

## ■ Stanford notes

# Stanford defense continues to perform under pressure

*To complement its deep defensive line, the Cardinal offense has stepped up production this season*

BY STEPHEN MILLER  
SPORTS REPORTER

Stanford's veteran defense has given the Cardinal a much needed boost this season.

The Cardinal (4-2 overall, 2-1 Pacific-10 Conference) has alternated its most recent win, a 23-17 final at Washington State last Saturday, and a victory against Washington with losses against USC and Notre Dame.

"It was nice to win (against Washington State)," Stanford head coach Buddy Teevens said, "but we need to play much better."

Stanford watched its lead of 20-3 dissipate in the fourth quarter as the Cougars tacked on two touchdowns to narrow the game to three points.

Cardinal kicker Michael Sgroi hit his third field goal of the night to inflate Stanford's cushion and solidify its first Pac-10 road win since 2001.

Despite Washington State overshadowing Stanford in passing (257 yards to 244) and rushing (180-139), the Cardinal snagged the ballgame defensively with three interceptions, two quarterback sacks and one fumble recovery.

Nine starters returned to Stanford's defense for the 2004 season, and 10 of the 11 starting positions are held by upperclassmen. Junior Kevin Schimmelmann is one of three returning linebackers and has the team-high mark of 43 tackles. Seniors Jared Newberry and David Bergeron make up the core of Stanford's linebackers, and junior

Jon Alston reinforces the squad, leading the team with four sacks.

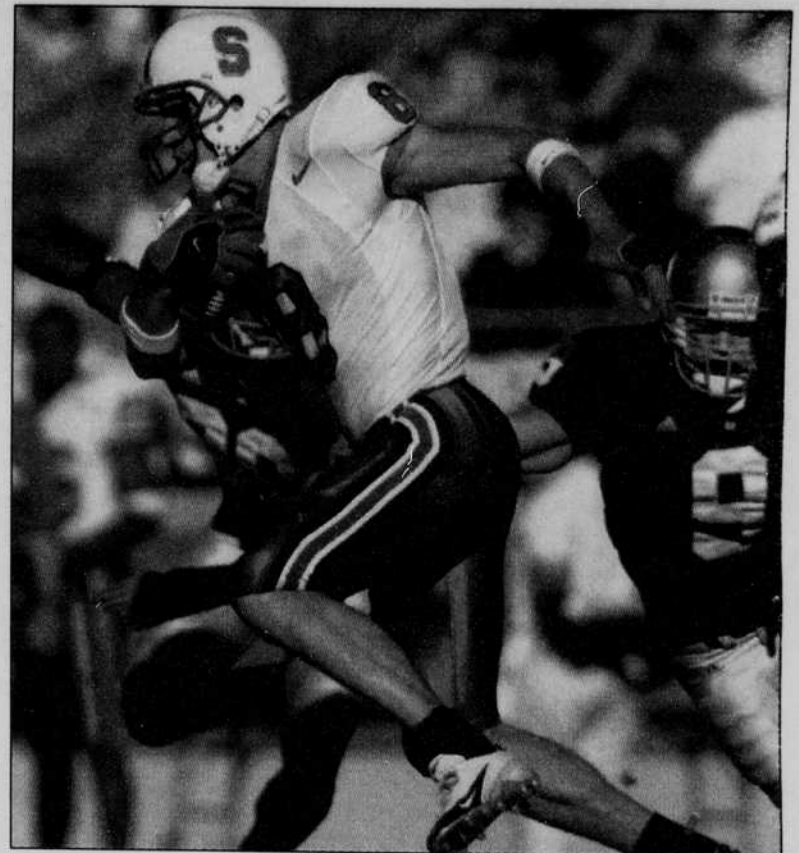
Stanford has adopted a 3-4 defensive alignment to augment its strengths on the field; mainly its aggressive group of linebackers.

"We made the switch to put more athleticism on the field, and it's worked so far," Teevens said. "One of the premises behind it is to keep people guessing."

Free safety Oshiomogho Atogwe is one of six seniors who have come back for a fifth year to the Cardinal program. He has led the Cardinal in tackles during the last two seasons. This year, Atogwe has recorded two interceptions, two forced fumbles and is second on the team with 39 tackles. In the last 28 games, he has snagged seven interceptions, recovered seven fumbles and forced 11.

Leigh Torrance accounted for two of

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Cardinal wide receiver Evan Moore creates height mismatches with his 6-foot-7 frame. The sophomore from Brea, Calif., also plays on the Stanford basketball team.

## ■ In my opinion

## Ducks mid-season report card stuck at satisfactory

The Ducks are halfway through their season, and it is time for their midterm grades.

While Oregon's GPA (gridiron performance assessment) has been on the rise, it hasn't reached a level that satisfies professor Mike Bellotti. Here are the Ducks' mid-season grades given by Dean Jones.

### Offense: C+

Comments: shows signs of improvement

I know some of you are thinking, "These guys just put up over 1,100 yards of offense in the last two games; how can you give them a C+?"

I'll tell you how. Remember a time not too long ago when the Ducks treated the end zone like the Pacific Ocean (at the Oregon Coast): They'd get close enough to look at it, but never get in.

But did they ever turn it around. They had a tough early quiz with Oklahoma, but the syllabus doesn't foresee a tougher opponent.

Kellen Clemens has aced his last two exams against Washington State and Arizona. In fact, he earned some

extra credit by accounting for all six touchdowns against the Cougars.

Terrence Whitehead has established himself as one of the top running backs in the conference. He is third in the Pacific-10 Conference in rushing and has looked like a pinball bouncing off defenders this year.

The downfall for the offense has been its protection of Clemens. Seen as an upside coming into the season, the Ducks' senior-laden offensive line has given up the most sacks in the Pac-10 this year with 20. This must improve for Oregon to keep its signal-caller safe and prevent a major injury.

### Defense: B

Comment: going above and beyond in class

We all knew coming into the season that Oregon's defensive line was going to be tough if the players stayed healthy. It's not a deep squad, but the likes of Haloti Ngata, Devan Long, Robby Valenzuela and Chris Solomon have been a force.

Long is making his way to the top of the class at Oregon with five sacks



CLAYTON JONES  
SEVENTH INNING STRETCH

in six games this season. He is now seventh all-time at Oregon with 17 sacks. Ngata showed against Arizona why he is such a dominant force and corralled a team-high eight tackles, including three for a loss.

The linebackers have performed well, maybe even above expectation. Seniors Jerry Matson and Ramone Reed, along with junior Anthony Trucks and freshman A.J. Tuitle have helped a formidable defense that ranks third in the Pac-10 in rush defense.

There have been times when it appears that the linebackers have missed assignments that led to touchdowns (i.e. the Arizona State game).

The surprise of the season may be the way the secondary has played.

The Ducks rank first in the conference and 23rd in the nation in pass defense. Aaron Gipson appears to be reaching his potential, and true freshman Jackie Bates has stepped in and done a great job.

Sophomore J.D. Nelson seems to be taking over right where Keith Lewis left off, and though Marley Tucker is lost for most of the season with a dislocated elbow, junior Justin Phinisee has made the transition from corner to rover quite smoothly.

### Special teams: D

Comment: needs extra attention outside class

A staple for Oregon football since Bellotti took over has been its exceptional special teams play, but this season has been different.

The kicking game is down, kickoff and punt coverage has been less-than-stellar and the return game — minus Phinisee last week — hasn't performed up to standard.

Has anybody seen Jared Siegel? Granted he has only had the opportunity to kick six field goals this season, but he made only three and has misses from 25 and 35 yards away.

The punting situation hasn't been much better. Transfer David Dittman took over for Paul Martinez and is ranked last in the Pac-10 in punting, averaging 38.3 yards per kick.

### Overall GPA: 2.1

Comment: satisfactory

While many wouldn't call Oregon's season satisfactory, the Ducks are only halfway through the season. Basically, they crammed for the Pac-10 season after a non-conference schedule the team seemed to sleep through.

If they can avoid stupid penalties, have their defense continue to play well and if the offense puts consistent points on the board, their GPA could improve.

Class dismissed.

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