

Mind over matter

Powerlifter of the Year and aspiring doctor Alex Gilde has his sights set on the Big Ten



Special to the Record-Eagle/Mike Dunn

Alex Gilde, national prep powerlifter of the year, works out at the McBain High School weight room in July.

BY MIKE DUNN

Special to the Record-Eagle

MCBAIN — It is 1:15 p.m. on a steamy Wednesday afternoon in the middle of July. The weight room in McBain High School feels like Hades' kitchen.

Alex Gilde is soaked with sweat. He and fellow senior Steve Michalak, also drenched in sweat, are the only members of the Rambler football team remaining in the room. Everybody else has done their required lifting and left the premises.

Gilde and Michalak, though, are still at it. The two have already spent four hours in the hot sun this day experiencing the demanding toils of summer football camp. That was before jogging from the practice field to the weight room 45 minutes ago.

Now Gilde is groaning under the weight of an iron bar that literally bends from the load it bears at each end. Gilde, a 17-year-old human oak standing 5-11 and weighing 269 pounds, and Michalak, himself an impressive figure at 6-2, 225 pounds, are taking turns doing bench presses. It's a

sight to behold.

Gilde is preparing for his senior season on the gridiron the same way he has prepared for every previous season. That means investing gallons of body fluids on the practice field and hundreds of hours in the weight room. That means hustling continually and leading by example.

Gilde, the national prep powerlifter of the year, is not sitting on his laurels. If anything, he is doing more. Sure it's demanding, but it's the only way Gilde can reach the high standards he has set for himself.

And Gilde is one person who is not into shortcuts.

His work ethic does not go unnoticed by his coaches.

"Alex is very self-motivated and extremely intense," said coach Paul Siembida, who is entering his third season at the helm of the McBain program. "I've never in my life coached anyone who is more focused on his goals. He's an all-area and an all-conference athlete who maintains a 4.0 GPA in the classroom. You couldn't ask for a nicer kid or a harder worker. He's got a

very bright future."

Gilde has the future in mind, though he is presently looking more at the near future than what might happen after he graduates. When it comes time for the Ramblers to open the 2005 campaign at home against Boyne City, Gilde, a two-way starter in the trenches, expects to benefit from the fruit of all his labors. More than that, he expects the team to benefit.

"Any individual goals I achieve won't mean much if the team doesn't do well," Gilde said. "Coach is always

about."

Last season, McBain survived a killer schedule and a 4-3 start, including a dispiriting 42-6 loss to Beal City in week two, to make the playoffs and advance all the way to the quarterfinals. After closing out the season with impressive victories over Kingsley and Mason County Central, the Ramblers beat the defending state champions, Traverse City St. Francis, in the opening round and crushed unbeaten Mio in the second round to advance to the quarterfinals against

playoffs and getting that far, but that's not how I feel about it and I'm sure nobody else on the team does either," Gilde said. "That was an awful, empty feeling leaving the field against Newberry that day. I don't want to experience that again. My ultimate goal is to leave as a senior with a state championship. That's what I've dedicated myself to."

Gilde's attitude reflects the motivation of McBain and its coaches as the season approaches.

Whatever success the

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stressing unity. He says to forget about doing the individual thing. This is coach's third year and I think everybody is finally on the same page now. After last season, all the players are realizing that coach knows what he's talking

Newberry. The 2004 season ended with a gut-wrenching 20-13 defeat.

The heartbreaking loss at the neutral field of Cheboygan still haunts Gilde.

"You can say that we accomplished a lot just making the

Ramblers achieve this season, it's certain that Gilde will be a big part of it. Gilde, like his older brother and 2001 graduate Kyle before him, is a four-year starter. Fellow senior

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