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Iowa Is Hoping to End Cycle

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PASADENA, Calif., Dec. 31 — Iowa, with a high national ranking and Chuck Long at quarterback, is a strong favorite to beat U.C.L.A. in the 72d Rose Bowl game Wednesday. The Big Ten champion has often been favored going into the Rose Bowl, but Pacific-10 teams have refused to be intimidated.

Although the Big Ten representatives have usually been favored over the last 20 years, there have been 16 Pac-10 winners and four Big 10 winners in the last 20 Rose Bowls.

"These things go in cycles, I believe," said Terry Donahue, the U.C.L.A. coach whose teams won the 1983 and 1984 Rose Bowl games. "For a long time the Pac-10 has been winning most of the Rose Bowl games. Before that the Big 10 dominated. I just hope this cycle isn't finished."

The Pac-10 has won the last four times, starting when Washington trounced Iowa, 28-0, in 1982.

"We would like to amend that defeat to Washington," said Hayden Fry, the Iowa coach. "And particularly that 28-to-zip score. That has bugged me ever since."

Long Top Quarterback

The Hawkeyes and the Big 10 may never have a better chance to turn the cycle their way. Long, one of the finest quarterbacks in Big 10 history, is the reason. He is considered the premier senior quarterback of the 1985 college season and U.C.L.A. is forced to go against him with its second-string quarterback, Matt Stevens. Stevens will start because David Norrie, the Bruins' regular starter, is suffering from a pulled right thigh muscle.

This gives an additional edge to Iowa, a 10-1 team that is ranked third in the United Press International poll

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and fourth by The Associated Press poll and seventh by The New York Times computer compilation. U.C.L.A. (8-2-1) is ranked 13th by each news agency and 27th by The Times.

Speaking of the 1982 Rose Bowl loss, Fry said: "The last time we wanted to go to the Rose Bowl and we did. This time we wanted to go to the Rose Bowl and win. There's a heck of a difference."

There is also a difference because Iowa has an outside chance to finish No. 1 in the nation in one or more of the polls and computer ratings. Iowa had no such opportunity in 1982. But so many things have to fall in place for Iowa to get No. 1 that it seems improbable. Penn State must lose and Miami must lose while Iowa wins. Or maybe Penn State and Oklahoma have to tie for the Hawkeyes to have a chance.

"Who can say who is No. 1?" Fry said. "We'll never really know until there is a playoff for the national championship."

Long is the biggest difference between the Iowa team of today and the Iowa team of four years ago. He did play a cameo role toward the end of the 1982 Rose Bowl disaster, but by the time he got in it was too late to do anything. He did not throw a pass.

This time he will throw repeatedly. Ronnie Harmon, the fine tailback, will probably run a bit and the Iowa defense, fifth best over all in the nation, will probably play better than the Hawkeyes did in 1982. The Bruins aren't worried about the run, in part because they have the best defense against rushing in the land. It is those passes by Long that worries them most, because the Bruin pass defense is not in the same class with its defense against the run.

A fifth-year senior, Long has completed 65.81 percent of his 1985 passes, thrown for 26 touchdowns and 2,978 yards. Each of those numbers represents the best performance by any of the top five quarterbacks in the nation this season.

Harmon has 1,111 yards rushing and nine touchdowns to give Iowa its powerfully balanced attack. The Hawkeyes parlayed all this and Rob Houghtlin's field goals into the second-highest-scoring offense in the nation.

Sophomore Leading Rusher

By contrast, U.C.L.A.'s leading ground gainer is Gaston Green, a sophomore who carried in only six of the games this season because of a knee injury. But he gained 666 yards.

Thus U.C.L.A. must counter Long and Harmon with a starting quarterback who has not played for seven weeks and a leading running back who is a sophomore in his first Rose Bowl game.

At least the Bruins have John Lee, the Korean-born place-kicker, who is the team's leading scorer and a unanimous selection as all-America field-goal kicker this season. He set a National Collegiate Athletic Association record for most field goals in a season in 1984 with 29 and then most field goals in two seasons with 50 for 1984-1985. But Iowa comes close to matching that with Houghtlin, who is also his team's leading scorer. His 17 field goals this season included three from more than 50 yards.

It is basically a match of two good defensive teams, one of which has a much stronger and more experienced offense.

Stevens said: "I know that the viewers watching the game are going to think of me as a second-string quarterback. But I don't feel like that. I hope I can do just as well as David. I don't want the team to think there's any kind of letdown."