

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL NOTEBOOK NO WORRIES AT HOOVER FIRST-YEAR COACH MEYER MAKING SMOOTH TRANSITION

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First-year Herbert Hoover coach Tim Meyer has been worry-free so far.

"When you have good kids that work hard it really takes the stress off you," Meyer said. "The community has really been behind me and the players have. I've had great help."

During the first week of practice, Meyer has been able to give his undivided attention to turning around a Huskies program that posted a 2-8 record last year and missed the Class AA playoffs for a third straight year. Players donned pads for the first time Friday around the Kanawha Valley and will begin contact drills Tuesday.

Following the season, Steve Stoffel Sr. stepped down as the Huskies' coach and was replaced by Meyer, the defensive coordinator who has been at the Falling Rock school since 2000.

"Everything was laid out," said Meyer. "It was in place pretty well. There's still a lot of stress with it and a lot of things that need to be taken care of.

"I really haven't had to worry about a whole lot of things. I've been able to focus on football. You always hear these coaches say they really don't get to coach a whole lot, but I have been fortunate. I've been able to do that."

Meyer has some talent returning in senior quarterbacks Patrick Ryan and Jamie Hurd, who combined to throw for just over 1,000 yards and seven touchdowns last year. Seniors Zach Fields and Storm Robinson are three-year starters who will anchor the defense, which allowed an average of 29.4 points last year.

"Back in June we were having around 40 kids showing up," said Meyer of the three-week practice period. "In the weight room - and July's the time when kids go on vacation - we averaged about 20.

"I think they realize in order to win games they're going to have to push themselves and work. They've definitely done that. The kids have been dedicated. I'm having a great time."

Gobel feels right at home

Bob Gobel is right where he feels most comfortable, leading a team onto the gridiron.

"It's something I've always enjoyed doing," said the 53-year-old coach who takes over at **Nitro** this season. "It's what we are, it's what we do. It's where I've always had the most fun, being around kids and coaching them.

"It's been a really easy transition, particularly because of two things. One, the tremendous coaching staff we have, and we have a really good group of players. We're real pleased with their attitude and their work ethic. It's made it pretty easy for me."

Gobel, who has made various coaching stops in the Kanawha Valley, begins his first year as a head coach since leading Herbert Hoover in 1999.

The 53-year-old Gobel is the Wildcats' second coach in as many seasons. **Nitro** is coming off a 3-7 campaign, one in which principal Paul McClanahan had to address several issues with the former coaching staff halfway through last year.

"We're really pleased with their unity so far," said Gobel of his coaches and players. "We haven't had a bad day of practice yet. We've had about as much fun as you can have the past four days. Everyone works together real well. It feels good to be back in the saddle."

The cupboard isn't completely bare at **Nitro**.

Mark Chandler, who was the only player last year to rank among the Mountain State Athletic Conference leaders in rushing, passing, receiving and scoring, will compete for the starting quarterback job with junior Bodie Johnson, who started the first half of last season.

Chandler, who alternated between quarterback and receiver, ran for 647 yards and seven touchdowns, completed 37-of-62 passes for 503 yards and four scores, caught 22 passes for 308 yards and a TD and tallied 10 touchdowns and three conversions for 66 points.

Johnson ended up with 964 yards and five TD tosses, but 433 yards and four TDs came in the opening-game 38-35 win against Poca.

"That's a good problem to have, two very capable quarterbacks," said Gobel.

Gobel also sees promise in wide receivers J.T. Flint and Zack Cloxton and linemen Josh Lanham and Sayre.

"We've got a few guys that are capable of making things happen," Gobel said. "I think there's some pieces there if we're able to blend in some young guys."

Chip Ellis | Saturday Gazette-Mail photo

Herbert Hoover coach Tim Meyer looks on as quarterback Jamie Hurd (left) hands off to running back Storm Robinson.

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