

Tedford, Bellotti still have respect

Cal head coach Jeff Tedford returns to Autzen for the first time after leaving the Ducks in 2001 to lead the Bears

By Jesse Thomas
Sports Reporter

It is time for Cal head coach Jeff Tedford to have his homecoming. It is time to re-cross that bridge he left two years ago. And it is time to walk out of the tunnel at Autzen Stadium wearing the blue and gold of California, not the green and yellow of Oregon.

Tedford is making his first return to Autzen Stadium since leaving after the 2001 season to take the head coaching position for the Golden Bears. Tedford was the offensive coordinator at Oregon from 1998-2001.

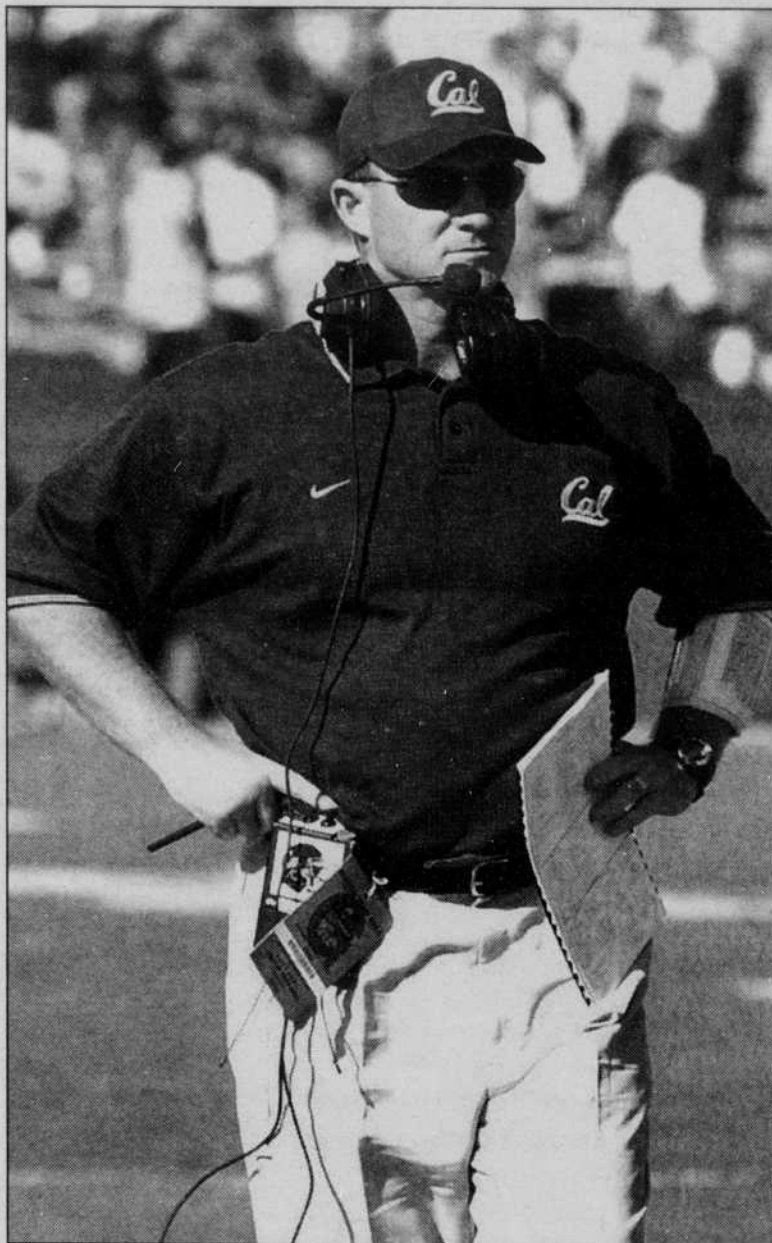
After being named the 2002 Pacific-10 Conference Coach of the Year, Tedford returns on Saturday to go head-to-head with an old colleague and an old friend.

"I'm sure there's going to be some feelings there," Tedford said. "I walked down that tunnel quite a few times and had a lot of success there. There were a lot of great days. But I'm with a new team now. I'm sure there will be some memories and things that come back to you after walking down that tunnel so many days for games and practices."

In his first year at Cal in 2002, Tedford led the Bears to a 7-5 overall record and the team's first winning season in nine years. He became nationally recognized, and Cal was considered the biggest one-year turn around in the nation that season.

Tedford inherited a team that finished 1-10 the previous season and led them to wins over the likes of Michigan State, Washington, Arizona State, UCLA and Stanford. Only Pappy Waldorf's 1947 team produced a larger one-year turnaround in school history, going 9-1 after a 2-7 previous season.

Tedford did not face the Ducks last year. It was the rare year off. And although their teams will duel on Satur-



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Jeff Tedford has gone 12-10 in two seasons with the Golden Bears.

day, Tedford and Bellotti are still friends and have great appreciation of one another.

But game time means game time. "I wish him well in every game but ours," Bellotti said.

"When you get between the lines, it's about competition, and once that's over, we'll be friends again," Tedford said.

Bellotti said he hasn't really thought about the coaching rivalry that much, though, and Tedford feels it is just another football game, saying "I have no ill feelings whatsoever. I have nothing to prove as far as that's concerned."

The two coaches spoke on a regular basis last year, but as Bellotti said, "the first year the umbilical cord is very

tight, and after that it severed pretty quickly."

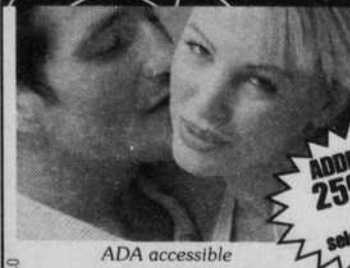
Tedford expects that when game time comes, the two will have "kind words" for one another, whether it be pre-game or post-game.

If anything, the game will come down to respect. And despite his overbearing success at times, Tedford still considers Bellotti the dean of Pac-10 coaches.

"Yeah, definitely, there is no doubt about it," he said. "That seems odd to say, because Mike is a young guy. But as long as he has been around the Pac-10 and as successful as he has been year in and year out, I think without a doubt."

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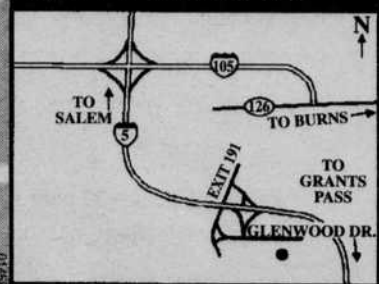
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