

New Coach Brings Experience and Results to Vernonia Football

By Scott Laird

Alex Etta has some very serious football experience. And he is sharing that experience with Vernonia.

Etta is the Vernonia Middle School head football coach and is looking for players to add to his team after a successful first season last year. Etta is hoping to build and develop a consistent program for Vernonia youth players to feed into an already successful high school program.

But first, about that experience Etta brings to Vernonia.

"I played professionally in NFL Europe for seven years," said Etta recently. "I played for Amsterdam, Barcelona, and London, and in Italy as well." Etta was a running back, kick returner, and even played a little defense as a strong safety during his time in Europe.

Etta, at 5'9" and 200 pounds, was never the biggest guy on the team. "But I was always one of the hardest working," explained Etta. "They did speed and strength testing weekly, and I was always in the top three in both. And that's very unusual, because usually the fast guys aren't the strong guys. And the strong guys aren't the fast guys. I used a good work ethic to make myself successful, and I try to teach that when I coach."

Being a high school star in Folsom California, where his team went 13-0 his senior year earned him a full scholarship to Dickinson State in North Dakota. A successful college career and great natural speed ("I run a 4.4 forty yard dash." Which is really fast!) got the attention of professional scouts and the opportunity to play in Europe.

Now Etta finds himself in Vernonia where he, his wife and one-year-old son live. Etta is a stay at home dad, and is hoping to settle in and stay in the community.

Etta says he has really connected with his players and earned their respect last season. "I will look them in the eye and tell them, 'Look what I was able to do. If you try hard enough, you can accomplish things in your life too.'" Etta has begun a weight lifting program for his returning 8th graders, and is working to teach his players new offensive plays and defensive schemes. "I always try to be learning and I encourage my players to always be learning, too." Etta stresses good grades from his players, and has received compliments from parents who have noticed improvements by their kids. "If they get good grades in school, it leads to better learning in football. And that goes both ways, so that's important," said Etta.

Last season Etta took his team to what is called a "Jamboree" where a bunch of teams come and play five short scrimmage games, all in one day. "We were the smallest team in numbers there," said Etta. "And we won every game. I heard people talking and saying, 'Is that really Vernonia?' We really impressed them."

Etta is trying to recruit more players for his team. "I want everyone to consider joining," said Etta. "Even if they've never played organized football before. I want the skateboarders. Everyone has a chance with me. A couple of my best players were brand new to the sport last year."

"I am willing to work around kids schedules to get them to come out. I'll even work around their skateboarding schedule, if that what it takes," joked Etta.

"My hope is that by starting kids early in a program we can develop better players. I try to tell my players that they could have a chance to earn a scholarship, go somewhere, change their life," said Etta "And I'm a real example of that, so the kids believe me when I talk with them."

Anyone interested in learning more about the Vernonia Middle School Football program can Call Alex Etta at 503- 781-2142

Student Athletes Recognized

By Scott Laird

Blake Moeller and Jeramey Lende, both Vernonia High School students, have been recognized for their achievements on the football field and have been offered special invitations because of their success.

Moeller who is finishing his junior year has been invited to attend an exclusive one-day Nike Football Training Camp. The camp gives players the opportunity to be exposed to high level one-on-one training with nationally recognized coaches, trainers, and NFL and college players. It is a great opportunity to showcase his talent and gain exposure to college recruiters and national media.

Moeller, also a track star at Vernonia, recently placed seventh at the State meet in the 200 meters with a personal best time of 23.68.

Lende has been invited to play in the annual East-West All Star Shrine game on August 2nd in Baker City. Players for the Shrine game are nominated by coaches from their league and selected by a Shrine panel and team coaches. Lende, who was named all league first team on defense as a linebacker and all league second team on offense as a running back, was also named the league defensive player of the year.

The Young Writers Club

This year the students at Washington Grade School have been using the Six Traits of Writing to develop strong writing skills. These focus on ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. Third graders are focusing on writing effective paragraphs and note taking skills.

To celebrate April as National Poetry Month, some students from Vernonia put their pencil to paper to create some of their own verse. Third graders from Washington Grade School have written limericks, modern cinquains, definition poems, and color poems to adorn the hallways and create an image through words. In these examples of their work you can savor a sample of supreme alliterations and enjoy some similes that fit like a button in a buttonhole.

Orange

Orange like the color of the sunset
Rising into the sky
Orange sun shining in the heat
Orangey orange that you like to eat
Orange sun going down.

By Pearl, age 9

Red

Red like a burning sunset,
Red smoking, sizzling fire flares on a cool fall night,
Red like juicy apples,
Red hot cinnamon
Red like delectable strawberries.

By Katilyn, age 8

My Dog Skipper

My dog Skipper is running away.
My dog Skipper is having fun.
My dog Skipper is loving everyone.
My dog Skipper is not obeying.

By McKenzie, age 8

Black

Black like the color of tires
Getting ready to speedrace
Black shoes walking all around the school
Black is tasty as blackberries in the summer;
Black wires so high impossible to reach.

By Anesto, age 9

Vernonia

Small and fun
Running, jumping, laughing too
Happy, sad, mad, glad
My home.

By Cheyenne, age 9

Green, Green, Green

Green like the grass in your field
Green like the Journal that keeps your secrets.
Green like the Mountains thereof.
Green trees swaying in the forest.

By Katie, age 9

Payton's Ham

There once was a girl named Payton,
Who just sat around eating bacon,
She was riding a lamb,
She found a ham,
She came home with her tummy achin'.

By Caitlyn, age 8

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