

Agates & Mariners Earn Pony League Championship Games

By John Sandstrom

Football players come in assorted sizes. Some are 6 ft. 8, weigh 380 pounds and play offensive tackle for the Minnesota Gophers. Others weigh a few pounds less, play for local Pony League teams and will be future Agates or Mariners. These hearty souls are every bit as dedicated, enthusiastic and determined as any of the professionals. (I know they are more enjoyable and less frustrating to watch than those players who wear purple and play on Sundays.)

Andy Morsette is one of the coaches for the Two Harbors team. "We played in the Duluth League and lost to Northwestern in the Championship game by a 16-6 score." The Agates finished the season at 5-3 and had thirty-four players that were primarily fifth and sixth graders. Other coaches for the Agates included John McDannold, Troy Groeneveld, Dustin Magnuson, and Scott Larson.

"Our kids worked hard and they bought into what we wanted to teach. We want them to be unselfish and great teammates now and when they get to high school. We know what Coach Nelson expects and want them to buy into the program."

Ziggy Hietala is a sixth grade running back for the Agates. "We were a hard-working team and an unselfish team. The best part for me is that I made some new friends in addition to my friends who are already playing." Ziggy's favorite professional player is Kyler Murray and his favorite part of football is "all the hitting and contact." (a born football player)

The young Mariners had twenty-one players and finished the season 7-2 losing to South Ridge in the championship game. Silver Bay was coached by Dave Klemmer, Chris Goerd, Jim Williams, Matt Cook and

Mike Hoff. Hoff was impressed with how much the kids improved during the year. "They kept improving, did a good job of listening and got along well as a team. It was a fun season."

Bryce Meeks is a sixth grader at William Kelley Elementary. Bryce played wide receiver and safety in this, his second year of Pony League. Asked to describe his season, he responded, "We did pretty good. We made it to the championship game but lost to South Ridge. Our team worked hard and we were competitive". His favorite professional player is Viking Adam Thielen and he hopes to play wide receiver when he is in high school.

The season ended prematurely for Bryce when he suffered a broken arm.... and no, it didn't happen at football. "A kid fell on my arm on the playground."

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