

A BRAVE

HAWK FOOTBALL TEAM KICKS OFF NEW SEASON WITH A NEW HEAD COACH

Black paint rolls down senior Hunter Hatfield's face as the pressure of the 455 pound weight pulls him down. Tightening his grip, Hunter forces his way up from a squat and racks the weight. Immediately, teammates and coach Josh Gibson roar with encouragement.

It was the last day of summer two-a-days and the football team transformed into wild men as they painted their faces and got their maxes for "Warrior Day."

"Maxing out turned into something out of 'Brave Heart,'" Hunter said. "We turned into savage animals lifting weights."

The team's first impression of coach Josh Gibson was something they didn't expect. Not only did he have new workouts and drills, he changed the vision for the Hawk football program by giving the team a new sense of intensity.

"Warrior Day was just kind of a fun day to reward us for our hard work during two-a-days, but it was also the first time we got a taste of how crazy coach Gibson is," junior Hunter Adams said. "He's like an army general and treats every game like it's war."

By the time the Hawks hit the field for their first game, coach Gibson had his battle plan ready. The Hawks fell behind early, but with a minute left in the game, junior Dalton Hinton kicked a 42-yard field goal to give the team their first win of the season.

Continued on page 38

HEAD COACH PUSHES FOOTBALL TEAM OUT ON A LIMB

Continued from page 36

The Hawks jumped around in the center of the field as the student section poured out of the stands to join them. "Coach Gibson was jumping like four feet in the air," senior Travis Old said. "Seeing him like that got us really pumped."

After falling short the next week against New Boston, the Hawks fought their battles throughout the season to finish with a district record of 6-4 and a ticket to the playoffs.

"Coach told us we needed to 'punch our ticket', so he got us a giant movie ticket to sign," senior Hunter Hatfield said. "This was the first time in four years we went to the playoffs. It was a dog fight back and forth the whole time, but it was what we worked for all season."

From the first day coach Gibson arrived, he had big plans for the Hawks.

Before warming up for the first game against Pittsburg, the football team crowded into the meeting room to see a giant tree stump sitting on a table. Gibson explained to the confused play-

ers that this stump was a contract for the team. By signing the stump, the team agreed to have good grades and behavior. "I wanted to give them something tangible that could represent their commitment to the team," he said. "I used the tree to represent a family tree between this team and future teams."

After not knowing what to expect from their coach all season, bringing a tree to practice wasn't much of a surprise for the team.

"I remember it was sitting on a table, and I thought 'What the heck. Are we going to work-out with that thing?'" junior Mark Ashby said, "After he explained what it was, I thought it was a great idea. It definitely helped us grow closer as a team."

With the new traditions and the intensity came a new sense of identity.

"When coach Gibson first got here, I knew that he knew what he was doing," Mark said. "He changed the culture of the season."

Page by Kenzie Glover



A SEASON

AFTER A FIRST HALF TOUCHDOWN, junior Dalton Hinton kicks the extra point. With just over a minute left in the game, Dalton put the finishing touches on a Hawk win with a 42-yard field goal which gave the Hawks a playoff berth for the first time in three years. "I was nervous waiting, but I could tell it was good as soon as I hit it," he said. [JBunch]

FIRE

Collin Forbes [12]: "All four years I've played football and put flags up on Fridays. It really gets me hyped for the game to know that everybody is supporting us around the community."

FOOTBALL

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