

# Coach David Shaw off to great start at Stanford

Tom FitzGerald, Chronicle Staff Writer

In one area, David Shaw is much like his wunderkind quarterback. Neither he nor Andrew Luck likes to take credit. When passed a bouquet, each can't wait to break up the flowers and pass around the blossoms.

That's a little unusual for a quarterback. For a head coach on the college level, it's practically unheard of.

"In order to win a football game, so many people need to do their jobs well," the Stanford head coach said in an interview Tuesday. "I'm not trying to position myself for another job. I don't care if nobody mentions my name (in connection to a vacancy). I don't care if nobody interviews me - postgame or whatever.

"I'm trying to establish something here so I can be here for a long time."

Shaw, 39, is undefeated as a head coach, and that's not bad when Halloween is right around the corner. He inherited a great team with the best pro prospect at quarterback since Peyton Manning. Shaw has maintained the momentum established by his former boss, Jim Harbaugh.

The Cardinal are 7-0 going into Saturday's game at USC. And they are winning with a vengeance: They have the nation's longest winning streak, 15 games. According to ESPN, they are the first major-college team to win 10 straight games by at least 25 points since 1936.

In his first year as a head coach, Shaw's fourth-ranked team is being discussed as not merely a Pac-12 champion but as a potential national champion. The stakes are getting higher each week, but Shaw seems as calm and polished as he was the January day he took the job.

That's not to say he doesn't get furious with his players. He and Harbaugh "might not seem the same on the surface," tight end Zach Ertz said, "but they both have the same burning desire to win. There's honestly not too much of a difference."

Unlike Harbaugh, Shaw is not looking to move to a higher-paying job. He hopes to stay at his alma mater for decades. He said he'd like to coach on the Farm at least until his youngest child, Gavin, 1 1/2, graduates from Stanford.

"There's no place I'd rather be," he said. "There's no area of the country I'd rather live. There's no university I'd rather work at. There's no group of kids I'd rather coach than Stanford kids; kids that are motivated, bright, engaging. Kids that want to be great in football but that will move on and do great things outside football as well. It's the perfect environment for me and my family."

He doesn't sleep at the office. In fact, he eschews early-morning meetings with his assistant coaches so they can have breakfast with their families and hopefully take the kids to school.

That might not sound like a big deal for most parents, but this is a job that normally entails 14- to 15-hour days. In the mornings, he watches video until the meetings with his staff start in the late morning or early afternoon. On Monday night, after doing a radio show, he left work at 12:30 a.m. Normally, he departs at 10 or 11.

Sometimes his wife, Kori, and their three young children are waiting for practice to end to greet Dad.

Football coaches are workaholics. Shaw describes Jon Gruden, his former boss with the Raiders, as somebody who took it to the extreme.

"I would love to get a sample of his DNA," he said. "Every day, he'd be in the office at 4 a.m. Then he'd go to absolute exhaustion and the next day do it all over again. I physically can't do it." At the end of a strenuous week for him and his staff, he said, he's concerned with "how efficient we can be so we can have enough energy to coach a game."

He continued Harbaugh's tradition of inviting players to address the team with a "wise words" lesson at the end of practice. A few weeks ago, defensive end Matt Masifilo spoke of working construction with his father. He described digging ditches, then having to fill them in, first with big rocks, then - at his father's insistence - with increasingly smaller ones.

"Anybody can dig a ditch, and anybody can find the big rocks," Masifilo told his teammates, echoing his father's words. "But to fill these holes, you've got to find the perfect small rocks to fit between the big ones." "Everybody does the big things. But if you want to be as good as you can be, you've got to concentrate on the little things and get those things right."

Asked if it's unfair to judge a head coach until he has at least a few of his recruiting classes on the field, he said, "People judge head coaches all the time. The circumstances are rarely important. It's the production. Are we graduating players? Are we competitive on the field? Are we winning football games?" The best coaches he has known, Shaw said, "don't have highs or lows. At the end of the year, they evaluate themselves and never look back."