

Column: Are You Ready For Some Football? You Bet!

BY PAUL NEWBERRY
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Well, it's that time of year again, when Americans across the land take an extended break from being productive at work, paying attention to trouble spots overseas, or noticing they have a family.

Our long national nightmare is over.

Since early February, we've had to get by with such mundane pursuits as pretending we care about politics, spending quality time with the kids, or — gasp! — watching the occasional hockey game (a caveat: this usually occurred only when flipping through channels in a futile bid to find someone yelling about Tim Tebow).

Sure, there was the occasional respite in our joyless lives.

The draft. Free agency. Watching repeated repeats of the 1976 Super Bowl on NFL Network.

But now, we are truly whole again.

We get to spend six days a week working on our fantasy league roster, deciding how much of that mortgage check can be diverted to betting on the Giants, and listening to the talking heads chatter on endlessly about which teams need a third-string quarterback (why won't they give Tebow a shot, for heaven's sake?)

Then, comes Sunday. Glorious, glorious Sunday. No need for pews when you've got a Barcalounger. The 50-inch, hi-def screen is our pulpit. All is right with the world — unless our team loses, of course. But that ain't happening. No way. Seriously, we killed it in free agency, and our GM really likes the rookies he drafted, and at least we don't have Tebow mucking up our roster.

What's that you say? It's just a game. There's no balance in our lives. We should spend more time worrying about a potential war in Syria than we do about Rex Ryan's latest gaffe.



MICHAEL CIAGLO/COLORADO SPRINGS GAZETTE/MCT
Denver Broncos tight end Virgil Green (85) celebrates with tight end Julius Thomas (80) after Thomas' 24-yard TD catch in the second quarter against the Baltimore Ravens on Thursday at Sports Authority Field at Mile High in Denver, Colo.

Well, clearly, you're European or something.

This is what we live for. This is all we live for.

And there's nothing sad about that, right?

Right?

So, drum roll please, let's take a look at what to expect from NFL '013:

AMERICA'S TEAM: Tony Romo steps up his game, doubling his interceptions from 19 to 38. Dallas Cowboys owner Jerry Jones rewards his quarterback by signing him to a 42-year, \$2.7 billion contract, while also stressing that doesn't mean Romo won't be his quarterback for all of eternity. Also, upon learning that several franchises will soon have stadiums newer than his, Jones announces plans to implode 4-year-old AT&T Stadium and build a 500,000-seat replacement. Oh, and Dallas misses the playoffs again.

RGIII-D: To ensure Robert Griffin III has no more problems

with his knees, Dr. James Andrews surgically alters the Redskins quarterback into a hologram. Even though Griffin can no longer be tackled, coach Mike Shanahan says he will continue to announce the starter on a week-to-week basis.

BAN THIS: Showing just how much influence it has over all elements of society, the NFL's ban on purses larger than a piece of gum becomes the latest fashion craze. All across the country, women willingly start carrying tiny clear plastic bags that require them to leave wallets, phones, bobby pins, sunglasses, mirrors, someone else's purse, and 17 J.Crew receipts at home. Everything but gum, that is.

JETS GEL: Rex Ryan is fired before the season is a month old. In a stunning move, the Jets bring back Tebow as a player-coach. He names himself the starting quarterback and leads the Jets to an im-

probable playoff appearance despite a passer rating of 0.04. Miley Cyrus even concedes she should've Tebowed instead of twerked at the MTV Video Music Awards.

ON THE MOVE: After losing their first 10 games, including "home" contests in Shanghai and Kiev, the Jacksonville Jaguars quietly move to Los Angeles. No one notices. In either city.

RETRO PREDICTION: This is only for those folks who don't realize the season actually started Thursday because they were too busy debating what's going to happen on the series finale of "Breaking Bad" (Bonus prediction: Walt doesn't make it). Anyway, Peyton Manning throws seven touchdown passes in Week 1 against defending Super Bowl champion Baltimore. The Broncos win by something along the lines of 49-27.

SUPER HAPPY FUN PICK: While we're at it, let's go

ahead and take the Broncos to win it all. Oh wait, the New York Giants haven't won a championship in two whole years. Time for that drought to end. Besides, they'll have the home-field advantage. Eli Manning completes four passes for 12 yards and leads the Giants to a 12-7 victory over Peyton's Broncos on a snowy, 12-degree day at the Meadowlands. The NFL proclaims the first outdoor Super Bowl in a northern city to be a complete success, while stepping up its global warming program to ensure the next one is played on an 80-degree February day. The Mannings hook up afterward for a rap album, which goes multi-platinum with such hits as "Football On Your Phone, The Remix" and "I Can't Believe My Younger Brother Has Three Rings And I Only Have One."

Enjoy the season, everyone.

Gazelles Win Two In Mitchell

MITCHELL — The Yankton Gazelles extended their win streak to five after sweeping a pair of girls' tennis matches Friday at a Mitchell triangular.

Yankton defeated Mitchell 6-3 and Pierre 8-1. Three players went 2-0 for the Gazelles, Sarah Rockne (flight one), Taylor Rothenberger (flight two) and Kaitlyn Frank (flight three). The tandems of Rockne and Rothenberger, and Alexa Bryan and Anne Knoff won both of their doubles matches.

Yankton (6-3) travels to Sioux Falls O'Gorman next Tuesday.

YANKTON 6, MITCHELL 3
SINGLES: Sarah Rockne Y def. Grace Grabenstein 10-2; Taylor Rothenberger Y def. Halle Larson 10-5; Kaitlyn Frank Y def. Haley Smith 10-3; Sammy Pooley M def. Alexa Bryan 10-5; Allison Buckley M def. Anna Kokesch 10-4; Anne Knoff Y def. Kendra Hanks 10-5
DOUBLES: Rockne-Rothenberger Y def. Grabenstein-Larson 10-4; Bryan-Knoff Y def. Smith-Buckley 11-9; Pooley-Hanks M def. Frank-Kokesch 10-7
EXHIBITION: Mimi Garcia Y def. Tatum Dean 9-8 (7-4); Jaeden Lizakowski M def. Sophie Kouri 8-3; Dean-Lizakowski M def. Kouri-Garcia 8-3
YANKTON 8, PIERRE 1
SINGLES: Sarah Rockne Y def. Eileen Leong 10-6; Taylor Rothenberger Y def. Jolee Smith 10-6; Kaitlyn Frank Y def. Sam Beck 10-4; Alexa Bryan Y def. Sydney Larson 10-4; Anna Kokesch Y def. Grace Jones 10-7; Brianna Dufour P def. Anne Knoff 10-4
DOUBLES: Rockne-Rothenberger Y def. Leong-Smith 10-8; Bryan-Knoff Y def. Beck-Larson 10-5; Frank-Kokesch Y def. Jones-Dufour 10-5
EXHIBITION: Cassandry Ryckman P def. Mimi Garcia 8-4; Chloe Ryan P def. Sophie Kouri 8-0; Ryckman-Ryan P def. Garcia-Kouri 8-1

Bucks

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get the Bucks on the board before the floodgates opened and Yankton closed the first half on a 35-7 run.

"That was huge," Hejna said of the first touchdown grab. "It was really just a confidence builder for us. I don't want to say we came out flat, but we really needed to get back to playing Buck football and I thought we did after that first touchdown."

Hejna set up a 1-yard scoring run by Strahl with a couple of nice catches to make it 16-15 with 5:29 left in the half before a disastrous punt attempt handed the Bucks another 1-yard score. Facing 4th and inches at their own 29-

yard line, the Raiders lined up to punt. Punter Carter Wevik watched the snap sail over his head and into the end zone. Instead of taking the safety, Wevik lunged out of the end zone to the 1-yard line, setting the Bucks up for an easy 1-yard scoring plunge.

The Raiders bounced back immediately as Hagen found Matt Minnick for 29 yards, plus a 15-yard facemask penalty, before a perfect strike to Justin Schick covered 41 yards and put Stevens up 23-22. Unfortunately for the Raiders, that was the last lead they would have. Travis Termansen took the ensuing kickoff 90 yards for a score and Hejna set up a late Strahl 1-yard run as Yankton took a 35-23 lead into the locker room at the half.

"We're so close," Stevens

head coach Scott Hagen said. "I really thought the kids played hard tonight. They kept battling and stayed right in there all night long. I'm very proud of them and how hard they played."

Trailing by 12, the Raiders had to kick to open the second half and it didn't take long for Hejna to make them pay as he went over Stevens defensive back Justin Hoff to snatch a pass and streaked 80 yards down the left sideline to put the Bucks up 42-23. A field goal and 88-yard touchdown pass from Strahl to Termansen made it 52-23 and all but ended the game. Termansen also had an interception to go along with his two long touchdowns. Strahl ended the game 16-of-22 passing for school-record 382 yards and three scores.

But true to their coach's

word, the Raiders never gave up, closing to 52-36 on a 64-yard scoring pass from backup Brandon Soucy to Eric Sanderson with 5:58 to play. Stevens got the ball back with just over 4 minutes left and a very real chance to make it a one-score contest, but Hejna picked off Soucy at the 2-yard line to ice it.

"He was big for them," Hagen said of the 6-foot-4 Hejna. "I thought we were in good position for the most part, but he had height on us and just went up and made some plays. Give him credit, but I was happy with how we played. We were right there. We just need to start making some of those plays."

Stevens (0-2 overall) will head to Sturgis to take on the Scoopers on Friday while Yankton (1-1) will host Brandon Valley.

Heelan Runners Sweep Don Baker Titles

VERMILLION — Sioux City (Iowa) Bishop Heelan's Lindsay Joyce and Alec Pavone swept individual honors at the Don Baker Memorial Invitational cross country meet on Friday at the Don Baker cross country course.

Pavone finished the 5,000-meter course in 17:44.78 to win the boys' race. Crofton's Alex Janssen placed second in 18:01.84.

Crofton put four runners in the top nine in the boys' race. Joyce finished the 4,000-meter girls' race in 16:03.25, beating Vermillion's Madisen Lavin by over a minute (17:12.88). Crofton put five runners in the top 10, led by Keely Hagge's fourth place finish (17:45.56).

GIRLS' TOP 10: 1, Lindsay Joyce, Heelan 16:03.25; 2, Madisen Lavin, Vermillion, 17:12.88; 3, Lauren Bleeker, Heelan 17:30.22; 4, Keeley Hagge, Crofton, 17:45.56; 5, Vanessa McFarland, Crofton, 17:47.18; 6, Madison Peck, Heelan 17:48.26; 7, Emma Sealey, Heelan 17:52.05; 8, Jazmin Wubben, Crofton, 17:54.19; 9, Alex Allen, Crofton, 18:08.04; 10, Kendy Kube, Crofton, 18:21.09.

BOYS' TOP 10: 1, Alec Pavone, Heelan 17:44.78; 2, Alex Janssen, Crofton, 18:01.84; 3, Ben Eastman, Heelan 19:06.61; 4, Drew Eskins, Crofton, 19:34.86; 5, Cole Steffen, Crofton, 19:46.10; 6, Jake DeLong, Heelan 20:11.84; 7, Daniel Brenner, Heelan 20:19.38; 8, Layne Meyer, Viborg-Hurley 20:28.65; 9, Brady Stucky, Crofton, 20:47.09; 10, Brock Wiederhold, Heelan 20:54.61.

N-V Inv.

NIOBRARA STATE PARK, Neb. — Stanton swept the team titles at the Niobrara-Verdige Invitational cross country meet, held on Thursday at Niobrara State Park.

Stanton finished at 29 points in the boys' division, followed by Hartington (51), West Boyd (65) and Chambers-Wheeler Central (65).

John Walnofer of Chambers-Wheeler Central won the boys' race in 18:28, finishing 25 seconds ahead of Randolph's Cameron Moes over the 5,000-meter course. Hartington's Noah Noecker placed third in 18:55.

Stanton edged Bloomfield in the girls' race, 48-51. Hartington finished third at 66 points.

Stanton's Braska Patterson earned medalist honors, finishing the 5,000-meter course in 21:23. Bloomfield's Breanna Gallup was second in 21:53, with Hartington's Rachel Loecker third (22:12).

BOYS' DIVISION
TEAM SCORES: Stanton 29, Hartington 51, West Boyd 65, Chambers-Wheeler Central 65, Osmond 68, Neligh-Oakdale 84, Niobrara-Verdige 109.

TOP 20: 1, John Walnofer, Chambers-Wheeler Central 18:28; 2, Cameron Moes, Randolph 18:53; 3, Noah Noecker, Hartington 18:55; 4, Caleb Goeken, Stanton 18:55; 5, Caylon

South Dakota Tops Northern Illinois For Third Straight Win

BROOKINGS — South Dakota scored two goals in the first 15 minutes of the second half en route to a 3-1 win against Northern Illinois Friday at South Dakota State's Jackrabbit Invitational. It was the third consecutive win for the Coyotes (3-1-1) who conclude the Invitational at 10 a.m. Sunday against Nevada.

Sophomore midfielder Rebecca Sparkman converted a corner-kick goal with a header eight minutes into the second half to break a 1-1 halftime tie. Sophomore Brenna Bills played the corner short to junior Colleen Reeves who sent the cross to Sparkman. Both Bills and Reeves were credited with assists.

Coyote freshman Jamie Karch tacked on another goal seven minutes later to complete the scoring. It was Karch's third goal in as many games. Senior Jenny Teslow worked past a Husky defender to make the pass to Karch who was alone in front of the box.

The two teams exchanged goals within a two-minute span in the first half. USD sophomore Elena Tsakakis scored her first collegiate goal when a shot from teammate Corey Strang ricocheted off NIU goalkeeper Amy Carr to Tsakakis for the score. NIU sophomore forward Nicole Gobbo countered moments later with her second goal of the season.

USD goalkeeper Mackenzie Viktor made four saves to earn the win. Junior midfielder Shannon Keller contributed 49 solid minutes off the bench. The Coyotes outshot Northern Illinois (22-0) 13-12.

South Dakota has outscored its opponents 8-2 during its three-game win streak.

Hirschman, Stanton 19:23; 6, Shay Weber, Chambers-Wheeler Central 19:31; 7, Dylan Reiman, West Boyd 19:34; 8, Kyle Young, Bloomfield 19:40; 9, Trevor Doffin, Stanton 19:35; 10, Jared Fullebrith, Hartington 19:58; 11, Scot Gubels, Osmond 20:04; 12, Drew Stanlecker, West Boyd 20:06; 13, Tyler Haigh, Bloomfield 20:16; 14, Garrison Hazen, Creighton 20:18; 15, Trenton Cadwalder, Stanton 20:25; 16, Justin Bellar, Neligh-Oakdale 20:42; 17, Ryan Colsden, Stanton 20:47; 18, Michael Peinka, Neligh-Oakdale 21:00; 19, Aaron Pavelka, Niobrara-Verdige 21:02; 20, Dallas Christiansen, Neligh-Oakdale 21:24.

GIRLS' DIVISION
TEAM SCORES: Stanton 48, Bloomfield 51, Hartington 52, Chambers-Wheeler Central 65, Neligh-Oakdale 72, Randolph 92, West Boyd 100, Stuart 112.

TOP 20: 1, Braska Patterson, Stanton 21:23; 2, Breanna Gallup, Bloomfield 21:53; 3, Rachel Loecker, Hartington 22:12; 4, Kristin Mahony, Chambers-Wheeler Central 23:45; 5, Paige Thielen, Stanton 23:47; 6, Cassidy Wilmes, Creighton 23:51; 7, Claudia Orozco, Neligh-Oakdale 23:53; 8, Martine Eriksen, Randolph 24:03; 9, Anna Brodersen, Hartington 24:04; 10, Jayda Chance, Neligh-Oakdale 24:20; 11, Marissa Frank, Creighton 24:22; 12, Anna Burbach, Hartington 24:33; 13, Hannah Nelson, Bloomfield 24:42; 14, Morgan Harmon, West Boyd 24:43; 15, Katie Fye, Randolph 24:50; 16, Margo Erickson, Chambers-Wheeler Central 24:53; 17, Clair Trenhaile, Bloomfield 25:21; 18, Katie Gribble, Chambers-Wheeler Central 25:34; 19, Lily Nagengast, Bloomfield 25:45; 20, Shayla Mandl, Stanton 26:24.

Mauer Still Not Cleared To Play

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Minnesota Twins catcher Joe Mauer has not cleared his concussion symptoms yet.

Mauer was missing from the lineup for the 16th straight game Friday, when the Twins started a series against Toronto. The All-Star said after taking batting practice he had "a good day," but the recovery process has

been slow.

Mauer said there's no timetable for his return but that he hopes to be back "sooner than later." He was hurt on Aug. 19, hit in the facemask by a foul ball.

General manager Terry Ryan said Mauer has had no setbacks and he doesn't have "any doubt" that Mauer will play again this season.

James

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vue, Neb., began his stay at USD in 1997 when he transferred from Iowa Western Community College. He spent two seasons with the Coyotes, helping the team win the North Central Conference title in 1998-99 — the first seven NCAA Tournaments USD would make in the next 10 seasons.

James was named to Boots' staff prior to the 2003-04 season and eventually became the program's top assistant — playing a key role in game management and game preparation.

The task now, though, is to assume the head coaching duties. Is he ready?

"It's a little different when you step across four or feet

into a different chair," James said. "It's something I feel like I'm prepared for. Coach Boots mentored me to this point."

With his program set to begin preseason practices on Sept. 30, James said there's little time to stop — on the other hand, he joked, still time to catch up on sleep he didn't get this week.

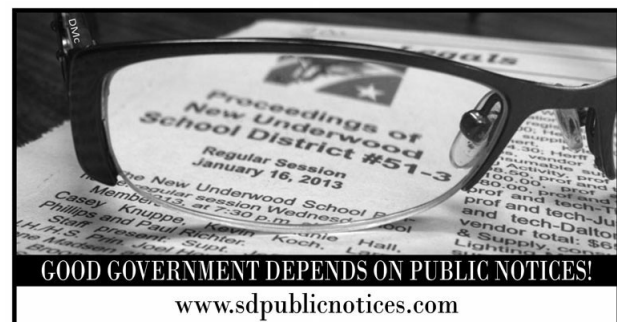
James will be joined on the Coyote bench by assistants Chris Kassin (enters his 10th season), Lloyd Williams (2nd season) and Eric John-

son (director of basketball operations).

USD's 2013-14 schedule is also nearing completion, he said, with the possibility of adding one more game.

"I'm glad I got that vote of confidence from Herbster, (senior associate A.D.) David Williams and president (Jim) Abbott," James said.

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



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