

Blackhawks use local talent as nucleus

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With the American Professional Football League opener a month away, the Iowa Blackhawks are at work on player decisions. The team's preseason roster squad, which at one time had more than 40 players, must be trimmed to a game-time total of 26 for the April 23 opener at Wichita against the Aviators.

The offensive backfield, the ticket sellers, so to speak, is nearly set.

The Blackhawks were delighted to sign former Thomas Jefferson and Nebraska-Omaha star Justin Kammrad. Kammrad completed his college days at UNO being a finalist for the Harlan Hill Trophy, the NCAA Division II version of the Heisman. Kammrad is penciled in at halfback.

Quarterback Chuck Wright was an All-State selection in high school in football-rich Florida. At Dana College, Wright at times led the nation in passing and total offense.

Demetrius Richards is a multi-time linebacker with the Omaha Beef. He earned All-North Central Conference laurels with UNO in the late 1990s. Safety Yano Jones has also played for the Beef, a higher level of indoor football and UNO. Iowa has also signed Tyrice Ellebb, a 6-foot-3, 347-pound three-time All-American wrestler from UNO for the offensive and defensive line.

But what has pleased Blackhawks president and general manager Jake Hiffernan is the ability of the organization to build a nucleus of local talent.

On hand are kicker Corey Harold (Thomas Jefferson), defensive backs Kurt Ferguson (Abraham Lincoln), Doug King (T.J.) and Chris Moore (T.J.), defensive lineman Travis Kleinbeck (A.L.) and offensive linemen Kent Brockman (T.J.), Daniel Case (Iowa Deaf), Brett Ryan (Underwood) and David Sigafoose (A.L.).

"That's just one part," said Hiffernan, "of what we're doing to become part of the community. We are also looking forward to working with youth organizations in the community."

The Blackhawks' home opener at the Mid-America Center is May 6. Call (712) 366-9326 or (712) 323-0536 about tickets.