

Traverso gets his wheels back

Matt Traverso returned to Stanford on Monday with all sorts of disturbing news.

He sensed that **Buddy Teevens**, his football coach, was about to be dismissed. The whole team expected as much after a trying season and a crushing defeat to No. 4 Cal in the Big Game.

What made matters worse for Traverso, a Christian Brothers High School graduate who's as talented as he is personable, was finding out someone had the audacity to rip off his wheels. His beloved golf cart was nowhere to be found after he spent Thanksgiving weekend in Sacramento. And knowing Traverso, this was no ordinary ride.

This was *the* ride, painted green and equipped with the charming pink Disney horn on the steering wheel, a complement to his flaming red hair.

"Unfortunately, these golf carts are fairly easy to hot-wire and hijack," Traverso said. "I was depressed and upset, then I got a tip where it was. I got it back, and I'm glad because I could never get back into riding a bike or walking."

Not that his regal legs don't work or anything. Traverso was a national recruit at tight end coming out of CBS, wooed by programs from both coasts, including Cal, Oregon and Florida. He chose Stanford, which his father, **Ben**, attended. (His mother, **Joyce**, went to UC Davis and insisted that golf carts are also perfectly acceptable there.)

In his three seasons, Traverso has experienced the full gamut of the business of big-time college sports.

The coach who recruited him, **Tyrone Willingham**, was gone by the time he signed his letter of intent, bolting for Notre Dame. He played two games as a freshman before missing the remain-

HOME COOKIN'

By Joe Davidson

ing nine games with an ankle injury, and was awarded a medical redshirt.

Last season, he saw time in 11 games and caught a touchdown pass against UCLA. This season, he was stuck behind an NFL-type tight end in **Alex Smith**, who at the team's awards banquet heaped praise on Traverso as the next true tight-end prospect. Traverso saw some time at fullback in the last two games, and he looked plenty capable in the role, leveling all comers.

But it's not what he wants to be. Guys who wear No. 87 catch the ball and block as tight ends, not lead fullbacks.

"They put me back there for a different look," Traverso said. "I liked being on the field, but it's not really my position. It's different than tight end. You're going full speed, and the guy coming at you is going full speed. You ice your shoulders a little more. I'm definitely a tight end. If I'm a fullback, I need to be more squatty."

Traverso is 6-foot-5 and 255 pounds. There's no squatty to that frame. He has two years of eligibility remaining and is listed as the starter for 2005.

In the meantime, Traverso works out, spends quality time with his best friend and brother, **Joe**, a former CBS and Harvard lineman star who earned a degree in electrical engineering.

And he tools around The Farm on his ride.

"This is a great place to be," Traverso said. "It's 100 times better than I thought it'd be. I'm loving it."

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