

Amityville: Fancy footwork



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While the other Warriors offensive and defensive units work on team drills, senior quarterback Gavin Kretz and head coach Chris Taylor are by themselves in the shadow of one goalpost.

Taylor tosses the football to Kretz, who drops back into an imaginary pocket, his feet moving as if on fire, and on command, passes to Taylor. This drill isn't about improving the strength or accuracy of Kretz's throwing arm. It's all about those dancing feet.

"Kill grass! Kill grass!" yells Taylor.

"I tried to think of something that I could say that would remind him to keep his feet moving all the time back there," Taylor said. "Finally, I saw the way the ground got chewed up and I came up with 'Kill grass.' It's working."

Even though Kretz threw for more than 1,200 yards as a junior, he admitted, "A lot of time, my footwork was slow. I know the plays have to be quicker."

Amityville, a No. 3 seed in Suffolk Division IV, likely will go as far as Kretz can take them. Taylor clearly trusts his rangy lefthander, spending considerable practice time with Kretz and giving him the freedom to adjust play calls at the line of scrimmage.

"He had a lot to learn last year," Taylor said of Amityville's spread offense. "For a while, it was a little overwhelming. But once he learned it, he was great. I'm expecting a lot from him this year. He's a great decision-maker and has an excellent pocket presence."

Kretz said he benefited from a summer camp at Maritime College with several teammates, compliments of some Amityville alumni. "I did a lot of work on picking up the reads," Kretz said. "I think a lot of us improved over the summer. We're pretty confident about this year."

One of Kretz's major weapons will be wide receiver Chris Allen, who's got speed and can get yards after the catch. "This is his first year as a fulltime receiver," Taylor said of Allen, who was a backup quarterback in 2008 and will double as a defensive back. "But he's a very good athlete."

Kretz said Allen, "is very tough to take down. He's a guy that makes my job easier."

Another Amityville receiver is Kretz's cousin Brian. "I'm looking for some Kretz-to-Kretz connections," the quarterback said with a grin.

(Gavin Kretz sets up in the pocket. Newsday Photo / Bob Herzog)