Defender Football: More Than a Game

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DEFENDER FOOTBALL: MORE THAN A GAME

Dordt’s football team under Coach Joel Penner had its best year in team history, but its impact has extended far beyond the field’s boundary markers and goal posts.

Rod De Boer, a Dordt football fan since the team began in 2007, has watched the program grow through several winless seasons to last year’s 5-5 record-breaking year.

While De Boer has enjoyed seeing the team become a serious competitor for opponents, the most rewarding thing for him has been to be a part of the host family program that pairs families from the Sioux County area with Dordt football players from all parts of the country. “The host family program allows you to meet a lot of great kids who also happen to play football,” says De Boer.

This program may be one of the reasons many people seem to be buying into Dordt football. The team’s growing popularity is partly because of the way players execute the game, but it is also because of the way they live their lives outside of football.

Dr. Mary Dengler, who directs the Kuyper Scholars Program and teaches English, describes the football players in her classes as “dedicated, hard-working, and academically serious young men.” She appreciates their diligence in their studies, despite the challenges that being involved in football can bring.

Dordt football players are standing out in a beleaguered sport. “I enjoy two things about the football players in my classes: They fill the front rows, and they call me ‘sir,’” says Dr. Bob De Smith, an English professor. “It’s not that I need to be addressed that way, but it’s a nice reminder that respect between teachers and students is worthwhile.”

Dordt football players are active in through the host family program, players can connect with people in the Sioux County community and enjoy a home-cooked meal.

On the field, the team has adopted the term “the ninth team” for those who sit on the sideline. “It refers to the energy that players who aren’t in the game bring to the team,” says Nicholas Carbone, freshman offensive lineman. The sideline is called the ninth team because they aren’t on one of the eight major parts that make up a football team: defense, offense, kickoff, kickoff return, punt, punt return, field goal, and field goal block. However, those sitting on the sideline can have a big impact on the game; Dordt’s ninth team does, and their energy has crept its way into the Dordt community.

Players, coaches, and fans are all invited to the postgame “attaways,” an open opportunity to verbally recognize all the positive pieces of the game—win or lose.
the community, too. Many of them volunteer at local elementary and middle schools as mentors, tutors, and friends.

Team members make up about eight percent of the student body on campus, but the way they move in packs makes their numbers appear even larger. The team shares a brotherhood—an inclusive one, where even non-football players are welcomed.

“Great college football in our rulebook is bigger than just the score after the game or a record after a season,” says Penner. “When it is all said and done, football at Dordt ought to be a light in the often dark world of competition.”

Dordt’s football team is using their sport as a platform for positive change in both the college and community.

JUSTIN BANKS (‘19)

Campus Kudos

Associate Provost Dr. Leah Zuidema was elected vice president of the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and assumed her office in November. The NCTE is devoted to improving the teaching and learning of English and the language arts at all levels of education.

Eighteen Dordt students attended the Global Health Missions Health conference in Louisville, Kentucky. The conference focused on medical mission work.

Dordt’s emphasis in Human Resource (HR) Management now fully aligns with the curriculum guidebook of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). This will enable senior HR students to sit for the SHRM-Certified Professional exam once they have 500 hours of experience instead of having to complete the one year of post-graduation experience otherwise required by SHRM.

Four Dordt agriculture students received the American FFA Degree, an award given to fewer than one percent of FFA members. The recipients were Madi Anderson, Callie Freeman, Sarah Goyne, and Georgia Lucas. Qualifications for the award include earning the State FFA Degree, being an active member for the previous three years, and completing at least three years’ worth of secondary school instruction in agricultural education.

Dordt Digital Media Instructor Mark Volkers and students Ben Kuiper and Ellen Ingrid Dengah (‘17) created a video for the Family Crisis Center in Sioux Center to bring awareness about domestic violence. The project won a gold Davey Award and gold MarCom award.

Dordt is now the first and only Avid Learning Partner (ALP) in Iowa. Digital Media Instructor Mark Volkers passed tests to become an Avid Certified Instructor (ACI), making Dordt an ALP. Volkers will be able to administer exams to students so they can become Avid Certified Users (ACUs). Avid Technology is the industry standard post-production software in the filmmaking industry.

Provost Dr. Eric Forseth was appointed chair of the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) Higher Learning Commission (HLC) Regional Accreditation Council. There are presently 44 CCCU member institutions in the HLC region.

Vocal Instructor Deb Vogel is a member of the South Dakota Chorale, which was nominated for three Grammy Awards: Best Engineered Album-Classical, Best Surround Sound Album, and Producer of the Year-Classical. Vogel also attended the National Association of Teachers of Singing, along with Pam DeHaan and 10 students. James Ryan, a junior at Dordt, placed as a semi-finalist.