

Vikings Seeking Strong Follow-Up Season For Smith

Packers Sign Banjo, Hines; Waive McMahon

GREEN BAY, Wis. (AP) — The Green Bay Packers have signed safety Chris Banjo and wide receiver Omarius Hines and waived safety Ryan McMahon.

The team announced the moves Monday.

Banjo, a 207-pound rookie out of Southern Methodist, signed with Jacksonville as a free agent in April before being waived on July 25. As a senior at SMU in 2011, Banjo recorded 82 tackles (50 solo), two passes defended and two fumble recoveries.

Hines, a 215-pound rookie out of Florida, signed with Baltimore as a non-drafted free agent in May before being waived on July 22. He appeared in 51 games with nine starts during his career at Florida and caught 64 passes for 801 yards and four touchdowns. Hines also rushed for 323 yards and four TDs on 33 carries during his career.

MANKATO, Minn. (AP) — Harrison Smith's rookie season was marked by hard-hitting play, three interceptions and two defensive touchdowns.

His intense style gave the secondary a big boost. It also yielded one ejection and a \$21,000 fine.

But Minnesota Vikings coach Leslie Frazier said he never saw his young safety back down from the pressure of being a starter on a play-off team.

"He wasn't afraid to take chances, which allowed him to make some plays," Frazier said. "You don't always see that in rookies."

Smith and the Vikings are counting on him building on his impactful first year in the NFL.

He started all 16 regular-season games and the playoff loss at Green Bay, tallying 86 solo tackles and 51 assists, according to coaching staff film. He also had one sack, one forced fumble, one fumble recovery and 13 passes defended.

Smith was also ejected from one game for making contact with an official and was fined for a horse-collar

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HARRISON SMITH

tackle in another game.

But the positives outweighed the negatives, and he has opened training camp as a clear starter and emerging leader.

"I really think that playing in all 16 games was a great accomplishment," Smith said. "You have your highs and lows, and it's such a long season, coming in from college."

Smith was drafted late in the first round after the Vikings traded up to No. 29, trying to solidify a position that they have been searching for a long-term answer for since Darren Sharper left in 2008.

Frazier said he was impressed with Smith's poise and intelligence as he learned on the job, making mistakes and the corresponding correc-

tions.

"He's a not a rah-rah player, but he made plays that kind of lifted our entire defense," Frazier said. "He was security blanket for our defense. He gave us something that we were lacking and something that we needed."

Smith downplayed the notion that playing too aggressively could be a problem for him.

"As long as you're doing your job, everything works out," he said.

Smith and Jamarca Sanford started the last 14 games together at safety, building chemistry with each other after Mistral Raymond was hurt. The relationship, Sanford said, was immediate.

"We're two of the same kind of players," Sanford said. "We both love

to play in the box. We're guys who like to play real physical."

With the departure of veteran cornerback Antoine Winfield, the secondary is lacking an obvious leader.

Sanford is the most experienced player in his fifth seasons, and cornerback Chris Cook has been with the team for four training camps. But given his position and ability, Smith's leadership will be critical on this defense.

"In my opinion, you can't be a leader without having the respect of all the guys," Smith said. "You can't force it. It has to happen. I look forward to working on that and getting better at it."

Notes: The Vikings held their first full-pads practice Monday afternoon, but Frazier said the hitting will be more intense Tuesday. ... DT Letroy Guion practiced with a brace on his left elbow after suffering a minor injury Saturday afternoon. ... Frazier said that veteran DT Kevin Williams will ideally play about 30 to 40 snaps per game, with rookie Sharif Floyd taking the other 20 or so.

College Football | Missouri Valley Football Conference

Coyotes Driven To Improve



University of South Dakota football coach Joe Glenn, right, speaks to a television reporter prior to a home game in the DakotaDome last fall. The Coyotes were selected 10th in the preseason Missouri Valley Football Conference poll on Monday.

Commish: FCS Alive And Well In Face Of FBS Upheaval

BY JEREMY HOECK
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To kick off Monday morning's Missouri Valley Football Conference preseason media session, commissioner Patty Viverito took the chance to again reiterate her belief that FCS football is alive and well.

Despite, of course, the continued shakeup of FBS football, with the top five leagues (Big 12, Big Ten, ACC, SEC and Pac-12) starting to separate themselves from the bottom five conferences.

Saying that the FCS has not been "distracted by labels" or "crazy decisions," Viverito pointed to the Valley's success in sending multiple teams to the post-season, highlighted by North Dakota State's back-to-back national championships.

A year ago, the MVFC sent three teams to the playoffs, North Dakota State, South Dakota State and Illinois State — two of which advanced all the way to the quarterfinals.

Also a topic of conversation Monday was the expanded FCS playoff field, starting this fall. The total number of playoff teams increases from 20 to 24, which includes an increase to 11 in automatic qualifying conferences and 13 in at-large selections.

The NCAA football committee also modified its playoff selection process, Viverito said. The biggest change will be that teams with six Division I wins will be considered, rather than the previous seven victories.

"History tells us that this will put more playoff worthy Valley teams in the at-large mix," she said.

The committee is also adopting what Viverito called an RPI-type rating system, which will measure strength of schedule — which, again, will naturally help potential MVFC contenders.

The issue of schedules also came up two other times in Viverito's call Monday.

On a question about such FBS conferences like the Big Ten essentially eliminating non-conference 'guarantee' games against FCS schools, the commissioner said she is not in favor of such a decision.

"Our hope is that as the FBS playoff selection criteria becomes more solid, they will recognize that playing our teams in many ways makes more sense, both financially and competitively than some of the bottom FBS options," she said.

South Dakota State, for example, had a 2015 game with Minnesota essentially wiped off the books when the Gophers replaced that contract for one with Texas Christian. The Jacks will also play at Nebraska this season.



Viverito

Two-Time Defending Champion Bison Picked To Repeat; Jacks Second

BY JEREMY HOECK
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On the idea of his team being picked to finish last, Joe Glenn laughs off such predictions as "opinion."

They do not mean anything, the football coach at the University of South Dakota claims, but they can, however, provide another spark.

"We have a chip on our shoulder; that's the way you have to practice and prepare," Glenn said Monday during the Missouri Valley Football Conference preseason media teleconference. "We take it personal."

The veteran coach closed by saying, "We don't think we'll lose every game in the conference again. You have to take it one at a time."

Coming off a 1-10 record — winless in league play — a season ago,

the Coyotes are more than aware of the expectations facing them this fall. They were picked to finish in 10th place, a total of 16 votes behind Western Illinois.

Two-time defending national North Dakota State was the unanimous preseason favorite, followed in the top five by South Dakota State, Northern Iowa, Illinois State and Youngstown State. The next five include Indiana State, Southern Illinois, Missouri State, Western Illinois and South Dakota.

The one positive for USD in the Monday chatter was senior line-backer Tyler Starr being named to the preseason defensive team. Seventy-four tackles and four sacks last fall played a big role in the selection, but he was clear that it means little in the overall scheme.

2013 MVFC Poll

Team (1st-place votes)	Pts
1. North Dakota State (39)	390
2. South Dakota State	323
3. Northern Iowa	269
4. Illinois State	264
5. Youngstown State	253
6. Indiana State	197
7. Southern Illinois	188
8. Missouri State	123
9. Western Illinois	77
10. South Dakota	61

"It's cool to at least be recognized like this after a one and ten season," Starr said Monday before a workout. "It's a drive to have it remain there for the post-season. Those are the

things you work out for."

Not much of anything went right last fall for USD, though.

The Coyotes suffered five league losses by a touchdown or less, and had other losses of 54, 31 and 23 points. In short, it was an up and down campaign.

"Last year didn't go as planned. We took it personally every day this summer," Starr said. "We don't want to be one and ten again."

"It makes all of us want to do that much more; go above and beyond what the requirements were."

Working out has been an off-season focus for the team, which had more than the typical number of players stay in Vermillion over the summer, Starr said. The key, he added,

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Vermillion Advances To Final Day Of State Legion

WEBSTER — Vermillion Post 1 advanced to the final day of the South Dakota State Class B American Legion Baseball Tournament with an 11-9 victory over Flandreau on Monday at Webster's Bob Wiley Stadium.

Vermillion will face defending champion Groton today (Tuesday) at 1 p.m. in the final. Groton is unbeaten in the tournament and, if Post 1 wins, the teams will play again at 5 p.m.

Chayse Meierkort went 3-4 with a double and four RBI to lead Vermillion. Tanner Settles also had three hits, driving in three. Tanner Anderson and Jayce Huska had two hits each in the victory.

Mitchell Foster had four hits, including a double, as Flandreau outthit Vermillion 19-13. David Parsley and Kyle Scofield each had three hits. Austin Ross, Jacob Patterson, Mitchell Hansen and Tim Parsley added two hits each.

Colin Olson allowed one run over 3 1/3 innings of relief

for the win. Meierkort pitched the ninth for the save. Patterson took the loss, giving up the first nine runs.

Groton 5, Tabor 1

WEBSTER — Tabor's Ross Kortan held Groton to just three hits, but the defending state champions scored three unearned runs on three Tabor errors in a 5-1 victory on Monday in Webster.

The loss eliminated Tabor from the tournament. Groton will face Vermillion for the title today (Tuesday) at 1 p.m.

Mason Madsen and Parker Rossow each had a hit and a RBI for Groton. Matt Thorson drove in two runs, and Brandon Stanley added a hit in the win.

Sawyer Fridrich, Ross Kortan and Mike Kocer each had two hits for Tabor. Austin Kaul and Lincoln Stoeckner also had hits. Blase Vanecek drove in the lone Tabor run.

Madsen struck out six in the complete game win. Kortan struck out eight in the loss.

VFW: Yankton Lakers 7-3, Brookings 1-9

BROOKINGS — The Yankton Lakers finished the regular season with a doubleheader split at Brookings Bombers Black on Monday in VFW Teener Baseball action.

In the opener, Yankton scored four runs in the third and pulled away to a 7-1 victory. Michael Heine doubled and singled, and Tyler Strahl had two hits each for Yankton. Nate Stephenson, Nathan Hein, Chase Vogt and Hunter Cameron added hits for the Lakers.

Jordan Kathol, Heine and Hein combined on a three-hit victory, with Kathol giving up all three hits in four shutout innings for the win. Ryan Argust took the loss.

In the nightcap, Brookings used a five-run fourth to pull away to a 9-3 victory.

Akren Prodohl doubled and singled, and Chris Lerdal, Devin Coughlin and Carter Krogman each had two hits for Brookings. Coughlin also drove in three runs. Sam Wilber added a double in the win.

Kathol doubled, and Stephenson and Heine had hits for Yankton. Krogman picked up the win. Cameron took the loss.

The Lakers begin play in the South Dakota VFW Teener 13-14 Year-old Majors Tournament on Friday in Mitchell.

Amateurs: District 6B Lesterville 8, Menno 4

SCOTLAND — Lesterville's Zach Johnson had three hits to lead the Broncos to an 8-4 victory over Menno in an elimination game in the District 6B Amateur Baseball Tournament on Sunday at Scotland.



JOHN PAPENDICK/ABERDEEN AMERICAN NEWS
Ross Kortan makes his pitch for Tabor Monday during a matchup with Groton in the S.D. State Class B American Legion Baseball Tournament in Webster. Groton eliminated Tabor with a 5-1 decision.