

Sibling revelry in Owusu household

By Rhiannon Potkey, Ventura County Star

Chris Owusu is surrounded by high achievers in academics and athletics on a daily basis at Stanford University.

But that's nothing new for the senior wide receiver.

The same dynamic exists at his home in Oxnard.

Owusu and his siblings have truly earned the label "student-athletes."

Owusu's brother, Brian, is a junior defensive back at Harvard, and his sister, Crystal, is a freshman guard on the basketball team at Columbia.

It doesn't take a math major to realize three siblings attending three colleges ranked in the Top 5 of the U.S. News and World Report's best national universities is an impressive statistical feat.

The trio has set the bar high for the two younger Owusu siblings to follow — Francis is a junior wide receiver at Oaks Christian, and Michael is an eighth grader.

"My parents really ingrained it in our head that going to schools like these helps you prepare for a better future," Chris Owusu said. "They really inspired us to go out there and work hard and do what we needed to do to help ourselves and pursue greatness."

Owusu's pursuit of greatness in football continues on Saturday night when No. 6 Stanford (3-0, 1-0 Pacific-12 Conference North) hosts UCLA (2-2, 1-0 Pac-12 South) at 7:30 p.m.

UCLA's injury riddled secondary will be charged with trying to contain the speedy Owusu. The 6-foot-2, 200-pound Oaks Christian School graduate is a double threat who can score on a deep route or a kickoff return.

Owusu has caught a team-leading 16 passes for 227 yards and one touchdown, and has returned four kicks for 98 yards.

"We are counting on Chris to continue to lead our young guys and, more importantly, to make plays for us and be that big-play threat in our offense," Stanford offensive coordinator Pep Hamilton said. "Chris sets high goals for himself and is a very conscientious worker. I am sure if it were up to Chris he would have 10 catches for 1,000 yards and 10 touchdowns in every game."

Although Stanford achieved historic levels of success last season, Owusu endured a frustrating year individually. He missed six games after sustaining a concussion and then injuring his knee.

"It was kind of overwhelming at some points, but my teammates, my coaching staff and especially my family were there to pick me up," Owusu said. "I definitely learned a lot in terms of playing. I wanted to give it my all in all the games I did get to play and contribute in a big way."

If Owusu needed any reinforcement to boost his spirits, he focused on the quote "Worrying is like a rocking chair. It gives you something to do, but it doesn't get you anywhere."

"I really took that to heart," Owusu said. "You can only control the things you can control, and I just tried to show people I was not letting it get to me. I was trying to smile a bit more and trying to keep my head up a little bit more."

Owusu's positive attitude is as much a staple of his game as his raw speed.

"I think that comes from my parents as well. They have sacrificed a lot for me and my family and every time I think about that, I can't help but smile," he said. "When my siblings and I see each other we always have a smile on our face because we know what they have done. Life is too short to go out there and frown too much."

The outlook for Owusu's senior season became much brighter once quarterback Andrew Luck decided to return to Stanford.

Luck was projected to be the top pick in the NFL draft, but turned down the money to obtain his architectural design degree and spend one more season with his teammates.

Luck told Owusu about his plans a few days before making the official announcement.

"I was so happy. The fact that he wanted to come back to help his team out is something that makes you want to work even harder," Owusu said. "It's awesome knowing that you have the best quarterback in the country throwing you the ball. He is a guy who is so humble yet so talented as well."

Owusu and Luck have forged a strong relationship on and off the field.

"He lives next door to me in our rooming situation, so we are constantly talking. He has been a really good friend the past three years," Owusu said. "It helps to have that friendship between a quarterback and a receiver. We work every day to make sure we connect during the game and have our timing down."

Owusu and his siblings manage to keep in touch frequently despite the heavy demands of their classes and practices.

"Every once in a while we joke about whose school is better," Owusu said. "Of course, that person always says their school. But you always want to be supportive of your family and help them out in any way possible."

Owusu has plenty to brag about when touting the credentials of Stanford.

"It's truthfully one of a kind. The people who come to this school all have something to bring that is unique," said Owusu, a human biology major. "It's an awesome atmosphere. It's really a place where you wake up and you are just like really happy to go and explore the campus and see what else it has to offer. I have really been blessed."

Hamilton believes Owusu's parents — father, Francis, who made the Ghanaian Olympic team in the 400 meters, and mother, Luaiva — should share their child-rearing secrets with the general public.

"I keep telling Chris, 'Your mom and dad should write a book,' " Hamilton said. "Their kids were born with natural athletic talent and ability. But the discipline that it takes to condition their kids to be able to manage both is what is most impressive about the family."

Owusu would love to leave Stanford with another BCS bowl appearance and a few records to his name. But it's not for his own benefit.

"The goals of the team are really all I am interested in," he said. "I think every team strives to get a lot of wins, and we are putting in the work to try and make that happen. All the accolades and whatever will come when the team wins. That is all I am focused on."