

MAIN CHALLENGE LOOMS

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Think of rookie camp as a three-day cram session.

Starting Sunday morning, when the established stars finally hit the turf at McMahon Stadium, Calgary Stampeders boss John Hufnagel will get a bit more insight about who's tackled their homework assignments.

"All the vets know the playbook, and the mental errors have to be eliminated," said Stamps offensive lineman Spencer Wilson, one of few rookie campers who practised with the full squad last season.

"If you don't want to screw up and you don't want to get yelled at by Huff — or, in my case, (offensive line coach) Kris Sweet — then you've got to know the playbook. That's the main thing.

"If you know the playbook, then you should be good. But mental errors are not really smiled upon."

The Stamps didn't practise Saturday, instead hosting youngsters for a KidSport camp and meeting for off-field classroom sessions.

After Friday's morning workout, Hufnagel said he was impressed with the newcomers so far.

"Obviously, at every meeting there's more and more thrown at them, but I'm pleased with the way they're picking things up," Hufnagel said.

"They are putting in their extra time, which they don't have a lot of, to be in the book and try to grasp as much as they can.

"That's what they're focusing on is being as good as they can be — with the knowledge of the offence, defence and special teams — so they have a chance to compete against the veterans."

That's the kicker.

Making a name for yourself in rookie camp is one thing. Holding your own against the biggest names in three-down football is another.

Starting Sunday, star quarterback Henry Burris will be hosting an informal clinic for newcomers Steven Gachette and Brad Sinopoli.

First-round draft choice receiver Anthony Parker can catch pointers from Nik Lewis, Romby Bryant and Ken-Yon Rambo.

Shifty ball-carrier LaMarcus Coker — perhaps the most impressive performer during the four rookie camp sessions — will get his first up-close look at two-time CFL rushing champ Joffrey Reynolds.

“I think the installation will just go a lot faster, probably,” Parker said. “(During rookie camp), you can sit with the coaches and kind of relax, and they can teach you things as fast as you can learn them. Once you get into main camp, all the veterans know the plays, so you’ve got to try to keep up with them.

“It’ll just be pace and trying to keep up mentally.”

Although it might be a bit nerve-wracking to rub shoulders with the veterans just a few days after getting their first glimpse of the playbook, the freshmen will also get plenty of help this week.

After all, Burris, Lewis and Reynolds were once rookie-campers, too.

“Hopefully, we can get a better idea with the veterans because they know the plays already,” said rookie receiver Tyrone Collins. “We can watch them, and that will be more helpful.”