

# Punter ready to kickstart his NFL career

Written by Jack Borenstein, Canadian Jewish Tribune

TORONTO – At press time USA Today coaches and AP Top 25 polls and Bowl Championship Series (BCS) standings rank Pac-12 Conference Stanford University Cardinals (11-1) fourth in NCAA Division I football.

Senior punter David Green will have plenty to reminisce and anticipate during his final career game Jan. 2 against Oklahoma State in the Fiesta Bowl.

The 22-year-old Mission Viejo, CA, resident started playing soccer in Grade 1.

“In my freshman year at Mission Viejo High School I tried out as a wide receiver,” said Green. “Having a strong kicking leg I ultimately felt kicking would be my best football position.”

As both kicker and punter he peaked during his high school senior season, connecting with 8 out of 10 field goal tries, averaging 41 yards punting and putting 85 per cent of his kickoffs into the end zone.

He was named top-ranked US high school kicker and First Team All-American by Scout.com.

Green’s father is Jewish and he recalled being riveted and respectful listening to his grandparents describe their Holocaust experiences.

“They always stressed the importance of their Jewish beliefs that helped them survive those traumatic years.”

He received scholarship offers from LSU, Oregon and California but knew early he would attend Stanford.

“Besides their football program, Stanford provided the best chance for post-football success (he majors in technology, science and society).

“I was immediately impressed with new Cardinal head coach Jim Harbaugh, who was intense about football and always thoroughly prepared our team for games.”

Back and hernia injuries forced Green to miss the 2007 season but recalled how Cardinal players “made me feel welcome. I recalled how ecstatic students were when we defeated pre-season nationally No. 1-ranked USC.”

As starting 2008 punter he averaged 39.9 yards in 53 punts, including a career high 70-yard kick, and helped Stanford lead Pac-10 with 37.7 yards net average.

In 2009 Green averaged 41.2 yards including 15 punts inside the 20 yard line as the Cardinals went 8-5.

“Playing a (Sun) bowl game was a great experience and punted a career high six times, averaging 44 yards.”

When Brian Polian became Cardinal Special Teams Coordinator in 2010, Green was supplanted by Daniel Zychlinski.

“It was a challenging experience not being the main punter. I practised hard in special team drills developing skills without the hype.”

Green said that Coach Polian was “a real technician of the game and always asked how I was coping. He helped me and our kickers improve to do the best job possible when called upon.”

Polian was impressed with Green’s mental toughness.

“When he was beat out as starting punter we gave him reasons why and things he needed to fix. Instead of simply accepting his backup role he dedicated himself to improving and got better as the season wore on.

“While being a really good teammate he continued competing and when the opportunity presented itself (game 11 vs. California) he took advantage.”

He finished the season with 8 punts averaging 43 yards) as the Cardinals (12-1) defeated Virginia Tech 40-12 in the Orange Bowl for their first bowl win since 1996.

“We had a very successful season and didn’t take our feet off the pedal,” Green said. “We really enjoyed the Florida experience from fan and media standpoints.”

Polian said he opened punting competition in 2011 training camp “but David grabbed it early and never let go.”

Green averaged 41.7 yards in 32 punts with double digit fair catches and punts inside the 20 yard line for the first time since 2008. He suffered a mild concussion attempting a tackle during a Cardinal triple overtime win at USC in late October and returned the following game.

He commended long snapper Andrew Fowler.

“Andrew keeps me locked in and focused while I warm up during long intervals till it’s time to punt.”

Despite a Nov. 12 loss to Oregon dashing national championship hopes, Green wants to finish his Pac-12 career on a strong note with a Fiesta Bowl win for first-year head coach David Shaw.

“Coach Shaw supports positive reinforcement and proper intensity as needed.”

Polian complemented Green’s attention to detail and dedication.

“What he lacks in raw physical power he makes up being the consummate technician. He understands his body and skill set and is constantly working to refine both. David is a wonderful person and has been fun to coach the last two years.”

Green acknowledged he’ll recall during Fiesta Bowl’s closing moments “being blessed playing for one of the top team in the nation. I learned many life lessons at Stanford and will keep on-field success in perspective. It would be great being drafted by a NFL club. If it doesn’t work out I’ll seek a professional job with a technical company and see where that goes.”

Polian believed Green could play with a pro team given the opportunity.

“He’s not as naturally strong as some guys in the league but he is consistent. His operation times are the best I’ve ever been around in college, and already approaches his job with the mentality and maturity of a professional. He’s one of those guys you’re not quite sure about, but when you have him, you’re glad he’s on your team.”