

# AHS football having great first summer under Snider

By Mike Monahan

ARCOLA – The first day of official football practice in Illinois high schools is August 7 but just like other schools the Arcola Purple Riders have been doing things to get them ready for the first day. This is the first year under new coach Steve Snider, who has four assistant coaches in Tommy Eddleman, Adam Reel, Steven Franco and Ronny Olvera.

Players have been lifting in the weight room Monday through Thursday mornings, have been in two 7-on-7's and a lineman challenge with their team camp coming up Monday.

"We have had great, great participation from freshmen through seniors," said Snider. "They all get a chance to work together, which I think is great. Getting them to work; older kids with the younger kids. It is all just intermixing because they are all part of the same thing especially when you look at Class 1A high school football. It is not a fresh-soph or a freshman team or a fresh-soph, junior varsity or varsity team. We are all one team and we will be practicing together and getting to know each other. So it is important that the older guys bring the younger guys along with them. They will show them what it is like to be a Purple Rider with a great tradition and get them into that right away."

It has not been exactly what you would think for Snider as he has lived in his in-law's Mini-Winnebago RV at the Arcola Camper Stop since June.

Snider has been very impressed with the people of Arcola.

"The people have been awesome!" said Snider. "I don't know if I have ever felt more welcome in a place before and I coached seven years in my hometown. The town itself is also great. It has that perfect small town atmosphere and gives you the chance to really get to know people."

The people here have been outstanding. It is overwhelming how welcoming everybody has been everywhere I go. That is awesome. The support for the school is unparalleled. There is no place that I have been or seen that had the same community support that the school does. So people have their priorities in a very, very good place."

Arcola has also had a skill positions camp (July 10-12) and a lineman camp (July 17-19).

"We got a good chunk of our playbook installed," said Snider. "The kids are great. They are catching on really, really fast. So, we have been able to get into stuff like that with a new blocking scheme, a new defensive scheme and everything like that and they have had a great time with that."

## Maroa-Forsyth 7-on-7

At Maroa it was just Arcola and Maroa-Forsyth in the 7-on-7.

"It is great competition and we got a great look for an hour," said Snider. "That is a great thing. I don't want to go to things where we are not going to get better or where we are not going to make us better at football. It poured the entire night and it made us a little bit mentally tougher and I think that there is a lot that can be said about that. The group handled it really, really well. We really played well and did a lot of good things. We built on things



ARCOLA FOOTBALL COACH Steve Snider spent just over a month in his in-laws Mini-Winnebago RV while meeting with the team in the weight room and other activities. Snider is in his first year. Photo by Mike Monahan.

throughout the night and that made it all the nicer when we had skill camp. When I explained things they had seen it once before so it really started to click this week (July 12). The biggest part is not worrying about wins or losses in the 7-on-7 tournaments, especially with a new coach. Them understanding the terminology, understanding me and our relationship with that and how to go back and forth and learn new things is the main thing. They have done an absolutely great job so far with that."

## Transition

Snider is very pleased with the transition of going from former coach Nick Lindsay's things he did to how Snider runs things.

"I owe a lot to Nick," said Snider of the smooth transition. "He has obviously coached some tremendous young men, not just football players, over the last several years and that is evident in everything we do. They are responsive to coaching. They understand that we are trying to make them better. We are not trying to get on them individually. We are trying to make everybody a football player and a human being. I owe a lot to him (Lindsey) because that made this transition really, really smooth. The kids are all bought in."

One of the first times Snider was at the high school last spring he met with all of the (to be) seniors.

## Early days of spring

"One thing that stuck with me, more than anything else, I just talked to the guys about being open and understanding that things are going to be a little bit different. Tyson Lewis looked at me and said, "Coach you are not going to have any problems from anybody. We don't want to be the team that is known for not going to the playoffs two years in a row (has not happened since 2012 and 2013). I remember that exact dialogue and they were all yes, that is exactly what it is and that 1) made me feel really welcome and 2) it showed me that these guys are here for all of the right reasons. They are not here for themselves. They are not here just for Nick. They are not here for just me. They are here for each other. They want to get better at football and be a better

linemen don't have to sit there and listen to me. Is there a little bit that has to go into it when we are all together? Absolutely, but to break that down and kind of separate that I think we have been able to kind of install things a lot quicker. I think there is more retention because they are able to pay attention for longer periods of time because it is directly impacting them and what they are doing."

## Leadership academy

"We have had one in June and one we had on July 12," said Snider. "It is with all of the juniors and seniors that can make it. We have a half an hour of a leadership academy. I bring in pizza and we sit down and try to make it as much dialogue as possible; their feedback, their impact and to get them to think about things in a different way because football is the greatest tool in the world that can be used to help develop young men. I personally believe that. I am biased being a football coach, but that is what I had from my high school coach (Toby Golembiewski) and that is what I had from my college coach (David Barth). That is what I tried to do at Orangeville and Morrison before here. That is what I want to do here. I want to help build the young men and develop those relationships because there is absolutely nothing better than developing that relationship and watching that young man grow and for them to know that I actually have a vested interest in them because I do."

It has been a great turnout and they participate. They are really starting to think about things in a different way."

## Team camp

After the no-contact days

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