

# Big Man on Campus

by John Reid, Palo Alto Daily News

THE NAME “MOOSE” MARTIN HAS A NICE ring to it. It harkens back to those 1930s movies made about an Ivy League football player. You know, the big lug who wears the coonskin coat and walks around with a cheerleader on each arm. Or, perhaps, the name references one of those characters in the old “Archie” comic strip.

Fortunately for Stanford, Jonathan “Moose” Martin is alive and well at left tackle, protecting the blindside of the franchise, quarterback Andrew Luck. The Cardinal, which hosts UCLA on Saturday, has given up just two sacks in three games. The 6-foot-6, 304-pound Martin has had a lot to do with it.

“Martin is a tireless worker,” Luck said. “He takes a lot of pride in being consistent and using the right technique. He’s very meticulous and sets a great standard for the younger guys. He’s a great football player.”

“Jonathan has long arms,” Stanford coach David Shaw said. “He’s tall, but he’s flexible. He can kick and punch. A lot of the publicity he has gotten is from the NFL draft rankings because he looks like an NFL tackle. Guys like that don’t come around very often to be able to do all the things he can do. You can’t teach a guy to be 6-5, 305 pounds, and be athletic. That’s what he is.”

Martin has started 27 games, making first-team all-Pac-10 last season and honorable mention all-conference the previous season. A pre-season first-team Playboy All-American, Martin — a projected first-round draft pick next spring — could be playing his final year at Stanford.

Though Martin has been adept at keeping defenders’ paws off Luck, Martin prefers run blocking to pass blocking.

“I really like those drives at the end of the games where we get to run the ball 10 straight plays,” Martin said. “It’s a pretty gratifying feeling.”

Martin has been part of Stanford’s renaissance as a national football power. His first season was a redshirt year in which the Cardinal went 5-7. The win-loss ledger has progressed for the better, going 8-5 in 2009 and 12-1 last season.

“When I came here, the culture was still changing,” Martin said. “We were still in transition. Coach Harbaugh did a great job of talking to the freshmen and getting our minds on how to be for the coming years. You could just see it in how the team acts now. We want to win. We expect to win. That’s how the standard has been set. Before, we were trying to get to a bowl game. Now, we have higher aspirations to win the Pac-12. It has been a fun process to be a part of.”

Martin prepped at Harvard-Westlake in Los Angeles, where he was ranked the No. 44 offensive tackle nationally by Rivals.com. His Los Angeles roots nearly landed him at UCLA. In fact, Martin originally committed to be a Bruin.

“UCLA was my first Pac-10 offer,” Martin said. “I wasn’t sure how many offers I was going to get at the time. My parents wanted me to go to an Ivy League school like Harvard. But, I wanted to play real Div. I football. Stanford had been a dream school for a long time, but I wasn’t sure if I would qualify academically, or even get offered. Once I was qualified academically and was offered, it was a no-brainer.”

Changing his mind was easy for Martin.

“The old coaching staff that recruited me at UCLA was all gone,” Martin said.

Stanford had an All-America tackle named Bob Whitfield (1989-91), who was a first-round draft pick by the Atlanta Falcons. Whitfield retired from the game after a lengthy professional career in 2007. Shaw, who played at Stanford with Whitfield, compared the two tackles.

“Bob (Whitfield) was just bigger than Jonathan,” Shaw said. “They had a lot of the same tools. Bob had 25, 30 pounds on Jon and could do the same thing. There are some similarities.”

Martin and All-America guard David DeCastro have been instrumental in keeping the Cardinal’s three first-year starters on the line on the right track.

“It’s one thing when the coaches demand it of a young player,” Shaw said. “It’s an entirely different deal when the veteran players, the guys that see it in the locker room and the training room, demand it of them. There is no soft place to land when you don’t do it right. David and Jon have been vocal.”

Martin got the nickname “Moose” when he was in the fifth grade.

“I was too big for Pop Warner Football, so I played flag football,” Martin said. “One of my friends gave me the name and it stuck.”

Martin has been one moose of a tackle for the Cardinal the past three seasons. And he’s just the right size.