

The following are tidbits for Lions fans as they head into the 2012 season.

Who is this guy

Several players who were part of Salem Head Coach Mo Moriarity's first year with program in 2011, said this off-season hasn't been the same.

One player said of this year compared to last, "He's kicking our butts!"

Moriarity didn't disagree with players assessment, in fact, he said he was only playing nice last year because of the age and physical ability of his players.

"There is no question I took it easy on them last year," Moriarity said. "The four freshman who started for us last year were all 14 years old. My concern coming in was that the year before I got here they finished the season with 26 kids and canceled the JV schedule after the second game. When they finished with 26, 13 of them were seniors. That left 13 kids in the program. That's almost no program. You are close to that anyway.

"Of the 45 kids I had last year, in our first year, 19 of them were freshman and I realized that, I can't run them, I can't run a practice, I can't run a program, the way I want because I didn't have bodies and it was tough. Now, I had the kids in the weight room and had them all summer. We had 63 kids all summer. We did not have anyone show up the first day of two-a-days who had not been with us during the summer conditioning."

Moriarity said the team's winter weight program prepared them to take it to another level this summer.

"The players responded," he said. "We've cranked it up and got after it. We did what we called strong man lifting on Wednesday where they lift tires and push trailers. It was hard and we couldn't do that last year because of how young we are. They were ready for it because they put the time in."

Separating freshmen

In a perfect world, Moriarity said his freshman would not be around the rest of the team.

He said that's the approach when building successful programs at Bloomington South and Carmel.

Moriarity said the reason for that is two-fold.

First he said freshman aren't physically where they need to be, nor are they mentally prepared for the strain of a varsity season.

"I really struggled last year with all the young kids who had to play at the varsity level," he said. "It's not just a physical thing, they are not mentally ready for that. The first thing I did at Bloomington South and Carmel is completely separate the freshman from varsity. We had separate locker rooms and didn't practice with each other. These kids are just 14 years old.

"(At Salem) we separate them as much as we can during practice and during drills. We have to protect them. Once you establish a really solid lifting program, your freshman coming in shouldn't be on level where they match up with the older guys."

Moriarity said that will only help to grow the program in the future.

"It's a plus that we don't have to throw them out in the battle," he said. "There are some good

players in that group.”

Youth movement  
in the program

Last year Moriarity and the Lions depended on freshmen, this year the freshmen, totaling 23 will develop at JV and both those groups will be followed by a solid class playing for SMS this year.

Moriarity said he had a chance to work with that group in the summer and he is excited about having them next year.

“What we like right now, we like our numbers,” he said. “Then our eighth-grade class is probably one of the best in the program. We have a lot of talented athletes. I am not basing that off the fact that they went undefeated last year, but I worked them in camp this summer and they’ve got some good players. They have skill and big kids who are fast. That’s real encouraging to look at your numbers and then to know you have a class like that coming in next year. We aren’t looking at decent numbers and then it drops off. We will have another good crop of freshmen coming in next year.”