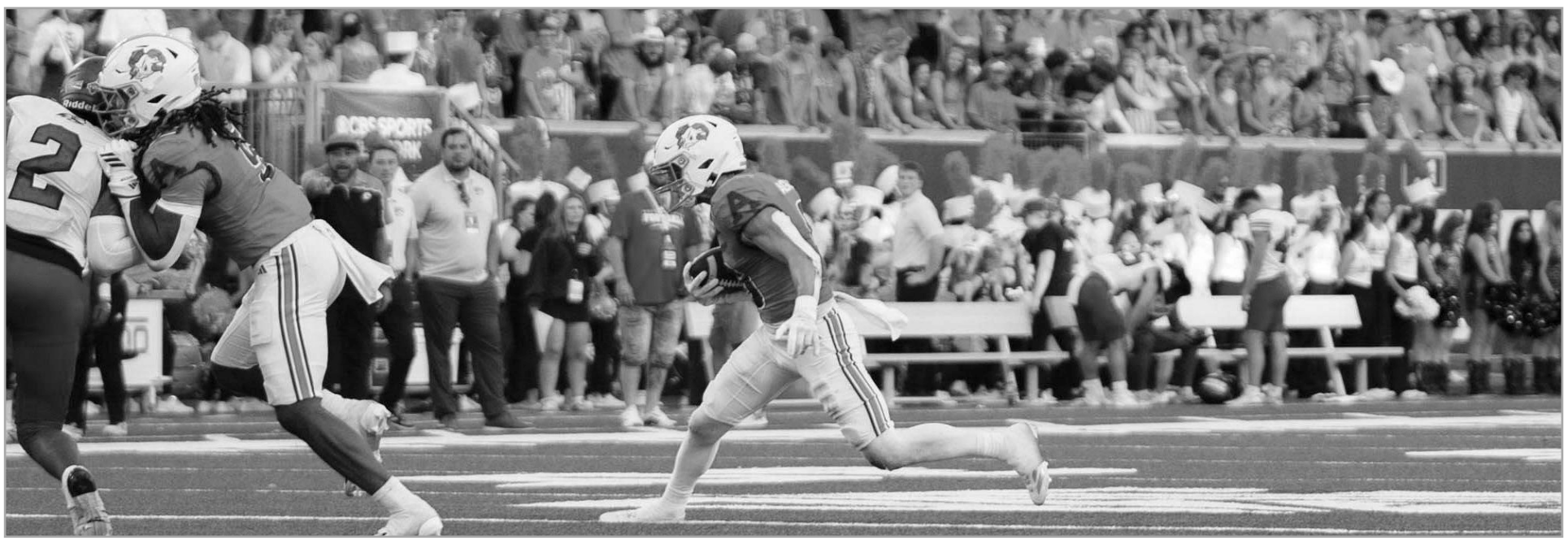
Sports

Photo of the Day | Football



UConn goes up against Maryland at Pratt & Whitney Stadium in East Hartford, CT on Saturday, September 12, 2026. The nice weather brought out a large crowd to support the Huskies. PHOTO BY MORGAN BLANCHARD / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER / THE DAILY CAMPUS

LOMBARDI LINEUP:
First impressions of the new Pac-12



The Colorado State Rams win 58-24 against the Southern Utah Thunderbirds on Saturday, September 12.
PHOTO BY COLORADO STATE FOOTBALL UNIVERSITY" ON FACEBOOK.

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Three years after losing its most historic schools to realignment, the Pac-12 has finally returned, but things will look far different from how they did in the past. With six new members, they are once again able to host a conference championship, just with different expectations this time around.

The league has lost its former Power Five status, now competing against the remaining Group of Six conferences. This shouldn't come as much of a surprise, as its new members all came from mid-major conferences, while the only original programs, Washington State and Oregon State, were never the heavyweights that ran the conference.

Early results have looked rocky for the conference, with half its members sitting at 0-2, and only one unbeaten team remaining. Yet the standings don't tell the full story, and real hope remains for the Pac-12 to send a team to the playoffs in its first season back.

Utah State has had one of the most puzzling starts in the country. In Week 1, the Aggies fell to FCS-level Idaho State as 15.5 point home favorites, seemingly derailing their entire season. Just one week later though, they traveled to Seattle and pushed No. 19 Washington to the absolute brink in a heartbreaking 19-17 loss.

Oregon State's 0-2 start also hides some real promise. The Beavers opened against No. 23 Houston and No. 13 Texas Tech, covering the spread in both contests and keeping the game within a single possession late into the fourth quarter. With the hardest stretch of their schedule already behind them, Oregon State has plenty of reason to believe their season will take a turn for the better once league play begins.

Washington State similarly opened with two power conference opponents. The Cougars fought hard in a 24-10 loss to in-state rival Washington, but week 2 was far less encouraging after a decisive 34-7 loss at Kansas State.

Out of the entire conference, Texas State has struggled the most so far. After a 59-7 thrashing at the hands of No. 5 Texas, the Bobcats fell to UTSA at home as a 2.5 point favorite. They will need to adjust quickly, or their three-year streak of bowl eligibility may be in jeopardy.

San Diego State cruised to a 53-20 victory over FCS opponent Portland State before taking on a more daunting opponent in UCLA. The Aztecs held strong defensively early on, going into the half scoreless against the Bruins. However, they couldn't contain star running back Wayne Knight, who found the end zone three times in a 28-10 UCLA win. Bringing back significant production from a successful Mountain West campaign last season, the Aztecs could be a dark horse contender in conference play.

Fresno State's 1-1 start leaves them as the biggest potential wild card in the Pac-12. Getting shut out by No.14 USC was mostly expected given the talent gap, but that didn't faze the Bulldogs when they rebounded in a 49-3 masterclass against Sacramento State. After facing teams at opposite ends of the College Football spectrum, it's currently unclear where Fresno State stands.

Colorado State stands as the lone undefeated team remaining in the conference, though their resume is still unproven. Convincing wins over Wyoming and Southern Utah brought the Rams to 2-0 in its first season under head coach Jim Mora, but its first true test will come this week when they host No. 11 BYU. Their performance on national TV will determine whether the Rams are true contenders or beneficiaries of a soft early schedule.

Meanwhile, Boise State has solidified itself as the team to beat in the new Pac-12, to little surprise for many. They took No. 2 Oregon to the brink in Eugene, leading at halftime before ultimately falling 34-27. They went on to host another potential Group of Six contender in Memphis, in which the Broncos completely took over the second half to win 38-20. Sitting just outside the top 25, Boise State remains the clear favorite to capture a playoff bid if they continue to play at their current standard.

Early-season stumbles prove that the rebuilt Pac-12 can no longer rely on the prestige it once held. They must earn that recognition back on the field if they no longer want to be seen as just a new mid-major conference.

Putting together close games against ranked opponents is a promising first step, given many mid-major contenders report difficulty even scheduling top-tier opponents. However, even if Boise State continues to soar, the rest of the conference must pull its weight to become a perennial playoff participant.

With so much on the line going forward, we can expect the new Pac-12 to be full of chaos and intriguing narratives as they look to regain national relevance.

The San Diego State Aztecs lose 28-10 to the UCLA Bruins on September 12, 2026.
PHOTO BY "SAN DIEGO STATE FOOTBALL" ON FACEBOOK.

