

Scottsdale Desert Mountain flushing 0-10 football season

by *Scott Bordow, Republic columnist* - Sept. 7, 2011 10:19 AM
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Not that Scottsdale Desert Mountain coach Tony Tabor was eager to start the season, but this is what he had to say after his club beat Mesa Mountain View 43-7 two Fridays ago:

"It had been 295 days since we played a game and November of 2009 since we won a game," Tabor said. "So, yeah, it was big. It was kind of like taking a giant gorilla off our back."

Has any team in the state been on a more dizzying ride than Desert Mountain? In '09, it finished 9-4 and reached the Class 5A Division II state semifinals, where it lost to Scottsdale Chaparral.

Last year, Desert Mountain ended up 0-10 and was outscored 322-89. It didn't score more than 16 points in a game and gave up at least 30 points six times.

Few, then, knew what to expect from Desert Mountain this year. Would it play like it was 2009, struggle again or find a reasonable compromise?

Well, after the convincing win over Mountain View and an overtime loss last Friday to Mesa Dobson, there's hope that Chaparral and Saguaro won't be the only Scottsdale teams to make some noise this year.

"After the last game last year, I said to myself, 'I'm not going to go through this again,'" Tabor said. "So, we changed some things."

The most significant change - in addition to putting a greater emphasis on speed drills and conditioning over the summer - was to include sophomore quarterback Kyle Allen and sophomore wide Mark Andrews in spring ball. In the past, Tabor had been reluctant to promote sophomores to the varsity before the fall primarily because he couldn't be sure they would be good enough to play at that level.

But Allen and Andrews were exceptions. Tabor not only was sure they were ready; he figured they would become starters. And that's exactly what has happened.

Allen has completed 29 of 44 passes for 447 yards, with six touchdowns and one interception, and Andrews has 10 receptions for 232 yards and four scores.

"Getting them in the system early really helped," Tabor said.

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come to Desert Mountain's rescue. All five of the team's starting offensive graduated after the '09 season, leaving the team woefully inexperienced up front last year.

This season, three starters returned and their leadership was evident in the weight room over the summer. Tabor said each player is asked to lift 30 times; the five starters on the offensive line checked in for 146 out of their 150 workouts.

"That makes a huge difference," Tabor said. "We've gotten a lot bigger and stronger."

Still, Tabor knew the physical transformation would be irrelevant if Desert Mountain followed 0-10 with a slow start. That's why the rout of Mountain View was so important; it convinced the players their work was producing results and there wouldn't be a hangover from the '10 season.

"There was a big third down in the Mountain View game that we converted. That was something we could never do last year," Tabor said. "You could see them believing that what we're doing is paying off. Their chins were up and they were feeling good."

Desert Mountain will quickly find out just how good it is; the next three weeks it plays Chaparral, Notre Dame Prep and Phoenix North Canyon.

The schedule could be a smack in the face - or notice served that Desert Mountain will be a factor in Division I.

Reach Bordow at [scott.bordow@arizonarepublic.com](#) or 602-444-7996. Follow him on Twitter at [Twitter.com/sBordow](#).

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