

Stanford

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quarterback. Fasani is ranked nationally in total points (sixth), pass efficiency (eighth) and total offense (25th).

Still, Fasani is not the only offensive weapon on the Stanford team. Senior running back Brian Allen ranks third in the conference in rushing yards per game, trailing only UCLA's DeShaun Foster and Washington State's Dave Minnich.

"Each year (Allen) continues to grow," Stanford head coach Tyrone Willingham said. "He looks more fast and explosive this year than any other."

Allen's 95.5-yards-per-game average is a significant improvement from last year, when he rushed for 41.9 yards per game. The Cardinal have a second rushing threat in junior Kerry Carter, who ranks 10th in the Pacific-10 Conference with a 61.2 yards per game average. Oregon is the only other Pac-10 team to have two running backs — Maurice Morris and Onterio Smith in the Ducks' case — ranked among the conference's top 10 rushers.

Willingham said the double-headed running attack causes problems for opposing defenses, especially because Allen and Carter have different running styles.

"I think it always does (provide an advantage), because now you have to adjust," Willingham said. "When you start making your opponent have to adjust, hopefully now you have the advantage."

Oregon head coach Mike Bellotti said his Ducks have noted the improvement in the Cardinal's running game, which ranks second in the Pac-10 overall.

"They are running the ball very well," Bellotti said. "200 yards per game is extremely impressive."

Stanford has turned its offensive weapons directly into points this season. The Cardinal carry a 3-1 record into their matchup with the Ducks, but Stanford has seen a lot of points posted on its scoreboard along the way. The Cardinal are outscoring their opponents 149-111 this season.

In its last game, Stanford found itself in a wild-west shootout with Washington State at Stanford Stadium. The Cardinal lost

the contest, but not after putting up a fight and even leading by four points heading into the fourth quarter. The Cardinal gave up 10 points in that fourth frame, and lost 45-39.

While Stanford's defense has given up a truckload of points this season, Bellotti said the Ducks don't expect to crush the Cardinal.

"Their defense is significantly improved," Bellotti said. "Their defensive line is big and strong and they can move you."

Stanford's defensive line has held strong this season, and its linebackers have helped lead the Cardinal to a fearsome rush defense. Stanford has given up only two rushing touchdowns this season, and the Cardinal rank second in the conference in rush defense.

"They are running the ball very well. 200 yards per game is extremely impressive."

Mike Bellotti
Oregon head coach

Part of Stanford's strong rushing defense is linebacker Coy Wire, who is having a career year as the leader of the Cardinal defense. Wire ranks fifth in the Pac-10 in tackles, with 8.5 per game, and has two sacks on the season.

The Cardinal have one more trick up their sleeve in the form of junior wide receiver Luke Powell. The 5-foot-8 flanker has skills outside of his 290 yards receiving this season: Powell is third in the nation in punt returning, with a 22-yard-per-return average. The junior has returns of 51, 49 and 46 yards this season.

When Stanford and Oregon meet Saturday in Eugene, they will each face unfamiliar teams. Stanford played every team in the Pac-10 last year except Oregon, and had the same situation in 1999.

"It becomes a little less familiar because you don't have the year-to-year," Willingham said. "We've seen them play last year, but you just don't go as intensely in terms of your preparation."

Stanford and Oregon will square off at 12:30 p.m. on Saturday at Autzen Stadium.



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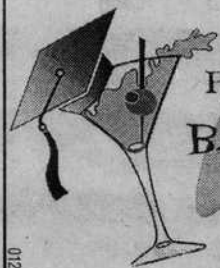
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