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Football players are put through paces at combine

MARQUETTE—While some football players across the Midwest are preparing for this coming gridiron season in the fall, others have already begun to look toward the future.

More than 40 high school football players from around the Upper Peninsula, downstate Michigan and northern Wisconsin took to the turf to be poked, prodded and analyzed Tuesday at a high school football combine at the Superior Dome.

“After you get all your results done, they send them to (Division I) schools and I’d love to play football at a D-I school,” said Casey Hares, who will be a junior at Ishpeming this fall. “I thought it would be a good experience to get my numbers out to colleges. Hopefully, I can play downstate at Central, or if I’m lucky, (Michigan) State or U-M.”

The combine was conducted by Todd Goldbeck and Xcel Sports Training, a non-profit organization based out of Wisconsin. Goldbeck developed the program four years ago after his Xcel staff attended the NFL combine in Indianapolis.

“We developed a high school combine that does the same thing so a high school athlete can come here and get tested in all the exact same tests that the pro combine does,” Goldbeck said. “Then we send that information out to all the college coaches.”

The results are sent out to every college football program in the country at no cost to the programs. The combine was open to all high school-age athletes.

“Seventy-five percent of all the colleges start looking at players their freshman and sophomore years, so if we can get a two-year look or three-year look at an athlete, it is better than a one-year look,” Goldbeck said.

The 4.5 hour camp tested youth in the 40-yard dash, vertical jump, broad jump, pro-agility shuttle, three-cone shuttle, 60-yard shuttle and maximum repetition bench press.

Chris Bussiere, who will be a senior at Gwinn this fall, said he learned that his speed and agility needed work. But he was confident with his performance in the 40 and bench press. Overall, he felt he was average compared to the other participants.

“I’m hoping to improve my attitude towards the game and how serious it is,” Bussiere said. “This opens you up to how serious colleges are and how good you have to be at everything.”

The combine concluded with an information session about what to do and where to go next in the process of playing college football. The combine is only one tool in the recruiting process and it still comes down to strapping on the pads to play ball,” Goldbeck said.

We promote athletes being proactive in their own recruitment,” he said. “If a college coach has contacted them, they can take their profile out and send it to that coach, saying these are accurate numbers by an outside source.”

While the results are sent out to Division-I college football programs, Goldbeck admitted the combine is more appropriate for non-Division-I athletes, because those are the players who are not already being recruited heavily by many schools.

“It’s for the athletes that are the all-conference and all-state players that maybe aren’t getting the Division I look, but a I-AA look, Division II look or Division III look” Goldbeck said. “They can still get good scholarship money to go play football, even at a private Division-III school.”

“There are diamonds in the rough that coaches will find that maybe they didn’t know about,” he said. “This will spark some interest.”



Casey Hares, who will be a junior at Ishpeming this fall, runs through the three-cone drill while being timed by Xcel Sports Training at a high school football combine at the Superior Dome. Information from the combine is sent out to every college football program in the country.



Chris Bussiere, who will be a junior at Gwinn in the fall, has his vertical jump tested at the high school football combine.