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**RANDLEMAN** - The second year for a head coach at any high school is usually a year in which he feels more comfortable in many areas. He's more comfortable with the players, more comfortable knowing the players are familiar with his offensive and defensive schemes and more comfortable with his assistant coaching staff.

Randleman High School's David Diamont said he's more comfortable in all those areas as he begins his second season at the Tigers' helm this high school football season.

"From a personal perspective, way more comfortable," Diamont said as the Tigers prepared for their season opener Thursday night at Providence Grove High School. "Being here for a full calendar year and doing things as a head coach for the first time through the calendar year makes me more comfortable in the sense of head coaching responsibilities."

Diamont said the first thing any new coach has to establish when he steps onto a new campus was accomplished during the Tigers' 7-4 season a year ago.

"Whenever you go into a new place, the most important thing is you have to sell yourself and what you believe in, especially to the seniors and their parents," Diamont said. "The most important thing last year was getting that senior group to believe. That was my biggest obstacle, as it is for a lot of coaches going into unknown territory."

As the season progressed, Diamont said he became more familiar with each player.

"As a head coach, you have to figure out each and every kid," Diamont said. "What flips their switch? What motivates them? I do know the kids a little bit more. Having them in the weight room all off-season is massive. Throughout the season and in the summer, you pick up more and more from the kids, being around them day to day. We have a pretty firm grip on what we have."

The Tigers ran into a little bit of bad luck last year. After finishing the season 7-3, RHS had a bye scheduled for its final week of the regular season. Coupled with a first-round bye in the new playoff format, the Tigers closed the regular season on Oct. 24 and didn't play its second-round playoff game until Nov. 14.



"Last year I felt I learned a lot," Diamont said. "Last year, the kids were getting to know me and what my vision is for this program. I have a year under my belt and we are in a better spot than last year. That's nothing negative with where we were last year."

Not only did Diamont have to learn an entire team of players, but his coaching staff as well.

"Getting to know the staff in general away from football was a primary step," Diamont said. "Getting to know them and their families. Their wives, girlfriends, do they have children? We have coaches who are homegrown. They went to Randleman, lived in Randleman their entire life. It was important to get to know them personally."

"With the returning coaches from last year, I can delegate more because I know their strengths," added Diamont. "I am getting more input and I feel we are all more comfortable in having open conversations and collaborating among ourselves."

That collaboration should pay big dividends this year, the second season the Tigers are competing in the new Piedmont Athletic Conference. RHS is the only team from Randolph County in the conference, which features Central Davidson, High Point Andrews, Lexington, Ledford and Montgomery Central. Randleman finished in second place last year to PAC champion Central Davidson.

"We approached last season very unknown, but I do think our staff did a very good job of making our kids aware of what to expect," Diamont said of the Tigers first year in the new PAC. "We made them very aware that this conference is going to be very different than in the past. In the skill positions, they will typically be more athletic. They were going to see more speed in conference play. Speed is a very big difference-maker in football."

The Tigers will prepare for this year's PAC schedule by playing Providence Grove, Eastern Randolph, Southwestern Randolph, Asheboro and Felton Grove, a new school located in Apex.

"Our kids are understanding we have to become quicker, faster and overall more athletic," Diamont said.

"Every one of those teams (sans Felton Grove), I take pride in saying are Randolph County teams that are well coached and disciplined," Diamont said. "It's a good non-conference schedule that will prepare us for the conference."