

Spring has sprung and it's time to talk ... football

Written by Scott Unash

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I know it is spring. The temperatures are steadily climbing, the birds are starting to sing and the grass is beginning its annual turn from doormat brown to green. We should be thinking of track, soccer, golf, tennis and everything associated with the warming of Mother Earth ... but I'm going to take a moment to talk some football.

We have a pair of exciting pieces of news for the upcoming football season that should whet the appetites of people for the pigskin flying through the air and the smell of barbecue lofting through parking lots; the announcement of a new coach at Prairie and the birth of a new program in the Metro area.

It has been a long and, I'm sure, arduous process for Prairie Athletic Director Rocky Bennett to find the right fit for the Hawk football program and fill the large shoes of former head man Craig Jelinek. Bennett stayed his course and in the end made, what I believe, is a terrific choice in Mike Morrissey.

Morrissey fills all the criteria you are looking for in a new coach. He's young, has experience both in the college and high school ranks and has grown up around the sport. He was a former quarterback in both high school and college and knows the game as a quarterback only can. His dad was a tremendous coach at Pleasant Valley High School in the Quad Cities at a school very similar to Prairie in both size and tradition.

From what I understand, the kids at Prairie are very excited about the hire and do not underestimate that when it comes to predicting games this fall. Many times a new coach brings a renewed enthusiasm to a school. If you need an example, look no farther than Linn-Mar's football re-birth when Bob Forsyth took over the reins. I had a chance to talk with Morrissey shortly after his hiring and he made a terrific impression on me just in a five minute conversation. I can't wait to see what his teams will be like at the re-dedicated John Wall Memorial Field this fall.

The other big piece of news was the announcement that 8-Man football is coming to town. It was long known that Cedar Valley Christian School was looking to join both the IHSA and the IGHSAA for various reasons. What was not known was that the school was going to be playing football this coming season.

This is no easy task. Everything has to start from scratch. You need equipment, a staff, players,

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and above all a field. Many schools that have started a football program have done it slowly, playing a JV schedule at first and then jumping into varsity competition after a couple of seasons. I admire CV for going "all in" and starting off with varsity competition right away, even though the school will not be eligible for the playoffs this fall.

The first head coach will be Ed Betsworth, who has served as a head coach at several stops in Eastern Iowa. He jumped aboard when the school was first looking at starting the program and one thing led to another and before you know it, he was the man to lead the Huskies on the field. I can't wait to talk one-on-one with the new coach and to get his views on starting from square one with a program. Perhaps an 8-Man football game is in the offing on 1600 AM someday.

Finally, best of luck to Cedar Rapids native and Regis graduate Zach Johnson as he tees it up this Thursday at Augusta National for the Masters. Perhaps the 2007 Champion will find that magic around the greens again this weekend and claim another Green Jacket!