



Jacob Cheadle went out for a pass in the scrimmage at Tracy last weekend.

By Byron Higgin
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Is there a target on Minneota's back after winning the state tournament?

"Most definitely!

"This year it's about having a state championship. But we've had that target on our chest every year — it says, 'Minneota'. Dawson-Boyd might have been the best team we saw last year and they were one touchdown from being in the state tournament and possibly being state champions — and they'll be motivated," the coach said.

"There is something about wearing Minneota across your chest. Some of that stuff stems from the late 80's and early 90's — so we're going to have a bullseye for years. People will never feel sorry for us," the coach related.

Fortunately, "The kids understand and that's a motivator."

On Saturday, for a moment, when senior center-linebacker Jacob Horner went down with a knee injury, you could have heard a pin drop in the Viking huddle.

Players looked from one to another as he was helped off the field.

On the next play the uncomposed Vikings couldn't pull it together and Wabasso rolled into the end zone for an easy touchdown.

But Minneota did recover and stopped the Rabbits the rest of the way.

As for Horner, he expects to play on Thursday at Adrian. He thought it was a bone bruise and, while sore, wouldn't keep him from starting the season.

“That was tough. We don’t need that,” said one of the team captains, Adam Josephson.

“But it appears to be a bone bruise so that’s lucky,” Josephson said.

Horner told The Mascot he planned to give the knee plenty of attention but was NOT thinking about missing the season opener.

Experience a factor against Adrian?

“It comes down to experience. Beau Buysse is going to be good for us at quarterback, but he’s not a three-year starter. We’ve got guys with experience and some new faces,” he said. His receivers won’t be as big of targets as the Vikings had last year, but Coach Johnston answered by saying, “That’s fine — so we won’t be able to go with big ball as much, that’s fine, that’s not everything. We’ll be able to throw the ball an extra five or 10 yards and keep the chains moving, that’s good for us.”

Can they average 50 points per game again?

“We obviously expect to put some points on the board, 50 points (last year’s average) — we don’t know yet. We have some question marks going into the season. “

He quoted former football Coach Joel Skillings as saying, “If you score four touchdowns on offense, you should win games.”

He said, “If we get to the 30-point mark and hopefully defensively we’ll be able to win games.”

The coach added, “We’re expected to be a little bit more of a grind-out team.”

“We’ve always strived for balance. We feel pretty good about this year. Everyone is talking about Brandon Anderson and obviously he had a great year last year. He had a lot of yards. Let’s face it, he’s going to be our workhorse this year.

But if you sit and try to keep him controlled and forget about guys like Adam Josephson and Jacob Cheadle and Jacob Bottelberghe and Andrew Swedzinski and obviously Beau is a good runner. If you forget those guys, they’re capable of busting some big plays. They will not be able to key on one person.”

Conference crown on the line right away?

“Obviously, we start off thinking about the conference a little bit. But you know what, I’ve always said it, that’s minor to hopefully making a great run in the playoffs.”

Nothing seems more ironic than the fact Minneota will face Adrian in the season opener on Thursday.

After all, the last time either team played all the marbles were on the line in the state championship, a game won by Minneota, 42-21.

And here they are again, facing off to start a new season.

Adrian lost 13 seniors from last year’s state runner-up team. Among them were quarterback Brett Novotny, running backs Adam Diekmann and Kyle Kilgore, top linebacker Stephen Loosbrock, 6-1 210-pound defensive end Brendon Kopplow and 6-5 defensive tackle Aaron Lonneman.

So Coach Randy Strand will be building a new team on the strength of about 11 juniors.

He does have a pretty good nucleus to build on with fullback Justin Wolf now a 200-pound senior, wide receiver Kyle Kilgore, potential quarterback Mitchell Sieve, now a senior and

running back Brock Bullerman.

Tackle Dustin Polzine returns to the offensive and defensive line along with Austin Wolf at center and Jake Diekmann.

Minnesota Coach Chad Johnston expects a battle from a team that left the state without a state championship and with a bitter taste in their mouths over the rivalry with Minnesota.