

Geneva coach's aim: unite team

Ten yards of bear-crawling, then roll to the right.

Ten more yards of bear-crawling, then roll to the left.

After the next 10 yards of bear-crawling, it was time to spin around on one hand.

If Geneva football players thought that was a bit much, there was worse in store – namely, the dreaded wind sprints from sideline-to-sideline, twice, under heavy scrutiny from watch-wielding coaches.

Welcome to the Vikings' third workout of the day.

"They need to hurt together," Geneva coach Rob Wicinski said. "That way, they can rely on each other."

The players' heavy breathing was all the more pronounced amid the solitude of Broadview Academy, the team's adopted home for the first three days of preseason practice.

Other than the coaches' whistles and the whistle of a passing train, there were only the sounds of nature.

Vikings linebacker Pat Schiller was pleased that many of his teammates tried to boost morale during the draining practices.

"Really, it's not that bad," Schiller said. "It's just long days. Once people start realizing you've got to just do it, then we're fine."



Wicinski kept a particularly close watch on some of the non-starters who are trying to lay claim to playing time.

"Usually, the guys you're relying on are ready to go," Wicinski said. "It's the depth you want to get up to speed."

When the team's two-a-day workouts conclude, it'll be time for Geneva's traditional watermelon picnic.

By then, the countdown to opening day – kept all off-season at the school's weight room – will be down to single digits.

That seemed a long way off on Wednesday, when it was still time to crawl like a bear toward a payoff only Aug. 25 can deliver.

Can't-miss moment: Some idle chit-chat among players went silent during a punt coverage drill when one of the assistant coach, referring to the formation, said "This is Morris."

The Vikings open with the defending 6A state champion Redskins – who eliminated Geneva last year – on Aug. 25.

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