

Former Metro preps ready to pad up again

Written by Mark Dukes

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High school competition sometimes is difficult to get out of your system. Years after your eligibility is completed, you may still yearn for one more game, one more chance at glory, one more chance just to mix it up.

If that's you, listen up.

Alumni Football USA is coming to Iowa this summer. It's a 26-year-old nationwide organization that puts on alumni football games, giving former players one more opportunity to get on the field and high schools a chance to raise money for the athletic department.

Bob Cazet started Alumni Football USA after his playing career in St. Helena, Calif., in Napa Valley.

"We started it in 1985," Cazet said. "I wanted to play one more game and a lot of others guys felt the same way. We got together and players that played in odd number years played the even number years. It came off well. My college buddies would tell me, 'What about us'?"

Alumni Football USA has held games in about 15 states but this is its first foray into Iowa. Dozens of former Iowa high school players, including Metro athletes, have signed up at the Alumni Football USA website.

Jefferson already has signed up the maximum 40 players and has about a dozen more on a waiting list. Among those interested is Blake Tiedtke, who led the J-Hawks to an unbeaten regular season in 2000 and went on to play at Nebraska.

Kennedy has about 30 players ready to go. Other Metro schools have fewer signed up.

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A meeting is scheduled Saturday at 3 p.m. at the Edgewood Road Pizza Hut for those interested in playing. At that time, players must pay a \$95 fee, which covers Alumni Football USA's expenses to provide uniforms, equipment, game officials, liability insurance, advertising, and the like. After games, every player will receive a video of the game and a t-shirt.

"The hardest part for us is that when you go to a city, people don't think it's for real," Cazet said. "There's some hesitation, but believe me it's real. We've played hundreds of games and there are over 200 You Tube videos of games. Once we have the meeting, the guys understand it will happen."

High schools are not required to be involved, but they can choose to run concession stands that will benefit their athletic departments. One California school raised over \$5,000 through pre-sale of tickets and concessions.

Cazet, a former public school teacher and coach in California, said several former NFL players have participated in games and some dads have played on the same team with sons. "It's a novelty but it's kind of like your average high school football game," he said.

Cazet said Metro matchups will be made after Saturday's meeting and it could be that Jefferson will play Kennedy, since those two schools have the most players signed up. The last two weeks of June and first two weeks of July are blocked out for games in Iowa.

The whole concept has the feel of "boys will be boys."

"It's like when you were 8, 10, 12 years old and you were out playing football with your friends," Cazet said. "Then your mom would yell out, 'C'mon in, it's time to go to bed.' And everyone would yell back, 'One more play!' "