

# New Stanford coach David Shaw just might fill his predecessor's big shoes

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LOS ANGELES — The new coach who will either make Andrew Luck a No. 1 overall draft pick or have him second-guessed by every football fan with ESPN could be managing a high-tech management team right now.

You can picture David Shaw wearing a Versace suit and sitting at a Silicon Valley desk telling big-time companies about teamwork, leadership and goals. As a receiver at Stanford in the 1990s, he appeared to have a better future in his major of sociology-motivational behavior than in big-time football.

Instead, Stanford's new coach read the audible from his favorite quarterback — his father — and now runs the show for the best quarterback college football has seen in years. Luck passed at the chance for lifetime financial security and being the surefire No. 1 pick in last April's NFL draft to return for another year.

That's with three of his offensive linemen leaving. That's with wunderkind coach Jim Harbaugh leaving. However, it's also with Shaw, Stanford's offensive coordinator the past four years, staying to replace Harbaugh. "He's been huge," Luck said at the Pac-12 Media Day this week. "He recruited me here. Like my redshirt year when I'm not playing, it always seemed like it would be Coach Shaw who would take me aside every now and then in practice and say: 'Remember, you're preparing yourself to play. Don't just take these scout team reps like they're nothing.' "

If Shaw, 39, had followed the normal family tree blueprint, he would've been predestined to wear a whistle instead of a tie. His father, Willie Shaw, worked at Stanford twice and with seven NFL teams during a 33-year coaching career.

David Shaw bounced around like a fumbled football on artificial turf: Detroit to Kansas City to Minnesota to, well, he learned to get along with people fast.

It helped he played four sports in high school, but his strong schoolwork helped land him a football ride to Stanford. He took a social psychology course and fell in love with the working dynamics of corporate teams.

He took internships around the Bay Area, including one with Pollock Financial, which does asset allocations for high-network individuals. He dreamed of working in upper management. He had found his niche.

"I was not going to coach football," Shaw said. "I was going to finish playing and say, 'See you later.' "

Instead, his career path got derailed. How? He smiled and said, "Coaching circles are small circles."

It all started in 1995, right after graduation. A defensive coordinator at Western Washington named Robin Ross had played for Willie Shaw in the 1970s. Ross called Willie and asked if David would be interested in coaching outside linebackers at a Division II school near the Canadian border.

His dad called.

"I said: 'You know what? I might not be ready to put on a tie just yet,' " David Shaw said. "Let me just try this coaching thing out."

Turns out he was perfect for it. It wasn't just because he played at Stanford and his dad was an NFL coaching veteran.

"What I didn't know was that I was being prepared to coach," he said. "My major was perfect as far as organizational behavior, social psychology."

In his last two playing years, he worked on the psyches of Stanford's young receivers, yelling at them about everything from footwork to yardage depth. They even started calling him Coach Shaw.

He roomed with quarterback Steve Stenstrom and spent late nights discussing protections,

progressions and reads. Shaw also received a master's degree in the West Coast offense from Dennis Green, and later from the system's hallowed professor, Bill Walsh.

"So here I am in the same offense for five years," Shaw said. "I coach two years and I get hooked up with Jon Gruden (with the Raiders in 1998-2000), who's coaching the same offense. I was able to stay more than half my career in one offense."

As Shaw went up in the ranks — Raiders, Ravens, Stanford — he found one person more influential than Gruden or Harbaugh or even Walsh. His father.

"Since I've been coaching, I would say between 10 and 50 times a year I find people that tell me: 'Hey, tell your dad I said hi. Tell him I always respected him,' " he said. "And that's what I want to leave."

Now he has his shot. He inherits a 12-1 Orange Bowl championship team that is expected to challenge Oregon for the Pac-12 North Division title. Yet he must rebuild the offensive line, find Luck some new receivers and hope the inexperienced cornerbacks and defensive line hold up.

Shaw also must continue the development of the best college quarterback on the planet. If the Stanford faithful will wait and see, his star has seen enough to know.

"He's been instrumental in my growth as a football player and ever since I've been on campus," Luck said. "So continuity was definitely something that a lot of the players were hoping for when the coaching change was being made."

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