

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PHOTO DAY



ROD AYDELOTTE, TRIBUNE-HERALD

Football players from all over Central Texas fill the home locker room at Waco ISD Stadium at the Tribune-Herald’s annual High School Football Photo Day on Thursday morning.

Ready or not, football is back

300 players descend on Waco ISD Stadium in sure sign of new season

If the Tribune-Herald’s 2025 High School Football Photo Day had a theme song, it would have been Taylor Swift’s “Cruel Summer.”



BRICE CHERRY

Wikipedia tells me Swift’s 2023 hit is about “an intense and painful summer romance.” What does that have to do with nearly 300 high school football players descending on Waco ISD Stadium to grimace, and sometimes grin, for the cameras?

Well, for one, we love our summer break. And it’s basically over. Time and again Thursday, I posed the same question to the Central Texas coaches who showed up for Photo Day. (Thanks to every one of them, by the way.) “How was your summer?” I’d ask. “Too fast,” came the response, over and over again.

And I get it. People ask me every summer, “Are you ready for football season?” and my response is the same every time, “HECK, no.” What I mean by that: Summer is our respite, our timeout from the seemingly endless, wall-to-wall action that fills each school year. It’s when we take our vacations, when we catch our collective breath. I friggin’ love summer. It’s my favorite season of the year, even when it tries to melt my face. As such, I can sympathize with Texas high school football coaches whose summers have basically evaporated into the percolating mercury. There was a time not so very long ago when a coach actually enjoyed a nice break in the summer. Nowadays, the window for coaches taking time off is thinner than ever, what with 7-on-7 tournaments, summer strength-and-conditioning workouts, teacher inservice meetings, and the like. You won’t hear them complain. This is

the job, and they love it. But I still think the idea of work-life balance is a noble one, even if it feels like a pipe dream much of the time. Trib Photo Day always signals the unofficial start of football season. Teams in Class 4A and below will hit the practice field Monday, with their big-school buddies following a week later. Stores are filled with “Back to School” displays. It’s all happening again. Having worked at the Trib for 27 years now, I’ve seen my share of Photo Days. “They all kind of blur together,” I replied, when our chief high school writer Michael Haag asked me at lunch about my craziest Photo Day memories. Still, it never gets old. The scene is similar every year, and yet goose-bump-inflicting. The room crackles with excitement and anticipation. Every time.

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TexasWorks opens with tuition-free training, diplomas

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TexasWorks, a school aimed at providing tuition-free job training for adults lacking a high school diploma, opened a new Waco campus Wednesday at a ribbon cutting attended by business leaders, state officials and educators. The school, part of a regional TexasWorks charter school chain with campuses in 43 Texas cities, will offer tuition-free instruction toward a high school diploma and job skills training for adults 18 to 50. Classes and schedules are flexible in design to accommodate adult work and family responsibilities. TexasWorks will share space with Waco’s Premier High School, 4720 N. 19th St., also a charter school that provides credit recovery instruction on a more self-paced basis than traditional schools and with adult guidance and oversight. Premier and TexasWorks are both part of the ResponsiveEd charter school management nonprofit.

Premier High Principal Lisa Linton also will serve as TexasWorks’ campus director. She said 19 people are enrolled as TexasWorks’ first Waco students, with classes beginning Aug. 12. In addition to its high school diploma program, the Waco school will offer job training as a Certified Medical Assistant, which would allow administrative and clinical work in health care clinics. Linton said job training offerings will expand over time, and TexasWorks students will be able to take dual credit classes and participate community education offerings at nearby McLennan Community College and other programs. Approximately 30 people attended the ribbon cutting at the school with business leaders and state officials praising the school’s role in helping train the workers needed to meet Texas’ and McLennan County’s growing manufacturing and business needs.

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CARL HOOVER, TRIBUNE-HERALD

Local and state officials mark the opening of TexasWorks’ new Waco location during a ceremony Wednesday morning. The school aims to provide job training for adults without high school diplomas.