

Wolves hit reset button

- Rome High's football team is out to get better and not rest after a championship season.

 By Jeremy Stewart

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PREP FOOTBALL

Spring practice for the Rome High football team this year has been a continuation of the mentality that the coaching staff has instilled in the players for the last two seasons.

The Wolves are working to keep their nose to the grindstone and their focus on improving, because the defending Class 5A state champions aren't going to rest on their laurels.

"We set our sights, we have our goals and we stay with the simplicity of those goals — perform every day and try to get 1 percent better every day," head coach John Reid said after wrapping up the final day of spring practice Thursday. With several of the players who helped Rome capture its first state title in school history returning, Reid said there is an expectation to put their success behind them and keep pushing for excellence.

"Our deal is to try to be a step above where we were last year. To be better than last year's team you would have to do a lot of things."

Reid and his staff are hoping they have planted the seeds of that growth during the two weeks of spring practice, which wraps up tonight with a scrimmage at North Paulding High School in Dallas.

SPRING FOOTBALL GAMES

TODAY

Model at Darlington, 7 p.m.

Rome at North Paulding, 7 p.m.

"I think it would be a good picture to see where we're at," Reid said. "We've worked all winter, met all winter, lifted all winter and come up with a plan for these kids. I think over the course of the nine practices there's been some ebb and flow."

Rome's practice Thursday included some scouting plays for the team to be prepared for the Class 7A squad that went 7-4 last season and returns a fair share of veteran players. It's a chance for those with something to prove to show the coaches they've gotten the most from the offseason and spring. There

are kids who are going to be in there and have to replace some guys we lost, and this is going to be a big night for them," Reid said. "This is their first time on a live stage representing a team that has high expectations, and there is a pressure to perform from your peers, which is good.

"Some of the veterans, they're probably just going to be chomping at the bit to play."

Those "veterans" include a defensive line that was dominant in the playoffs last season and includes four Division I prospects, including recent LSU commits Jamarcus Chatman, Jaquon Griffin and Adam Anderson. On offense, a solid running back group led by Jamious Griffin returns to help returning quarterback Knox Kadum.

Losses like outside linebacker Jaylen Griffin and offensive linemen Blake Bradfield and Zach Kadum do leave some question marks for the Wolves as they head into summer.

"I think it's just as hard to handle success as it is to achieve it.

"That's something that is very difficult and it has to be learned," Reid said.

"There are missing cogs that have got to be replaced and chemistry and all those things, so I think that we threw that out the door in terms of any kind of idea of repeating, or back-to-back, or anything like that."



Jeremy Stewart/Rome News-Tribune

Rome High quarterback Knox Kadum (right) looks to avoid Adam Anderson (19) as Jackson Norton comes in to block during spring practice Thursday.



Jeremy Stewart/Rome News-Tribune

Rome High wide receivers coach Nick Bridges (right) gives instructions to Malik Stewart during spring practice Thursday at Rome High School.



Jeremy Stewart/Rome News-Tribune

Rome High running back Nick Burge carries the ball through traffic during spring practice Thursday at Rome High School.