

NORTH DAKOTA COLLEGIATE FOOTBALL

VALLEY CITY STATE UNIVERSITY VIKINGS



**VALLEY CITY
STATE UNIVERSITY**

Valley City State University struggled through the first half of last season losing four of five, but the Vikings finished strong, winning four of its last five games providing players and fans confidence VCSU will contend for the North Star Athletic Association title and a NAIA playoff berth.

Dennis McCulloch celebrates 30 years of coaching football at VCSU this fall, 27 as the Vikings head coach. McCulloch is 156-104 overall with six conference titles to his credit and four NAIA playoff appearances.

McCulloch and his coaching staff were hard at work during the spring recruiting student-athletes for the program. The football team announced the signing of 34 athletes, 20 of which are from North Dakota.

"Our coaching staff has done a tremendous job finding this group of guys," McCulloch said. "They've put in countless hours, effort and miles to find the right student-athletes for our program. This is always an exciting and rewarding time for our staff as our recruiting class comes together and we envision the future of Viking Football."

The Viking offense looks to be led by junior quarterback **Avery Thorsgard** (6-1, 184). Thorsgard opened 2022 as the starter, but an injury sidelined him for most of the season playing in only four games. When he did manage to stay in the game, Thorsgard completed 48 of 75 passing attempts for 395 yards and three TDs. He rushed for 318 yards and four TDs on 46 carries. At the season's end, versus Mayville State, he earned NSAA Player of the Week recognition as he passed for three TDs and rushed for 170 yards and two more TDs.

Junior lineman **Riley Gerhardt** (6-2, 220) leads the defense. Gerhardt made 109 tackles, 19.5 for losses. He 12.5 sacks led the NAIA. For his efforts Gerhardt earned NAIA second-team All-America honors to go with his first-team All-NSAA award. In the season-ending victory over Mayville State he had three quarterback sacks and earned NSAA Player of the Week honors. Second-team all-conference selection senior **Jahidi West** (5-11, 200) is also part of the linebacking corps, last year he had 55 tackles, a sack, four interceptions, two forced fumbles and six pass break-ups. He was a first-team all-conference player as a sophomore.

Senior running back **Justice Bice** (6-3, 202) led the team in rushing with 752 yards and six TDs on 165 carries. He also led the team in receiving with 28 catches for 175 yards and a TD. He is a two-time all-conference first-team player.

Senior offensive lineman **Sammy Trejo** (6-1, 250) is a three-time first-team all-conference performer who is joined by junior lineman **Troy Dietz** (6-4, 296) who earned first-team All-NSAA as a freshman and second-team all-conference as a sophomore.

Junior running back **Taylor Simmons** (5-8, 175) is key to the rushing attack. As a sophomore he rushed for 436 yards and five TDs on 89 carries. Simmons led the team with 103 all-purpose yards per game and served as the team's returner. He was named NSAA Honorable Mention.



Paco Baltazar

Other Honorable Mention all-conference players returning for VCSU are junior linebacker **Ashton Raquino** (5-11, 215) who was third on the team last year in tackles with 56 including a sack and four TFL and senior defensive back **Paco Baltazar** (6-2, 200) who played in eight games with 29 tackles and a five pass break-ups.

The Vikings open the 2023 campaign at home versus the University of Jamestown.

— Gordon Weixel



Coach Dennis McCulloch

2023 SEASON

Head Coach: Dennis McCulloch (27th year)
Career Record: 156-104
Assistant Coaches: Gregg Horner, Dustin Yorek, Brandon Bouma, Dave Rausch, Trent Kosel, Sam Chilsen, Dalvin Simmons, Alec Brown
Affiliation: NAIA
Conference: North Star Athletic Assn.
Key Players:
 Jahidi West, Sr, 5-11, 200, LB
 Justice Bice, Sr, 6-3, 202, RB
 Sammy Trejo, Sr, 6-1, 250, OL
 Paco Baltazar, Sr, 6-2, 200, DB
 Avery Thorsgard, Jr, 6-1, 184, QB
 Riley Gerhardt, Jr, 6-2, 220, DL
 Troy Dietz, Jr, 6-4, 296, OL
 Taylor Simmons, Jr, 5-8, 175, RB
 Ashton Raquino, Jr, 5-11, 215, LB

2022 RESULTS

**North Star Athletic Association
Conference Record: 4-2**

Overall Record: 5-5

at Jamestown	L	24-27
CONCORDIA-MOORHEAD.....	L	12-14
DICKINSON STATE	L	10-35
at Presentation.....	W	28-10
DAKOTA STATE	L	17-31
IOWA WESLEYAN	W	32-0
at Waldorf	W	35-14
at Dickinson State.....	L	13-21
PRESENTATION.....	W	21-10
Mayville State (in Fargo)	W	48-40

VALLEY CITY STATE VIKINGS

Location: Valley City, ND

Enrollment: 1,600+

Team Colors: Cardinal Red and Blue

Stadium: Shelly Ellig Field
at Lokken Stadium (cap. 2,500)

On the Web:

www.vcsuivikings.com
www.vcsu.edu



Justice Bice



Troy Dietz



Riley Gerhardt



Ashton Raquino



Taylor Simmons



Avery Thorsgard



Sammy Trejo



Jahidi West