

Safe on the bag



A Colby K-18 baseball player was safe at second base during a game against Quinter on Thursday at the Colby Recreation Fields. KAYLA CORNETT/Colby Free Press

College football, players need to change



Kayla Cornett

● On the Sidelines

If you're like me, you can't wait for September to roll around because that means the National Football League season is beginning. Sundays are spent lying on the couch, flipping between the local channels and the NFL Network, watching as many plays as you possibly can. There's also the added bonus of Monday Night Football and Thursday Night Football, along with college football all day Saturdays. It's a dream come true.

This year, we might not be so lucky, though. As I'm sure everyone knows, the NFL is experiencing a lockout because the owners and the players are arguing about how much money players should be receiving. There are other issues they are discussing, but money is the main dispute. Almost everyone in the sports world, including players and coaches, agree that the lockout will end before the season begins, but this is the longest lockout the league has ever seen. If they cannot come to an agreement, there will not be professional football this fall.

In my mind, this is unfathomable. There have been professional football games for over 100 years and football has become America's favorite sport. Some people don't think it will be too terrible because we will still have college football to fall back on. In some ways that is true, but lately college football has been riddled with problems of its own.

Cam Newton, who was the number one overall pick in this year's draft, dealt with a scandal last year when his father, Cecil Newton, was accused of asking for \$180,000 for his son to play at Mississippi State. The school declined to pay, and Newton enrolled at the University of Auburn instead, where he became an outstanding quarterback and Heisman Trophy winner. Newton and Auburn were investigated by the National Collegiate Athletic Association, but it was determined that they had no knowledge of Cecil Newton's scheme and the quarterback was not punished.

Terrelle Pryor and four of his teammates at Ohio State sold championship rings, jerseys and awards on eBay last year and were suspended for five games this coming season. They were also accused of receiving money and discounted tattoos from an owner of a tattoo parlor. When Ohio State Head Coach Jim Tressel was asked about these issues, he denied knowing about them, but was later found to have known about them since April of last year. A *Sports Illustrated* article said, "Tressel had signed an NCAA compliance form in September saying he had no knowledge of any wrongdoing by athletes," and his contract had required him to report any potential violations. On May 30, Tressel turned in his letter of

resignation. All of this controversy has made me a little sour on college football. They're not huge problems like Southern Methodist University had in the late 80s; I don't think any team needs the death penalty. Still, I feel like many college athletes, especially football players, are exploited for their talent, and that's why there are so many scandals. The players find a way to get the money they feel that they deserve, which is against NCAA rules, and then they get penalized for it.

If college sports are going to be highly competitive and a major factor in deciding a student's future, then the rules need to change. The country needs to either agree that college players should be compensated, or take out the extreme competition and have them play for themselves. If there is a lockout this season, college football will become more important to Americans, which will put more pressure on the players. If they are already expected to play like professional athletes and are treated like them now, it will only get worse with a lockout. College football will become like the NFL; the money and sense of entitlement will only get worse.

Personally, I think we should start making changes as soon as possible. Coaches and parents need to stop making competitiveness in sports so important and just let kids have fun. Without the pressure of needing to get the best deal and sign with the NFL, college football players wouldn't be worrying about making money or being the best in the nation. Sports reporters and broadcasters need to stop comparing players and teams incessantly and just enjoy the game. If this were to catch on, I believe the scandals would stop and college football would be appreciated, not condemned. It would make football as a whole an even greater sport, and the country could continue to love watching it.

Kayla Cornett is the sports reporter for the Colby Free Press. She has been interested in sports her entire life and has been writing about sports since high school. She is a native Coloradan.

More than 40 Chiefs attend first workout since the lockout

By Doug Tucker

AP Sports Writer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP) – Swimming, boxing and vigorous workouts in the neighborhood gym had kept Ryan Lilja in good football shape.

He thought.

During three days of light training with about 45 teammates, the veteran right guard of the Kansas City Chiefs discovered his personal conditioning during the NFL lockout may not have been as productive as hoped.

"I thought I was (in shape), but coming here running some plays and being with the guys, I've got a ways to go," he said. "So I'm excited about refocusing on (conditioning). We came out here and kind of gauged ourselves a little bit and got to work. Hopefully, we can all get back to work because it's fun to be back with the guys."

Organized by quarterback Matt Cassel, safety Jon McGraw and linebacker Derrick Johnson, the Chiefs got together on a local high school football field Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday for the first time since the NFL lockout began in March. They mostly ran routine plays and there was never any contact. Media were allowed

to watch only the last half-hour on Thursday afternoon.

"This was more of a mental practice, not a lot of physical going on," said Johnson. "You're running around, everybody working out. It's just a good time to get back with your teammates, get the camaraderie going, to freshen up on the mental aspect of the game and some basic plays."

Not many Chiefs players actually live in Kansas City and the logistics of getting everyone together were somewhat involved. But after getting more than 40 team members to agree to come to town, the players hired security guards to make sure everyone kept order, and paid a professional trainer to stand by in case anyone got hurt.

There was no contact at any time, although the workouts were more vigorous than most anticipated.

"We were going harder than I expected we were going to go," said Lilja. "We thought, 'Hey, one step, chill.' Man, we were running just like we had helmets on, like it was a Friday practice. And guys were moving around. It felt like normal. But we didn't get anybody hurt."

Center and player representa-

tive Rudy Niswanger said that after three months off, it felt good just hearing Cassel calling out cadence.

"It was a good workout," he said. "Any time you get the guys together, you call the plays, you run through them, you break the huddle, you get a little sweat, you build that camaraderie, that team unity, that's a good thing. We had a lot of guys. We had almost enough for two full teams, both sides."

McGraw, who has said he might want to coach one day, helped run the pre-practice meetings where everybody was drilled on what they would be working on each day.

"I enjoyed it. We were in the classroom drawing things up, making sure all the guys know what's going on when we come out and do our walkthroughs," he said.

Everybody agreed they're itchy to get the lockout lifted and return to work.

"I tell them to be prepared," Niswanger said. "I tell them to always be ready. We don't know if something's going to happen one day from now or six months from now, so be ready, be prepared. Your body's your business and you've got to be ready to use it."

TV station to air game

Smoky Hills Public Television's production crew will be at the 8-Man Football All-Star game on June 25 to record the action.

The Kansas versus Nebraska rivalry game features the 8-Man All-Stars playing at Lewis Field Stadium on the Fort Hays State University campus, and will be aired on July 6 at 7 p.m. on Smoky Hills Public Television.



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