

Cal hosts 107th Big Game against bay rival Stanford

One of the oldest football rivalries in the NCAA will showcase the fourth-ranked team in the nation

BY ALEX TAM
DAILY EMERALD FREELANCE REPORTER

California head coach Jeff Tedford knows all about the aura surrounding rivalry games.

Tedford was the offensive coordinator at Oregon for four seasons, where he took part in the storied Civil War rivalry between Oregon and Oregon State.

Now, in his third season as California's head coach, Tedford's fourth-ranked Golden Bears (8-1 overall, 6-1 Pacific-10 Conference) host Stanford (4-6, 2-5) in Berkeley, Calif., at 12:30 p.m. Saturday. The historic matchup, which is deemed the Big Game, will mark the 107th meeting between the two teams and will continue the NCAA's ninth-longest football rivalry.

Tedford said this weekend's game has "a similar flavor" to the Civil War games, but lacks the same true hatred between the Ducks and the Beavers.

"The Civil War is kind of a massive game and they get after each other a little bit — I don't see that as much here," Tedford said. "I think both teams have tremendous respect for each other."

However, he added that it does not deter from the excitement that the 74,000 people expected to attend have in anticipation of the game.

"This is special, this has a different flavor and a healthy environment that a lot of people get very, very excited about," Tedford said. "It is just a tremendous game."

With a victory, Tedford would become the first head coach at Cal to win three straight Big Games in over 55 years.

Even though the Cardinal leads the series history with a 54-41-11 record, the Golden Bears have won the last two meetings. Last season, Cal was victorious 28-16 and in 2002, Cal won decisively 30-7.

In last season's game, Cal wide receiver Geoff McArthur had an explosive game with 16 receptions for 245 yards. Tedford said that McArthur, now a senior, has been one of the reasons for their success this season.

"There is no question we needed that performance at that time," Tedford said. "Geoff is that type of player who can make things happen. He is pretty reliable as he always has been."

Quarterback Aaron Rodgers and tailback J.J. Arrington provide the Golden Bears with terrific players at each of the skill positions.

After last week's two-touchdown performance, Rodgers became just the second Cal quarterback to throw at least 19 touchdowns in consecutive seasons.

Meanwhile, Arrington needs just 46 more rushing yards to break the school record for rushing yards in a single season at 1,460 yards set by Chuck Muncie in 1975. Arrington, a senior, has run for 1,415 yards so far in nine games.

"Offensively, they're immaculate," Stanford head coach Buddy Teevens said. "Their running game has been formidable this year and their passing game as well."

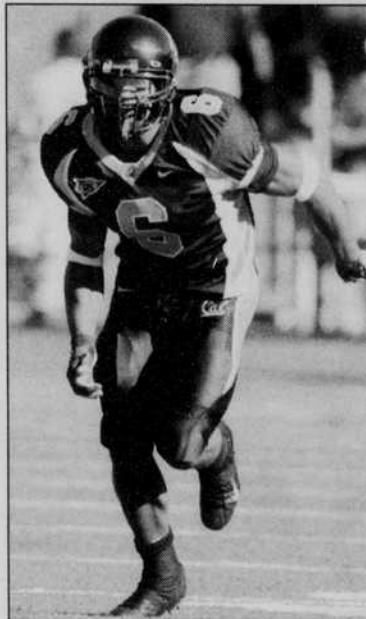
The Golden Bears have one of the most potent offenses in the nation. It ranks first in the Pac-10 and fifth in the nation in total offense, compiling 491 yards per game and scoring more than 38 points per game.

Tedford compared his offense to the 2001 Oregon offense that was led by ex-Duck and NFL quarterback Joey Harrington. He also credited the strong running game the Ducks had behind current NFL running backs Maurice Morris and Onterio Smith.

"That year that we went to the Fiesta Bowl at Oregon I think is very similar (to this year)," Tedford said. "(Morris and Smith) both rushed for 1,000 yards apiece and there was tremendous balance that year in the offense."

On the other side of the ball, Stanford is heading in the opposite direction. After beginning the season with a 4-2 record, the Cardinal has faltered down the stretch losing four straight games to both Oregon teams, UCLA and Arizona State.

Teevens, however, said he is optimistic about the future of Stanford football.



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Cal's Geoff McArthur had 16 receptions for 245 yards last season against the Cardinal.

"We're very excited about the development of our program," he said. "We may not have the wins we would have liked this season but our kids were competitive the whole year."

Unlike its opponent this weekend, Stanford is ranked near the bottom of the Pac-10's offensive categories. The Cardinal is seventh in scoring offense, averaging around 23 points per game.

The game could ultimately come down to whether Stanford's defense can slow down Cal's offense. Stanford ranks third in the Pac-10 in scoring defense, surrendering just 19 points per game.

"Our guys showed passion with the way they played as a group," Teevens said. "They're committed to each other and were very, very solid over the course of the season."

He added that this season's edition of the Big Game should be as competitive as any other and his team should be up to task in the season's final game.

"I expect it to be a tremendous ball game," Teevens said. "To get a chance to play a team like Cal is an honor and certainly a challenge. We're looking forward to the opportunity."

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