



# MEDIA CLIPPINGS

## ALEXANDER

### ALEXANDER DOESN'T NEED STATS TO ATTRACT ATTENTION

*Jay Heater, Times Staff Writer*  
*Saturday, November 13, 2004*  
*© 2004 Contra Costa Times*

Don't try to tell Cal senior defensive tackle Lorenzo Alexander that he is doing a thankless job.

Whenever he wants thanks, he looks in his team's win column.

That number is seven and rising as the Bears (7-1 overall, 5-1 Pac-10) go into today's game against Washington (1-8, 0-6) in Seattle. If things go well for Cal, fans probably won't notice Alexander.

"My job is to play within our schemes and play against the double team," said Alexander, who has 18 tackles, including three for loss but no sacks. "When I get those double teams, it shows that the other teams respect me. It shows that I have made some plays."

Alexander has made a lot of plays, but it shows up on the statistic sheet under somebody else's name. He clears a path to the ball carrier for Cal's linebackers and defensive backs. It's his role in defensive coordinator Bob Gregory's system.

"He makes it easy on the rest of us," said Cal safety Ryan Gutierrez, who leads the team with 54 tackles. "He does so much that people don't see. He allows you to do things you otherwise couldn't do by taking on those double teams."

"And the thing is, he doesn't need a pat on the back. In fact, if you try to give him one, he looks at you as if he doesn't want it."

Alexander admits that he tells his teammates not to make a fuss over him. "I'm doing my job," he said. "I don't need any extra thanks or ... well, I wouldn't call it sympathy ... anything extra. I am just doing what the coaches ask."

Since he hasn't piled up sack totals, Alexander might not get noticed when the postseason awards are announced, but Cal coach Jeff Tedford said opposing coaches and NFL scouts will notice Alexander's play.

"Lorenzo has been so solid for us," Tedford said. "His leadership has been critical."

"And the attention he demands inside with double teams has been critical for us. He has been a force. He keeps the offensive linemen off the linebackers."

Tedford's players also appreciate "Zo."

"Lorenzo is the biggest challenge we face, and we get him in practice every day," said Cal center Marvin Philip. "I think he is a main reason our offensive line is having so much success. He has raised the bar, raised the standard."

"I love Lorenzo," said Cal cornerback Harrison Smith. "He is such a leader. Everything he does is geared toward pushing us farther. He might not get many looks from the media, but we know. We will see him rush the passer, then chase a receiver and make a tackle downfield. He is relentless."

Alexander said it's easy to be relentless when the fortunes have changed so dramatically since he arrived from St. Mary's High School in 2001, when Cal was 1-10. "Everything has been great," Alexander said. "We have so many second-year guys here (junior college transfers Ryan Riddle, Ray Tago, Joe Maningo, Matt Giordano) who have meshed. It's so much fun to be out there with them."

Besides having talent, the Bears also have the right attitude, Alexander said. "I pride myself on working hard and staying humble because there always is somebody out there who is better than you. And I think everyone on our team is like that ... they stay humble."

Along with the team success, Alexander is hoping to be selected in the 2005 NFL draft. Does he think he has done enough this season?

"I've got to step it up and make a couple more big plays," he said. "My (hyper-extended) elbow has hindered me, but I'm starting to get it back."

But even if he does make a few more big plays against the Huskies, fans might not notice. "If I can put pressure on the quarterback, make him move around, make a running back change direction, a whole lot of things like that, then I am making plays."

## HE'S STILL MAKING CUTS

### Cal's J.J. Arrington Survived a Chain-saw Mishap as a Kid, and Now Chops Up Defenses

Joe Davidson, Bee Staff Writer  
Friday, November 5, 2004  
© 2004 The Sacramento Bee

J.J. Arrington still has the boots. They are stashed away in his parent's home in the back woods of Nashville, N.C.

On the right toe area, there's proof of his work, a gaping hole from seven years ago when Arrington nearly cut his big toe off with a chain saw.

The idea of a tailback without the services of that particular digit leads one to wonder.

"I don't know how it would affect my balance," Cal's star running back cracked. "It'd be weird. I need that toe."

Fortunately for Arrington, only the boot was damaged. Arrington is in one solid piece, running rough shod over defenses aimed at containing him.

He has mowed through most of them this season to rank as the nation's fourth-leading rusher, the ideal partner for heralded passer Aaron Rodgers and the fourth-ranked Golden Bears.

All told, Arrington has amassed 1,106 yards with four regular-season games remaining, giving him a real shot at Chuck Muncie's single-season school record of 1,460 yards, set in 1975. The senior also could be the first Cal player to lead the Pacific-10 Conference in rushing since quarterback Joe Kapp in 1958.

With a Pac-10 Player of the Week honor to his credit after his 188-yard effort against then-No. 20 Arizona State last weekend, Arrington prepares for Oregon.

And there's irony in facing Oregon because Arrington nearly became a Duck before a recruiting violation changed his course.

Arrington's relentless nature, the way he pounds forward and churns his 5-foot-10, 210-pound body into the fray, can be traced to his upbringing. He has always been something of a grinder, always doing something with his feet and hands.

Pulling gravel from his thighs and forearms from tumbles on way-ward go-karts or whisking away flying sawdust in the woods, Arrington never shied away from a challenge or physical labor.

Arrington was a woodsman growing up in his small town of 4,300 people located about an hour away from Raleigh.

The work ethic came from his father, John, who after long shifts making tires at a local plant would cut trees for several hours, with son J.J. (the initials stand for Jay Jerome) in tow. The Arringtons cut wood for their use and to sell; felling, cutting and stacking cords for local families.

After cutting wood, Arrington would go to school the next morning, his legs and back aching. He still has his chain saw and ax waiting at home in North Carolina.

"I'll always do a little bit of that, and I enjoy doing that kind of work," Arrington said. "It's real work, makes you appreciate things. And it was another chance to spend quality time with pops."

That Arrington came home one day with the tip of his boot gone didn't surprise his mother. Queen Arrington had seen the second of her two sons seemingly encased in scabs and scars over the years because of his many outdoor activities, such as youth football and go-kart crashes.

She recalled noticing something unusual about her son when J.J. was a baby.

"His skin wasn't that soft," she said in a phone interview from her North Carolina home. "It was hard and strong and tough. He'd come home as a little boy all scraped up and I'd ask him, 'What in the world happened to you?' He fell off the go-kart again, and he'd always say, 'Momma, I'm OK. It didn't hurt.'"

About the only real hurt for Arrington in recent years has been internal.

Despite rushing for 1,806 yards and 23 touchdowns as a senior for Northern Nash High School in Rocky Mount, N.C., he didn't draw college attention because of his spotty grades.

But with the help of one of his high school coaches, Arrington wound up in Southern California, playing at College of the Canyons, a community college in Santa Clarita.

Leaving his family wasn't easy. Arrington felt a sense of obligation to mentor his young cousins and the little boys who admired him and flocked to him after games - and to help his father in the woods.

He also knew, however, that he didn't want to wield an ax the rest of his life.

"I didn't pass the SAT, so I had to go to a JC," Arrington said. "California was a long way from home, but I was kind of used to being out of the house a lot anyway as a kid, working and playing sports."

Said his mother: "He was really focused on making it. He wanted to prove and show that he could become a good student and that he could play college football."

Arrington handled both chores just fine, setting College of the Canyons football records, including the career and single-season rushing touchdowns marks.

The experience, though, was marred by a recruiting violation.

Following his sophomore season at COC, Arrington was the target of a spirited recruiting battle between Oregon and Cal.

Oregon assistant coach Gary Campbell pressured Arrington into signing a letter-of-intent with the Ducks.

The coach had Arrington back-date the document so it would appear the letter met the deadline for community college transfers. Campbell also instructed Arrington to forge his father's name on the document.

The document was signed in Arrington's hometown, in a hotel room filled with tension and emotion. Arrington said his mother didn't feel good about what had happened, or the process, or how unsettled her son was.

Perhaps, Arrington and his mother agreed, Cal was the better option. But when Arrington called Campbell to say he had changed his mind about Oregon, the coach told him it was too late. The letter was a binding commitment.

The NCAA then stepped in. The NCAA Division I Committee on Infractions found Campbell had violated NCAA rules. In June 2003, Oregon was placed on probation for two years, although it did not lose any scholarships. Campbell was docked one week's pay.

Campbell, in his 22nd season with the Ducks, also apologized for his conduct.

With his letter-of-intent invalidated, Arrington was allowed to sign with Cal.

Arrington said he wants the issue put behind him. He said he harbors no ill will toward Oregon or Campbell.

"It was very intense going through all of that," Arrington said. "I learned a lot about college football, about how much pressure there is in it."

"I made the right choice. I'm glad I'm here. I felt bad for coach Campbell because he's a good guy."

Arrington has kept on top of his grades at Cal, although he said it hasn't been easy. He says he has grown to appreciate academics more, from his class lectures to the work required for his degree in social welfare.

Last season, Arrington had trouble with fumbles and risked not playing. He began hanging onto the ball and ran for 607 yards and scored eight touchdowns despite not being the featured back.

This season has been a breakthrough. He has seven successive 100-yard games, a Cal record, and he's prepared to rush for more yards this season than any in his life.

His teammates love his work ethic, and they love to rib him about his North Carolina accent.

"Oh, we give him a hard time about it," Rodgers said. "I can't say enough about what J.J. has done for us. He takes so much pressure off of me. I still don't know if the country really knows who he is."

Said Cal coach Jeff Tedford: "He means everything to our team. He's a complete back."

The recruiting violation remains a touchy subject in Eugene. Players and coaches don't talk about it. And in watching Arrington on game film, Oregon coach Mike Bellotti sees a back that could have been his and who now stands in his way of a potential Rose Bowl berth.

"Arrington is one of the best running backs in the nation," Bellotti said, picking his words carefully. "He did commit to us at one time and then went back on it. He is a difference-maker for Cal. He is built low to the ground, and he has speed. There is an anger when he carries the ball."

If not an anger, then a determination, like a man trying to avoid having his toe cut off.

## OUT OF THE SPOTLIGHT

*Monte Poole, Tribune Staff Columnist*  
*Wednesday, November 17, 2004*  
 © 2004 Oakland Tribune

This is the age of the posing jock, the sound bite and the repetitive highlight, when voices shout out from the TV screen and fame arrives at the speed of the Internet.

If you're good, the world hears about it.

If you're really good, the hype comes gratuitously and in high-def surround sound.

So why can't J.J. Arrington get his?

He's the starting tailback at Cal, a high-scoring, top-5 team and one of the nation's most touted programs.

He's fourth in the nation in rushing, and he leads the Pacific-10 Conference by a wiiiide margin.

None of the top 50 rushers in NCAA Division I-A exceeds Arrington's 6.9 yards per carry.

He has run for at least 100 yards in nine consecutive games, leaving him two away from the Pac-10 record set 23 years ago at USC by a future Hall of Famer named Marcus Allen.

Arrington is 46 yards away from breaking Cal's single-season rushing record, set 29 years ago by a future NFL star named Chuck Muncie.

Arrington likely will be the first Golden Bear to lead the Pac-10 in rushing since the legendary Joe Kapp in 1958.

Yet J.J. remains relatively anonymous. Despite the efforts of Cal's publicity machine, the 5-foot-11, 210-pound senior gets slightly more national attention than a puddle of sweat at the gym.

How in the name of ESPN and Fox Sports does this happen?

"I'm not really worried about it," Arrington says in the staccato twang characteristic of his North Carolina roots. "I'm just staying humble, just trying to keep doing what I've been doing.

"But it motivates me. I've had a lot of things motivate me over the years, and this is just another thing to put in my trunk as motivation."

Arrington runs with intense conviction, every stride seemingly committed to making a point. Every run is a statement of validation.

He's not especially big and not a classic blazer, although he has been timed under 4.5 seconds in the 40-yard dash. But Arrington has the vision and patience, as well as the quickness to slip by some defenders and the strength to charge through others.

But Arrington comes wrapped in rugged denim. While quarterback Aaron Rodgers has become the overnight star and coach Jeff Tedford the wizard behind Cal's high-tech offense, Arrington is the soul, bringing a blue-collar mentality to the weekly pyrotechnics.

Maybe that's why he remains under cover.

"It might be because I'm part of a (quarterback-friendly) offense here at Cal with coach Tedford," Arrington says. "But coach does a great job with both the pass and the run.

"I guess there ain't too much I can do about it. I'll just keep trying to help my team win."

Going into Saturday's Big Game in Berkeley, the No.4 Bears are 8-1, the loss coming when they beat No.1 USC everywhere except the scoreboard in Los Angeles.

Cal has responded by punishing its opponents and making a steady climb through the rankings. Winning has raised the school's profile. Winning with dynamic offense has made Cal a highlights staple.

Not that this has greatly enhanced Arrington's status. His ascent has been steady but slower than the team's.

He has inched his way onto many Heisman Trophy lists, and is the subject of a Web site ([arringtonforheisman.com](http://arringtonforheisman.com)). But there is no indication J.J. should expect an invitation to the trophy presentation in New York.

Any serious Heisman talk involving running backs revolves around Texas' Cedric Benson and Oklahoma freshman Adrian Peterson.

The talking heads also rave about the Auburn duo — Carnell "Cadillac" Williams and Ronnie "The Hummer" Brown. And USC's Reggie Bush.

And, eventually, Arrington. "I watch 'SportsCenter,'" he says. "I watch the other backs. A lot of guys are doing great jobs. The guy I didn't know too much about — he's not getting talked about that much either — is the guy at North Texas. I guess he's not getting that much pub because of the conference he's in. If he was putting up those numbers in a big conference, he'd definitely be recognized more."

Jamario Thomas, who leads the nation in rushing, is a freshman. As for whether he'd receive greater recognition if he were in a more prestigious conference, he certainly would.

Or not, when one considers Arrington, who goes out each week and outperforms nearly every other runner in the nation. He runs, he catches, he blocks, he willingly splits time with freshman Marshawn Lynch and others.

With two regular-season games and a bowl game remaining, Arrington is on pace to rush for more than 1,800 yards. He'll be voted All-Pac-10, and he'll likely leave Cal with several school and conference records.

He's doing it in throwback fashion, with old-school sensibilities and a country-folks work ethic. No preening, nobody screaming his name. Utterly unattached to hype.

## BIG MEN ON CAMPUS

### Despite Heisman Talk, Rodgers and Arrington Are Staying in Character

*Bruce Adams, Chronicle Staff Writer*

*Thursday, November 18, 2004*

*© 2004 San Francisco Chronicle*

Quarterback Aaron Rodgers and tailback J.J. Arrington are breathing rarefied air these days. Both are candidates for the Heisman Trophy and All-America honors. This is their time.

The two high-profile stars of Cal's offense could be forgiven for taking on a studied, world-weary demeanor in the locker room, a "look-at-me" strut on campus. That's not happening.

"They're both kids still," guard Aaron Merz said. "It's kind of fun."

It's fun for Old Blues who have never seen a Cal player win the Heisman -- college football's top award. Now, in this charmed season, they have two legitimate candidates.

Rodgers began to attract attention down the stretch last year, culminating with his 15-for-17 second-half passing performance in Cal's 52-49 win over Virginia Tech in the Insight Bowl. He came into the season carrying high expectations and didn't disappoint — breaking an NCAA record with 23 consecutive pass completions in the USC game and now ranking No. 1 in the Pac-10 and No. 7 in the nation in passing efficiency. He has completed 68.4 percent of his passes for 1,977 yards and 20 touchdowns.

Arrington, a backup to Adimchinobe Echemandu last year, entered the season on a quieter note. He has gone on to rush for 100-plus yards in all nine games — a Cal record. His average of 157.2 yards a game is No. 4 in the nation and his 6.87 yards a carry is the best among the country's top 40 runners.

"They've accomplished a lot this year," coach Jeff Tedford said. "But you couldn't tell. They haven't changed a bit. They're the same guys they were two years ago when they arrived."

Rodgers came to Cal after one year at Butte College and Arrington after two years at College of the Canyons in Santa Clarita (Los Angeles County). Rodgers is from Chico and Arrington from Rocky Mount, N.C. They've remained true to those small-town roots.

"They're not big time," wide receiver Geoff McArthur said. "J.J. is hilarious and Aaron is a character."

As the season has worn on, Tedford has increasingly talked about team chemistry — stressing the bond shared by his players and the trust they share. Rodgers and Arrington typify that togetherness.

"It's just great to be a part of it and be playing with them," McArthur said.

Rodgers and Arrington sometimes hang out together off the field, joking around, playing video games, watching football on TV or sharing a game of chess.

"He's a cool guy who is always working his brain," Arrington said of Rodgers.

"J.J.'s pretty goofy, pretty laid back," Rodgers said. "But he's also smart."

Team mates acknowledge their easy personalities, taking their athletic skills for granted.

"J.J. is just a funny little guy, a little man," McArthur said. "He looks so old, but he's just a little kid inside — and I don't mean that in a bad way. He's a fun guy to be around."

Arrington is quiet, with Tedford saying "you can't get two words out of him." When he does open his mouth he often takes good-natured kidding about his Carolina drawl. Rodgers is more talkative, going along with his role as quarterback.

"With Aaron you see him handling so much pressure all the time," Merz said. "At the same time he plays childish jokes and says dumb things in the huddle to keep it loose."

Both are on the watch lists for the Heisman and the Walter Camp Player of the Year Award, among other individual honors.

"I try to shy away from stuff like that," Arrington said.

"It's nice to look at, nice to talk about," Rodgers said. "But in the end, people only remember how good your team was. I want people to remember 2004 as a special season."

Rodgers and Arrington are more comfortable sharing credit for their accomplishments, especially with their guardians on the offensive line.

"They care about us and they're happy to be here," guard Jonathan Giesel said.

Rodgers recently joined the linemen at their weekly Friday breakfast, but they wouldn't let him pay — insisting they had invited him. Arrington wasn't so lucky. He invited the 300-pounders out for Chinese dinner a few weeks ago and picked up the \$160 tab.

"They're very positive people," said Merz, who frequently seeks out their company in the locker room or at the training table. "It's always good to sit down and just get some energy from them."



## CORTEZ – OFFENSIVE COORDINATOR

### BEARS COACH WINNING HIS OWN BATTLE

#### Cortez Is Back with Team after Having Two Surgeries for Detached Retina

*Dave Newhouse, Tribune Staff Writer*  
*Friday, November 12, 2004*  
*© 2004 Oakland Tribune*

George Cortez is a creature of the darkened room, a video addict who secludes himself for hours studying football players on a screen.

As Cal's offensive coordinator, he took his eyesight for granted as he searched for weaknesses in defenses while also fine-tuning the Bears' offense.

This selfless, tireless process often kept him working past midnight.

Then last spring, some "floaters" (spots) appeared in front of his eyes. A medical examination indicated he had a retina problem, but it wasn't deemed serious. So Cortez holed up again in his office hideaway, watching tiny uniformed figures moving in the dark.

On Friday, Oct. 16, the day before the Cal-UCLA game, Cortez noticed a brief "lightning storm" in his right eye. The following Tuesday, a "red bubble" appeared across the bottom of the same eye.

His condition worsened the next day, when he was diagnosed with a detached retina. He had surgery that day at Alta Bates Medical Center and was placed in the coaching version of the disabled list.

But five days after surgery, the retina detached, and he needed a second surgery, once again by Dr. Eugene Lit. This time, it held together.

Eye rehabilitation wasn't easy. For six days after the second surgery, Cortez had to sit face down to strengthen the repaired eye. He even slept face down in a chair. The result was positive.

"My vision (this week) is 20-50 in my right eye," he said. "Doctors said it was much better than a week ago."

A change in eyeglasses, Cortez hopes, will return his corrected vision to 20-20 eventually. Though he lives in Vallejo, he started driving again this week to and from work. It's all about progress.

Last week, he went home after practice every day. The first part of this week, he went home at 10 p.m. Things improved to where he spent Tuesday night at Memorial Stadium, joining Jeff Tedford and staff in their ritualistic Sunday-through-Thursday air-mattress office sleep-overs.

"I won't be working too late because my eyes get tired," Cortez said. "It puts a perspective on health issues. But relatively speaking, there hasn't been a lot of pain."

He is Tedford's right arm in terms of offensive strategizing. Tedford addressed Cortez's value to him this week.

"Great communication and hard work," Tedford said. "We spend many, many hours together bouncing ideas off one another. He's got a great football background, and he's the hardest worker I've ever seen. He's a conscientious guy and very thorough in his attention to detail."

"His strengths are the way he's able to facilitate game-planning, and running practice, making sure we have all bases covered."

With Cortez either unavailable or limited for a month, more pressure was placed on Tedford to game-plan largely on his own.

"Oh, man, you don't know how good it is to have him back," a relieved Tedford said.

Cal quarterback Reggie Robertson has worked with Cortez since 2002, when Cortez was named a coordinator on Tedford's new staff.

"Coach Cortez brings it to the table every day," Robertson said. "You know he means business. He makes us understand what we're trying to do on Saturday. He also gets the whole team fired up. Everyone knows his sayings."

His sayings?

"It's a great day to be a Bear," Robertson said. "That's his favorite one."

Everyone teases him about it, but they like it.

Besides his being medically cleared this week to resume a full-time work schedule, Cortez will fly with the team today to Seattle, where Cal (7-1, 5-1 Pac-10) plays Washington (1-8, 0-6) on Saturday.

"It's hard to do my job if I couldn't see," Cortez said.

No words ever made him happier.

## CAL'S GIESEL TAKES LICKIN', STILL TICKIN'

*Dave Newhouse, Tribune Staff Writer*  
*Wednesday, November 17, 2004*  
 © 2004 Oakland Tribune

Navigating Cal offensive guard Jonathan Giesel's aching anatomy is to travel through a sea of hurt.

"My body could definitely use a rest," Giesel said Tuesday.

Rest will come, but not now with Cal (8-1, 6-1 Pac-10) fourth in both polls and the Bowl Championship Series (BCS) standings.

This is Giesel's fifth season of Cal football, and it has been one injury after the other, not to mention the surgeries, the medication, the casts, the crutches, the whirlpools and the miles of elastic bandages.

"It's from my head to my toes," he said, charting his own injury course. "My neck, my shoulders, my biceps, my thumb, my knees, my ankle this year. I've had everything. I've tasted it all."

Biceps surgery as a freshman in 2000 cost Giesel nine games. He redshirted in 2001 after having shoulder surgery. He missed one start in 2002 because of an injured knee. Last year, Giesel missed two games with a banged-up knee and three with a pinched nerve in his neck. This year, he has sat out one game with a sprained ankle.

The mere fact he's still standing, albeit barely, and he's still a force in the trenches is testimony to his grit and determination.

"I know the limits of what I can take," Giesel said, who's now a graduate student. "I believe I'm tough. I can get through some stuff, but I know if it's something I can play with or not. I just keep going."

The 6-4, 300-pound Giesel, whose goal is to become a minister, may be too banged-up for the NFL, but he wouldn't mind the opportunity.

"I'd give it a chance if they're interested," he said. "But I've never been looked at highly."

That's not a problem at Cal, where Giesel is looked up to with the highest reverence.

"Over three years, Jonathan has set the tone in the line as far as toughness," said Cal offensive line coach Jim Michalczyk. "Off the field, he's the happiest, nicest guy you're ever going to meet. But in a game, he's got a tough mean streak to him, which raises everyone's expectations."

Cal's fifth in the nation in total offense, scoring offense and passing efficiency, and ninth in rushing offense. Giesel is partly responsible for all that production even though he's glued together.

Aaron Merz, a 6-4, 332-pound junior, is Cal's other starting guard. He admires Giesel for something other than his pain threshold.

"It's his prioritizing," Merz said. "He's playing this year as a graduate. He doesn't need to be doing this for a scholarship. He's playing to have another year with us, with this team. It means a lot that we're the reason he's here. Not to win a bowl game. We play for each other."

And the shining example Giesel sets by persevering through his ongoing physical malaise certainly motivates.

"It helps all of us," he said, "because we all have our nicks. This is my 10th year of playing. I've been banged up a lot. You get past the injuries. They mend, and they heal. They're not a bother any more. "But my body's sore."

All over.

## SECONDARY SCHOOLS

### Cal Twin Safeties Not Afraid To Tackle Anything

*Bruce Adams, Chronicle Staff Writer*  
*Wednesday, November 17, 2004*  
 © 2004 San Francisco Chronicle

Matt Giordano had a rough time with a midterm exam the Monday after Cal beat UCLA.

It wasn't the material. It was his ability to physically answer the questions.

Giordano broke his right thumb in the UCLA game and had to write using his index and middle fingers.

"I got a 'B,' " he said. "I don't think the professor could read it all."

Giordano then broke his left pinkie in the Arizona State win and underwent surgery. He easily can be spotted on the field with a bulky cast on the left hand and a splint on the right hand.

Fellow defensive back Ryan Gutierrez has had an easier time of it — taking on a slightly amazed look as he says, "I'm injury-free for the first time in probably two or three years."

That's not counting the knockout blows he's given himself, most recently in the win at Oregon State when he made a hard tackle on a running play and came to not remembering where he was.

"I did it a couple times this year and a lot more last year," Gutierrez said.

Gutierrez, Cal's starting free safety, leads the Golden Bears in tackles with 59. Giordano, who lines up at safety and rover, is No. 3 with 53.

Cal's Bruise Brothers, each 6-foot, 190 pounds, combine for a slightly larger version of 6-3, 300-pound defensive tackle Lorenzo Alexander.

"They hit harder than I do, pound for pound," said Alexander, noting the two debunk a stereotype about defensive backs.

"Sometimes you get the rap of being just a cover guy, a pretty boy," Alexander said. "Those two, not at all. Those little guys come up and hit people."

The two seniors keep Cal's trainers busy, being taken to the sideline after particularly violent collisions to be medically cleared before returning to the game.

"They get up and bring it again," Alexander said.

For the second year in a row, Giordano, a junior college transfer, and Gutierrez, a fifth-year senior, will be on the same side when No. 4 Cal plays Stanford Saturday in the Big Game. Back home, they were opponents when Giordano's Buchanan High lined up against Gutierrez's Clovis High.

"We always heard stories about Ryan," Giordano said. "He's been a notorious hard hitter ever since I've known him."

The archrivals from Clovis (Fresno County) became fast friends at Cal.

"Matt is an easy person to get along with," Gutierrez said. At least off the field.

Both idolize John Lynch and Ronnie Lott, two NFL hard hitters.

Giordano recalls what Lynch — a two-sport star when he played at Stanford — once said in an interview.

"When someone hits a baseball, you don't imagine hitting one baseball," Giordano said. "You imagine hitting three at the same time. I imagine there are three players stacked up like dominoes."

And when he connects, he refers to it as an "ooh" hit. "That's because the crowd likes it," he said.

Gutierrez also has a fondness for prompting those grandstand choruses of oohs and aahs.

"The ideal hit is a guy who never sees you coming because you can really lay into him," Gutierrez said. "Those usually make the best hits because you see a body fly."

Typical of coordinator Bob Gregory's defense, the two appear to be all over the field — "playing with reckless abandon," in Gutierrez's words.

They stress fundamentals in their tackles, going chest to chest and wrapping with their arms. "Knock them off their feet and hit them hard," Giordano said.

Coaches give a weekly award to the biggest hitter in each game. Giordano, Gutierrez and linebacker Wendell Hunter, No. 2 on the team with 54 tackles, are regulars at having their photos hung on the wall in the football offices.

Giordano and Gutierrez are part of a regular rotation that includes rover Donnie McCleskey, last year's consensus biggest hitter — with one memorable stop where he sent an opponent's body flying one way and his helmet the other. McCleskey has played with an injured shoulder most of the year — nearly deciding to take a medical redshirt earlier in the season — and has had to find a softer, gentler way of tackling. Still, he's No. 7 on the team with 27 stops.

"We like to be competitive with each other," Gutierrez said. "We like to go at each other and that has only made us better."

# GREGORY – DEFENSIVE COORDINATOR

## CAL'S ACE IN THE HOLE

### Defense Flourishing under Adjustments of Coordinator Gregory

*Tom FitzGerald, Chronicle Staff Writer*

*Saturday, November 13, 2004*

© 2004 San Francisco Chronicle

Maybe somebody is spiking the Gatorade of Cal's football opponents at halftime. The Bears have surrendered just 28 second-half points in their eight games, none in the last three weeks.

Barring foul play, the most plausible explanation is that defensive coordinator Bob Gregory is making halftime moves like a chess grandmaster. Well, at least like the card player he used to be at Washington State.

"He never studied in college," chuckled Ron Collins, his former roommate and fellow WSU defensive back. "He played cards. He's a big-time cribbage player. We played every night."

A couple of decades later, both are defensive coordinators for bowl-bound teams: Gregory, whose Cal tacklers figure to fatten their already impressive statistics at Washington today, and Collins, whose 14th-ranked Boise State plays this morning at San Jose State.

Gregory's defense is ranked 13th nationally in yardage and ninth in points. Given how far the Bears have come since 2001, when they gave up yards and points in bulk loads, you'd have to wonder if Gregory is a genius at the chalkboard, especially at halftime.

"Absolutely not," he said with a laugh. "There are no geniuses here, just a lot of young guys who believe in what we're trying to do. If I was that smart, I'd be in the chemistry department."

He's smart enough that head coach Jeff Tedford, whose strategic strength is on offense, gave Gregory the keys to the defense two years ago and checks in now and then to listen to the engine purr.

The purr was more of croak in the first half of the Oregon game last week. The Ducks scored three touchdowns in 2 1/2 minutes in the first quarter and led 27-14 late in the second quarter. But they mustered just 57 total yards and no points in the second half, and Cal eked out a 28-27 win, with the help of a key dropped pass.

Gregory ordered more man-to-man coverage and more blitzes, but mostly he pushed the right motivational buttons. "To be honest with you, this was the first time he really got fired up," said safety Ryan Gutierrez, the team's leading tackler. "He's usually very even keeled. When he got fired up, the players followed suit."

Gutierrez, one of the holdovers from the Tom Holmoe regime, added, "I don't want to say anything bad about the former staff, but coaches would

have been yelling at players, and players would have been yelling at coaches. The difference now is that nobody doubts ourselves."

Gregory is so meticulous in his planning that, while on the staff at Willamette University in Oregon, he compiled a notebook on "press coverage," or bump-and-run techniques for defensive backs. It was 1 1/2 inches thick.

"What's the big deal with that?" said Dan Hawkins, his boss at Willamette and later at Boise. "Well, there are a ton of ways to do it, way more than a casual fan would know."

"I don't know that I've ever seen anybody work harder in coaching. I don't care what time you get to work — his car is always there before you."

But Hawkins says Gregory's main asset is his ability to get athletes to play hard without being an ogre. "He makes kids feel good about themselves. Some coaches say, 'We need somebody bigger or stronger.' He's not like that. He'll take the players he has and make them better."

Gregory's parents were teachers, although his father left teaching to start his own physical education equipment company in Spokane, Wash. Bob was one of five children, all adopted.

He walked on at Washington State and played linebacker and defensive back. In 1986, the Cougars beat USC (34-14) for the first time in 29 years. Teammate Collins said Gregory "was talking a lot of smack to their offensive line."

Don't believe it, says Gregory. "I wasn't good enough to trash-talk. I was just trying to figure out where to line up."

Gregory and Collins lived in a Pullman apartment that, according to a third roommate, "was an absolute pigsty." Former Chronicle sportswriter Tim Keown, now with ESPN the Magazine, said, "When we ran out of dishes, we'd eat out of the can. Once a month we'd clean up."

Gregory grew up to be extremely meticulousness in his game plans, but Keown said, "I don't think it extended to housekeeping, at least not in those days."

Gregory responded, "Tell Tim Keown he still owes us \$250 for rent. And he'd better pay up now that he's in the big time."

It may be only a matter of time before Gregory reaches the big time as a head coach. Could it happen in Berkeley?

"If Tedford leaves," Hawkins said, "they should get all over Bob Gregory."

"My response to that," Gregory said, "is I hope coach Tedford and I are here at Cal for a lot of years."



## AILING HUNTER JUST PLAYS ON Cal Linebacker Performing Well Despite Shoulder Injury

*Dave Newhouse, Tribune Staff Writer*

*Thursday, December 02, 2004*

© 2004 Oakland Tribune

Wendell Hunter isn't on the list. It's not his fault or Cal's fault. He's just a victim of that common list-killer: Circumstance.

Cal puts out a list weekly of its honors candidates. Quarterback Aaron Rodgers. Running back J.J. Arrington. Wide receiver Geoff McArthur. Center Marvin Philip. Defensive linemen Ryan Riddle and Lorenzo Alexander.

All valid candidates. Hunter's not on that list. Neither is defensive back Donnie McCleskey, a preseason All-America candidate. Both are injured, McCleskey in a few more places than Hunter, though both play on valiantly.

Cal (9-1, 7-1 Pac-10) is ranked No.4 in the country. There's a game to play Saturday at Southern Mississippi (6-4). Then it's bowl selection day Sunday. Rest and healing comes afterward.

Hunter, the senior linebacker, soldiers on with a damaged shoulder. Like any true soldier, he's good in the trenches. He is Cal's No.1 tackler in almost every game where he has stayed on the field for four quarters.

This means he's playing hurt, and occasionally playing rusty. He sat out the Air Force Academy opener, then had spot duty against New Mexico State and Oregon. Yet he has had three games with 10 tackles, one with 9, two with 7. Mostly solo stops, and delivered with one good shoulder.

"When the game comes, he makes big plays," Cal defensive coordinator Bob Gregory said of the 6-foot-1, 230-pound Hunter. "The biggest thing about Wendell is he has a great passion for the game."

Perseverance through injury is what's needed most in football, because every position player on every team is hampered physically to some degree. Football isn't golf. Hunter has relied on resiliency to make his own lists.

Twice this season, he has been Pac-10 Defensive Player of the Week, the only Cal defender so honored. Hunter was selected this week as a first-team all-conference linebacker. None of this impressed him one iota.

"It really doesn't," he said. "I love my teammates. I don't play for honors. I play for victories. Honors are icing on the cake."

One of those get-well cakes. Hunter swears he's functioning with two good shoulders. He of "Just block it out," he said of physical distractions. "It's just believing in myself. The key to the football is see it and go."

That's exactly what Hunter does with his built-in radar system for the football. He gets there in a hurry with blazing speed, disarming strength and fierce determination — the three main components of outside linebacking.

"It's very instinctive," he said, "but it's preparation, too. It's very simple, really. Hit the guy with the ball."

Not quite that simple. Gregory often catches Hunter after practice, watching practice film and game film, looking for ways to improve his craft, which means having to get around 300-pound tackles.

"I try to beat them with speed," said Hunter. "They're 300, I'm 230. I'm not going to overpower them. I try to give them a quick spin or the quick rip (under the arm) to get their center of gravity shifting."

Hunter certainly makes head coach Jeff Tedford's list as a gamer.

"His tenacity," Tedford of Hunter's primary talent. "There's no question about his athleticness. He's very tough, he plays through injury, and he's a tremendous tackler."

Those qualities, Tedford believes, will earn Hunter a shot in the NFL along with his big-play tendencies, which date back to last year's game-saving — season-saving? — tackle at Illinois.

"I don't know what the common thread is," Gregory said of big-play players. "It's just making plays. Wendell has it, Donnie has it, J.J., Marshawn (Lynch). ..."

... Rodgers, McArthur, Riddle, Philip (big-play blocker), Alexander, who are all on Cal's list, which Cal is checking twice because of Hunter.

## A NEW GOLDEN RECEIVER

### Jordan Trades in His Red Shirt for a Starting Role

*Bruce Adams, Chronicle Staff Writer*  
*Thursday, November 4, 2004*  
 © 2004 San Francisco Chronicle

By any measure, this looked like a mismatch — tiny freshman receiver Robert Jordan versus the 300-pounders on Cal's offensive line.

The playful behemoths, acting as the self-appointed guardians of the team's inner-circle, prepared to welcome Jordan to the starting lineup.

"We thought we'd mess with him a little bit, break him in," said guard Aaron Merz, 6-foot-4, 320 pounds.

Ryan O'Callaghan, who said he didn't even know Jordan's name until he became a starter, began "playing with his head a little bit."

The 6-7, 340-pound tackle squared off in front of the 5-11, 160-pound Jordan and posed a question.

"I asked him if he was scared or not," O'Callaghan said. "He gave it right back to me."

That was about the time that fifth-year senior Geoff McArthur, the leader of the Bears' wide receivers corps, came to the rescue — of the linemen, not Jordan.

"He said 'You're not going to be able to mess with him,'" Merz said. "'He's too confident.'"

Jordan just laughs. "I took it as an initiation," he said. "I accepted it and I went ahead."

As the ranks of Cal's receivers have thinned dramatically because of injuries, Jordan has gone from a scout-team redshirt acting as practice fodder for the starting defense to lining up opposite McArthur for the No. 4 Bears.

"That doesn't happen easily," coach Jeff Tedford said. "He has tremendous confidence and the ability to go with that confidence."

Jordan began attracting attention in fall camp, showing speed, sure hands and the ability to get open. He was expected to spend his first year as a red shirt — maturing, getting bigger and learning the system.

But then the seniors so integral to Cal's passing game began to go down. Chase Lyman was lost for the season with a torn ACL in the USC game. Jonathan Makonnen was knocked out of the Arizona game with a liver contusion and is not expected to return soon. Burl Toler III has missed the last two games with tendonitis in both knees.

Jordan replaced Makonnen in the Arizona game and caught five passes for 40 yards. In his first start in last Saturday's 27-0 win over Arizona State, he led the team with seven catches for 116 yards and one touchdown.

"He has great instincts and he's mature with the ball," quarterback Aaron Rodgers said. "When he gets the ball he has a sense about him, he knows what to do. ... He attacks people, makes them tackle him."

Jordan says his confidence comes from his family — starting with older brother Randy Jordan, who graduated from Kansas State last year after starting at cornerback for two years.

"He told me I've been ready for this since the day I was born," Jordan said. "It's no time to be nervous now."

He said he has consistently heard the same message from his grandmother, Frances Johnson.

"She always told me I could do it," he said. "And I knew I could."

He gets further family support from cousin Marshawn Lynch, also a true freshman and No. 2 on the Bears in rushing with a 42.8 yards a game average.

"I've fed off Marshawn all year," Jordan said, noting Lynch talked to him just before he took the field for his first collegiate appearance at Arizona. "He said, 'Just do your thing. Play like you practice,'" Jordan said.

A third cousin, defensive back Virdell Larkins, was unable to enroll in Cal this fall because of academic issues, but is expected to enroll in the spring semester.

Lynch and Larkins played together at Oakland Tech, and committed to Cal as a package deal. Jordan played at Hayward High and committed to Cal with teammate Phillip Mbakogu, a defensive end.

"Oh man, it will be a dream come true," Jordan said of the prospect of the three cousins — "the three amigos," in his words — finally playing on the same team.

By then, it is likely Jordan will be the one providing veteran advice.

Punter David Lonie, 25 and the oldest player on the team, has the locker across from Jordan, 18 and one of the youngest. He has watched Jordan change from a cocky teenager to confident teammate.

"It was funny when I first met him, this is a young guy who doesn't get college football," Lonie said. "Straight out of high school, talking a bit and being loud in the locker room. He's matured a lot in the last few months and become a team player."

## CAL'S KOOKY KICKER

*Janie McCauley, AP Staff Writer  
Friday, September 10, 2004  
© 2004 Associated Press*

David Lonie had never considered kicking a football.

He preferred the non-traditional daredevil athletic pursuits, spending his time surfing, spear fishing, water skiing, snowboarding and riding horses. He traveled the world doing them.

Not until he came from his native Australia to coach at a summer sports camp in the United States in 1999 did playing football become an option.

Now, he's the popular new punter for No. 12 Cal.

It was at the camp that he met a punter headed to Drake on scholarship.

"I was out-kicking him," Lonie said with a smile this week as the Golden Bears prepared for their home opener Saturday against New Mexico State.

The camp director noticed, and suggested Lonie pursue it further by going to Cincinnati to work out with his friend Doug Pelfrey, then with the Bengals. It didn't take much convincing. We're talking about somebody who's seemingly up for anything.

Lonie became hooked. It certainly helped that he's 6-foot-6 and 200 pounds — almost massive proportions when it comes to punters.

With his California good looks and his speech peppered with trademark Aussie phrases such as "No worries," Lonie fits in perfectly in the zany Cal community.

Back home, he played soccer, water polo and competed in track and field. He modeled for a golf magazine, and worked all sorts of odd jobs to make money to fund his trips — construction, security and selling skis. He's been to about a dozen countries, going solo and making friends along the way.

It hasn't taken him long here.

His teammates refer to him as Zoolander, Thunder from Down Under and Aus-struck.

"It's just a good vibe," Lonie said of being around the Golden Bears. "The guys are down to earth. It's laid back, similar to Australia."

Third-year Cal coach Jeff Tedford — no-nonsense, always intense and basically the opposite of his punter — was so interested in Lonie that he took a 34-hour round-trip flight to Australia just to meet his parents for 15 minutes. Lonie, also highly sought after by many other schools, wasn't even there at the time.

Tedford likes Lonie's maturity and life experience, and the fact he's already done so many interesting things.

"I don't think players have to be so shallow and only think about football," Tedford said. "He's a more mature young man because he's well traveled and has been making his own money for so long. I told him he's going to provide leadership for this team."

Lonie is 25 years old, but isn't getting much razzing for it because "half the guys don't even know," he said. He is studying education and youth culture.

He had verbally committed to Ohio State two years ago, but didn't qualify academically because some of his course work from Australia didn't comply with NCAA standards. So, Lonie enrolled at Ellsworth Community College in Iowa Falls, Iowa. He declined a chance to join the Canadian Football League because he didn't want to burn his college eligibility.

He averaged 41.8 yards per punt last season as a sophomore and converted 21 of 25 PATs — the ones he missed were all bad snaps. He converted 11-of-19 field-goal tries.

For now, Lonie is the starting punter. But his predecessor at Cal, Tyler Fredrickson, punted, kicked off and booted field goals. Lonie's role could grow in the future.

His teammates wouldn't mind. They liked Lonie right away during spring ball, then he played well in the Bears' 56-14 win at Air Force last week.

"He's a real good guy," linebacker Joe Maningo said. "Your basic first impression is he's just a fun-loving person. He carries it onto the field. His skills are tremendous. His placement really helps out the special teams and defense."

"It's crazy how the guy just came in. He was punting it from one sideline into the stands on the other side. I've never seen a punter do that. It shows his leg strength."

Lonie hopes to take that strength to the NFL, and he wouldn't be the first Aussie to do it. Darren Bennett punts for the Vikings, and Aussie Nathan Chapman was cut by Green Bay last month.

## LYMAN REMAINS A PRESENCE

### Injured Wide Receiver Still Finding Ways to Contribute to Bears

*Dave Newhouse, Tribune Staff Writer*  
*Friday, October 22, 2004*  
 © 2004 Oakland Tribune

Chase Lyman felt as if he were flying. He finally was rid of past injuries and illnesses, he was catching passes and running free, and he was becoming a national name. He was, at last, soaring.

The Cal football coaches and players were ecstatic at Lyman's success, that he was leading all Division I receivers with 29.6 yards per catch, because he's one of the most respected players on the team.

Well, Lyman won't be an active part of wherever it is the Golden Bears are going, whether they're climbing the polls or heading to some prestigious bowl. He tore up his left knee on a pass route against USC and had major surgery two days later, thus ending his frequently interrupted, star-crossed college career.

But if resiliency is a virtue, Lyman is a saint.

"I'm doing well," he said Thursday. "The toughest part is I'm not going to play with my teammates any more — forever."

He managed a smile as he poked through his eggs.

"It is what it is," he said. "It's a rough sport. I have only one option. If I felt sorry for myself, I'd be wasting a day of rehab. I'm on a tight schedule. And ACL rehab takes five, six months. The (NFL scouting) combine is in five months. I'm working hard to make the combine."

The 6-foot-4, 210-pound Lyman has soft hands, a big body and impressive speed when all of his physical parts are working cohesively. The NFL might want to give him a look, likely as a free agent, then see if he can hold together.

"A lot of people come back from these (knee surgeries) stronger," he said. "I'm looking at it that I'll be faster."

Lyman looks at all his Cal setbacks — ankle, groin, hamstring, hip, appendicitis, knee — and he still has the mental makeup not to give up.

"It's natural the way I was raised," he said. "I grew up in a real competitive household. I hate to lose at anything. If I threw in the towel, I'd see myself as a quitter. That's the last thing I want to be."

He wore his blue "Cal" warm-ups and his blue "Cal" baseball cap. Though he won't wear No. 15 again at Cal, he remains a part of the team, attending practice, watching film with teammates.

"Obviously I'm done here," he said, "but this is a special group of guys, and I want to be a part of it. I want to be in Pasadena on New Year's Day."

What makes the Cal team special?

"Its closeness," Lyman said. "I told coach (Jeff) Tedford this summer, 'I've never enjoyed working out with so many guys.' Everyone says, 'We are family,' but this team really is. I have friends playing (football) around the country who talk about racial division on their teams. We're so far beyond that here."

Lyman is white. His roommates, Donnie McCleskey and J.J. Arrington, are African American.

Lyman doesn't figure to travel to Tucson for the Cal-Arizona game Saturday because there's only so much room on the charter. But his impact on the team continues to be felt in a different way.

Lyman and Tedford had dinner together on successive nights, which speaks volumes about the player and the coach. The first night, Lyman asked how practice was going. Not well, he was told. The second night, Lyman asked the same question. Better, he was informed. Lyman smiled.

"I just said some stuff to some of the guys, the leaders," Lyman said Thursday.

"That's the kind of guy Chase is," said Tedford.

## UPRIGHT, OUT OF SIGHT

### Cal Freshman Stays Up, Regardless of Situation

*Bruce Adams, Chronicle Staff Writer*  
*Friday, November 19, 2004*  
 © 2004 San Francisco Chronicle

When Cal freshman tailback Marshawn Lynch is carrying the ball, quarterback Aaron Rodgers often has one of the best views in the stadium.

“He never goes down,” Rodgers said. “Sometimes you want him to go down so he doesn’t fumble. But he never goes down on the first hit. One guy can’t tackle him.”

Rodgers recalled an early run in the win at Air Force when Lynch broke five tackles. There have been many others. In one otherwise forgettable short-gainer in Cal’s win at Arizona, he was hit by two defenders, one at chest level and another wrapping his legs. More players piled on. The play was whistled dead with Lynch in the grasp of five tacklers but still on his feet.

Recently Lynch visited his 87-year-old great-grandfather in Oakland. “Stay in school,” D.C. Lynch told the youngster. Then the patriarch offered another bit of advice. “It’s OK to go down.”

Marshawn Lynch is powerless, a prisoner of instinct. “I don’t think about it,” he said. “It just happens. I’m running to stay up.”

Lynch is patiently waiting his turn, backing up J.J. Arrington.

“Whatever they tell me to do, that’s what I do,” he said.

Coach Jeff Tedford, with a straight face, refers to the pair as “a good one, two punch.”

It’s easy to make a case for Arrington being the best running back in the nation. He is climbing in the record books, approaching the single-season accomplishments of legends such as Cal’s Chuck Muncie and USC’s Marcus Allen. He is averaging 6.9 yards a carry, best average among the NCAA’s top 40 rushers. He is averaging 157.2 yards a game, No. 1 in the Pac-10.

It’s also easy to make a case for Lynch being better. He is averaging 8.5 yards a carry in his part-time role. In last Saturday’s 42-12 win at Washington he touched the ball 13 times — running for touchdowns of 70 and 32 yards and catching a 29-yard scoring pass. He finished with 121 rushing yards, another 51 yards on two kickoff returns and threw a 14-yard pass.

“That’s a good problem to have,” Tedford said, finally breaking into a smile.

Lynch plays with a pure power that belies his 5-foot-11, 200-pound frame.

“Marshawn is bigger, stronger, faster than most of the guys he goes up against,” Rodgers said.

As No. 4 Cal (8-1, 6-1 Pac-10) prepares to face Stanford (4-6, 2-5) Saturday, Lynch is blissfully beyond the Big Game hype.

He never followed the game when he was growing up in Oakland. He attended his first Big Game last year as a recruit from Oakland Tech.

“I pay attention to it now,” he said. “I’m playing in it.”

To Lynch, football isn’t about pomp and pageantry, rivals and revelry. He has a narrowly defined view of the game. After his first Pop Warner championship game, a loss, his mother saw the 11-year-old smiling, basking in the joy of having played. A bit later he came over to her with tears welling in his eyes.

“I asked him why he was crying,” Delisa Lynch said. “He said, ‘because everyone else is crying.’”

Then Delisa, who says she’d known since birth that Marshawn had a gift, was taken by a mother’s intuition.

“I said, ‘Marshawn, you’re going to have a whole lot of football ahead of you. You will win some, you will lose some. But always have fun.’”

Tedford has marveled at Lynch’s ready smile and easy-going nature.

“I don’t think he realizes what he’s doing or where he’s at, which is a good thing,” Tedford said earlier this season. “He doesn’t see any pressure.”

Lynch said, “That’s what I’m about. It’s fun out there — the atmosphere, being around the guys, playing the best people in the nation.”

His mother won’t let him forget that come Saturday.

“He looks for me before every game. ‘Where’s Mama? Where’s Mama?’” she said. “I always say the same thing. ‘Have fun, Marshawn.’”



## FILLING THE VOID

### With Lyman Out, Senior Wide Receiver Jonathan Makonnen Reprises His Starting Role

*Steven Dunst, Daily Cal Contributing Writer*  
*Wednesday, October 20, 2004*  
© 2004 The Daily Californian

Senior wide receiver Jonathan Makonnen has been through more ups and downs than a Six Flags roller coaster ride during his college career.

However, the one constant in his life has been his refusal to put away his football cleats—no matter how many injuries he faces or how low he falls on the depth chart.

He was a no-name receiver at City College of San Francisco but earned a spot on the Cal football team.

He was a junior college transfer waiting on the bench but became the Bears' leading receiver.

He was a role player coming off a medical redshirt season but now, with Chase Lyman out for the year with a knee injury, he's back starting for the No. 7 Bears.

"I never doubted myself," says Makonnen. "Nobody would've believed that I would end up at Cal. I took a chance in going to a one-win team, but now look at us—we're in the top-10 of the country. This is the best thing that has ever happened to me."

After leading the Bears with 54 receptions and 682 yards in 2002, Makonnen has another chance to show himself, the team and the country that he has the potential to be one of the top wide receivers in the Pac-10.

He missed that opportunity last season, as he sat out the bulk of the year with a foot injury.

Makonnen was responsible for one of the most memorable moments of 2003, when he made a clutch 20-yard touchdown grab in double overtime of the biggest game of Cal's season against then-No. 3 USC.

However, the touchdown came while he was suffering through a stress fracture in his foot. After the upset victory, Makonnen underwent season-ending surgery.

"It felt great to catch that pass against USC, but I wish I could have continued to play the rest of the year," he says.

Makonnen petitioned the NCAA for a medical redshirt and received one. After his foot recovered, the injury bug sidelined him again as he aggravated his hamstring before the start of this season.

He came into this year expecting to start opposite wide receiver Geoff McArthur, hoping to regain his 2002 form and become a key contributor. But those goals were thwarted by Makonnen's hamstring, which became so troubling that he was unable to even jog for the first few games of the season.

"I really try to make sure that I don't even think about my injury," says Makonnen. "I know that I'm not going to be 100 percent at all this season, but I've come too far to let a nagging injury get the best of me. I've played through injuries my whole life."

With Lyman gone, Makonnen says he hopes to regain the respect he feels he deserves.

"I'm going to need to step up and be a leader," he says. "I need to do some of the things that Chase did. I've always had confidence in myself, even when nobody believed in me. I need to prove to people that I am worthy of playing."

Although his hamstring is still just 80-85 percent healthy in his opinion, he has maintained optimism and a team-first mentality, even when he was warming the bench.

"It (was) very frustrating not getting in the game," says Makonnen. "It was heartbreaking not playing. I know that I can be on the field contributing."

Against the No. 1 Trojans, Makonnen caught two passes for 22 yards. However, on fourth down on the Bears' final possession, he briefly lost his footing, leaving him a fraction of a second too slow for quarterback Aaron Rodgers' laser pass. The ball fell to the grass just out of his reach as USC escaped with a 23-17 victory.

"I had no doubt in my mind that we would win," says Makonnen. "We were so confident in the huddle. It's such a tough loss. But I now know that I will have a chance to get significant playing time, and I am ready to step up."

It is a testament to Makonnen's tenacity and work ethic, however, that he was even on the field against the Trojans.

As Makonnen knows, the best way to play through injuries is to train hard in the offseason—especially if it is with future Hall of Fame receiver Jerry Rice as a workout partner.

"It was great to work with one of the greatest receivers ever," says Makonnen. "I learned his work ethic, which I try to instill in myself whenever I work out or watch film. I really got to see what it took for him to get where he's at."

After this season is complete, Makonnen hopes to don an NFL jersey.

"I definitely think that I deserve a chance to play in the NFL," says Makonnen. "I want to give it a shot. I haven't been playing over 10 years to give up now."

## GEOFF McARTHUR HAS BEEN UP TO THE CHALLENGE

*Bruce Adams, Chronicle Staff Writer*

*Friday, November 12, 2004*

*© 2004 San Francisco Chronicle*

As a measure of how far Cal has come, wide receiver Geoff McArthur recalls his reaction to some trash talk aimed his way during a game against Washington when he was a true freshman.

It was Oct. 21, 2000, and the Bears were leading the then-No. 9 Huskies by 11 points going into the fourth quarter at Husky Stadium when a Washington player asked McArthur, "Why are you still playing? You're Cal."

McArthur said he paused for a moment and thought about the question. Meanwhile, after two fumbles, an interception and a blocked punt, the Huskies won 36-24. His reaction back then, seems foreign now.

"With this team that wouldn't be possible," McArthur said as No. 5 Cal (7-1, 5-1 Pac-10) prepares to play Washington (1-8, 0-6) Saturday at Husky Stadium. "That shows how far we've come — the change in attitude, the togetherness, is so much more than it was back then. Everybody is good, and nobody is pointing fingers."

McArthur has made his own dramatic personal changes.

"It's like night and day, as far as my own beliefs, my work ethics," he said.

McArthur is playing with pain, and has been most of the year. He smiles and chuckles at the irony of a season that began with him injury free as the team emphasized the run and didn't show much in the passing game.

Then, as coach Jeff Tedford began to employ more and more of the passing game, McArthur began to battle a series of injuries — a pulled oblique muscle on his side, a banged up knee and a sprained shoulder.

"I think every year presents its own challenges," he said. "This year, going in I knew it would be challenging."

He just didn't know to what extent. The wide receiving corps has been thinned by injuries. Chase Lyman was lost for the year with a torn ACL in the USC game. Jonathan Makonnen is still out after incurring a liver contusion in the Arizona game. Burl Toler III missed the last three games with tendonitis in both knees.

That left McArthur as the only veteran on a unit that has been forced to bring in younger, untested players such as true freshman Robert Jordan, redshirt freshman Noah Smith and heretofore injury-plagued sophomore David Gray.

"His leadership role is very important and valuable to the team right now," Tedford said, noting McArthur is key in helping the youngsters deal with Cal's multiple formations and myriad assignments.

Tedford is also mindful of McArthur's injuries, and has often rested him during drills — only working him enough to keep his timing sharp.

"Even though he doesn't practice a lot during the week because of his health issues, he does suck it up and play during the game," Tedford said. "I know the young guys appreciate that."

Last year McArthur led the team — and was among the leaders in the nation — with 85 catches for 1,504 yards and 10 touchdowns. He was named a second-team All-America. This year, he has 40 catches for 597 yards — making 33 of those receptions and scoring six touchdowns over the past five games. With 185 career receptions, he is 10 short of Dameane Douglas' all-time Cal record.

"I know if I just fight through, good things will happen," McArthur said. "I knew my time would come."

## CAL'S MERZ HAS THE JEKYLL-HYDE ACT DOWN PAT

*Bruce Adams, Chronicle Staff Writer*  
*Friday, October 1, 2004*  
© 2004 San Francisco Chronicle

Aaron Merz shows up at the stadium showered, shaved, well-dressed and in a good mood.

"I like showing up for work clean, sharp and ready to go," Merz said.

His routine also includes listening to the song "Burn for You" by Kreo.

"It makes me upbeat and happy," he said.

Then the 6-foot-4, 320-pound Merz flips the switch.

"It's a game and it's really fun to nail somebody when they're not expecting it or to push somebody's helmet into the ground when they're trying to get up. ... Other people talk. I can do that. And they remember it."

With a ready smile, a cherubic face and wire-rimmed glasses, Merz more closely resembles a choir boy — well, a very large one — than a football player who delights in showing his nasty side. Teammates say he's one of the meanest players on the team.

After going three weeks between games, the Bears open their Pac-10 season Saturday in Corvallis, Ore., facing an Oregon State team that is known as much for trash talk as it is for its great defense. That's just fine with Merz.

He said the most fun he's had this year came in Cal's last game, a 41-14 win over New Mexico State at Memorial Stadium on Sept. 11, when he encountered a trash-talking Aggie.

"I got in a couple jarring matches with one of their linebackers," he said. "I got to run over him a few times. That felt good. They shoot their mouth; I'll go beat them up."

Merz came to Cal as a lightly recruited walk-on out of Wasco High School in Kern County. Now the redshirt junior is on scholarship and a mainstay on the offensive line.

"He's very confident in his abilities," quarterback Aaron Rodgers said.

"He's out there," added wide receiver Chase Lyman. "It's good to have. It sets a tone on the offensive line."

Merz rooms with Ryan O'Callaghan, the starting right tackle and another finalist in the meanest player contest. Merz said the two hang out with their fellow behemoths on the line and are likely to have wide-ranging discussions on topics such as Marxism and government, tell jokes that run from "5-year-old humor to intellectual," and watch "South Park" and "Reno 911" on TV.

"We're all kind of baby-faced and we're all smart," Merz said. "But we definitely flip that switch and put people in the dirt. ... I wouldn't say I'm the meanest guy. But if you watch the film, I've got the most hits that come just when the whistle is about to blow."

That's all part, he said, of finishing the job at hand.

"I like driving somebody off the field, really taking them out of the play," he said. "The last 10 yards are completely unnecessary ... but they remember getting their ass kicked. It comes back on them."

Coach Jeff Tedford is continually reminding his players to go "snap to whistle." Merz takes that slogan to the extreme.

"I play pretty dirty until that whistle blows," he said, adding that once the play is over he's "smiling and going back to the huddle."

Merz said his play isn't the result of emotion or anger. He doesn't spend time working himself into a rage thinking about the other team. His approach is methodical and businesslike.

"I need to hold them accountable," he said. "I'll get whatever I can as long as it's legal."

## BIG MEN ON BLOCK: CAL'S LINE

*Jay Heater, Times Staff Writer*  
*Wednesday, November 10, 2004*  
*© 2004 Contra Costa Times*

Seeing Cal tailback J.J. Arrington running 30 yards for a touchdown against Oregon was not unique. What happened behind him was.

Back about the 25-yard line, Bears offensive tackle Ryan O'Callaghan reached out and high-fived guard Aaron Merz.

"J.J.'s touchdown run was the first time we've ever given each other a high-five," said Merz, who lives with O'Callaghan. "We double-teamed and destroyed the tackle and he went back and ate the linebacker. Ryan's really not a rah-rah guy, but he gave me a high-five. Then on the sideline, he pointed out that was our first one. It was one of those awkward friendship moments."

Cal fans are hoping for more of those awkward friendship moments. Other than senior guard Jonathan Giesel, the rest of the starters on the Bears' offensive line — sophomore left tackle Andrew Cameron, junior center Marvin Philip and juniors Merz and O'Callaghan — return next season. Cal's huge offensive numbers — 37.6 points and 492.9 yards per game — have been keyed by the line.

"If you look at the numbers, you know Cal's offensive line has to be doing well to generate that great balance between the run and the pass," said Washington coach Keith Gilbertson, whose Huskies host Cal on Saturday. "Their pad level is the best in the conference."

Gilbertson had Cal's last great offensive line, the one that led the Bears to an Alamo Bowl victory over Iowa in 1993. Four of Cal's five offensive line starters that season — center Ben Lynch, offensive guard Eric Mahlum and tackles Todd Steussie and Brian Thure — eventually played in the NFL. Offensive guard Todd Blackwell was the other starter.

The group cleared the way for tailback Lindsey Chapman to rush for 1,037 yards, while quarterback Dave Barr threw for 2,619 yards and 21 touchdowns despite missing three games due to a separated shoulder.

"Those guys were great players and fun to coach," Gilbertson said. "They were wild-horse riders, a lot of great kids."

Cal coach Jeff Tedford isn't sure that any of his current offensive linemen will get the acclaim that landed on Steussie and Mahlum, but he says they have been outstanding as a unit. "I think our offensive line is a little typical of our defense," Tedford said. "You've got so many guys playing well together. But I don't know that you can name one standout. They are all doing a good job."

"But this is the best college offensive line I've had the pleasure to be around. They are big and physical and smart."

Lynch, who played seven years in the NFL, is sitting out of football this season following his fifth knee surgery. His down time has given him a chance to watch Cal play on a regular basis.

"One of the comparisons I would make to the '93 team is how tight-knit this group is," Lynch said. "You can see that they always hang out as a group. In 1993, we were doing things like barbecuing as a group. That real bond has to be there on an offensive line. You need to have that camaraderie and that chemistry."

"Besides that, we would be in the film room and we would see Steussie burying guys every play. We would think, 'I'm in the weight room just as much and I'm doing the same things he is, so why can't I be that guy?'"

Lynch sees a similar attitude among the current Bears, who told Tedford at halftime last Saturday that it was time to run the ball against Oregon. "We would rather run the ball every play," said O'Callaghan, a 6-foot-7, 350-pounder. "We average seven yards a run, so let's go."

Cal rushed the ball 26 times for 145 yards against the Ducks in the second half, controlling the clock for 21:20 of the 30 minutes in a 28-27 victory. "We were demanding the football at halftime," Merz said. "We were disappointed we didn't get more chances. It bothered us."

With Arrington, who has 1,294 yards on the season and has rushed for more than 100 yards in every game, the Bears offensive line probably will get plenty of chances in the final three games.

Lynch said that means trouble for Cal's opponents. "When I played in '93, we didn't have all the talent like Cal has now, so Steussie and Mahlum were big names," Lynch said. "These guys they have now might be no-names, but you are going to be hearing about them on Sundays."

## CAL CENTER HAS DIFFERENT MISSION

### Mormon Missionary Philip Sets Sights on Getting to Rose Bowl

*Dave Newhouse, Tribune Staff Writer*  
*Thursday, August 26, 2004*  
 © 2004 Oakland Tribune

Marvin Philip didn't know about the Cal coaching change in December 2001. The telephone, television, radio, Internet and newspapers were off limits to him. All instant communication was cut off.

No, he wasn't in Siberia, but the weather felt about the same in Minnesota and the Dakotas with winter coming on. Philip's life was changing without his knowledge, so he was unaware of the magnitude of that change.

Finally, a letter arrived from his mother informing him Tom Holmoe had been fired as Cal football coach, and an Oregon assistant, Jeff Tedford, had replaced him.

Philip was permitted by the Church of Latter Days Saints to write letters during his two-year mission, so he knew Cal was 1-10 in 2001. And he remembered thinking how fortunate he was to be spared such agony.

"I left a team that was 3-8 and came back to a team that was 7-5, then 8-6," he said. "It's funny how things kinda fell into place. I missed the 1-10 season, thank goodness. Wouldn't have wanted to be around for that one."

Following his mission, Philip returned to Cal in the spring of 2003 at 250 pounds. He was too light to play center, a position at which he had started as a 300-pound Cal freshman. He beefed up to 280 pounds by last fall and beat out the incumbent center, Nolan Bluntzer, by midseason.

Now a senior weighing 295, the 6-foot-2 Philip, is on the Rimington Award watch list as one of the top centers in the nation.

Philip actually came to Cal because Holmoe was agreeable to his going on a mission. Knee surgery his freshman year, plus that 3-8 record, convinced him the mission would be welcome relief.

Little did he know. He served in Rapid City, S.D., where he learned Spanish because there were Hispanic cultures in Wyoming and Minnesota. His mission encompassed five states, including North Dakota and Nebraska.

It was grueling work with no time off. Twelve months a year, seven days a week, even on holidays. He went from door to door, distributing church information and doing whatever labor that would help out the needy.

He could call home twice a year, on Christmas and Mother's Day.

"And I'm a real mama's boy," he said.

Putting on a coat and tie every morning, he walked 15 to 20 miles a day, worked 15-hour days, and tried his best to stay warm. That took a heavy coat and thermal underwear.

"The hardest thing was being out there in the cold," he said. "I'm a warm type of person, and it's negative degrees, and I'm knocking on doors."

Being away from football two years made him a better player.

"The desire to play football kinda grew," he said, "because it was the first time since I was a kid that I didn't have football."

He's now pursuing his goals of getting Cal to the Rose Bowl and playing in the NFL.

"Our personal goals outweigh all those (preseason projections)," he said of the Golden Bears. "We're harder on ourselves than anybody else is, but we believe we should be up there with all the top teams in the country."

Philip is the rock in the center of the Cal line.

"He's an extremely hard worker, very intelligent," said coach Jeff Tedford. "He's the foundation for what we're doing in the offensive line. His communication, his understanding of the game, he has been great for us."

Football two-a-days must feel like a sunny beach in Cancun to Philip compared to those chilly winter months on his mission.



## RIDDLE ON TRAIL OF CAL SACK MARK

*Dave Newhouse, Tribune Staff Writer*  
*Tuesday, November 23, 2004*  
 © 2004 Oakland Tribune

Whether it's art, literature, music or football, a body of work is the proven way of defining someone's ability.

Staying power is crucial, but critics also look for that one flash of brilliance — a memorable painting, book, song or even a tackle.

Cal defensive end Ryan Riddle has the body of work — 12.5 sacks this season, which is first in the Pac-10 and third nationally. He needs 1.5 sacks to break Andre Carter's single-season Cal record (13.5 in 2000).

Riddle, a 6-3, 250-pound senior, has two games left, Southern Mississippi on Dec. 4 and a bowl game. But Riddle had that one individual moment, too, that turned NFL heads.

USC running back LenDale White broke outside against Cal on Oct. 9 and appeared headed for big yardage. Riddle took after him with sprinter's speed for a lineman and tackled him after a 4-yard gain.

"A lot of people bring that play up to me," Riddle said after Monday's practice. "I was surprised I was able to match him foot to foot and beat him to the edge."

That one play crystallized in Cal coaches' minds why they recruited Riddle, the only Pac-10 school to offer him a scholarship.

"He was undersized by defensive end standards," Cal defensive line coach Ken Delgado recalled. "He's not a prototype Andre Carter-looking defensive end. But in junior college, he was relentless, blocking kicks, intercepting balls. His highlight tape was never-ending."

Riddle was so undersized, he sat out of football for two years after Culver City High. He worked at a movie rental place and waited on tables. Then, slightly larger, he gave football another try at El Camino Community College, where he knocked down quarterbacks with regularity.

But he came to Cal in the summer of 2003 weighing 232 pounds.

"He showed flashes of greatness last year," Delgado said. "But with weight training, he's really blossomed. There's no doubt in my mind he can play professional football. He's athletic and a playmaker."

Riddle also is a force. He has at least one tackle for a loss in each of Cal's 10 games. He has 19 tackles for losses, totaling 118 yards, ranking him second in the conference and seventh in the nation.

"I understand the speed of the game," Riddle said of his evolution as a premier pass rusher. "I have the quality of adjusting to (each) playing level."

His play is now instinctive. Thus opposing linemen find themselves in a track meet trying to keep the speedy Riddle from getting around them, or through them with his improved strength.

From Blockbuster to busting blocks, Riddle now has a chance to overtake Carter, a starting defensive end with the San Francisco 49ers.

"That's amazing, especially when you consider who owns that (sack) record," he said. "I'm just more proud about how our season is going as a team — 9-1, a possible BCS (bid). That's the most exciting thing."

In his senior farewell speech the night before the Big Game, Riddle brought home the message of togetherness.

"What I really admire about this team," he said that evening, "is we're not the biggest team, we're not the strongest team, the fastest, the most athletic. But the way we play together, the way we believe in each other, the way we hustle out there, definitely compensates and makes us excel beyond those teams that just rely on athletic ability."

It's the body of work, with individual commitment, that works best.

## CAL QB WON'T BE IGNORED

### Overlooked as a Prep, Rodgers Might Just Be Best in the Pac-10

*Dan Raley, Post-Intelligencer Staff Writer*  
*Friday, November 12, 2004*  
 © 2004 Seattle Post-Intelligencer

Picture Rick Neuheisel standing at the line of scrimmage, barking out signals and not getting the play off in time. It happened, and, oh, how the Washington football program is getting penalized. Yard after yard after yard.

The Huskies need a quarterback in the worst way. Tomorrow's opponent, fifth-ranked California, lines up behind Aaron Rodgers, arguably the Pac-10's best player at that position. Two years ago, both schools possessed a phone number for this unwanted-prep-prospect-turned-junior-college-whiz-kid. The Bears dialed it first.

"There was no fight for me," recalled Rodgers, who was coming off a highly productive season as a freshman at Butte College in Oroville, Calif. "Nobody knew about me until I committed to Cal. The next day Neuheisel called and said he had me on the radar, but he thought I was going to be (at the JC) two years.

"He said I could be behind Cody Pickett and start three years."

The Bears had Rodgers' word, but Neuheisel, then the UW coach, thought he could work the recruit a little. Rodgers and Taylor Barton, Pickett's former backup, knew each other. Both had once lived at the same time in Beaverton, Ore., and stayed friendly. Barton encouraged the other QB to check out the Huskies.

Rodgers had already informed Cal he was coming, but hadn't taken his recruiting trip. Neuheisel suggested he visit the Bears first, and then fly up to Seattle for a look. The quarterback never made it north.

"I decided to go to Cal and not burn any bridges," he said.

That's just another reason Husky Stadium is in flames these days.

Campaigning for votes

Rodgers, completing 70.3 percent of his passes, has outplayed or held his own this season against the likes of USC's Matt Leinart, Arizona State's Andrew Walter and Oregon State's Derek Anderson, all record-setting Pac-10 quarterbacks putting up huge numbers.

Against Leinart, widely considered a leading Heisman Trophy candidate, Rodgers was near perfect in a 23-17 loss in Los Angeles, connecting on 29 of 34 passes for 267 yards and a score, with no interceptions. In one torrid stretch, he drilled 23 consecutive completions, tying an NCAA record. Leinart was good but not great that day, hitting on 15 of 25 attempts for 164 yards and two scores, and throwing a pick.

"I think Aaron Rodgers is the premier quarterback in the league right now," UW coach Keith Gilbertson said. "By the numbers and percentage, he's really having a remarkable year."

Confirmed Huskies cornerback Derrick Johnson, "He's the frontrunner."

Still, Leinart directs the nation's top-ranked team. Walter is the Pac-10 leader in career touchdown passes with 80. Anderson is fifth all-time in passing yardage, set to pass Pickett for fourth this weekend.

Choosing the All-Pac-10 quarterback might require a coin flip, though Rodgers is as worthy as anyone. He thought so a year ago, too, and Leinart and Pickett, two guys he beat head to head, were selected as the first- and second-team players. Cal's impressive newcomer was given honorable mention recognition.

"I guess I'm just going to expect the worst and hope somebody sees something in me this time," he said of the impending balloting.

Cougars had a chance

Rodgers, of course, has been ignored before. He possessed a strong arm, had decent grades and came from a winning program at Pleasant Valley High School in Chico, Calif. He tried to explain all this in a cover letter he sent out, along with game film, to a handful of colleges. No one cared.

Purdue and Colorado State, two schools that had unearthed quarterback candidates in obscure places before, were targeted. They were unmoved. A Washington State coach stopped by the school and said he would be tracking Rodgers' progress throughout his senior year. The quarterback never heard from the Cougars again.

"The only school interested in me was San Diego State, but the coaches all got fired, and they forgot about me," he recalled.

Rodgers actually received a couple of rejection letters. He considered returning to Oregon and playing football for Lewis and Clark, the small school in Portland that counts former White House intern Monica Lewinsky as a former student.

He realized irreversible errors had been made in his recruitment, on both sides. He turned to Butte, the local JC team up the road, and regrouped.

"I didn't go to the right camps," Rodgers said. "People don't know how to find me. My high school didn't really know how to get my name out there. My parents and I didn't realize that your junior year was such a big year. I just slipped through the cracks a little."

Audible is possible

Rodgers doesn't make many mistakes anymore. In two seasons, he has thrown 558 passes for the Bears, and only nine have been intercepted. That's nearly a two-game total for this season's UW quarterbacks.

"I don't like throwing picks," he said. "I threw only five last year, and I tried to force the ball a little. I'm smarter with the ball this year."

Good decisions are one thing. Superior mechanics don't hurt, either.

"He has a really strong release," Gilbertson said. "The ball is up, out and it's gone. He's really good."

More and more people know it. Even though it was so hard to get to Cal, Rodgers might pass up his third and final season and head directly to the NFL next year. He grew up as a San Francisco 49ers fan, appreciating Joe Montana's talents.

A lot will depend on what Bears coach Jeff Tedford decides. He's also someone with rapidly increasing options, with several schools looking for a new coach — such as the UW — as well as pro teams, sending admiring glances his way.

"We came in and my parents asked on the recruiting trip, 'Are you going to be here three years?'" Rodgers said. "He said yeah, and we believed him. But he's had so many offers to deal with. I know what he wants. Without question, he wants an equal chance at recruiting. He wants the same facilities as everybody else. He's the reason the program is doing so well. I don't know why they can't find the money to just keep him here."

"It's scary knowing that Washington wants him."

Rodgers doesn't rule out anything. Friends tell him he should chase the pro dream right away. He'll get a second opinion from Tedford.

"The coach and I are going to sit down and see if there's an opportunity," he said. "If the opportunity is too good to pass up, maybe I'll consider that."

Rodgers, who has thrown for 1,816 yards and 18 touchdowns this season, will show off his high-powered Cal team and once-underappreciated arm in town tomorrow. He's the high school reject turned showcase quarterback. Nobody wanted him. Now seemingly everybody does. It's hard not to gloat.

"Maybe a little bit, but I'll keep that to myself," he said.

## CALIFORNIA DREAMING

### In just a year former P.V. and Butte standout Aaron Rodgers has gone from obscurity to the spotlight as starting quarterback for the nationally ranked Cal Bears. Where to now?

*Jason Cassidy, News & Review Staff Writer*  
*Thursday, November 18, 2004*  
 © 2004 Chico News & Review

In the 81-year history of UC Berkeley's Memorial Coliseum, there has never been a single night game. Until this night.

It's the last weekend of October, and from the rim of the Romanesque bowl at sunset, the panoramic view of the Bay Area is postcard perfect. The Berkeley rooftops are quickly fading into the cold shadows, and you can hear the hum of enormous generators below as four rent-a-cranes poke through the night, arching floodlights over the outer walls of the Coliseum to bathe the football stadium in light.

The warm glow has attracted some 60,000 Blue and Gold faithful for tonight's battle between their beloved Golden Bears and the Arizona State Sun Devils. With the abnormally late start, the tightly packed student section has had more time than usual to prepare for the game, and its collective voice is restless as a chant rises up, entreating the gladiators to take the field.

"Air-run Raw-jers! Air-run Raw-jers!"

The call is for Aaron Rodgers, the quarterback from nowhere who is now leading Cal through a dream season.

With superstar coach and program savior Jeff Tedford guiding him, Rodgers has gone from an unrecruited small-town star in Chico, Calif., first at Pleasant Valley High School, then at Butte College, to the short list for this year's Heisman Trophy award and, if he chooses to skip his senior year, to an early first-round pick in the 2005 NFL draft.

Cal is the seventh-ranked Division I team in the country heading into this night's contest versus 20th-ranked Arizona State. With a record of 7-1 (the only loss a squeaker to No. 1-ranked USC), an invitation to the Rose Bowl for the first time since 1958 seems likely, and there's even an outside chance Cal could be playing for the national title.

TBS is here tonight to televise the game—which is why the lights are on for the first time ever—and, 140 or so miles to the northeast, fans in Chico watch as one of their own takes full advantage of the spotlight that almost never was.

They don't have long to wait. Arizona State fumbles the opening kickoff, Cal recovers, and Rodgers and his potent offense take the field.

Snap. Pass. Ka-boom! Within seconds the cannon on Tightwad Hill (where cheapskates sit in the dirt and watch for free) explodes, announcing Rodgers' sweet pass to freshman Robert Jordan in the end zone on the very first play of the game. The celebration of the opening turnover hasn't even subsided, and with just 20 seconds ticked off Cal is up 7-0. The crowd goes berserk.

Rodgers' dagger hit its mark, as it nearly always does, and the game was over almost before it began. In the end, Cal hands the visitors a 27-0 shutout and climbs to No. 4 in the national rankings.

From here on out, whichever chapter in Aaron Rodgers' football career is being written, the story will always begin the same way: It almost didn't happen.

Since his arrival at Cal, every media outlet, from the Sacramento Bee to ESPN to the San Francisco Chronicle, has been telling the tale, adding the heroics of the last game or the NFL draft projections by the latest analyst to that same dramatic plot point that makes the Rodgers story such a great story.

Despite a stellar career at Pleasant Valley, Rodgers attracted no interest from Division I programs. He'd broken nearly every one of his high school's passing records as a varsity quarterback, and his 4,419 career yards passing is not only the best in school history, but also the sixth best in Northern Section history. That's after only two seasons—the top five had three years to set their marks.

Some Division III schools and junior colleges were taking looks at him, but short of walking on somewhere, playing football at a major school was quickly becoming a faded dream. Rodgers even toyed with the idea of going to school to become a lawyer.

"For whatever reason, he just slipped through the cracks," his father, Ed Rodgers, says during a lunch break from the chiropractic office he runs out of In Motion Fitness in Chico. With the 6-foot-4-inch brick-house stature of a former player (he was a linebacker for Chico State University in the late-'70s), Rodgers knows football, and he was disappointed that his son wasn't getting any looks.

"I had an interesting conversation with a Division I coach right before his senior year," the elder Rodgers explains. "He told me that very rarely do Division I coaches look north of Sacramento."

While geography appeared to be working against his success, Rodgers still felt passionate about playing football, so he turned to a local institution, Butte College. Though he had no way of knowing it at the time, that would turn out to be the best decision he could have made.

As luck would have it, our own little community college, hidden away in the foothills between Chico and Oroville, is actually a national junior-college football powerhouse. Coach Craig Rigsbee hasn't had one losing season in his 15 years at the helm, has won more than 80 percent of his 160 games, and has guided Butte to the conference championship a remarkable nine times.

More important, though, his program is a veritable blue-chip factory, and dozens of former Butte players are now playing for Division I schools, and a handful (such as Dallas Cowboy All-Pro lineman Larry Allen) have made it onto NFL rosters.

With some coaxing from his father, Rigsbee and Greg Barton, a former quarterback for the Detroit Lions who mentored Rodgers at quarterback camps, the 18-year-old decided to give Butte a try.

Rodgers immediately got his confidence back. In a system that was designed around his ability to throw the ball, Rodgers completed 62 percent of his passes and averaged over 16 yard per completion, picking up conference and regional MVP awards along the way.

One of Rodgers' favorite targets at Butte was a 6-foot, 5-inch monster tight end named Garrett Cross. Two years earlier, when Rodgers was a junior at P.V., Cross was a man among boys as a senior at cross-town rival Chico High School. Also spurned by major recruiters, Cross was at Butte to bulk up and hopefully show up on Division I radar screens.

Putting past allegiances behind them, the duo tore up the competition at Butte. Cross was a recipient of 39 of Rodgers' passes, 10 of them for touchdowns. By the end of the season, Butte had won its conference and was the No. 2-ranked junior college team in the nation, finishing the season with a 10-1 record and a 37-20 victory over San Joaquin Delta in the Holiday Bowl.

While Rodgers and Cross were in Butte County devouring the NorCal conference, a new coach was in the process of taking a Cal Berkeley team that had finished 1-10 the year before and guiding it to a 7-5 record, giving the program its first winning season in nine years and earning Pac-10 Coach of the Year honors.

Coaching at Fresno State University and, most recently, the University of Oregon (as offensive coordinator under Mike Bellotti, former head coach of Chico State University's football program), Jeff Tedford had gained a reputation for developing great quarterbacks, with Trent Dilfer, Joey Harrington and Cal's Kyle Boller all blossoming into NFL quarterbacks thanks in large part to his grooming.

With the majority of his starters set to leave after that 2002 season, Tedford was on a scouting tear, and one player on his radar was Butte's Cross. Tedford hadn't even heard of the freshman Rodgers.

This changed when Tedford began scrutinizing tapes of Cross. He couldn't get over the impeccable mechanics of the young quarterback throwing him all those passes. Already satisfied that this new prospect had the necessary physical attributes to make a good quarterback, he made a trip to Butte to check out both players.

After talking with Rodgers and after seeing his poise and leadership on the field, Tedford knew he'd struck gold. He returned to Berkeley with a new tight end and a new quarterback on his roster.

It's unusual for a Division I team to take a juco player after one season, so Ed Rodgers gives Rigsbee a lot of credit for giving his son the green light to move on.

"Rigsbee held his hands open with Aaron and said, 'You were meant to do this.' He could've been selfish—I think it shows what kind of character the guy has."

It's Wednesday, the day when one hour is set aside before the Cal football team's afternoon meeting for Rodgers to talk with the media.

As he walks into Cal's Hall of Fame room, which is buried within the enormous concrete of Memorial Coliseum, Rodgers is happy to hear that it's a hometown paper waiting for an interview.

"Sweet. I love Chico."

The dusty room, lined with glass cases of photos and trophies and plaques documenting Cal's numerous sports accomplishments, seems an especially appropriate setting to talk with the current big man on campus.

At first glance, the 6-foot-2-inch Rodgers is unassuming. At second glance the chiseled biceps of a dedicated athlete pop out of his T-shirt. And at third glance the serious gaze of a focused quarterback is a bit unnerving, even as the friendly young 20-year-old treats a visiting reporter and photographer as guests in his home.

Relaxed and looking a little tired, he sits down across the conference table and politely ignores his sack lunch while speaking openly about growing up in Chico, idolizing Joe Montana (he still wears Montana's jersey under his uniform) and his steep and improbable rise to the top of the college football world.

"It's kind of crazy," Rodgers says by way of introduction to most of his comments about the last year of his life. He chuckles at the absurdity of his sudden high-profile celebrity and at the mention of his name in the same sentence as "Heisman" and mostly at the luck of crossing paths with three men, first Rigsbee, then Cross (who, after suffering a leg fracture in 2003, has returned to Cal's multi-option receiving corps) and subsequently Tedford.

"I'm a firm believer that everything happens for a reason," he says, adding, "Coach Rigsbee is like a brother to me. My Butte experience was so crucial. ... I was able to be around good people and a good program."

Coming into Cal, Rodgers was a backup for the first time in his life, waiting in the wings for the first five games of the 2003 season. After impressing off the bench with a 15-for-25, 224-yard performance against Utah, Rodgers got his first start against Illinois, a Division I program where Rodgers had a friend on the coaching staff and where he had hoped to play coming out of high school. Illinois' coach never called, and Rodgers returned the favor by leading Cal to a 31-24 win, going 20 for 37, throwing one touchdown and running for another.

After starting 1-4, Cal went 7-3 the rest of the way with the new starting quarterback. And the wins weren't mere creampuff-stomping. In his second start, against conference rivals and West Coast powerhouse USC, Rodgers went 18 for 25, threw two touchdown passes and ran for a touchdown as Cal upset the eventual co-national champs 34-31 in triple overtime.

There was also the Big Game, the 107-year old rivalry game with Stanford, in which he broke Jim Plunkett's total-yardage record for the game with 414 all-purpose yards in the 28-16 season-finale victory.

The crowning achievement of that first season, the one that sealed an honorable mention for the All-Pac-10 team for 2003 and pre-season MVP selection for 2004, was the 52-49 upset of national powerhouse Virginia Tech at the Insight Bowl in Cal's first bowl appearance in nine years.

In that game Rodgers completed an insane 77 percent of his passes with zero interceptions, passed for two touchdowns and ran in two more.

"Christmastime at my house—holiday times—you watched bowl games. I watched every bowl game when I was growing up," Rogers remembers, adding, "It was amazing that I was playing in a bowl game—something I'd always dreamed about doing."

It's likely he'll be playing in another bowl game soon. Now sitting pretty at No. 4 in the national rankings, Cal needs to win its final two games, the Big Game versus Stanford (4-6) on Saturday and a makeup game (postponed due to hurricanes) at Southern Miss (5-3) on Dec. 4, to insure that it will be playing in Pasadena on New Year's Day.

"We feel really blessed," says Ed Rodgers, echoing a sentiment he and his son repeat throughout their interviews. "I can't talk about his road without really talking about our faith as a family. ... That's an important part. I try not to leave it out."

"We're a very strong Christian family," Aaron Rodgers says. "I know they're always praying for me, so it's encouraging."

The Rodgers' home is at the end of a dead-end street, and you pass a line of portable basketball hoops parked along the sidewalk as you near their big, blue house. The scene is nice. Comforting. It doesn't take a sociologist to see that this is kind of place you want to come home to.

"If something goes wrong with football, I have a great family to fall back on," Aaron Rodgers says, displaying an ability to see the big picture despite the frenzied atmosphere that often distorts the young minds of athletes in his position. "I have a great city that's supported me, which has been unbelievable. I have great friends who care about me regardless if we win or lose or how good I play."

They do love to watch him play, though. Both parents have made it to all the Cal home games. Rodgers' mother Darla sends notes of encouragement and prayers to his fellow players, while his father has even given adjustments to some of the guys.

It's not all about Aaron, though. Older brother Luke, who's now a pre-med student at Chico State, used to play football, and younger brother Jordan is the quarterback for the junior-varsity squad at P.V.

"We watch [Jordan] on Friday and Aaron Saturday," says proud papa Ed, flashing a slightly weary smile.



While he acknowledges that Aaron's current success feels "kind of unreal," Ed understands how his son got from there to here.

"At 3 and 4 years he'd sit and watch the whole [football] game on TV; as a 5- and 6-year-old he'd know all the players; and, as a 7- and 8-year-old he'd know all the stats.

"Aaron is remarkable at keeping focused," Rodgers continues. "I built him a wooden field, like a football field, and he'd make players—he'd sit there for hours and design plays. He had a playbook ... stuff other kids didn't do."

Despite the early interest, the Rodgers kept the boys out of football until eighth grade, encouraging them to play sports like soccer to save their bodies from as much wear and tear as possible.

But once the football started, Dad joined his sons on the field.

"We always played a game called Pass Pattern," Ed Rodgers explains. "One would be the receiver, I'd be the quarterback, the other would be the DB, and they'd try to guard each other. It got real competitive."

In recalling those days, Aaron Rodgers admits that the sports-centric environment of his childhood—he also starred on the basketball and baseball teams at P.V.—was crucial in his evolution as an athlete, and that early on he knew that he didn't want to limit his time on the field to his high-school years.

"Me and my brother used to always talk about, 'We're going to be NBA stars,' 'We're going to be NFL stars.' That was always a dream of ours, and Mom and Dad never shot it down."

The Arizona State game is over, and at the spot along the concourse that overlooks the tunnel leading to the Cal locker room, people are piling up to catch a glimpse of the winning quarterback, who's still on the field giving post-game interviews.

With his Coliseum adversaries summarily dispatched, the conquering hero passes below on the way to the locker room, with a shrieking chorus of young women above him shouting: "Aaron!" "Aaron!" "Over here!"

That kind of stuff is just beginning for Rodgers. It's been only one year since his big splash against USC last season. In that time he's gone from the backup quarterback on a team predicted to finish at the bottom of its conference to the starting quarterback on the fourth-best team in the country.

What's that do to a guy's life?

There are those screaming girls, for sure, and the everyday fans—backslappers and autograph-seekers—who do their part to help sustain that Saturday-to-Saturday buzz but also make walking across campus to classes a growing challenge.

And there are the rock stars. Well, one, Counting Crows lead singer Adam Duritz, a Cal alumnus, who joins the team in the locker room to sing the Cal fight song and whose stylish dreadlocks could be seen bouncing around the Cal bench during the Arizona State game.

There are also, of course, the media, not just clamoring for Rodgers' time for interviews and sound bites, but also creating his football myth right in front of him, before it even plays out. The stories in the newspapers grow by the day, and Rodgers has gone from reading about what he just did on the football field to reading about what he's going to do—in Pasadena, at the Downtown Athletic Club in New York for the Heisman Trophy ceremony, or next spring for the 2005 NFL draft.

Even Hall of Fame quarterback Jim Plunkett is talking about him in interviews!

All of this is not really that crazy when you take a step back and look at the big picture. If Rodgers opts to leave Cal for the pros after this season, every expert from ESPN to The Sporting News is projecting him to be the first or second quarterback taken in the draft. Last year, the top three quarterbacks taken received signing bonuses of anywhere from \$9 million to \$20 million, and that kind of money, no matter what you're doing to earn it, draws a lot of attention.

A climb so steep, so quick can give even the fittest athlete a bad case of altitude sickness, but Rodgers appears to be mentally acclimated.

"Being the quarterback, and with the success the team's having, this stuff comes with it," he says, adding, "It does kind of drain me sometimes mentally, but I don't really mind it that much."

The grounding effect of that quiet Chico neighborhood and the dependable foundation in the home at the end of the block go a long way toward keeping Rodgers even-keeled despite the enormity of his two commitments—to a major football program with all its attendant distractions and to one of the toughest schools academically in the country as a communications major (with a business emphasis).

But at the press conference after the Arizona State game, there's something else about Rodgers that comes to the surface, something hinted at in his childhood with the Sundays spent dissecting the 49ers on TV and the energy put into compiling play books for his toy football players.

When Rodgers comes in through the back door, wearing a Cal T-shirt, shorts and a pair of navy-blue socks, a bevy of beat writers turn their attention away from Coach Tedford at the front of the room and scurry back to the corner to meet him. The writers seem energized by the 20-year-old phenom. As he talks, these men who are double or triple Rodgers' age seem like kids in awe of one of their heroes—giggling at his self-effacing humor and generally showing him a lot more respect than men their age are in the habit of doing for one so young.

Rodgers accepts the role. With his hands at his sides most of the time, he squares his jaw, assumes a command presence and like a true leader quietly takes control of the room.

If I were to guess, this will end up being the real story—the guy is a born leader. And the picture of the shy overgrown kid who still has a bedroom in his parents' home belies a very serious side, a mental toughness at work that suggests that Rodgers' devotion to this pursuit runs deep. Sure, the "almost never happened" twist will live on. But in the end, if Rodgers ends up being one of the great ones, it'll be because he was born to do it, realized he was born to do it and was disciplined in his pursuit of fulfilling that promise.

All the same, though, he's still playing a game.

"It's so fun for me," Rodgers admits. "Every day, just living out a dream."

It's hard not to get caught up in that sentiment. The Cal fans, alumni and students alike, are living out a dream season. Likewise, UC Berkeley's dreams of an elite football program have Rodgers' legacy and Tedford's genius as a foundation to build upon (as long as they make good on promises to upgrade the stadium's outdated facilities).

But no one dreams bigger than the press, and in a recent editorial in the San Jose Mercury News, columnist Tim Kawakami had a bright idea for what the struggling San Francisco 49ers could do to return the franchise to its former glory: "do whatever they can to land Cal's Jeff Tedford" as head coach and "draft Cal quarterback Aaron Rodgers (if he declares as a junior) with their inevitable high pick."

It's a tantalizing dream, and one that just might be swirling around the heads of many a football fan in the Bay Area (including one young quarterback in Berkeley resting up for the Big Game) as they lie in bed at night, dreaming of a new Joe Montana leading the team onto the field.



## HOW JEFF TEDFORD REVAMPED THE CAL FOOTBALL PROGRAM

*Jon Wilner, Mercury News Staff Writer*

*Thursday, November 18, 2004*

*© 2004 San Jose Mercury News*

During the Pacific-10 Conference's annual spring meetings, Cal officials attended a presentation on bowl game logistics. When the discussion turned to the national championship game, Dan Coonan noticed his coach, Jeff Tedford, jotting down: "Arrive: Dec. 26."

Coonan was stunned.

It was spring 2002 - months before Tedford's first game at the helm of a program that was coming off a 1-10 season.

"I remember shaking my head and thinking, 'We've either got a complete dreamer or the best coach in the country,'" recalled Coonan, now the athletic director at Santa Clara. "It's pretty clear now that it's the latter."

Tedford took over a program that won one game and in three amazing seasons has produced a national power with one loss.

The Bears (8-1, 6-1) are ranked fourth in the nation and on the brink of a Bowl Championship Series bid. If they beat Stanford on Saturday and Southern Mississippi on Dec. 4, they'll remain in the hunt for the national title and probably clinch their first Rose Bowl appearance in 46 years.

So Tedford might have gotten the date right after all. Arrive: Dec. 26. He just missed by two years.

"As a staff, that was the vision we had, and we thought it was possible," Tedford said Monday. "I wasn't going to sit there and say, 'We were 1-10, so we're not going to win.'"

Here's an inside look at how he turned the program around:

### WINNING HEARTS AND MINDS

Coonan wanted to hire Tedford in December 2001 because of what he saw: a master organizer who developed NFL quarterbacks at Oregon and an innovative play-caller whose offense was one of the most productive in the country.

But Steve Gladstone, Cal's athletic director at the time, wanted to hire Tedford because of what he sensed.

"What distinguishes Jeff are his leadership qualities," said Gladstone, who still coaches crew at the school. "Leadership isn't yelling and screaming. It's not rah-rah. Leadership is articulating a mission, it's setting a standard that is immutable, and it's an emotional empathy that causes people to coalesce around you."

Tedford, 43, has made a psychological connection with the players that's as integral to his success as recruiting and play-calling - and it's a connection rooted in his own troubled past.

Tedford's father was an alcoholic who left home when Tedford was 10. His mother worked two jobs to support five children in a tiny home in Downey, on the edge of South Central Los Angeles. Tedford, the youngest child, spent much of his time on the streets. One year, he lived in the

warehouse where his brother worked.

The closest thing Tedford had to a role model was his older brother, Dennis, who encouraged Tedford to get off the streets and into a football uniform.

A gifted quarterback, Tedford attended Cerritos College and Fresno State, where he was named an honorable-mention All-American. He spent six seasons in the Canadian Football League, then became an unpaid assistant at Fresno State. After two years, Tedford took a job selling cardboard boxes. Eventually, he gave coaching another try and joined the staff of the Calgary Stampeders.

Tedford now makes a reported \$800,000 annually, lives in a luxurious home in the East Bay and has such a sparkling resume that he'll probably receive a multi-million dollar contract offer - if not from Cal then from Washington, Florida or an NFL team.

But when Tedford looks at his players, he sees the son of an alcoholic wandering the streets of Downey.

"You feel like he can relate," Bears safety Ryan Gutierrez said. "To buy in to what he wants, you have to have complete trust that he's been there, and he has struggled."

### A UNIFIED TEAM

Tedford's first task was to get to know his team. He met with every player asked them to identify four leaders. No one could; some could not name any.

Stunned by the responses, Tedford handed out leadership handbooks to the seniors and established a team council to help address issues ranging from locker-room music to training-table food.

He organized unity meetings in which the players were divided into groups and given a series of questions, which started easy (name a favorite movie) and progressed to difficult (describe a life crisis). The players shared their responses with the group and then the team.

The walls came tumbling down.

"Before Coach Tedford got here, the team had cliques," senior defensive tackle Lorenzo Alexander said. "You had black people here, white people there. The unity meetings let us get to know guys."

To develop trust, Tedford introduced the concept of "holding the rope." He told the players to imagine they were hanging from the edge of a cliff, with a person of their choice holding the other end of the rope.

"I told each player to look around the room and ask yourself, 'Who can I trust to hold the rope? Who is going to let their hands bleed for me?'" he said.

The concept resonated so deeply that it has endured to this day. Before each game, the Bears hang a rope above the locker-room door. On his way to the field, each player gives it a tug.

"When you don't trust the guy next to you, you overplay," Alexander said. "When there's trust, you do your job and the system works."

To establish teamwork, Tedford introduced "cross vaulting." While touring the Sattui Winery's caves with his assistants, Tedford noticed the

unusual construction of the four-sided cross vaults, which come together at the highest point in the ceiling. He learned that the vaults are held together by evenly distributing the stress among each brick - by compression, not external support.

Instantly, he linked the vault construction to his team. He instructed Cal's publications department to develop a cross-vault design, which was then printed on T-shirts for the players. The words "offense," "defense," "special teams" and "trust" represented the four sides of the cross vaults.

"It was a powerful message for our players," Tedford said, "a message that became one of our rallying cries."

## REVAMPING THE RECRUITING

Tedford had earned the players' trust, identified leaders and established teamwork. His next move was to change the recruiting process.

Under Tedford's predecessor, Tom Holmoe, Cal focused on the massive talent pool in Southern California. Although the strategy produced some gems (Kyle Boller, Nnamdi Asomugha), it also forced the Bears to compete against the Los Angeles schools on their turf.

Tedford shifted the focus to Northern California. During the coach's first spring, the Bears called or visited every school in the Bay Area, recruiting assistant Andrew McGraw said. The move produced instant results. Many of Cal's best young players are homegrown, including defensive end Phillip Mbakogu (Hayward) and tailback Marshawn Lynch (Oakland), whom Tedford has called "the best freshman running back I've ever seen."

"Every year, there are dozens of blue-chip players locally," McGraw said. "You have a better chance of getting a Bay Area kid to Cal than a Southern California kid."

Tedford and his staff have shown a remarkable eye for talent, but some of their best moves involve passing on highly rated players who don't fit their model.

In spring 2003, the Bears began searching for a junior college quarterback to replace Boller. The staff watched thousands of hours of film, talked with hundreds of coaches and passed on many of the biggest names in the country. But when they finally found their man - a little-known freshman at Butte College named Aaron Rodgers - they had the scholarship waiting.

"You could say we stumbled across Aaron, but we really didn't," assistant head coach Jim Michalczyk said. "We looked at every JC quarterback we could find. There were lots of prospective guys, but you bring back film and find out they aren't exactly what you're looking for."

## AN OFFENSIVE MACHINE

Cal's offense, ranked fifth in the country in points (38.1) and yards (491.3) per game, is the fraternal twin of the systems used by Arizona State and Boise State. All three are offshoots of the Oregon offense, which Tedford learned during his four years as the Ducks' offensive coordinator.

The system emphasizes misdirection and a moving pocket, and it has a massive playbook. The coaches spend hundreds of hours scouting the opponent on video - they sleep in the office four nights a week - and then select the plays most likely to succeed.

"We can run the same plays out of any formation," receiver Geoff McArthur said. "That's how we catch guys off guard. Sometimes, I see defensive players arguing, saying 'You were supposed to do that.'"

The Bears' often-immaculate execution stems from Tedford's obsession with detail and loathing of shortcuts.

When McArthur gave up on a play during a rainy spring practice, Tedford showed a replay to the team - over and over and over. If Rodgers' release point is an inch too low, he hears about it. If a linebacker takes on a block with the wrong shoulder, he hears about it.

"If you are two minutes late for a meeting with your academic adviser, you pay for it," Gutierrez said. "Coach knows everything, and he enforces what he says, so it becomes habitual."

Tedford's genius is not only teaching the offense but also calling the game. He knows the defensive tendencies. He knows which formation to run in every situation, and he knows how to use a play in the first quarter to set up a play in the fourth.

He becomes so engrossed in the action, so attuned to the rhythms of the game, it's as if he's back at Fresno State playing quarterback.

"Everything he does - the protection schemes, what the running backs and receivers are doing - is through the eyes of the quarterback," assistant Eric Kiesau said.

"I've never seen a guy with such a feel for the game. He's two steps ahead of everyone."

And only two years behind the impossible schedule he set for himself.

## TEDFORD EXTENDS CONTRACT TO 2009

### Cal Football Coach Signs for \$1.5 Million Yearly Salary

*Kevin Morsony, Daily Cal Staff Writer*  
*Tuesday, December 7, 2004*  
 © 2004 The Daily Californian

Twenty-four hours after missing out on its first Rose Bowl since 1959, the Cal football program was given reason for a half-decade of hope.

Coach Jeff Tedford signed a new five-year contract yesterday that will run through the 2009 season.

"I am very happy today," Tedford said. "Yesterday was a very disappointing day. But I could not be more encouraged by this administration and the direction that this program is going."

The deal will pay him a guaranteed \$1.5 million per season.

Tedford's previous base salary was reportedly \$800,000.

Incentives for winning national championships and for academic goals, among other items, could increase the new yearly amount by as much as \$300,000.

Additionally, Tedford will receive \$2.5 million if he stays in Berkeley for the entire five seasons, bringing the total value of the contract to \$10 million before incentives.

Athletic Director Sandy Barbour called the payout at the end of the contract "golden handcuffs."

The lucrative contract was paid for out of Chancellor Robert Birgeneau's discretionary athletic fund, Barbour said. The fund contains a pool of money collected from a consortium of major donors.

"We went out there with a call to action," Barbour said. "We would not have been able to do this without private funds."

After completing a 10-1 season in which his team finished No. 5 in the Bowl Championship Series rankings, Tedford was rumored to be a top candidate for several coaching jobs around the country, including at Washington and Notre Dame.

Barbour said more than one major football program had contacted the athletic department to ask permission to interview Tedford.

Tedford, however, said he never directly talked with any of the other programs.

"It was very important that we got this done in a hurry. I did not want to entertain any other offers," Tedford said. "I am 100 percent dedicated to this program."

In 2001, the year before Tedford was hired, Cal finished the season with a 1-10 record, and Tedford has been responsible for the dramatic turnaround in the program's fortunes.

In each of his three seasons, the Bears have finished with winning records. This year, for the second season in a row, the team is headed to a postseason bowl game.

The attendance at home games topped 64,000 this year, providing a financial windfall for the university and the athletic department. Football, along with men's basketball, is financially responsible for supporting the university's 25-team athletic department.

"Our philosophy has been to say that we would fairly compensate Jeff from day one," Barbour said. "He is very cognizant that he and this football program is part of the larger sports program."

Barbour took over for Steve Gladstone as athletic director in September.

"When I got here I identified urgent priorities," Barbour said Monday. "Jeff's contract was one of those."

A clause in Tedford's previous contract would have lowered its buyout to \$500,000 if significant progress was not made on the Memorial Stadium renovation project by Dec. 15.

Tedford said his new contract also provides provisions for stadium progress.

"It's not significant. It's not something I am paying attention to," he said of the stadium provisions. "I am working with the university on a lot of goals—the stadium project is one of those."

The announcement on a physical plan for the renovations should be announced in the coming weeks, Barbour said.

Tedford said he and Barbour will soon discuss better compensation packages for the team's assistant coaches. Defensive coordinator Bob Gregory is a finalist for this season's Broyles award, given to the nation's top assistant coach.

"When I came here three years ago, we had high expectations," Tedford said. "We have accomplished some of our goals—but we're not finished."

## TEAM – HOLIDAY BOWL

### AFTER GOOD CRY, CHEER FOR BEARS AT HOLIDAY

*Carl Steward, Tribune Staff Columnist*  
*Monday, December 06, 2004*  
© 2004 Oakland Tribune

In the end, Cal wound up getting blown away by Hurricane Ivan after all. That, and by a system with more worms in it than a Southern Mississippi bait shop.

Those cruel facts quickly dispensed, we offer the wisdom if not the wit of Jeff Tedford.

Be disappointed, but not dejected. Be upset, but not undone.

And please, whatever you do, don't whine. Not the least little whimper or snivel. You're still going somewhere, Blues, somewhere pretty nice. Compared to three years ago, it's still every bit a paradise.

In fact, here are your new marching orders, Cal Nation: Chin up, chest out and go directly to San Diego on Dec. 30. Tear up the city while watching Cal tear apart Texas Tech in the Holiday Bowl. Make it your party and rest assured no one will be having any more fun than you are anywhere else.

This may sound patronizing, but San Diego's a far better city than Pasadena anyway — better food, less smog, more sights — and what do you care about the bowl payout inequities? You aren't getting a dime of it either way.

And if you really want to get mordant about Sunday's BCS rug-pull, maybe wear a rose on your lapel between now and then. A big, bright, beat-Stanford-butt red one.

Oh sure, you can crunch the bogus BCS computer figures and get madder. You can belittle and berate Mack Brown and his shameless whoring for poll votes all you want. You can write your "My 100 Reasons Cal Got Jobbed" and feel justified about darn near every one. But it still won't help, just it isn't the folks down at Auburn.

See, it's the system, not the team. Just remember that and it'll bring a smile back to your face eventually. System, not team. Horrible system, great team. We knew it going in, we know it coming out. Maybe more so in pain.

In fact, while this 10-1 Cal team somehow isn't the school's first in 46 years to go to the Rose Bowl, it still is the best and most entertaining team anyone's seen from Tightwad Hill on down in 46 years. Longer, actually. That '59 Rose Bowl team went 7-4. Lost to UOP and Oregon State, for crying out loud, and got trounced in Pasadena. Even '92 was better.

This Bears team was a absolute ball to watch and the closer you got to them the better they looked. Tedford was and is a total class act, as fine a man as he is a football coach and that's a very, very large statement. Dammit, Cal, don't you dare lose this guy.

The players? What more can you say about quarterback Aaron Rodgers? How about J.J. Arrington? How about Ryan Riddle and Geoff McArthur and Wendell Hunter and Chase Lyman and Lorenzo Alexander? Fantastic young men, all of whom have an excellent chance of being fantastic additions to the NFL. But even if they don't make it in the pros, they'll still

be fantastic young men with a Cal education trying to make the world a better place. Maybe one will even deem it's his calling in duty to take down the farce that is the BCS.

Yes, they all deserved to go to the Rose Bowl along with all of those long-suffering Cal alums. But Texas deserved to go to the Rose Bowl, too. Utah deserved to go to the Rose Bowl. Boise State, for Payette's sake, deserved to go to the Rose Bowl. OK, we draw the line at Pitt and the Big Yeast.

But in a flawed system — I prefer the term "diseased" personally — somebody's destined to get misdiagnosed. Usually more than one team, in fact, as was the case again this year.

Fact is, Cal needed to thump their Saturday night foe and didn't do it. They needed something on the order of 55-8, not only showing no mercy but no esteem.

"We didn't cash in in the last seconds, I guess, or beg for votes after the game," said an angry Rodgers.

In sobering retrospect, what the Bears really needed to do was play the final game on Sept. 16, even if meant playing in a hurricane and on four days rest. Then a 26-16 outcome at Southern Miss wouldn't have mattered. Not enough people would have seen it, and even if they had, they would have forgotten it or written it off to early-season roughness.

Instead, it played out on national TV as the Bears' ultimate Judgment Day with most poll voters watching. Unfair, said Tedford Sunday, and he's right.

Cal's 41-6 romp over Stanford should have been their season-ending exclamation point, and while the Cal folks hem and haw about how Sunday might have played out under those circumstances, gee, what do you think? No doubt about it, the Bears would be playing Michigan on Jan. 1 instead of the Longhorns.

But they won't. So, hey, go in your closet, weep uncontrollably for five minutes, then come out and be over it. Granted, it hurts, particularly if you've been following this program for decades and thought for sure this was the Red Soxian breakthrough.

And yes, there is that air of fatalism that always seems to accompany Cal football, that there may never be a better shot at Pasadena than this one. Tedford could be gone to Washington or Notre Dame tomorrow, Rodgers could be off to the 49ers, Memorial Stadium finally could crumble and fall into the sea, Stanford could take back the Axe for the foreseeable millennium and some guy named Lem will be coaching a 3-8 Cal team of undisciplined bandits.

Maybe, but doubtful. We've watched Tedford's baby hatch and grow and reach preposterous competitive proportions in an incredibly short period of time. Somehow, it doesn't feel like a Franz Klammer run is imminent.

If it is, well, show up en masse in San Diego. Fill the restaurants, hotels, and last but not least, Qualcomm Stadium. Have a beer or three and cheer the Bears and think about what Willy Shakespeare once said about a rose by any other name would smell as sweet. Cal and its fans can still make that happen, and should.

After all, one more time with feeling: It's the system, not the team.

## JUST MISSED IT

### Cal Shows it Belongs in Loss to No. 1 USC

*Bruce Adams, Chronicle Staff Writer*  
*Sunday, October 10, 2004*  
© 2004 San Francisco Chronicle

It was everything it was supposed to be — this dramatic game between two of the best teams in the country. It was everything but a Cal win.

No. 1 USC beat the No. 7 Golden Bears 23-17 Saturday, with what nearly was the miracle of the Los Angeles Coliseum turning to bitter heartbreak on the Bears' last possession.

In defeat, the Bears still validated their spot on the national stage, played well in most phases of the game and remained in position for a landmark season.

"There's no quit in our team," coach Jeff Tedford said. "We've got great days ahead of us."

Cal was trailing by six with a 1st-and-goal at the 9 with 1 minute and 47 seconds remaining. Quarterback Aaron Rodgers was having a record-setting day. The Bears were moving with relative ease against the Trojans' vaunted defense. It appeared that victory was at hand.

But Cal's last offensive play was an incomplete pass in the end zone to Jonathan Makonnen, who slipped while trying to get past Trojans cornerback Kevin Arbet.

"I couldn't get the job done," said a dour and disappointed Rodgers. "I was trying to make a play there at the end."

Expectations were high for this game. The outcome could eventually have an impact on the national championship as well as the Pac-10 title. It also was to be a showdown between Heisman candidates Rodgers and USC quarterback Matt Leinart.

Leinart's team won but Rodgers tied the NCAA single-game record for consecutive completions.

In fact, Cal's offense and defense both played well enough to win — battling the din from a crowd of more than 90,000 much of the way.

"USC is a great football team," Tedford said. "Our guys went toe-to-toe with them."

"It was a challenging day," USC coach Pete Carroll said.

Mistakes, mostly in Cal's kicking game, made the difference — although Tedford wouldn't blame his special teams.

"We're all in this together," he said. "We win together and we lose together."

Two errors were particularly costly.

In the first quarter, long snapper L.P. Ladouceur was low on his snap and David Lonie was unable to handle the ball and couldn't get off the punt. USC took over at Cal's 31 and went ahead 7-0 on a 5-yard touchdown pass from Leinart to LenDale White.

In the second quarter, Tim Mixon muffed an attempt to field a punt. The Trojans recovered at the Cal 16, settling up a 33-yard field goal by Ryan Killeen — who turned sharpshooter in nailing three on the day — to go ahead 13-3.

While USC led the entire way, the game was close until the closing minutes.

"Momentum was huge in this game," safety Ryan Gutierrez said. "They beat us today. But I feel we could beat these guys nine times out of 10."

The Bears scored in the second quarter on a 39-yard field goal by freshman Tom Schneider — the first in his college career.

Geoff McArthur appeared to return to form, leading the Bears with seven catches for 101 yards and scoring the team's first touchdown on a 20-yard pass from Rodgers in the second quarter.

Freshman Marshawn Lynch finished Cal's scoring with a 2-yard touchdown in the third quarter.

Rodgers was 29-for-34 for 267 yards, compared with Leinart, who went 15-for-25 for 164 yards and two touchdowns — the last a 16-yard toss to Dwayne Jarrett.

J.J. Arrington carried the ball 21 times for 112 yards, his fourth consecutive 100-plus yard effort of the year.

And Cal defenders held the Trojans running duo of White and Reggie Bush to a combined 75 yards.

"It was extremely intense," Gutierrez said. "USC came out firing early. We held together and tried to fight back."

It all came down to Cal's final possession.

Rodgers drove the Bears 55 yards in six plays.

Once inside the USC 10, his first pass to Noah Smith was incomplete — the ball zipping by the freshman receiver. Then, Rodgers was sacked for a 5-yard loss.

On third down, Geoff McArthur was trying to break free of coverage in the back of the end zone. He came forward, still closely covered, and Rodgers put the ball low and away. McArthur was unable to make the catch. It would have taken a supreme effort.

The incompleteness to Makonnen was Cal's last chance.

"I'm not sure if he slipped or got hooked," Tedford said. "Something happened."

Makonnen said he wasn't sure.

In any event, the Trojans (5-0, 2-0 Pac-10) took over and ran out the clock.

And the Bears (3-1, 1-1), Tedford said, came away from the loss with a measure of football riches.

"There's a great feeling of resolve," he said outside Cal's locker room, "a feeling of resolve not to lose again."