

"Battle at the Big House" to include Mona Shores vs. Canton in 2017 football opener



Michigan Stadium will be the site for the Mona Shores football opener against Canton in the "Battle at the Big House" on Aug. 24.

MUSKEGON, MI – **Mona Shores** has accepted an offer to play in the “Battle at the Big House” to kick off the 2017 high school football season.

Muskegon faced Ann Arbor Pioneer in last year’s inaugural event and **Mona Shores** will get its chance to play at Michigan Stadium on Thursday, Aug. 24 against **Canton**. Game time has yet to be announced, but it is expected to be at either 4 or 7 p.m.

“I think it’s kind of a compliment to the kids that got this program going,” Mona Shores coach Matt Koziak said. “To be invited to something like this speaks volumes for kids in the program. What an honor to be invited.”

Koziak said the players were excited by the news when it became official Wednesday.

“They’re all excited and they can’t wait. They’re pretty jacked up about it,” Koziak said. “It’s going to be cool for the kids to come out of the tunnel onto that field. Who knows, but 99.9 percent of them will never play at Michigan, so what an opportunity.”

The full Battle at the Big House six-game slate will be announced within the next few weeks, said Lapeer Athletic Director Shad Shilski, who is coordinating the event. Two games will be played on Aug. 24, 25 and 26.

Mona Shores was released out of its scheduled season opener against Holland West Ottawa to face Canton. It will be the start of a tough three-game nonconference stretch for the Sailors that includes Zeeland West in Week 2 and Rockford in Week 3.

“Our kids know already there is no room for days off because we are hitting the ground running before we go into the OK Black,” Koziak said.

Canton went 8-3 in 2016 and has made the playoffs in Division 1 every season since 2008. Mona Shores missed the playoffs last season with a 5-4 record, but Koziak said the Sailors graduate just two starters on offense and three on defense.

Mona Shores had made three consecutive trips to the playoffs, including a Division 2 state runner-up finish in 2014.

In last season's Battle at the Big House, Muskegon trounced Ann Arbor Pioneer 51-14 in the finale of a seven-game event.

"There's so much talent of players in the Muskegon area. Now we're invited and that speaks volumes for the city of Muskegon and football here," Koziak said.