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CLIMAX - With the start of the high school football regular season just weeks away, Providence Grove High School head coach David Hayes resigned his position.

Hayes turned in his resignation August 2, just days after schools were allowed to begin practice for the upcoming season. Football season opened July 31. Calling it a very difficult decision, Hayes said he needed to spend more time with his two sons.

Mark Heilig, who is beginning his 31st season as a football coach, was named the school's interim coach, PG Athletic Director Cody Moran announced.

Heilig was the team's outside linebackers coach last season.

Hayes spent just one season at the Patriots' helm, finishing with a 6-5 record, including a 2-3 record in the Piedmont Athletic Conference.

"The timing was unfortunate," Hayes said of his decision to leave the football program but remain as a Physical Education teacher at PG. "I had to make a decision that was in the best interest of as many people as possible. The timing was not what I expected, but at the end of the day, it was a decision I had to make."

Last season, the Patriots won their first four games and five of their first six before falling in four of their last five. PG outscored foes 119-53 in winning their first four contests.

"I do take a lot of pride in doing a good job," Hayes said, adding he was never asked to resign. "It's always tough because you feel like you have a plan. Sometimes you find yourself in situations where you have to make adjustments."

Heilig was immediately named interim coach for the upcoming season, which begins August 23 at home against East Davidson.

"As a staff, we looked in the mirror to see who has the most experience and Coach Heilig was named the interim coach for the year," Moran said. "With 30 years of experience, we have the guy who can lead this team."



David Hayes. Photo provided.



*Interim head coach Mark Heilig.
Photo provided.*

Heilig, who has worked under a number of head coaches including Burton Cates, Calvin Brown, Seth Baxter and Todd Schuping, will be a high school head football coach for the first time. He has spent most of his high school career at PG and Eastern Randolph. He previously was a middle school head coach.

"This is where I want to be, in this community," Heilig said. "I have the support of a real young coaching staff which is awesome. We have three who played right here at PG. Having those alumni, coaches who want to come back here makes it easier for me."

Heilig, who mapped out a strategy when he applied for the position when Hayes was hired, said he doesn't expect many changes in philosophies.

"I felt like we had a pretty good plan in place," Heilig said.

"We may change the terminology and tweak a few things, but we're still going to try and put our kids in good spots where they make plays."