

A Panther pause

Written by Scott Unash

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I had the opportunity Monday to take part in the 20th Annual UNI Panther Prowl at the Elmcrest Country Club here in Cedar Rapids. The event is a combination meet and greet, and fundraiser for the Panther Scholarship Fund and the UNI Athletic Department.

By the way, congratulations to the two Linn County Scholarship winners for this past year, women's basketball player Katelyn Oney, formerly of Washington, and football player Kaleb Admire, formerly of Jefferson. Each won a \$1,000 scholarship given out by the Panther Scholarship Fund.

Most of the UNI coaches came down for the day of activities, including football coach Mark Farley, men's basketball coach Ben Jacobson and wrestling coach Doug Schwab.

The day was spent on the beautiful Elmcrest course and then there was a dinner featuring all the coaches and Athletic Director Troy Dannen, who spoke about their respective programs and prospects for the coming year. As you can imagine it was an upbeat program.

As most of the sports public already knows, many of the UNI rosters are made up of lowans, and many of those are from eastern Iowa. More specifically, there are a lot of former Metro athletes. On the football side, former Xavier star Jay Teply just finished his career for the Panthers and is now trying to make an NFL team for the coming year. He has a tryout with the Minnesota Vikings.

One of the Metro athletes in the Panther football camp right now is former Linn-Mar star Will Roth. Roth is an interesting story. He was an all MVC quarterback for the Lions and went to Cedar Falls to play that position. However, circumstances evolved and now Roth finds himself as a tight end and in the middle of a battle for the starting spot this fall. After battling a knee injury, Roth is healthy now and coming off a fine spring game. Farley said he will be in the mix for the 2012 season.

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On the men's basketball side, Jacobson has done well harvesting the Metro area. I kidded with him Monday that he could nearly put an "All Metro" team out on the floor soon for the Panthers. Four former Metro stars will be Panthers next year.

Max Martino, formerly of Kennedy, played some minutes for the Panthers last year and will be a sophomore this season. He brings athleticism and solid defense to the table.

Matt Bohannon, from Linn-Mar, will be a red-shirt freshman this coming year. Matt will provide some outside shooting for the Panthers and knows how to win.

We will have to wait a year perhaps to see two other Metro stars. Waiting in the wings is former Washington Warrior Wes Washpun, who played for Tennessee his freshman year before transferring this off-season to UNI. He is a freak athlete and a terrific point guard who can play big-time defense for UNI. And last, but certainly not least, is Matt MacDougall, who played at Prairie this past year and was all MVC. He will be a walk-on for the Panthers next year. While MacDougall more than likely will red-shirt next season, his ceiling is very high. He is a terrific jumper with a good mid-range jump shot and will contribute to the Panthers in the future.

It was fun to talk about the future with Coach Jacobson on Monday, especially about the group of Metro athletes he has under his tutelage in Cedar Falls.

UNI's athletic department faces many challenges in the future, as do many universities of similar size and status. Budgets will continue to shrink, forcing tough decisions to be made.

UNI plays football at Wisconsin and at Iowa this fall because of the economic impact that those games will have on the budget. It is a fact of the times. But as all the coaches talked about, they welcome that challenge to face "the big boys"

And a lot of those UNI teams will do so with Metro athletes leading them.

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