

Gaffney hopes to follow in Gerhart's footsteps

By Rick Eymmer
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Toby Gerhart played the outfield for the Stanford baseball team in addition to his running back duties with the football team.

Tyler Gaffney tried out for baseball following his freshman year in football, and not only made the team but earned a starting spot in the outfield.

In fact, Gaffney gave Mark Marquess and the rest of his teammates a real boost a few days after Gerhart announced he would not return to baseball as he focused on getting ready for the NFL draft.

In many respects, although Gerhart was a center fielder and Gaffney a right fielder, Gaffney took Gerhart's spot on the Cardinal baseball roster.

As the football training camp begins to swing into full gear, Gaffney is looking for ways to repeat Gerhart's record-setting season this fall. Wednesday was the first day of shoulder pads

Stanford began fall practice without its Heisman Trophy runner-up this week. Gaffney love to show he's a hit in football as much as he was in baseball.

"We're pretty solid at running back. We all have our own strengths," said Gaffney, who hit .328 and was a Pac-10 honorable mention in baseball. "We're looking for who can help us win, who is the biggest threat and who brings the most to the table."

Gaffney figures he's learned a great deal from balancing two sports and school.

"It leads to more organization in putting forth the effort to know both sports," he said. "Baseball is more mental and football is physical and you have to keep flipping back and forth. Last year I learned what I had to do in baseball and I can bring that back here and see where it goes. This is like starting a new life."

Gaffney's 87 rushing yards last year served notice that he would compete hard this fall to earn playing time.

Cardinal coach Jim Harbaugh said there are four returning running backs and three newcomers intent on establishing their own identity.

"There were a ton of good things," said Harbaugh, who led Stanford to its first bowl game in eight years last fall. "A lot of guys were impressive. They are all equal today, every single guy. It's going to be who practices hard, who picks up the position and who holds on to the ball. We'll start to see that this camp."

Senior Jeremy Stewart, who missed seven games due to injury last year, is the front-runner but he's had limited success. He rushed for 343 yards as a freshman and has accumulated a combined 183 yards the past two years.

"Gerhart is a great runner," Stewart said. "The biggest thing I learned from him was watching him. You could tell he was having fun."

Sophomores Stephan Taylor and Usua Amanam and freshmen Anthony Wilkerson, Ricky Seale and Andrew Stutz will also be given an opportunity.

Notes

Harbaugh said Wednesday that the defense was ahead of the offense at this stage of the camp. How did that manifest itself on the field? "They played better," said Harbaugh . . . Alex Loukas and Owen Marecic are training as two-way players this camp. Loukas, who has seen time at several spots, is working out at free safety and quarterback. Marecic will play fullback and inside linebacker . . . Sacred Heart Prep grad Matt Walter is a walk-on at Stanford hoping to make the rotation at running back . . . The Cardinal (8-5 last year) host Sacramento State in their season opener on Sept. 4.