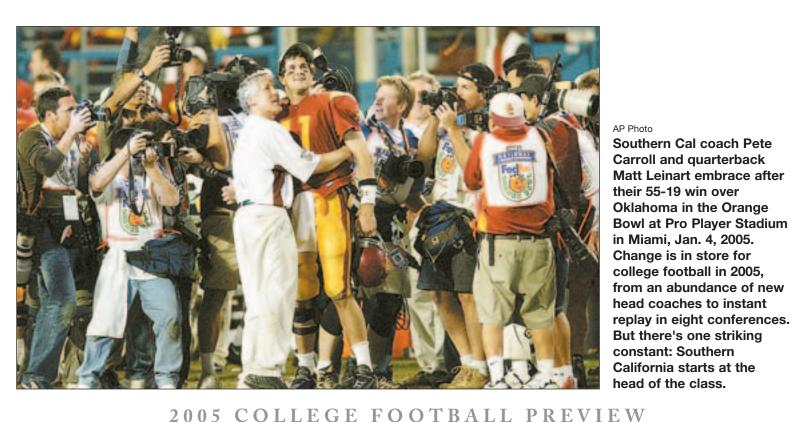
Kickoff 2005



Conference shuffle glance

The conference shake-up that started last season continues in 2005. Here are the conferences that'll have a new look:

ATLANTIC COAST CONFERENCE Boston College's arrival makes 12 teams in the ACC with two divisions:

Atlantic Boston College Clemson Florida State Maryland North Carolina State Wake Forest Coastal Duke Georgia Tech Miami North Carolina Virginia Virginia Tech

BIG EAST

Boston College and Temple are out. Cincinnati, Louisville and South Florida are in via Conference USA. They join Connecticut, Pittsburgh, Rutgers, Syracuse and West Virginia.

MID-AMERICAN CONFERENCE

Marshall and Central Florida exited, leaving the MAC with 12 teams.

East Akron Bowling Green Buffalo Kent State Miami (Ohio) Ohio West Ball State Central Michigan Eastern Michigan Northern Illinois Toledo Western Michigan

CONFERENCE USA

Marshall and Central Florida move over from the MAC, and Rice, SMU, Tulsa and UTEP from the WAC to replace five defectors (TCU. Louisville, Cincinnati, South Florida and Army), and the conference splits into two six-team divisions: Fast

UAB Central Florida East Carolina Marshall Memphis Southern Miss West Houston Rice SMU UTEP Tulane Tulsa

MOUNTAIN WEST

TCU bolts C-USA and joins Air Force, BYU, Colorado State, New Mexico, San Diego State, UNLV, Utah and Wyoming.

WESTERN ATHLETIC

Reached into the Sun Belt Conference for Idaho, New Mexico Sun Belt State and Utah State. They join Boise State, Fresno State, Hawaii, Louisiana Tech, Nevada and San Jose State.

SUN BELT

Division I-A neophytes Florida Atlantic and Florida International join North Texas, Troy, Louisiana-Monroe, Louisiana-Lafayette, Middle Tennessee and Arkansas State.

Trojans try for a 'three-peat'

Leinart tries for a Heisman repeat

(AP) — What's new in college football in 2005? Plenty, starting with nearly 20 percent of Division I-A head coaches.

Eight conferences will use instant replay for the first time, six leagues will welcome first-year members and a new poll will help determine which teams play in the Bowl Championship Series.

Amid all that change, Southern California remains a constant — the Trojans are still the class of college football.

With back-to-back national titles, 22 straight wins and a 36-3 record over the last three seasons, USC already has established itself as college football's first dynasty of the new millennium.

If Heisman Trophy winner Matt Leinart and the rest of coach Pete Carroll's Trojans add an unprecedented third straight national title, a case can be made that theirs is the greatest run in the sport's history.

"It would be a tremendous accomplishment just from the standpoint of parity in football now," said Miami coach Larry Coker, who was part of a Hurricanes program that won 34 straight from 2000-2003, but only one championship. "Getting there is very, very difficult, but to win those games would be a tremendous accomplishment. It's never been done. That says a lot right there."

Eleven teams have won at least 30 straight games, but only Miami's streak came within the last three decades.

"Our focus isn't about any kind of numbers you can put up, or any championships or any of that stuff," Carroll said. "It's about practicing really well, and battling every day. We do that kind of stuff and we'll be a good football team and we'll see how far we can take it."

Leinart, the big left-hander with SoCal roots, shocked many — and no doubt deflated race. quite a few competitors when he decided to return for his senior season.

After tossing five touchdown passes in a 55-19 Orange Bowl rout of Oklahoma, it was assumed that Leinart would take his cool demeanor and pinpoint accuracy to the NFL, where he was almost assured of being the No. 1 pick in the

draft.

But who needs a job when you're having this much fun? Now Leinart has a chance to join college football's most exclusive club.

"There's a lot of preseason hype about Archie Griffin being the only two-time winner of the Heisman, but everybody on our team knows that's not what I'm about," said Leinart, one of nine returning starters to USC's offense and one of two Heisman Trophy finalists in the Trojans' backfield. Do-it-all tailback Reggie Bush is the other.

The Rose Bowl will host the BCS national title game this season, and the Trojans are overwhelming favorites to be playing in Pasadena on Jan. 4. But there are other teams with is one of those schools bankchampionship aspirations, and Leinart should have plen- its fortunes. Urban Meyer, ty of company in the Heisman

In the Big 12, Texas could have its best team in the Mack reprise of the not-so-distant Brown era, led by elusive quarterback Vince Young, who began his Heisman campaign with an eye-popping performance in the Rose Bowl. Oklahoma has to replace 11 players drafted by the NFL, plus 2003 Heisman winner Jason White. Having

tailback Adrian Peterson, the Heisman runner-up as a freshman in 2004, is a nice way to start.

Michigan and Ohio State, as usual, are expected to make a run at the national title out of the Big Ten, and Iowa, with three straight double-digit win seasons under Kirk Ferentz, has now nudged its way into the league's elite.

There's a new Vick leading Virginia Tech, Mike's little brother, Marcus, and — unlike last season — the Hokies won't surprise anybody if they win another Atlantic Coast Conference crown.

In the Southeastern Conference, Tennessee and LSU are loaded for a run for the Rose Bowl, while Florida ing on a new coach to change with his record of quick turnarounds and explosive offenses, has the Gators believing a glory days under Steve Spurrier is imminent.

Speaking of Spurrier, the Ol' Ball Coach returns to college football and the SEC with South Carolina.

"It was a lot more fun hanging

PLEASE SEE PAGE 31