Lights' grid camp a big hit with the kids

Daniel Horton
Wednesday, June 8th, 2011

For the last several summers, the Montana State University-Northern Lights football program has been bringing a little bit of football action to the Hi-Line’s youth.

And now with the MSU-N K-8 football camp finishing up its fifth straight year, more and more kids are getting a helpful jumpstart to their football careers.

But as the camp continues to grow, more than just Hi-Line football players are benefiting.

Last summer the camp topped out at about 100 individuals, but this season the total jumped to 115. And while the majority of the campers come from Havre, this year's camp also saw an increase of numbers come from Chinook, Big Sandy and Turner. There were also five campers who came up from Fairfield.

The camp, which runs through today was held at the MSU-N practice fields in Havre. And with such a wide variety of K-8 football experience was in attendance, the camp set out to accomplish a few different goals a long the way.

While every camper was introduced to various football games and skills, including passing, catching, punting, kicking, tackling and blocking, the kindergarten through fourth and fifth through eighth graders were approached in different ways.

“With the kindergarten through fourth graders,” MSU-N Offensive Coordinator and Quarterback coach, Kyle Samson said. “We are just trying to teach them the basic fundamentals. We are trying to get them interested in football, and really, most of this is about having fun.

“And with the older group,” Samson added. “We are really trying to hit them hard with the fundamentals, but also get them into some offense and defensive game like situations. There are a lot of really good athletes in this age group and they are smart. They are picking up everything really quick and hopefully we can get them some good skills that will help them in the fall when they are playing tackle football.”

Havre’s Carson Hayes was in attendance for his third time and really enjoys the camp. Not only does the love of football bring him back each time, but also just getting to have fun and hang out with friends.

“I really like hanging out with friends and doing all the drills we get to do,” Hayes said. “And I like getting to be around the college players too.”

This year the Lights’ camp got help from four different players, all volunteering to give up some of their summer.

Northern junior wide receiver Orin Johnson and cornerback Chris Hamilton joined sophomore quarterbacks Derek Lear and Travis Dean for the three-day camp. And while running drills and playing games, the four were instrumental to the campers, as they helped critique technique and helped ensure just a fun and helpful experience overall.

“They are giving up their time to help out and I think they really like it,” Samson said. “It gets you back to when you were a little kid and really enjoyed football and they are helping teach these kids the basics. Being with the kids is enjoyable and it is really fun to be with the kids for three days and really watch them progress.”
The MSU-N football camp will conclude this afternoon.