this year. . .Penn State 31, West Virginia 7.

Virginia Tech at Alabama—Bryant's boys haven't been real impressive since their opening win over the Huskers. However, it won't matter how they play against the Gobblers. . .Alabama 48, VPI 14.

State shutout

Oklahoma State at Nebraska—Huskers' defense seems to play better every week and should earn one more shutout. No, not Nov. 11 or Nov. 18, but at Memorial Stadium's 98th consecutive sellout. . .Nebraska 49, Oklahoma State 0.

Maryland at Duke—Terrapins better not look ahead to next week's showdown against Penn State. The Blue Devils could be real devils and knock 'em off. . .Any-way, Maryland 27, Duke 6.

In other Big Eight games:

Iowa State at Kansas—The Jayhawks have been a real pest in Lawrence this year, upsetting UCLA and nearly shooting down Oklahoma. Iowa State, however, is ready to take out the frustration of three straight losses to Nebraska, Missouri and Oklahoma. . .Iowa State 31, Kansas 15.

Colorado at Missouri—Bill Mallory's Buffs are smarting and Warren Powers' Tigers are flying. The Colorado-Missouri winner is annually unpredictable so expect

Colorado to win if the pick is. . .Missouri 38, Colorado 28.

Games around the country:

East—Pittsburgh 14, Navy 10; Army 24, Colgate 14.

South—North Carolina State 14, Clemson 13; Georgia Tech 24, Florida 21, Mississippi 34, Vanderbilt 21; Florida State 30, Southern Mississippi 14; Tennessee 21, Mississippi State 17; Georgia 20, Kentucky 3; Tulane 20, Memphis State 17; Auburn 23, Wake Forest 7; North Carolina 17, South Carolina 14.

Southwest—Texas A & M 45, Rice 14; Texas 23, SMU 21; New Mexico 38, UTEP 20; Arkansas 28, Houston 17; Baylor 31, TCU 17; Tulsa 33, Drake 21.

Midwest—Michigan 35, Minnesota 7; Notre Dame 31, Miami, Fla. 16; Indiana 17, Illinois 14; Purdue 24, Iowa 7; Michigan State 31, Wisconsin 7; Wichita State 20, New Mexico State 17; Ohio State 52, Northwestern 7.

West—UCLA 31, Arizona 10; Washington State 35, Oregon 24; Southern Cal 28, California 17; Washington 20, Arizona State 13; Air Force 27, Kent State 16; Wyoming 23, Colorado State 13; San Diego State 28, Long Beach State 20; Stanford 35, Oregon State 14; Utah State 31, San Jose State 14.

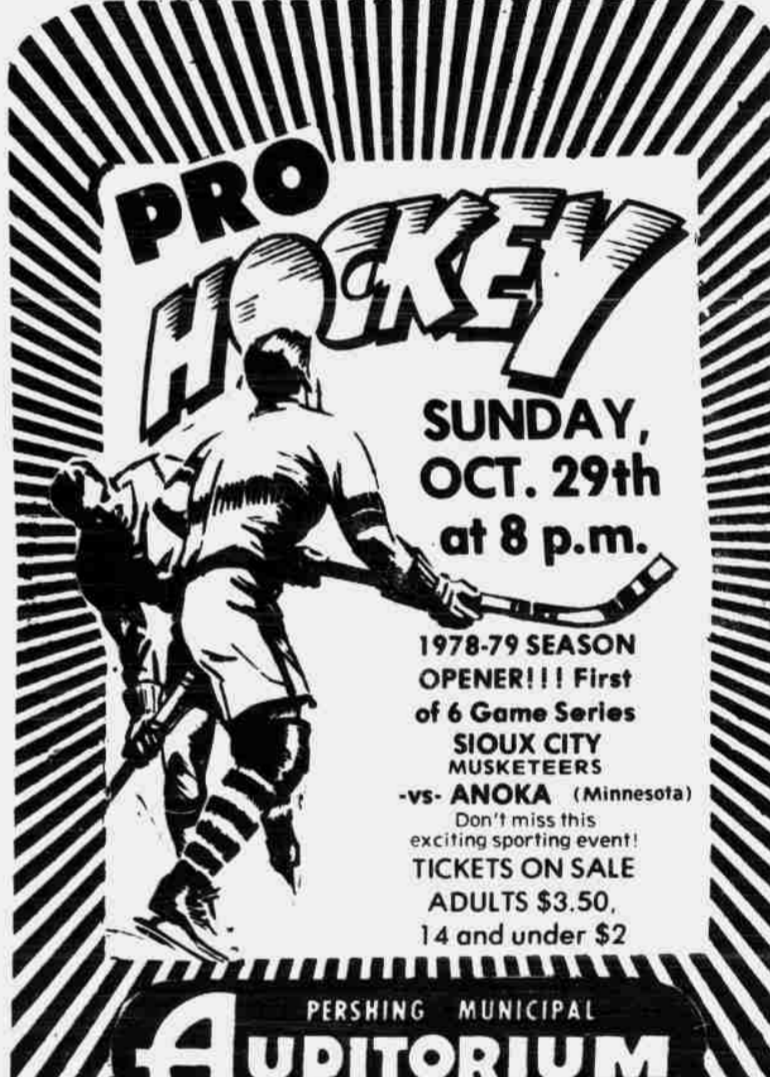
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