

August 30, 2023

By Dennis Garcia  
SportsTone.net

CLIMAX - Trust is essential when it comes to high school football, especially when a school hires a new head football coach. It doesn't come immediately or easily, but the players, administration and community must demonstrate their trust and belief in so many ways.

The Providence Grove High School varsity football team is now under the leadership of David Hayes, who is in his first year as a head varsity football coach at any school. And he's earned the trust and support of his players, administration and a community in a very short time.

"The amount of support we have in the community and in the school, all those little outside things, is incredible" Hayes said. "You want them, but you can't make them happen. We have a great athletic director, a great principal and we have parents who are doing everything they can. It's exceptionally good here. Providence Grove has been a little bit Eastern Randolph and a little bit Randleman. We are starting to shift the atmosphere a little and have our own culture."

Winning certainly helps when a new coach takes over and makes some changes to a program that has experienced six straight winning seasons. Hayes and the Patriots, who are led by a first-year quarterback who has played football a total of just two years, opened with a 24-7 win over East Davidson and then followed that with a 45-12 win over Southern Guilford.

"It's way better to be 2-0 than 0-2," Hayes said. "It was really good to get the first one out of the way. After that, it was may the chips fall where they may. It relieved me. Now I can go coach. At the end of the day with any team, any sport at any level, you have to see results. We preached all spring and then all summer long and they had success with it."

Wins, losses and schemes weren't the first things Hayes had to worry about when taking over the program last February. Most of the assistant football staff followed Calvin Brown to Asheboro High School, meaning Hayes had a coaching staff to fill.

"The biggest thing we had to work on was we lost the majority of the staff and we had to find the right people to be here and then we had to have the kids trust us," Hayes said. "Calvin did such a great job with wins and losses, they believed in what they did. At the end of the day, our kids have responded well and they are hungry and rose to the occasion."



*David Hayes is in his first year as head football coach at Providence Grove High School.*

Hayes said he had a vision when first taking over the Patriots. But that vision was adjusted quickly.

"I came in with a vision and we adjusted that vision, not because they couldn't or wouldn't, but because of what they do well," Hayes said. "We're a balanced team who throws when we have advantages. We are a physical team who can run the ball. I want to be a running team."

The quarterback position, of course, is key to success and Hayes and the coaching staff looked to senior James Ellis, a player who stepped onto a football field for the first time as a junior. The wide receiver caught 10 passes for 148 yards and one touchdown last year. This year, his role has definitely changed.

"He is an improviser," Hayes said of Ellis, who is 9 of 17 for 144 yards with a touchdown, no interceptions and 137 yards rushing in the first two wins. "He throws the ball really well and he's 100 percent a dual threat. He was a receiver last year and he is handling as much as we throw at him. He has good command in the huddle. I've been so impressed. The kid didn't play football until last year and we handed him the keys to the Porsche. He is a very smart kid."



*Patriots quarterback James Ellis.*

Ellis said he welcomed the challenge and knows there's plenty more improvement that needs to be done.

"It's a big change for me," Ellis said. "Last year at wide receiver, I had like 10 receptions. I didn't have the ball in my hands that much. When you have the ball in your hands every play, you have to know what everyone's assignment is on every play. You have to know what the running backs are doing, what I am doing, what every receiver is doing. I think from the first spring workout when I was there to now, I really worked hard on being the best I can be. All these quarterbacks have been doing it since at least middle school and my progression has been going well. I still have a lot of progression to make."

Ellis said he has learned to trust the new coaching staff. That is a must if the Patriots are going to be successful.

"When you have a new coaching staff and you lose 22 seniors and only have three or four returning starters, you have to have trust in them," Ellis said of the coaching staff. "It takes a lot for a team to trust what they have to do."

Hayes and the coaching staff have quickly earned that trust with the team, the administration and the community.