

One look at the Cardinal's 2006 roster and it's evident Stanford is a different team than a year ago. That's because the Cardinal has six new faces, included two players who redshirted last year, a talented group of freshmen and several key returnees.

For second year head coach John Whitlinger, there is reason for optimism.

"We have much better depth than we did last year," said the former Stanford All-American. "We've got good experience returning and we've added a lot from last year with two returning redshirts and a good freshman class. I think we have a chance to be there at the end," he said.

And so do Cardinal fans as Stanford's Taube Tennis Stadium will be the host site of the 2006 Men's and Women's NCAA Championships, May 18-29.

"We've got competition at the bottom of the lineup," said Whitlinger, "and when we've won championships in the past, that's what we've had. Some guys got a lot of experience last year. It may have been a year early, but it should pay off this year. We've got solid experience at the top of our lineup, great competition and a solid freshman class.

The Schedule

The Cardinal will be tested early and often in 2006 as the schedule does not allow Stanford to ease into the season. In fact, it begins with a bang. National powerhouses USC and UCLA visit Taube Tennis Stadium on February 3 and 4.

"We've never played UCLA and USC so early in the season," says Whitlinger. Those two matches will get our attention quickly."

Another early season test for the Cardinal will be a February 25 match against defending NCAA runner-up Baylor. On March 29, Stanford will play Illinois indoors in Champaign in what will be a tremendous challenge for the Cardinal.

"Baylor and Illinois are two of the top teams in the country," said Whitlinger. "Baylor has been in the NCAA final match the past two years and playing at Illinois, in their indoor facility, will be a huge challenge for us."

Stanford will also host three evening home matches this season, something Whitlinger says his players are excited about. The Cardinal will host UC Irvine on February 10, Baylor on February 27 and Fresno State on April 11 – all beginning at 5:00 pm at the Taube Tennis Stadium.

The highlight of the 2006 season will be the first-ever combined men's and women's NCAA Tennis Championships that will be held at Stanford from May 18-29.

ITA Preseason Team Rankings

As of Jan 11, 2006

Rank	School (1st Place votes)	Pts.
1	Virginia (15)	2293
2	Florida	2277
3	Georgia	2221
4	Illinois	2210
5	UCLA	2214
6	Mississippi	2192
7	Baylor	2180
8	Duke	2109
9	Pepperdine	2102
10	LSU	2019
11	Florida State	1992
12	South Carolina	1935
13	Texas A&M	1876
14	Stanford	1840
15	Wake Forest	1833

Singles

The Cardinal's starting lineup will feature three-time All-American KC Corkery and junior James Wan along with returning All-American James Pade and freshman Matt Bruch, who made an immediate mark on the national scene this past fall.

Those four – who are all ranked among the top 15 in the West - could form the top of Stanford's lineup. Corkery enters the year ranked second in the West, Bruch is No. 3, Pade No. 10 and Wan No. 15.

Corkery, of course, is a seasoned veteran who enters his senior season as a definite threat to win the NCAA singles crown. He won the NCAA doubles crown in 2004 and was a semifinalist a year ago.

"KC is a very smart player," says Whitlinger. "It's almost like having another coach on the court. He is our team captain this year and I expect him to have a tremendous season. He is a definite threat to win the NCAA singles championship."

Bruch made himself known immediately this past fall as he won 10 of 12 matches, beating seven ranked players along the way, while advancing to the semifinals of the All-American Championships and the quarterfinals of the National Indoors.

"I think Matt is the best freshman in the country," said Whitlinger. "Based on what he did this fall, it makes him one of the top players in the nation. He has put himself in position to compete for the NCAA singles title."

One of the biggest reasons for optimism on The Farm is the return of Pade, a junior who decided to redshirt the 2005 season. A starter for the Cardinal as a freshman and sophomore in 2003 and 2004, Pade's return helps bolster Stanford's lineup with another quality player capable of making an impact in both singles and doubles.

"It's great to have James back on the team," said Whitlinger. "He's a big-time player, period. He and KC Corkery will form one of the nation's top doubles teams and will challenge for the NCAA championship."

Wan has been in the starting lineup the past two seasons and his continued improvement will play a key role for the Cardinal in '05. He enters the year with an impressive 57-19 singles record

"James is a winner. His record speaks for itself," says Whitlinger. "I see no reason why he won't have the same kind of year he's had for us in the past."

Filling out the rest of the singles lineup will be very competitive. Returning starters Phil Kao and Eric McKean will be tested by three freshman and three veterans, who are all looking to fill the No. 5 and No. 6 singles slots.

Both Kao, a sophomore, and McKean, a junior, shared the No. 5 and No. 6 positions a year ago. Kao, from nearby Archbishop Mitty HS, started in all 25 dual matches a year ago. He began the 2005-06 campaign this past fall by winning six of seven matches, including the Bronco Classic, and is, according to Whitlinger, "the most improved player on the team.

McKean received tremendous experience last year as he started in 22 dual matches. "He will definitely be a factor in our lineup this year," says Whitlinger.

Other returning veterans include Jon Wong, a senior from Los Altos, Calif., junior David Ryan and sophomore Chris Rasmussen. Wong, who will compete for playing time both in singles and doubles, was a solid contributor last year and has the potential to play a more prominent role this year.

Rasmussen received a lot of playing time in both singles and doubles as a freshman in 2004, but decided to redshirt the '05 season. His return not only helps bolster Stanford's overall depth, but it gives the Cardinal another player capable of making a strong contribution this season.

Ryan saw limited action in 2005 and he, too, will compete for increased playing time this season.

Along with Bruch, the freshman class includes Blake Muller from Santa Barbara, Calif., Ken Kao from Cupertino, Calif., and Jeff Zeller from Centennial, Colo.

Muller, who won five of seven matches this past fall, is a two-time prep All-American who "has a big future ahead of him," according to Whitlinger. Muller is in the mix to compete for a significant role in both singles and doubles. Kao is also a two-time high school All-American while Zeller comes to Stanford as the No. 1 prep player in Colorado last year.

"I feel we can now win matches in singles, which is something we had trouble doing last year. If we lost the doubles point last year, it became difficult for us to win matches," said Whitlinger. "I really like our team, the chemistry we have both on and off the court. The competition we have within the team will only make us better. We have good talent on this team and if we continue to improve, we can compete for the national championship."

ITA Preseason Singles Rankings

As of January 11, 2006

Rank PlayerSchoolPts

1	Lars Poerschke	Baylor	71.15	
2	John Isner	Georgia	56.86	
3	Benjamin Kohlloeffel	UCLA	55.45	
4	Matt Bruch	Stanford	50.96	
5	Raian Luchici	UNC Chapel Hill	48.11	
6	Treat Huey	Virginia	44.92	
7	Ryler Deheart	Illinois (UC)	44.62	
8	Stephen Bass	Notre Dame	40.2	
9	Ludovic Walter	Duke	35.8	
10	Somdev Devvarman	Virginia	31.03	
21	KC Corkery	Stanford	21.75	

Doubles

While Corkery and Pade enter the season as one of the top doubles teams in the nation, Stanford must find a way to become more consistent at doubles if they are to challenge for the NCAA title.

"Doubles are an area of emphasis for us this year," said Whitlinger. "We have more depth than we did last and are much improved. We will put a lot of time and energy into improving our doubles play in 2006."

Whitlinger knows he can count on Corkery and Pade to be among the best in the country. "With their past record of success, they could be a threat to win the NCAA title," he said.

But putting the pieces together with the other doubles combinations will be a key factor for Stanford in 2006.

"The other doubles spots are a work in progress," said Whitlinger. "We have a lot of new faces and we have to find out which combinations play best together."

ITA Preseason Doubles Rankings

As of January 11, 2006

Rank	Players	School	Pts
1	Brad Pomeroy/Raian Luchici	UNC Chapel Hill	59.8
2	Scott Green/Ross Wilson	Ohio State	53.5
3	Andreas Siljestrom/Marco Born	Mid. Tennessee St.	53.5
4	Matt Baccarani/Patrick Thompson	Ball State	48.3
5	KC Corkery/James Pade	Stanford	43.8
6	Strahinja Bobusic/Colin Purcell	Georgia	26.4
7	Thomas Schoeck/Luke Shields	Boise State	26.2
8	Alex Jago/James Spence	Memphis	25.6
9	Jonathan Stokke/Joey Atas	Duke	23.8
10	Ken Skupski/Mark Growcott	Louisiana State	23.8