

Thomas Finds Family At Stanford

By Haley Hirai, Pac-12.org

Michael Thomas always wanted a brother. He now has over 100 of them that suit up with him in the cardinal and white every day.

"I'm motivated by my family and the people that I've played with, because they're like my brothers," said Stanford's senior free safety. "I grew up with three older sisters. I always wanted a brother and I get to come out here every day and be around people I consider my brothers. I want to play hard for the brothers that I have on this team."

The concept of family support has always been important to Thomas, the youngest one in his family. With a smile, he makes sure to add that he wasn't a spoiled "baby boy." Thomas' father, who also shares the name of Michael Thomas, is the younger Thomas' ultimate role model. The two Michaels can sit and talk about sports with each other all day.

"I look up to him for everything I do. I see a man who just tried to be the best man he could be," Thomas said. "He wanted me to excel and be a great man, the best man I could be. A Christian man, too."

The Houston native has come a long way from when he first started playing football in seventh grade. In high school, he faced off against Stanford teammate and Heisman candidate Andrew Luck on the football field and basketball court. When Luck decided to attend Stanford, he shared his reasons with Thomas. They both wanted to be a part of a program that would be on the rise with the arrival of former head coach Jim Harbaugh. They both wanted to make an impact and help change the face of Stanford football.

"I wanted to be a part of all the same things as him," Thomas said. "Once I got accepted into Stanford, it was hands down."

Now co-captains, the former high school competitors have led Stanford to a top-10 ranking and hopes of a Pac-12 title. Thomas has noticed a more vocal change in Luck from last year, as he is stepping into his leadership role as a senior.

"Andrew is a little more quiet, and you know, bashful and modest," said Thomas. "I'm kind of modest, but I'm way more loud. People say I'm an enthusiastic leader. You can hear me. You can always hear me."

Thomas describes his personality as "easygoing, but fiery," and his contagious passion about Stanford, the game of football, and his teammates is evident. An abundance of energy is packed into his 5-foot-11 frame.

"A lot of people can tell that it's genuine," he said. "I'm not trying to fake it. Every time I go out there, that's really how I feel. I love my teammates and I just love being around them every day."

It's his senior season and Thomas feels a sense of urgency to do his best. He loves the fact that not just the seniors share this mindset, but his younger teammates do too. As he looked out onto the field where his teammates were wrapping up practice for the day, Thomas said that they want to do "something special" this year.

"I'm feeling confident. This team has come a long way. We feel like brothers. We feel like we're family. I feel like my senior year is going to be a great one," he said.

His Stanford teammates won't let him down. He used to be a kid who just wanted a brother, and now no matter how the games play out, Thomas will be finishing his senior season with a whole new family.