

Stanford's Andrew Luck at ease as season nears

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Posted: 07/21/2011 09:05:54 PM PDT
Updated: 07/22/2011 07:27:00 AM PDT

In a wide-ranging interview, Stanford quarterback

Andrew Luck said he never seriously considered entering the NFL draft even though he was the likely No. 1 pick.

Luck's one-sentence statement on Jan. 6 announced his intentions to return to Stanford -- and stunned the football world.

"Let's just say it wasn't stressful," Luck said with a laugh Thursday. "I was at peace."

Wearing flip-flops and sporting a scraggly beard that he plans on trimming before training camp begins Aug. 8, Luck showed no signs of feeling the pressure that comes with being the most-acclaimed player in the country.

He's the front-runner for the Heisman Trophy after finishing No. 2 last year (behind Auburn's Cam Newton). He's the presumptive No. 1 pick in the 2012 draft, and he plays for a team with national championship aspirations.

If Luck is weighed down by anything these days, it's the closure of one of his favorite frozen yogurt

shops on University Avenue in Palo Alto.

"I'm excited (about the season), but I'm going to make use of the next two weeks -- maybe go to the beach," he said. "I wouldn't have any issues with training camp starting tomorrow."

The redshirt junior is taking summer classes --

he's on schedule to earn a degree in architectural design next spring -- and participating in workouts with his teammates. He took a family vacation to Europe, visiting friends in London and touring northern Italy. He also served as a counselor at the Manning Passing Academy in Thibodaux, La., this month.

Luck picked Peyton Manning's brain -- and not for the first time. They spoke by phone in January when Luck decided to return to school.

"I asked him how he approached the season, what he did workout-wise, some of the keys mentally," said Luck, who has known Manning since childhood. (Luck's father, Oliver, was a teammate of Manning's father, Archie, in the NFL.)

Luck managed to pick Peyton's brain again this summer at the passing academy.

"We talked about film preparation, and he stressed the point about covering all your bases," Luck said. "It helps you sleep well at night."

Luck's focus this summer has been on sharpening his timing with a revamped cast of receivers. He has kept records of the routes and taken note of areas that must be improved.

"I have tried to be more organized," he said.

Luck does not covet attention and abhors star treatment, but he's aware the spotlight will be on his every move this season as the Heisman front-runner and projected No. 1 pick. The offseason has brought a steady stream of interview requests -- he recently sat down with ESPN's Urban Meyer, the former Florida coach -- and the demands on his time will only increase when the season begins.

"I don't live in a cave," he said. "I have a computer. ESPN is on in the locker room. Doing it is part of the job, and it helps get Stanford's name out there."

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