

FOOTBALL from page 1B

he was still in high school, have been playing six-man for at least two years now.

“Triangle Lake has been playing since 2018, so we’re coming in pretty well behind schedule, in terms of the other teams that we’ve been playing,” Ford said. “The newest team that I know of is Siletz, and they decided to drop down to six-man last year. And other than that, every other school has been playing six-man for a few years now.”

Because it’s so new for everyone, the coaches are working with patience and understanding to help the kids get to where they need to be. Their current goal is to ensure that everyone learns as much as possible this year.

“I’ve been telling the kids that right now, this is all brand new to us,” said Ford. “We’re going to put our time in, we’re going to prepare you, you guys just need to be preparing yourselves as well. So, I’ve been giving them homework, I’ve been telling them they have to go watch videos. We can get better up here with our fundamentals and our technique, but they actual-

ly need to understand the game that they’re about to go and play. ... We just have to keep learning, because that’s what this entire year is going to be about.”

Indeed, the coaches have a lot to contend with in teaching a style of play that is new to everyone for the most part.

“I have a little bit more experience under my belt at least with the six-man aspect, but it’s still a big learning curve to try and step into Coach Greene’s shoes,” said Krueger. “I still want to do a lot of the same stuff — what he stood for when it came to football and playing the game.”

For Krueger, defensive Coach Bryan Moore was a big role model when he attended Mapleton.

“I’d like to see our defense do fairly well,” Krueger added. “We’re teaching a new shoulder tackling in order to make it a lot safer for the kids, not having that head-to-head contact. There have been a bunch of videos that every coach in Oregon has to go through and watch, and that’s what they’re trying to progress it into to make it better and safer for all the kids. It’s part of Oregon School Activities Asso-

ciation’s (OSAA) Heads Up Football Program.”

Because of the change in staff and the timing of the new hires, unfortunately, the Sailors have not had as much time for summer practice as they would in a typical school year.

“Principal [Brenda] Moyer and the rest of the staff from the school talked to us about it and asked if we were interested in it, and I was, because I was already the middle school coach,” said Krueger. “They contacted us in the beginning of August, so we didn’t have a whole lot of time to really get something set up to where we could get the kids into the weight room before school.”

“Football pretty much started with daily doubles for the most part, just because of the whole transitioning into new coaches,” echoed Ford.

The coaches are already preparing the athletes to plan on summer camps next year.

“Another interesting and unique thing about this team is the fact that we have no seniors,” Ford added. “That’s why they have to really understand that this is a learning experience

this year. We want to go out there and work hard and try to win every game — that’s a given — but we want to go out there and have fun because all of them get at least another year to go and do this. We don’t really know what we’re getting ourselves into, so we want to have fun with it, and prepare ourselves for next year.”

With the work they have been doing this summer, the kids are definitely having fun, and they’ve had the opportunity to earn some money in the process.

“I had a close family friend help me out with bucking hay this summer, so hopefully I’ll be able to get more of the kids to do that to give them a little bit of outside weightlifting experience,” said Krueger.

His family owns a 150+ acre farm with approximately 40 head of cattle.

“We have to put away hay every summer, and I’ve always had a hard time trying to find help until I started coaching,” Krueger said. “Now it’s like, ‘Hey, I know these kids, this would be good for them for football!’ They make a little bit of money, and most kids like to make money during the summer.”

As the season begins, Krueger is also looking toward the future of Mapleton football by aligning his program with the new middle school football program

that is starting back up this year under coach Brian Barrows.

“I’ll be looking forward to having some kids that are at least a little bit experienced with the game if they’ve played in middle school for me before,” said Krueger. “I’m going to talk to the middle school head coach now, to let them know some of the fundamentals of the route tree and certain things that [the kids] will be using at the high school level, so they aren’t just completely blindsided or blown away by a whole bunch of new stuff. Then they can work on some of the minor things at the middle school level, but that will help them out when they get to the high school level.”

It was one of the things Greene and Krueger worked on with the kids so they could be ready for high school football. Several students Krueger coached when they were in sixth and seventh grade will be on the team this year.

Both Krueger and Ford anticipate a learning curve as they get used to the new level of play.

“Now, with six-man football, we have to think about the fact that we have two less players,” Ford said. “So, you have even more ground to cover.”

At this point, the team is fairly small as well, so the

players will have to build their strength because most of them will play the entire game.

“As of right now, we have seven, and we’re hopefully trying to get a few kids out with registration,” said Ford.

Fortunately, the players Krueger and Ford do have definitely want to be there and are already demonstrating prowess on the field.

“Keevyn Walker (a sophomore) has been showing good potential at being the quarterback, as has Alex Burnett, a freshman, and this is his first year ever playing football,” said Ford. “We have some players who are lineman material, but everyone’s a skilled position in six-man football, because even the center can be a wide receiver. It all just depends on how your formation is set up.”

He explained, “Everybody has to be able to catch, run and block. Really, the only position that’s been kind of looked at more specifically has been the quarterback. For everyone else, it really depends on the play and where we think you need to go.”

“I feel like that’s going to be another unique thing about six-man — your position is not going to be very permanent in any way whatsoever. Maybe more on defense, but on offense, who really knows? You could have three linemen, but sometimes you might just have the center.”

The coaches hope to have more kids come out after registration this week, but in the meantime, they are working with what they have, and they are excited to get the season going.

“I’m just looking forward to going out and having a good time with the kids and teaching them all the fundamentals that’ll help to keep them safe and grow them into being good, outstanding young adults,” said Krueger.

The Sailors play their first game of the season at home against Jewell on Friday, Sept. 3, at 7 p.m.

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