

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: Greencastle-Antrim hosts East Pennsboro for home opener

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By Ben Destefan

After two scrimmages and a pair of games away from home, Greencastle-Antrim finally gets to play under the lights at Kaley Field Friday night.

The opponent just happens to be one of the best on the Blue Devils' schedule.

Looking to gain some type of traction, G-A hosts highly-talented East Pennsboro for a 7 p.m. kickoff, completing a non-league slate that has been anything but friendly thus far.

Working on a short week, the Blue Devils (0-2) are trying to rebound following Saturday's 41-3 loss at Milton Hershey while the Panthers (2-0) enter on a roll, having blasted both Big Spring (49-21) and West Perry (39-7) to open the season.

"Nobody has really even slowed them down," G-A head coach Chuck Tinninis said of East Penn. "We knew that three of our toughest opponents were going to be at the beginning of the year, especially a veteran team like this. We want to find ways to slow them down and be around in the fourth quarter when anything can happen."

For that to transpire, the Blue Devils will have to account for Panthers running back Onasis Neely. Through the first two games, the junior has rushed 43 times for 445 yards and eight touchdowns. Last week against West Perry, Neely ripped off 240 yards and four scores on only 17 carries. In the opener against Big Spring, Neely went for 205 and four touchdowns while also adding a receiving score.

"He's definitely one of, if not the best back around," Tinninis said. "They want him to get his 20 touches a game behind an offensive line that is very experienced. They can also throw the ball to some nice receivers, so we're going to have to defend against both phases."

East Penn quarterback Payton Morris has certainly been efficient in his first two outings, completing 29 of 47 passes for 313 yards and three touchdowns with no interceptions.

While the defensive effort will be pivotal, G-A's offense must show signs of improvement if the Blue Devils intend to hang around.

After totaling just 188 yards in the season-opening shutout against Chambersburg, Greencastle managed only 106 this past Saturday, unable to sustain drives and keep the defense off the field for any extended period of time. Considering the 90-plus degree temperatures, that wasn't exactly a recipe for success.

Fortunately, the Blue Devils will have starting running back Demetrius Burton in uniform after serving a one-game suspension. The likes of Caleb Schaeffer, Kyrin Zimmerman and Isaiah Peck have also shown flashes when given the ball, a concept that will need to continue Friday night.

"We've had a good week of practice," Tinninis said. "The big thing is that we see improvement every time we take the field. Believe it or not, I did see some improvement against Milton Hershey, especially early on. Our kids our playing hard, they're working hard and we're excited to finally be at home."