



COURTESY PHOTO

Stanford's second-year head coach Tyrone Willingham earned 1995 Pac-10 Coach of the Year honors and is looking to improve on his team's 7-4-1 record from a year ago.

Preview: Willingham leads Cardinal to success

Continued from Page 1B

about than just which quarterback to put on the field. Stanford's defense, anchored by a strong defensive line, is a major concern for Bellotti and the Ducks.

"They have good athleticism across the board, they play very well as a team," Bellotti said. "They have picked up the load this year for a young offense, have kept them in every game they have played this year, and they are a tough physical football team. This is by far the best defense that we've played to this point."

Stanford head coach Tyrone Willingham credits his defense as being a major asset for Stanford (0-1 Pac-10, 1-3 overall) as well. "I think we've been very fortunate to have some young men on campus that also agree with us that the defense is a key ingredient to having a successful football team," Willingham said. "With the likes of Kailee Wong, Carl Hansen, Chris Draft and Jon Haskins, we've had some pretty good up-front play this year."

Stanford's numbers on defense haven't been particularly impressive, but the Cardinal has been impressive when it counts. Stanford ranks first in the Pac-10 in scoring defense, allowing only 15 points a game, and is fourth in the Pac-10 in passing efficiency defense. Going into Saturday's game, Willingham is well aware of what Graziani and Perry-Smith can do.

"We are going to play the best

passing offense that we will see all year," Willingham said. "They're very talented."

If the Ducks are going to get anywhere against Stanford they might have to do it in the air. Kevin Parker was the only tailback who practiced on Tuesday. Parker began the season as a flanker and has been moved into the backfield after the Ducks' injury woes.

Derien Latimer did not practice on Tuesday and is labeled as "between questionable and doubtful" by Bellotti for this week's game. Latimer went out in the UCLA game with an eye injury. Tailback Saladin McCullough is listed as very doubtful for this week as he is still hampered by a knee injury, and Jerry Brown will be out for three-to-five more weeks with a broken hand. This may put more pressure on Graziani, who is known for his ability to scramble, to gain more yards on the ground.

Oregon's defense will be less than full strength this week once again due to injuries. Defensive linemen Mark Schmidt and Bryant Jackson are listed as doubtful, as is linebacker Derrick Barnes, who has been plagued by an ankle injury all season. Safety Brandon McLemore will sit out the Stanford game and Michael Fletcher will be out for four to five more weeks.

Stanford and Oregon are in nearly the same situation going into this week's matchup. Both teams need to win, and both coaches see it that way.

"This is no more of a must [win] game than last week's was or the Arizona State game or the Washington State game," Bellotti said. "Every league game is a must win. Certainly at this point, probably, the magnitude grows each week if you don't win."

"There's no question that we think that this is a pivotal game in our season," Willingham said. "We still have aspirations to be a force in the conference and you can't be a force with two conference losses."

Willingham is in his second season as a head coach at Stanford. He led the Cardinal to a 7-4-1 record last season and a berth in the Liberty Bowl. That gained Willingham a lot of attention nationally, being voted Pac-10 Coach of the Year and National Coach of the Year by the Black Coaches Association. Willingham doesn't take much of the credit for such lofty awards though.

"It reflects the job that assistant coaches did and the job that the players did," Willingham said. "From a personal standpoint I really don't look at [awards]. They're nice in terms of acknowledging what the staff did and what the players did."

The modest Willingham has one thing up on the Ducks: He's undefeated against them. In his rookie season last year, Stanford beat Oregon in Eugene 28-21.

The Ducks will be looking to avenge last year's loss when they battle Stanford on Saturday. Kick-off is 2 p.m.

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