



Kings Mountain High head football coach Greg Lloyd addresses 50 varsity players prior to the start of mini-camp Monday morning.

A Taste of Football

Two-day mini camp helps KM varsity players bond before Thursday's official start of practice

Fifty Kings Mountain High varsity football prospects went through a two-day mini-camp Monday and Tuesday and will take the day off today before officially beginning pre-season practice Thursday morning.

Already, the Mountaineers have been dealt some bad breaks as five players who have started in the past will not be on the field this season, including their top returning defensive player, Jacob Miller. Miller was seriously injured in a wreck last week and is in a Charlotte hospital with cracked vertebrae.

Two other players who started last season chose not to return this year, and two returning backs are ineligible.

But, head coach Greg Lloyd said he's optimistic that younger players will take up the slack and the Mountaineers will have a good season.

The players at mini-camp not only went through conditioning drills Monday and Tuesday but also developed a closeness through entertainment, movies, bowling and other activities in area towns.

Players will officially sign-in to play football Thursday at 8 a.m. at the field house, and begin conditioning at 9 a.m. on the practice field.

The NCHSAA requires five days of conditioning - including two in helmets and three in helmets and pads - before beginning contact drills on Wednesday, Aug. 7.

The Mountaineers will host a three-way scrimmage with North Gaston and Clover on Saturday, August 10 at 9 a.m. with each of the three teams playing the other two.

Coach Lloyd said losing Miller is a "tough blow" but he is thankful that he wasn't hurt more seriously.

"We were already short-handed," the coach said. "That's a major blow on both sides of the ball - at middle linebacker and fullback. He started at linebacker as a sophomore and junior and was also going to be the starting fullback this year. He had worked really hard during the summer. We're glad he's going to be okay."

The two other players injured in the wreck - tight end Collen Queen and defensive end and tight end Khalil Hopper - should be back with the team in time to start the season, Lloyd said.

Replacing Miller will be impossible, but the coaches hope several players will take up

the slack.

Elijah Whitaker returns at inside linebacker and Lloyd said the team is "trying to find who we think our best player is" to replace Miller. "After we find that player we'll have to move some other people around. It's probably going to be young guys," he said.

Lloyd hopes a big player who can run and block will step up at the fullback position. Possibilities are Hopper and Nick Postell. Postell started on the offensive line last year and is a good blocker. He will probably play nose guard on defense.

Despite their heavy losses - and assuming there will be no more - the Mountaineers should be competitive on the offensive and defensive lines and at the receiver positions, Lloyd believes. The backfield positions will most likely be manned by younger players.

"Running back is the big key," Lloyd said. "A lot of people are going to be playing both ways, so we're hoping for football weather beginning the first game with Hunter Huss."



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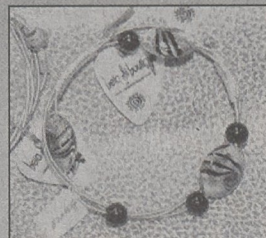
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