

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS

SANTA BARBARA ATHLETIC ROUND TABLE LUNCHEON : 'Tis the hard-hittin' season

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The air is getting crisper, and so is the contact on the football field. Even the celebrations can have you seeing stars.

SBCC's Ravonte Wilkerson found that out the hard way after returning a punt 72 yards for a touchdown during the Vaqueros' opener against Hancock last weekend.

"That was the fastest 72 yards I've seen a kid run," coach Craig Moropoulos said during Monday's first Athletic Round Table Luncheon of the year. "And he told me that the hardest hit he's had all night was when our guy went and drilled him in the end zone to celebrate ó he gave him a stinger, and he said he'd never been hit that hard before."

He added that transfer linebacker Nick Vought smacked Hancock a few times, too, though it came in a 14-10 Vaqueros loss.

"He's one of the fastest guys on the team, if not the fastest, and he had 10 tackles from the safety position," Moropoulos said. "This guy isn't huge in stature, but he was coming up and smacking them."

• **CARPINTERIA HIGH:** Lineman Jesus Cardona was back for the Warriors' season-opening, 7-0 win at Santa Ynez last Friday after missing most of last season from a hit that he didn't anticipate:

"He got hit by a car riding his bike on the first day of double-sessions," said Warrior assistant coach Steve Murillo. "He was out with a broken leg for most of the season. It's good having him back . . . He comes out and plays hard for us every day."

He said that Cardona "challenges" Carpinteria's star center, Garrett Gonzales, every day in practice.

"Garrett is the rock of our offensive line," he said. "He makes all of our calls, he's a senior, carries a 4.0, he's a senior captain. And he's the man."

• **BISHOP DIEGO HIGH:** Coach Tom Crawford, whose Cardinals lost a 21-14 heartbreaker at big-school Arroyo Grande last Friday, is gonzo about his own Gonzo: tight end and linebacker Art Gonzales.

"I don't know if he came off the field during the contest," he said. "He made a very acrobatic catch in the end zone for our second score between two defenders, and played very well the entire game."

He also introduced his other touchdown man, R.J. Escamilla, who is, "carrying on the tradition of tough running backs that we've had with Jacob Sandoval and Aaron Skinner . . . R.J. showed on Friday night that he's in that same mold."

• **SAN MARCOS HIGH:** Coach Dare Holdren is anticipating the hits of defensive captain Adrian Stimson, a linebacker who also doubles as a fullback, when the Royals open their season at home this week against Rio Mesa.

"He's probably the best linebacker-fullback duo we've had in my 10 years over there," he said. "I can't wait to see what this guy does on Friday night ó he looks like a linebacker, doesn't he?"

Holdren is also high on his offensive captain, center Andrew Lopez Aguirre: "He's one of our hardest workers in the program, and will really be a key to that O-line."

• **SANTA BARBARA HIGH:** Coach Will Gonzales said two-time all-leaguer Bryson Lloyd will be one of his few two-way players, starting at tight end and strong safety.

"Bryson has had a tremendous career so far at Santa Barbara High School, and hopes to continue it," he said.

Another Don star, Sam Lindberg, was recently given a second chance at his prep career after missing his entire senior year because of "medical issues."

"He got reinstated by CIF, and we'd been holding our breath because he's a top, top guy," Gonzales said. "He's a running back and a safety and one of the fastest guys on the team. He did a heck of a job as an all-league guy as a junior . . . Both he and Bryson are 4.0 students."

• **DOS PUEBLOS HIGH:** Coach Jeff Uyesaka said the Chargers will be using their Noodle, as well: Mikey Mendez, who was nicknamed "Killer Noodle" last year by former assistant coach Mike Hart.

"Maybe it should be the 'Super Noodle,' because he can do anything," Uyesaka said. "He's a defensive end, he's a tight end, he's a receiver."

He said senior quarterback Jack Johnson can do a lot, too, although he was perhaps confusing him with someone else: "He's pretty good at guitar and singing," he said through a smile. "He played in a secondary role to Gary Braun last year and he's just an all-around great kid, a good quarterback and we should see more of him this Friday night."

COLLEGE SOCCER

• **UCSB MEN:** College coaches must sometimes make promises to the parents of the players they recruit, but Tim Vom Steeg had to make an usual one to the father of freshman midfielder Bryan Dominguez:

"On the recruiting trip, his father said, 'The only concern I have hasn't anything to do with soccer, because my son can play, it's sending my son from Atlanta to Santa Barbara at age 16,'" recalled Vom Steeg, whose Gauchos are 3-0 this season. "And I said, 'I'll find him an older brother.'"

"So, Alfonso (Motagalvan, a senior captain) has adopted him. He plays behind him on the field, Bryan plays in front, and that's the way they go. So wherever we take them, we take them together."

• **UCSB WOMEN:** The Gaucho women, like the men, are relying heavily on freshmen. Coach Paul Stumpf counted six on the field during their 2-1 loss to top-ranked UCLA ó their only setback in five contests.

But he introduced three seniors who are making a difference: Defender Rachael Ritchey, striker Michelle Russell strikers and center-back Sami Svrcek.

"All three have brought a great deal of leadership," he said. "There's a new kind of attitude going around with our program, and I can't thank them enough for the three years we've gotten from them."

• **WESTMONT:** Coach Dave Wolf is coaching both the Warrior men and women, which often makes him unsure of "what day it is, what state I'm in, or which gender I'm coaching on any particular day."

He has a lot of players to keep track of, with 20 Warriors who see playing time on the men's side.

"I'm really, really enjoying the fresh legs that I can put out onto the field pretty regularly," he said after splitting his first four games ó three against nationally ranked teams.

The Warrior women are 1-1-1 and ranked 13th.

"They're a very, very deeply committed group that has a very rich history," Wolf said. "That's very, very important to them."

That's especially true of assistant coach Krist Kiely, who played on three of Westmont's NAIA championship teams.

• **SBCC:** Sports information director Dave Loveton noted the Vaquero men's 4-2 win last week over Santa Ana, which finished third in the state last year, and the women who are 3-0 so far after outscoring their opposition 17-2.

WATER POLO

SANTA BARBARA HIGH: The Dons are ranked sixth despite being moved up to CIF Division 1, thanks to a veteran roster of 11 seniors led by two scholar-athletes.

"They're both high on Stanford's recruit list and they're two of the top players at their position in the country," said coach Mark Walsh. "The first one is Ian Gamble, our center-defender . . . He was on the Junior national team and traveled to Brazil and won the gold medal at the Pan American Games."

"The other is Hunter Ploch, and he's one of the top goalies in the country and one of the big reasons for our success."

• **UCSB:** Coach Wolf Wigo lost his top goalkeeper and top scorer to graduation, and he's stockpiling several key players on the redshirt list for a run at the national championship in 2009.

"But that said, we still should have a very strong team," he said. "We're capable of beating any team in the nation."

BASEBALL

• **SANTA BARBARA FORESTERS:** It was tough for manager Bill Pintard to say goodbye to his National Baseball Congress championship roster. "Out of all of the years I've been coaching, I don't think I've ever had a more rewarding year than what came down this year," he said.

But he introduced one pitcher who's sticking around: Pitcher Chris Joyce.

"He got drafted by the Dodgers in the 10th round," Pintard said. "He had some decisions to make: 'Do I sign or not sign?' Well, he didn't sign, so he's going to be a UCSB Gaucho and you're going to see a lot more of Chris."

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