

IN THIS ISSUE:

- > Mike Clark's Current Events
- > Meet our head coach-Chris Thompson
- > Meet a Steelhawks veteran-Marvin Johnson

As our season draws nearer, the Steelhawks front office remains busy building the team they believe will be a championship contender. More big names return to Lehigh Valley on this quest. From last year's squad, WR Jeff Willis and Lehigh University's own DB John Kennedy are returning, and from the 2011 Steelhawks team returns OL Jonathan Mitchell. Newcomer Matt Hoffman, from Rowan University, will be looking to make an immediate impact on the defensive side of the ball as well.

The Steelhawks offense gets a boost with the return of a veteran receiver in Jeff Willis who

was the teams 2nd leading receiver last season. Willis has a number of years' experience in arena football, previously having played with the Reading Express before he was a Steelhawk. Last season he had 48 catches for 571 yards and 11 touchdowns. He hauled in the team's longest reception on the year (48 yards).

In addition, the team added to their experienced on defense with the resigning of Lehigh University product Kennedy. As a rookie defensive back, John recorded 27 tackles, had two interceptions that he returned for 50 total yards.

Mitchell, a 6'3 320lb offensive lineman from Cheyney University, returns to the Steelhawks after he had an injury shortened year in 2011.

New to the Valley and looking to make a big impact is Hoffman (6'3 225lb), a Rowan University alum (also the alma mater of former Steelhawk star RB Ryan Leafey). Hoffman is an athletic defensive end/linebacker that has explosive speed for the pass rush. He led Rowan in sacks for three consecutive seasons and in his senior season was named a finalist for the Gagliardi Trophy (DIII Player of the Year Award).

The Hawks Nest

Lehigh Valley Welcomes Veterans and a Newcomer

Mike Clark, Executive VP/GM Update

GET TO KNOW YOUR STEELHAWKS FRONT OFFICE...by General Manager Mike Clark

As hard as our players work on the field, our fantastic front office works just as hard off of it. The preparation for the season is not a typical nine to five job and takes the joint efforts of everyone in our offices to pull together this organization. From the top, our owner Glenn Clark is the foundation behind our successes. His belief in this team, its staff, and our goals allow us all to live out this dream of professional football. I encourage all of our new players to reach out to him and introduce yourself as a new or returning member of the organization (glenn.clark@rockwoodinsurance.com) and get to know him, as he is all of our biggest fans sitting front row, mid field at every Steelhawks game!

From there you have myself. I am the General Manager and Executive VP of the team. I began working at the league office of the Indoor Football League, and with the guidance of Glenn was able to start our own franchise in 2010. It has always been a dream of mine to run a professional organization and there is no better way than starting it and building it within your vision. As I have mentioned many times before, it is and will always be our mission to provide high quality, family friendly events for members of this great area with the combined goal of GIVING BACK to this community. We are very blessed to be in a position to give back, whether it be helping raise money for an organization, or by simply donating our time.

Chris Thompson was brought on last December as our Head Coach and Assistant General Manager, holding a dual role that splits his time between on and off the field duties. He is a fantastic leader of young men with a wealth of experience and helped our young franchise reach the playoffs in just our second year of existence. In the off-season he assists in acquiring the performance partners that allow us all to do what we do as a professional organization. Chris and myself sit down each and every day and go over how we are going to achieve our goals for the coming years. There is a different smell in the air this year, and together a BFR (Big Fat Ring) is what it all comes down to on the field.

Tammy Santiago is our Director of Performance Partnerships, and is a non-stop ball of fury! She knows EVERYONE in this community, and fosters relationships with the many partners we have that allow our players have the best experiences possible while here in the Lehigh Valley. To use a sports analogy, Tammy is our biggest UTILITY PLAYER, as she does it all! She was brought on about 18 months ago, and her motor has been turning ever since. You won't find anyone else who is a bigger fan of this team than her, and she will work her tail off to make sure the Steelhawks are #1 in the PIFL in EVERY aspect.

Rounding out our staff is our Game Day Coordinator Lauren Petri, who helps us in a wide variety of team aspects, from press releases, to making sure everything is ready to go on game days. The show behind the show is just as integral to our success as winning games. Our fans come for the whole experience, and we couldn't do it without Lauren!

We have an amazing core of people working behind the scenes, and we won't stop until we can provide the best possible experience for our partners, fans, and the surrounding community. It's going to take everyone from our ownership, front office, coaching staff, interns, and players to achieve our goals this year, but always know, you are all a part of the STEELHAWK FAMILY now. The journey has begun!



Mike Clark
Executive Vice President and General Manager

MEET A COACH-Chris Thompson

This December will be Head Football Coach and Assistant GM Chris Thompson's first full year with Steelhawks. Chris came to the Steelhawks with quite a resume, including 6 years with the Reading Express Indoor Football team which won 5-Division Championships, 2-Conference Championships, 1 League Championship. He and staff were a part of an organization that won more than 70 games in 6 years!

Coach Thompson didn't join the team until December of 2011 which made it difficult to build on the number of recruits coming into the preseason. His late arrival also didn't allow for time to do a full evaluation of the coaching staff or allow for a deep search for new candidates. As the season progressed, he was pleased with the promotion of 10 Steelhawks that moved up to AFL and CFL teams and the late entry into the 4th playoff spot for the first time in the young franchises history.

Chris describes his role as "extremely diverse and widespread". "I truly enjoy both sides of the spectrum with this position because without the business side, there would be no football side. There is no doubt from my prior 7 year experiences working in sports that the two sides definitely go hand-in-hand". Coach Thompson points out that both are equally important to the success of a professional sports organization but the business side always precedes the football side. He assures everyone that this is not just a part time or seasonal job and it takes a lot of hard work, dedication, and hours for everything to come together. Not to mention, he has to surround himself with great character people that have equal philosophies and beliefs in professionalism.

Chris spends his offseason front office work in many areas. He points out that "One may think, it would be a part-time job since our season only runs from February to June but there is a ton of planning, preparation, front office duties, building relationships (Partners/Sponsors), growing our fan and season ticket base, along with doing everything we can to brand the Lehigh Valley Steelhawks within the Lehigh Valley surroundings".

As the Head Coach and Offensive Coordinator of the Steelhawks, there is not a day that goes by that he does not include recruiting or the evaluation of players. However, also being the Assistant General Manager, means that he must find ways to maximize the revenue streams, decrease expenses, and make decisions that are always in the best interest of the organization. Prioritizing and being able to multitask are definite characteristics that this profession demands of Coach Thompson but he wouldn't want it any other way.

Coach shares a little about himself in this Q&A session

Can you share with us a little detail on your family?

My wife LeeAnn and I got married last September after being together for more than 3 years and we

celebrated our first year of marriage with a new addition to our family and appearing on the new season of the Newly Wed Game show that will air this November. We currently live in Ephrata and have 2 children, Haley Jade who is 8 and Kellen James is who is 5 months old.

Tell us a little about your football playing time in high school & college?

I am a graduate of Manheim Central High School in Manheim, PA where I spent all 4 years playing Football and Baseball and taking the necessary measures to further my education. In the 3 years I spent playing varsity football, we had a record of 34-3 and won 3-straight Section and District Gold Championships but unfortunately lost in the State Playoffs each year to the hands of Berwick and Allentown Central Catholic. My senior year, I was not only named All-League at Quarterback but also placekicker as well and accepted a football scholarship to Bloomsburg University. See BIO on Steelhawks website by clicking on my head shot for the rest....

What do you do in your down time, outside of the Steelhawks interests?

I enjoy spending time with my family and playing the great relaxing sport of golf when time allows. We also love the beach and always try every year to take a family vacation to it. Our favorite beach to visit is Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

What did you learn about 2012 Steelhawks/season?

I learned a ton from this past season both on and off the field that I can take with me and keep moving forward in my profession. One thing I've learned in my 34 years and now being the Head Coach/Assistant General Manager of 2 different playoff caliber professional sports organizations, is you have to follow your instincts to what got you here and have to have great time management skills.

What are your priorities for this offseason?

Priorities this off-season are vast since this will be the first opportunity I've had to have an off-season with the Steelhawks. First and foremost, we will look to lock in some of our necessary partnerships, like Hotel/Housing, transportation, merchandise and apparel, printing needs, practice facility, finalizing our new uniform look, and growing and building all of our existing and potential sponsors so that we can be in the new Allentown Arena when the completion of it hits and our 2015 season kicks off. It will be an awesome thing for everyone and the Lehigh Valley community. We have 2 years to continue to grow and do the necessary things on

and off the field to help make the transition a smooth one. Which means, myself and our coaching staff will continue to recruit and bring in the best talent we can from all of the United States and our housing deal allows.

What is your 2013 outlook for the Steelhawks?

Last year our goal was to make the playoffs for the first time and we did that by finishing in 4th place but unfortunately had to travel out to Sioux Falls, South Dakota and play the eventual IFL champions, Sioux Falls Storm in the first round. This year's outlook is simple, bring home our first ever League Championship to Lehigh Valley and put a Big Fat Ring (BFR) on our fingers.

Why did the Steelhawks change leagues ?

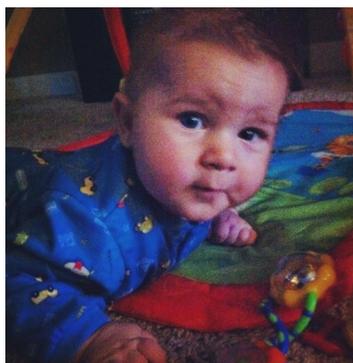
Making decisions to switch leagues like we did this offseason is not always easy but it was definitely in the best interest of the organization. The number one reason we switched was the Indoor Football League (IFL) that we were in for 2 seasons did not grow or expand enough in the Northeast like they had promised they were working on. There was not enough close proximity teams around us to travel to and our travel budget for our away game schedule would have been more than double what it was from a year ago. Another reason was, this past season we helped move up more than 10 guys to Arena Football League teams and Canadian Football League teams and the style of play in the Professional Indoor Football League (PIFL) is almost identical to the style of play that the Arena Football League plays, so it made sense again to join this group of well-established teams in the Professional Indoor Football League.

What was the strangest thing that happened to you while coaching?

The strangest thing that has happened to me while coaching both took place this past season, when we went into a 4 overtime game and 2 overtimes against the Chicago Slaughter. Never had that happened ever prior to me in my playing or coaching career and let's just say, I learned some great lessons from it as we only went 1-1.

Now that you have had a chance to build your 2013 staff, what are your impressions of those coaches?

I take a great deal of pride in surrounding myself with great people and building life long memories and relationships with my coaching staffs. This season will be special and more organized because I was able to make a few changes to the staff and their roles and responsibilities. We are off to a great start this off-season and can't wait for training camp and the 2013 season to get here.





MEET A STEELHAWK VETERAN-Marvin Johnson

NOTABLE INDOOR EXPERIENCE: My experience in indoor football has been great. Playing on a smaller field will help out your reaction time a lot because the play of the game moves much faster. It also helped out my man to man coverage. Like I said, it's a fast game which means it's not really enough time to help a teammate out unless the routes run your way. You're pretty much on an island!

COLLEGIATE BACKGROUND: I played my college ball at the University of Oregon from 2006-2010. I practiced with a lot of great athletes and played against great ones too. I still remember very clear my sophomore year I made an exceptional open field tackle on the speedy back now for the Detroit Lions, Jahvid Best, when Cal was at their best and sitting at #2 in the nation. My class became the most winning class ever at the U of O. I played in a bowl game in each of my 4 years: Sun Bowl, Holiday Bowl, Rose Bowl, and National Championship BCS Bowl. I was a member of the back to back Pac10 champs.

WHAT YOU ARE DOING FOR OFFSEASON TRAINING FOR 2013: I wanted to stay in football shape so I decided to play semi-pro back home and I lift weights from time to time. No power lifting though just a little something something.

CAREER ASPIRATION: I just want to continue to ball out and show the world that I belong in the NFL. I don't talk about it much because I want to let my play do all the talking. I feel coming back to Lehigh will help me out on my journey.

A SHORT PARAGRAPH ON YOUR STEELHAWK EXPERIENCE: The Steelhawks are the first indoor team that I have played for. Leaving the west coast heading all the way East, I was nervous and excited at the same time. Nervous because I was going somewhere I knew nothing about, by myself. Once we started practice I felt more comfortable because football is my comfort zone. Most would say they get butterflies before their first game. That wasn't the case for me because I love playing and I visualize the game like 5 times before I actually play which helps out my nerve system.

Playing at Stabler arena in front of the hawks fans really made me fall in love with Lehigh even more. I love playing football because of the fans, I entertain by any means whether I'm making a big hit, deflecting a pass, or dancing in between plays I feed off their energy. The fans and community made my experience as a Steel hawk wonderful.



IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

- > Meet one of our coaches
- > Meet another SteelHawk Veteran
- > Meet another trade partner