Kinnick football players return from camp after conquering Mount Fuji

Story by Greg Mitchell,
CFAY Public Affairs

Nile C. Kinnick High School football team returned from a week of training at Camp Fuji which highlighted with a climb of Mount Fuji Aug. 11. The camp was created to usher in the beginning of the upcoming 2012 season.

"The purpose for this trip was to develop some sort of connection between all of the teammates," said Kinnick football head coach Daniel Joley. "We were looking for some type of male bonding and comrade to occur, and I think we were able to achieve that."

During their visit, the football team focused on physical fitness that ranged from plyometrics, ropes training, tire flops and buddy carries, and several other exercises. The coaches covered playbook material and got a look at the overall talent, assessing who would be best suited in whatever roles were tasked both defensively and offensively.

"I think we have a great feel for where to put people, so now it's about how to get everybody involved," said Joley. "We have almost 60 kids out here, but we can only play 11 at a time so we have a lot of kids trying to work their way up into some playing situations. But we already know who our starting 11 are on both sides of the field."

Several of the new players who are potential starters on this year's junior varsity team, were excited to arrive at Camp Fuji.

"Before we got on the bus to leave Yokosuka, I was wondering what it would be like and what we were going to be doing," said freshman Chris Deibel. "Once we got there, the minute we got off the bus it was non-stop and we had a lot of things to do. Now that I am back, I am more ready to start the season than I was when we first left."

At Camp Fuji, the football team was submitted to a boot camp-style atmosphere with a tempo that compares to what most of their parents went through when they joined the military.

"I wasn't too nervous because I have been to a camp similar to this one when I was playing with my previous team," said freshman Nick Gallagher. "It was tough but after this camp, I got a good idea of what our coaching staff wants us to do, so there are no surprises from this point on. I can't wait for the new season to begin."

Kinnick High School football players, coaching staff and parents raise their walking sticks in unison to signify the successful completion of climbing Mount Fuji during their football training camp. The team withstood the elements and altitude of climbing Mount Fuji to arrive back to Yokosuka in preparation for the upcoming 2012 football season.

Photo by Cindy Joley

Kinnick High School football players challenge the Marine Corps obstacle course in Camp Fuji during their football training camp.

Photo by Cindy Joley

For the senior classmen, the focus was more on rounding up their high school careers on a high note. This camp set's the tone for the future.

"This camp has definitely helped our development as a team," said Alexander Banks, senior and one of the leaders of the varsity team. "I saw a lot of bonding, and I also saw a lot of players come into their own on the field. I think coach got a good glimpse of who's who at different positions. I was also surprised at the effort put in by our new freshmen teammates. They seemed to fit in nicely with no problem at all."

All of the players were challenged by the final task of the camp, climbing Mount Fuji.

"Training with Marines was already tough, but I think I would have to say that climbing Mount Fuji was probably the hardest thing I have ever done," said freshman Nick Bell. "I am just glad that it is over with and I can concentrate more on the season ahead."

Forty-three players successfully climbed the mountain.

"There is a huge difference from the time we got ready to get on the bus to leave Yokosuka, to the time we came back," said Joley. "About 20 parents came and climbed with us and some of them have told me that they could see a total difference in their kids after leaving home."

The team will continue to hold intensive workouts throughout the week, leading up to their pre-season game Aug. 18 against Yokosuka Gaukuen at Berkey Field.

"After this camp, I think these guys understand what it takes to overcome adversity and when you get in the season these kids are faced with school work, all kinds of responsibilities at home, organizing themselves and I think we really dialed them in," said Joley. "It took three days to get them in a straight line but we got them loud and proud and I think 90 percent of what football is all about is being able to organize your mind. You got to be able to walk on to the football field focused and ready to go."