

Stanford's Montgomery a star waiting to shine

By Rick Eymmer
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Ty Montgomery showed up at a Stanford football camp the summer after his freshman year of high school at St. Mark's School of Texas in Dallas, eager to learn and prepared to do what was necessary to get into the school.

Four years later, the freshman receiver fulfilled one goal and is eager to continue his education both on the field and in the classroom.

"We thought he was a senior," Cardinal coach David Shaw said of Montgomery's camp attendance. "We've known since then he would be a special player."

Montgomery introduced himself to the college football world last Saturday during Stanford's magnificent 56-48 triple-overtime thriller against host USC, in which he filled the role of Chris Owusu, who left the game after suffering another severe blow to the head and did not return as a precaution. Montgomery caught five passes for 87 yards.

Two special plays in which he participated were particularly exquisite in nature and his entire body of work for the evening was notable.

His performance may not have earned him the start for this Saturday's 12:30 p.m. game at Oregon State (2-3, 2-6), but Montgomery will remain an integral player on offense and on special teams. Owusu, who was cleared to practice this week, will start.

Stanford takes a 6-0 mark in the Pac-12 Northern Division into the game, an 8-0 overall mark and the nation's longest current winning streak of 16 games. The Cardinal is ranked No. 4 by The Associated Press and is No. 4 in the BCS standings -- with a chance to move up this weekend when No. 1 LSU and No. 2 Alabama meet.

And Montgomery has contributed to Stanford's successful start.

"He has strength, speed and good hands," Shaw said of his prized freshman. "But by no means is he ready to take over anything."

That doesn't stop Shaw and other Stanford players from showering compliments on Montgomery, a well-spoken, thoughtful young man who listened to his camp counselors four years ago and applied himself in a search for success.

"He's a sharp kid," Cardinal quarterback and Heisman Trophy candidate Andrew Luck said. "Since Day 1 he has asked the right questions. He seems insightful and has a keen football mind."

Montgomery learned many things at his first football camp and recalled some advice he received from his coaches.

"They said 'if you work hard and do what my mom tells me,' I will be successful," Montgomery said. "It became apparent to me that Stanford is a place to be successful. Football is important to me but one thing my mom (Lisa) taught me was NFL stands for 'Not For Long.' The average career is about three years."

In high school the Marksmen ran a spread offense and Montgomery excelled both as a receiver and runner. Of his 17 receptions last year, 10 went for touchdowns. He also rushed for 823 yards on 93 carries.

"The pro style was foreign to me," said Montgomery, who set about quickly integrating himself into the new system at Stanford.

He also lettered in baseball and lacrosse, and was one of seven St. Mark's School athletes to sign with a college. He was the only one who went west.

In his first action late in the USC game, Montgomery was on the receiving end of a flea-flicker pass from Luck that went for 62 yards late in the third quarter. It set up a touchdown that gave Stanford a 24-20 edge.

"I was thinking touchdown but I turned around to look and lost my footing," Montgomery said with a grin.

Montgomery did not expect to be in the game that late and certainly wasn't expecting to be involved in the two-minute offense and all three overtime periods.

"I loved every minute of it," he said.

After Luck threw the interception that gave the Trojans the lead late in the fourth quarter, Montgomery acknowledged he was a little worried about the outcome.

"Then Andrew walked the sideline and said everything was going to be all right and I stopped worrying," Montgomery said. "The fact he's done it before, over and over and over again, allows you to trust what he says."

Montgomery caught the first two passes of the drive for the tying touchdown, and then performed the hook-and-ladder with Luck and

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Jeremy Stewart to perfection in the first overtime, even though he had never practiced the play.

"Chris has taught me a lot about footwork and accelerating," Montgomery said. "Sometimes he doesn't have to say anything. When you watch him, you can learn a lot."

Montgomery also kept a drive alive in the second overtime with a nine-yard reception and now has seven catches for an even 100 yards. He's rushed once for eight yards and has a fumble recovery along with three tackles.

Montgomery scored his first collegiate touchdown on a 96-yard kickoff return that ended Stanford's 44-14 victory over Washington State. He's averaging 30.8 yards a return.

He's also a valuable player to have ready, in case of emergencies.

NOTES: Freshman Jordan Williamson, who missed the USC contest with an injury, was named one of 20 finalists for the Lou Groza Trophy, representative of college's top placekicker . . . Kickoff for next Saturday's game against Oregon has been set for 5 p.m. . . . Stanford is 5-9 in its last 14 meetings with Oregon State . . . The Cardinal ranks third nationally with 49.5 points a game . . . The 121 combined points of the past two games are the most ever accumulated by a Stanford team in consecutive games . . . Stanford has scored a touchdown or field goal in all 47 trips into the red zone, tops in the nation . . . Stanford tight end Zach Ertz is expected to miss this weekend's game after being injured against USC. Defensive back Delano Howell also could miss his third straight game with a hand injury.