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RAMSEUR - Most high school football teams have a bye week built into their schedule. Where in the schedule that bye week comes can be a help or a hindrance.

Certainly, when teams are struggling, the extra week of practice can be beneficial. But when a team is playing well, a team can get awfully antsy to get back on the field and underneath those Friday night lights.

The Eastern Randolph High School varsity football team is in its bye week after recording three straight impressive victories. A season-opening setback to Eastern Alamance was followed by wins over Asheboro (69-7), Walkertown (35-21) and Williams (28-21). Now the Wildcats must wait until next week to get back on the field.



"Most of the time when you really need a bye week, you are a week short or a week late," ER coach Burton Cates said. "We could have really used one after the Eastern Alamance game. But it gives you a chance to work on some things that you did in the spring and summer. You see kids at the start of August and you just don't know what they could give to your team. Now you have a little better understanding and you can work on some things."

Of course, everyone involved in the program wants to play. But entering a bye week after a win, or in Eastern Randolph's case three straight wins, is a lot easier to handle than coming into the bye week after a loss.

"It's easier on the coaches on the bye week after a win because you're not critical," Cates said. "After a loss, you feel everything you did was wrong that week and you're critical of everything. It's definitely easier on the coaches and the players."

One of the main concerns during a bye week is making sure the players are going full-tilt. Cates said he and his coaching staff attempt to make everything a competition so no one slacks off. Nearly every one-on-one and team drill is done with competition in mind.

That, of course, aids in avoiding injuries.

"We tell our players 'If you go 100 percent, the chances of getting hurt is reduced,' " Cates said. "If you go only 70 percent, you're asking for an injury. You need to get out of your bye week healthy."

ER is taking this week to work on a few specifics.

"Our biggest area we worked on this week was tackling," Cates said. "We have gotten better because of the competition we played. We needed to be more consistent in carrying out our blocks all the way to the whistle."

The Wildcats have one more game to sharpen their skills before opening the Piedmont Athletic Conference season against Southwestern Randolph on Oct. 30. Then it's five straight weeks of conference action.

After this week, there will be no more breaks for ER.