

Football Notebook

Hard work in off-season helps Bonner snap skid

By Rick O'Brien
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

In January, on Friday evenings and Saturday mornings usually reserved for hanging with friends and sleeping in, James Wilent and his Monsignor Bonner football teammates were in the weight room, preparing for a season eight months away.

"It was rough at times," said Wilent, a senior outside linebacker, "but everyone showed up and worked hard. What helped us through it was that we knew it would pay off in the end."

It did, in Week 2. Carrying a major monkey on their backs in the form of a 24-game losing streak that spanned four seasons, the Friars clawed it off by beating Interboro, 7-6, in a nonleague matchup Friday night at Upper Darby High.

The players rejoiced. The coaches, thrilled most of all for the players, embraced. Bonner supporters streamed from the stands onto the field.

"It was exhilarating, on a lot of different levels," Friars second-year coach Tom Oropeza said. "The kids had worked so hard in the off-season to prepare for this year. It was great to see them get rewarded for that."

In the fourth quarter, with the Friars nursing a one-point lead, the 6-foot, 200-pound Wilent intercepted a third-down pass at the Bonner 30-yard line and returned it 28 yards.

"I just followed the tight end, stayed on his hip, and cut underneath for the ball," Wilent said.

Earlier, in a 16-play drive that lasted from midway through the third quarter into the fourth, the Bucs drove to the Bonner 2. But on fourth and goal, senior free safety Dave Smith came up and stopped Shawn Krautzel short of the end zone. "We really came together as a team on that goal-line stand," Wilent said.

In addition to Smith (team-high nine tackles) and Wilent, Bonner's other defensive standouts were cornerbacks Anthony Jackson and Sam Christie along with ends Matt English



RON CORTES / Inquirer Staff Photographer
Malvern Prep's Neil Willis steamrolls over La Salle defender Kevin Farrington, falling just short of a touchdown on Friday.

and Aaron Wallower. The linebacking corps also included Larry DeVasio, Tom Fitzgerald and Marco Dapkey.

Of Wilent, a 17-year-old from Drexel Hill, Oropeza said, "He plays with a lot of fire. He's a tough, hard-nosed football player. He's a reflection of the type of team we have."

Wilent's brother, Greg, is a junior outside linebacker for the Friars. He is out with a broken arm suffered in a pre-season scrimmage against Canwell-Egan.

In its 24-game losing streak, Bonner dropped its final game of the 2005 season, went 0-11 in 2006 and 2007, and went down in this year's opener against next-door neighbor Upper Darby, 28-7.

Two-sport standout. In addition to being a top-notch receiver for Malvern Prep, Joe Price is a quality baseball pitcher. At a showcase event over the summer, his fastball was clocked at 90 miles per hour.

The 6-3, 185-pound senior, a righthanded hurler, throws a fastball, slider and change-up. He has received recruiting interest from James Madison and William and Mary.

In Friday's 47-21 nonleague romp over visiting La Salle, Price had four receptions for 117 yards and two touchdowns. He and senior quarterback Billy Conners hooked up for scores of 55 and 45 yards.

On his 45-yard TD in the second quarter, Price caught the ball over the middle, found his way to the left sideline, then beat several defenders to the

end zone. "I got quicker over the summer," he said. "I probably wouldn't have scored on that play last year."

Price, a 17-year-old from Havertown, was timed at 4.45 seconds in the 40-yard dash at Delaware's football camp. Preliminary interest in football has come from Delaware, Penn. and William and Mary.

Notable. In Malvern's win against La Salle, Friars defensive back Tom Keefer was involved in a team-high eight tackles and had two hurries. ... La Salle quarterback Drew Loughery passed 29 times in the first half. He finished 17 for 35 for 209 yards and two scores, both to split end Connor Hoffman. On the other side, the Explorers were led by defensive back Kevin Farrington (12 tackles, eight solos) and linebacker Anthony Cognetti (eight tackles, three solos). ... In a game postponed by rain, Central Bucks West visits William Tennent tonight at 7. The official grand-opening ceremony for Tennent's Alumni Stadium has been pushed back to Sept. 19, when the Panthers host Council Rock North at 7. ... In its 24-game losing streak, Bonner was outscored by a combined 834-292. ... In two games, Cardinal O'Hara junior Corey Brown has rushed 16 times for 303 yards, a per-carry average of 18.9 yards.

Contact staff writer Rick O'Brien at 610-313-8019 or robrien@phillynews.com.

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