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| --- | --- |
| Malvern Completes Perfect Season, 2008    On Nov. 27, at Villanova Stadium, Malvern Prep overcame a 21-0 deficit   and defeated St. Joseph's Prep, 34-27, to complete a 10-0 season under 31-year coach **Gamp Pellegrini**. This was Pellegrini's fourth unbeaten team, and he called it his best.   Click [here](http://www.tedsilary.com/MalvernFB08.htm) for the Malvern team page. Look below for the boxscore, starting lineups, game-by-game results, Huck's website report and Ted's *Daily News* story.  At right are **Billy Conners** (5), who passed for four TDs and ran for another, and **Joe Price**, who notched three TD catches. |  |

**MALVERN 34, SJ PREP 27**St. Joseph's Prep     14    7     0     6  -- 27
Malvern Prep            0    7   14    13 -- 34
  SJP: Turner 34 pass from Giubilato (Skalamera kick)
  SJP: Yeager 7 run (Skalamera kick)
  SJP: Giubilato 17 run (Skalamera kick)
  MP: Conners 34 run (Tiberi kick)
  MP: Mooney 17 pass from Conners (Tiberi kick)
  MP: Price 40 pass from Conners (Tiberi kick)
  MP: Price 71 pass from Conners (kick failed)
  SJP: Yeager 15 run (kick failed)
  MP: Price 27 pass from Conners (Tiberi kick)
                                 SJP      Malvern
First downs                 21           17
Rushes-yards          49-345     34-172
Passing yards             62          268
Total offense            407          440
Passing                   4-14-2     15-24-1
Return yards             177           82
Fumbles lost               1              1
Punts                     3-31.0       4-35.5
Penalties-yards         3-20         3-31
**INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS**  **RUSHING** -- SJP: Yeager 28-193, Giubilato 11-92, Compton 5-27, Pereira 3-22,
Labor 2-11. MP: Connelly 13-87, Willis 11-42, Conners 8-42, Price 1-3, Gunther 1-(-2).
  **PASSING** -- SJP: Giubilato 4-14-2 -- 62. MP: Conners 15-23-1 -- 268, McCabe 0-1-0 -- 0.
  **RECEIVING** -- SJP: Johnson 2-20, Turner 1-34, Yeager 1-8. MP: Price 7-172,
McCabe 5-64, Mooney 2-27, Connelly 1-5.
  **INTERCEPTIONS** -- SJP: Pereira. MP: Conners 2.
  **RETURNS** -- SJP: Yeager 4-70, Compton 2-34, Bonner 1-17, Pereira 1-56. MP: Willis
5-78, Conners 2-4.

**SEASON RECORD . . .**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|   | **W-L** | **We** | **They** |
| **La Salle** | **W** | **47** | **21** |
| **WC Henderson** | **W** | **42** | **0** |
| **at McDonogh (Md.)** | **W** | **34** | **15** |
| **idle** |  |  |  |
| **at Salesianum (Del.)** | **W** | **42** | **0** |
| **Episcopal Academy** | **W** | **53** | **8** |
| **at Haverford School** | **W** | **43** | **0** |
| **Gtn. Academy** | **W** | **56** | **23** |
| **at Penn Charter** | **W** | **55** | **21** |
| **at Chestnut Hill** | **W** | **18** | **0** |
| **SJ Prep** | **W** | **34** | **27** |

**STARTING LINEUP . . .**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **OFFENSE** |  |  |  | **DEFENSE** |  |
| **C** | **Matt Devlin** | **64** |   | **E** | **Mike McCorkle** | **62** |
| **G** | **Mike McCorkle** | **62** |  | **E** | **CJ Mooney** | **42** |
| **G** | **Joe DiTrolio** | **66** |  | **T** | **Sean Ferguson** | **70** |
| **T** | **Dave Umile** | **54** |  | **T** | **Joe DiTrolio** | **66** |
| **T** | **Bobby Panchisin** | **52** |  | **LB** | **Rob McCabe** | **2** |
| **TE** | **CJ Mooney** | **42** |  | **LB** | **Gerry Stark** | **7** |
| **WR** | **Joe Price** | **15** |  | **LB** | **Christian Green** | **55** |
| **QB** | **Billy Conners** | **5** |  | **DB** | **Neil Willis** | **1** |
| **RB** | **Neil Willis** | **1** |  | **DB** | **Billy Conners** | **5** |
| **RB** | **Rob McCabe** | **2** |  | **DB** | **Tom Keefer** | **31** |
| **FB** | **James Connelly** | **4** |  | **DB** | **Bobby Hill** | **6** |
| **K** | **Mark Tiberi** | **17** |  | **\*DB** | **Mike Mayock** | **3** |
|  |   | **\*depending on alignment** |

**HUCK'S REPORT . . .**

**NOV. 27
NON-LEAGUE – THANKSGIVING
Malvern 34, SJ Prep 27**     Last season, the Friars came into this Turkey Day game with an identical (9-0) record as this year’s version. But last year the Hawks had their way with the Friars and headed to the post-game feast with a convincing 33-6 victory to ruin the Friars hopes of a perfect season. Today, it appeared very much so that we were in for more of the same. With 7:12 left in the second quarter, sr. QB **Mark Giubilato** took a keeper around the left end for a 17-yard touchdown, giving the Hawks a commanding 21-0 lead. Sr. OG **Mike Pinciotti** (6’3”, 292 lbs), looking like a guy going after the last drumstick on grandma’s dinner table, provided a devastating block in assisting Giubilato. This child abuse moment was a microcosm of how the game had gone to this point, as the Hawks were just having their way with the Friars. However, things would begin to change in favor of Malvern soon after, and before long they would be the ones sitting at the head of table. Hey, any time you can comeback from a 21-point deficit against a team of SJP’s caliber, then there has to be a crucial, game-turning moment, right? You betcha! After the Hawks' third score, their defense forced a three-and-out and a punt. On the next play, SJP sr. RB/DB **Mike Yeager** took a handoff 60 yards to the Malvern 23-yard line. He was thrown out of bounds by Malvern sr. DB/RB **Neil Willis** in a rough manner. No flag was thrown (I’m not sure one was warranted), but afterwards Yeager was hit for a personal foul. I’m not positive if it was retaliatory or merely jawing at the official. Anyhow, this pushed the ball back to the 38-yard line. They still had a first-and-ten, but disaster struck with a fumble on the next play. Mammoth sr. DT **Sean Ferguson** (6’4”, 340 lbs) did the forcing, while jr. DT **Joe DiTrolio** made the recovery. This was the second time that the Hawks turned the ball over right after a huge play. Earlier, sr. LB **Mike Pereira** returned an interception 56 yards to the Malvern 26-yard line. On the next play, sr. QB/DB **Billy Conners** made a pick at his 5 on a pass that was under thrown. After the fumble, Malvern would finally ignite the scoreboard, but they needed a gigantic play from Conners to do so. And as it turns out, this would the first of many great plays by the scrappy, but athletic Conners in the game. Faced with a fourth-and-5, Conners sprinted to his left with the option to throw, but instead, held on to the ball and nicely cutback to his right at about the twenty. From here he easily found the end zone for a 34-yard score with 3:15 left in the half. You got the sense at this moment that the Friars weren’t going to go away. It remained 21-7 Hawks into the third quarter. To begin the second half the Friars built upon the momentum they captured near the end of the opening half. It took them just a 1:40 to draw within 21-14 on a 17-yard pass from Conners to sr. TE/DE **CJ Mooney**. The score was set-up by a 35-yard run by sr. RB **James Connelly**. SJP’s first series of the second half ended with another interception by Conners in the left flat. The ball was tipped by Mooney near the line scrimmage and deflected to Conners. Four plays later we had a tie ballgame, as Conners beautifully lofted a pass to the right flag to impressive sr. WR/DB **Joe Price** for a 40-yard strike. Earlier in the game the sure-handed Price had a ball slide off his fingertips that would have been a sure touchdown. This play gave him a little redemption, but he was far from finished in the redeeming area. Early in the fourth quarter, Malvern was faced with a third-and-six from their twenty-nine. The call was a simple hitch to Price to the left. He made the catch about yard pass the marker, but after the lone SJP defender failed on a tackle attempt it was clear sailing. Yes, 71 yards to paydirt! The point-after failed, but Malvern had just scored their 27th straight point to take the lead. Refusing to put their tails between their legs, or should I say have their wings clipped, the Hawks soared back. Their subsequent drive covered 76 yards on 12 plays. Yeager, playing the role of the workhorse, carried eight times for 50 yards on the drive, including a 15-yard capper. The Hawks also failed on the point-after and the tilt was tied with 5:48 left. Malvern’s game-winning possession began at their 27-yard line. Showing a ton of poise, Conners calmly orchestrated his crew. Twice he converted third down chances. First, he connected for 14 yards to Price. Then, he used a sneak to gain two yards. The game-clinching play came via another Conners-to-Price hook-up. It covered 27 yards and came with 37.1 seconds left. To be honest with you, but the score was way too easy. How the Hawks allowed a player of Price’s talents to get that much space was inexcusable. Afterwards, the Hawks had one last-ditch effort beginning at their 34-yard line. They reached Malvern’s 49-yard line with 7 ticks left, but a final play, a screen to Yeager, netted just 8 yards. The unassuming, but effective Conners was brilliant, like he’s been all year. He finished 15-for-23, for 268 yards. Included in this was an 8-for-8, 187-yard performance over the final 24 minutes. He accounted for all five Malvern scores with 4 passes and one rush. He also added 42 yards on 8 carries. Price (7-172) was held to just one snag for seven yards in the first half, but exploded for 6 catches for 165 yards. What a terrific player! For those of you who haven’t seen him I’d say he’s in the mold of former Wood great **Chirs Lorditch**, but probably is a little stronger than Lorditch was at this stage. Connelly (13-87) and Willis (11-42, 78 yards on 5 returns) were the primary rushers for the Friars. Sr. WB **Rob McCabe** made 5 catches for 64 yards. All total, the Friars posted 440 yards of offense. Great job by the guys in the trenches! Leading the way were: sr. C **Matt Devlin**, G’s sr. **Mike McCorkle** and Ditroilio, T’s sr. **Bobby Panchisin** (6’2”, 280 lbs) and sr. **Dave Umile**, and Mooney (6’4”, 235 lbs) at tight end. On defense, Mooney (sack, 7 tackles), sr. DB **Tom Keefer** (seven, 6 solos), McCorkle (seven, 6 solos), DiTrolio (7 tackles), Ferguson (five), and Willis (five) were headliners. For the Prep, Yeager played extremely well with 193 yards on 28 carries and 2 TD’s (Also, 7-yarder). He also added 70 yards on 4 returns. Giubilato had 154 yards of passing (4-for-14, 62 yards) and rushing (11-92). His best toss of the game came on a 34-yard touchdown to sr. WR **Dan Turner**. The Hawks also eclipsed the 400-yard plateau in the game with 407 total yards. If I had a complaint with the Hawks' offense it was that, in my opinion, they put the ball in the air 6-to-8 too many times. I believe that the power attack, with a few more Giubilato keepers, could have been more of an effective path. Defensively, jr. FB **Stephen O’Hara** (6 tackles) forced a fumble, recovery by jr. DE **Bill Mancini**. Yeager and sr. DB **Dan Casey** each made seven tackles, with many of them being tag-team efforts. Jr. RB/LB **Garrett Compton** was next with 5 tackles. For the game, the teams combined for 847 yards of offense and 1,106 yards, counting returns. It remains to be seen if this will be the last hurrah for Malvern’s legendary Head Coach **Gamp Pellegrini**. He was non-committal to yours truly afterwards on that issue. Either way he’s had a tremendous career, and arguably this year’s team was his finest ever. For the Hawks, it was a season of near misses. Their four losses all came to excellent teams and for the most part they were in all of these games, but only to come up just short in each. Many quality seniors graduate on both clubs, so next season should be interesting to see who can reload the quickest.

**TED'S *DAILY NEWS* STORY . . .**

**Malvern Prep wraps up magical year**

By TED SILARY
Philadelphia Daily News

  THE THOUGHT passes through Billy Conners' mind, as he puts it, every so often.

  How could it not? The dude is one helluva football player. But when he enrolls next fall at Duke, the Malvern Prep senior will be doing so on a lacrosse scholarship.

  "I love playing football. It's my No. 1 sport," Conners said. "But that's not the sport where I signed for a scholarship. It is what it is. When I get down there, we'll see what happens. Maybe I'll ask about being able to try out for football as a walk-on. Maybe free safety, strong safety . . . "

  The occasion yesterday in front of 7,000-plus observers at Villanova Stadium was a clash between two of the city-leagues' most covered-in-stardust programs, Malvern and St. Joseph's Prep.

  Malvern won, 34-27, but don't think for a minute, not even a second, that the path to a 10-0 final record was easy.

  Prep, 7-0. Prep, 14-0. Prep, 21-0.

  Is that any way to try to make history?

  "It was pretty emotional before the game," Conners said. "Coach [Gaspare "Gamp" Pellegrini] called us together and said how proud he was of this group. How he'd never seen a team as tight as this one, and how he'd never had a connection with a team like he has with us.

  "Falling behind like that definitely rocked us. You see things going down the drain. All you can do is not panic. I knew our offense could bail us out. We'd had quarters this year with 35 points, and there was still lots of time remaining. After you play your worst quarter of the year, the only place to go is up."

  By game's end, Conners was 15-for-23 for 268 yards and four touchdowns - three to Joe Price (7-172) and one to CJ Mooney.

  He began the comeback with a 34-yard, pre-halftime scoring run and completed it - with 37.1 seconds remaining, no less - on a 27-yard pass to Price that broke a 27-27 tie. The winning drive, requiring 11 plays, covered 73 yards.

  Soon, the Friars were setting new world records for the amount of elation energy expended and Pellegrini, the coach for 31 seasons, was saying, "This team is right at the top. There were three other undefeated teams, and other teams with great players. But this one, with all we did, is the best."

  Conners was part of the early mess with an interception. (At cornerback, he later notched two of his own.) His approach was to remain calm while sternly making in-huddle points.

  "I said we were going to chip away," he reported. "I said we were going to move it down the field one play at a time and get on the board before halftime. We did that.

  "When we came out for the second half, I said we were going to [steadily] move it down the field and score this time, too. And we did. And we had to really drive the ball. There weren't short fields off turnovers."

  After intermission, Conners passed 8-for-8 for 187 yards and four touchdowns. Price snagged six of those passes, turning them into 165 yards.

  "I didn't think about how I was having a perfect half," Conners said. "I just wanted to keep bringing us back. What Joe did was no surprise. All *year* he did that."

  Conners finished with eight carries for 42 yards. James Connelly (13-87) and Neil Willis (11-42) helped out. For Prep, Mike Yeager exploded for 193 yards and two touchdowns, including a 15-yarder to tie the game with 5:48 left, on 28 carries. Mark Giubilato accounted for 154 yards of rushing/passing, along with a score in each category.

  This sweetheart of a game featured 1,106 all-purpose yards, with SJ Prep the winner at 584.

  Conners finished the season 70-for-96 (72.9 percent) for 1,509 yards (15.7 per attempt) and 19 TDs. Price turned 36 catches into 939 yards (26.1) and 13 scores.

  As always in recent years, Pellegrini has heard the rumors that he's thinking about retiring. His record in 42 seasons - including 1967-69 at long-gone St. Thomas More, his alma mater, and 1970-77 at SJ Prep, where current boss Gil Brooks was one of his players - is 278-144-9. He's 219-86-8 at Malvern.

  "Not sure yet," he said. "Have to think about it."

  Conners, meanwhile, has not come to terms with the season's end. And he's not alone.

  "After the game," he said, "we were all talking about how we wish we could keep on playing. But when you think about what we did . . . It's pretty humbling."