

# Stanford's New Coach Fulfills 2 Dreams

By PETE THAMEL, New York Times

Soon after he graduated from Stanford, David Shaw met Kori Bevans. They saw "Apollo 13" on their first date, then went to Jack in the Box and ordered two tacos and two fries.

Instead of dining in, Shaw had a suggestion that allowed him to introduce his first love to his new one: "I want to show you my school."

The spot of their impromptu fast-food picnic, just outside Stanford's Memorial Church, was also where David dropped on one knee and proposed four years later. They married in the church in 2001, and the symmetry of their story reflects the depth of Shaw's devotion to the university.

With No. 7 Stanford awash in optimism, holding its highest preseason ranking since 1950 and the Heisman Trophy favorite Andrew Luck, Shaw has been elevated from assistant coach to one of the most intriguing positions in college football. Can the mild-mannered Shaw keep Stanford on the path forged by his ornery predecessor, Jim Harbaugh, who left for the N.F.L. after guiding the Cardinal to a 12-1 record, including an Orange Bowl victory?

"He won the job," Athletic Director Bob Bowsby said. "He didn't get it because he was a Stanford guy, or an African-American or because his dad coached here. He won it by articulating a vision and having passion that comes across. This guy is special and has been around a lot of great coaches."

A few days after Shaw, 39, got the Stanford job, he had a quiet moment in his office with his father, Willie, a longtime assistant coach in college and the N.F.L.

"We closed the door and we hugged and there were tears," Shaw said. "It was one of the best moments of my life."

The embrace celebrated two dreams fulfilled. The tears were shed for Willie Shaw's lost dream, which helped forge a path for David to get the head coaching job he never could.

Willie Shaw, an assistant with five colleges and seven N.F.L. teams, interviewed for five N.F.L. head coaching positions and was a finalist with Philadelphia and Kansas City.

Brian Billick, who coached with Willie Shaw at multiple stops and also coached David at Stanford, said, "It's hard to understand now, but when you look back in that era, African-American coaches were thought of more as great position coaches and recruiters."

Willie Shaw said he was so close to getting the Stanford head coaching job in 1992 after Dennis Green left for the N.F.L. that he had met with the university president and that a team meeting and a news conference were scheduled to announce his appointment. Green recalled that Willie was "an eyelid away."

But the sudden availability of Bill Walsh dashed that plan. As always, Willie Shaw did not become bitter, but rather moved on to the next stop.

"If I was on the committee, I would have hired Bill Walsh over me too," he said.

And after seeing all those disappointments up close, his wife, Gay, knew the significance of the hug between Willie and David.

"There was so much that wasn't said, that was felt in that moment," Gay Shaw said. "It was part of what you do as a non-Caucasian in this land. Since I've been in the Bay Area and met a lot of Asian people who have had similar experiences. There's an unspoken bond between me and these ladies and our husbands. We don't complain, but we keep on fighting."

As a Stanford receiver, David earned the nickname Coach Shaw for being a stickler with the underclassmen, and he even begged Walsh to call the play — a shallow cross known as 76X — that resulted in his first touchdown. Still, Shaw insisted that he would not follow his father into coaching, and he nearly joined an asset allocation firm after graduation. But he felt a tug.

"I wasn't ready to put on a tie," he said.

Shaw took a job as a graduate assistant at Western Washington in 1995, and he fondly recalled earning \$7,000 a year and eating nightly dinners of \$3.95 teriyaki chicken.

Gay Shaw was upset with her son's career choice. "Haven't you been paying attention your whole life?" she said she told him. She recalled the Thanksgivings separated from her family, more than a dozen moves and continual rumors and uncertainty. Now that Willie is retired and their three children and five grandchildren are all in the Bay Area, Gay Shaw said, "You couldn't dynamite me out of here."

After his first day on the practice field, it would have taken explosives to move Shaw to another profession. Soon, he emulated his father's style of teaching and articulating the most minute detail.

"I saw the allure and saw that this was something that you don't necessarily choose to do," Shaw said. "It's something you do and you can't stop doing."

Rob Smith, the Western Washington coach at the time, said Shaw did not yell, listened in meetings and connected with the players individually. He stood out by not trying to stand out.

"It wasn't about David Shaw," said Smith, now the coach at Humboldt State. "It was about the job and the players with David. My guess is that he hasn't changed."

While at Western Washington, Shaw got an internship with the Philadelphia Eagles and impressed a young assistant coach named Jon Gruden. Wide receiver Irving Fryar unintentionally taught Shaw a valuable coaching lesson during that camp.

Shaw shook Fryar's hand when the internship ended and told him he was going back to college coaching. Fryar could not believe that Shaw, who had tutored him on the nuances of the West Coast offense, was only 26.

"When you speak from a position of knowledge, you get people's respect," Shaw said.

He eventually joined Gruden with Oakland as a quality control coach and worked his way up to quarterbacks coach for the 2001 season, which ended with the Raiders' loss in the controversial tuck-rule game against New England. Shaw credits Gruden for teaching him to think like a play caller, especially after Gruden berated him for failing to think through a mock game plan he had drawn up.

Gruden, now an analyst for ESPN, remembered that Shaw had a quiet swagger. During training camp in 1999, when the Raiders cut receiver Dameane Douglas, a fourth-round draft pick out of California, Gruden recalled that Shaw said: "He went to Cal. What did you expect?"

As for Shaw's future, Gruden said: "He's going to do an excellent job, just as he's done there already. David Shaw wasn't sitting there with his mouth shut and eyes closed. He deserves a lot of credit for where Stanford is."

In his office, Shaw has a tissue box with pictures of a smirking Rex Ryan, for whom Shaw was an assistant with the Baltimore Ravens. Shaw and the bombastic Ryan are opposites in personality, and the tissue box is a reminder of that. "Be yourself," said Shaw, acknowledging that he smiles whenever he sees Ryan's pictures. "And when something goes wrong or crazy, it reminds me of Rex saying, 'Do you want to take a tissue and cry?'" Despite his composed nature, Shaw can show emotion.

When Doug Baldwin was a freshman receiver at Stanford in 2007, the trainers held him out of a practice with a hamstring injury. But Baldwin joined a one-on-one drill anyway, so Shaw stopped practice and grabbed him by the jersey.

"I won't repeat what he said," Baldwin recalled with a laugh. "But I got the message."

Although Shaw, unlike Harbaugh, is selective in showing his intensity, no one doubts his passion. "The packages are different," Bowsby, the athletic director, said of Shaw and Harbaugh, "but the contents are the same." As Stanford's offensive coordinator, Shaw worked closely with Luck, the starting quarterback since 2009. Comparing his new coach with Harbaugh, Luck said Shaw would be a "little less eccentric and maybe a little less polarizing than the guy we had before."

The former quarterback Rich Gannon, who had Shaw and Harbaugh as N.F.L. position coaches, said he did not expect any drop-off with Shaw in charge. "I think the one guy who is really going to benefit is the quarterback," Gannon said. "One thing David really does well is knowing what the quarterback needs."

Kori Shaw said she had asked her husband why he did not show more emotion on the sideline. He responded that he was not going to change who he is. That means, perhaps, a quick fist pump after a big play, then he is analyzing the next situation.

"David's personality is what you see," Kori Shaw said. "That's how he is all the time. When something is exciting, he'll say, 'I'm excited.' But not excitedly."

Kori Shaw loves Stanford as much as David does. She has degrees in mechanical engineering, a bachelor's from M.I.T. and a master's from California. On the side, she has studied Chinese, and in April she traveled to China to test her linguistic skills. Recently, she decided to spend more time with their three children: Keegan, 8, Carter, 6, and Gavin, 1 ½. A self-described closet nerd, Kori Shaw had worked as a model and at various Internet start-ups.

"In the football vernacular," Bowsby said, "David outkicked his coverage."

Shaw has changed little since they met, his wife said, although he no longer has his pet snake, named Sade after his favorite singer, and rarely suggests Jack in the Box for dinner anymore. He is comfortable looking at sculptures in the Prado in Madrid, as he did on a family vacation this summer, and voraciously reading presidential biographies.

"He's the kind of person," she said, "when no one is looking he'll still do the right thing." Shaw has another first date on the Stanford campus. This one will come against San Jose State on Saturday, and a few more people will be watching. He is hoping for another happy ending.