

Teams Test Out A New Helmet, But Does It Work?

BY DAVID BRANDT
 AP Sports Writer

Arkansas coach Bret Bielema proudly posted a message on Twitter last spring that featured the Razorbacks' new helmets — a futuristic design by Riddell called the SpeedFlex that is supposed to be the latest in head protection.

A vocal proponent of player safety, Bielema is happy to be a part of the cutting edge. But it's a bit of a leap of faith. He has no proof that the SpeedFlex — or any other helmet — can reduce the risk of a devastating head injury.

"It's just like everything else — everything advances and you get better at it," Bielema said at a recent Arkansas practice. "I think our kids really like the way (the helmets) feel. They feel snug. They feel fit. So I think

that's a step in the right direction." With lawsuits and concern regarding concussions hanging over every level of football, the race to develop safer helmets and other equipment has never been more intense. Even so, experts say it remains to be seen if new technology has made a dent in reducing concussions on the football field.

"It's very admirable that they're trying to get better," said Dr. Robert Cantu, a Boston-based neurosurgeon who specializes in sports concussions. "But with regards to concussions, it's a very complex issue ... There really isn't any helmet that has clearly been shown on the football field to be superior to other helmets."

The NCAA recently reached a proposed settlement of a class-action lawsuit by agreeing to tougher return-to-play rules for players who receive

head blows and create a \$70 million fund to pay for thousands of current and former athletes to undergo testing to determine whether they suffered brain trauma while playing football and other contact sports.

Concussions occur when the brain moves inside the skull from an impact or a whiplash effect, but it's still an injury that doctors are learning about. There's also debate about the best way to test for concussion factors or how to even identify when concussions occur.

The SpeedFlex's new design features a five-sided indentation on the crown of the helmet and a faceguard that both have some flexibility, which is supposed to allow some force to be absorbed and dispersed instead of going directly to the head.

There's also a revamped ratchet chinstrap system for faster adjust-

ments and a quick release for the faceguard that could benefit medical staff seeking access to the face in the event of an emergency.

Thad Ide, Riddell's senior vice president for research and product development, said his company isn't claiming that the SpeedFlex can help reduce concussions. But like Bielema, he believes progress is being made in regards to lessening head impacts.

"We'll let the medical researchers weigh in on the medical data around concussions, because that's kind of a moving target right now because of all the things that are being learned," Ide said. "But what we can do is try to reduce the forces of impact to the player's head. I think reducing those forces is unequivocally a good thing."

Cantu said current football helmet certification tests by the National Operating Committee on Standards for

Athletic Equipment (NOCSAE) measure only linear impacts, which are direct blows. But new standards proposed over the summer would also mandate tests for rotational forces — or non-direct blows that could better reflect what actually happens on a football field.

NOCSAE's new standards are expected to go into effect sometime next year.

Mike Oliver, the executive director of NOCSAE, said helmet technology is improving but there are no simple answers.

"I think the helmet manufacturers are doing everything they can do to address these issues," Oliver said. "But they labor under the same restrictions that we do, which is until we understand more about the

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Tanagers Take Season Opener

BY ALAN DALE
 The Plain Talk

VERMILLION — Three goals, three different ways, broke perfectly for the Vermillion Tanager girls' soccer team on Thursday night.

Be it freebie, freaky, or by physical superiority, those three strikes were not sanctioned by the visiting West Central Trojans at Cotton Park.

Like that matters. Junior Natasha Samudzi's 71st minute goal despite being outnumbered by Trojan defenders was enough to lead the Tanagers to a 3-2, come-from-behind victory in the program's first ever sanctioned contest.

"West Central took us out of the playoffs last year and the girls wanted to get a little bit of revenge on their home field," Vermillion head coach Shannon Fitzsimmons said. "They came out here with confidence and desire to get that win. Even when we fell behind we kept pushing forward knowing that we were playing well, playing strong, and connecting the passes. That goal was going to come and just needed the right opportunity and a little luck to make it happen."

It didn't hurt that the win came against Vermillion's rivals who also happened to be the defending state champion club team which knocked out the Tanagers (1-0) from last year's playoffs.

"This means that we have to keep pushing ourselves," junior Vermillion midfielder Autumn Barnett said. "This is a very good start for the season."

Samudzi's blast came after receiving a pass and then flicked the ball to herself off of a header. She moved around the nearest West Central (0-1) defender and blasted the winning shot off of the right side and into the back of the net to complete the rally.

"It's all about that movement to get the ball to the middle and then out wide so we can take the player on and that's where we were," Samudzi said. "Tori was on the backside waiting just in case I missed it. It just takes a lot of practice with that and we got it down. The goalie was pretty wide so I knew I just needed one touch around her."

Despite the heat and humidity Vermillion got even more fired up four minutes before Samudzi's heroics, when senior midfielder Tori Gregoire scored a most unusual goal.

Coming down the left side and fading into the corner,



Gregoire served up an out-swinger feed that instead of meeting one of her teammate's foot or head ended up placed softly into the far right side of the West Central goal to tie things at 2-2.

"I was trying to cross it in for someone else to get a touch on it, but I must have had the right swing and in got in the right corner there," Gregoire said. "I got the chills from that one. I wasn't expecting that one, but I was very happy it happened."

"I had looked around the field and saw that we were kind of standing around and I think we really picked each other up because we needed the energy. We obviously got some there."

That goal was key because the Tanagers were going through a lull of seeing West Central boss the action for a period of time in the second half.

"With it being so hot out here our girls were getting a little tired out there," Fitzsimmons said. "We controlled



ABOVE: Vermillion's Natasha Samudzi fights for a ball against West Central's Olivia Becker Thursday at Cotton Park. Vermillion won 3-2 thanks in part to Samudzi's late goal.

LEFT: Vermillion High School midfielder Autumn Barnett, left, takes control early against West Central Thursday at Cotton Park.

ALAN DALE/
 PLAIN TALK

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Gazelles Girls' Tennis Team Looks To Build On '13 Finish

BY NICK ROBINSON
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The Yankton Gazelles tennis team is looking to continue their success from a season ago. Yankton went on to get fourth in ESD and 10th at the state tournament.

The Gazelles are happy with their progress, but used the summer to keep busy and keep their tennis skills up to date.

"We have been putting in a lot of hard work," Yankton senior tennis player Sarah Rockne said. "We had two-a-days to start last week. We have been conditioned and the girls' have been keeping up with tennis in the summer."

Head coach Matt Termansen can see the improvement already from the end of last season to now.

"Everyone is playing hard in practice," he said. "Our ground strokes and serving is better. All the girls put in a lot of work over the summer. I can already tell they are better than they were at the end of the season last year."

Yankton, who lost only one senior from last season, will use their conditioning to wear teams' out.

"We don't hit it as hard as the other teams', but we are more conditioned and that proves to help out a lot," Termansen said.

Yankton brings back three seniors from last season: Rockne, Kaitlyn Frank, and Kim Cap. The lone junior on the squad is Adrienne Kusek.

Rockne also sees the effort being put in by the Gazelles.

"I think we have put so much more effort this year so far," she said. "We have gotten a lot better at ground strokes and serving. We have put in more time and I think in years' past, we have kind of slacked at that."

Termansen feels his team is able to keep the ball in play and get to the net fast.

"I think our strengths will be getting to the net and keeping the ball in play," he said. "Usually, the point or match is won by the team who makes the fewest mistakes."

He also feels his team might be too aggressive.

"Our biggest weakness right now is knowing when to be aggressive and when not to be," he said. "We need to be patient and not press so much, let the game come to them."

Rockne is holding high standards for the team and herself, as she expects to improve from last season.

"I think as a team, we can finish top four in ESD and in state to get top 10," she said.

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GAZELLES TENNIS

8/23	vs. Vermillion/R.C. Stevens	Waterloo	9 a.m.
8/29	Aberdeen Central/Marshall/	at Brookings	1 p.m.
8/30	Brook. Jamboree	9 a.m.	
9/5	Pierre/at Mitchell	2 p.m.	
9/9	vs. O'Gorman	4 p.m.	
9/11	vs. Vermillion	4 p.m.	
9/12	Brandon Valley Inv.	4 p.m.	
9/13	Aberdeen Roncalli/	at Rosevelt	9 a.m.
9/16	vs. Lincoln/Mitchell	1 p.m.	
9/18	at Vermillion	2 p.m.	
9/20	Spearsfish/at Mitchell	noon	
9/22	Madison/at Brandon	Valley	1 p.m.
9/25	at Washington	2 p.m.	
9/27	Milbank/at Brookings	10 a.m.	
10/2	ESD at Watertown	9 a.m.	
10/9-11	State at Rapid City		

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Dell Rapids Edges SBL At DV Invite

DAKOTA DUNES — Dell Rapids and Sergeant Bluff-Luton each shot 304, with Dell Rapids earning team honors at the Dakota Valley Invitational boys' golf tournament on Thursday at Two Rivers Golf Course.

Vermillion finished third in the nine-team event, carding a 315.

Corey Matthey of Sergeant Bluff-Luton earned medalist honors, carding a 67. Vermillion's Carter Andre finished second at 70, followed by Dell Rapids' Devon Weber (73).

Vermillion's Sam Craig claimed JV honors with an 81, three strokes better than Dell Rapids' Jordan Kerns.

TEAM SCORES: Dell Rapids 304, Sergeant Bluff-Luton 304, Vermillion 315, Canton 329, Dakota Valley 343, Sioux Falls Christian 348, Elk Point-Jefferson 350, West Central 361

TOP 15: Corey Matthey, Sergeant Bluff-Luton 67; Carter Andre, Vermillion 70; Devon Weber, Dell Rapids 73; Lee Wynja, S.F. Christian 74; Adam Karst, Dell Rapids 74; Cooper Williams, Vermillion 75; Ty Hoeglund, Dell Rapids 76; Ryan Admire, Sergeant Bluff-Luton 76; Connor Prescott, Sergeant Bluff-Luton 76; Kevin Frick, Canton 78; Jordan Sehr, Canton 80; Mason Schmidt, Dell Rapids 81; Andrew Heine, Vermillion 82; Tanner Hensley, Dakota Valley 83; Brandon Koupal, Elk Point-Jefferson 83; Jameson Bull, Dakota Valley 83

Oregon RB Tyner Is Ready For His Close-Up

EUGENE, Ore. (AP) — No more rookie excuses for Thomas Tyner.

Oregon's sophomore running back is ready to live up to the expectations that were heaped on him when he joined the Ducks last year.

"It's time to grow up," he said. "It's time to step up and do it big."

As a freshman Tyner was third on the Ducks with 711 yards rushing, and he scored nine touchdowns. He steadily improved and had a breakout in the Civil War rivalry game against the Oregon State Beavers, with 22 carries for 140 yards and a score in Oregon's 36-35 victory.

The Ducks finished the season 11-2 with a victory over Texas in the Alamo Bowl. This year they're ranked No. 3 in the nation heading into the opener Aug. 30 at home against South Dakota.

Tyner says he's ready, having matured as a player since last season.

"Now it's just more natural. Last year I think was I was thinking way too much," he said. "Now I'm just thinking about the play, and what I have to do in the moment."

Oregon's expected starter at running

back this season is Byron Marshall, the Pac-12's top returning rusher who ran for 1,038 yards and 14 touchdowns last season.

Tyner is competing in fall camp with promising freshman Royce Freeman, considered one of the top prospects in the nation out of high school.

Freeman, who is from Southern California, also had offers from Alabama, Florida, Florida State, and Stanford before settling on Oregon. He ran for 2,824 yards and 41 touchdowns as a high school senior, drawing comparisons to former Ducks LeGarrette Blount and Jonathan Stewart.

Like Freeman, Tyner was a star in high school.

Nicknamed Dash, Tyner was a home-grown recruit from Aloha High School, west of Portland. He rushed for 3,415 yards as a senior, setting a new single-season rushing record for the state. He scored 47 touchdowns, 43 on the ground.

On his 18th birthday his senior year, Tyner smashed state records with 643 yards rushing and 10 touchdowns in an 84-63 victory over Lakeridge High School.