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# Lueders aims for starting spot

By Brent Glasgow/Sports correspondent  
CNHI

— A four-year letter winner during his football days at Zionsville Community High School, Blake Lueders isn't used to sitting on the bench.

Entering his sophomore season at Stanford University, he has no intention of getting accustomed to it.

After a freshman campaign in which he played in 10-of-13 games, mostly on special teams, Lueders plans to nail his name to the top of the outside linebacker depth chart. The former Indiana Mr. Football position award winner is on the Stanford campus in Palo Alto, Calif. this summer, with his sights set on earning a starting job.

"I'm not taking any classes this summer, just focusing on football," said Lueders, a 2010 ZCHS graduate.

Lueders is locked into Stanford's arduous offseason training program. Listed at 241 pounds going into last season, his 6-foot-5 frame now packs 256.

"It is definitely a much higher intensity (than high school)," Lueders said. "We start out with a run and then lift afterwards. When you put the two together, it's quite a workout."

Stanford exploded upon the national scene last fall. The Cardinal went 12-1 and finished No. 4 in the country, one spot behind Oregon, which appeared in the Bowl Championship Series title game and handed Stanford its only defeat.

"As a team we really had a great season," Lueders said. "Obviously we really want that Oregon game back, and it's a big game on the schedule this year. That's the one we all have circled."

Lueders' freshman season provided an intriguing personal match-up when Stanford traveled to Notre Dame, where he originally committed before changing his mind after former head coach Charlie Weiss was fired.

"That was a blast. I had a lot of friends and family at the game, so it was definitely a lot of fun," said Lueders, whose team trounced the Irish, 37-14. "I grew up going to a lot of Notre Dame games, so just to play on that field was pretty cool. I knew a lot of guys at Notre Dame, so seeing them after the game was nice, too."

Lueders finished the season with six total tackles, including one for loss against the Irish.

"I was happy I got in some, but I definitely want to play some more, and that's why I'm training so hard this offseason trying to get more reps and get into the starting lineup," Lueders said.

Shortly after Stanford's 40-12 Virginia Tech demolition in the Orange Bowl, head coach and Indianapolis Colts Ring of Honor member Jim Harbaugh left to take over the San Francisco 49ers. While disappointing, Harbaugh's exit wasn't shocking.

"We really didn't have much warning about it, but he left and we really weren't too surprised," Lueders said.

Taking over for Harbaugh is David Shaw, a 1994 Stanford grad who served as the Cardinal's offensive coordinator from 2007-10.

"He's a great coach and a Stanford man who has been around the program," Lueders said. "The offense and defense haven't changed at all, which is nice for the players. All of the players love him, so we should be good."

Easing the transition was quarterback Andrew Luck, last year's Heisman Trophy runner-up and likely No. 1 pick in the NFL draft, who turned down millions of dollars to return for his senior year.

"That was great. He's an amazing player, but just a great leader also," Lueders said. "He's stepped up to be an even bigger leader this offseason, and you can tell he's going to be the guy everyone follows, and rightfully so."

Academically, Lueders was prepared for Stanford's rigorous demands, but the 4.1 GPA high school student still found the daily schedule a challenge.

“Playing a Division I sport is like a full-time job, so trying to find time between football and academics is probably the toughest part of it,” said Lueders, who plans to major in management science and engineering. “Once you can do that, it’s manageable.”