

Meinken learns how to win at Stanford

By Scott M. Johnson, Everett Herald Writer

Having already made the transition from defensive end to linebacker and then to fullback, Stanford sophomore football player Geoff Meinken has one main goal these days.

“I’m just trying to learn one position,” he said.

But once he’s mastered the fullback position, Meinken might allow his dreams to take him to another place. Maybe one day, the Lynnwood native will be starting on both sides of the ball for the Cardinal.

Sounds preposterous, yes. But nobody has a mentor like the one that Meinken looks up to every day at practice.

Senior Owen Marecic, who was Meinken’s roommate at training camp earlier this fall, is the nation’s only starting two-way player — at fullback and linebacker.

“I would love to have that opportunity, and he’s a great guy to look up to in that aspect,” Meinken said this week, as he prepares for his first collegiate homecoming when Stanford faces the University of Washington at Husky Stadium Saturday afternoon.

At both positions, Meinken gets to do what he loves most about the game: hit someone.

“That’s why you play football,” he said. “It’s like an organized street fight.”

For now, Meinken is just trying to recover from a knee injury he suffered last season, help the Cardinal on special teams and try to get an early leg up on the two-way battle to replace Marecic as starting fullback next year.

Oh, and he’s also doing something else. Meinken, for the first time in a long time, is winning.

After winning just two games in three years as a varsity player at Lynnwood High School, Meinken has already been a part of a Stanford team that’s gone 14-6 over the past two seasons. He’ll return to his home state with a Cardinal team that is ranked 13th in the country.

“It’s been a fun ride, especially coming from Lynnwood,” he said. “Getting a win the first week I was here, it took a little while to sink in. It was like, ‘I could be on a winning team.’ That’s pretty special.

“Hopefully, I can go back (to Lynnwood High) and instill that mindset in them.”

Because of the Royals’ lack of success while Meinken was at LHS, it’s a bit of a miracle that he’s playing college football at all. Washington State offered him a football scholarship after seeing him win the 100-meter dash at a high school track meet — he initially verbally committed to the Cougars — and then Stanford stumbled onto Meinken while scouting a Mariner High School player during his senior season. After Meinken stood out in the Royals’ loss to Mariner, Stanford assistant coach Lance Anderson talked to him about playing for the Cardinal.

Two years and one torn anterior cruciate ligament later, Meinken couldn’t be happier.

Well, maybe he could. There’s always that two-way thing he’s considering down the road.