



Nothing finer in Carolina than Nick Sundberg as long snapper

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Sundberg ready for NFL

He leaves the Golden Bears with 52 consecutive starts under his belt, but even some of the die-hard Bear Backers have trouble remembering his name. That's just the way [Nick Sundberg](#) likes it.

If he gets his name called by an announcer during a game, that means that he hasn't accomplished his one and only goal - perfection.

For a long snapper, there's only one statistic that matters. You won't find the statistic in the box score and even though Sundberg's job enables points on the board, he'll never see himself credited with any. You may not see the stat, but he and his coaches know. That stat is what's called 'stat accuracy' and if it's listed, then it's due to an error being credited to him.

In fact, the only time that he was credited with a stat in his entire Cal career, was when he wasn't perfect on the season. His junior year, he was listed with a 99.2% accuracy (128 out of 129 snaps), but his 100% rating each of his other three years as a Bear are nowhere to be found.

"It's kind of weird because the other three years of my career, I never had a bad snap," explained Sundberg by phone. "The one year that I did have a bad snap, they decided to come out with statistics on me."

The snap in question was 'arguably' a bad snap, and I do mean arguably. As he explains it, "It was pouring rain, and I threw it a little harder than I should've, and it was a tad high, but it went through my holder's hands."

Sundberg is harder on himself than any stat could ever be. He followed that up by saying,

I mean, it wasn't exactly perfect so, I mean, I'll take the blame for that. I just think it's interesting that the other three years where there was nothing else that happened like that, they decided not to come out with statistics.

Sundberg's disdain for the stat has nothing to do with tracking his accuracy, but more to do with that one snap preventing his perfection. Back in 2007, [he told Ryan Gorcey of the Daily Cal](#), "Nine out of 10 isn't good enough." For Sundberg, missing one out of some 400-plus snaps isn't good enough either.

So what does it take to be a good long snapper? A lot of hard work and as Sundberg puts it, "practice, practice, practice, practice, practice. I can't stress that enough."

As is the case with long snappers, Sundberg didn't begin playing football as one. He was a left tackle on his high school football team that moved to center his junior year. Since he was the center and the previous long snapper had graduated, his coaches also made him the long snapper that season, but he was, "horrible," at it.

That all changed for Sundberg when Ben Bernard became the school's new line coach his senior season. Bernard sought out Sundberg and since long snapping was important to the coach, the two began working after practice to build up the lineman's 'muscle memory' for snapping.

For four and five days every week, Sundberg would practice long snapping to the tune of 150 to 200 snaps a day. Remember his stat from his junior season? He snaps more times in one day than he does in a season.

It takes a lot of...it takes hours of practice, day in and day out to really, really, figure it out. Figure out what your weaknesses are, what your strengths are, and how to improve on both of those, and everything like that. Without having a coach like I had, there's no way I would've been able to get to where I am today.

Sundberg isn't just paying lip-service either. While I was talking to him, he was on his way to...yeah, you guessed it, practice. His drive and determination has made him one of the best long snappers in the country and also has him taking those talents to the next level with the [Carolina Panthers](#) of the NFL.

Not bad for a guy who was told by [Arizona's](#) Mike Stoops, coming out of high school, that he wasn't good enough to play on their team in any capacity. Sundberg's the one laughing now, but to his credit, those types of criticisms only served to make him work harder.

Actually, it made me want to work harder to spite him, you know? I just wanted to go to another Pac-10 school, just so we could play them every year.

That's when Cal came into the picture. He was offered by Cal and Washington, but as you know, it was the Bay Area that he chose to move to. As with many recruits that commit to Cal, Sundberg cited his reasons as being the program, coaches, and especially the academics.

**Editorial aside - It's a testament to Coach Tedford, the program, and the university that they bring in these types of student-athletes, with a focus on the 'student' part.*

While he could have gone to Washington, Sundberg chose to play at Cal as a walk-on. As a freshman, he would have to win the starter's role in order to receive his scholarship. The opportunity was not the only reason that he chose Cal.

[Coach Tedford](#) is...he's a great, great, great guy. He's a great coach. He's a player's coach and I love him. He helped in so many ways just to get me there, you know? Our special teams coach, [Coach Pete Alamar](#) was so nice through the whole process, talking to me about the other offers that I had and why I should choose them [Cal]. He really helped me decide...he was so non-biased, both of them, they gave me the truth about everything and I thought that was really genuine and I, you know, I liked that about Cal. I liked that about their coaches, and it was just a really good fit for me.

Sundberg changed his major from [integrative biology](#) to [legal studies](#) due to the rigorous studying required to obtain that degree. Eight hours a day on top of classes and football were just too much for him to fit in, but don't get the impression that he slacked while attending Berkeley. He finished his degree in three-and-a-half years by taking 25 credits last spring, 10 more over the summer, and another 18 credits this last fall while playing for the Golden Bears!

I told him that I thought he was crazy, but he didn't seem to care. In fact, taking huge course loads isn't anything compared to what he likes to do with his free time. "I like to jump off of really high things," he laughed.

I'm a big-time adrenaline guy. That's why I like the game of football. It's kind of wierd that my body type and everything has taken me into long snapping...I've been skydiving, bungee jumping, cliff diving, just about everything you can imagine. I'm a big fan of the adrenaline rush.

I had to know, so I asked him what his highest jump was. "An airplane at 13,000 feet." Sounds a little scarier than taking 25 credits of legal studies, doesn't it? The Panthers or his fans won't have to worry about him repeating that feat, but they can thank his mom for that. Sundberg said that his mom doesn't want him doing that because he has too much to lose.

With an NFL contract in hand and a bright future ahead, she definitely has a good point.

NOTES:

- Sundberg's best GPA for a semester at Cal was the semester that he took the 'crazy' course load of 25 credits. His GPA was a 3.4.
- One of the long snappers that Sundberg will be competing with in Carolina is an opponent from high school. [J.J. Jansen's](#) team beat Sundberg's the entire time he was in high school. He's looking forward to getting a little payback in the NFL by winning the starting job.
- Even though Sundberg is from Arizona, he was a [Cheesehead](#) growing up. Family members from the [Cheesehead](#) state (Wisconsin) passed it down to him. He's 100% a Panther fan now.
- Bear Backers need not worry about having their first new long snapper since Sundberg's freshman year. Cal went back to the same well when they recruited another pupil of Ben Bernard. [Matt Rios](#) began learning under the long snapping guru the same year that Sundberg did - except that Rios was in eighth grade and Sundberg was a senior in high school. Rios was ranked as the number-two snapper coming out of high school. Sundberg heaped plenty of praise on the freshman. "Matt's a great kid. I have absolute faith that he's gonna' be the best long snapper in the country by the time he's done there [at Cal], if not when he starts there."