

## Around the League

**Malvern optimistic.** Don't let Ryan Nassib's departure from Malvern Prep fool you.

The standout quarterback is now a freshman at Syracuse. And though he will be missed, the Friars should be successful in defending their Inter-Ac title without him.

"We have quite a few players back from last year, and last year's team was 9-1," said coach Gamp Pellegrini, who has eight offensive and six defensive starters returning. "We are optimistic to have a good season."

Billy Conners, a 5-foot-11 senior, takes over the quarterback position vacated by Nassib.

"We have a great little quarterback in Billy Conners," Pellegrini said. "He was all-league last year at defensive back. And he has a scholarship to Duke in lacrosse."

Malvern Prep also returns leading rushers in senior running backs James Connelly (738 yards and seven touchdowns) and Neal Willis (707 and seven). A threat whenever he touches the ball, Willis also hauled in three touchdown passes. He returned two interceptions for TDs as a defensive back and scored on a kickoff.

Conners, Willis and senior defen-

sive linemen C.J. Mooney and Sean Ferguson will be the defensive leaders.

"I think we are going to be OK on defense," Pellegrini said. "The kids who played last year as juniors are a year older, stronger, 15 pounds bigger and, hopefully, better."

**Excitement in the air.** There's a lot of optimism surrounding Episcopal Academy's program.

And why not? The Churchmen return several key contributors from last season's third-place team. And Episcopal boasts a new stadium at the school's Newtown Square campus.

"You should come out and see this place," coach Bill Gallagher said.

The hosts, however, hope their opponents leave in defeat. A lot of that may depend on Episcopal's offensive line, its most experienced unit.

The Churchmen return four dependable bruisers in senior tackle Bobby Rinehard, junior tackle Dan McKeivey, junior guard Jacob Butts, and senior guard Bobby Wassell.

They will look to open holes for senior tailback John Gormley. Primarily a wide receiver last season, Gormley had 11 carries for 50 yards and a touchdown. The playmaker also scored on

two kickoff returns and a punt.

**New coach on the block.** Jeff Humble, who spent the last three seasons as an assistant, takes over the head coaching duties at Penn Charter.

Humble inherits a program that went 5-4 last season under Brian McCloskey.

**Who's up for the challenge?** Germantown Academy coach Luke Harris didn't make any bones about it.

"We are going to have to have some guys step up on the line, both offensive and defensive," Harris said. "We might be a little inexperienced in the secondary."

Things could be interesting if the line plays to its potential and the secondary develops.

That's because the Patriots return six offensive and six defensive starters. GA finished a disappointing 3-6. Five of those losses were by a combined 25 points.

The Patriots have four returning senior starters in quarterback/safety Pete Haines, tight end/linebacker Tim Vernon, lineman Ian Hillman and linebacker Pete Weindorfer to depend on.

**A confident coach.** This is a rebuild-

ing year for Chestnut Hill Academy. The Blue Devils call it reloading.

"I feel good about the kids that are replacing the guys that left," said Chestnut Hill coach Rick Knox, whose squad returns just four starters on each side of the ball. "They just need to step up."

These Blue Devils have huge shoes to fill. Last season's squad finished 9-1 while outscoring opponents by 341-59.

"We hope that we can keep working hard and keep it going," Knox said.

Ibraheim Campbell can keep it going. The junior tailback/defensive back had 31 carries for 153 yards and two touchdowns while backing up his older brother, Rashad, last season. Rashad Campbell graduated after compiling 4,204 rushing yards and 60 touchdowns.

"Ibraheim is bigger, stronger and faster than Rashad," Knox said of the 5-foot-11, 185-pounder, who runs the 40-yard dash in 4.39 seconds.

Other key returners are fullback Tom Devlin, wideout John McAllister, wideout/defensive back Alex Logue, lineman Eric Herrera, linebacker Matt Flannery, and linebacker Phil Thomas. All are seniors.

— Keith Pompey

## 2008 Around the League preview

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