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Nicholls State readies for pros' camps

By KYLE CARRIER

Football has evolved as a competitive sport throughout the decades. The cuts are quicker, the action is faster, the hits are harder and the players are more powerful and explosive than at any other time in the game's history.

To gain competitive advantage, athletes must commit themselves to training - during the season and during the offseason - to push beyond perceived limits, break through physical barriers to become faster, more powerful, more agile, instinctive and lightning quick.

Some do that through strict offseason workouts. Others turn to the professionals for help.

The Manning Passing Academy (July 9-12) and the 2nd Annual Pro Football Combine Camp (July 17) offer that professional help, bringing NFL players to Thibodaux to mentor high school athletes.

Tomorrow marks the beginning of one of the area's biggest camps, the Manning Passing Academy. Prior to last year's camp, Archie and his sons, Cooper, New York Giants quarterback Eli and Indianapolis Colts quarterback Peyton, signed an extension to keep the camp at Nicholls until at least 2017.

"I can't say enough about Nicholls State and the people of Thibodaux," Archie said last summer. "The way they have welcomed us over the last four years is astounding. It's really been fun to watch this thing grow."

This year's camp provides much of the same.

Among the more than 900 anticipated campers are a brigade of new camp counselors ranging from high school coaches to NFL talent.

Some of the anticipated counselors include Memphis quarterback Martin Hankins, Oklahoma State quarterback Zac Robinson, Oklahoma quarterback Sam Bradford, Ole Miss quarterback Jevan Snead, North Carolina quarterback T.J. Yates, Indianapolis Colts wide receiver Anthony Gonzalez, Minnesota Vikings quarterback Sean Glennon, former New Orleans Saints and current Arizona Cardinals quarterback Tyler Palko, former NFL quarterback Bubby Brister and former Cincinnati Bengals coach Dave Shula, son of Hall-of-Fame Miami Dolphins head coach Don Shula, among others.

The camp provides a bit of a reunion for a family whose members are rarely together during the season.

"The chances for us to be together are very rare," Peyton explained at last year's press conference. "My dad and Cooper may come to a couple of home games each. This is a chance to get together. It's a special week being with my two brothers and my dad."

But the camp isn't just good for the athletes participating, it's good for Nicholls as well.

As with all summer camps, the university sees it as a marketing opportunity and a valuable recruiting tool.

"Our camps are growing and bursting at the seams," said Brandie Toups, director of continuing education at Nicholls State University. "People recognize that the university offers quality programming led by credentialed instructors and they are drawn to that and they appreciate our offerings. Because of that, each year they grow bigger and bigger."

"Some of the camps like the Manning camp bring in people from across the country, so to have that much exposure for Nicholls is a great thing," she added.

A week later, the Green Brothers - Jarvis, Howard and Skyler - bring the Pro Football Combine Camp back to Nicholls



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for its second year. Unlike the Manning Camp, the Pro Football Combine Camp is geared more towards local high school athletes.

The camp features Nike SPARQ Training, Protocols and Ratings in conjunction with Velocity Sports Performance to help raise the level of athleticism and game of local athletes. Participants will go through combine skills coaching, drills and testing to obtain actual combine scores, finding out how they stack up against other athletes. Professional athletes from the New Orleans Saints, New England Patriots and others will team up with trainers to help put on the camp.

The centerpiece of Nike's efforts is SPARQ which stands for Speed, Power, Agility, Reaction and Quickness. It offers dynamic performance training designed to make young athletes excel. In addition, there will be position specific drills taught by NFL athletes and area coaches.

The Manning Camp registration is currently closed, but anyone interested in the Pro Football Combine Camp can still register by July 10.

A non-refundable registration fee of \$50 (payable to Pro Football Combine Camp) and a copy of a valid insurance ID card must accompany completed registration and consent. Registration forms can be mailed to:

Pro Football Combine Camp, c/o Orthopaedic Sports Specialists of Louisiana, P.O. Box 28, Thibodaux, LA 70302-0028.

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