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Adjustments during a high school football game are often the difference between winning and losing. The high school football coaches and student-athletes in Randolph County have already been forced to make numerous adjustments before the ball was placed on the tee for the opening game.

With Covid-19 first delaying everyone's season for nearly six months, teams were allowed to begin official workouts in early February. But it didn't take long for the virus to cause even more havoc to the schedule as a couple of teams were shut down early due to being quarantined.

"I am eternally grateful we are getting to play football," said Wheatmore High School coach Phillip Yarbrough. "I wasn't so sure at one time that was going to be the case."

Scheduled to open the season Friday are four Randolph County teams with two more battling one another on Wednesday, March 3. On Friday, Asheboro will host Southeast Guilford, Randleman will travel to Wheatmore and Trinity hosts South Stokes.

Eastern Randolph, which had its preparation halted for two weeks due to Covid-19 protocols, will travel to Providence Grove for a delayed season opener on March 3.

Southwestern Randolph, which experienced a halt in its program as well due the virus, will open Friday, March 5 at Eastern Guilford.

"It's been definitely unusual circumstances," Yarbrough said. "This week we practiced in gyms and had a scrimmage on a turf soccer field. Luckily at Wheatmore, we avoided a lot of (problems due to the virus) with football players. It's still kind of waiting for the other shoe to drop. First moving to February and having to deal with weather this time of year is hard. And knowing the state hasn't given us any room to reschedule is tough."

While Wheatmore was able to get in a scrimmage against Thomasville, although it took place on a turf soccer field, the Warriors' first opponent didn't. Randleman's scheduled scrimmage with SWR was called off.

"It's kind of like you have had a deer in your scope for an hour and it's time to do the deal now," said first-year RHS head coach Shane Timmons. "We are very excited to play and we told them to be thankful for every day you get to put a helmet and shoulder pads on. You have to be grateful for everything you get. Whether it's 11 games or one game."

There are still values, Timmons said, teams can look to in order to ease the difficulties of the season.

"You have to keep things in perspective," Timmons said. "There will be adversity, not if but when. You always have your priorities to fall back on. With us it's faith, family, football. There's a lot of adversity, but we're playing football."

Like Timmons, Asheboro High School's Blake Brewer is a first-year head coach with plenty of coaching experience. The long-time assistant for a number of head coaches takes over for Kevin Gillespie, who is now in charge of the Thomasville High School program.

"In a way, I guess I just didn't know any better," Brewer said of the hurdles that had to be cleared and the hoops that had to be jumped through. "It's always something. When we first had workouts, the guidelines would seem to change all the time. It's been tough. But luckily, we haven't had any hiccups yet. We've had some kids who have had to be quarantined, but a lot of schools have battled that. We go beyond and above the guidelines set."

Practices at AHS have been much like everywhere else.

"All summer long we geared for August 1," Brewer said. "Then they pushed that back. So you have to pump the breaks and then reload. You can tell they are ready to play, but you can tell they had some time off. Unless they played track or basketball, they haven't been a part of an organized sport for a long time. It's been different. But we feel we have a good plan in place for Southeast Guilford."

While in normal years, basketball programs had to wait for their football players to finish the season, football teams had to wait until the basketball season concluded in this unusual year.

"They are pretty resilient," Yarbrough said of the student-athletes. "I think it bothers adults more than kids. Being a school of only about 700 kids, a lot of our skill position players are basketball players, so we've had them for only a couple of days. Usually, you have two scrimmages and we usually play at least four nonleague games. We are really going into Week One blind."

At Providence Grove, the Patriots' opener against ER is delayed and like every team, there are obstacles to get around, but coach Calvin Brown said the team is anxious to take the field.

"We're facing the same struggles everyone is; the weather, basketball," Brown said. "We know there will be changes daily. We will have to grow with it and adjust to it. More disappointed than anything we are not playing this week. We are ready. We know this year it's going to be let's go play and be able to adapt and adjust."

Adapt and adjust: The motto for the 2021 high school football season.