

## POSITION OUTLOOK FOR 2006

**QUARTERBACKS** - Cal has had 7 QB's selected in the NFL draft since 1979 including three 1st rounders. As a QB coach, Jeff Tedford has had 7 QB's go on to start an NFL game including six 1st round DC's. When Tedford took over here, he inherited an underachieving Kyle Boller (career 47%). In his only season under Tedford, he threw for 2,815 (53.4%) with a 28-10 ratio (#1DC BAL). Aaron Rodgers won the starting job the next year and left as a #1DC of the Packers. I thought that Joseph Ayooob (PS#6JC), who had thrown for 5,790 yards and 55 TD's in two years at JC, would inherit the starting job. He was beat out by rFr VHT Nate Longshore (PS#18) but Longshore broke his leg in the opener. Ayooob misfired on all 10 passes vs Sac St and walk-on Steve Levy, who played FB in 2004, hit 2 of 7 for 52 yards and led 2 TD drives. Ayooob started the next 9 but struggled and was often booed at home. In his last 4 he completed 42.9% with 11 int. He actually hit just 1 of his first 19 in Memorial Stadium and threw for 1,707 (49.2%) with a 15-14 ratio (175 rush). Levy started vs Stanford and in the bowl for two wins and finished with 439 (61.5%) with a 4-2 ratio. Bryan Van Meter (6-2 195 So) was 3rd string. This year everyone returns. Longshore was #1 out of spring and has excellent size and good footwork. If Joe Ayooob wins the job, he ran the exact same offense at JUCO and was very successful. Kyle Reed (6-2 228 rFr, PS#18) was impressive in bowl practices. This should be one of the most improved QB positions in the NCAA.

**RUNNING BACKS** - Last year Cal had to replace JJ Arrington who rushed for 2,018 yards (7.0) in 2004 and set a Pac 10 record with 12 straight 100+ yd games. VHT Marshawn Lynch (PS#23) had an excellent true frosh season and would have topped 1,000 himself if he wasn't the backup, as he rushed for 628 and a sensational 8.8 ypc.

VHT's Marcus O'Keith (PS#26) and Terrell Williams (PS#46) were Lynch's backups going into 2005. Diminutive Justin

Forsett (5-8 183) emerged in August as an elusive Barry Sanders-type RB. Lynch rushed for 147 in the opener but then broke his pinkie finger vs UW and missed 2 games. Forsett had 187 and 235 in consecutive starts. Lynch rushed for an avg of 150.6 ypg over the final five and finished with 1,246 (6.4) Forsett was #2 with 999 (7.6) and #3 O'Keith added 243 and a super 11.0 ypc. The only losses are TB Williams (82 yd, 4.3) and FB Chris Manderino (8 st, 256 yd, 4 yr st'r). Not only do the three star TB's return, but they add another VHT in true frosh James Montgomery (PS#22). I list the FB's and not listed are TB Bryan Schutte (6-1 190 rFr) and Brian Holley (5-10 229 rFr). This is one of the best RB corps in the country.

**RECEIVERS** - Cal's receiving corps was extremely banged up in 2004 and Robert Jordan (PS#108) took off his redshirt to start 6 games and finished 2nd with 29 rec (11.4). Last year they had to replace their top WR, Geoff McArthur, who set a Cal single season record with 1,504 yards in 2003 as well as their top 3 receivers yardage-wise. While the group was younger, it was more talented with the addition of VHT true frosh DeSean Jackson (PS#1) and JUCO Lavelle Hawkins (PS#5). Jordan and Hawkins each missed two games with injuries. TE Craig Stevens (PS#36) started all 12 and had 13 (12.7).

Jackson led with 38 (15.8) and Jordan added 34 (13.4). Walk-on LaReyille Cunningham (6-2 193 So) had a huge 57 yd TD rec vs Wash St but just 4 other rec. Noah Smith (PS#54) broke his ankle in the opener (5 gm). The only loss this year is TE John Rust (0 rec). This unit should stay healthier and is more experienced.

**OFFENSIVE LINE** - In 2003 a veteran O-line helped Cal improve to 4.3 ypc rushing with 29 sacks. In 2004 they had to replace four players who combined for 40 starts. Surprisingly, the inexperienced O-line paved the way for 6.1 ypc rushing (25 sk). Last year they only had to replace one starter and one backup. The line opened holes for 5.8 ypc while allowing 23 sacks. RT Ryan O'Callaghan simply won the Morris Trophy (Top OL P10). Four of the 5 OL's missed starts and nine different players started. With the loss of LT Andrew Cameron after 3 starts (ACL), they really only had 3 starters back. This year the losses are heavier. Departing are RT O'Callaghan (#5DC NE, 1st Tm P10, 3 yr st'r), RG Aaron Merz (#7DC BUF, 10 st, 2nd Tm P10, 3 yr st'r), C Marvin Philip (#6DC PIT, 12 st, 1st Tm P10, 3 yr st'r), OT Jonathan Murphy (2 st) and LT Cameron (3 st). Four players return with starting experience and if the unit stays healthy, they should come close to the last two year's standards.

**DEFENSIVE LINE** - Cal's defensive strength over the past 8 years has been their D-line play. In 2003, they had to replace 5 players who combined for 35 starts and allowed 3.7 ypc but recorded 38 sacks. In 2004, only one starter returned but it was DT Lorenzo Alexander and the unit allowed just 2.7 ypc rushing with 37 sacks. Last year they had to replace three starters including two All-Pac 10 players and 2 backups. The unit slipped a little as they allowed 3.3 ypc rush and the sack total dropped to 32. This year the only loss is DE Tosh Lupoi (6 st, inj'd, 15 tkl). Not only do eight players return with starting experience, but all four of my projected starters are VHT's and they add 2 more VHT's plus 3 HT's this year. This may be the most physical D-line in the Pac 10, avg 291 lbs.

**LINEBACKERS** - Cal's LB corps was very inexperienced heading into last year losing five players who had combined for 36 starts. I did mention the unit may have been upgraded athletically with the addition of two super

JUCO's. Desmond Bishop (PS#3JC) lived up to his billing and became one of the Pac 10's best LB's. Mickey Pimentel (PS#24JC) did not arrive until the fall but contributed more as the season went on. Two frosh VHT's combined for 9 starts. This year they lose OLB Ryan Foltz (12 st, 55 tkl, 4.5 tfl) but have 5 of the top 6 back. This looks like one of the best LB corps in the NCAA.

**DEFENSIVE BACKS** - Cal was #10 in my pass D rankings in 2004 and last year had to replace two starters and two backups. They did return ROV Donnie McCleskey who was the #1 tackler in 2003 (102) but only started 2 in '04 (inj), so they basically had 3 starters returning. Cal had another solid year ranking #11. This year they must replace FS Harrison Smith (12 st, 72 tkl, 2 int, 8 pbu), ROV McCleskey (12 st, 73 tkl, 8.5 tfl, 2nd Tm P10) and Jason Honey (2 tkl). There are plenty of VHT's in the 2 deep and both starting CB's are back. Cal should have one of the top pass D's in the country once again.

**SPECIAL TEAMS** - In Tedford's first two seasons Cal finished #33 and #47 in my ST rankings. In 2004, they had to replace their P, FG and KO man (all one player - Tyler Fredrickson) as well as their top PR and KR and dropped to #69. They did bring in Aussie

JUCO P David Lonie but despite a booming leg, he only averaged 40.0 (net 35.8). Cal is a directional punting team which causes the punt avg to generally be lower. The team's top KR in 2004 was RB Marshawn Lynch (24.8) but since he became the feature back in '05, he was taken off of KR duties. Lonie improved to 42.0 (34.4 net). At midseason Tedford reevaluated his kick and punt coverage units and also brought Lynch back on KR's (20.8). Top PR Tim Mixon (14.9) and DeSean Jackson both had PR TD's. SS Thomas DeCoud has blocked 6 kicks in his career and has 4.4 speed with a 37" VL. K Tom Schneider hit 9 of 16 (long 49) with 2 misses from 50+. Lonie had 27 TB's on 68 KO's and Schneider 1 TB on 4 KO's. I list the replacement P's on the depth chart. Overall this unit moved back up to #34. If a solid new punter emerges, this group has Top 20 potential.

**COACHES** - Jeff Tedford has done an outstanding job here. He was the Pac 10 Coach of the Year in his first season and then became the first Cal coach to receive the honor more than once by winning it again in 2004. He had previously been the OC at both Oregon and Fresno St and has produced many fine NFL QB's. His OC Mike Dunbar, who is in his first year here, did a GREAT job as the OC at Northwestern the last 4 years. 5th year DC Bob Gregory was Boise St's DC in 2001 and Oregon's secondary coach from 1998-2000.

## PHIL'S FORECAST

In 2004, I called Cal my #2 surprise team in the country and forecasted that they would go from 8-6 to a potential 10 or 11 win season. The Golden Bears were nearly the surprise team in the country in 2004 as in a road trip to USC, Cal had 28-12 FD and 424-205 yard edges but came up short failing to score on 1st & goal from the 9. They fell 6 points short of winning the Pac 10 Title and getting to the National Title game. The Bears amazingly outgained Pac 10 foes in 2004 by 158.5 ypg and outscored them by 23 ppg, even better marks than the Trojans! Tedford's first 3 years were the most successful 3 year run for a Bears HC since Pappy Waldorf took them to 3 straight Rose Bowls in '48, '49 and '50. They had 8 players make 1st Tm Pac 10 in '04 and Tedford was given a 5 year contract extension. At one point they were #4, their best ranking in 52 years. Cal was very inexperienced last season with just 8 starters back and had to replace 1st and 2nd round DC's, its top 3 receivers and top 6 tacklers. Having to replace Aaron Rodgers was expected to be tough but Tedford had signed PS#6JC Joe Ayooob. Unfortunately he did not live up to his VHT billing. Nate Longshore won the starting QB job but was lost in the opener and Ayooob and former FB Steve Levy took turns at QB. They trailed Illinois after 3Q's but rallied for the win and got off to their first 5-0 start since 1996. They were ranked #10 vs UCLA and Cal had a 26-17 FD and 545-395 yd edges but lost. Cal did not recover from that loss the next week and was outgained by Oreg St 377-315 in Berkeley and lost. They trailed Wash St 38-28 in the 4Q but managed a win. However, vs an Oregon team without its starting QB, they lost in OT, 27-20. When they beat BYU in the bowl, they finished 8-4, their 2nd best mark under Tedford, despite their first negative TO margin (-6) under him. They finished #25 in the polls (#9 in '04) which was the first time since '50-'51 that Cal has finished the season ranked in back-to-back years. Last year Cal avg'd 32.9 ppg which was the 4th highest scoring average in school history but just the 3rd best in Tedford's four years. With 7 starters back, including all of their top RB's and WR's, and much better play from the QB position, Cal will be more potent in 2006. In 2004 Cal had 8 starters back on D and allowed just 16.0 ppg, its best since 1979 (reg ssn). Last year with just 3 starters back, they played better than expected (21.2 ppg). This year, with a fierce defensive front 7 and both starting CB's back, Cal may have their best D yet under Tedford. Cal will be favored in 10 of their 12 games this year and despite tough road trips to Tennessee and USC, Cal must be considered not only a Pac 10 contender, but a National Title contender as well.



TB Marshawn Lynch