

Cold playoff game in Montana excites Teply

Written by Jim Ecker

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CEDAR FALLS - Northern Iowa football coach Mark Farley tells a funny story about big Jay Teply plopping into a chair and breaking it as a true freshman in college.

The part about Teply being big is true enough. He weighed 340 as a freshman and tips the scales at 328 these days, but he insists it wasn't him. Somebody else broke that chair.

"Every reporter I've talked to has told me this story and I feel bad," he said Sunday. "There was a kid who came in with me freshman year who looked almost identical to me, but weighed 20 pounds more than I did.

"He was sitting right next to me in the meeting and his chair broke. I grabbed the second chair and sat on it. It wasn't me, but it could have been."

Teply admits he was too big when he enrolled at Northern Iowa in 2007 after graduating from Xavier High School.

"Basically when I got there weighing 340, it was a majority of baby fat that needed to be changed," he said. "All freshman year we went through a hard workout all season. I dropped about 30 pounds in the first couple of months. It came off pretty fast."

Teply, who stands 6-foot-7, replaced his baby fat with muscle and developed into one of the top offensive linemen in the Missouri Valley Conference. He was named first team all-conference this season and helped the Panthers win their fourth MVC title during his five years in Cedar Falls.

Northern Iowa (10-2) will play Montana (10-2) in the quarterfinals of the FCS playoffs Friday

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night in Missoula, Mont., where it's expected to be in the 20's at game time with a 10 percent chance of snow. That's just the way Teply wants it. The colder the better, as far as he's concerned.

"I'm actually pretty excited about it," he said. "My whole life I've been a Green Bay Packers fan, so I've been watching their cold games. It gets me going, playing in that kind of an atmosphere where it's supposed to be really cold."

He plans to play in short sleeves Friday night, exposing his massive arms to the elements. "I don't think I could live with myself if I didn't," he said.

Teply, 23, helped the Xavier Saints win the Class 4A state football title as a senior in 2006 and was named the MVP of the state championship game in the UNI-Dome. He was named all-state in football and basketball at Xavier and was light on his feet for a big man.

"That's one of the things the Northern Iowa coaches liked about me when they recruited me," he said. "They said I had really good feet for the size I was. I think that's only gotten better since I've gotten here. I think that's one of my good qualities."

Teply was named a Scout Team MVP as a true freshman at UNI in 2007 when he was red-shirted. He started eight games at right tackle in 2008, played as a substitute in 2009 and started all 12 games at left tackle last season.

He stayed at left tackle this year and was recognized as one of the top blockers in the MVC. "I was pretty happy with that," he said. "I've just tried to play the best I could all season and it's nice to be rewarded with something like that."

Northern Iowa has compiled a 48-15 record during Teply's five years in the program, with four MVC titles and four trips to the FCS playoffs. He's proud to have played a role in UNI's success.

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"It's basically why I chose to come here," he said. "When I was being recruited, they promised I'd be coming to a good program and I'd need to make an impact. That sounded really appealing to me.

"They were right about a winning program. To be an actual factor in that has been a lot of fun."

Teply is combining three fields of study into an independent major at Northern Iowa, with an emphasis on physical science, exercise science and sociology (with classes in criminology). He might want to become a parole officer or work at a correctional facility.

He's also getting a minor degree in coaching. "I definitely want to coach," he said.

Teply has the size to play pro football and would love to get a chance after he graduates.

"Right now I'm really focusing on the end of the season. I want to have the best season possible and kind of let those cards (pro football) fall when they do," he said. "From what I've seen and heard, I should be getting a shot, whether I'm drafted or sign as a free agent. Just getting the opportunity would be a lot of fun."