



April 14th, 2007: California Football Scrimmage Notes

PARTICIPATION:

- QBs: both Nate Longshore and Kyle Reed were wearing red 'no contact' shells. Kevin Riley did not play (as expected).

- Players I did not see participating either in the scrimmages or in the 7-on-7 or 11-on-11 no tackling drills: Kevin Riley, LB Worrell Williams, Safety Bernard Hicks, Punter Andrew Larson, RB Tracy Slocum, RB Bryan Schutte, CB Charles Amadi, DB Gary Doxy, WR Drew Glover

- WR Robert Jordan is wearing #2 now.

- The above is of course not counting players who have not played all spring due to injury such as starting OT Mike Gibson, potentially first string OG Norris Malele, and blueshirt frosh DE Keith Browner.

Apparent current depth chart (for players that scrimmaged - i.e. none of those mentioned above), slashes indicate where I could not tell who was ahead of whom, or that they played together:

OFFENSE - DEPTH CHART: (*in scrimmage*, not necessarily true depth chart)

QB - 1. Nate Longshore, 2. Kyle Reed, 3. Bryan Van Meter 4. Cory Smits

RB - 1. Justin Forsett, 2. James Montgomery, 3. Brian Holley 4. Lavelle Hawkins (see below)

FB - 1. Will Ta'ufo'ou, 2. Brian Holley/R.J. Garrett

WR - 1. Desean Jackson/Lavelle Hawkins/Robert Jordan, Others(2./3.): Sam Desa/LaReylle Cunningham/Daniel Lofton/Nyan Boateng/Sean Young/Alex Stroud/Cameron Toler/Cooper Miller

TE - 1. Craig Stevens, 2. Cameron Morrah, 3. Skylar Curran/Garry Graffort/Julian Arthur

LT - 1. Chet Teofilo, 2. Matt Laird (Laird opposite side from last scrimmage? But Laird played at least one series at RT too)

LG - 1. Brian De La Puente, 2. Mark Gray

C - 1. Alex Mack, 2. Chris Guarnero

RG - 1. Mark Boskovich 2. Kevin Bemoll

RT - 1. Mike Tepper, 2. Justin Prueitt (Prueitt opposite side from last scrimmage? But Prueitt played at least one series at LT too)

DEFENSE - DEPTH CHART: (*in scrimmage*, not necessarily true depth chart)



DE - 1. Cody Jones/Tyson Alualu, 2. Rulon Davis/John Allen, 3. Tad Smith/Jon Karacozoff (actually not 100% sure if I saw Smith today)

DT - 1. Matt Malele/Mika Kane, 2. Derrick Hill/Mike Costanzo, 3. (none - I only noticed 4 people playing DT during scrimmages)

LB - 1/2. Greg Van Hoesen/Anthony Felder/Justin Moyer/Zack Follett/Eddie Young/Matt Russi (all 6 rotated a lot between 1st/2nd string, though technically GVH, Felder, and Moyer appeared to be 1st string), 3. Shea McIntyre/Tyler Morrow/Mike Mohamed/Kyle Kirst, possibly others

Safety - 1. Thomas Decoud/Robert Peele, 2. Marcus Ezeff/Brett Johnson 3. Kenny Frank/??Kyle Kirst (from LB)/??Gavin Beeman (converted from WR)

CB - 1. Syd'Quan Thompson/Darian Hagan, 2. Brandon Jones/Brandon Hampton/Jesse Brooks, 3. ? Don't remember if anyone else played corner

As always, there was a lot of mixing and matching, and later in the scrimmage, the first team offense would play against the second team defense for a while, but the above is my best guess.

OBSERVATIONS:

- It was a fairly quick practice this afternoon, with only a few drills before non-contact 7-on-7 and 11-on-11s, followed by full contact situational scrimmage. Yes, there was a scrimmage, though as often, it was with fixed starting points like the 30 yard line or the defensive 11 yard line, as well as punts and kickoffs. It was drizzling lightly off and on but mostly cleared up by 2pm. I'm terrible at estimating crowd size, but there were maybe 2k people there.

- There was quite a turnout earlier up at the press box for the Bear Backer pow-wow/lunch and Troy Taylor chalk-talk prior to the scrimmage. Troy was nice and had a couple jokes (one of which I'm paraphrasing below). He talked a bit about what it's like to cover the team as a broadcaster (while also having a job teaching), about the commitment the coaching staff and players make, and what he expects out of the Bears next year. Nothing much that is unknown to most hard core fans regarding the team itself.

- Man, I was easily one of the youngest people attending the Bear Backer event. Well there were a few other young people, but they mostly looked like family members with older folks, whereas I was there by myself. Now I know what it's like to hang out on the alumni side rather than with the crazies in QQ where I still request my tickets. I did talk to one very nice lady on the way up to the press box, though we talked more about basketball than football.

- Troy Taylor brought his young son whose little league game had been rained out, and related the following story. The kid (whose name I'm blanking on right now) has a big USC fan for a schoolteacher who apparently talks about the Trojans in class every Monday during the Fall. At one point the teacher was telling the kids how big a USC fan she is and got them excited and told all of them to raise their hands if they were also USC fans. The kids, being easily influenced, all complied eagerly except for Troy's son. The

teacher then asked the boy why his hand was not raised and he answered that it was because he was not a USC fan. The teacher then asked what team he was a fan of, and Troy's son said Cal. The teacher persisted, asking why he would possibly be a Cal fan, and he answered that both his mom and dad are Cal fans and that he likes the Bears. She then retorted by asking "what if your mom and dad were both morons, then would you be the same?" Troy's son thought about it and said "if my mom and dad were both morons, then I would be a USC fan."

- (The above is actually a common football joke as I found out later, substitute any two teams for Cal and USC, and "felon" or "junkie" for "moron")

- Nate Longshore had an up and down day, but the Nate-to-Desean connection was evident throughout, starting with the non-contact 7-on-7 drills where Nate hit Jackson deep down the sideline against a cover 2, over CB Darian Hagan, and before Safety Thomas Decoud could come over. Longshore also connected with Jackson on a beautifully executed inside screen and 30 yard scamper for the first touchdown of the scrimmage, and later threw a hitch that Jackson caught and then weaved in, then out for a first down and more on a 3rd and long. Lavelle Hawkins and Desean really stood out today in comparison with the other receivers (not sure if Jordan was ever thrown to).

- On the other hand, Longshore was low/short on several throws, eliciting groans from those in attendance, and was visibly annoyed with himself on at least one occasion. He did react to pressure well a couple times, appearing to come off his first and second options to sidestep and throw short over the middle to Justin Forsett who converted another third and long. On another occasion around the 10 yard line, faced with a blitzing Matt Russi, Nate hit his outlet, TE Craig Stevens, who had got a free release, on a slant for a TD. On the latter play, however, it is uncertain whether Longshore could have completed the throw had Russi not honored the red shell 'no hit' rule and veered around him. As always, Longshore's deep ball looked good, including a 1-on-1 sideline bomb to Hawkins who took the ball away from Syd'Quan Thompson for a 35-ish yard gain from near his own goal-line. Longshore also had another touchdown near the goal-line on a slant to WR Sean Young, which was nice to see after all of Young's injury issues.

- Kyle Reed also did not impress to the extent that he has in earlier scrimmages. To be fair, the second team defense that he was playing against appeared to mount a better pass rush than the first team (Rulon Davis, Zack Follett, Eddie Young all applying pressure on the second team), and Reed did not have Jackson/Jordan/Hawkins at his disposal most of the time. He threw one near interception (by CB Jesse Brooks) on an out, had his pass blocked by a blitzing and leaping Young, and threw incomplete into coverage on a seam route to WR Cooper Miller who was blasted by Safety Brett Johnson just after the ball arrived.

- RB James Montgomery showed a flash of brilliance on a run between the tackles to the right that he cut left about 10 yards downfield and barely outran the backside coverage to sneak by the left pylon for a 30 yard score. However, for the most part, he, Forsett, and FB Brian Holley (our apparent 3rd string tailback with Slocum/Schutte not playing) were contained during the scrimmage, though in truth, Forsett only was in there for a couple series. There were no other long gains that I can remember from these three, and several

runs were stuffed near or behind the line of scrimmage. Follett had a monster hit on Montgomery on an inside run near the beginning of the scrimmage that got the crowd riled up.

- Rulon Davis looked fairly good, with at least one would-be sack on Reed in which he emphatically ripped the ball out of Reed's hands (again no hit due to the red shell Reed was wearing). Also, Matt Malele, Mika Kane, Derrick Hill, and Mike Costanzo seemed pretty solid up the middle stuffing the run, but again, not that much pass rush from those four.

- There was at least one play where I could have sworn the defense lined up in a 3-4 rather than our customary 4-3, which is interesting because we have the personnel (deep at LB with good outside blitzers, bigger gap control DEs rather than speed rushers) to play a 3-4. Malele anchored the middle with Cody Jones and Tyson Alualu as 'inside ends'. Linebackers Zack Follett and Justin Moye lined up near the line of scrimmage on the outside and Anthony Felder and Greg Van Hoesen were inside linebackers. Anyway, this only happened once that I noticed. Most of the time, the defense stayed in a 4-3.

- I'm really concerned about our kicking game. Not about the actual kickers and punters. Schneider looked ok, and while several punts were short by #35 Ryan Theimer and Jordan Kay, starting punter Larson is not playing and I think things will be different once Andrew is back. However, as for protection/coverage, there were 3-4 blocked or partially blocked punts, with one returned for a TD by Forsett, and another returned to the 1 yard line (could not see by who). Eventually, as before, the coaches made the change to have the punter stand to the side so he could get the punt off regardless of the rush so that they could practice returns, and on both punts like this, the return man took it to the house. The first one was a spectacular Desean-esque 'run and fake left and loop back all the way right picking up blockers' escapade by Brandon Hampton. The second was a routine punt return right by Brandon Jones for the distance. It appeared to be either tremendous blocking and returning, or serious coverage issues (or both). On kickoffs, Hawkins and Syd'Quan Thompson both had fairly long returns as well. I do recognize that kickoffs are from the 30 this year, but can't allow return men to consistently get to the 40 and 50 yard lines as occurred today.

- Bryan Van Meter played at 3rd string QB and was pressured quite a bit, not finding much success. He did have one rollout and pass to his fullback, Holley in the right flat. Holley then proceeded to stiff arm CB Darian Hagan into oblivion and rumble down the sideline for a fairly long gain to about the defensive 10 yard line. Hagan recovered on the subsequent two plays, however, and tackled WR Nyan Boateng for a short completion, and then covered Boateng well on an incomplete fade in the end zone from Van Meter. Van Meter also had a 6 yard completion to TE Skylar Curran for the JC transfer's only catch. I did not see TE Cameron Morrah catch one today, though he definitely played.

- Backup safety Marcus Ezeff had a nice interception to stop an otherwise fairly successful drive on the one series that QB Cory Smits played. Smits did have a few nice completions (to Cameron Toler, Boateng, TE Graffort) to drive from his own 30 for a few first downs. Smits had a knot of young fans (fraternity brothers?) that were hooting and hollering every time he completed a pass or even audibled. The same group also



appeared to be cheering Schneider heavily, and at one point Tom turned and acknowledged them.

- Anthony Felder played well along with Follett and Eddie Young, stuffing a Forsett draw and making several other tackles.

- Thomas Decoud looks like a stud out there at safety. I think he is going to be the rock of our secondary. He was always a good run-stopper, but his pass coverage has improved as well.

- Syd'Quan Thompson had a nice 'knock-away' when Van Meter threw into triple coverage on fourth and goal from the 16 on the last play of the scrimmage. Earlier in the series, Follett barrelled in for another would-be sack, but avoided nailing Van Meter even though Bryan did not have a red shell on. Van Meter then started scrambling downfield, but the play was blown dead.

- There were lots of penalties on both sides of the ball and the scrimmage had a bit of a sloppy feel to it at times, but of course, lots of regulars are not playing, and spring is for ironing out the kinks.

- Our fourth string tailback was Lavelle Hawkins. I feel ok saying this and not revealing any state secrets since the Cal site also mentions it. Lavelle spearheaded a series from the defense's 30 yard line, lining up at tailback and rushing 3 times: a sweeping sprint to the right, hugging the sidelines for a first down, followed by 2 surprising inside rushes for a touchdown. On the score, Hawkins drew a lot of contact as he leaped and was flipped over in the air but landed in the end zone for a touchdown. I was a bit concerned about the pounding he took, but he appeared to be all right. Percy Harvin watch out!

- It's always hard to figure out just how good the team is when they are playing against themselves and several players are out. Overall, having been to all three scrimmages, I am very excited about some aspects of the Cal squad (Longshore deep throws to wide receivers, linebacker depth), hopeful about others (development of young tackles - Tepper, Teofilo, etc., talented young DBs just starting to hit their stride), and frankly very worried about others (lack of DE pass rush with perhaps a slight exception for Rulon, punt protection and punt/kickoff coverage issues). Then again, I am not a football coach, and I have tremendous trust in JT and his staff to mold this talented group into a great team once September rolls around.