

Drenched with sweat and trembling from exhaustion, senior Marcos Garcia paused between practice scrimmages at the summer football camp at Pittsburg State. As the starting whistle sounded again, he got to his feet, ready for the next game. Compounding off the summer training camps and the leadership of the senior class, the Indians powered through the season.

"It's been a mental mindset," Garcia said. "The idea was that for the past three years we've all been leading up to our senior year. The senior class knew that they had to really put in the extra work, they knew that for the best chance for students, the best we would be was this year because of our class. It was a big build-up since freshman year."

Driven by the leadership of the senior class and the new summer training program, the Indians won Regionals and ended the season with a winning 6-5 record, the best since 2004.

"I don't think it was one particular thing that gave us a successful season, it's a culmination of many things that came together," head coach Ben Bartlett said. "We obviously had a very strong senior class coming into this season which definitely contributed to the wins. I think the off-season training and drills that we did were definitely beneficial to the success that we had. There was hard work in the off-season both in participation in camps and the weights program."

The newest addition to the team's summer workouts included football training camps at Pittsburg State and Emporia, a grueling three-day experience. Practicing for over eight hours a day, the boys scrimmaged constantly, sharpening their skills for the season.

"It was a whole new experience because none of us had ever done that kind of thing before," Garcia said. "It was really helpful, it was a good way to get our feet wet for the season. It was an awakening. We saw what we had, and then we built from it."

Though the camps were challenging, for some of the players it was their favorite part of the season.

"My favorite thing about the camp was the camaraderie," senior Avante Williams said. "When we played the other teams there was a lot of trash talk and a lot of hitting, and I didn't expect that to happen. So that's what I liked a lot, and just being with my friends. We ordered pizza at nights, it was fun."

Even after all of their preparation over the summer, the football season was still one of the most demanding for the team and the individual players.

"Most challenging part of the season was losing, that was definitely the toughest part," senior Carlitos Hernandez said. "Dealing with injured players was difficult, especially because some of our key players got hurt. But we realized that it wasn't over unless we quit."

The boys capped their season with a 52-49 Regionals championship win over Lawrence. After tying the game with an 80-yard touchdown pass by senior Will Schneider to sophomore Noah Laird and a successful two point conversion, the Indians managed to get the ball back and pull off the win with a 26-yard field goal by junior Oscar Aguilar.

“Winning Regionals felt like a dream at first,” senior Tanner Wilmon said. “Because it seemed impossible at times but then at the end it felt like nothing could stop us. All our hard work we put in paid off.”