

Interac Strength Sapped

When you think about the great high school teams that have played in this area over the past five years, be sure to include the Malvern Prep teams of 1972 and 1974, the Germantown Academy team of 1973 and the Haverford School teams of 1970 and 1971.

All had two things in common. They finished the season undefeated and they came from the tiny Interacademic League, where football is often considered an afterthought to high-powered academics.

"I think our record against outside competition speaks for itself—especially against schools from the Catholic League," said Malvern Coach Jack (Shark) McGuinn. "In the past seven years, Interac teams are 11-1 against Catholic League teams. And that includes one game in which Chestnut Hill Academy defeated Roman Catholic. In the Interac, you're dealing with student bodies of 250 kids playing against some schools that have 1,000 boys in their upper three grades."

THIS YEAR, the walls are finally beginning to crumble. Mighty Malvern is 3-1 but was tied by Woodrow Wilson of Levittown, 13-13, on the first game of the year. Haverford School has lost to Nether Providence. Germantown Academy was upset by Germantown High School. Penn Charter has come up short against Lawrenceville, Father Judge and Chichester.

"I think you've got to put everything in proper perspective," McGuinn said. "Take Penn Charter's losses. Both Judge and Lawrenceville are still unbeaten and Chichester was unbeaten at the time."

"For the whole, though, the league may be a little down. I still think we can compete with just about anybody

in the area but our weakest teams, for the first time in a while, are struggling."

PART OF THE REASON may be numbers. The Interac still has its share of major-college prospects—running back Eric Hittelbeitel of Germantown Academy, defensive back Rich Devine and quarterback Steve Donnelly of Malvern, quarterback Mike Mayock and wide receiver Sam Clement of Haverford School—but depth is a definite problem.

"You saw what happened last year when Mike Mayock got sick at Haverford School," McGuinn said. "There are certain schools in this

league that don't have any more than two guards. What happens if they get hurt?"

Some schools have been lucky. Haverford, which featured John Haldeman in 1971, used only 14 players that year. "We only played 20 the next year," McGuinn said.

It is the problem of private schools—preparatory academies that do not have the same amount of financial aid now that the economic bite has been magnified.

"I think it's a cyclical thing," McGuinn said. "A temporary thing. We'll be back."

—Dick Weiss

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