

Atlantic Coast Conference Football Kickoff

Tuesday, July 22, 2025

Charlotte, North Carolina, USA

Stanford Cardinal
Coach Frank Reich
Sam Roush
Tevarua Tafiti
Collin Wright

Press Conference



against many worthy opponents in this 2025 season in our quest to be ACC champions this year.

Q. Coach, like you said, being interim coach for this season and working with Andrew Luck, for you, what are the foundational pillars for a successful program that you're going to live by throughout the season, and why was it right for you at this point in your career to take on this opportunity at Stanford?

FRANK REICH: It's great to be here. We are, on behalf of the Stanford football team, along with our players, we're excited to be here to kick off the 2025 season here at this ACC Kickoff in Charlotte. We're extremely proud to represent Stanford University, the excellent tradition both academically and athletically. Proud to have been playing football at Stanford for about 130 years. A lot of great history of winning tradition, coaches, players, some 282 players being drafted into the NFL.

Now we're here for the 2025 season and really looking forward to that. We really believe coming into this 2025 season that under new GM Andrew Luck, that the Stanford football program is about to enter a new era of football and you're going to see a new brand of football under his vision and leadership. I'm really excited to be a part of that for the unique opportunity that I have to be the interim head coach for the 2025 season.

I think, after having been there for three months, the reason I'm most excited, besides working with Andrew, is getting to know guys like these four guys sitting right up here, along with many of their other teammates, especially the more veteran, older guys, who are really going to be the foundation to turn this program around as we enter this new era. We could not be more excited for the year ahead.

It's a unique year. We've got a lot of change, a change with me coming in as the interim head coach, 17 transfers, more than ever in Stanford history, but it really all starts with player leadership, with Sam Roush, Collin Wright, Tevarua Tafiti and Simi Pale, as well. These guys are true leaders, along with the other guys, and we're excited to compete here in the ACC. We look forward to competing

FRANK REICH: Life is full of many journeys and experiences. That's what we're looking for, to grow all the time. When Andrew called and said, would you help us out this year, first I was a little bit hesitant, but then when I came out and I just realized, listen, I've experienced a lot of things in life in the football world, but I get an opportunity to coach Stanford? I mean, this is a unique place. I've been there for three months, and I've drank the Kool-Aid, and it is different. It is different in the best of ways.

The culture there is different. The people. It's really a unique place. Really where, for me, it was about the experience of coaching the student-athlete, the Stanford student-athlete, guys like who are sitting right over here to my left, that I knew would make my better, make me a better coach, a better person. The other reason I said yes to Andrew is I know I've got something to offer. I've got something to offer to help Andrew, I've got something to offer to help these guys.

As we come in to kind of kick this new era of football off, we kind of started with, we put up here's the standards that we're going to live by and we're going to play by. We've got to all commit to these, and we've got to put our brand of football out there and let people see what that's going to be. We'll let our talk on the field show what it's going to be. I'm extremely optimistic about the progress we're going to make in the 2025 season.

Q. As an interim coach, how are you balancing short-term goals like winning with planting seeds for Stanford's long-term success?

FRANK REICH: That's a great question, and I don't -- I think those two can go together, right? I think they always



do go together. We do have goals for this season, and they're clear to each one of us what those goals are, but we also understand the way you plant seeds for long term success is get the process right and get the people right.

Like I said, we have the right people, starting with these guys and some transfers we got in and the rest of the team that was there, and now it becomes a question of us together, players and coaches, committing to a process that can be the foundation for long-term success.

You've got to create a championship culture before you can really win the championships. So sometimes the results, you see the results right away, and sometimes times they lag. There's no given. There's no absolutes in this world as far as you can't be promised that you're going to see those right away, but what makes me feel like we're going to see the results this year is because of the right kind of people who have laid the foundation, how hard these players have worked this off-season. I've seen that. I've watched it. I've seen the progress we've made in the weight room in every way possible off the football field.

Then as far as putting in new schemes and preparing for the season in that way, in the short time we've had, I've just seen an incredible amount of progress and I'm excited to start competing against some other people.

Q. You mentioned a new era. What does that look like for you as far as Stanford football is concerned? And the connection between you and Andrew Luck, what does that look like for you guys this season?

FRANK REICH: We have a very similar philosophy and belief. When Andrew and I were together in 2018, I think we had an incredible season together. We both resonate with it starts with the process. These guys will joke, and hear about me saying and Andrew saying, hey, it's all about getting 1 percent better every day, going 1-0 every day. That's the way you build success. It's a commitment to that.

It's a combination of confidence and humility. That's what I saw in Andrew Luck that was so special. This extreme confidence, but also this great humility. To know that you can get better every day, to know that you can get better every day.

That's going to be our approach. We're going to make a lot of progress because we're going to put in the right systems and we've got the right people, and we're just going to work hard at getting better all the time.

Q. When you look at some coaching changes around the country the last few years, you look at last year,

Curt Cignetti had one of the most crazy turnarounds for Indiana of all time. What's it take to have a turnaround like that in year one for you?

FRANK REICH: Player leadership. I think as coaches you can come in and provide some structure. You can provide new schemes that will bring a little bit of life and hope to the program, and I think that's really what Andrew and I have been trying to do is just provide a framework and a culture that can give our team hope.

But I think our team knows the responsibility -- this is a player's game, and it's up to them to make the plays on the field. I think that's how it's done, and I think that's what we'll see this year.

Q. Personally I see a few similarities between the two programs, Boston College and Stanford, being great academic institutions and then having head coaches with NFL experience. Just tell me, how do you kind of harness the academic side of the program while also keeping the football strong? I know that's something that Bill O'Brien has harped on consistently.

FRANK REICH: There's no question. I mean, how you do anything is how you do everything. Everything matters. A better man makes a better player. You can only compartmentalize your life so far. For those who try to say, hey, football is a separate deal and I have a different approach, it just is short-lived.

You find the people and the players and the coaches who understand that there's a certain way of doing things. Whether that's in the academic world or in the athletic realm or at home as a father or husband or brother, whatever the case may be, there's certain principles and standards that you live by in life that help us to win and create a winning culture and really create an opportunity to elevate your own game and elevate other people around you.

That's really what we're trying to do, just build that kind of mentality. So excited to get to work doing that.

Q. I was wondering, you've been in the NFL since 1985. What were some of the challenges and differences with coming back down to the college level? It's been so long since you've been here.

FRANK REICH: Great question. Football is football. So on a schematic level, there were no challenges. Obviously at Stanford, we've got high quality student-athletes who are very physically talented but also mentally can grasp the things in the pro style schemes that we're going to run.



I think the biggest challenge is the amount of time that you get with the athlete, where in the NFL you're with these guys all day every day and you can stay as long as you want. In college there's just a different deal.

You have to really pick and choose what you want to do and how much you want to put in and how far you can go with certain things. Then it's incumbent upon the players to really take ownership of that. Good news for us, we've got the right kind of players to do that, but that is the biggest challenge is the time spent because, to be able to sit and talk football 24/7, you put yourself in that environment, you're just going to get better.

In college you have to count on the players doing that for themselves and doing that amongst each other, and I believe we've got that kind of leadership.

Q. Quick question about Stanford. I think more than any program I can think of over the past decades, offensively at least, when Stanford has been rolling, it's really had a distinct identity. Back to Coach Ralston, when he had Plunkett and could throw the ball, Coach Christiansen did the same thing, Coach Walsh, very progressive, and then Dennis Green's teams were very physical. Coach Harbaugh's teams, David Shaw's teams, again, that pounding run game, even though, Andrew Luck spanned both of them. But there was always that real identity. I think Stanford lost that the last few years. What do you see the identity, at least offensively, that you're trying to establish on the farm?

FRANK REICH: I'm glad you asked that question, and it is the question, the most important question not only offensively but really as a defense. I've talked a lot about this with the coaches and want to make sure that we, as a coaching staff, know what the answer to that question is, which we do.

However, being a, quote, unquote, new coaching staff, since I'm new and there's some question of, well, what Stanford's going to do on offense? Are they going to go back and do what Andrew and Frank did back with the Colts, or is it going to be when Frank was with the Eagles, where? But I was so late that I got the same coaches from last year. So there's still a little mystery to what we're going to do on offense, and honestly I just want to keep it that way, you know what I mean?

At least for the first few games of the season, that's a mystery. The truth is we're going to be a hybrid of a bunch of different things, or at least that's what we want everybody to think and let people figure it out as we go. So don't really want to provide too much information there.

But you did hit on one keynote that I'm willing to talk about, and that is physicality. I don't care if you're throwing it or running it, you can't win if you're not physical, and if you don't play with great effort and great intensity. That has to be part of the identity, and then how the rest of it plays out, you'll see as it unfolds. If it's not physical, then we haven't really achieved what we were shooting for.

THE MODERATOR: Coach, thank you. You can switch spots with Sam Roush.

Q. To look at the long line of tight ends at Stanford, when you look at Fleener and Hooper and Ertz and Dalton Schultz and so on and so forth, just what that means to you to carry that tradition and to know of that long line of success that has come not only at Stanford, but also in the NFL?

SAM ROUSH: It means a lot. Those are the guys that I look up to. We talk about that consistently in the tight end room. Zach Ertz, Austin Hooper, Coby Fleener, Colby Parkinson, all those dudes, they come back and visit, give us advice. We get to talk to them. They talk about how their journey was, how it's different than college, how it is in the pros.

That's a legacy I want to continue, and I would like to be a part of that. Those are kind of the heroes of that story.

Q. Sam, your family, your bloodline has a lot of legends in it, has some Hall-of-Famers, has a dad that played in the ACC at Duke, as well. Did that situation where you're coming from a family that has high athletic standards prepare you to be in the tight end room for a place that for a while was considered a tight end U of sorts?

SAM ROUSH: Yes, sir. I would say that it's still considered a tight end U. Yeah, I grew up playing pretty much every sport. It wasn't something that my parents forced on me. They just wanted me to go out there and have fun. Didn't play football until I got to high school, but kind of always knew that was something I was going to do and be good at.

I'm really appreciative of my parents doing a great job kind of introducing me to the sport and allowing me to make my own decisions. I'm glad that it's worked out thus far.

Q. A bit of a devil's advocate question. Being a native of Tennessee, why travel almost the length of the country to attend Stanford?

SAM ROUSH: Something you might not know is I actually

 . . . when all is said, we're done.®

lived in San Jose for about four years through high school. My uncle played at Stanford. He kind of put that idea in my head. Then the second I got the offer, I kind of decided internally I was going to go there.

A month later, I called up the old tight end coach, Coach Turner, and asked if my offer was committable, and he said yes. That was kind of the end of that story.

Q. What specific skill areas have you focused on during the off-season to be the best you can be this season?

SAM ROUSH: Yes, sir. I'd say two main areas of skill, first, route thoughts. I think the most important thing you can do as a route running tight end is separation at the top of your routes. That's something that Zach Ertz does really well. Some of the greats, George Kittle, Sam LaPorta, they're excellent at the top. If you can get that little bit of separation and have trust with the quarterback, you can do a lot for the team.

Secondly, blocking. That's something I've always been really passionate about. Coach Byham is extremely passionate about blocking as a tight end. He was very, very good at that. I feel like I've been good in the past, but I'd like to continue to build that consistency and resume. So when Coach Reich is calling the plays, he can count on me to get the job done at the point of attack on a power run scheme or duo or anything.

THE MODERATOR: Sam, you can switch spots with Tevarua.

Q. Tevarua, you started off as a special teams specialist, as a guy who was one of the leaders on the special teams unit, and you developed yourself into one of the better linebackers in the ACC. How has that happened, and is that mentality of that kind of all out, face first special teams helped out with being a great linebacker?

TEVARUA TAFITI: Starting with special teams, I feel like that builds character and that builds a player. I feel like I've always been the underdog, and I feel like coming throughout, I've really digged in and become the player I am today.

Q. Prior to enrolling into Stanford, you said that you wanted to get better as a coverage linebacker or coverage backer. Now that you're entering your senior season, how do you feel how you've accomplished that goal, and is there anything else you're looking to improve on this year?

TEVARUA TAFITI: During the off-season, I spent a lot of time with Coach April and Coach Joe. We talked about a lot of coverage and different spacings. One other thing that we worked on a lot was my pass rush moves and just a lot of hands and get-offs and stands.

Q. Bobby April III, just what you can say about working with him and what he's done to bring out the best in you. Some of his leadership style and the decisions he makes?

TEVARUA TAFITI: He's a very smart guy. He's been in the NFL. His dad has been a special teams coach in the NFL, too. He brings a lot of knowledge with us. He also brings a lot of connections. He coached people in the NFL. One player in mind is Nick Herbig. He was from Hawaii, and he introduced me to him, and I gained a lot of knowledge. So just the connections with him and connecting to other people.

Q. Everyone likes to make a lot about the departures, whether it's coaches or people in the transfer portal. There's over a dozen guys that have come in. What's your role in terms of someone who's been with the team for so long, in terms of meshing the old with the new and creating whatever the new kind of brand is for Stanford football now that Coach Reich has come in?

TEVARUA TAFITI: I think my role is just welcoming everybody, welcoming the 17 transfers we got in. The guys that stayed, just stay by them throughout the season.

Q. You described yourself as a longtime underdog. Why have you been an underdog?

TEVARUA TAFITI: I feel like I had to earn my spot. I've been behind people pretty much through college, and I felt like, when I'm at my best, I'm competing.

THE MODERATOR: We'll spend a few minutes with the power cornerback, Collin Wright.

Q. Can you describe the importance of disrupting the receivers on their release and/or their stem, and what sort of techniques do you utilize to do so?

COLLIN WRIGHT: First off, I just think a big part of that comes from being physical, as Coach talked about as a defensive unit, as a defense. We want to be extremely physical, and that starts up front. That starts with us on the back end. That starts with our linebackers. I think physicality and disrupting time. Obviously for us it helps guys like Teva be able to make plays on the ball, get sacks, get strip sacks, all of that.

I think just being physical is a big part of that, and I think that's something we've tried to embody as a team as something we're going to embody. Can't wait to see it in camp. Can't wait to get going and make sure all those plays show up on Saturday.

Q. Collin, you talked about at the beginning of play and kind of disrupting what guys want to do early in their routes. You have a unique ability to play the ball totally in the most interceptions in the season that we've seen at Stanford in the last five years. What is it that allows you to be so calm in that moment of truth where a lot of defensive backs panic and get bad PIs and things like that, as opposed to you who was able to have your career high in pass breakups and interceptions last year?

COLLIN WRIGHT: I think it's something we do as a unit. Coach Williams, which is my cornerback coach, is a guy that hones in on finishing plays and playing the ball. A lot of that happens in the off-season, not just with me, a lot of things we do with our teammates. We kind of have to train like we're receivers. We have to catch the ball just as much as they do, so when the ball is in the air, as much as it's the receiver's ball, it's my ball, as well.

I think that big aspect of being able to finish plays and being able to make plays on the ball is something that changes the game. Those opportunities don't come. So when they do come, we have to take advantage of them. I think that's something that we do a lot.

Q. Having Frank Reich as your head coach now and all that NFL experience, everything that he's seen and the knowledge and wisdom gained, how have you been a sponge to that, and what can you say to the team embracing Frank this season?

COLLIN WRIGHT: Just what Coach said, being 1 percent better each day, I think that mindset just helps us so much. It helps us attack things we do on the field, things we do off the field, the way we interact with people on a day-to-day basis. I think a lot of the lessons we've learned from Coach not only impacts us as players, but also as humans, which is one of the best aspects and one of the best things you can have in a leader is someone who cares for you outside of what you do.

I think that's something I've definitely picked up on and something that a lot of our team has picked up on. I think that's what value Coach brings, what Andrew brings, is just that renewed aspect of expectations that no matter who you are as an athlete, it just means less if you aren't a good person. So I think in that way it's helped a lot, and all the football stuff will take care of itself.

Q. With having three trips to the East Coast, what are some things that you all are going to do to get your bodies acclimated to the time change and the travel?

COLLIN WRIGHT: I think for us just being smart about it. We have so many resources, different things we use on the plane and to keep our body moving, keep our blood flowing. I think we have a great support staff that gives us all those resources.

Also, for games that we truly do have to travel on the plane for six hours, we leave a day earlier so our bodies can acclimate to wherever we're playing. I don't think it's too big of a deal. Definitely something that we had to deal with last year, but we have so much support that it makes those things easy for us.

Q. You said a little while ago you can't wait to see how the season unfolds. Sort of how you said it. When people say they can't wait, sometimes that's just a casual thing they say. Are you a patient person?

COLLIN WRIGHT: I think I'm a very patient person, but also love to compete and I love to compete with groups of guys that also love to compete. I think a lot of those things that we want to do, all the things we did to train nine months out of the year for 12 weeks is an experience like no other.

When you think about it, we've dreamed of playing at these high stages since we were kids. We don't take for granted our spot. So can't wait to get ready for the season, can't wait to go out and ball out with the guys sitting on the left of me, all the guys that are in our locker room each day putting the work in and so adamant about being successful this year.

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