





After a bye to follow the end of the regular season, coupled with a bye in the first round of the state playoffs, Mason Hollingsworth and his Whitefield Academy teammates will have gone three weeks without a game before returning to action next Friday night.

Special - Laura Moon

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Whitefield Academy had a first-round bye in the Class A-AAA Private state playoffs, putting the Wolfpack in the middle of a three-week layover before taking the field next Friday night.

That leaves fifth-seeded Whitefield hoping to avoid the rust when it hosts either No. 21 Darlington or No. 12 Aquinas for the second-round Nov. 21.

How does a team stay focused during a 21-day idle stretch? Whitefield also earned a bye last year, so it at least had a blueprint to work from and learned what worked and what did not.

This year, Robert Walsh and the Whitefield coaching staff altered their approach. Instead of giving players a few days off to get their minds away from football, they conducted practices on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday over the last two weeks.

Walsh said workouts were intense with live scrimmaging, and the team was able to get a head-start on preparations on both potential opponents. Next week, the program will revert back to a normal practice schedule.

“We’ve had great energy at practice,” Walsh said. “Our kids know how close we are. Our senior class don’t want the season to end. The energy has been awesome, and I am hoping that they can do that again (next) week.”

An eight-game winning streak highlighted Whitefield’s season, with seven of the victories determined by more than two touchdowns. A 31-7 loss to Fellowship Christian to end the regular season gave the Wolfpack a renewed sense of focus moving forward.



“Defensively, we played well,” Walsh said of the Fellowship game. “It was two plays in the first half (that was the difference). They had to earn everything they got.”

On the offensive side of the ball, it was more of a learning experience.

Whitefield moved the ball against Fellowship, but it was the plays that resulted in negative yardage that became the issue. Over the last two weeks, the Wolfpack put more emphasis on handling long-yardage situations.

Whitefield has relied this season on its running game behind Mason Hollingsworth, who leads Cobb County in rushing with 203 carries for 1,851 yards and 29 touchdowns. Quarterback Landon Ryan has thrown for 1,336 yards with 14 touchdowns and two interceptions.

Should the Wolfpack end up facing Darlington (3-7), it would be a rematch of a game from Week 4, when Whitefield rolled to a 56-28 victory. Hollingsworth ran for 243 yards and four touchdowns.

Class AAA Aquinas (6-4), which is averaging 33.4 points per game, opened the season winning five of its first six, but it dropped its last two and three of its last four. Three of the Fighting Irish’s four losses have come in one-score games.