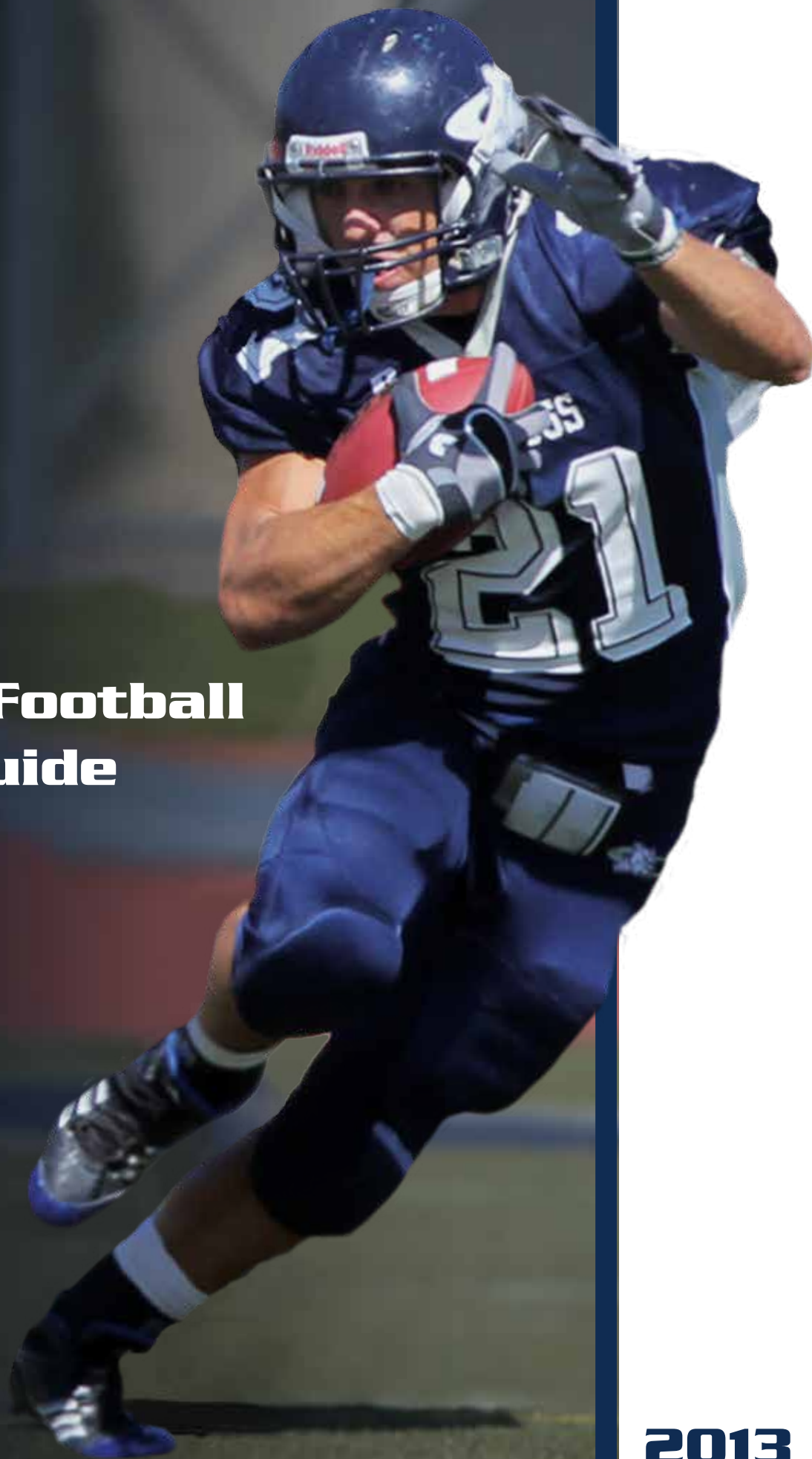




# **Bulldog Football Media Guide**



**2013**

# Schedule

Sept. 5 (Thursday)	at William Jewell College	7 p.m.
	2012 Record: 2-9	
Sept. 14	*Hastings College	7 p.m.
	2012 Record: 6-4	
	Last year's meeting: Hastings won 34-26	
Sept. 21	*at Midland University	1 p.m.
	2012 Record: 4-6	
	Last year's meeting: Concordia won 23-14	
Sept. 28	at Dakota State University	4 p.m.
	2012 Record: 2-9	
	Last year's meeting: Concordia won 28-7	
Oct. 5	*at Dordt College	1 p.m.
	2012 Record: 2-9	
	Last year's meeting: Concordia won 52-12	
Oct. 12 (Homecoming)	*Nebraska Wesleyan University	1 p.m.
	2012 Record: 6-4	
	Last year's meeting: Neb. Wesleyan won 16-6	
Oct. 19	*at Northwestern College	1 p.m.
	2012 Record: 9-3	
	Last year's meeting: Concordia won 17-16	
Oct. 26	*Doane College	1 p.m.
	2012 Record: 7-3	
	Last year's meeting: Doane won 17-7	
Nov. 2 (Parent's Day)	*Morningside College	1 p.m.
	2012 Record: 13-1	
	Last year's meeting: Morningside won 50-0	
Nov. 9	*at Dakota Wesleyan	1 p.m.
	2012 Record: 6-4	
	Last year's meeting: Dakota Wesleyan won 26-23	
Nov. 16 (Senior Day)	*Briar Cliff University	1 p.m.
	2012 Record: 1-10	
	Last year's meeting: Concordia won 45-12	



# Fact Sheet

## SPORTS INFORMATION

Jake Knabel, Sports Information Director  
Email: jacob.knabel@cune.edu  
Office: (402) 643-7392  
Cell: (563) 543-1439  
Twitter: @Jake\_Knabel

## SOCIAL MEDIA

Twitter: twitter.com/cunebulldogs  
Facebook: facebook.com/concordiabulldogs  
YouTube: youtube.com/concordiabulldogs

## GENERAL INFORMATION

School: Concordia University, Nebraska  
Location: Seward, Neb.  
Address: 800 N Columbia Ave.  
Seward, NE 68434  
Founded: 1894  
Enrollment: 2,200  
Nickname: Bulldogs  
School Colors: Navy and White  
Home Field: Bulldog Stadium  
Seating Capacity: 2,500  
Affiliation: NAIA  
Conference: Great Plains Athletic Conference

President: Dr. Brian Friedrich  
Director of Athletics: Devin Smith  
Head Athletic Trainer: Randy Baack  
Athletic Department Phone: (402) 643-7328

## PROGRAM HISTORY

First Season: 1925  
All-Time GPAC Record: 50-72  
Last Postseason Appearance: 2001  
Winningest Coach: Courtney Meyer (70-115-1)  
Most Wins, Season: 2001 (10-2)  
Undefeated Seasons: 3 (1931, 1944, 1945)  
Most Rush Yards, Season: 1,265- Jamaine Lewis (2007)  
Most Pass Yards, Season: 2,150- Jarrod Pimentel (2001)  
Most Receiving Yards, Season: 852- Eric Pralle (1990)  
Most Touchdowns, Season: 19- Bernard Arkebauer (1931)  
Most INTs, Season: 9- Andy Schwich (1979)/Steve Sirek (1970)

## FOOTBALL STAFF

Head Coach: Vance Winter (5th season)  
Alma Mater: Dakota State University  
Coaching Record: 16-27 (All at Concordia)  
Office Phone: (402) 643-7349

## ASSISTANT COACHES:

Curran White, Asst. Head Coach/Off. Coordinator/O-Line  
Patrick Daberkow - Def. Coordinator/Linebackers  
Corby Osten - Special Teams/D-Line/JV Head Coach  
James Landers - Strength & Conditioning/Receivers  
Reggie Corbin - Running Backs  
Harold Pester - Tight Ends  
Wade Halvorsen - Defensive Backs  
Courtney Meyer - Kickers/Punters

Equipment & Operations Manager: Zach Fisher  
Athletic Trainer: TJ Schmidt

## 2012 Results (5-6 overall, 4-5 GPAC - 7th)

8/25	(13) Benedictine	L, 37-45
9/8	*Dakota Wesleyan	L, 23-26
9/15	*at Hastings	L, 26-34
9/22	*Dordt	W, 52-12
9/29	at Dakota State	W, 28-7
10/6	*at Briar Cliff	W, 45-12
10/13	*(11) Northwestern	W, 17-16
10/20	*at Neb. Wesleyan	L, 6-16
10/27	*Midland	W, 23-14
11/3	*at (4) Morningside	L, 0-50
11/10	*at (20) Doane	L, 7-17





# Season Preview

## Bulldogs aim for above .500 finish in 2013

Head coach Vance Winter's Bulldogs enter the 2013 season determined to turn last season's close losses into victories. While the 2012 campaign produced the program's most wins since 2004, Concordia suffered five losses by 10 points or less as part of a tightly-grouped middle of the GPAC.

"We did have our opportunities," Winter, a fifth-year head coach, said. "That's what's kind of disappointing about last season. We were closer in a lot of ways. It was a few plays here or there in every football game. A lot of our close losses came down to turnovers and missed opportunities, whether it be dropped passes, dropped interceptions or whatever. We had an opportunity to finish that play and we didn't do it."

"That's the theme this year – finish."

Still, several great stories emerged in 2012. After dropping their first three games of the season, the Bulldogs won four in a row, including a signature 17-16 upset of No. 11 Northwestern on homecoming at Bulldog Stadium. Electrifying punt returner Derek Blessing spearheaded the win with a 50-yard punt return touchdown midway through the fourth quarter. Blessing would go on to lead the NAIA in punt return yards (388) and touchdowns (3), setting school records in both categories.

Under the direction of new offensive coordinator Curran White, Concordia's pistol spread attack allowed for an improvement from 16.7 points and 249.5 yards per game in 2011 to 24.0 points and 306.5 yards per contest in 2012. The Bulldogs found a consistent playmaking threat with Von Thomas taking over under center as a sophomore last season.



Kyle Rakow

team three bona fide stars. The key will be to find depth around the standouts. Winter believes the depth of the program is in as good a shape as it's been during his tenure, especially with an incoming recruiting class well north of 50 names providing fortification.

"I feel like our talent level has improved," Winter said. "I feel like we've always had good players, but depth has always been an issue. A few key injuries here or there have cost us big time. I feel like we're developing more and more depth. We have guys who have worked their way up through program in a three or four year period that have continued to get better year after year, and that helps your talent level."



Darnell Woods

Miami, Fla., led the team in both passing (1,840) and rushing yards (460) as a premier dual threat. Now with his mastery of the offense, and an emphasis placed upon putting more speed around Thomas, the unit could see another significant bump in production in 2013.

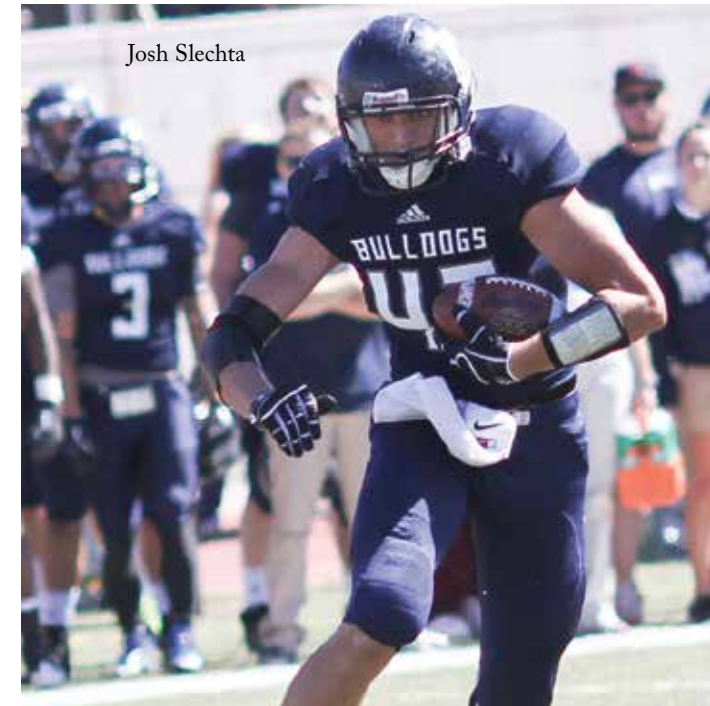
"I am 100 times more familiar with the offense so I'm a lot more comfortable," Thomas said.

"We're probably going to see an even greater leap than last year, just for the simple fact that we're more comfortable in our offense now."

The biggest question marks offensively come at running back and receiver – units that both lose their top two yardage producers from last season. After unexpected losses to the backfield after the spring, senior Mitch Reed (32 rushes, 177 yards) is left as the most experienced ball carrier. That leaves plenty of opportunity for a number of incoming freshmen backs.

While second team all-conference receiver Colten Quinabo (47 catches, 567 yards) has graduated, the Bulldogs feel good about the duo of Jeff Balz (21 catches, 238 yards) and Derek Klaus (10 catches, 99 yards) at the position. In addition, Winter raves about sophomore tight end Josh Slechta (14 catches, 193 yards), who could morph into Thomas' most reliable target this season.

# Season Preview



Josh Slechta

"I feel like that's my core group of receivers so I'm very comfortable with them," Thomas said. "We've been through thick and thin. I know if I throw the ball up in the air they will go up and get it to help out the team the best they can."

Up front, Concordia must replace its best offensive lineman in left guard Adam Faulstich, a 2012 second team all-conference choice. The good news is that junior right guard Josh Powell and senior center Dylan Klassen are back to form a solid interior. Winter also liked what he saw this spring from junior guard Glennon Manninger and senior tackle Mitchell Cherney.

While the offense figures to make continued strides, the defense has fewer question marks. Fourth-year coordinator Patrick Daberkow will trot out a unit with experience at every position group, particularly in a loaded secondary.

Blessing made a smooth transition from running back to corner last season, leading the team in tackles (75), pass breakups (6) and forced fumbles (3). He is likely to team with junior Landon Oelke at the two corner spots this season. Oelke brings the least amount of starting experience to the secondary group, but he was a special teams regular who made 11 stops last season.

Woods became the star of the defense last season after switching from corner to safety early on. The ball-hawk from Phoenix, Ariz., picked off five passes, and like Blessing, is dangerous with the ball in his hands. He returned one pick for a touchdown and totaled 176 interception return yards. He will be flanked by free safety Tait Sibbel, who ended up starting 10 games while more than holding his own as a true freshman. Says Winter, "Our defense kind of took off after those moves."

"We've got a lot of guys returning back," Woods said. "As many core guys as we've got coming back, we feel very connected. It builds our chemistry. We'll be very solid."

Despite losing key contributors Kyle Little and Tom Malander at the linebacker position, Concordia is well-stocked with backers that fit the team's 3-4 scheme. Dylan Heithoff (71 tackles, 4 sacks) and Langston Jones (73 tackles) provide senior leadership and stability along with Drew Baxter, a converted safety. Winter called Baxter the team's defensive MVP of the spring. Another senior, Colton Schneider, is primed for a starting job after serving as a special teams ace the past couple years.

The defensive line loses second team all-conference choice Michael Voelker but counters with holdovers in senior Cody Hawk (45 tackles) and juniors Alex Melius (24 tackles) and Kyle Rakow (15 tackles). This gives the Bulldogs plenty of seasoned veterans at the position.

Special teams, coordinated by Corby Osten, figure to be a strength again in 2013. Kickers Adam Meirose and Zach Moje will compete to take the place of departed All-American Kenny Zoeller (school record 15 made field goals in 2012). Senior Joe Marshall comes back for his third season as the team's punter while the return units are strong with Blessing.

Considering the sum of these parts, the Bulldogs will aim for the program's first above .500 season since sharing the conference crown in 2001. The key will be to more consistently bottle up the type of performance that allowed Concordia to shock Northwestern last season.

"We showed glimpses of it last year," Winter said. "The thing we're looking for this year is consistency week in and week out. We know what we can be. We know how we can play. We did it in spurts. We played at a high level at times. I want us to really on a consistent week-by-week basis, to show that talent level and show our improvement."

Added Woods, "We're going to shoot for the top. We want to be in the top two or three contenders with teams like Northwestern, Morningside and Doane. It's going to be a battle to the top. We're ready for it." •



Mitch Reed



# Key Returners

Starters Returning - Offense: 7; Defense: 8; Special Teams: 3

Key Losses: RB Victor Brown, OL Adam Faulstich, LB Kyle Little, LB Tom Malander,

WR Colten Quinabo, DL Michael Voelker, K Kenny Zoeller

## Offense



Jeff Balz • WR • Sr.  
5-11 • 190 • Elkhorn, Neb.  
2012: 21 catches, 238 yards, 2 TDs.



Dylan Klassen • OL • Sr.  
6-1 • 265 • Humphrey, Neb.  
2012: Honorable Mention All-GPAC.



Josh Powell • OL • Jr.  
6-0 • 270 • Kennesaw, Neb.  
2012: Honorable Mention All-GPAC.



Mitch Reed • RB • Sr.  
5-10 • 200 • Genoa, Neb.  
2012: 32 carries, 177 yards, 1 TD.



Josh Slechta • TE • So.  
6-4 • 235 • Kennard, Neb.  
2012: 14 catches, 193 yards, 1 TD.



Von Thomas • QB • Jr.  
6-2 • 190 • Miami, Fla.  
2012: Honorable Mention All-GPAC; 1,840 pass yards, 14-17 TD-INT ratio, 50% comp., 460 rush yards, 6 rush TDs.

## Defense



Drew Baxter • OLB • Sr.  
5-10 • 205 • Rockwall, Texas  
2012: Limited to one game due to injury.



Derek Blessing • CB • Sr.  
5-10 • 195 • Ogallala, Neb.  
2012: 1st Team All-GPAC; BSN 1st Team All-America PR, led NAIA with 388 PR yards & 3 PR TDs, led team with 75 tkls, 6 PBUs, 3 FFs.



Dylan Heithoff • LB/DE • Sr.  
6-4 • 260 • Elgin, Neb.  
2012: 2nd Team All-GPAC; 71 tackles (9.5 for loss), led team with 4.0 sacks.



Langston Jones • LB • Sr.  
6-2 • 235 • Loveland, Colo.  
2012: Honorable Mention All-GPAC; 73 tackles (6.5 for loss), 1 INT, 2 FR, 2 blocked kicks.



Tait Sibbel • S • So.  
6-2 • 200 • O'Neill, Neb.  
2012: Honorable Mention All-GPAC; 67 tackles, 1 INT, 2 FR, 3 PBUs.



Darnell Woods • S • Sr.  
6-4 • 205 • Phoenix, Ariz.  
2012: 1st Team All-GPAC; led team with 5 INTs, added 58 tackles, 1 TD; moved to SS after starting 1st game at CB.

# Coaches

## VANCE WINTER, Head Coach



Vance Winter enters his fifth year as head football coach at Concordia University in 2013. He was named head coach in December of 2008. He owns a career record of 16-27 overall and 13-25 in GPAC action in his four seasons as head coach of the Bulldogs.

Winter reached a career high with five wins in 2012 as Concordia improved vastly from the previous season. The high point of the campaign came on Oct. 13 when the Bulldogs upset then No. 11 Northwestern 17-16 in front of the homecoming crowd at Bulldog Stadium. Between Sept. 22 and Oct. 13, Winter guided Concordia to four-straight wins.

Winter is the ninth head coach in the university's 87-year football history. He was promoted from within, having served previously on the Bulldog staff for two years as the defensive coordinator and two years as the linebackers' coach.

During his coaching career, Winter has made stops at Peru State College (defensive coordinator, linebackers 2004-05), Wayne State College (linebackers 2002-04), and Dakota State University (running backs 2000-01).

Winter was a four-year letter winner while playing middle linebacker for Dakota State University. A team captain in 1999, Winter was a two-time honorable mention all-conference linebacker for the Trojans and the team's leading tackler in 1998 and 1999.

Winter earned a bachelor's degree in physical education from Dakota State University in 2002 and a master's degree in sport management from Wayne State in 2004. Winter lives in Seward, Neb., with his wife Tanya, son Jackson and daughter Clara.



## Curran White, Assistant Head Coach/Offensive Coordinator

Curran White began his first season as the Bulldogs' assistant head coach/offensive coordinator in April 2012.

Under White's direction, the offense improved from an average of 16.7 points per game and 249.5 yards per game in 2011 to 24.0 points and 306.5 yards per contest in 2012.

The Bulldogs also saw the emergence of playmaking quarterback Von Thomas, who piled up 2,300 total yards and 20 total touchdowns in White's spread attack.

White came to Concordia after spending the previous six seasons as the offensive line coach/run game coordinator at Missouri Valley College (MVC). Prior to that, coach White spent four seasons at Wayne State College, first as graduate assistant (2001-02), then as an assistant coach (2003-05).

In addition to coach White's on-field responsibilities at MVC, he served as the Vikings recruiting coordinator. During his tenure with MVC, White helped lead the Vikings to a combined 55-14 record and four NAIA Championships Series berths. In 2011, coach White's rushing attack averaged 224 yards per game.



## Patrick Daberkow, Defensive Coordinator & Linebackers

Patrick Daberkow enters his seventh year with the Bulldogs in 2012. He spent three seasons as the secondary coach and is now in his fourth year as defensive coordinator for the Bulldogs in 2013. Daberkow continues to work with the defensive backs.

The Bulldog defense has continued to improve each season under the direction of Coach Daberkow. In 2012, the Concordia defense limited opponents to 22.6 points per game (33rd in the NAIA) and a respectable 356.3 yards per game while forcing 23 turnovers on the season.

Concordia also enjoyed a solid season defensively in 2011, ranking 29th in the NAIA in total defense (309.4 yards per game), while holding opponents to only 116.5 rush yards per game (27th nationally). Both linebacker Jerrod Fleming and defensive back Benjamin Klein earned GPAC First Team All-Conference honors.



## Corby Osten - Special Teams/Defensive Line/JV Head Coach

Corby Osten enters his sixth season as an assistant coach with the Concordia University football program in 2013. Osten is a native of Columbus, Neb.

Osten led a Concordia special teams unit that ranked among the nation's best in 2012. The Bulldogs' Derek Blessing led the NAIA with 388 punt return yards and three punt return touchdowns and kicker Kenny Zoeller racked up the second most field goals nationally with 15. As a team, Concordia ranked fourth in the NAIA in average yards per punt return (16.6) and 11th in average yards per kick return (22.9).

As a player, Osten was a three-year letter winner on the Bulldog football team. Osten helped the Bulldogs to the 2001 GPAC Championship.



# Roster

1	Sandy Fisher	WR/P	6'0	185
1	Mark Bender	DB	6'0	175
2	Nakemm Evans	OLB	6'2	245
2	Mitchell Walkup	K	6'0	190
3	Matt Keener	DB	5'9	180
3	Devon Samuels	WR	5'11	185
4	Hunter King	WR	5'8	160
4	John Lee	DB	6'0	185
5	Jeff Balz	WR	5'11	195
5	Adam Meirose	K	5'10	190
6	Michael Hedlund	QB	6'0	185
6	Ryan Moraniec	WR	6'0	185
7	Deshawn Eure	WR	5'9	180
7	Zach Moje	K	5'10	165
8	Eddie Narvaez	DB	5'10	185
9	Cameron Christiansen	QB	6'3	200
9	Darnell Woods	DB	6'4	210
10	Bruce Hicks	DB	5'11	170
10	Von Thomas	QB	6'2	190
11	Ryan Coffey	DB	6'0	190
11	TJ Austin	QB	6'0	210
12	Justin Haun	FB	6'0	215
13	Brandon Namuth	WR	6'1	195
14	Chase Murman	QB	6'3	205
14	Nathan Scoggins	WR	6'0	175
16	Garrett Folchert	QB	5'11	190
17	Jonathan Foster	FB	6'1	215
18	James Ferguson	WR	5'9	190
19	Josh Brown	TE	6'4	215
20	Mitch Reed	RB	5'10	200
21	Derek Blessing	DB	5'10	195
22	Jake Gieselman	OLB	5'8	205
23	Demarques Saulberry	RB	5'10	205
23	Spencer Zysset	DB	5'9	170
24	Chavarius Curry-Felix	WR	6'1	200
25	Landon Oelke	DB	6'0	190
26	Ricky Jones	DB	5'10	185
27	Tyler Michael	DB	6'4	190
28	Bryce Collins	RB	5'9	205
29	Christopher Agee	OLB	6'2	210
29	Tait Sibbel	DB	6'2	205
30	Collin Christiansen	DE	6'2	225
30	Luke Glenn	RB	5'9	185
31	Connor Kayton	DB	5'11	190
31	Jerad Leifeld	FB	5'10	220
32	Taylor Dudley	P	6'0	180
33	Drew Baxter	OLB	6'0	210
33	Landon Stouffer	RB	5'11	195
34	Trey Barnes	RB	6'1	215
34	Brandon Luetchens	WR	6'3	195
35	Devin Elley	FB	5'11	220
36	Joseph Marshall	P	6'0	195
37	Clay Mauro	LB	6'1	220
38	Michael Winters	DB	5'11	185
39	Christopher Hendricks	DB	5'9	165
40	Tyler Broekemeier	OLB	5'11	210
41	Michael Carroll	LB	5'10	215
42	Langston Jones	LB	6'2	225
43	Brandon Groseth	FB	6'1	220
44	Joseph Scott	LB	5'10	215
45	Geoff Kleinschmit	DB	6'1	205
45	Patrick Skwara	LB	6'0	205
46	Brennan Talcott	OLB	6'1	205
47	Guillame Cerfontaine	DB	5'9	155
47	Joshua Slechta	TE	6'5	250

So.	Lakewood, Colo.
Fr.	Humphrey, Neb.
Jr.	Lincoln, Neb.
Jr.	York, Neb.
Fr.	El Segundo, Calif.
Fr.	Los Angeles, Calif.
Fr.	Kearney, Neb.
Sr.	Milpitas, Calif.
Sr.	Elkhorn, Neb.
So.	Lincoln, Neb.
Fr.	O'Neill, Neb.
Fr.	San Antonio, Texas
Jr.	Vallejo, Calif.
So.	Pilger, Neb.
Fr.	Panorama City, Calif.
Fr.	Palmer, Ark.
Sr.	Tolleson, Ariz.
Fr.	Los Angeles, Calif.
Jr.	Miami, Fla.
Sr.	Columbus, Neb.
Fr.	Angleton, Texas
So.	St. Louis, Mo.
So.	Lewellen, Neb.
RS-Fr.	Glenvil, Neb.
Fr.	Prosper, Texas
So.	Ogallala, Neb.
Fr.	Concordia, Mo.
Sr.	Columbus, Neb.
Sr.	Aurora, Colo.
Sr.	Genoa, Neb.
Sr.	Ogallala, Neb.
Sr.	Malcolm, Neb.
Fr.	Beaumont, Texas
Sr.	Hastings, Neb.
Fr.	Columbia, S.C.
Jr.	Dalhart, Texas
Jr.	Gilroy, Calif.
Fr.	Whittier, Calif.
Fr.	Boerne, Texas
Fr.	Los Angeles, Calif.
So.	O'Neill, Neb.
Jr.	Palmer, Ark.
Fr.	Shelton, Neb.
Fr.	Palisade, Neb.
RS-Fr.	Humphrey, Neb.
So.	Longmount, Colo.
Jr.	Rockwall, Texas
Fr.	David City, Neb.
Fr.	Seward, Neb.
Fr.	Murdock, Neb.
Jr.	Hastings, Neb.
Sr.	Malcolm, Neb.
So.	Ely, Nev.
Fr.	Perris, Calif.
Fr.	Cedar Park, Texas
Sr.	Elk Point, S.D.
Jr.	Aliso Viejo, Calif.
Sr.	Loveland, Colo.
Fr.	North Platte, Neb.
Fr.	Highland, Calif.
Jr.	Crofton, Neb.
Fr.	Boerne, Texas
Jr.	Phoenix, Ariz.
Fr.	Vilvoorde, Belgium
So.	Kennard, Neb.

48	Tobias Martin
49	Seth Fitzke
50	Denzel Lewis
50	Joshua Powell
51	Jadon Schneider
52	Deiondre Lewis
53	Adam Aschenbrenner
54	Lane Johnson
54	Colton Schneider
55	Colin Elley
56	Dylan Heithoff
57	Travis Newgard
59	Cody Hawk
60	Seth Schlenger
60	Corey Washington
61	Trey Anderson
61	Dylan Pierquin
62	Hallick Lehmann
63	Dylan Klassen
64	Coleman James
65	Keddrick Fuselier
66	Andrew Crist
66	Nolan Schroeder
67	Austin Faulstich
67	Taylor Wohlers
68	Glennon Manninger
69	Justin Kathman
70	Sawyer Birtell
71	Michael Fox
71	Adam Lueders
72	Theo Sheridan
73	Jimmie Bunting
74	Brian Gorman
75	Ben Balduc
76	Darvin Woods
76	Christopher Weitman
77	Philipp Mancuso
78	Aaron Watson
79	Mitchell Cherney
79	Jose Garcia
80	Devin Gilbert
80	Mitch Kreifels
81	Riley Herren
82	Joel Newton
83	Brian Serra
84	Paxton Folkerts
85	Brian De Caluwe
85	Jordan Larrington
86	Demarcus Hollier
87	Derek Klaus
88	Cody Eitzmann
89	Clinton Gardels
91	Kinser Gergen
91	Michael Grau
92	Dylan Helberg
93	Ronald Jackson
95	Michael Winckler
96	Michael Gill
97	Kyle Rakow
98	Alex Melius
99	Casey Johnson
99	Caleb Wehling
RS	Dakota Coon
RS	Alonzo Garcia
RS	Trent Good
RS	Davon Hodge
RS	Demetrius Hood
RS	Brett James
RS	Roland Youngling

OLB	6'0	205
TE	6'4	230
LB	6'0	210
OL	6'0	270
LB	6'1	205
OLB	6'0	225
OL	6'1	265
OL	5'10	250
LB	6'3	230
DL	5'10	245
OLB	6'4	265
LB	6'1	200
DL	6'2	265
LS	6'0	285
OL	6'0	240
OL	6'0	230
LB	6'0	215
OL	6'4	245
OL	6'1	270
OL	6'2	235
OL	6'2	285
OL	6'1	230
DL	6'3	230
OL	5'11	250
DL	5'10	260
Jr.	6'2	280
OL	6'1	280
OL	6'6	300
DB	6'0	190
OL	6'6	290
OL	6'1	260
OL	6'3	255
OL	6'0	245
OL	6'3	290
OL	6'4	295
DB	6'0	150
OL	6'2	270
OL	6'4	285
OL	6'7	310
DL	6'1	215
WR	6'1	170
WR	6'5	200
WR	6'0	175
TE	6'3	235
WR	6'2	195
TE	6'4	215
OLB	6'2	210
TE	6'3	220
WR	5'10	165
WR	6'0	200
WR	5'10	155
TE	6'4	220
OLB	6'0	200
DL	6'0	230
TE	6'1	210
DL	5'10	285
DL	6'0	250
DL	6'0	265
DL	6'3	250
DL	6'3	245
DL	6'1	275
DB	5'11	175
LB	5'10	190
DB	5'10	200
WR	5'8	200
QB	5'10	185
WR	6'1	195
WR	5'8	165
OLB	6'0	190

Jr.	Wahoo, Neb.
Fr.	Seward, Neb.
Fr.	Lancaster, Texas
Jr.	Kennesaw, Neb.
So.	Millarville, AB Canada
Fr.	Spring, Texas
Jr.	Malcolm, Neb.
Fr.	Stilwell, Okla.
Sr.	Millarville, AB Canada
Jr.	Hastings, Neb.
Sr.	Elgin, Neb.
Fr.	Omaha, Neb.
Sr.	Dodge, Neb.
So.	Colorado Springs, Colo.
Fr.	Houston, Texas
Fr.	Lincoln, Neb.
Fr.	Vilvoorde, Belgium
Fr.	Albion, Neb.
Sr.	Humphrey, Neb.
Fr.	Ponder, Texas
Fr.	Humble, Texas
So.	Springfield, Mo.
Fr.	Davenport, Neb.
Jr.	Concordia, Mo.
Fr.	Crawford, Neb.
Jr.	Omaha, Neb.
Jr.	Juniata, Neb.
RS-Fr.	Madison, Neb.
Fr.	Nixa, Mo.
Sr.	Johnson, Neb.
So.	Long Beach, Calif.
Sr.	Brock, Neb.
So.	Colorado Springs, Colo.
So.	Roanoke, Texas
So.	Phoenix, Ariz.
Fr.	Yerington, Nev.
Fr.	Nolanville, Texas
Fr.	Mims, Fla.
Sr.	Burnsville, Minn.
Fr.	Ogallala, Neb.
Fr.	Angleton, Texas
Jr.	Lincoln, Neb.
So.	Lone Tree, Colo.
Sr.	Rockford, Ill.
Jr.	Monterey, Calif.
Fr.	Milford, Neb.
Fr.	Dilbeek, Belgium
Sr.	Elm Creek, Neb.
Fr.	Houston, Texas
Sr.	Beatrice, Neb.
Jr.	Deshler, Neb.
So.	Wilcox, Neb.
Fr.	Geneva, Neb.
So.	Lawton, Iowa
Sr.	McCook, Neb.
Fr.	Houston, Texas
Fr.	Fremont, Neb.
So.	Ogallala, Neb.
Jr.	Milford, Neb.
Jr.	Lincoln, Neb.
Fr.	Battle Creek, Neb.
Fr.	Liberal, Kan.
So.	North Platte, Neb.
Fr.	El Paso, Texas
So.	Gothenburg, Neb.
So.	Lancaster, Texas
Fr.	Leander, Texas
Fr.	Kearney, Neb.
Jr.	Tucson, Ariz.





# Season in Photos

- 1** The Bulldogs celebrate after a missed field goal in the final minute preserved a 17-16 upset of No. 11 Northwestern on Oct. 13.
- 2** Quarterback Von Thomas established himself as a threat with both his arm and legs in 2012. He totaled 2,300 yards and 20 touchdowns.
- 3** Colton Schneider's blocked punt keyed a 23-14 victory over Midland on Oct. 27, giving Concordia its fifth win in six games. Between Sept. 22 and Oct. 13, the Bulldogs won four-straight contests.
- 4** Kicker Kenny Zoeller set a school record with 15 made field goals in a season and was named an AFCA NAIA All-American.
- 5** Derek Blessing burst onto the scene to become the NAIA's top punt returner in 2012. He led the nation in punt return yards (388) and touchdowns (3).
- 6** Keeping with tradition, the Bulldogs celebrated each home victory in 2012 by ringing the bell at Bulldog Stadium.



# 2012 Honors

## DEREK BLESSING

- First Team All-GPAC (PR)
- Honorable Mention All-GPAC (KR)
- GPAC Special Teams POW - Sept. 24, Oct. 15
- Beyond Sports Network First Team All-America (PR)
- *Omaha World-Herald* All-Nebraska NAIA

## ALEX CALLAN

- Daktronics-NAIA Scholar-Athlete

## MITCHELL CHERNEY

- Capital One Academic All-District 6 of College Division (CoSIDA)
- Daktronics-NAIA Scholar-Athlete

## BOBY CODY

- Daktronics-NAIA Scholar-Athlete

## ADAM FAULSTICH

- Second Team All-GPAC
- *Omaha World-Herald* All-Nebraska NAIA

## DYLAN HEITHOFF

- Second Team All-GPAC
- *Omaha World-Herald* All-Nebraska NAIA

## LANGSTON JONES

- Honorable Mention All-GPAC

## DYLAN KLASSEN

- Honorable Mention All-GPAC

## KYLE LITTLE

- Honorable Mention All-GPAC
- *Omaha World-Herald* All-Nebraska Honorable Mention NAIA

## TOM MALANDER

- Honorable Mention All-GPAC
- Daktronics-NAIA Scholar-Athlete

## JOSH POWELL

- Honorable Mention All-GPAC

## COLTEN QUINABO

- Second Team All-GPAC
- *Omaha World-Herald* All-Nebraska Honorable Mention NAIA

## BRADLEY SCHICK

- Daktronics-NAIA Scholar-Athlete

## TAIT SIBBEL

- Honorable Mention All-GPAC

## VON THOMAS

- Honorable Mention All-GPAC
- *Omaha World-Herald* All-Nebraska Honorable Mention NAIA

## MICHAEL VOELKER

- Second Team All-GPAC
- *Omaha World-Herald* All-Nebraska NAIA

## DARNELL WOODS

- First Team All-GPAC
- *Omaha World-Herald* All-Nebraska NAIA

## KENNY ZOELLER

- AFCA NAIA Coaches' First Team All-America
- First Team All-GPAC
- Beyond Sports Network Third Team All-America
- *Omaha World-Herald* All-Nebraska NAIA
- National Bowl Game participant

## SPENCER ZYSSET

- Daktronics-NAIA Scholar-Athlete

## 2013 Preseason Honors

- Beyond Sports Network All-America:  
 Derek Blessing - 1st team (PR)  
 Darnell Woods - Honorable Mention





# Derek Blessing:

By Jake Knabel, Sports Information Director

Derek Blessing had not returned a punt since his sophomore year as a prep at Ogallala High School in western Nebraska. So when head coach Vance Winter approached the junior before practice last spring about taking over the hazardous role as a returner, Blessing hesitated.

"Kickoff's great, but punt returns I'm a little nervous about," Blessing told his coach. "In that first punt return against Benedictine, I can honestly say that I was pretty scared back there."

Ironically, it would be opposing special teams units that appeared nervous when No. 21 trotted deep to receive punts. By the sixth game of the season, Briar Cliff didn't seem to want any part of Blessing, repeatedly punting out of bounds for an average of 26.8 yards.

Blessing's reputation as a return threat started in the opening game of the season. He raced 71 yards for a punt return touchdown late in the fourth quarter to give the Bulldogs a chance against then-No. 13 Benedictine on Aug. 25. The once-reluctant Blessing went on to return punts for touchdowns of 56 yards versus Dordt on Sept. 22 and 50 yards in the upset of then-No. 11 Northwestern on Oct. 13.

So, what's it like to break away and return a punt to the house?

"It's a feeling that I had never actually had in football before," Blessing said. "I've scored before, I've had interceptions before, I've had success in other places before, but returning a punt for a touchdown is a special feeling. When you get out in that open field and look and see no guys, or one or two guys in front of you and know that you have a chance, you get excited."



Among all collegiate punt returners in the NAIA and at all levels of the NCAA, only NCAA Division III Mount Union's (Ohio) Chris Denton, who had four punt returns for touchdowns, took more punts to paydirt than Blessing. Blessing led the NAIA with 388 punt return yards on 21 attempts, giving him an eye-popping average of 18.5 yards per return.

Blessing's success even made it into an opposing head coach's game plan. "We held Derek Blessing to just 56 yards on punt and kick returns," Nebraska Wesleyan head coach Brian Keller told the Lincoln Journal Star after the game. "That was a very big thing for us, because we were not going to let him beat us."

Blessing, a student of the game with aspirations of becoming a football coach and teacher, understands how to be patient, how to set up blocks and also the need to get north-south quickly. Combine these traits with his solid speed and tenacity with the football and you get the type of player that forces opponents to spend extra time prepping to stop him.

# A Man of Many Happy Returns

**Blessing: 2012 NAIA national leader in punt return yards (388) and punt return touchdowns (3).**

"Punt returning is not an easy thing to do," Concordia head football coach Vance Winter said. "You have to have the right personality. Derek is fearless. He maybe had some hesitancy early on in the year, but I like the way he attacked things. He has a mindset of just going out and making a play. He's a huge weapon for us."

Winter's statement was underscored in the season's signature victory versus Northwestern on homecoming. Behind Blessing, Concordia piled up 175 return yards compared to just seven for the Red Raiders. Special teams coordinator Corby Osten simply wanted someone who would reliably secure punts.

He has gotten that and a whole lot more from Blessing.

"Vision," Osten replied when asked what attributes make Blessing a standout returner. "He sees the field. He's physical and breaks a lot of arm tackles. You really have to square him up to tackle him."



"In the return against Northwestern he cut back across the field. He sees the field so well, he took an angle to help set up the blocks that allowed him to take it to the end zone."

The transition to punt returner was not the only upheaval for Blessing during his career as a Bulldog. The coaching staff had also approached the former First Team All-State Nebraska high school star about a move from running back to cornerback. Blessing liked playing running back, but in his characteristic unselfish manner he agreed to make the change.

"He's the epitome of an unselfish teammate," Winter said. "He's always putting team goals above individual goals. When we asked him to move he really saw how it was going to benefit the team."

"Derek is a class act all the way. He's a great student, a great citizen off the field and just a really intense and tough football player."

The two-time GPAC Special Teams Player of the Week has showcased a flair for making game-turning plays since high school. Blessing piled up 15 touchdowns as a senior and 15 interceptions for his career at Ogallala. With these credentials, Blessing had no shortage of potential college suitors. But one school quickly emerged above the rest.

"I came here, walked through the door and Coach Winter shook my hand. He knew me by name already."

"I felt it was a great place to go. It was definitely something that was in God's plans for me, because I hadn't considered it [before the visit]. All of the sudden here it was on the table and I just fell in love with it."

Outside of football, the secondary education major spends plenty of time studying and hanging out with friends. "Just the normal stuff," Blessing says.

It's on the football field that Blessing is far from normal. Opposing GPAC special teams units beware. •

*This feature first appeared in the winter edition of the Broadcaster, the university magazine of Concordia.*



2012 Statistics

TEAM STATISTICS	CNC	OPP
SCORING	264	249
--Points Per Game	24	22.6
FIRST DOWNS	196	213
--Rushing	80	92
--Passing	94	107
--Penalty 22 14	22	14
NET RUSHING YARDAGE	1490	1714
--Yards Gained Rushing	1729	1972
--Yards Lost Rushing	239	258
--Rushing Attempts	401	446
--Average Per Rush	3.7	3.8
--Average Per Game	135.5	155.8
--TDs Rushing	12	19
NET PASSING YARDAGE	1881	2222
--Att/Comp/Int	339/169/18	340/197/14
--Average Per Pass	5.5	6.5
--Average Per Catch	11.1	11.3
--Average Per Game	171.0	202.0
--TDs Passing	15	14
TOTAL NET OFFENSE	3371	3936
--Total Plays	740	786
--Average Per Play	4.6	5.0
--Average Per Game	306.5	357.8
KICK RETURNS: NO./YARDS	44/1009	32/482
PUNTS RETURNS: NO./YARDS	25/416	14/204
INTS RETURNS: NO./YARDS	14/321	18/66
KICK RETURN AVERAGE	22.9	15.1
PUNT RETURN AVERAGE	16.6	14.6
INT RETURN AVERAGE	22.9	3.7
FUMBLES/LOST	13/7	22/10
PUNTS/YARDS	57/2031	56/2112
--Average Per Punt	35.6	37.7
--Net Punt Average	32.1	30.3
KICKOFFS/YARDS	53/2552	53/3050
--Average Per Kick	48.2	57.5
--Touchback	7	5
PENALTIES/YARDS	67/613	76/664
--Average Per Game	55.7	60.4
TIME OF POSSESSION/GAME	28:50	30:57
3RD DOWN CONVERSIONS	62/164	64/165
--3rd Down Pct.	37.8%	38.8%
4RD DOWN CONVERSIONS	8/17	9/19
--4th Down Pct.	47.1%	47.4%

RUSHING	G	Att	Yds	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G			
Mitch Reed	4	32	177	5.5	1	39	44.3			
Von Thomas	11	121	460	3.8	6	36	41.8			
Aaron Gillory	11	118	408	3.5	1	28	37.1			
Victor Brown	10	82	323	3.9	3	23	32.3			
PASSING	G	Effic	Att	Comp	Int	%	Yds	TD	Long	Avg/G
Von Thomas	11	100.2	331	165	17	50.0	1840	14	72	167.3
Justin Haun	4	153.5	7	4	0	57.0	41	1	17	10.3
RECEIVING	G	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long	Avg/G			
Colten Quinabo	10	47	567	12.1	4	72	56.7			
Noah Smith	10	28	359	12.8	3	42	35.9			
Jeff Balz	9	21	238	11.3	2	38	26.4			
Josh Slechta	9	14	193	13.8	1	30	21.4			
Derek Klaus	9	10	99	9.9	0	19	11.0			
Will Cox	8	10	39	3.9	2	11	4.9			
Jimmie Bunting	7	9	73	8.1	0	12	10.4			
Victor Brown	10	7	76	10.9	1	59	7.6			
Deleon Dallas	7	7	64	9.1	0	13	9.1			
Zack Warner	6	5	61	12.2	1	15	10.2			
Jordan Larrington	4	5	37	7.4	1	12	9.3			
FIELD GOALS	FGs	Long	PATs	Points						
Kenny Zoeller	15-20	42	27-28	72						
INTERCEPTIONS	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long					
Darnell Woods	5	176	35.2	1	60					
Derek Blessing	2	52	26	0	52					
Trey Haggerty	2	8	4	0	8					
Langston Jones	1	34	34	0	34					
Tom Malander	1	20	20.0	0	16					
Kyle Little	1	18	18.0	0	18					
Tait Sibbel	1	13	13.0	0	13					
Ryan Coffey	1	0	0.0	0	0					
PUNTING	No.	Yds	Avg	Long	TB	FC	I20	Blkd		
Joe Marshall	56	2030	36.3	61	3	17	15	1		
PUNT RETURNS	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long					
Derek Blessing	21	388	18.5	3	71					
KICK RETURNS	No.	Yds	Avg	TD	Long					
Noah Smith	21	446	21.2	0	46					
Derek Blessing	20	507	25.4	0	60					

Defensive Statistics

Tackles							Fumbles					
No.	Name	G	UT	AT	Total	TFL/Yds	Sacks/Yds	INT/Yds	PBU	Rec/Yds	FF	Blkd kicks
21	Derek Blessing	11	51	24	75	3.5/7.0	0	2/52	6	0/0	3	0
42	Langston Jones	10	34	39	73	6.5/16.0	1.0/9.0	1/34	1	2/0	0	2
52	Kyle Little	11	38	34	72	2.0/4.0	1.0/2.0	1/18	6	0/0	0	0
56	Dylan Heithoff	11	35	36	71	9.5/56.0	4.0/19.0	0/0	0	1/0	1	1
29	Tait Sibbel	11	38	29	67	2.0/7.0	0	1/13	3	2/11	0	0
57	Michael Voelker	11	34	29	63	8.5/70.0	2.0/15.0	0/0	4	0/0	0	0
9	Darnell Woods	11	39	19	58	2.5/5.0	0	5/176	4	0/0	0	0
39	Tom Malander	11	27	25	52	1.5/4.0	0	1/20	1	0/0	2	0
59	Cody Hawk	11	22	23	45	1.0/0.0	0	0/0	0	1/0	0	0
11	Ryan Coffey	9	21	13	34	0	0	1/0	0	1/0	0	0
2	Nakemm Evans	8	7	18	25	1.0/3.0	0	0/0	0	0/0	0	0
98	Alex Melius	10	8	16	24	1.5/3.0	1.5/3.0	0/0	0	1/0	0	0
97	Kyle Rakow	9	4	11	15	1.0/2.0	0	0/0	2	0/0	0	0
10	Trey Haggerty	8	13	1	14	1.0/4.0	0	2/8	5	0/0	1	0
54	Colton Schneider	5	6	7	13	0	0	0/0	0	0/0	0	1
96	Michael Gill	5	3	10	13	1.0/8.0	1.0/8.0	0/0	0	0/0	0	0
7	Avery Oliver	6	7	5	12	5.5/27.0	3.5/20.0	0/0	0	0/0	1	0
25	Landon Oelke	7	8	3	11	0	0	0/0	0	0/0	0	0



Kenny Zoeller





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