

Gilroy High football will feel 'loss' as Clovis plucks its coach

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By Andy Boogaard / The Fresno Bee

Rich Hammond, who in three seasons elevated Gilroy High's football program from mediocrity to excellence in the Central Coast Section, will be introduced as Clovis' coach today.

"We'll feel the loss, definitely," Gilroy athletic director Jack Daley said of Hammond, who went 24-10 with two league titles and a section runner-up finish.

Hammond's no-huddle, spread offense delivered more than 8,000 yards passing from Jamie Jensen the past two seasons, when the Mustangs went 19-5.

He replaces Jerry Campbell, who went 2-18 in two seasons at Clovis. That marked an unprecedented reversal for a program that captured eight Central Section championships from 1970-2002.

Hammond, who will teach mathematics, and wife Katie are expecting their first child in June.

"This is a chance to raise kids and put down roots in a great community with a great school system," he said. "That's part of the attraction. The second thing, from a football standpoint, there's a rich tradition of success. And it's a school that's growing and whose numbers will attract athletes to build the program."

Campbell fought a numbers game at Clovis, which has begun to return to a Division I level as benefitted from recent boundary changes in the Clovis Unified School District.

Hammond, meanwhile, injected a charge into Gilroy, which, with 2,400 students -- similar to Clovis -- competes in the Tri-County Athletic League and the Open Division of the Central Coast Section.

"Up until two years ago, we hadn't won a league championship since the early '80s," Daley said. "Rich is super organized, knows football and brought a whole new level of intensity. There's not much stand-around time in practice. The program suddenly had a lot of pride."