



# Touchdown Club

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Official MSU Football Booster Club



Vol. 3/Issue 1

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE MSU FOOTBALL BOOSTER CLUB

## TODD HOFFNER NAMED HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

Minnesota State has announced that Todd Hoffner has been named head football coach.

In doing so, the University of South Dakota offensive coordinator and former head coach at Wisconsin-Eau Claire becomes the 14th head coach in the history of the Minnesota State football program.



TODD HOFFNER NAMED HEAD FOOTBALL COACH

“We are very excited to have Coach Hoffner join us as the new head coach of our football program.” said Kevin Buisman, MSU Director of Athletics. “Our search committee helped me develop a profile of the key characteristics and attributes we were seeking, as we worked very hard to narrow our choice from amongst the more than 80 applicants for the position. In selecting Coach Hoffner, I am pleased to say that we believe Todd’s experiences, skills, and abilities make him an outstanding fit for the current needs of the program. As we begin our transition to the Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference next season, I am confident that MSU football is poised to achieve a high level of success under Todd’s direction and leadership.”

“I want to thank the search committee and others who were a part of this process for the commitment and dedication they made to ensure a successful search outcome. Because of their involvement, I believe it was very evident to our candidates that there is a strong level of interest and support that will sustain the ongoing growth and development of Maverick football. I know Coach Hoffner is anxious to get this new era underway and is encouraged in knowing that our administration, fans, boosters, and alumni stand ready to assist him wherever possible.”

Hoffner, 41, recently completed his second season as the offensive coordinator for the University of South Dakota football team. During the course of 2007 season Hoffner guided an offense that ranked eighth in NCAA Division II in rushing and ninth in total offense. In 2006, the Coyote offense ranked fifth in the nation in total offense (427.5 yards per game), including fourth in rushing offense at 253.4 yards per game and he directed an offense that was 15th nationally with 32.3 points per contest. Hoffner coached All-American Christian Morton, who was named the Rimington Award recipient as the best center in NCAA Division II. He also coached Noah Shepard who was 12th in the nation in passing efficiency as a freshman in 2006 and All-American Stefan Logan, who rushed for 1,707 yards, and was a finalist for the Harlon Hill Trophy. Hoffner spent seven seasons as the head coach at Wisconsin-Eau Claire (1999-2005) prior to joining USD and led the Blugolds to a 46-28 record during that time. Hoffner led UWEC to a league title in 2001 and his teams were nationally ranked five times, including as high as sixth in the nation. He was an assistant coach for eight seasons at Wisconsin-Stevens Point (1991-98) prior to becoming UWEC’s head coach in 1999. A 1989 Valley City (N.D.) State grad where

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he was a cornerback on the football team and a 400-meter hurdler on the track team, Hoffner earned a master's degree from North Dakota in 1991. A native of Esmond, N.D., Hoffner and his wife, Melodee, have three children (Kiaya (4), Brady (3) and Mara (6 mos.)).

"It's an honor and a pleasure to be named the 14th head coach at Minnesota State," said Hoffner. "Obviously, I'm very excited. MSU has tremendous resources, facilities, people, talented players and coaching staff and it's my belief that this is a program that can be taken to a new level. I would like to thank everybody involved in this process - President Davenport, Vice President Rick Straka, Kevin Buisman, the search and screening committee, the athletics administrative team and the student-athletes. I thought it was a thorough and fair process with an extremely competitive field of candidates." **TDC** ■



## MESSAGE TO THE MSU TD CLUB FROM COACH HOFFNER

"Dear MSU Football Fans, I would like to welcome you to a new era in MSU football. I could not be more excited to be leading Minnesota State and look forward to meeting all of you over the next few months and into the 2008 season. Although only in place for a short period of time, I am excited about our recruiting class. The class we just signed has 8 young men who either won a state championship or played for one at their respective school. The players that we signed come from programs that have winning tradition. We recruited winners and guys who know how to win. Their will to win should us turn the program around and bring a winning tradition to Minnesota State. I very much appreciate the efforts of the assistant coaches for their effort in keeping their interest alive.

Beyond recruiting, we have begun Becoming A Maverick Week which has been designated as our week to form a strong bond amongst fellow teammates. During this week we practiced under the stadium lights, performed mat drills in the wrestling room, performed thousands (thousand stairs and a thousand sit ups), conducted the 45 pound isometric plate workout and also the county fair. The men have been mentally, physically and emotionally tough during the 5:15am workouts. Spring football is just around the corner as March 24 marks the beginning. The spring football season promises to be a physical one. The spring football schedule will be posted on the internet so feel free to come visit us some time. Thanks for all of your support over the first few weeks. Go Mavericks!" **TDC** ■

**Head football coach Todd Hoffner has announced that 23 student-athletes have committed to play football for Minnesota State.**

All signings to attend Minnesota State are contingent upon admission to Minnesota State and compliance with NCAA rules, including certification by the NCAA Clearinghouse.

"All things considered, we maximized the situation," said Hoffner. "The assistant coaches did a fantastic job keeping the prospects interested in the program and what we have as a result today is a direct correlation to the hard work and effort to the signing class."

"This is a championship-caliber signing class," added Hoffner. "There are lots of guys who have come from programs with very strong winning traditions. Those are the types of players we need to build a winning tradition at Minnesota State."

Twenty-two of the 23 student-athletes enter the program as true freshman. The lone non-true freshman

## TWENTY-THREE STUDENT ATHLETES COMMITTED TO PLAY FOR MN STATE





is Taylor Bennett, a quarterback who redshirted last year at Iowa State University .

Fourteen offensive players make up the recruiting class. Six of the recruits are offensive linemen, the most of any position in the signing class. There is also a pair of tailbacks to go with a quarterback, running back, h-back, tightend and wide receiver.

Defensively the Mavericks signed nine players at nine different positions.

Last year, Minnesota State posted a 5-6 record and went 3-5 in the final season of the North Central Conference. Full biographical information of the 23 members of the Minnesota State recruiting class of 2008 follows:

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**Max Anderson**

Strong Safety

6-1 • 195 • Freshman • Wales, Wis. • Kettle Moraine \* High School Coach: Mike Fink

Was Honorable Mention All-Conference as a defensive back...Registered 91 tackles as a senior, including two for a loss, one sack, one forced fumble and one interception...Also broke-up three passes...Also plays baseball and hockey...Member of the National Honor Society.

*Hoffner on Anderson :* "Max is a big hitter who can make plays sideline to sideline. He is constantly around the football and enjoys contact."

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**Taylor Barlament**

Offensive Line

6-4 • 250 • Freshman • Shofield, Wis. • D.C. Everest • High School Coach: Wayne Steffenhagen

As a senior was named Second-Team All-Conference after earning Honorable Mention All-Conference honors as a junior...Paved the way up front an offense that averaged over 365 yards per game last year...Played a role in D.C. Everest's 8-2 record last year.

*Hoffner on Barlament:* " Taylor is an aggressive, physical player with great feet. He has all the skills you look for in an offensive lineman."

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**Lucas Bauer**

Defensive End

6-4 • 240 • Freshman • Verona, Wis • Verona • High School Coach: Dave Richardson

A three-year starter at defensive end on a team that only lost one regular season game during the span...Helped Verona to a 12-1 record as a senior and fourth-round playoff appearance...Three-year All-Conference pick, the last two being unanimous...Second-Team All-State by the Associated Press...WFCA Honorable Mention All-State...Also named All-Area and All-District...Chosen to play in the 2008 WFCA All-Star Game.

*Hoffner on Bauer:* "Lucas has very outstanding skills for a high school defensive lineman and uses his hands effectively. He will be an excellent pass rusher from day one."

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**Taylor Bennett**

Quarterback

6-5 • 200 • Redshirt-Freshman • Des Moines, Iowa • Dowling • Iowa State • High School Coach: Tom Wilson

Redshirted at Iowa State last year...Completed 69 of 145 passes for 1,091 yards as a senior...Led Dowling to an 8-2 record and a berth in the Iowa Class 4A playoffs.

*Hoffner on Bennett:* "We are very excited to have Taylor join our program. He has all the tools you look for in a quarterback and we expect big things from him in the future."

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**Mike Bernarde**

Offensive Line

6-2 • 300 • Freshman • Sussex, Wis. • Sussex Hamilton • High School Coach: Joe Damato

Named Honorable Mention All-State by the Associated Press and the WFCA...CNI Newspapers First-Team All-Suburban...First-Team All-Waukesha County and First-Team All-Conference as a defensive lineman...As an offensive lineman, he was a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Honorable-Mention all-area



pick...Finished with 29 tackles, eight tackles for a loss, and one forced fumble...Offensively, helped anchor a line that ran for 2,700 yards, while defensively helped limit opponents to less than 100 yards rushing per game.

*Hoffner on Bernarde: "A two-way performer in high school, we project Mike as an offensive lineman. He has great feet and really explodes off the football."*

## **Mike Brunner**

Offensive Lineman

6-3 • 270 • Freshman • Hudson, Wis. /Hudson • High School Coach: Jerry Hannack

Three-time All-South Lakeland selection...Named all-district in 2006 and 2007...Team Captain...Two-time all-conference basketball player...First-Team All-State by the WFC...Academically, stands first in his class...President of FFA, Student Council and National Honor Society.

*Hoffner on Brunner: "Not only is Mike an outstanding football player, but he is also ranked No. 1 in his graduating class. He brings smarts and toughness to the offensive line"*

## **Damon Campbell**

Inside Linebacker

6-0 • 230 • Freshman • Milwaukee, Wis. • Wis. Lutheran • High School Coach: Kirk Denoyer

Associated Press State Player of the Year... Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Area Player of the Year...Four-year starter who played on three state championship teams...First-Team All-State by the WFC and Associated Press...Three-time First-Team All-Wisconsin Little 10...36 solo tackles, 74 assisted tackles, four sacks and 17 tackles for a loss...Forced three fumbles and also served as a team captain...Two-time state qualifier in the 4x100 meter relay.

*Hoffner on Campbell : "Damon is a guy we feel very fortunate to land. He's been a dominant player for four years in high school and has freakish athletic ability. He has the physical tools to contribute immediately."*

## **Chris Echols**

Tailback

5-10 • 220 • Freshman • Milwaukee, Wis. • Wis. Lutheran • High School Coach: Kirk Denoyer

First-Team All-State by the Associated Press and the WFC...First-Team All-Area Milwaukee Journal Sentinel...Rushed for an area-best 2,480 yards (7.8 yards per carry) with 40 touchdowns...Three-year starter...Ran for 1,840 yards and 20 touchdowns as a junior...Conference champion in the 100-meter dash and a two-time state qualifier 4x100 meter relay.

*Hoffner on Echols: "Chris brings a punishing running style to the program, as he is very strong and finishes his runs. He also has the speed to take it the distance."*

## **Clarence Fraser**

Defensive Tackle

6-4 • 270 • Freshman • St. Paul, Minn. • Cretin Derham Hall • High School Coach: Mike Scanlan

Finished his senior season with 36 tackles, including eight for a loss...Also registered two sacks and one fumble recovery...Named Honorable Mention All-Conference...Helped guide CDH to the Minnesota Class 5A state championship...Finished senior year with a 13-1 record...As a starter, saw CDH go 23-2.

*Hoffner on Fraser: "We are excited to have Clarence join the fold. He is a very versatile defensive lineman who can play on the inside or out at end and has the physical tools to excel at either one."*

## **David Goebel**

Fullback

6-1 • 230 • Freshman • Minnetonka, Minn./ Minnetonka • High School Coach: Dave Nelson

All-State Honorable Mention as a senior...Named team Defensive Most Valuable Player...Team captain in 2007...Averaged 6.5 yards per carry last year.

*Hoffner on Goebel: "David is a very powerful player who enjoys contact. He has an impressive frame for a high school player and will bring a physical element to our team."*





## **Justin Howard**

Wide Receiver/Defensive Back

5-10 • 175 • Freshman • Homestead, Wis. • Homestead • High School Coach: Dave Keel

A second-team All-Conference pick...Hauled in 28 receptions for 521 yards and five touchdowns...Also rushed the ball 14 times for 162 yards and three touchdowns...A former quarterback, he also completed 9-of-21 passes for 165 yards and two touchdowns as a junior...Also had 77 carries for 435 yards and five touchdowns as a junior.

*Hoffner on Howard: "Justin was Mr. Everything in high school, as he excelled at multiple positions on both sides of the ball. An explosive athlete who makes big plays all over the field, Justin will have an impact at whatever position he ends up."*

## **Beau Illikainen**

Tight End

6-3 • 230 • Freshman • Plymouth, Minn. • Wayzata • Brad Anderson; Head Coach:

All-Classic Lake selection...Named Honorable-Mention All-State as a senior...Led the team in receptions as a senior with 27...Two-way starter as a junior and senior...Three-year letterman on the basketball team.

*Hoffner on Illikainen: "A two-year starter on both sides of the ball for Wayzata, Beau will give us immediate help at the tight end position. He is an equally effective blocker and pass catcher, who can do everything you ask of the position."*

## **Ross Jirgl**

Defensive Back

6-1 • 180 • Freshman • Wausau, Wis. • Wausau East • Head Coach: Mike Younggren

Led the Wisconsin Valley Conference in interceptions...2007 Second-Team All-Conference pick...Led the team in tackles...Helped guide Wausau East to an 8-3 record including the second round of the state playoffs...Qualified for state track in the 110 hurdles as a junior.

*Hoffner on Jirgl: "A ball hawk, who is also a sure tackler, Ross is always around the football making plays."*

## **Darrin Joos**

Nose Tackle

6-5 • 300 • Freshman • Eagan, Minn. • Cretin Derham Hall • Head Coach: Mike Scanlan

Named an All-Conference selection as a senior...Finished with 52 tackles, including 10 for a loss and one sack...Three-year starter for CDH, going 33-5 during that span...Helped Cretin Derham Hall to two state championship games...Finished senior season with a 13-1 record.

*Hoffner on Joos: "Darrin is a huge presence on the interior who excels at stuffing the run. He will command a double team at the point of attack and solidify the middle of our defense."*

## **Connor Lee**

Offensive/Defensive Line

6-6 • 265 • Freshman • Mission Viejo, Calif. • Trubaco Hills • High School Coach: Jason Negro

Helped guide the Mustangs to a 12-2 record, including a 5-0 league record...Led the team in sacks and led the defensive line in tackles...Voted a 2007 defensive captain and was named to the 2007 Seaview All-League.

*Hoffner on Lee: "We're excited to have Connor joining us from California. He impressed the coaching staff at our summer camp and showed that he has the ability to stand out on either side of the football."*

## **Joe Pilecky**

Cornerback

5-10 • 175 • Freshman • Schofield, Wis. • D.C. Everest • High School Coach: Wayne Steffenhagen

Was named First-Team All-Wisconsin Valley as a senior and was an Honorable Mention selection as a junior...Helped guide the D.C. Everest defense, which finished tops in the league.

*Hoffner on Pilecky: "Joe brings toughness to the cornerback position. Don't let his size fool you, as he*



is adept to coming up and playing the run. He is also an excellent pass defender."

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**Connor Reed**

Offensive Lineman

6-2 • 290 • Freshman • Rochester, Minn. • Lourdes • High School Coach: Mike Kesler

Two-way starter on the offensive and defensive line...Was an All-Conference performer.

*Hoffner on Reed: "Conner was a two-way standout in high school, who we are projecting to play as an interior offensive lineman. He is a physical, hard working player who likes to get after it."*

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**Caleb Rissman**

Wide Receiver

5-10 • 170 • Freshman • Triton, Minn. • West Concord • High School Coach: Don Henderson

Named Second-Team All-State as a senior...The Cobras finished 31-5 in games Rissman started...Set the school rushing record as a junior with 1,341 yards...Rushed for 972 yards as a senior, averaging 8.2 yards per carry...Had 18 rushing TD's and eight receiving touchdowns last year...55 touchdowns over the last two years.

*Hoffner on Rissman: "A playmaker who excels at making people miss in the open field, Caleb has the speed to take it the distance every time he touches the football."*

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**Ross Schulz**

Offensive Line

6-4 • 280 • Freshman • Bloomington, Minn. • Kennedy • Head Coach: Dave Frisell

Two-year starter for Kennedy...All-Lake Conference selection in football and track...Helped guide the Eagles to a 6-3 mark as a senior and their first winning season since 1982...State qualifier in the shot put...Plans on participating in track and field at Minnesota State.

*Hoffner on Schulz: "Ross helped lead an impressive turnaround at Kennedy and brings athleticism to the offensive line. He has a tremendous upside and the work ethic to realize the potential."*

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**Michael Sewall**

Running Back

5-10 • 180 • Freshman • Combined Locks, Wis. • Kimberly • Head Coach: Steve Jorgensen

Helped guide Kimberly to a Wisconsin Division 2 state championship with a 14-0 record...As a senior, rushed for 2,555 yards and his junior and senior rushing totals equaled 4,018 yards...Reached the endzone 31 times as a senior...Finished in the top-five in Fox valley Association Conference history for single-season rushing yards...Named First Team All-State by the Associated Press and the WFCAs...Was the Appleton Post-Crescent First-Team All-Area and Player of the Year selection...Named Fox Valley Association First-Team Co-Offensive Player of the Year and Co-Offensive Back of the Year...Was a unanimous First-Team All-Conference selection as a running back and a return specialist...Selected to play in the 2008 WFCAs All-Star game.

*Hoffner on Sewall: "Michael was a dominant performer in high school who carried his team to a state title. He is also an excellent return man with the ability to make people miss."*

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**Torres Tillman**

Linebacker

6-0 • 210 • Freshman • St. Paul, Minn. • Cretin Derham • Head Coach: Mike Scanlan

Named All-Conference as a senior and Honorable Mention All-State...Finished with 49 tackles, including four for a loss...Also registered three sacks, a fumble recovery and an interception as a senior...Helped guide CDH to the Minnesota Class 5A state championship..Finished senior year with a 13-1 record...As a starter, saw CDH go 23-2....Starting point guard on the basketball team.

*Hoffner on Tillman: "A sideline to sideline performer who flat out makes plays, we are expecting big things from Torres in the future. He is a natural leader, which is a must at the linebacker position."*

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**Tyler Usechan**

H-back

6-3 • 215 • Freshman • Janesville, Wis. • Craig • High School Coach: Bill O'Leary





## MINNESOTA STATE FOOTBALL TEAM HANDS OUT AWARDS

### TDC BOARD MEMBERS

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First-Team All-Big 8 Conference as a senior, Second-Team All-Conference as a junior...Was the Big 8 Conference Wide Receiver of the Year...Team Captain...Three-Sport Athlete...Helped set the school record in the 4x100 meter relay...Has also lettered in basketball.

*Hoffner on Uschan: " Tyler has the ability to create mismatches, as he has tremendous speed for his size. He has excellent hands and the ability to make the tough catch in traffic."*

### Paul Vanden Huevel

Fullback

5-11 • 210 • Freshman • Hudson, Wis. • Hudson • High School Coach: Adam Kowles

Two-time All-Big River Conference selection...Team MVP and team captain as a senior.

*Hoffner on Vanden Huevel: "An excellent blocker who can also run the football very effective, we are excited to have Paul joining the program. He is a physical, hard working player with a bright future ahead of him." TDC\_■*

The Minnesota State football team hosted its annual award banquet Sunday, February 10th at the CSU Ballroom on the campus of Minnesota State . Senior quarterback Ben King was named the team's Offensive Player of the Year. King finished the season completing 339 of 569 passes for 4,096 yards, 28 touchdowns and averaged 372.4 passing yards per game. King's senior season helped him establish new single-season passing records and solidified him on top of several career passing records. Sophomore Randy Earl was named the team's Defensive Player of the Year. Earl registered 66 tackles, 13.5 of which went for a loss. He led the team in sacks with 10, and broke up three passes and recovered three fumbles. Junior wideout Dante Shackelford, was named the team's Newcomer of the Year. Shackelford led Minnesota State in rushing with 40 carries for 192 yards and three touchdowns. He also caught 38 passes for 598 yards and a team-high eight touchdowns. Freshman running back Jake Aberg was named the team's Offensive Scout Team Player of the Year, while junior linebacker, Tom Langford, was named the team's Defensive Scout Team Player of the Year.



Several players were also recognized for their academics and football. There were 6 players with 4.0 GPA and 30 players with between 3.0 - 3.9 GPA. Other "total student athletes" recognized were the following:

### ACADEMIC ALL-CONFERENCE WINNERS

Spencer Dickinson, Chris Brunkhorst and Blake Freese

### ALL-CONFERENCE 1ST TEAM, 2ND TEAM AND HONORABLE MENTION

Randy Earl (*1st team*), Blake Freese, Thaddeus Gibbs (*2nd team*), Andy Schoonover, Adrian Battles, Ben King, Jeff Fielder, Chris Nowlin, Damian Turner, Chris Brunkhorst, Grant Smith and Ryan Weinzierl (*Honorable Mention*)

### NCC COMMISSIONER'S ACADEMIC HONOR ROLE

Omaar Balton, Eric Spiekerman, Ryan Cross, Andy Schoonover, Chris Brunkhorst, Blake Freese, Jake Droessler, Ryan Weiznierl and Spencer Dickinson TDC\_■

