

Press & Dakotan DAILY DOSE

Daily opinions from the P&D Sports Staff on local and national high school, college and professional sports.



BY JAMES D. CIMBUREK james.cimburek@yankton.net

A day ago you heard from my talented assistant, Jeremy Hoeck, about his work-related goals for the new year. While his top 3 — blog more, write more columns and work on a sports podcast — are on my list, I have a few others I'd like to see as well.

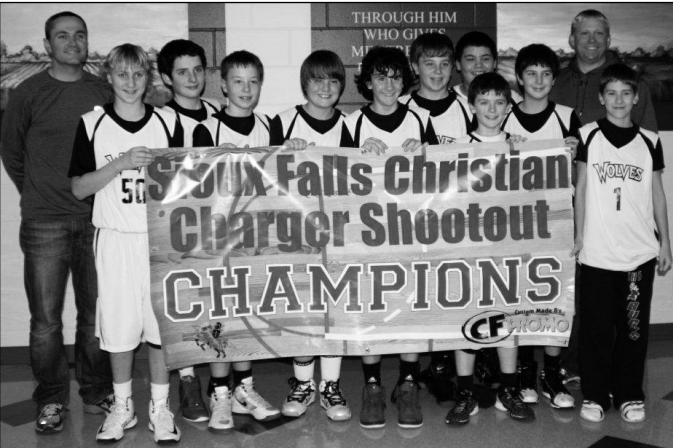
My Turn To Talk About The New Year

Second, I'd like to see us grow a few more "regular" features. During my tenure as sports editor, we have both had "games of the week" and "athletes of the week."

Finally, I'd like to find a little more "teaching" time for my staff. While I feel we have a staff that can compete with any paper our size, most have less than a year of newspaper experience.

I am always looking for story ideas and ways to make our sports section better. (Please don't say, "more national coverage" because I will only take away local coverage space for national stories if the national story warrants it.)

WOLVES WIN SFC SHOOTOUT



The Yankton Wolves won the seventh grade boys' white division at the Sioux Falls Christian shootout on Dec. 8. Team members include (front) coach Jeff Wolfram, Brady Dangler, Garrett Tennant, Cameron Krejci, Trevor Rafferty, Tate Gale, Casey Krejci, Kobe Bowker, Jack Wolfram, Gerrit Dykstra, coach Nate Franzen and Kellen Franzen.

Gayville-Volin's Buffington Named SDHSCA Coach Of Year

SIoux FALLS — Gayville-Volin's Larry Buffington was selected as the South Dakota High School Coaches' Association's girls' cross country Coach of the Year, according to a release by the SDHSCA on Wednesday.

Buffington mentored the Raiderettes to a school-best runner-up finish at the South Dakota State Cross Country Meet last October. Freshman Genevieve Clark became the second GV runner to win an individual cross country title in the meet.

Also nominated were Jason Bohl of Garretson, Jesse Coy of Rapid City Stevens, Todd Thorson of Ipswich and Andy Van Deest of Spearfish. Thorson was the 2011-12 winner.

Also honored were Madison's Bob Cords (boys' cross country), Dell Rapids' Steve Hansen (football) and Warner's Kari Jung (volleyball).

These coaches will be recognized at the annual awards banquet to be held in Aberdeen on Wednesday, July 17, in conjunction with the summer coaches' clinic.

Kokesh Earns Big 10 Honors

LINCOLN, Neb. — Sophomore Robert Kokesh earned Big Ten Co-Wrestler-of-the-Week accolades with Northwestern's Jason Welch, the conference announced Wednesday.

Kokesh took home the Midlands Invitational title at 174 pounds on Sunday, winning six matches to extend his winning streak to 17 and improve his record to 22-1 on the season. The Wagner native

outscored his opponents 46-7 and added two pins to extend his number to eight on the season. He won two more of his matches by major decision and one by technical fall in addition to his pins.

Kokesh earned the 50th win of his collegiate career in Saturday's quarterfinals and now has 52 as a Husker. He led the Nebraska wrestling team to a tie-for-15th place finish at the Midlands Invitational with the individual crown.

Kokesh was the last Husker to win Big Ten Wrestler of the Week when he took home the honor on Dec. 13, 2011.

Classic Tourney Begins Today

HARTINGTON, Neb. — The annual Classic Basketball Tournament begins today (Thursday) at Winside and Bloomfield.

Winside hosts Wymot today, with the girls' game at 6:15 p.m. and the boys' game at 8 p.m. Bloomfield hosts Hartington, also with games at 6:15 and 8 p.m.

Final round games will be held in Hartington on Friday, with the consolation games at 4 and 5:30 p.m., and the championships at 7 and 8:30 p.m. The girls' games will be played first, with the boys' games to follow.

NDSU Linebacker Likely To Play In FCS Title Game

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Standout North Dakota State University linebacker Grant Olson will travel with the team to the Football Championship Subdivision title game in Texas and head coach Craig Bohl says "the outlook is promising" that he will play Saturday.

Olson is the team's leading tackler and captain. He recently was hospitalized with an undisclosed ailment. The Forum reports Bohl said Tuesday that Olson had some tests done over concerns with his appendix.

The Bison face Sam Houston State on Saturday in Frisco, Texas, for the FCS crown. It's a rematch of last year's title game won by NDSU.

In the FCS quarterfinals last month, Olson set a school record with 29 tackles in NDSU's win over Wofford.

Ponder Limited By Sore Elbow

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — Minnesota Vikings quarterback Christian Ponder is dealing with a sore right elbow that has been limiting him in practice this week as they prepare for a playoff game at Green Bay.

Coach Leslie Frazier says he isn't concerned with Ponder's ability to play in the game on Saturday. Frazier says he expects Ponder to ramp it up in practice on Thursday and be ready to go for the third game this season between the division rivals.

Ponder was injured Sunday when his elbow hit a Packers helmet on the follow-through. He was able to remain in the game and deliver one of his best performances in a 37-34 win.

Adrian Peterson was held out to rest, as was cornerback Antoine Winfield on Wednesday.

Vikings' Peterson Wants To Play Special Teams Too

BY DAVE CAMPBELL AP Pro Football Writer

EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. (AP) — Adrian Peterson has been Minnesota's most irreplaceable player for years, piling up 2,097 yards rushing this season alone to put himself in the mix for the NFL's Most Valuable Player award.

This unparalleled contribution to the Vikings and their success, however, hasn't been enough to satisfy Peterson. One of the sport's most relentless competitors, he would like to play on special teams, too.

"For the past two years I've been trying to get in on field goal block. Come in off the edge, you know? It's just going to take one block for them to really be like, 'OK, you know what? Let's take the chance and let you go out there and get it done,'" Peterson said. "Kickoff return. I wouldn't mind getting back there. I'm in it to win."

Peterson was only asked about this Wednesday because special teams coordinator Mike Priefer revealed Peterson's constant request to reporters a few minutes earlier.

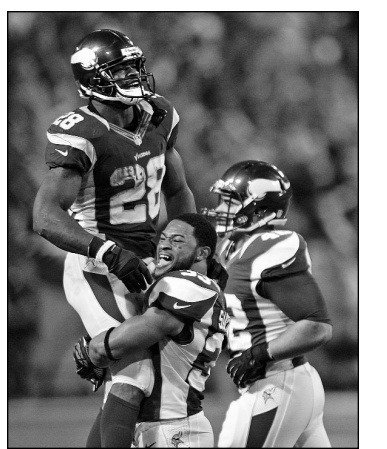
"He always asks," Priefer said. "It's a football player. Gunner, field goal block, returner. The guy is awesome. I always say yes, and then I ask the head coach and he says no. I know what the answer is going to be. I don't even have to ask."

Peterson actually returned 16 kickoffs as a rookie in 2007, averaging 25.8 per attempt including a 53-yard gain at Chicago, where he had his first 200-yard game that afternoon. The Vikings used him in that role once during the regular season in 2008 and again that year in the playoffs, but never since.

He's too valuable to risk injury on one of football's most dangerous plays, so approval from coach Leslie Frazier is unlikely. Even Percy Harvin, the team's primary kickoff returner until he sprained his left ankle in November, was given breaks from that role to keep him fresh and safe. But Peterson has that rare blend of speed, power and instinct that could pay off with a game-changing touchdown, should the Vikings ever decide to surprise their opponent.

Priefer said he has the play cards with him on the sideline in case a scenario arose that persuaded them to put Peterson in for a kick return.

"We would show him exactly where the return is supposed to



ELIZABETH FLORES/MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE/MCT Minnesota Vikings running back Adrian Peterson (28) is lifted by teammate Jamarca Sanford after he left the field against the Green Bay Packers at Mall of America Field in Minneapolis, Minn., on Sunday.

hit and let him do his magic. There's absolutely an opportunity for him to go back there, I would think, in a crucial situation," Priefer said.

Peterson beamed at the podium Wednesday when the subject of special teams came up.

"I believe in having your best players on the field, especially in critical times. You never know what can happen," he said. "That's what I would do."

Even if Peterson never gets his chance as a kickoff returner, he's served the Vikings well with more than just running the ball. He served as a counselor of sorts for Christian Ponder, whose two interceptions deep in Packers territory cost the Vikings the game at Green Bay on Dec. 2. Seeing a look of defeat on the quarterback's face, Peterson approached his teammate and encouraged him to keep his spirits up, telling Ponder how much he's appreciated the passion he plays with.

"I just did what I felt I needed to do to help him get over that. Because this is the guy we're rolling with, and we need him to continue to improve each week," Peterson said, adding: "I feel like he got back on track, got his mind right, didn't let it dwell on too long."

Coming off a career-high 34 carries, and playing through some abdominal soreness, Peterson was also asked how his body is holding up, one year after reconstructive surgery on his left knee.

"My body feels great," he said, smiling. "I could play for 12 more games if I have to."

SCOREBOARD

BOWLING

YANKTON BOWL

INDUSTRIAL

HIGH TEAM GAME: Dakota Trailer 1005

HIGH TEAM SERIES: Dakota Trailer 2796

HIGH INDIVIDUAL GAME: JJ Peterson 287, Tom Grass 279, Casey Weverstad 278, Kevin Annis 268, Jerry Peterson 267

HOLIDAY: Baylor 49, UCLA 26

Friday, Dec. 28

INDEPENDENCE: Ohio 45, Louisiana-Monroe 14

RUSSELL ATHLETIC: Virginia Tech 13, Rutgers 10, OT

MEINEKE CAR CARE: Texas Tech 34, Minnesota 31

Saturday, Dec. 29

ARMED FORCES: Rice 33, Air Force 14

FIGHT HUNGER: Arizona State 62, Navy 28

PINSTRIPES: Syracuse 38, West Virginia 14

LAHO: Texas 31, Oregon State 27

BUFFALO WILD WINGS: Michigan State 17, TCU 16

Monday, Dec. 31

MUSIC CITY: Vanderbilt 38, N.C. State 24

SUN: Georgia Tech 21, Southern Cal 7

LIBERTY: Tulsa 31, Iowa State 17

Saturday, Jan. 5

HEART OF DALLAS: Oklahoma State 58, Purdue 14

GATOR: Northwestern 34, Mississippi State 20

CAPITAL ONE: Georgia 45, Nebraska 31

OUTBACK: South Carolina 33, Michigan 28

ROSE: Stanford 20, Wisconsin 14

ORANGE: Florida State 31, Northern Illinois 10

Wednesday, Jan. 2

SUGAR: Florida 11(1)-1 vs. Louisville (10-2), 7:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Thursday, Jan. 3

FIESTA: Kansas State (11-1) vs. Oregon (11-1), 7:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Friday, Jan. 4

COTTON: Texas A&M (10-2) vs. Oklahoma (10-2), 7 p.m. (FOX)

Saturday, Jan. 5

BVA COMPASS: Pittsburgh (6-6) vs. Mississippi (6-6), noon (ESPN)

Godaddy.com: Kent State (11-2) vs. Arkansas State (9-3), 8 p.m. (ESPN)

Monday, Jan. 7

AT MIAMI: Notre Dame (12-0) vs. Alabama (12-1), 7:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Monday, Dec. 24

HAWAII: SMU 43, Fresno State 10

Wednesday, Dec. 26

LITTLE CAESARS PIZZA: Central Michigan 24, Western Kentucky 21

Thursday, Dec. 27

MILITARY: San Jose State 29, Bowling Green 20

BEUK: Cincinnati 48, Duke 34

HOLIDAY: Baylor 49, UCLA 26

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FOOTBALL

NCAA FCS PLAYOFFS

Championship

Saturday, Jan. 5

At FC Dallas Stadium, Frisco, Texas

North Dakota State (13-1) vs. Sam Houston State (11-3), 1 p.m.

NFL PLAYOFF GLANCE

Wild-card Playoffs

Saturday, Jan. 5

Cincinnati at Houston, 3:30 p.m. (NBC)

Minnesota at Green Bay, 7 p.m. (NBC)

Divisional Playoffs

Saturday, Jan. 12

Baltimore, Indianapolis or Cincinnati at Denver, 3:30 p.m. (CBS)

Washington, Seattle or Green Bay at San Francisco, 7 p.m. (FOX)

Sunday, Jan. 13

Washington, Seattle or Minnesota at Atlanta, noon (FOX)

Baltimore, Indianapolis or Houston at New England, 3:30 p.m. (CBS)

FBS BOWL GLANCE

Saturday, Dec. 15

NEW MEXICO: Arizona 49, Nevada 48

FAMOUS IDAHO POTATO: Utah State 41, Toledo 15

Thursday, Dec. 20

POINSETTIA: BYU 23, San Diego State 6

Friday, Dec. 21

BEUF 'O' BRADY'S: UCF 38, Ball State 17

Saturday, Dec. 22

NEW ORLEANS: Louisiana-Lafayette 43, East Carolina 34

LAS VEGAS: Boise State 28, Washington 26

Charlotte 8 23 258 14/12

Washington 4 26 133 18

Central Division

W L Pct GB

Indiana 19 13 594 -

Chicago 17 13 567 1

Milwaukee 16 14 533 2

Detroit 12 22 353 8

Cleveland 7 26 212 12/12

WESTERN CONFERENCE

W L Pct GB

San Antonio 26 8 765 -

Memphis 20 9 690 3/12

Houston 18 14 563 7

Dallas 13 20 394 12/12

New Orleans 7 25 219 18

Northwest Division

W L Pct GB

Oklahoma City 24 7 774 -

Denver 18 15 545 7

Portland 16 15 516 8

Minnesota 14 14 500 8/12

Utah 12 17 485 9

Pacific Division

W L Pct GB

L.A. Clippers 25 7 781 -

Golden State 21 10 677 3/12