

Hawg Tuff...

By Dale Ross

I had the opportunity to see what the Hawg Tuff camps are all about after attending the June 28th camp at Lake Norman High School. The very first thing I want to say is that all coaches should send their Offensive Linemen to one of these camps. You will not find a better way to spend \$40!

First a little bit about Coach Mike Pope. Coach Pope is from Union County and played his High School football at Piedmont High School where he was also a coach. He will move back to Union county to Monroe; he says that he would love to coach College football, possibly at Wingate University. Coach Pope played college football at Gardner Webb and played Semi-Pro football for the Stanley Patriots.

Coach Pope has coached at many different High Schools across South Carolina and currently calls Walhalla High School home. While coaching at Indian Land High school, just south of Charlotte, NC he started his first Hawg Tuff camp in 1990. In nineteen years he has gone from one camp to his projections of 35 camps next year.

In 2005 coach Pope had both legs amputated below the knees as a result of a staff infection. He had to make a choice, lose the legs or lose his life. He said that he didn't want to lay in a bed and rot. He then told us that he used to have arthritis in his ankle and now he can feel it in his metal!

One more important note about coach Pope and maybe the most important one; he loves kids. It is very easy to see that he loves what he is doing. His wife Ginger told me that it keeps him going.

Now a little bit about the Hawg Tuff camp. A lot of camps you go to get bogged down with agility drills; not this camp. The kids go through many different stations that will teach them good technique and will make them better offensive linemen. Instead of trying to explain each drill and duplicate efforts, here is a link to the drills ran at the 2008 camps: [2008 Camp Schedule and Drills](#).

My favorite drills were the ball drills, rolling the balls back and forth in both stationary stance and with movement. Also the medicine ball drills are very good for teaching punching!

The coaches do stress the importance of stance and footwork. One of the most important things a lineman can learn is how to work and keep their feet under them. A lineman on the ground is a useless lineman!

Of course these camps will do little for the players if they do not continue with the drills after they leave. I had three linemen from Olympic High School with me. Each one of them said that they felt like they would be better players after attending this camp. They need to go back and share this information with their fellow linemen; this is true of all of the players that attend a Hawg Tuff camp!

Rising seventh graders to rising seniors in High School can attend these camps. Parents, it is never too early to start teaching your kids technique. You spend money sending your children to work with trainers to make them "faster", how about spending a little money to make them a better football player?

Bad habits are hard to break. So get them into the habit of proper technique early!

Next North Carolina Camp will be Northwest Cabarrus on July 19th. A list of camps can be found at <http://www.HawgTuff.net> or by checking the event calendar here at CarolinaVarsity.com

I have to end by saying that Coach Pope is a good man and has good words of wisdom that he shares with the campers. He tells a lot of stories, but there is good solid meaning behind those stories.

Pictures for the camp can be found here: [Hawg Tuff O-Line Camp](#)