

LOOKING FORWARD

Varsity football team takes advantage of the offseason to train after losing 17 senior starters

James Nosek | Staff Writer

May is a busy month for the Mason varsity football team, but that's nothing new.

Since head coach Brian Castner took over the program two years ago, an attitude of family has shaped the team into a top GMC competitor, on and off the field. Last season the "Long Green Line" helped lead the Comets to their first playoff appearance in over seven years, but Castner said the motto isn't just another saying; it's a lifestyle instilled in on every one of his players.

"We don't just talk about the 'Long Green Line,' we walk it," Castner said. "We have a staff and group of young men that believe in it."

And the motto doesn't just apply to football.

In the month of May, the Comets will focus on next year's season—that starts August 24 against Springboro—but not before doing many off-the-field projects that center around strengthening the community. Mason will be helping out at both the Marvin Lewis and the Anthony Munoz golf outings/charities, as well as doing work at local churches and work with senior citizens.

"It is a big 'give back' month," Castner said. "There's a lot going on and we're giving a lot back to the community."

The charity work is on top of a training regiment—lifting and agility work Monday, Wednesday, Friday—that has been going strong since January. Castner said this month will be a key to: get the freshmen into the swing of things, start strength and agility testing and prepare for the start of summer camp,

which starts July 16. He also said if the Comets want to repeat the success of last season, then this month of training and preparation is vital looking towards August—especially when 27 seniors are graduating, and 17 of those being starters.

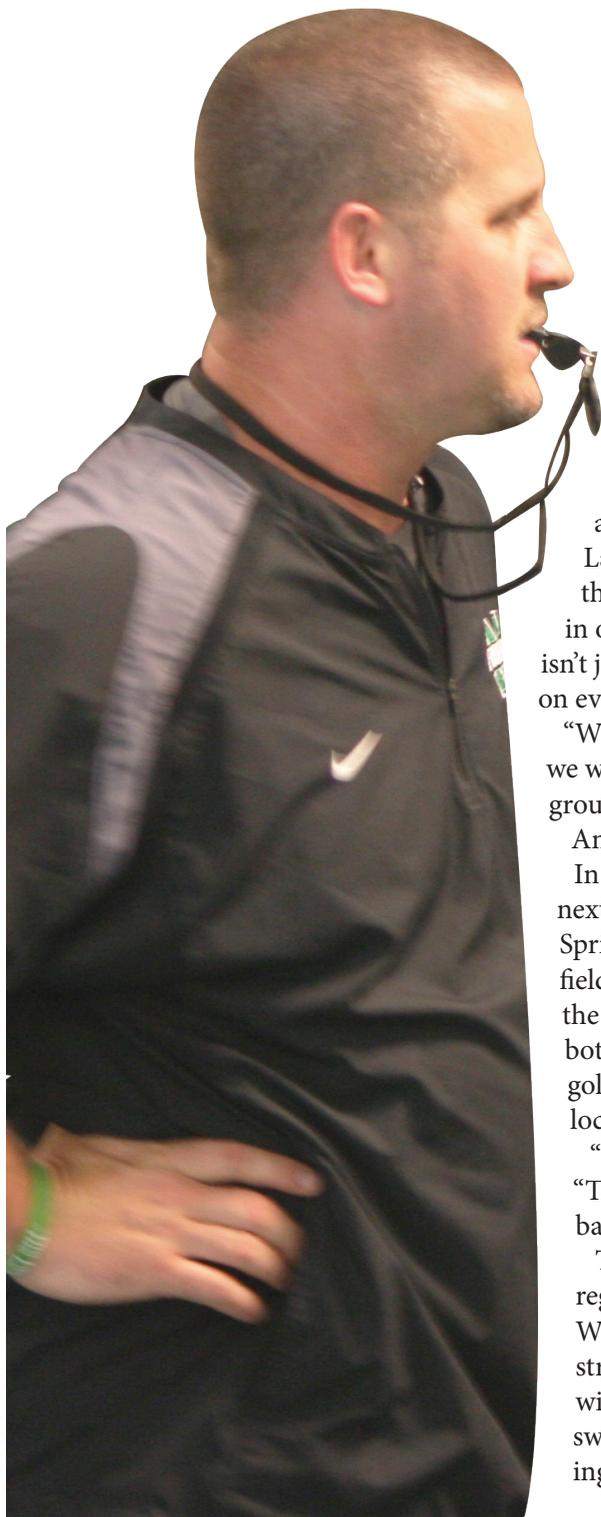
"Every year, regardless if we lose 17 starters or five starters, we are going to continue to have the basic goal, and that is to get better," Castner said. "We have to get in [the weight room], work our tails off, be unselfish and give everything we have."

The only returning starter on offense from the 2011 season is running back Darryl Johnson. The 5'11," 187 lb tailback is coming off a First Team All-GMC year, where he rushed for 1344 yards and 18 touchdowns. Johnson, who Castner said will be the top offensive player for this coming year, has been at the core of the Mason workouts as well as workouts he is completing on own. He said his goal is to outshine his performances of last year, despite the big challenge that is ahead—Johnson's whole offensive line is graduating.

"Next year will be harder just because I'll have a new offensive line," Johnson said. "I'm working hard because I want to be better than last year; I want to be number one."

If Mason wants to avenge their 17-6 first round playoff loss to St. Xavier last November, Castner said it all starts with the hard work in the offseason and the dedication from each member of the "Long Green Line."

"We need to recognize that we are [98] days away from the first game and [64] days away from the start of camp," Castner said. "We need to understand that when we come together as a team on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, that's the number one priority."



TRADING PUNCHES

Mason has owned the all sports trophy since they joined the Greater Miami Conference five years ago.

Do the athletes at MHS care if they're the all sports champions?

Mason athletes do care about having the all sports trophy.

It gives us a certain pride as a school knowing that as a whole we are the best athletic group in the league even if one sport doesn't do as well as another. This year gives us a special sense of pride due to the fact that we set the record for all around points. Go Comets! It's been a great four years.



Joseph Spencer

People in general don't realize that the All-Sports Trophy represents the

dominance of a sports program. That's essentially what it is. I think athletes are even more clueless to the accomplishments that the Mason Athletics program achieves every year—five All-Sports Trophies in five years. They think it's just a small pat on the back because of how under the radar the trophy really is. It is a bigger deal than people play it out to be.



James Nosek

For athletes at Mason, the all sports trophy is just another check mark on

our long list of accomplishments. We've established dominance in the GMC, so by now people are just used to all of the accomplishments that Mason athletes achieve. It seems like we pretty much expect to get the all sports trophy, so when we do get it, it's not that big of a deal to them, because we've got it for the past four years.



Katelyn Cain