

No BCS drama: USC-Texas for title

LOS ANGELES (AP) - A perfect championship game, a classic coaching matchup and Notre Dame. The Bowl Championship Series couldn't have asked for more - a glitzy lineup with little for critics to gripe over. Only Oregon has a case to complain, as the Pac-10 has a 10-1 team left out of the marquee bowls for a second straight season.

Southern California and Texas, the only unbeaten left in Division I-A, will decide the national title in the Rose Bowl on Jan. 4.

"They do have the No. 1 team in the country," Texas coach Mack Brown said of the two-time defending champion Trojans. "They've just blown out people out right and left and that will be challenge for us. But that's fun.

"For Texas not to be in the national championship game for 36 years and to see where (USC coach) Pete (Carroll) has brought their program the last three years, that's where we want to go."

Major college football's two winningest coaches, septuagenarians Joe Paterno of Penn State and Bobby Bowden of Florida State, will meet in the Orange Bowl on Jan. 3.

The Fighting Irish are back in the BCS after a five-year absence. Charlie Weis' team faces Ohio State in the Fiesta Bowl on Jan. 2.

The relocated Sugar Bowl will be played in Atlanta after being chased from New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina, making it a quick and familiar trip for South-

eastern Conference champion Georgia and its fans. The Bulldogs (10-2), who won the SEC title by beating LSU in the Georgia Dome, return there to meet Big East champion West Virginia (10-1) on Jan. 2.

"I certainly understand that there are teams that are not in these four games that have had a great seasons, as we have every year," BCS coordinator and Big 12 commissioner Kevin Weiberg said Sunday. "I must say that there's a lot of consensus that we have quality matchups among highly regarded teams in this year's BCS games."

The BCS has been hammered in the past for putting the wrong teams in its championship games. Two years ago, USC was left out and college football ended up with two champs. Last season, many felt Auburn should have played USC for the championship instead of Oklahoma.

The other common complaint is the BCS doesn't create compelling matchups beyond the title game. Well, it all worked out this season. Even before a bowl is played, the BCS can declare victory.

Yes, Texas-USC made it easy for the BCS. But remember, in the pre-BCS days the two superpowers would be going separate ways for the postseason.

"Anytime we have a matchup that is widely lauded as being a great matchup in the championship game, you can really see the benefit of a system like this in which through the bowls we're able to bring together

the No. 1 and 2 ranked teams that otherwise wouldn't have come together through the (old) bowl system," Weiberg said.

Now the Pac-10 champion Trojans (12-0) and Big 12 champion Longhorns (12-0) can determine which team is best in the Granddaddy of Them All.

With 2004 Heisman Trophy winner Matt Leinart and 2005 Heisman front-runner Reggie Bush, USC has won 34 straight games.

The Trojans could make history with an unprec-

edented third consecutive national title.

"We're sitting here at 19 straight wins and there is a tremendous amount of pressure on kids and coaches to keep it going," Brown said. "And these guys have done it now for three straight years."

Many of the Trojans got together on campus to watch the bids become official Sunday. Their reaction: "Mello," defensive end Frostee Rucker said. "We've been here before."

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University of Southern California running back LenDale White (21) breaks away from UCLA's Dennis Keyes (11) and Marcus Cassel (15) during the second quarter of Southern California's 66-19 win in Los Angeles on Saturday. White scored his 54th career touchdown during the game, breaking the all-time USC touchdown record.



Texas Longhorns quarterback Vince Young, left, scrambles past Colorado Buffaloes linebacker Thaddaeus Washington, right, for a first down during first half action of the Big 12 Championship in Houston on Saturday. Texas won 70-3.

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