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Friars continue to roll with win over Quakers

Strong defense helped undefeated Malvern Prep earn its first league victory of the season.

By Todd Zolecki
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

If the impossible is possible, then some team still has a chance to beat Malvern Prep on the football field this season.

Possible, yes. Likely, no. Not with four games remaining.

The Friars have beaten Catholic League power St. Joseph's Prep and PIAA power Downingtown. And yesterday at Quigley Field, they opened their Inter-Academic League schedule with a 24-0 victory over visiting Penn Charter.

"I think we're one of the top two or three teams out there," Friars defensive back D.J. Driscoll said.

Malvern (5-0, 1-0) is No. 3 in The Inquirer's rankings, which includes teams from Southeastern Pennsylvania and South Jersey.

Against Penn Charter (1-4, 0-1), Malvern Prep proved that it can dominate even when it doesn't play its best football. In the first two quarters, the Friars had three turnovers but still led at halftime, 9-0.

The game's biggest play may have come at the end of the first quarter, when Driscoll scored on a 65-yard punt return. That gave the Friars a 6-0 lead.

"Everybody cleared a lane and I just took it," Driscoll said.

After their first two possessions resulted in a missed field goal and a punt, the Friars were looking for a score. Driscoll provided it. The play looked even bigger when the Friars followed with three straight turnovers.

Fortunately for Malvern Prep, it has a strong defense. The Friars limited the Quakers to 73 yards in the first half, and intercepted PC quarterback Matt Ryan twice.

"They hit hard," Ryan said. "They're pretty physical. They capitalized on our mistakes, and against a team like that you can't make mistakes. They're probably the best defense we've faced. They stopped the run. They stopped the pass."

Malvern Prep's other first-half points came on a 27-yard field goal by senior Brendan Carney, who is considered the area's premier placekicker.

The Friars scored touchdowns on their first two second-half possessions. T.J. Cascio had both, on runs of 4 and 2 yards, respectively. Malvern Prep used the clock effectively on both occasions.

"There are times when we can play with anybody," Malvern Prep head coach Gamp Pellegrini said, when asked how good the Friars are.

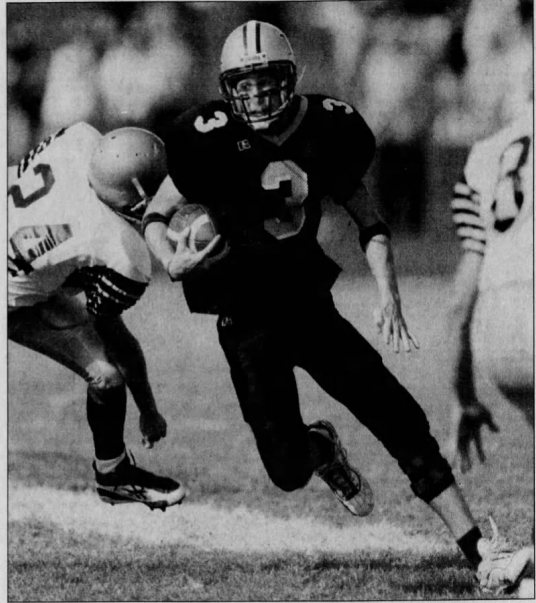
"I don't know if we could play those [top PIAA teams] every year. But this is an exceptional year and an exceptional football team. We can line up against Downingtown some years and beat them. And we'll go over there for three years and they'll make minced meat out of us."

"This team here? Could we play with those guys? Oh yeah. Could we beat them? I don't know, but we certainly wouldn't embarrass ourselves."

Penn Charter	0	0	0	0	—	0
Malvern Prep	6	3	7	8	—	24

MP: D.J. Driscoll 65 punt return (kick blocked)
MP: Brendan Carney 27 FG
MP: T.J. Cascio 4 run (Carney kick)
MP: Cascio 2 run (Cascio pass from David Moore)

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DAVID SWANSON / Inquirer Suburban Staff

Malvern Prep's D.J. Driscoll returns a punt for a touchdown in the last seconds of the first quarter against Penn Charter. The Friars won the Inter-Academic League game, 24-0, yesterday.

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