

# Stanford's Andrew Luck enjoys his nerdy side

Scott Ostler, Chronicle Columnist

Andrew Luck is on the cover of Sports Illustrated and ESPN The Magazine. Apparently People and Architectural Digest are waiting to make sure Luck isn't a flash in the pan.

When I ran into the Stanford quarterback after a recent open-to-the-public scrimmage, he said he hadn't seen the magazines.

"I've not subscribed to Sports Illustrated or ESPN," he said, "so I haven't seen the articles, the covers or whatever, so it's not hard to avoid things of that nature."

Hold it. Avoid? You are 21 years old (22 next month), you are being touted as the greatest college quarterback in years, and you want to avoid seeing yourself on national magazine covers?

"But I also realize it's good for Stanford, that players are getting publicity," Luck continued. "So it's a double-edged sword. Anything for Stanford, it's good."

You can see why people at Stanford wept like tiny babies last year when Luck announced that he would be coming back for another season.

You can also see why Luck is considered something of a nerd. That word has popped up in stories about him, which makes him laugh. He laughs a lot in interviews, and that's kind of nerdy, in a way. Luck doesn't realize that big-time athletes are supposed to endure interviews, not enjoy them.

So, how about that nerd label?

Luck laughed and said, "It's fine. There could be worse things than a nerd. Maybe I'm proud of being a nerd."

Maybe Luck is redefining the word. Maybe he's the coolest nerd on campus. CNOC.

When asked how nerdy he is (how's that for a nerdy question?), Luck laughed and shot back, "Who can measure that?"

There's the perfect project for some Stanford engineering/psychology student: Invent a nerd-o-meter.

Luck would get nerd points for riding a bicycle around campus. Points for being deliberately oblivious to his superstar status. Points for saying his teammates will never allow him to get a big head. Bonus points for adding that his level-headedness can be attributed to "good parenting, as well."

Add about 30 million bonus points, one for each dollar Luck walked away from when he elected to dodge the 2011 NFL draft.

Can we quantify his nerd quotient? What kind of movies does he like?

"Comedy, action," Luck said. "I'm a big fan of historical fiction stuff. Historical battles - 'Gladiators,' 'The Patriot.' "

How about books?

"Same thing. Historical fiction."

What are you reading now?

"I'm reading a book, 'The Shadow of the Wind.' It was given to me by (offensive lineman) David DeCastro, my roommate this camp. His dad gave it to him. It's by a Spanish author. It was translated into English, set in Barcelona in the 1940s."

If Luck is so smart, why does he wear a laminated cheat sheet of plays on his forearm?

"You definitely need a cheat sheet," Luck said with a laugh.

In working toward his quarterbacking B.A. (Bachelor of Awesomeness), Luck is doing a lot of film watching. Offensive coordinator Pep Hamilton is feeding the Stanford quarterbacks a steady diet of video cut-ups of great NFL quarterbacks, present and past, mostly in red-zone situations. What impresses Luck when he watches these films?

"The footwork of Philip Rivers and Drew Brees, we watch a lot of that, and the way that they're loaded all the time, they're ready to get the ball out. Unbelievable feet. ... There's a couple plays in the red-zone film we watch, there's a couple throws that Manning makes and Brady makes, it's like, 'My God, is that even legal?' "

Is there one NFL quarterback in whom Luck kind of sees a bit of himself?

"I don't think I'm nearly as good as anyone playing in the NFL," Luck said, "but I've always tried to emulate how Ben Roethlisberger keeps plays alive, moves around the pocket, keeps his head up. Roethlisberger, especially, keeping plays alive when they break down, and not making bad decisions, keeping his offense in a good spot."

All that film study cuts into Luck's outside fun time. He said he doesn't do as much discretionary reading as he'd like, because "when you're playing college football, you can't stay up until 1 reading a book or whatever."

What about hobbies?

"You don't get much free time," Luck said. "I like to play football, read some books, study."

I mentioned that it would make for a better story if his hobby was something like butterfly collecting.

He laughed and said, "That would be great, wouldn't it?"

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