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Photo by Tracy Dreslinski
 The Hazel Park High defense huddles before a play during a scrimmage Aug. 20 at Royal Oak High.

Ready to roll

A year later, Hazel Park High football shows it's improved

By Christian Davis
 C & G Sports Writer

HAZEL PARK — Hazel Park High football coach Scott Guthrie described his team in one word — “gritty.”

And the Vikings lived up to their coach’s assessment during their game against Berkley High Aug. 28 on the Bears’ home field.

Hazel Park trailed Berkley 14-0 and later 20-14 before scoring with a minute left to take a 36-28 victory.

“They’re going to battle to the end,” Guthrie said of his guys Aug. 31 at practice.

Last season, Berkley beat Hazel Park 30-20 in the season opener, and the Bears returned 16 starters from that squad.

“It’s definitely encouraging that (Berkley) beat us last year and returned a lot of their guys, and then we turned around and beat them this year,” said Guthrie said, who has 13 starters back of his own. “So we’re ahead of where we were last year at this point.”

Senior captains Cody Thomas, Dominick Wiggins and Clint Treadway agreed.

“A win like that definitely builds momentum for the rest of the season,” Thomas said. “It also shows how much we’ve grown and how much better we got over the summer.”

“It kind of shows us where we are,” Wiggins added.

The trio also agreed that the biggest difference in this squad is the hard work that was put in during the summer months.

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The captains said they all made sure to call each player on the roster for weight training and passing camps.

“We’re a dedicated, hard-working team,” Treadway said. “There’s not that much horsing around in practice. We know when we need to be serious and when to have a good time.”

The Vikings are also a close-knit team, according to Thomas.

“We’ve been playing together for about six years,” he said. “We’re family. We work together, and that’s why we were successful.”

For the Vikings to keep winning, Guthrie said they need to be crisper in recognizing their assignments on both sides of the ball.

Thomas said the defense also needs to pursue the ball better.

“We can’t let them come to us,” the linebacker said. “We’ve got to go to them and fill up the holes or go get the ball carrier.”

The Vikings played Bloomfield Hills Andover after press time. Hazel Park beat the Barons 28-10 last season, and Andover opened this season with a 48-0 loss to Auburn Hills Avondale.

The Vikings were in search of their first 2-0 start since 1996.

You can reach Sports Writer Christian Davis at cdavis@candgnews.com or at (586) 498-1062.



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