

# Warshaw hoping for big finish to Stanford career ... and a professional run afterwards

MICHAEL BULLOCK, The Patriot-News

As many 21-year-olds do — especially those nearing college's elusive finish line — Bobby Warshaw spent the summer checking out potential employers while, at the same time, providing them a chance to evaluate his marketable skills.

Though Warshaw wasn't clerking for some well-known law firm or filing work papers for an accounting giant, the Mechanicsburg High School graduate and Stanford senior was determined to leave a favorable impression at every stop.

In Warshaw's case, prepping for a promising career meant auditioning for Major League Soccer teams on both coasts and receiving looks from two Norwegian clubs.

Let's just say the All-American defender — Stanford's first NSCAA first-teamer since 2002, the last time the Cardinal reached the national final — stayed busy.

And the 6-0, 185-pounder will remain busy organizing Stanford's D-backfield and getting into dangerous spots on set pieces. Though Warshaw did not score Sunday, Stanford opened its exhibition season with a 3-2 win over Sonoma State.

Stanford will close out its exhibition season on Saturday at Air Force.

Bret Simon's 13th-ranked club, 12-6-2 last season when the Cardinal reached the NCAA Tournament's round of 16, will begin regular-season play on Sept. 1 at Vermont.

While Warshaw admits the professional game is alluring and already on his radar, his crowded Stanford agenda still sports unchecked items. Leading the Cardinal on another deep postseason run ranks right up there, but so does polishing off his political science degree.

Something he'll do this fall.

"Obviously I'd be lying if I said I didn't have MLS and pro in the back of my mind, but the best way to accomplish those goals is you win that next game," said Warshaw, a preseason All-American.

"As much as I would love to play professionally, if I won a championship and never played a professional game I'd be OK with that. The only thing that I ever think about and that I can ever think about is winning in the fall. ... I'm confident, but if we win in the fall, good things will happen."

## GOOD THINGS ALREADY HAVE HAPPENED

After playing forward and midfielder his first two seasons at Stanford, the fierce-tackling, technically sound Warshaw shifted to center back during the spring 2009 campaign — even though he'd twice led Simon's club in scoring and was an all-Pac-10 selection both times.

TopDrawer Soccer even tagged him an '08 All-American.

"Bobby can have a bigger influence in the game from the center back position," Simon responded during an email Q&A. "It's a natural position of leadership. It also fits many of his best qualities including his organizational abilities, distribution talents and ball winning.

"He also can pick and choose times to get involved in the attack."

Warshaw understood.

"We were very talented my first two years, but we weren't organized, we weren't disciplined, we didn't have someone who if someone didn't get into a tackle — I don't like this as my job — but to kind of lay into them and say that's unacceptable," Warshaw said.

"So I think my personality fit in what we needed at center back and I just wasn't what they wanted at the other two positions. It made sense."

Not only did Warshaw continue to thrive — he slipped forward enough to top Stanford in scoring for the third consecutive year (6 goals, 1 assist) — but defensive efforts perked, the results piled up and a national ranking followed. So did another All-American tag.

Warshaw also was a semifinalist for the Hermann Trophy in '09 — soccer's equivalent to the Heisman — and he's a candidate again heading into what he hopes is a super-successful year.

"You win games," Warshaw said of the recognition. "It's kind of unfair to some of the other players, but because of the team's success and

having played for three years and kind of being in a leadership role, I'm lucky enough to be the beneficiary of those things.

"But we have guys who often were much better than me on the field. As I move on and they become the faces of [the program], they'll be the ones to get those rewards."

"You always knew he was the real deal," Mechanicsburg coach Tony Lougee said of his former high school All-American. "He's the complete package, he's smart, he's an incredibly hard worker, he cares, he has passion and he has plenty of ability."

"You always knew that maybe he was going to get to that [All-American] level."

Even if the humble Warshaw downplays his accomplishments, an admirable characteristic he's displayed forever, his college coach does not.

"Bobby has reached and exceeded my expectations," said Simon, who is about to begin his 10th season at Stanford. "I certainly thought he would be a terrific college player, but he's continued to grow as a player and as a leader. In many ways, he's been a catalyst for our program's resurgence."

And while helping catalyze Stanford's return to national relevance, Warshaw's propelled himself into pro soccer's ever-changing conscience.

#### STUDYING A SUCCESSFUL MODEL

Already, even before he's dispossessed an attacker or slipped into the penalty area to nod home a restart, Warshaw's been projected in MLS mock drafts as a first-round choice.

Still, the driven Warshaw continues to push himself to enhance his strength, agility and speed by devoting countless hours to fitness. Everything possible to complement his razor-sharp soccer instincts and keep him one step up on the competition.

More tricks for the trickster, if you will.

Warshaw cited Ben Olsen's magnificent career as a prime example, specifically the sizable portion that played out after the former Middletown great and Virginia All-American suffered several serious ankle injuries before celebrating his 25th birthday.

Although Olsen recovered and eventually returned to D.C. United's lineup — he played well enough to make one appearance for Team USA at the 2006 World Cup in Germany — his physical issues forced him to adjust. And he did so adroitly until his November retirement at age 32.

"He's a guy who had all the athleticism in the world, but unfortunately had it taken from him," Warshaw said. "He still found a way through other soccer means to make up for it."

"All I'm kind of trying to do is the second part of Ben's career. I don't have the legs and I don't have the ability, but there's still a way."

And count Olsen, who happens to be Warshaw's soccer idol, among those in the pro ranks who want to see more of Stanford's gifted defender. Especially since Olsen recently was promoted to United's interim head coach.

"He's been my favorite as long as I can remember," Warshaw gushed. "I wear 14 at Stanford because of Ben. And now, it's funny, I have him in my phone because I've gone down to D.C. a couple times this summer and I trained with them last summer."

"He dropped me a text and just said, 'Come play.'"

#### AND PLAY HE DID

In addition to runs with United, Warshaw worked out with the San Jose Earthquakes, Seattle Sounders and Philadelphia Union. When home, he practiced with the USL Second Division's Harrisburg City Islanders. All before he went to Norway.

"He's definitely going to play at the next level," City Islanders head coach Bill Becher said. "Where and how high depends on a lot of different things, but I think he can play in MLS."

"What I liked about him is he's a good player, he's strong, he's good on the ball and he knows how to play. The thing that struck me the most is he came in here and was almost like a leader. He came in and he took charge. I just think he's going to be a good professional player."

So does Simon. "I think Bobby will be a terrific professional," Simon said. "He has a great range of talents. Most importantly, he has the right attitude, confidence and he's extremely dedicated. I believe he'll be able to help a professional team right away."

Well, not quite right away. "I think about the next training session, that's about it," Warshaw said, referring to January's draft lottery. "It's hard. ... You want it to come. Every little kid wants it to happen. "When it's close, you want it to come."