

Members of the 1989 All-Area Top 11 football team are: (Front row, from left) Coach of the Year Dan Lankas, Atwood; Jason Fellers, Salina Central; Kendall Hahn, Norton; Kirby Rust, Kensington. (Second row) Eric Rice, Salina South; Mark Giles, Salina Central; Brian Lammey, Smith Center. (Back row) Jeff Vrbas, Atwood; Dart Forst, Salina Central; Shane Meyer, Chapman; Tracey Hoffman, Hays-Thomas More Prep-Marian; Todd Moss, Salina South.

Ben Harris

Atwood's own sows success

Buffs' Lankas wins honor for leading alma mater to title

By TIM FITZGERALD
Sports Writer

Somewhere in the rich soil of northwest Kansas, Dan Lankas discovered the seeds he wanted to sow.

The former All-Big Eight Conference linebacker gave up working on his family farm in Atwood to return to football coaching. More than anything else, Lankas wanted to nurture young minds and bodies.

"Coaching means a lot to me — helping young people develop their work habits and morals for life. Seeing them succeed — whether it's in football, the classroom, or just in life," said Lankas, who took over his hometown's high school program in 1984.

After six years in charge of the Atwood Buffaloes, Lankas' program is in full bloom. His 1989 edition of the Buffaloes finished the season with a 13-0 record after a 26-7 victory over Madison in the Class 2-1A state championship game.

For his leadership, Lankas has been named the Salina Journal's 1989 Area Football Coach of the Year.

"I was out of coaching for four years and farmed," Lankas said. "My father had passed away and my brother (Dean) and I went back to the family farm. I had always wanted to coach, but I had always wanted to farm."

"But, I really got to missing working with young people and coaching football."

In Lankas' six years at the Buffaloes' helm, he has taken teams to five playoffs and compiled a record of 49-15. Those are lofty numbers for a school which is often dwarfed by its fellow members of the Northwest Kansas League.

But there was a time when Lankas wasn't sure he wanted to coach. He had led the program at El Dorado — the smallest school in the Ark Valley League — and in his eight years with

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—Dan Lankas

the Wildcats, he captured shares of three league titles.

"I think it would be something good if every coach got out to see if that's what they want to do," said Lankas, whose career record is 108-38. "I think I came in after four years more hungry to coach."

Lankas' first step was transferring that hunger to his players and the community. People responded.

"It's been really pleasant," said Lankas of taking over his alma mater's program. "I've got a lot of sons whose dads I played with. I think with my background of playing (in Atwood), playing at Kansas State and playing some professional football, the people have really backed our program."

An aggressive weightlifting program is the cornerstone of his success and Lankas leads by example. At 43, Lankas' broad shoulders still make him look as if he's ready to strap on the pads.

"(The town has) helped us put in an outstanding weightlifting program. Our training rules are not a problem because I trained when I was in high school and their parents know I trained," Lankas said.

While lifting weights is a conventional method of preparing for football games, not all of Lankas' methods are as popular with other high school coaches.

Take for example an idea Lankas borrowed from former Nebraska coach Bob Devaney — the Buffaloes practice in full pads only once a week and shoulder pads and shorts one other day of the week.

"It's unusual for most schools," Lankas said. "(Devaney said) if you hit every day in practice, you won't hit game day and I believe that. I think it helps prevent injuries. We had no injuries this year and have had very few in my coaching career. I think we're well rested."

With a healthy team on the field, it's the Buffaloes dispensing the pain. "Doing it that way, come Friday we're ready to hit," Lankas said. "The last day we hit is Tuesday. This is the way I've coached the 16 years

(See Lankas, Page 32)

Top 11 team features record-setting performers

By TIM HOSTETTER
Sports Writer

Though it's one of the smallest teams ever, the 14th annual Salina Journal All-Area Top 11 Football Team is loaded with big-play and record-setting performers.

The most notable record-setter is Kensington quarterback Kirby Rust, the first eight-man quarterback named to the Top 11 since Darren Gale of Eastern Heights in 1978.

Rust, the smallest player on this year's team at 145 pounds, owns virtually every state passing record and is Kansas' all-time total offense leader with 8,681 yards.

Chapman's Shane Meyer and Salina South's Eric Rice proved to be two of the state's top defensive backs, setting school records for most career interceptions.

Meyer, Chapman's first Top 11 selection since Dan Jones in 1980, also set records as a receiver.

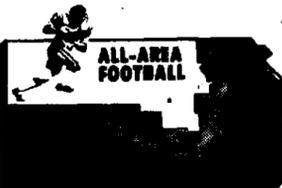
Two of the state's top football programs, Smith Center and Norton, each produced a player to remain at the top of the list for most Top 11 selections.

Brian Lammey is Smith Center's 11th selection, while Kendall Hahn is Norton's 10th.

Salina Central reached the Class 5A state championship game for the first time this season, and the Mustangs were rewarded with three Top 11 selections: Jason Fellers, Mark Giles and Dart Forst.

Fellers and Giles were two of only three players to be selected first-team players on offense and defense on the All-I-70 League team, and Forst was a consensus all-stater.

Tracey Hoffman is the first



player from Thomas More Prep-Marian to be selected to the Top 11 since Dan Drees in 1982. As a three-year starter, Hoffman rewrote much of TMP's record book for receiving and rushing.

It would be difficult to run outside against this team with Atwood's Jeff Vrbas and Salina South's Todd Moss' at defensive ends. They are the two biggest players on this year's team.

The 11 senior stars all played on winning teams. Nine of the 11 were on playoff teams, and the South players were kept out of the playoffs by Central.

Here's a closer look at this year's Top 11.

JASON FELLERS

Though he developed into an outstanding quarterback this season, throwing for 1,242 yards and 15 touchdowns, Fellers made a louder noise on defense. In fact, many ball carriers will remember Central's 165-pound defensive back for some time.

"When you talk great hitters, you're talking about Jason Fellers, both on offense and defense," said Central coach Marvin Diener. "A lot of times you don't think of a quarterback running the option delivering a lot of blows, but there weren't a lot of times when the

(defensive) ends hit Jason and Jason ended up on the ground."

Fellers had 45 solo tackles, two interceptions and a fumble recovery from his free safety position, and he finished with 93 career tackles.

As an option quarterback, Fellers proved to be a good reader and was consistent all season.

"One of Jason's personal goals that he wrote down before the season was to have a solid performance every game," Diener said. "I made the comment then that if Jason fulfills that goal, we'd win a lot of football games. He sure did, and in a big way."

DART FORST

Forst, a 6-2, 205-pounder, was a two-time All-I-70 League linebacker, collecting 175 tackles and 152 assists. He had 89 solo stops and an interception this season.

Diener credits his defense for getting Central to the state championship game, and his defense was built around linebackers Forst and Jon Doddridge.

"The way our defense was set up, we had a plugging linebacker and a running linebacker," Diener said. "Dart was the plugging backer, and he gave up some tackles that he might have made. Dart, being more physical, was responsible for plugging more holes and (Doddridge) was responsible for cleaning up plays."

Forst also played offensive guard, and Diener doesn't want Forst's contribution there downplayed.

"Dart was our only senior on the offensive line, so it was very nice having a senior like Dart to build

Player, School	Hgt.	Wgt.	Yr.	Position
Jason Fellers, Salina Central	5-7	165	Sr.	QB-DB
Dart Forst, Salina Central	6-2	205	Sr.	OG-LB
Mark Giles, Salina Central	5-10	185	Sr.	RB-NG
Kendall Hahn, Norton	5-9	160	Sr.	RB-DE
Tracey Hoffman, TMP-Marian	6-1	181	Sr.	RB-CB
Brian Lammey, Smith Center	5-10	180	Sr.	FB-LB
Shane Meyer, Chapman	5-11	175	Sr.	WR-DB
Todd Moss, Salina South	6-6	230	Sr.	TE-DE
Eric Rice, Salina South	6-1	170	Sr.	WR-DB
Kirby Rust, Kensington	5-7	145	Sr.	QB-DB
Jeff Vrbas, Atwood	6-5	210	Sr.	OT-DE-P

our line around," Diener said. "He really helped those young kids when we were in our different drills." Dart really led us well in that area."

MARK GILES

The combination is unusual: running back-nose guard. But Giles starred at both positions. His blend of power, speed and quickness allowed him to excel both ways.

Giles had four 100-yard games and finished with 1,181 yards rushing and 12 touchdowns. The 185-pounder was a big-play threat every time he touched the ball. Ask Wichita Kapaun-Mt. Carmel. Against the Crusaders in the sub-state playoffs, Giles scored on runs of 72 and 80 yards and finished with a career-high 191 yards.

"If Mark got in the open, he was gone," Diener said. "Our team had big-play potential, and Mark gave us that on the ground. He could score from anywhere on the field, and that's huge."

But Giles' contribution on defense was just as big.

Having Mark at nose guard was like having three linebackers on the field because he could cover the field from sideline to sideline." Diener said. "His eight quarterback sacks were key parts as to why our secondary was so successful all season. Mark kept the pressure on the quarterback."

In addition to his sacks, Giles had 48 tackles and 44 assists.

KENDALL HAHN

Rarely does a 150-pounder play fullback and defensive end. But Hahn did, and proved as forceful as a 200-pounder.

Hahn was Norton's most versatile player. He could play just about any position on the field. Norton coach Neil Melillo took advantage of that early in the season by moving him from a running back to fullback and moving Bill Jones to the line.

Hahn responded by rushing for 1,001 yards, averaging 5.5 yards a carry, and scoring 80 points. He also

(See Top 11, Page 32)