

# Cougars LB Ready To Pounce On D-1 Foes

Kalkowski  
Drawing  
Division I  
Interest

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Cade Kalkowski is a force to reckon with in Nebraska Class D-1 football.

The Niobrara-Verdigre linebacker is ready for his senior season with hopes of leading the Cougars to a successful season.

In 2104, the Cougars suffered from injuries while finishing with a 2-6 record and missing the playoffs. However, Niobrara-Verdigre will return much of last year's team with a playoff berth in mind.

Kalkowski took advantage of his time this off-season to prepare for the upcoming year.

"Cade worked his tail off all summer long and it definitely paid off for him," said Cougar head coach Doug Konopasek. "He is poised for a breakout year."

At the end of last season Kalkowski weighed around 235 pounds, but with a summer of hard work, he has added around 15 pounds of muscle.

"I tried a new strength program this summer and really worked hard at it," said Kalkowski. "I focused on bulking up without losing my



Cade Kalkowski (48) • Niobrara-Verdigre

speed or quickness."

While seeing double teams on nearly every play, Kalkowski still finished last season with 108 tackles. A stronger Kalkowski will make blocking him that much harder.

"He is a really strong kid that plays the game with a lot of heart," said Konopasek. "He can be a real game-changer."

Kalkowski's main focus this pre-season? Getting

healthy.

After suffering a minor knee injury while working in the fields of his family's farm, Cade hopes to be ready for the season opener on Sept. 4.

"I'll be ready," said a reassuring Kalkowski.

While being one of the most powerful forces in the state on defense, Kalkowski also proves to be a versatile offensive player.

He has seen time at various offensive line positions

and even fullback. Cougars coach Doug Konopasek said "that this year Cade will be playing tight end."

Kalkowski not only plays an important role on the field, but off the field with his leadership skills.

"All of us seniors really take pride in being strong leaders," said Kalkowski. "We try to act as role-models for the underclassmen and help them out as much as possible."

Kalkowski is making the most of his leadership role while nursing his knee injury.

"He is always talking to the younger guys, helping them and showing them what to do," said Coach Konopasek. "It is almost like having another coach on the practice field sometimes."

With potential interest from colleges such as South Dakota State and The University of Wyoming, Kalkowski is still undecided on future

years. He and his teammates have one thing on their mind.

"We want to make the playoffs. It's Coach Konopasek's last year, and it would be pretty special to send him out with a bang."

Kalkowski and the rest of the Niobrara-Verdigre Cougars open up their season on Sept. 4 at home against Bloomfield.

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yards), Austin Creamer (Jr., 5-11, 160, RB/LB, 18 rushes, 70 yards), Easton Joachimson (Jr., 6-2, 180, WR/S, 1 catch, 9 yards), Quinn Paulson (So., 5-8, 215, G/DT), Capp Bengston (Jr., 5-10, 170, FB/LB/K), Casey Lammers (Jr., 5-9, 170, FB/B), Bryce Lammers (Sr., 6-1, 175, FB/LB)

### Laurel-Concord-Coleridge

**COACH:** Jordan Taylor (2nd year, 0-9)  
**VITALS:** Class C2  
**RETURNING:** Cody Wilson (Jr., 5-8, 155, WR/CB); Dillan Wolfram (Sr., 6-1, 185, QB/

FS); D.J. Spahr (Jr., 5-11, 155, WR/CB); Garrett Taylor (SO., 5-10, 135, FB/OLB); Mason Forsberg (Jr., 6-3, 175, TE/FS); Malik Knox (Sr., 5-10, 185, RB/FS); Garrett Long (Jr., 5-8, 250, G/NG); Nolan Casey (Sr., 5-8, 200, T/DT); Zach Hauptmann (Sr., 5-10, 255, C/NG); Zach Dietrich (So., 5-10, 200, G/DT); Eric Surber (Sr., 5-10, 190, G/DE); Trey Erwin (Jr., 5-10, 115, WR/CB); Ben Lammers (Jr., 5-10, 250, T/DT)

**NEWCOMERS:** Dominic Anderson (Sr., 5-11, 190, FB/MLB); Aaron Gothier (Sr., 5-9, 145, FB/OLB); Billy Bareلمان (Sr., 6-2, 200, T/DE); Charlie Stanley (So., 5-11, 140, FB/OLB); Lucas Heydon (Sr., 5-11, 170, T/DE)

### Niobrara-Verdigre

**COACH:** Doug Konopasek

(39<sup>th</sup> year, 169-107)  
**VITALS:** Class D1  
**LAST YEAR:** The Cougars went 2-6 and graduated four starters.

**RETURNING:** Cade Kalkowski (Sr., 6-4, L, All-State LB, 111 tackles), Kobe Keo (So., 5-8, C), Jacob Tuttle (Jr., 6-1, E), Kevin Rudloff (Jr., 5-8, B), Dakota Crosley (So., 5-9, L), Clay Konopasek (Jr., 5-8, B), Schyler Forman (Sr., 6-0, QB), Ben Johnson (Sr., 6-0, B), Greg Rudloff (Sr., 5-9, B), Jace Fritz (Jr., 5-10, L), Nate Sandoz (Jr., 6-1, E), Matt Mozak (So., 5-9, B), Thomas Stark (Sr., 5-10, L), Garrett Babcock (Sr., 5-11, L), Cole Kopetjka (Sr., 6-0, L)

### Ponca

**COACH:** Troy Evans  
**ASSISTANTS:** John Stroud, Pat Korth, Ryan Olander  
**VITALS:** Class C2  
**LAST YEAR:** Ponca finished the season with a record of 4-5.

### Randolph

**COACH:** Mark Lech  
**ASSISTANTS:** Jim Hixon, Ted Stubbs, Layne Sievers, Tom Shafer, Colin Schuman  
**VITALS:** Class D2, District 5  
**LAST YEAR:** Randolph went 7-3 and lost in the second round of the playoffs.  
**RETURNING:** Grant Brunsen (Sr., 6-0, LB); Landon Anderson (Sr., 6-4, WR); Denton Kuhl (Sr., 6-0, DE); Conner Bloomquist (Sr., 6-0, CB); Mason Stubbs (Jr., 6-0, QB); Drew Boberg (Jr., 5-10, RB); Logan Northues (Jr., 6-3, TE)  
**NEWCOMER:** Bradley Korth (Jr., 5-11, RB)

### Santee

**COACH:** Ken Hajek (4th year)  
**VITALS:** 6-Man  
**LAST YEAR:** The Warriors went 1-7 on the season.  
**RETURNING:** Damon Pojar-Henry (Sr., FB/LB, returning starter); Brandon Whipple (Jr., C/T); Tate Ferguson (So., E/E); Jaylon LaPlante (Sr., G/T, returning starter); Brady Pike (Jr., B/B); Thomas Macias (Jr., E/B, HM all-state)



McGwire Mackeprang (61) • Bloomfield

### Wausa

**COACH:** Chip Bartos (1st year)  
**ASSISTANTS:** Adrian Alonzo, Greg Conn, Caleb Kluender  
**VITALS:** Class D2  
**LAST YEAR:** The Vikings went 0-8 on the season. Four starters are gone from that squad, including all-state honorable mention Jordan Burns. Austin Hegge, Nick Story and Christian Wilken also graduated.

**RETURNING:** Aiden Kleinschmit (Sr., 5-10, QB, HM all-district); Ryan Kumm (Sr., 5-11, WR, HM all-district); Austin Gillilan (Sr., 5-10, C); Brice Barney (Sr., 5-8, G); Luc Bloomquist (Jr., 5-10, G); Kolton Alexander (Sr., 5-8, DE); Eli Rosberg (Sr., 6-2, DE); Travis Gillilan (Sr., 5-10, WR); Gaige Hegge (Jr., 5-10, FB); John Rosberg (So., 5-7, RB); Alex Kleinschmit (So., 5-6, FS)  
**NEWCOMERS:** Tyson Kaiser (Fr., 5-6, RB); Drew Munter (Fr., 5-9, QB); Ghatlin Hegge (Fr., 5-9, LB); Tom Lundberg (So., 6-3, G)

### Wynot

**COACH:** Steve Heimes (30-19)  
**ASSISTANTS:** Steve Wieseler, Ryan Boeckman, Todd

Pinkelman  
**VITALS:** Class D2, District 1  
**LAST YEAR:** The Blue Devils went 6-3, falling to Chambers-Wheeler Central in the opening round of the playoffs. Four starters are gone from that team: Kyle Boeckman (147 tackles), Thane Goetz (31 tackles), Tristin Wieseler (65 tackles) and George Hite (80 tackles).

**RETURNING:** Cody Stratman (Sr., 5-7, RB/S; all-district; 190-1,984 rushing, 30 TD); Jalen Wieseler (Jr., 5-6, QB/LB, 57-132 passing, 710 yards, 7 TD); Dawson Sudbeck (Jr., 5-6, WR/DB; 17-197 receiving, 2 TD); Austin Lange (Sr., 6-2, C/DT)  
**NEWCOMERS:** Trevor Gartner (Sr., 5-7, WR); Justin Lange (So., 5-8, RB)



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Cody Stratman (23) • Wynot

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