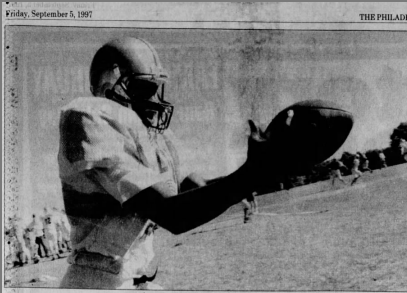


Friday, September 5, 1997 THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER



Malvern Prep's Chris Downs is a sprinter who rushed for 1,682 yards and scored 18 TDs last season.

## Malvern Prep faces challenge from Germantown Academy

By Sam Carciddi  
PHILADELPHIA

Malvern Prep is considered a strong contender for the Inter-Ac League football title, as usual. But the Friars, who have won or shared 12 league titles in the last 18 years, should be severely challenged by Germantown Academy, which has one of the city's best backfields.

Penn Charter, which shared the title with Malvern last season, was decimated by graduation. Ditto for Episcopal Academy, which lost 16 of 21 starters from last year's 6-8 team. Haverford School, 8-0 last year, will try to regroup behind veteran quarterback Frank DeFazio.

Malvern, on the other hand, has few weaknesses and features multi-talented senior running back Chris Downs, a 5-foot-9, 175-pound senior who was the Inter-Ac's sprint champion last spring. He rushed for 1,682 yards and scored 18 touchdowns last year, highlighting the season by rushing for 85 yards in a 28-0 win over Owen J. Roberts.

"He's not big, but he's fast and elusive and he understands the blocking schemes and where people should be," said Penn Charter coach Brian McKinstry.

Malvern Prep coach Giuseppe "Gemp" Pellegrini calls Downs "a coach's dream because he's a guy who can go the distance at any given time from anywhere."

"I'm shooting to play Division I football," said Downs, who has plenty of support in Malvern's defense-wise attack.

"We're throwing better and that'll help Chris because teams can't load up on him," said Pellegrini, who is entering his 20th year at Malvern and is the winningest coach in city league history with a 186-149 record in 30 seasons at three schools.

Downs' over-the-hill brother (and, also a senior, who anchors Malvern's defensive backfield, "I think the better he does, it takes the pressure off me," said Tony Downs.

**Players to watch**  
**James Berry, Penn Charter.** The 5-9, 185-pound sophomore tailback is the go-to player in the Quakers' offense.  
**Matt Blewitt, Germantown Academy.** The two-way back combines 4-second speed with great strength (300-pound bench-press) and balance. The 5-10, 175-pound Blewitt rushed for a school-record 1,340 yards and 16 TDs last fall.  
**Jon Burling, Haverford School.** The senior packs lots of leg strength on his 5-9, 160-pound frame. Last year, Burling nailed 7 of 9 field-goal attempts, including a 47-yarder. The city-league record for field goals in a season — 11 by Archbishop Ryan's Brian Hamill in 1990 — could be in jeopardy.  
**Kevin Coban, OJ, Cummans Academy.** The 6-2, 220-pound senior guard will help anchor the offensive line.  
**John Daly, Penn Charter.** The tough 5-11, 195-pound senior linebacker does things as a quality fullback.  
**Chris Downs, Malvern Prep.** Last year, the 5-9, 175-pound Downs gained 1,682 yards on 218 carries, an average of 7.7 yards per attempt. His 18 touchdowns were second in the city behind the 28 TDs scored by Frankfort's Eddie Gaskins.  
**Chris Fox, Penn Charter.** Charter would be wise to run behind the veteran 5-11, 210-pound left guard.  
**Shawn Gallagher, Malvern Prep.** The 6-2, 190-pound senior has looked sharp in the preseason and seems primed for a banner season, improving on 1996, when he completed 94 of 127 (84 percent) of his passes for 731 yards and seven TDs.  
**Ben Glauser, Episcopal Academy.** Glauser is a 6-foot, 250-pounder who should solidify massive offensive and defensive line.  
**Bob Heleliak, Germantown Academy.** Heleliak completed 88 of 124 passes (70.9 percent) for 1,125 yards and nine touchdowns last fall. The 6-1, 185-pound quarterback/samey is regarded as a I-AA prospect.  
**Don Porsen, Episcopal Academy.** Porsen, a 6-5, 220-pound senior tight end, gives the Churchmen a huge passing target.  
**Jim Woodward, Malvern Prep.** The 6-1, 225-pound senior is a talented two-way lineman who projects as a college linebacker.

**Teams to watch**  
**Malvern Prep.** The Friars (6-4 overall last year, 3-1 league) have starters returning at 16 positions and are clearly the Inter-Ac favorites. Malvern's biggest challenge: Trying to rebuild its offensive line.  
**Germantown Academy.** The Patriots (7-3, 2-2 last year), led by Blewitt and Heleliak, have a potentially explosive offense and have a legitimate shot at their first league title since 1973.  
**Penn Charter.** Charter (4-4, 3-1 last year) will have a difficult time replacing MVP Brendan Moore at quarterback. Chris Rahlil, a quick-learning 6-foot, 175-pound junior quarterback, looks promising.

**Games to Watch**  
• Downingtown at Malvern Prep, Sept. 20, 1 p.m. This is a matchup of big-school (Downingtown) and small-school (Malvern) powers — and of two highly experienced running backs — Downs and Downingtown's Adam Harris — who rushed for 1,953 yards and scored 22 TDs last year. Malvern should keep it much closer than last season, when it was trounced, 61-7.  
• Malvern Prep at Germantown Academy, Oct. 25, 1 p.m. Call it the Inter-Ac's game of the year, a matchup that figures to determine the league champion.  
• Germantown Academy at Penn Charter, Nov. 15, 1 p.m. This is the Inter-Ac's version of Army vs. Navy. It will be the 11th meeting between the teams, making it one of the nation's longest continuous rivalries. Last year, GA upset the Quakers, 9-6, and prevented Penn Charter from winning the title outright. Penn Charter leads the series, 49-30-11.

## 1997 Pre Season preview and pic of Chris Downs

Clipped By:



wmills9354

Thu, Apr 22, 2021