

More Than a Game: *continued from page 12*

The Toppers uniforms colors are orange and black, and include a plain white helmet, similar to two other schools they compete against. The students chose to use the money they raised to buy a decal package for their helmets that included an arrow that starts at the back and wraps over the top to the front of the helmet, as well as the high school logo V and crossed axes. "The team chose those symbols--the arrow symbolizes moving forward, both as an athlete and as a student, and



the high school logo on the side adds to tradition and helps tie the district program together," said Kay.

Kay says he and assistant coach Dan Titus have focused on building leadership qualities in their players.

"We've tried to stick to the core philosophies of Discipline, Integrity, Team, and Family Values," said Kay.

Kay says his players intend to continue their fundraising efforts this next year with the intention of helping purchase new uniform jerseys, not just for the middle school team, but for the high school team as well. "With the district taking cuts, money for new uniforms just isn't a priority," says Kay. "Our athletes came up with a plan themselves that they are calling 'Sponsor an Athlete' and they're going to take it upon themselves as leaders to go around and contact people in our community to sponsor an athlete and help upgrade the uniforms."

Kay says that one of the things he is most proud of about his team is that throughout the year, none of his players had to sit out for academic reasons. He is also working to instill a feeling of community pride and community service. "That's why the uniforms are so important-- it's about pride," says Kay. "Our athletes believe that if you look good, you feel good. And if you feel good, you play good."

On the field, the team installed

the high school offense and used many of the plays and terminology as a way to help contribute to building a unified program. "We ran a pretty complex offense for this level of play," said Kay. "We don't have a lot of great big guys, so we have to be smarter, have better technique, have to be more disciplined, to be able to move the bigger players out and run the ball successfully," said Kay. His team also successfully passed the ball throughout the season, something that is somewhat unusual at this level.

It's true when Kay says he doesn't have a lot of big "guys." In fact, one of the team's most consistent players is a female-- Joise Roberts. "She is not only a heck of an athlete, she was our middle linebacker and called our defense on the field and did a great job," said Kay. "We also had one of the smallest nose tackles in the league with Jake Harbour."

With only nineteen players on the team, the Toppers had to play "iron man" football with players having to play both offense and defense. "The amount of heart and dedication these middle school athletes showed made me very proud," said Kay. "We were competitive in every game and put a lot of points on the

board. And the kids got better every week."

Because of limited capacity for an organized playoff at this level, the Toppers finished their season with a "playoff" game against Warrenton at the end of October. When the Topper defense knocked the Warrenton star player out of the game early in the second quarter, the Warrenton coach



threw in the towel and forfeited the game to the Toppers, ending the season with a win for Vernonia.

"Our athletes bought into the program, our parents bought into the program, and it was just a tremendously successful season," said Kay.

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Vernonia Students of the Month

October 2010



Charity Coleman, Grade 4

Charity is a self manager. She is always safe, kind, respectful and responsible. She is willing to help out in the classroom in any way the teacher asks. She is a good role model for the other students. She is a great helper to the kindergarten students at lunch and does extra whenever it is needed. Charity's favorite subject is Reading. She likes collecting pretty rocks, shopping, drawing and taking care of animals. She has 2 chickens, one dog, and two cats at home.

Meghan Sullivan, Grade 8

This is Meghan's first full year at VMS and she is transitioning well. Meghan has good grades, is a hard worker and is a good example to her peers. Her work is impressive! Meghan is participating in volleyball and will also take part in basketball and track. She holds two school records for track from last year. Her favorite subject is Art and her hobbies include arts and crafts projects, 4-H and cake decorating.



Justin Rainbolt, Grade 12

Justin was nominated for his contributions as a Student Aid at the high school. He is very helpful and always has something interesting to add to any discussion. Justin is involved in Cross Country and Leadership in school and has helped with the Vernonia Theater with Set Design and has been an Outdoor School Counselor at Wilkerson, which may lead to PCC credits. Justin's favorite subject in school is Science--Natural Resources in particular. He also enjoys reading, drawing and artwork.

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