

Koyotes eye title recovery

BY [RICK PETERSON](#)

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For the first time in its eight-year history the Kansas Koyotes' indoor football team has something to prove this season.

After winning a string of American Professional Football League championships, the Koyotes were derailed by the Iowa Blackhawks last season, dropping a 64-17 decision in the title game.

The loss didn't sit well with Koyotes coach Jim Green or his players, who are out to re-establish their league supremacy when the 2010 season opens April 17 at Landon Arena against the non-league Independence (Mo.) Bulldogs.

"There is a lot of sour taste left from last year, absolutely," Green said. "There were a lot of guys who had indicated to me prior to that (championship game) that they were going to retire. After the game they stepped off the bus and said, 'Coach, I can't leave like this. I will be back.'

"Some of these guys came back in just great shape. They're lighter, they're stronger, they're faster. They want that cup back and it's something they all agree on and it has also trickled down to the new guys. Now that the new guys are part of this team, they too feel the pain of the veterans and the guys who were on this team last year."

The Koyotes return a strong core of veterans from last year's team — Donnell Smith, Justin Wrecke, Tyrone Barrett, Carlos Kelly — while also adding some key newcomers, including several former Washburn players.

The list of former Ichabods who have joined the team include former standout quarterback Jordan Brill (2003-2007), wide receiver Michael Odupitan ('02-'05) and defensive player Chris Brown ('02-'06).

"The roster looks good," Green said. "We've got a lot of Washburn players. I think the coaches have done an excellent job of mixing the veterans in with the new guys. I think the biggest thing we're going to have fun with is our speed because we have been lacking that for the last couple of years.

"You're going to see some new names and a lot of names that people can relate to, from especially Washburn. We have some really good chemistry with these new kids, and that's what we were looking for in our tryouts."

The Iowa Blackhawks and Springfield (Mo.) WolfPack are APFL holdovers while the Mid-Missouri Outlaws and Junction City Force also will compete in the league this season.

The APFL teams will fill out their regular-season schedules with games against teams from the Central Plains Football League.

The first of two regular-season games between APFL powers Iowa and Kansas will take place May 8 at Landon Arena. The Koyotes are scheduled to close out the regular season at Iowa on June 26.

The Koyotes will open their season with three straight home games — Independence on April 17, the Nebraska Rhinos on May 1 and the Blackhawks on May 8.

"We're ready to go," Green said. "If we would have had to play (Tuesday) night, we were very good last night (in practice)."

KANSAS KOYOTES 2010 SCHEDULE

(All kickoff times 7:05 p.m.)

April 17 ... Independence Bulldogs

May 1 ... Nebraska Rhinos

May 8 ... Iowa Blackhawks

May 15 ... at Springfield Wolfpack

May 22 ... Mid-Missouri Outlaws

June 5 ... Springfield Wolfpack

June 12 ... at Mid-Missouri Outlaws

June 19 ... Junction City Force

June 26 ... at Iowa Blackhawks

TBA — APFL playoffs.