

Laurel product getting a kick out of role

POINT MAN Although he never kicked in high school, Antonio Reino has taken charge of the job for the New Castle Thunder.

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Antonio Reino has been practicing without the bare essentials.

A placekicker doesn't need much besides his leg and the football, but the Laurel High graduate has been preparing without a goal post.

For the bulk of the past three weeks, the New Castle Thunder has been forced

to prepare wherever the team could find an open field — many of the times practicing on an open plain across from Flaherty Field.

"It's been kind of rough," Reino said. "Where we practiced we had a batting cage, and I would just picture the upright and then just put (the ball) where I thought the upright was."

It took Tuesday — three days after the Thunder's season opener, the very contest Reino became the team's leading scorer with a 35-yard field goal in a 28-3 loss — before the kicker got the opportunity to use a true field goal post when New Castle practiced at Deshon Field.

"It's been nice to have some uprights to kick on," he joked.

"A couple of guys joke about (being the leading scorer); but I'm doing my part," Reino said. "It made me feel great when we're down in the first quarter and we're only down 7-3. At least we got something on the board."



Antonio Reino

Head coach Rick Razzano never questioned his kicker's ability, although he was surprised the field goal was a first.

"That was the first field goal he ever made in his life," Razzano said. "He told me they never let him kick in high school. I was shocked by it. That was his first three points. He has a nice leg."

Like many of his teammates, Reino has been away from the game since graduating in 2003.

"I haven't kicked since high school," Reino said. "As soon as I heard about this (the Thunder), I started kicking. I went to Laurel and practiced. I also went to the field behind my house to kick some balls just to get my leg loose."

Reino attributes his soccer-style kicking ability to the other kind of football. A club member during his time as a Spartan, Reino has played soccer for about 15 years

and still plays indoor at the Y Zone in Neshannock Township.

"It helps so much," Reino said. "To get underneath the football, you have to kick soccer style. It's all about angling the ball. Straight on, you can't really angle it. Playing soccer for so many years helped me with this. That's what actually got me into football."

Considering some of his practice spots have presented more dirt than sod, the surfaces have aided the kicker when playing on turf. Canon-McMillan High School, where the Thunder played the Colts, as well as Slippery Rock University's Bob DiSpirito Field, the Thunder's home field, are both carpeted with AstroTurf.

"Practicing on grass and then getting on turf for a game is totally different," Reino said. "Practicing on fields with not much grass really helped me because it was so much easier to kick the football."

Since getting his leg back in shape, Reino has been able to notch boots as far as 55 yards during practice, and he believes he's only getting stronger. That has also allowed a gain in his overall confidence when it comes to would-be crucial moments where his kicking services could be needed.

"Pressure is nothing to me," Reino said. "I can hit it under pressure."

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