



In the Saturday Baraboo News Republic and the Sunday Shopper Stopper Extra

BARABOO NEWS REPUBLIC



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weather



High: 50°F
Low: 31°F
Decreasing Clouds

poll

Army Gen. Stanley McChrystal wants to add between 30,000 and 40,000 troops to the current force of 68,000 in Afghanistan. Should the Obama administration agree to this request?

- A — Yes, we must do this if we hope to defeat the Taliban and Al Qaeda.
- B — No, we should pull troops out, not send in more.
- C — I'm not really sure what we should do.

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More than just a pain in the neck

By Pete Watson/News Republic



Pete Watson/News Republic
Sidelined with a neck injury since Week 2 of the football season, Baraboo senior Jake Banks talks with a teammate on the sideline during the T-Birds game against Sauk Prairie.

Jake Banks never gave it much thought before.

After all, the Baraboo High School senior had never endured major injury — save a rolled ankle or two — in his sports career.

"I never really thought about the next play possibly being your last, because it really could be," the T-Birds quarterback/defensive back said while watching practice on Monday. "I've always heard that, but never really took it to heart."

Though it wasn't his last play, Banks' high school football career essentially came to an end with 3:48 remaining in the second quarter against Stoughton on Sept. 4.

Playing in the secondary, Banks came up to make a tackle — and did — but with his head down and tweaked his neck. Not knowing fully the extent of the injury and wanting to help his team, the 6-foot-1, 153-pound two-sport athlete got up off the turf, shrugged off the initial pain and played the remainder of the contest.

"I think my adrenaline was just going and I just wanted to play the rest of the game," he said. "I really didn't want to show any weakness."

Long after the final whistle and his adrenaline levels returned to normal, the pain began to set in.

"My neck was still bugging me the rest of the week. About five days later I couldn't move it and the pain was kind of intolerable," Banks said.

A short time later, Banks was told by a doctor that he'd fractured the C5 vertebrae in his neck and wouldn't be able to play the rest of the year.

A new kind of discomfort began to set in.

"I teared up a little bit. I really didn't know what to think about it at first," Banks said of hearing the news. "I mean it's my senior year. I don't think it really hit me right away until I went to practice and didn't suit up. It hit me really hard that first game. Not being able to suit up with my friends — it was tough."

Outfitted with a neck brace for the past four weeks, it will be another four before Banks can take it off.

When the brace is removed, his weakened neck muscles will be a reminder of the past eight weeks.

But Banks has made the most of his abbreviated senior season from the sidelines. Though the team is off to an 0-6 start, the senior has stayed around to help where he can.

"I'm just trying to be there for my team and try to help the younger kids out," he said.

His new role is not as glorified as when he was BHS's quarterback, but it's enough to make him feel like he's still part of the team.

"It's not very satisfying until you see someone do something well and know that you might have helped them out," he said. "But it's tough when your team isn't doing well because you're always thinking you could have helped them."

When Banks was lost for the year, fellow senior TJ Kaminski stepped in behind center. Though Kaminski has done an admirable job moving from fullback to quarterback without the luxury of experience, BHS coach Jeff Oschankehl admitted the loss of Banks was one his team could not afford.

"The domino affect was that we had to move TJ to quarterback, which meant we had to move someone else and somebody else and so on," Oschankehl said.

So now the T-Birds will continue on without Banks as they have for the last five weeks.

And for Banks, who expects to be healthy in time to suit up for his final season of

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T-Birds basketball this winter, the experience this fall has confirmed a popular, but hard lesson.

"I guess it's true. You should play every play like it's your last," he said.

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