

Rich Hammond isn't a good coach, he's a great coach

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By [Josh Koehn](#)

I've developed a lot of good relationships with coaches around the area in my time here in Gilroy, but none has impressed me more than Rich Hammond, whose passion for the game of football and inventive ideas on how to accomplish the highest of team goals is unmatched. (I realize that's saying a lot because there are some truly extraordinary coaches in Gilroy, recently retired GHS wrestling coach Armando Gonzalez being the most successful.)

A Class of 1997 graduate of San Benito High School, Hammond traded red for blue when he came to Gilroy for his first teaching job. He later became an assistant under Darren Yafai before leaving for Santa Clara High School, only to return as head coach in 2006. Twenty minutes from the place he grew up, wanting nothing more as a kid than to beat Gilroy into the ground in the annual Prune Bowl, Hammond converted.

"It's always had a special place in my heart," Hammond said of Gilroy. "I always kind of felt like being back home, even though I wasn't exactly at home."

A 23-11 record in three seasons is impressive, but more so is the 19-5 record the past two seasons, which included back-to-back league titles and an appearance in the Central Coast Section Open Division championship. Gilroy's last league title before Hammond was 1981. The defense was solid if not spectacular during his time here, but most of the credit has to point to when Hammond installed his spread, no-huddle attack on offense.

Every coach I've asked on his GHS staff said the offense was almost exclusively his brainchild, and every one of those GHS coaches also agreed that Hammond has the kind of coaching smarts and passion (yes, he's animated as all hell) that could work on the collegiate level. Resigning from GHS to coach at Clovis in the fall should be just a step below college ball, as the area is considered a goldmine for athletic talent.

Gilroy, with all due respect, overachieved the past two seasons considering some of the schools it was up against. Yes, the Mustangs had excellent players on both sides of the ball, but there is no doubt GHS would have gotten trounced more often than not if it ran the Wing-T, or other more run-oriented offenses like other teams in the Tri-County Athletic League.

Whoever takes over for Hammond, and I think assistant Greg Garcia seems like a good fit, will have big, big shoes to fill.