

Hejna, Termansen Named To All-State Team

Football: Sawatzke, McKee Earn HM Selections

BY WADE LA ROCHE
Pierre Capital Journal

PIERRE (AP) — After a record-breaking season that culminated in the school's first state title on the grid iron, the Pierre Governors' 2013 season saw a fitting close with a heavy presence on the Class 11AA All-State team.

The Governors featured a class-leading nine players selected to the All-State team, as well as an honorable mention, capping off their history-making season. The Governors' counterparts in the state title game, Watertown featured seven selections and two more honorable mention nods.

Harrisburg featured three selections, Brookings, Yankton and Huron featured two selections, while Douglas, Mitchell, Spearfish and Sturgis each had one select.

Offense

Quarterback: Alex Gray, Pierre, 5-10, 180 pounds, senior

Gray not only stood out in terms of the 11AA Class, but the senior signal caller proved to be one of the best quarterbacks South Dakota has to offer during the 2013 season.

Gray assaulted the Governors' record books in 2013 as his 2,329 passing yards broke Scott Rislov's school record for most in a season. Gray also broke another Rislov record in Pierre's playoff win against Harrisburg when his 309 yards passing set Pierre's record for most yards in a single game. Gray was efficient as he threw 23 touchdown passes compared to just eight interceptions.

Gray was a dual threat for the Governors offense as he accumulated 528 yards on the ground to go along with a team-leading 10 rushing touchdowns.

Alex is a special athlete with outstanding leadership skills," Governors head coach Jayson Poppinga said. "He is very unassuming and always puts the team first, and he played most of the 2013 season with a stress fracture in his foot. Alex's football knowledge is impressive, as seen by his decision-making on the field."

Running Back: Shay Bratland, Watertown, 5-10, 205 pounds, senior

The Watertown Arrows had a terrific season that culminated in a trip to the

Class 11AA state title game, and Bratland was the main culprit for the Arrows' success.

The senior halfback became one of South Dakota's elite during the 2013 season when he amassed 1,565 yards and 17 rushing touchdowns during the 2013 season. Bratland averaged more than five yards a carry while leading the Watertown offense.

Bratland also caught four touchdowns to go along with his 12 catches for 329 yards, and the senior returned a kickoff for a touchdown in the state title game against Pierre.

"Shay is a fierce competitor and works extremely hard in practice," Watertown head coach Steve Svendsen said. "There is no doubt who our go-to guy is. He's an impact player who's came up with some real big plays this year. Shay will take on whatever challenge for endeavor comes his way with full commitment to get the job done. He's a great kid and a great football player."

Running Back: Jonathan Kabambi, Harrisburg, 6-0, 205 pounds, junior

As Harrisburg transitioned into the 11AA class, Kabambi proved to be a pivotal part of a physical offense that helped the Tigers reach the semifinals of the postseason.

Kabambi was the leader of a tough stable of Harrisburg running backs, accumulating 922 yards and nine touchdowns on 243 carries. Kabambi's rare mix of power and explosiveness gave opponents fits in 2013 and should continue to do so in 2014.

"Johnny is a tough kid, and probably the best back I've had in Harrisburg," Harrisburg head coach Brandon White said. "He's a very explosive player and had a great year while splitting time with a senior."

Fullback: Tyler Kleinsasser, Huron, 5-11, 190 pounds, senior

The fullback position isn't always a glamorous one, but Tyler Kleinsasser showed just how beneficial a great fullback can be during the 2013 season.

Kleinsasser proved to be key component of the Tigers' offense as his lead blocking helped Huron's rushing attack flourish at times, and he was just as strong in pass protection. The senior also got his piece of the pie as he carried the ball 70 times for 322 yards (4.6 yards per carry) and four touchdowns.

"Tyler is a very tough, hard-nosed runner who got the tough yards," Huron head coach Mike Postma said. "His loved leading the way for our tailbacks, and he protected the quarterback well."

Wide Receiver: J.J. Hejna, Yankton, 6-4, 200 pounds, senior

At 6-4, 200 pounds, Hejna was a matchup nightmare for any opposing defense during the 2013 season.

Hejna had his best season to date for the Bucks in 2013 when he led the Yankton offense to the semifinals of the post-season. Hejna was electrifying for the Bucks with 63 receptions for 1,205 yards and 10 touchdown receptions. The senior was a threat down the field with 19.1 yards per catch.

"J.J. is one of the best captains and leaders we have on and off the field," Yankton head coach Arlin Likeness said.



Yankton seniors Tanner Termansen (below) and J.J. Hejna (above, left) were named to the Class 11AA all-state football team by the South Dakota Football Coaches Association. Seniors Steven McKee and Lane Sawatzke were honorable mention selections.

"He's very intelligent and is a team player. He will play college ball."

Wide Receiver: Austin Christopherson, Pierre, 6-1, 180 pounds, senior

Christopherson shined in a high-flying offense that featured many standouts for the state-champion Pierre Governors.

Despite drawing much attention from opposing defenses, Christopherson led the Governors with 11 touchdown receptions, along with 571 receiving yards off of 32 receptions. Christopherson played a pivotal role in Pierre's state championship when he hauled in six catches for 151 yards and two touchdowns against Watertown.

Christopherson also made history for the Governors in 2013. His four touchdown receptions against Huron were good for a school record. The senior had the longest kickoff return in school history against Mitchell, a game in which he also returned a punt for a touchdown.

"Austin has been our top receiver for the past two years," Poppinga said. "Although his total yards gained may not be the highest, he's a big part of an offense that gained over 4,000 yards. His presence and athleticism was a major reason for our success this year."

Tight End: Shay Reinke, Pierre, 6-1,

180 pounds, senior

Reinke's numbers may have been overshadowed by those of a couple of his teammates, but the senior tight end was a valuable piece to Pierre's record-setting offensive attack.

Reinke caught 30 passes for 395 and two touchdowns over the course of the season, giving Alex Gray another reliable target in the passing attack. While Reinke had to be accounted for in the passing game, his true value to the Governors' offense may have come on the ground, where his blocking helped Ethan Case, Jace Jerome and Gray make due for Pierre's rushing attack.

"Shay is one of the biggest reasons our running game is successful," Poppinga said. "He has had big games receiving, while sharing receptions with two of the top receivers in the state. He is a two-way starter, team captain and one of our great leaders on and off the field."

Tackle: Brandon Swenson, Pierre, 6-1, 250 pounds, senior

The Governors had some holes to fill within their offensive line to begin the season, but Swenson provided some much-needed stability to the group. The senior

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Vander Maten Named To MVFC All-Acad. Team

ST. LOUIS — South Dakota junior Josh Vander Maten was named to the Missouri Valley Football Conference All-Academic Team announced Wednesday by the conference office. League sports information directors voted on the team by designating 11 players for first-team and 11 players for second-team honors.

All but two of the 22-man team carry cumulative grade point averages above 3.5. Vander Maten, a second-team pick, has earned a 3.53 GPA while working on a degree in kinesiology and sports science. Nominees must have reached sophomore academic and athletic standing and have at least a 3.2 cumulative GPA.

Vander Maten started the first four games of the season at quarterback before converting to wide receiver. In 12 games, he threw for 394 yards, ran for 313 yards and had 19 catches for 238 yards. He accounted for seven touchdowns. Vander Maten finished the year as the Coyotes' third-leading rusher, second-leading passer and fifth-leading receiver.

Jason Schneider and Zach Zenner were among six South Dakota State players named to the All-Academic Team.

Joining the duo on the first team was senior offensive lineman Taylor Sues.

Second-team honors went to senior wide receiver Brandon Hubert for the third consecutive year.

Honorable mention all-academic honors went to senior linebacker R.C. Kilgore and junior punter Ethan Sawyer.

NBA Game In Mexico Postponed

MEXICO CITY (AP) — The NBA says the game between the San Antonio Spurs and Minnesota Timberwolves has been postponed because of smoky conditions inside the Mexico City arena.

The game scheduled for Wednesday night will be made up in Minnesota at a later date.

The arena was evacuated about 45 minutes before the scheduled 9:30 p.m. EST tipoff when a generator malfunction outside the arena sent smoke pouring into the building, according to NBA spokeswoman Sharon Lima.

Jackrabbits Continue Turn-Around



South Dakota State offensive lineman Trevor Greger, 66, prepares to block during the Jackrabbits' game at Nebraska on Saturday. The junior right tackle from Wagner has helped the Jackrabbits turn things around after a rough stretch during the season. SDSU travels to No. 3 Eastern Washington for the second round of the FCS playoffs on Saturday.

SDSU Rides Win Streak Into Second Round Matchup With E. Washington

BY JEREMY HOECK
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In the span of seven weeks, South Dakota State has gone from postseason improbability to a repeat playoff participant.

Turning around their season has proven to be a study in will and determination for the Jackrabbits (9-4), according to junior offensive tackle Trevor Greger of Wagner.

"It's been awesome to see how we pulled together," Greger said this week. "It kind of seems like it brought out the best in the team."

"Everyone stepped up all around." The result: Five consecutive wins, a second straight at-large invite to the FCS playoffs, a second straight first-round win and another road date with a ranked team in the second round.

The Jackrabbits will travel to third-seeded Eastern Washington (10-2) for Saturday's second round of the FCS playoffs in Cheney, Wash.

Kickoff is set for 3 p.m. Central and will be streamed online at ESPN3.com.

The optimism surrounding the Jackrabbit program is understandably an "all-time high," Greger said.

Nearly two months ago, though, it wasn't.

Following a 35-21 loss at Missouri State on Oct. 19, the Jackrabbits were sitting at 4-4 and in serious danger of a disappointing season.

The players then held a meeting to right the ship, Greger said.

"We were just talking about how the leaders need to step up and that if we wanted to get back to the playoffs, we had to get going," he said.

And just like last year when the Jackrabbits traveled to North Dakota State for a second round game, they are headed to another FCS powerhouse.

Eastern Washington, a member of the Big Sky Conference, won a national title in 2010, advanced to last year's semifinals and picked up a win this season over a ranked FBS Oregon State squad.

The Eagles average an FCS-best 40.4 points and 359.3 passing yards per game, but they also surrender 29 points and 454 yards.

The key to the offense? Sophomore quarterback Vernon Adams, who was earlier this week named one of three national finalists for the Walter Payton Award.

A 6-foot, 190-pound native of Pasadena, Calif., Adams ranks third nationally with 4,059 passing yards to go along with a Big Sky-record 46 touchdowns — and 12 interceptions.

Combined with his running threat, Adams also leads the nation in total yards (379.2) per game, which has led his coach to rave about the quarterback's improvements from last year.

"If you were to watch him last year, he was making a lot of plays as a freshman and winning games, but at the same time it was different," EWU head coach Beau Baldwin said Wednesday. "At times he would take off and run, and now he's able to do things athletically and do things as a true quarterback."

Already with a semifinal appearance from 2012 under his belt, Adams only figures to keep progressing, Baldwin said.

"We still feel like there's a high ceiling," Baldwin said. "He'll still tell you he feels like he can still keep getting better."

And I think that mindset has gotten him to this point."

Playoff experience, understandably, certainly favors EWU, as head coach Beau Baldwin pointed out Wednesday.

"It definitely helps. Guys have been on some of those runs, they've been in those games," Baldwin said. "The thing it helps you with is young guys see the older guys staying calm in those situations."

"Too often, playoff teams when it's their first time in there, they get a little bit tight."

Not so with SDSU.

The Jackrabbits have rushed for over 300 yards each of their last two games, including 343 in last Saturday's first-round playoff win at Northern Arizona.

Junior running back Zach Zenner has vaulted to the top of the FCS rushing yardage list with 1,944 yards, thanks to 249 at NAU — his second output of over 200 in three career playoff games.

"I still see them being able to explode, too," Baldwin said. "It's not like they're so low-scoring."

"To me, they have a running back that is as good of a home run hitter as we've seen all year. And we've faced some really good running backs."

Something SDSU hasn't faced is a red field like the one it will see Saturday in Cheney. Not that it matters much, Greger said.

"We just feel good to have another game, no matter where it is," he said.

You can follow Jeremy Hoeck on Twitter at twitter.com/jhoeck. Discuss this story at www.yankton.net.

No. 2 Raiders Down MMC

ORANGE CITY, Iowa — Second-ranked Northwestern took advantage of a short-handed Mount Marty College squad, beating the Lancers 87-71 in Great Plains Athletic Conference women's basketball action on Wednesday in Orange City, Iowa.

The victory was Northwestern's (11-0, 4-0 GPAC) 14th straight over Mount Marty, dating back to the 2007 season.

MMC (3-4, 0-3 GPAC) was without starter Holly Hegge and reserve Kieran O'Malley, both out with injury.

Full statistics on the game were not available at presstime.

Mount Marty travels to Doane (Neb.) in GPAC action on Saturday.

No. 10 MIDLAND 77, NEB. WESLEYAN 64: LINCOLN, Neb. — Darien Moon scored 16 points off the bench to lead 10th-ranked Midland to a 77-64 victory over Nebraska Wesleyan in GPAC women's basketball action on Wednesday.

Taylor Shepard and Sammi Licari each scored 15 points for Midland (8-3, 5-0 GPAC).

Bridget Bucher scored a game-high 20 points off the bench for NWU (1-5, 0-3 GPAC). Courtney Cook netted 13 points and Amanda Diaz added 11 points for the Prairie Wolves.

No. 18 N. CAROLINA 75, No. 15 NEBRASKA 62: CHAPEL HILL, N.C. (AP) — Xylina McDaniel hit 11 of 15 shots and scored a game-high 25 points to lead No. 18 North Carolina in a 75-62 victory over No. 15 Nebraska on Wednesday night.

McDaniel, in addition to 73.3-percent shooting, grabbed eight rebounds for the Tar Heels (7-2). UNC shot 48.5 percent from the floor and 5 of 11 from behind the line, but finished with 10 more steals and seven more rebounds than Nebraska.

The Huskers, who faced their first ranked opponent of the season in UNC, shot a perfect 12 of 12 from the line, but finished just 39.3 percent from the floor and 28.6 percent from behind the arc. Jordan Hooper led the team with 18 points.

No. 20 IOWA ST. 83, N. IOWA 55: AMES, Iowa (AP) — Hallie Christofferson, Nikki Moody and Seanna Johnson had big games as No. 20 Iowa State cruised by Northern Iowa 83-55 Wednesday night.

Christofferson led in scoring with 22 points, hitting 8 of 10 free throws. Moody added 16 points and eight assists. Johnson had 14 points and 13 rebounds as the Cyclones (8-0), off to their best start in 11 seasons, out-rebounded Northern Iowa 49-30.

The Panthers (2-7), held to 36 percent shooting, were led by Madison Weekly with 16 points.

Erin Dohnalek's 3-pointer pulled Northern Iowa into a 14-14 tie before the Cyclones reeled off 16 straight points. Late in the first half, Iowa State went on a 12-2 run before six quick points from the Panthers made it 43-26 at the half.