

Training Camp Q&A - Richard Sherman

by Dave Fowkes, Examiner.com

Fifth year senior Richard Sherman will leave Stanford football after this year with two of the great plays in Stanford history under his belt. One of those plays was on offense and the other on defense and they were both in Los Angeles in huge wins over USC. The first was the big fourth down reception in the closing minute that set up the game winning touchdown pass to Mark Bradford in 2007. Last year it was the signature interception return for a touchdown that pretty much signaled the final nail in the Trojan coffin in the 2009 drubbing of Troy.

After having one full year at cornerback, Sherman looks to really step up his game this season, just as he expects the game of his defensive teammates to step up as well. As he says, there is something special on the way. I had a chance to chat with Sherman after practice on Tuesday:

Q: We are a little over a week into camp, how are things going?

Things are going great. Camp is always a grind. We are into two-a-days so things are ramping up. Guys are executing. Guys are getting a lot better. There is a lot more experience out there so we are trying to win every day.

Q: How is that experience showcasing itself this year?

Guys are doing a great job of recognizing concepts and reacting. Obviously there is a chemistry that is developing between defensive backs and the linebackers so that helps.

Q: You have a new coaching staff, how are you and Coach Mason getting along? I think it is funny. When I talk with you, you are calm and mild mannered. When I talk to him it is the exact same way. But during practice I can hear you both from campus drive! (Laugh)

It is exciting. We had great coaches last year. We have more great coaches this year. They are doing a great job of coaching us, putting us in positions to be successful. He is a fun guy to play for. He is doing a great job.

Q: This is your second full season at cornerback, what kind of improvements have you made on your game? Why is this year going to be special for you?

Just experience. As a team, as a defense, we are going to be better so that obviously helps everybody. The linebackers, Shayne Skov, Owen (Marecic), (Thomas) Keiser, Chase Thomas, they are doing a great job of executing their jobs. Sione Fua, (Matt) Masifilo putting pressure on so that helps the back end a lot. You have Delano (Howell) doing his job. You have Michael (Thomas) doing his job. You have (Johnson) Bademosi and (Corey) Gatewood doing their jobs. It helps me. The defense working together and playing better is helping everybody.

Q: Does the change to the 3-4 make any difference to you guys in the secondary or is it just the front seven?

Yeah, it does not do much for the back end, it is just coverage.

Q: What is going on with the competition at corner now? There is Gatewood, Bademosi, you, what is happening with the first team now?

Coach Mason is giving everybody a shot. He is rotating us all through trying to see what combination works best. At the end of the day he will make his decision. So everybody is rotating through and nobody has a position right now.

Q: If Stanford is going to make that next step to the Rose Bowl on January 1st, what is going to go right for the Stanford defense?

We get a lot of turnovers. We get some three-and-outs. And in the crunch time, when the offense needs the ball back, we get a stop.

Q: Tell me about the leadership role you are taking with the team this year?

We are senior lead veteran defense. Everybody is trying to do their role. You have Sione Fua down low. You have Brian Bulcke. You have Owen. You have Gatewood. There is a lot of senior leadership out there so it is not falling on any one person. It is falling on the strong shoulders on a bunch of guys. It is great. I feel like we are all doing a great job trying to execute our responsibilities to help all the young guys set a great example.

Q: Do you feel something special in the bonding of the defense this year?

Yes, definitely! You can definitely feel the energy. You can definitely feel there is going to be something different about this year. There is definitely going to be something special and something to watch!