

St Cloud Times
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Prep football combine hits St. Cloud
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About 70 prospective college football players will convene in St. Cloud State next week hoping to improve their stock to programs of all levels all over the country.

They'll run, jump, lift and listen as they go through a performance and recruiting combine.

The program is in its fourth year and was started by a former University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse football player. Xcel's staff served as interns at the NFL Scouting Combine - an annual evaluation of college talent held in Indianapolis before the draft.

The Xcel Sports Training Performance and Recruiting Combine is Wednesday at St. Cloud State University. There will one session starting at 11 a.m. Openings for the combine remain.

"Our staff started going to the pro combine to help out with tests down there," said Todd Goldbeck, founder of Xcel Sports Training. "We sat down and decided we could do the same thing for high school athletes looking to play in college."

Xcel Sports Training will conduct 16 scouting combines in six states this year with hopes of expanding down the line.

Goldbeck said these combines work the same as its NFL counterpart. They electronically test athletes in eight areas, including the 40-yard dash, the broad jump, vertical jump and various shuttle runs, and also take physical measurements.

The results of each athlete's performance are then posted on the company's Web site at www.xcelsportstraining.net. Those results are made available for every college program at Division I, I-AA, II and III.

Goldbeck said he expects athletes from Central Minnesota, the Twin Cities, Wisconsin and other states to attend Wednesday's drills. The program also includes a session that instructs athletes and parents on the recruiting process.

"Another benefit we have is to bring in a recruiting expert to talk to them about what they can expect as far as how to contact coaches and how to research a college to make sure they're getting the right fit," Goldbeck said.

The combines started in Wisconsin and have expanded to Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa and Michigan. Steve Crutchley, St. Cloud State's wide receivers coach, made some initial contacts to help bring the combine here.

"I recruit in the Madison and Milwaukee areas, and that's where the combines started," Crutchley said. "I called the gentlemen who ran it and asked what the goals were. It's really an education for young high school students to learn the recruiting process. They try to cover everything from academics to number of scholarships colleges have. This is the first year here, so hopefully we'll get a good number. It's a valuable resource for kids to come look at our facilities."

Because everything is timed electronically, coaches know the results are exact. The results on the Web site are free to coaches.

Xcel Sports Training also conducts Functional Agility & Speed Training (F.A.S.T.) camps, sport-specific enhancement camps, a session that coaches on sports medicine and performance education, and also offers strength and conditioning consulting. The recruiting combines are the organization's signature event.

Because the combine is on-campus, St. Cloud State's coaching staff is allowed by NCAA rules to scout in person. But the biggest benefit, coaches hope, is getting so many prospective players to see Husky Stadium along with the school's other facilities.

"We get kids to see our campus, and that's the No. 1 benefit," St. Cloud State coach Randy Hedberg said. "It's a good evaluation for us. It will be a good experience. We'd like to attract more situations like this.

"Having this here is a real good deal, no question about it."