

Miami takes top spot in BCS poll by slim margin

(AP) Miami finally moved atop the Bowl Championship Series standings — by the slimmest of margins.

The defending national champion Hurricanes squeaked past Ohio State, which needed overtime to beat Illinois 23-16 Saturday, in the latest standings released Monday. They edged the Buckeyes by 0.01 points, and the top two BCS teams have never been closer.

Miami, No. 1 in the AP media and coaches' polls, has 3.69 points to top the standings for the first time this season, while Ohio State has 3.70 points. Washington State is third with 9.11 points.

The tight margin will be meaningless if Ohio State (12-0) and Miami (9-0) — the only unbeaten teams remaining — win the rest of their games. The top two teams in the final BCS standings released Dec. 8 will play in the national title game at the Fiesta Bowl in Tempe, Ariz., on Jan. 3.

"The BCS really hasn't entered my mind," Miami coach Larry Coker said. "I don't think it's entered the minds of our players much. It's one of those things that's totally out of our control."

The Buckeyes' close win over Illinois was partly to blame for their drop. Ohio State lost the No. 1 spot in *The New York Times* computer poll to Miami this week, increasing its computer-rank average to 1.50 while the Hurricanes' was lowered to 1.33. That ranking is an average of seven different computer polls.

Miami, which did not play Saturday, also picked up points when its strength of schedule went from 1.60 to 1.36 this week. Ohio State, which has a composite total of 4.50, is so close to Miami because of a 0.8-point quality-win deduction for a victory over BCS No. 3 Washington State earlier this season.

Ohio State plays its regular-season finale against No. 12 Michigan (9-2) at home Saturday. Miami, which has won 31 straight games, hosts No. 17 Pittsburgh (8-2) on Thursday, then plays at Syracuse (4-7) and home against No. 13 Virginia Tech (8-2) on Dec. 7 to close out the season.

The Buckeyes are not concerned with the latest BCS standings.

"I don't care. It doesn't matter," said Ohio State free safety Donnie Nicky. "If we're 1 or 2, we're in the game. Let's do it."

Who's going to the Fiesta?

The Bowl Championship Series standings Weekly standings which will determine the teams that will play in the BCS National Championship Game at the Fiesta Bowl. (Games through Nov. 16)

Rank	Team	Poll avg.	Computer rank	Schedule rank	Losses	Quality win	Total
1	Miami (Fla.)	1.00	1.33	1.36	0	0.0	3.69
2	Ohio State	2.00	1.50	1.00	0	-0.8	3.70
3	Washington St.	3.00	4.33	1.08	1	-0.3	9.11
4	Oklahoma	4.50	4.67	0.88	1	-0.3	10.75
5	Georgia	6.00	5.00	0.36	1	-0.2	12.16
6	Notre Dame	8.00	4.17	0.16	1	-0.2	13.13
7	Iowa	4.50	6.92	1.44	1	-0.2	13.66
8	Southern Cal.	7.00	6.50	0.04	2	0.0	15.54
9	Michigan	10.50	9.92	0.40	2	0.0	22.82
10	Texas	11.00	11.50	0.96	2	0.0	25.46
11	Kansas St.	10.00	15.17	2.20	2	-0.3	29.07
12	Florida St.	14.00	12.17	0.08	3	0.0	29.25
13	Colorado	16.50	12.83	0.32	3	0.0	32.65
14	Florida	16.00	14.67	0.20	3	-0.6	33.27
15	Penn St.	15.50	17.50	0.48	3	0.0	36.48

SOURCE: The National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame Inc. AP

The BCS formula uses the AP media and coaches' polls, computer polls, strength of schedule, won-loss record and a bonus-point system.

Miami has 3.69 points — 1 for poll average, 1.33 for computer-rank average, 1.36 for strength of schedule, zero for losses and no bonus-point deduction.

Ohio State has 3.70 points — 2 for poll average, 1.50 for computer-rank average, 1.00 for strength of schedule and a 0.8 bonus-point deduction.

Washington State would be the biggest beneficiary if Ohio State or Miami slips up. Also hoping for help are No. 4 Oklahoma (10.75) and No. 5 Georgia (12.16). Notre Dame moved up one spot to No. 6, putting it in position for a BCS bowl game.

The Fighting Irish (9-1) are guaranteed a spot if they finish in the top six of the final BCS standings. The Fighting Irish are not in a conference and play Rutgers on Saturday before ending the season at BCS No. 8 Southern California (8-2).

Oklahoma and Georgia received a 0.2 bonus-point deduction for beating Alabama even though the Crimson Tide are not listed in the standings. Preliminary BCS standings have the Crimson Tide at No. 9, but because of NCAA probation they cannot be included.

Without Alabama, Michigan is No. 9 and Texas is No. 10. The Longhorns dropped five spots after losing to Texas Tech 42-38 Saturday. Oklahoma also received a 0.1 deduction for beating Texas.

Emmitt Smith's future with Dallas Cowboys in question

IRVING, Texas (AP) — Emmitt Smith knew his role with the Dallas Cowboys would change after he became the NFL



SMITH

leader rushing career. He just didn't expect it to get cut so much, so fast.

Two games after breaking Walter Payton's record, Smith had just eight carries for 22 yards in a 20-3 loss Sunday at Indianapolis. It was his lowest total since a blowout loss in the 2000 opener, when he ran only seven times.

The reason Smith didn't get the ball much was because the Cowboys wanted to get a look at backup Troy Hambrick.

Hambrick carried the ball seven times for 42 yards rushing. Smith said Monday that coach Dave Campo never told him the change was going to be this drastic.

"They didn't make that clear at all. I'm very disappointed by that," Smith said Monday. "They have one expectation and I have a different one, and obviously their expectation is much greater than mine."

"I do deserve to be communicated to in a proper manner. I think I earned that much where they can just communicate to me

to what degree that they want to go."

Smith is expected to remain the starter the final six games, but the Cowboys (3-7) have to determine if Hambrick could be their featured back when Smith is gone. The first major step toward that was taken Sunday.

"It probably wasn't specifically said, 'You are going to get this many carries, he's going to get this many carries.' It's a course-of-the-game type of thing," Campo said. "I can see where Emmitt might have gotten the feel that he was not told exactly how things were going to go."

The Smith-to-Hambrick transition is a sensitive situation for the Cowboys, who built their entire marketing plan around Smith's pursuit of the record. Smith passed Payton with 109 yards on 24 carries in Dallas' last home game, Oct. 27, in a 17-14 loss to Seattle.

With Smith unlikely to return under his current contract — he's due a base salary of at least \$7 million next year, when he will be 34 and in his 14th NFL season — the Cowboys have to evaluate Hambrick.

Smith and Cowboys owner Jerry Jones refuse to talk about what is going to happen after the season.

Hambrick, who has never been shy about his desire to play

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