

Sights and sounds of football's return fill the air at PCEP

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Aug. 16, 2013 |
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Canton football players run through a spirited 'Hoot and Holler' drill during the first practice day with full pads. / JOHN KEMSKI | EXPRESS PHOTO



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Canton assistant football coach Dave Smilo (right) talks to a player about a practice drill Thursday. / JOHN KEMSKI | EXPRESS PHOTO

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The sounds of the season began in earnest Thursday.

On the opening day of full-pad workouts, Canton [football](#) players' shoulder pads were cracking.

The players also were "Hooting and Hollering" their way through the spirited, free-for-all 4-vs.-4 practice drill — and yelling encouragement amid whistle toots.

"We're still working on putting our offense and defense in and just working on our basic drills to be able to execute those things," Chiefs' varsity head coach Tim Baechler said. "On the first day of pads the boys do a little 'Hoot-and-Holler' session, where it [teaches](#) getting off blocks, tackling, blocking and the kids have fun with it."

In just 11 days, Canton will be hitting and tackling for real. The opener is 6:30 p.m. Thursday, Aug. 29 against West Ottawa on the junior varsity field at Plymouth-Canton Educational Park.

According to Baechler, built into the first weeks of practice is preparing for that Week 1 opponent. And, maybe start to tune up for Week 2 opponent Brighton.

So far, so good as far as the opening week of official practices are concerned.

"The kids are great kids, they're working hard," Baechler continued. "We've got a lot of depth on the offensive line, the defensive line. I'm thrilled with what I'm seeing right now."

Canton wasn't the only team sharpening up for the 2013 season Thursday at PCEP.

Plymouth's Wildcats were busy doing the same on the west end of the sprawling campus.

Meanwhile, Salem wasn't even at the Park for the start of practices. The Rocks spent the week at Adrian [College](#) for a team-building camp.

"It gives us a way to focus," said Salem head coach Kurt Britnell. "No outside interference, no [cell phones](#). Just three and a half days of football."

Plymouth and Salem will face each other in the season opener, 7 p.m. Aug. 29 on PCEP's varsity turf field.

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