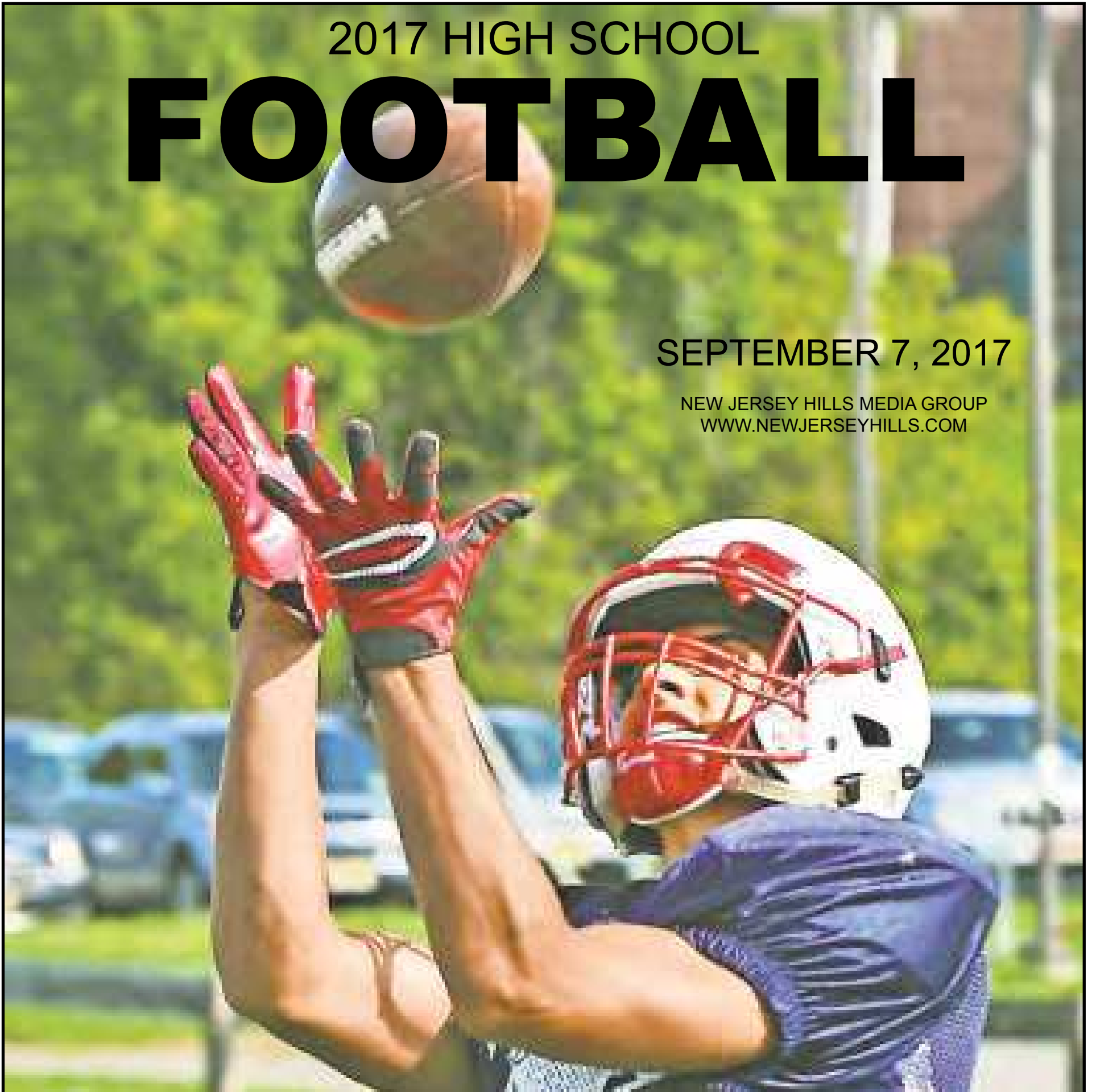


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BERNARDS HIGH SCHOOL

BERNARDS TO RELY ON SENIOR LEADERSHIP THIS SEASON

By **AMIT BATRA**
SPORTS EDITOR

BERNARDSVILLE – The Bernards High School football team will ask a lot of its seniors coming into the 2017 season.

The Mountaineers return four starters and five seniors overall. Head coach Jon Simoneau, who is going into his 10th year, realizes his team is young, but at the same time, bodes talent across the roster.

“We’re really young,” Simoneau said. “Going on 10 years, this is the youngest we’ve ever been with the amount of freshmen and sophomores. It’s like cooking from scratch. You can see the sloppiness that comes with it and everything goes longer. We have to teach everything along the way.”

“The exciting part is that there is a lot of young talent in this building. Our kicker right there off the bat we already know is going to be a freshman. There are four or five freshmen who are going to work into the mix this year and play. That part is exciting.”

Despite the youth, Simoneau hopes to keep up the recent excellence for Bernards, which reach the final of the Central, Group 2 state playoffs last season before falling to Manasquan.

“If we can put things together and get things going in the right direction, we have a chance,” he said. “The last seven years, we’ve been the best public school as far as wins/losses in the state. To keep that up, we have to put in a lot of work.”

Bernards opens the season earlier than most, taking on Shabazz in the season opener on Sept. 1.

“It’s a tough one, but they have to come here,” Simoneau said of the opener. “They are the complete opposite of us. They were in the state championship last year, too. They lost, but they return 14 starters. We return three. Once you play football, who knows.”

Some of the talent at the top will feature senior offensive lineman/defensive lineman and team captain Cubby Schuller, who has received college offers from Yale University, Colgate University, Columbia University and the University of New Hampshire. He has been in the system these past few seasons and knows his role is large on the team.

“It’s very important,” Schuller said of the senior leadership on Bernards. “We have a lot of young kids. It’s a heavy task for us. We have so many kids that we have to teach the right stuff. The majority of our players are freshmen. Teaching them what they have to do as freshmen, that has been the most important thing.”

As far as his recruiting process, Schuller talked about his offers and waiting to see what other schools do, such as the University of Pennsylvania and Princeton University.

“It has been very exciting,” Schuller said of the process. “Our school is known for putting a lot of kids in college. I have the opportunity to play at an Ivy League school. I have two Ivy offers. The only other player who has done that is Sebastian Sanchez.”

Sanchez, a 2016 Bernards High School graduate, now plays at UPenn. Schuller has spoken with Sanchez regarding the process.

“I’ve been in contact with him,” the

PLEASE SEE **BERNARDS**, PAGE 4



Bernards High School’s Jon Simoneau will enter his 10th year as head coach for the Mountaineers.

Photo by Glenn Clark

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Cover photo by Paul Hamilton

SPECIAL SECTION

is published by New Jersey Hills Media Group,
Suite 104, 100 South Jefferson Road, Whippany, N.J. 07981.

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BERNARDS

FROM PAGE 3

Bernards senior said. "He has been very helpful in the process. He has given me a lot of advice, as well as my parents. They've been very supportive and they helped me through the whole thing."

Schuller said he'd like to make his decision as soon as possible. He'll wait to see as many options he has before making official college visits and finalizing on a decision.

"Everybody in this program can take a little note from Cubby," Simoneau said of his lineman. "We have a lot of three-sport players. Cubby has done it the right way. All those A.M. lifts, Cubby has never missed them. He's a very good basketball player too. He's played track, he has played baseball, but he has been a three-sport player."

"He has focused on grades, because that's what puts you in college. It's not how great you are at a sport; it is grades. He has done the weightlifting and the training part."

New at quarterback this season will be senior and team captain Lofton Hoover. Hoover has the tools to be effective both in the air on the ground.

"I've been a skill player my whole life," Hoover said. "Scoring touchdowns, I like doing that. Throwing them and scoring them is going to be fun. I'm excited for that."

"He has a good time - he does some good things with his legs," Simoneau added. "He's a tough kid. I've seen that kid play with stitches in his face. He is what you want your captain and quarterback to look like. He has done all the right things as far as rallying the troops."

Rounding out the list of captains is senior linebacker/offensive lineman Declan McParland.

Junior Ethan Caldwell will play at running

PLEASE SEE BERNARDS, PAGE 5



Left: Bernards senior OL/DL Cubby Schuller, left, has offers to play for Yale University, the University of New Hampshire, Colgate University and Columbia University. He is one of five seniors on the Mountaineers this season. **Below:** Bernards players participate in a camp drill.

Photos by Glenn Clark



BERNARDS MOUNTAINEERS

Head Coach: Jon Simoneau (10th year)

Section: Central, Group 2

Last year's record: 8-4

Playoffs: Central II final, lost to Manasquan

Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 4 (2/2)

SCHEDULE

Sept. 1 Shabazz, 7 p.m.

Sept. 9 Roselle at Rahway High School, 1 p.m.

Sept. 15 Johnson, 7 p.m.

Sept. 23 at Hillside, 1 p.m.

Sept. 28 New Providence, 7 p.m.

Oct. 6 Delaware Valley, 7 p.m.

Oct. 13 at Bound Brook, 7 p.m.

Oct. 20 at Voorhees, 7 p.m.

Oct. 27 at Belvidere, 7 p.m.

Nov. 3 BYE



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BERNARDS: Handful of seniors ready to carry load for Bernards

FROM PAGE 4

back/wide receiver and cornerback this season. He primarily played cornerback last season but also saw time in the backfield.

"I played a little bit of running back in the Manasquan game last year," he said. "I got a feel for it the whole entire week in practice. It transitioned over to the offseason. I got to know every single play basically since I'm playing wide receiver too. It's a big transition."

Bernards finished last season with an 8-4 record and was overall very successful. The ending of the year ended on a sour note, however; as the Mountaineers fell to Manasquan in the CII final, 42-6.

"That loss hurt a lot, but only revenge is coming," Hoover said.

"We obviously have learned from it," Schuller said. "It'll always sting a little bit because you got so close but you were so far away. I think our job now is to look at this season, see how we can learn from last season and how we can progress through this season."

Simoneau said he doesn't dwell on that loss to Manasquan, as this year's group is a whole new bunch of faces.

"It's a whole another year, it's a whole new group of people," the Bernards coach. "That was our last little chapter with that team, and it wasn't the fairytale ending we wanted, but it was a heck of a team, a heck of a run."

"We were able to take some things from it, sure. We met and talked with the Manasquan coaches a bit and see what they did – how they went from a 3-7 team to a state championship team. Manasquan is tremendous in every sport. It turns out that all those kids work out and train. It's not only a football thing, it's a total progress thing for us. If we get the whole school to go over this, we can turn into the Manasquan of the North."



Above: The Bernards High School captains for 2017: From left, senior linebacker/offensive lineman Declan McParland, senior quarterback Lofton Hoover and senior offensive lineman/defensive lineman Cubby Schuller. **Left:** A Bernards player gets stretched out as the Mountaineers take part in a summer scrimmage.

Photos by Glenn Clark



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BOONTON HIGH SCHOOL

ATTENTION TO DETAIL WILL KEY BOMBERS

By **JOE HOFMANN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

BOONTON – There's a right way to do things and a wrong way. That goes double in high school football.

And that goes triple at Boonton, which has made the playoffs in each of the last three seasons.

Bombers coach Bryan Gallagher has led the team to a 23-8 record during that stretch, including two playoff victories. The seventh-year coach has the team believing in commitment, hard work and paying attention to detail.

Those aren't just words. Gallagher has his squad fulfilling those traits every day.

That wasn't always the case at Boonton, which was 4-16 in his first two years before climbing to 5-5 in his third.

"It's not natural to be great or a champion," Gallagher said. "It's natural to just get by. You only get what you earn."

Gallagher and the Bombers have tasted the fruits of their labor in making the postseason the last three years. Boonton hadn't made the playoffs since 2003, when the Bombers went 11-1 and won Section 1, Group I.

In Gallagher's first three years, the Bombers packed away their gear come playoff time. But the winning has taught the returning players what it takes to achieve that success.

"The kids coming back understand that the level of expectations are higher," Gallagher said. "The seniors have

seen the guys who have been successful and they have seen the right way to do things. We always talked about paying close attention to detail when we got here."

Gallagher hopes some experience on the front line can lift what is mostly a young backfield. The key returnees up front are left tackle Joe Chermak (6-3, 240), who has drawn looks from Division 1AA Delaware and Bucknell, and left guard Janok Bilgec. The rest of the line will be comprised of centers John Writenour and Bryan Quintanar, guard Nick Ezzi, tackle James Jacobson (6-3, 235), and tight end Julian Billa.

"I think up front with Joe and Janok that we have some experience in the trenches," Gallagher said. "I think Jacobson has a chance to be special. The strength of the offense is in our O-Line. We're brand new in a lot of the skill positions. We had some really good backs last year, but we'll be more sturdy up front this year."

The new quarterback will be Trey Cabalar, the younger brother of the former Bombers standout Gage.

"Trey is a poised kid under fire," Gallagher said. "He pitched for me as a sophomore on the baseball team (Gallagher is the school's head baseball coach) and he has good poise and leadership skills."

Joe Cannizzaro saw some action at fullback last year and will be joined in the backfield by Vinny Ventricelli, Ja-



Left: Boonton head coach Bryan Gallagher has led the Bombers to the playoffs the last three seasons. **Below:** Boonton High School left tackle Joe Chermak will be one of the team leaders this season. He has received college interest from Division 1AA schools Delaware and Bucknell.

Photos by Warren Westura



PLEASE SEE BOONTON, PAGE 7

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BOONTON: Bombers focusing on details as season nears

FROM PAGE 6

son Earle, Nick DeLorenzo, Sami Uthman, and Corey Dempster. The receivers will be Brandon Wong and Nick DeLuca.

The defense consists of many of the same names. Bilgec, Billa, Chermak, and Tristan Martinez will rotate up front at end in Boonton's 3-3 alignment, with Jacobson, Ezzim and Writenour at nose.

Ventricelli saw some time at linebacker last year and returns to the position with Cannizzaro, and Quintanar. Matt Cannizzaro, Joe's younger brother, will see action, as will Jordan DeCosta and Chad Reed.

Earle, Uthman, Justin Waters, and Chad El Sahely will play strong safety, with Cabalar at free safety. Wong, DeLuca, DeLorenzo, and Dempster will play corner.

"We have a good core of players working hard," Gallagher said. "They've had a really good summer of lifting and running. There's been a real commitment. The kids know they have to put in the work if they want to be successful."

Gallagher's team captured the North Jersey Football Super Conference National White championship with a 21-14 victory at Butler in the regular-season finale last year.

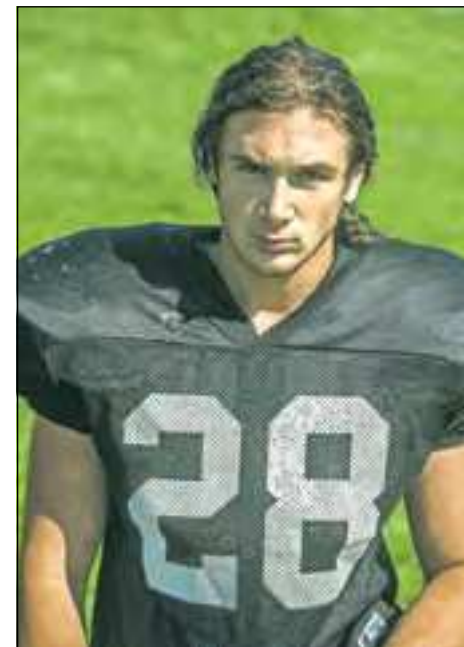
The Bombers are hoping to be in the mix this year, but Gallagher would rather have his team focus game-by-game, starting with what figures to be a strong Pequannock team coming to Boonton on Sept. 8.

"If we are concerned about anything past any one game, then we have problems," he said.



Photos by Warren Westura

Above: Boonton's Trey Cabalar will be the quarterback for the Bombers this season. Top right: Boonton tight end Julian Billa. Left: Boonton running back/linebacker Vinny Ventricelli will look to have an impact season for the Bombers in 2017.



BOONTON BOMBERS

Head coach: Bryan Gallagher (seventh year).

Section: North 1, Group I.

Last year's record: 7-2.

Playoffs: Lost in sectional quarterfinals.

Returning starters Offense/Defense: 2/2

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 Pequannock

Sept. 15 at Weequahic

Sept. 23 Parsippany

Sept. 28 at North Warren

Oct. 6 Shabazz

Oct. 13 at Hopatcong

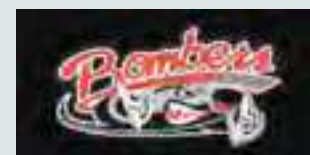
Oct. 20 Dover

Oct. 28 at Verona

Nov. 3 Butler



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CHATHAM HIGH SCHOOL

COUGARS LOOK TO BUILD ON CHARACTER

By **CHRIS ORLANDO**

CONTRIBUTING WRITER

CHATHAM – Jason Izsa has experienced highs and lows in his short tenure as head coach of the Chatham High School football team.

And as he is set to begin his fifth season at the helm of the Cougars, Izsa has a simple edict for the 2017 campaign.

“I just want them to believe in themselves, play within ourselves and be competitive,” said Izsa. “I never want them to look too far ahead and focus on the task directly ahead.”

Chatham is coming off a disappointing 2-8 season a year ago but is just two years removed from finishing 9-3 and landing a berth in the North Jersey, Section 2, Group 3 championship game in 2015.

And while Chatham came up on the short end of a 50-23 decision to Cranford in that title game, the Cougars have proven that the days of its 23-game losing streak earlier in the decade are long gone.

“This program has character and has shown that over the past few years,” said Izsa. “We’re looking to build on that. We’ve had a solid pre-season and want to bring that enthusiasm into our opener on Sept. 9.”

The Cougars will open its season on that date when it plays host to Barringer at Cougar Field at 2 p.m.

Chatham and Barringer are each members of the Patriot White division of the North Jersey Super Football Conference along with Nutley, Parsippany Hills,

PLEASE SEE CHATHAM, PAGE 8



The 2017 Chatham football captains, from left, Ben Herbert, Max Schelling and Christian Cuttita.



Photos by Glenn Clark

Chatham looks to improve from last season's 2-8 record.

Left: Chatham head coach Jason Izsa works with the Cougars in camp.



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Photos by Glenn Clark

Chatham High School senior quarterback Andrew DesMarie.



Members of the Chatham High School football team participate in drills.

CHATHAM

FROM PAGE 8

Orange, West Essex and Ferris.

The Cougars' non-conference foes include road games against Morris Hills and Mount Olive and a home game against Newton.

Chatham finished 2-4 and in fifth place in divisional play last season.

As of press time, it appears that senior Andrew DesMarais may be the starting quarterback having returned to the team after taking the past two seasons away from the football field to focus on basketball.

"Andrew came out his freshman year but

didn't play the last two," began Izsa. "He's been coming along really well in practice and while nothing is decided yet, he's a strong possibility to start."

Top returning players for the Cougars include senior running back/quarterback/linebacker Max Schelling (79 rushes for 289 yards, five touchdowns; 13-for-24 for 144 yards, two touchdowns; 45 tackles in 2016), senior running back/linebacker Drew Sardini (60 rushes for 283 yards), senior receiver/defensive back Christian Cuttita (18 receptions, 166 yards; 33 tackles) and junior offensive/defensive linebacker Luke Agnew (50 tackles in 2016).

The rest of this season's Chatham roster is heavily made up of underclassmen which include juniors Ma-

son Agonostelli, Sean Aul, Ben Baker, Shane Carlin, James Ehler, Jack Gallagher, Sean Goodman, Phillip Hoernner, Lawrence Lofaro, Ryan Lonergan, Alex Molinaro, Colin Petrullo, Kristian Roos, Colin Schroeder, Evan Small, Josh Smith and Jake Wingate and sophomores Sam Altermann, Jake Badian, Amari Bhalla, Ethan Bitar, Ackshey, Ryan Coughlin, Richie Coviello, Charles Cuneo, Aidan Davenport, Tamer Farid, George Fuentes, Liam High, Peter Hughes, Quinn Kelly, Carson Lubrano, Owen McCaffrey, Ryan McCauther, Drew Ott, Jeremy Pollard, Logan Robson, Peter Schelling, Matt Snyder and Connor Tully.

A small contingent of seniors include Thomas Elliott, Connor Harrington, Ben

CHATHAM COUGARS

Head Coach: Jason Izsa
Section: North 2, Group 3
Last year's record: 2-8
Playoffs: None

SCHEDULE

Sept. 9: Barringer
 Sept. 15: at Parsippany Hills
 Sept. 23: at Morris Hills
 Oct. 1: Ferris Cougar Field
 Oct. 6: at West Essex
 Oct. 14: Newton
 Oct. 21: Nutley
 Oct. 27: at Mount Olive
 Nov. 3: at Orange

Herbert, Patrick O'Malley and Chris Strutt, "We have a bunch of players with no varsity experience but we do have some strong senior leadership," said Izsa, who is 11-11 over his last two seasons at the helm. "We'll mix in those veteran guys with the newcomers and see what happens."

When Chatham hosts Barringer in its opener the Cougars will be playing on at a renovated Cougar Field, which has had some major upgrades in the off-season.

"There's been new bleachers and press box installed as well as a new scoreboard," said Izsa. "From what I've heard everything should be ready to go for our opener."

"We're looking forward to getting the season underway."



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DELBARTON SCHOOL

PLENTY OF TALENT AT DELBARTON

By **JOE HOFMANN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

MORRISTOWN – Brian Bowers looks out on the Delbarton School football practice field. What does he see? Talent, and lots of it.

The Green Wave coach sees speed, quickness, agility, and tenacity.

But is all of that enough for a winning season? We're about to find out.

Delbarton, playing in the North Jersey Super Football Conference's United White Division for the first time last year, finished an un-Delbarton-like 4-6. The Green Wave managed to beat St. Anthony (Long Island, NY), Poly Prep, Seton Hall Prep, and Hudson Catholic but lost to eventual state Non-Public Group III champion St. Joseph-Montvale, Pope John, Don Bosco, DePaul, eventual Non-Public Group IV champion Paramus Catholic, and St. Peter's Prep — all of them arguably among the best 10 schools in New Jersey.

Delbarton returns to the four-team United, where it will oppose Pope John, DePaul, and Seton Hall Prep. The Green Wave plays those three, as well as traditionally strong St. Anthony (Long Island, NY), St. Joe's, Bosco, returning Non-Public Group II champion Mater Dei, and Paramus Catholic.

The 1927 Yankees Murderer's Row has nothing on the Green Wave's schedule.

"The league is what it is," Bowers said. "It's certainly competitive. Every week presents another challenge. We need to play good, solid Delbarton football. We have quick, athletic kids. We're all about

developing physically and our depth."

Bowers loves his team's speed on defense, depth in the offensive backfield, and some good quarterbacks and receivers.

He likes what he has seen out of quarterback Miles Leniw, who had back issues last year.

"He's in great shape and throwing well," Bowers said. "He's the complete package, very smart and a composed player. He can really throw, run the offense, and he is a good athlete."

The running back position has some talent, as well, led by Anthony Siragusa and Cole Kreshpane.

"Both of them can run and block," Bowers said. "They're really good players."

Another back to keep an eye on is Mishod Harrison, who can be a handful for defenses. Kevin Sawtell and Dee Nestico are two more runners who should get some carries.

"We feel we have a good mix of kids who can play," Bowers said. "We'll go with a running back-by-committee approach. We want to keep everyone fresh."

Bowers likes his group of receivers as well, which includes Paul Spada, Mike Jarmolowich, Nick Gubler, Mike Lodge, and Ben McNaughton.

The line, traditionally a Delbarton strength, appears strong once again with tight end Trey Zgombic and four-year starter and Navy commit Will Anderson, the center, leading the way.

PLEASE SEE DELBARTON, PAGE 11



Above: Delbarton senior quarterback Miles Leniw warms up prior to an Aug. 25 scrimmage against Sparta. Left: Delbarton School head football coach Brian Bowers.

Photos by Chris M. Junior

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DELBARTON

FROM PAGE 10

“Trey is a great tight end, one of the best in the state,” Bowers said. “Will will probably end up playing more varsity football for Delbarton than anyone we have ever had, which is saying something.”

Filling out the line will be tight end Lucas Unger, tackles Will Smart and James Donini, guards George Johnson and Drake Mead, and linemen Michael Morgan and Paul Guenther.

Zgombic, Smart, Anderson, Mead and

Gianni Vinci will man the three-man front. Kreshpane is at one inside linebacker spot along with Johnson. Unger, Jarmolowich, and Brandon Wallace will play outside.

Siragusa, Sawtell, Lodgeand and Jake Kopeld will play safety, with Spada, Gubler, Nestico, Gary Lewis and Tommy Schelling playing corner.

“The kids are working hard and have had a great summer,” Bowers said. “We have a nice core of seniors and we need to bring along some of the younger kids. Depth is a concern in our conference, but we’re very excited to compete against the best teams in the state.”



Delbarton senior running back/linebacker Cole Kreshpane.



Photos by Chris M. Junior

Delbarton School senior lineman William Anderson.



Delbarton senior Trey Zgombic, left, is a tight end and defensive lineman.

DELBARTON GREEN WAVE

Head Coach: Brian Bowers (14th year)

Section: Non-Public Group 4

Last year's record: 4-6

Playoffs: Lost in first round

SCHEDULE

Sept. 9 St. Anthony's (N.Y.)

Sept. 16 St. Joe's (Mont.)

Sept. 23 at Pope John

Sept. 29 at Don Bosco

Oct. 7 Seton Hall Prep

Oct. 14 DePaul

Oct. 21 at Hudson Catholic

Oct. 28 at Mater Dei

Nov. 4 Paramus Catholic

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DOVER HIGH SCHOOL

SENIOR-LADEN SQUAD AT DOVER

By **JOE HOFMANN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

DOVER – The Dover High School football team's offensive playbook will be so old-school this fall that it will actually be fresh and innovative.

All that is missing are leather helmets.

Just don't ask coach Nick Gregorio exactly what the Tigers will be running when they have the ball.

"We'll be running something unusual," he said. "Let's just leave it at that."

What Gregorio will tell you is that he loves his team's experience and work ethic.

"The summer has gone very well, probably the best attended in my four years here," he said. "We have a lot of senior experience and senior leadership. We are a senior-laden team, so expectations will be high. We have some three-year varsity kids, and that experience goes a long way."

One of the team's strengths lies with some of its offensive linemen. Thomas Smith (6'0, 310) leads the way up front at tackle.

"He's our biggest lineman," Gregorio said. "He's got varsity experience mostly on defense, but with some offense. He's a big body and understands our scheme. He's always in the right place at the right time."

The two guards — Anthony Ocampo and Izzy Quiroz — also return.

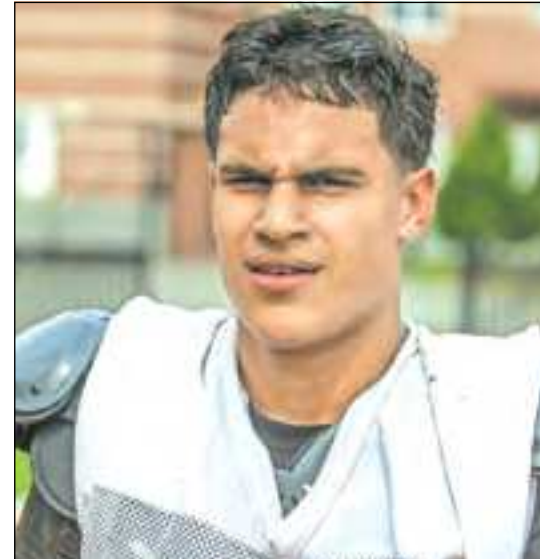
"Anthony is tough and he has great



Photos by Warren Westura

Dover High School's Thomas Smith will lead the offensive line this season.

Dover's Zarrinus Nieves, at right, will see more time in the backfield for the Tigers this season.



Dover's Christian Acevedo, left, will be the starting quarterback for the Tigers this season.



Nick Gregorio is in his fourth season as Dover High School football coach.

DOVER TIGERS

Head Coach: Nick Gregorio (fourth year).

Section: North 1, Group III.

Last year's record: 1-9.

Playoffs: Didn't qualify.

Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 7/7

SCHEDULE

Sept. 9 Hackettstown
Sept. 17 at Kittatinny
Sept. 23 at Hoboken
Sept. 30 Hanover Park
Oct. 7 Newark Central
Oct. 14 at Kinnelon
Oct. 21 Boonton
Oct. 28 at Pequannock
Nov. 4 Madison

DOVER TIGERS

To A Winning Season!



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Photos by Warren Westura

The Dover football team practices in a summer camp.



Dover's Masyn Sanchez will be one of the guys in the backfield for the Tigers this season.

DOVER

FROM PAGE 12

technique," Gregorio said. "He has good speed, and we'll pull our guards often. He'll lead block and he always gets a helmet on someone. Izzy is tough, a technician, and gets the job done. He and Anthony are like twins the way they work together."

Erick Ojedis will play center and Paul Thompson the other tackle spot.

Christian Acevedo will play quarterback.

"He brings leadership onto the field," Gregorio said. "He has a good attitude and he has taken command of the offense. The team respects him as a quarterback and as a person. He'll do a lot of things for us: Throw, run, and block. He took some lumps last year, but that's normal for sophomores on a Friday night."

Gregorio will go with two primary running backs. Masyn Sanchez is just 5-4, 150 but "don't let his size fool you," the coach said. "He's an explosive runner who's played on the varsity since his freshman year. He's got great football savvy. He can read his blocks and he is explosive. He can take it the distance if he gets free."

Zarrius Nieves spent most of his time at receiver last year but Gregorio believes it is time for Nieves to get more touches.

"We want him in the backfield so we moved him there," Gregorio said. "He's a big body. He has a strong lower body and can run between the tackles, lower his shoulder and get the tough yardage. We want our best kids to get the ball and he is one of our best kids."

Kevin Velez will open at wide receiver but Gregorio loves his versatility.

"He is the ultimate utility player," the coach said. "He can play quarterback, running back, wing back, wide receiver.

When one guy goes down, Kevin will be in there."

James Dodd will play fullback. Ryan Rumanowski will play tight end and defensive end.

He will be joined on the defensive front by Smith, Nick Fernandez, and Thompson.

Ocampo, Quiroz, Dodd and Acevedo will play linebacker. Velez, Chris Vindel, and Nieves will man the defensive backfield.

"I feel really good, but I worry about our depth," Gregorio said. "Our health will be the key to our success. If we're healthy, we can surprise some people."

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HANOVER PARK HIGH SCHOOL

HANOVER PARK PREACHING NEXT MAN UP MENTALITY

By **MARK KITCHIN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

EAST HANOVER TWP. — It's next man up for the Hornets. Hanover Park High School football lost a sizable number of athletes from the previous year's 8-3 team. However, the Hornets have never been a group to dwell upon the past. Every year gives a different player the chance to be great.

"We never look at it as replacing people," Hanover Park coach Gerry Moore said. "It is just next man up. Every year we graduate about 20 seniors so it's a next man up mentality."

It has been three years since that next man was calling signals. Donato Casolaro was a starter since his sophomore year and served with distinction. This year the job will fall to senior Tyler Scaff or sophomore Matt Tully.

"We are breaking in a new quarterback," Moore said. "They are both very capable of running the ball and throwing the ball. They are balanced. They are both very skillful. That's what we look for in our quarterbacks. The ability to stretch the field vertically and to work outside of the pocket and extend the play."

Whoever takes on the role will have the advantage of handing off Sean Conley and Connor Mildren in the backfield. Conley played a big role on the Hornets on both offense and defense last year and expects to do it again this year.

"Sean is a big, solid kid," Moore said. "He is a hell of a wrestler and a hell of a leader. He's someone the program is going to rally around. He's another voice for us."

Tight end junior Max Lockhart and sophomore Kyle Junda are versatile and fit in with whatever the Hornets decide to do.

The quarterbacks will also have a big target to throw with Michal Radomski returning. At 6-foot-3, 185 pounds, the three-year starter gives opposing defenses plenty to worry about.

"He has had a great career since he has been here and we're looking for him to continue doing what he's doing," Moore said. "He's getting better each year. He is getting better at understanding the game. He is going to be a weapon that we are looking forward to having."

"His height is a mismatch and his ability to stretch the field vertically is the key. He is a problem for a lot of teams."

The biggest positive for the Hornets is the experience of its offensive and defensive line. The athletes that were tested during last season's campaign have overcome their obstacles and have emerged as stronger athletes with more confidence. Dan Corcoran will play center. Teddie Hsi and Anthony Salvemini are tackles are Kyle Rinsky and John Malrechauff are guards.

"They have gotten better and better



Photos by Glenn Clark

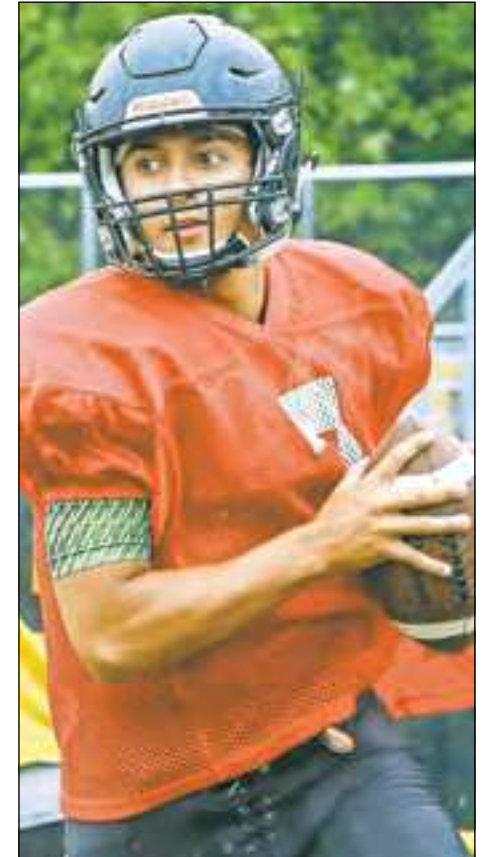
Hanover Park High School football coach Gerry Moore.

HANOVER PARK HORNETS

Head Coach: Gerry Moore (eighth year)
Section: North 2, Group 2
Last year's record: 8-3
Playoffs: Lost to Madison, 34-33, in semi-finals of North 2, Group 2 playoffs
Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 7/5

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 Cedar Grove, 7 p.m.
Sept. 15 at Newark Central, 7 p.m.
Sept. 22 Mountain Lakes, 7 p.m.
Sept. 28 Dover, 7 p.m.
Oct. 6 at Mahwah, 7 p.m.
Oct. 13 at Pequannock, 7 p.m.
Oct. 20 at Kinnelon, 7 p.m.
Oct. 27 Madison, 7 p.m.
Nov. 3 at West Essex, 7 p.m.



Hanover Park senior Tyler Scaff is vying for the starting quarterback position.

PLEASE SEE HORNETS, PAGE 15

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HORNETS

FROM PAGE 14

because they have been there," Moore said. "They are ahead of the game learning wise. We are getting better and better."

Corcoran, Hsi, Malrechauff and Salvemini rotate in on the defensive line. Their amount of two-way play remains to be seen and will depend upon how well other teammates progress.

Conley, Milden and Dan Marinos have key positions at linebacker. The secondary could be outstanding with Radomski, Scaff and spot starter Bobby Lupo stepping up. Ra-

domski will also continue his kicking and punting duties.

Not a lot of changes are expected in what the Hornets believe to be a successful formula. They feel that as long as they stay healthy and committed to their plans, success is always within their grasp.

"We have had this blueprint since we've been here and we are sticking with it," Moore said. "The kids understand the system. The biggest thing they understand is the commitment level. They have been working all summer long and it is the key to why we have been successful as a program.

"It's the same model every year. We want to win the conference and be in the state finals."



Photos by Glenn Clark

The 2017 Hanover Park football captains Sean Conley, left, and Kyle Rinsky.



Hanover Park's Teddie Hsi will look to be a focal point on the offensive and defensive line.



Hanover Park sophomore Kyle Junda will have a bigger role on both sides of the ball with the Hornets this season.



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HUNTERDON CENTRAL REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

FIRST-YEAR HUNTERDON CENTRAL COACH TO RELY ON UNDERCLASSMEN

By **HARRY FREZZA**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

FLEMINGTON — After 13 years, 94 wins and three sectional titles, Hunterdon Central Regional High School coach Matt Perotti decided it was time to step aside after last season.

Perotti's replacement is Casey Ransone, who leaves a young program at St. Joseph of Metuchen after four years to one that's been a perennial sectional title contender for more than a decade.

Ransone, a standout player in high school at Immaculata, and a member of its Hall of Fame, inherits a young team that has had a competitive pre-season for many starting jobs.

The Red Devils open the season Sept. 8, playing host to two-time North Jersey, Section 2, Group 5 finalist Bridgewater-Raritan. The Panthers have beaten Central three straight seasons and come into the season with a 22-game Mid-State 38 regular season winning streak. B-R hasn't lost a league game since 2014 when it was beaten 28-0 by Elizabeth.

Central will be a clear underdog in the home opener at Stewart Memorial Field.

"It was a senior heavy team last season," said Ransone. "We have some

talented players in this senior class, but we will be a predominately young team with a ton of underclassmen contributing."

The Red Devils have just one offensive lineman back from last year when the team finished 6-4, the season ending with a 41-14 loss to section champ Piscataway in the first round of the Central Jersey, Group 5 playoffs.

One of the key positions Ransone needs to fill is quarterback. Christian Shaw, who saw varsity action in four years, graduated along with backs Devin Trechock and Blake Leeds and receiver Frank DePaola.

Abundance Of Youth

"Having been in building a program at St. Joseph, I know what it's like to have a young team," said Ransone. "For us to be successful we have to overcome inexperience by playing mistake-free football.

"Experience is on the job training and our young guys will get better with each rep, practice and game."

Because of its abundance of youth, Central's senior leadership will be vital in how quickly the team grows. Ransone will rely heavily on two-way players like fullback/linebacker Jack



Left: Hunterdon Central first-year head coach Casey Ransone works with the offense.

Below: Hunterdon Central quarterback Clayton Lancaster drops back to throw.

Photos by Nick Scalera



HUNTERDON CENTRAL RED DEVILS

Head Coach: Casey Ransone (first year)
Section: Central, Group 5
Last year's record: 6-4
Playoffs: Fell to Piscataway, 41-14, in first round of NJSIAA Central Jersey, Group 5 playoffs
Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 6/6

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 Bridgewater-Raritan, 7 p.m.
Sept. 15 at Phillipsburg, 7 p.m.
Sept. 22 Montgomery, 7 p.m.
Sept. 28 Franklin, 7 p.m.
Oct. 6 at Elizabeth, 7 p.m.
Oct. 13 Hillsborough, 7 p.m.
Oct. 20 Warren Hills, 7 p.m.
Oct. 27 at Watchung Hills, 7 p.m.
Nov. 3 at Union, 7 p.m.

PLEASE SEE CENTRAL, PAGE 17

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CENTRAL

FROM PAGE 16

Kovi, offensive tackle/defensive end Alex Molto and linebacker Nick Zahos.

"I think we have the potential to have a lot of breakout guys this year as the majority of our guys are underclassmen," said Ransone.

Junior Clayton Lancaster (5-11, 180) appears to have won the starting quarterback role.

"He's a dynamic athlete," said Ransone.

Junior R.J. Thornton leads a group of backs that include sophomore Will Enzema, junior Dan Furmato, senior Jack Mordeci and junior Mike Bryant. Junior tight ends Luke Pizzico (6-4, 210) and Torre Lentini (6-3, 210) should keep defenses stretched along with speedy players like senior wide receiver Anthony Valentino and junior wide receivers Ben Kenyon and Terrance Murphy.

Senior Sean Parker will be a wide receiver and backup quarterback.

"R.J. Thornton is a throwback, tough fearless runner," said the Hunterdon Central coach. "He can be complemented with plethora of backs like Enzema, Furmato, Mordeci and Bryant."

Junior guards Nick Alonge and Garret Lewis will join with Molto on the offensive line. Zahos, Kovi and junior Chris Lancaster are linebackers, while senior Quentin Lacombe, Parker, Valentino, Kenyon, Furmato and Thornton are slotted for the secondary. Pizzico and Lentini will also play defensive end.



Hunterdon Central Regional High School assistant coach Jim Casertano reviews the play with quarterback Clayton Lancaster during a summer practice in preparation for the upcoming football season.



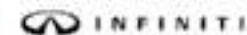
Photos by Nick Scalera

Above: Hunterdon Central junior wide receiver Ben Kenyon attempts to catch a deep pass. Left: Hunterdon Central wide receiver Rich Livornese catches a pass.

**Best of Luck to the Hunterdon Central Red Devils!
Have a Great Season!**



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JAMES CALDWELL HIGH SCHOOL

NEW ERA TO BEGIN FOR CHIEFS

By **CHRIS ORLANDO**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

WEST CALDWELL – A new era will begin for the James Caldwell High School football team when the 2017 season commences.

But for first-year head coach Tom Lamont, it is a moment he has longed prepared for.

“Its been a seamless transition so far,” said Lamont, who was an assistant for the past 23 seasons to just-retired Ken Trimmer. “We’ve had some real good scrimmages and the team is progressing at a good clip.”

Lamont was the first coach that Trimmer hired when the latter took the reigns in 1994. Trimmer, who spent the past 53 years at the school, including the last 23 as head coach of the Chiefs, left the West Caldwell school with a career record of 170-73-1.

Last fall, Caldwell started the season at 3-0 before finishing 6-3-1. The Chiefs qualified for the NJSIAA North Jersey, Section 2, Group 2 state tournament where it bowed to Hanover Park in the first round, 28-22.

The Chiefs return a slew of talented players for the 2017 campaign, including 6-0, 175-pound senior quarterback Brian Clarkin and 5-11, 175-pound senior wide receiver James Miller. Clarkin completed 63 percent of his passes last season, good for 2,194 yards and 22 touchdowns, including 15 to Miller. Miller caught 56 of Clarkin’s 166 passes for 1,037 yards making the duo one of the most prolific

in the state.

“They are both leaders of the team and are good role models,” said Lamont. “They’ve both improved every year and are two of our top players entering this season.”

Other key returning players this year include senior receiver/defensive back Pat Theobald, who along with Clarkin and Miller will be a tri-captain for the Chiefs, junior receiver T.J. Sheehan, senior center Nick Christopher, senior offensive lineman Steve Murphy, senior defensive/offensive lineman John Murphy, junior quarterback/safety, Ethan Carpenter, senior running back/linebacker Anthony Costigan, senior offensive lineman Max Van Allen, junior defensive/offensive lineman Frank Mondini and senior offensive/defensive Kyle Schaffer.

Newcomers this season include junior offensive lineman Charlie Pierce, senior receiver/defensive back Brian King, senior lineman Jacob Gaynor Crisci, junior running back/defensive back Matt Driggs and senior defensive lineman Dennis DePalma.

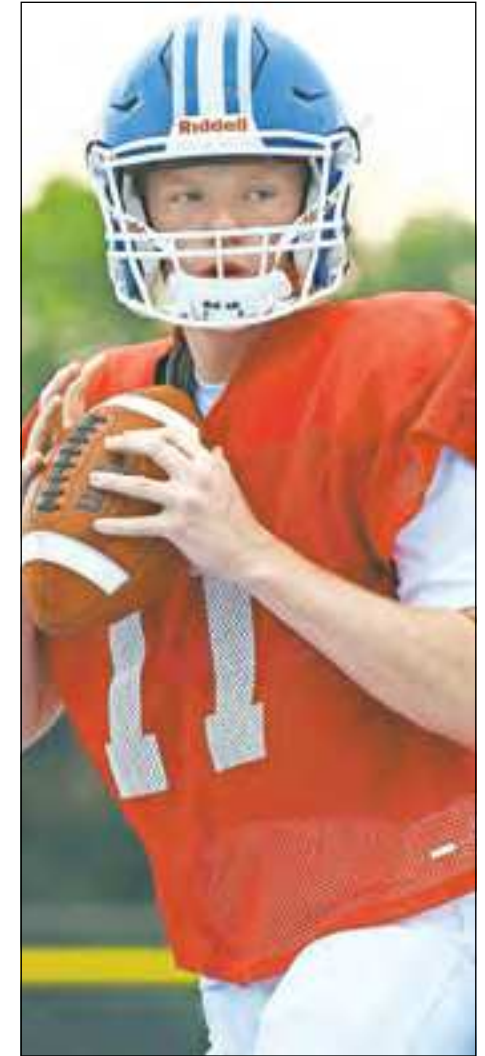
“The team has responded well to the change in coaches,” began Lamont, 56. “But there is a lot of consistency in our assistants Rocco Antonelli (offensive coordinator) and Todd Romano (defensive coordinator). And our former co-OC (and school Athletic Director) Dan Romano is still very involved with the team.”

Lamont joined the Caldwell staff in ‘94 when Trimmer took over for Andy



Photos by Glenn Clark

Above: Caldwell High School head football coach Tom Lamont. **Right:** Caldwell senior quarterback and co-captain Brian Clarkin.



JAMES CALDWELL CHIEFS

Head Coach: Tom Lamont (1st year)
Section: North 2, Group 2
Last Year's Record: 6-3-1
Playoffs: Lost in first round

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 West Side
Sept. 15 Parsippany
Sept. 23 at Millburn
Sept. 28 at West Essex
Oct. 6 Montville
Oct. 13 Lincoln
Oct. 20 at Mountain Lakes
Oct. 27 Whippany Park
Nov. 3 at Pequannock

PLEASE SEE CHIEFS, PAGE 19

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Photos by Glenn Clark

The 2017 Caldwell football captains, from left, are Pat Theobald, James Miller and Brian Clarkin.



The Caldwell defensive line works on a drill in camp.

CHIEFS: Caldwell will be under new direction in 2017 season

FROM PAGE 18

Durburrow. Lamont assumed offensive line coaching duties from '94 to 2007 and was defensive coordinator from 2008 to through last year. Lamont was also the head baseball coach at Caldwell from 2005 through 2015.

Lamont was inducted into the New

Jersey Football Coaches Association in the summer of 2013. A former three-sport standout in football, basketball and baseball, Lamont began coaching on the gridiron as offensive line coach and offensive coordinator at DePaul High, which won a state title in 1992.

Caldwell will begin its season on Friday night, Sept. 8 when it plays host to

West Side at 7 p.m. The Chiefs are once again situated in the American Blue Division of the North Jersey Super Football Conference where it finished second to undefeated Lincoln with a 4-1 mark last year.

The Chiefs will play four of its first six games at home with one of its road games in that span being the much-an-

ticipated meeting with neighboring rival West Essex at 7 p.m. on Thursday night, Sept. 28. West Essex won last year's tilt, 18-10.

"There's a lot of respect between the programs and I think both go about playing the game the right way," said Lamont. "It's something the players, fans and community all look forward to."



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MADISON HIGH SCHOOL

MADISON LOOKS FOR MORE OF THE SAME SUCCESS IN 2017

By **MARK KITCHIN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

MADISON — Remember all the fun and excitement the Madison High School Dodgers football team had posting an undefeated season and a winning streak which has reached 22 games over the past two seasons? Well, the players can't unless you count the hard work and perseverance that was needed for the Dodgers to get there.

Madison didn't win two consecutive state titles resting on its laurels. It's back to square one with more hard work and new challenges to face.

"Our schedule in how we do things and what we do is exactly the same since 11 years ago when we first came here," Madison coach Chris Kubik said. "It's the same formula. You may tweak things you do but there is no change."

What does change is the athletes and the Dodgers will have to replace plenty of graduated players starting at quarterback where Ryan Schmitz takes over where Michael Kearney left off.

"He brings athleticism and toughness," Kubik said of Ryan Schmitz. "He's probably one of the best athletes on the field at all times. He is a competitor, a leader, a great player. He is throwing the ball well but he is also a tremendous runner."

The backfield has a variety of individ-

uals looking for playing time. Brian Bradley and Austin Schmitz are the key candidates at fullback while Matt Mulcahy and Pat Higgins lead a talented crew battling for time at halfback.

"We have a lot of different sets. A lot of guys are interchangeable," Kubik said. "We have three of them on the field at all times. Mulcahy is a physical runner, Bradley is quick. Higgins is one of our fastest kids. They all bring something a little different but they are all fast, have good feet and are tough."

The receiving corps is fairly inexperienced but Santi Quintero is a capable playmaker and serious threat to score whenever he touches the ball.

"Santi is a tough kid," Kubik said. "He is a leader on the team. He played a lot of split end last year when Matt O'Donnell went down."

Brian Harris is a returning starter at tight end but Anthony Vacchiano and Anthony Mazzela are also expected to see time.

The line lost a lot of standout players like Dante DiIonno, Max Downing, Griffin Meister and Yiako Kostidakis. The good news is that some of them were injured in stretches last year so their replacements have some experience on the varsity level.

One returning starter Trevor Jasen has missed early camp because he had his



Photos by Glenn Clark

Madison High School football coach Chris Kubik.



Brian Badley will be another talented piece in the backfield for the Dodgers. He is expected to get time at fullback.



Madison will have a new starting quarterback this season in Ryan Schmitz.

MADISON DODGERS

Head Coach: Chris Kubik (11th year)

Section: North 2, Group 2

Last Year's Record: 12-0

Playoffs: Defeated Lenape Valley, 13-7, to win NJSIAA North 2, Group 2 title

Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 5/5

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 at Lenape Valley, 7 p.m.

Sept. 16 Verona, 1 p.m.

Sept. 23 at Kinnelon, 1 p.m.

Sept. 28 at Pequannock, 7 p.m.

Oct. 7 Mountain Lakes, 2:30 p.m.

Oct. 21 Newark Central, 1 p.m.

Oct. 27 at Hanover Park, 7 p.m.

Nov. 3 at Dover, 7 p.m.

Nov. 23 at Millburn, 10 a.m.

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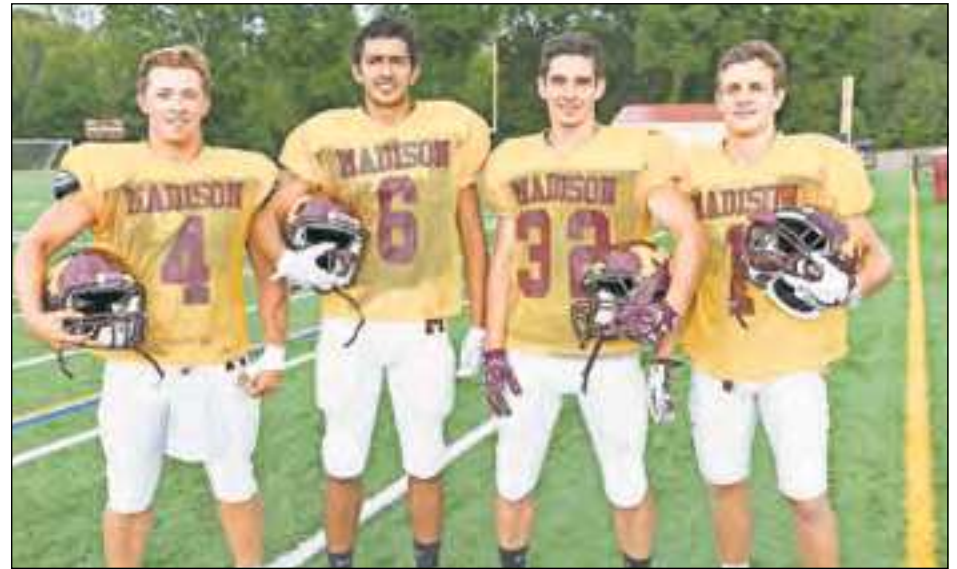
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Photos by Glenn Clark

Left: Madison junior running back Matt Mulcahy will lead a talented backfield this season. **Above:** Madison captains for 2017, from left, are Ryan Schmitz, Santi Quintero, Brian Harris and Brian Bradley.

DODGERS: Football team looks for continued success in '17

FROM PAGE 20

appendix removed but he should be ready once the season starts. Paul Links, a mainstay at center and left tackle, will also be back. Liam Barry, a starter in the early part of the season who was hampered by injury, is also returning. There's plenty of competition for spots as Ian Warek, Nate Klimaszewski, Ryan Luttinger and sophomore Paul Sauers battle it out.

Being a Group II school, Madison is sometimes forced to have a number of two-way players but the Dodgers like their athletes to have multiple positions and rotate them in and out to keep them fresh.

If someone is capable of playing and can help, he is usually on the field somewhere.

"Sometimes we are forced to (go two-way) but it depends," Kubik said. "If it's close or a tie, I go for one way. We do it in spots sometimes.

"Our defense is a bunch of hybrids. We go all over the place. Kids play multiple positions all through camp but the guys that come off the edge are our linebackers. Some people look at them as defensive ends."

Linebackers are usually on the field quite a bit. Harris, who has plenty of experience, and Klimaszewski will see plenty of time. Bradley is also back and in

good form.

"He has been tremendous," Kubik said. "He is someone who is going to help us. He is an undersized kid but he is tough and smart. He knows where the ball is. He always finds the ball. He has the knack for getting to where he needs to be. He's an instinctive player."

Safeties, probably Mike Holland and Brendan Quinn, are just learning their positions but they will get plenty of help with Ryan Schmitz and Mulcahy. Mulcahy burst on the scene last year as a sophomore and has proven to be a tenacious and talented performer.

"He has had good experience, big game

experience," Kubik said. "He is tough. He is fast. We expect two great years out of him."

You don't fix what isn't broken. Madison adheres to the same formula every year that has given it success. The season opener is at Lenape Valley which will give the Dodgers a good indication of where they are and where they have to go.

"Same story, different year," Kubik said. "We are excited and optimistic. I think this team is going to be pretty good. Can we be as good as we want to be? It's a new year, a new team. These guys are excited and they have a shot to do something special."

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MENDHAM HIGH SCHOOL

CLOUSE, MENDHAM SET FOR 2017

By **AMIT BATRA**
SPORTS EDITOR

MENDHAM TWP. – Logan Clouse looks to have a strong role with the Mendham High School football team in 2017.

The sophomore pro-style quarterback saw playing time as a freshman, but now his role will increase that much more.

He was the only freshman selected to Nike's The Opening camp, an elite showcase held at the New York Jets training facility in April featuring some of the best players the country has to offer.

"Logan right now is stepping into more of a leadership role," Mendham second-year coach Brett Ressler said. "Last year as a 14-year-old kid, he has kind of matured now into more of a confidence in what he's doing. He knows the offense with that experience. He's being more vocal than he has been in the past. That's what you need out of your quarterback."

Mendham went 3-6 in the 2016 season in Ressler's first season as head coach after spending five seasons as an assistant with the Minutemen.

Now going into his second year, he's trying to build a foundation and continue Mendham's storied success.

"It's further establishing the culture as a head coach," Ressler said. "Bill Carpluk was a tremendous head coach here for a number of years. Close to 140 wins, seven state finals...you just keep doing what he was doing and add your spin on things. We do a great job in the weight room all year long with kids.

"That's huge in the strength and conditioning aspect. We build off that. Now as it transitions to the field, we work on playing fast, playing in shape and doing our job."

Ressler said the biggest emphasis in camp is to play the next play, getting rid of mental errors and having a short memory.

He stressed all three phases of the ball in offense, defense and special teams in preparation of the season opener at Morris Hills on Sept. 8. Mendham opens its home slate on Sept. 16 against Mount Olive.

The X-factor

"All three phases of the game are important," Ressler said. "We have some great experience coming back on defense, some younger kids are going to have to step up on offense, so we think the X-factor for us is going to be our special team play. We have to win the field position battle in our games."

Mendham, which competes in the Freedom Red Division of the North Jersey Super Football Conference, has 14 seniors on its roster. That senior leadership is emphasized thus far in practice.

"For these guys, only a handful might have an opportunity to play in college," Ressler said. "For them, it's four months for the next 40 years. This is something they're going to remember for the rest of their lives. I think they're starting to understand that. The leadership is on them to set the emphasis for camp and the rest of the season."

Clouse, senior running back/kicker and captain Giuseppe Canino, senior wide receiver/cornerback Joe Scotti, senior linebacker and captain Zack Polley and senior outside linebacker/offensive lineman Pat Maclean will lead the Minutemen in 2017. Reid Randolph is the other team captain, but he suffered a concussion a few months ago and is going into the season not playing.

Canino and Scotti were all-division selections in 2016. They're expected to carry the load on offense with Clouse.

"We have a young team so we're starting to get things going now," Canino said. "We just have to keep working on things. We have to get our reps and we'll get better. We have a lot of kids who haven't played varsity yet, so you have to step up and be a leader."

Scotti is expected to have a big year, as he understands the connection between himself and his quarterback.

"He was here last year too so we definitely have (a connection)," the senior wideout said. "These younger guys coming up, he has played with them so there's definitely a little connection there. We keep building on it everyday and keep putting that work in."

The players emphasized having a winning mentality in camp and getting some revenge on the teams that prevailed over the Minutemen last season.

"I'm looking forward to the season," Maclean said. "It has been a great time, we're all having a lot of fun. We're all



Photos by Paul Hamilton

Above: Mendham High School's Brett Ressler will be entering his second year as head coach of the football team. **Below:** Mendham sophomore starting quarterback Logan Clouse is expected to make an impact in 2017.



PLEASE SEE MENDHAM, PAGE 23

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MENDHAM

FROM PAGE 22

looking forward to our first game against Morris Hills. We're emphasizing teamwork and doing our jobs. We have a great group of seniors this year. We have five, six guys who have been great players for our team the past three years."

Randolph has had a different vantage point in camp, having suffered a concussion during the lacrosse season. He was elected captain before getting the concussion.

"This year is a little different than past years because I'm injured and going into the season not playing," he said. "I'm seeing a lot of the young guys working hard to get some playing time. I remember when I was a sophomore; I had to put in that work to get playing time.

"I think we have a lot of depth at certain positions, especially at receiver. I think our passing game is really going to be a step up this year. Our offense is a lot more fast-paced as opposed to the past couple of years where it's more on the ground. That's real exciting."

email: abatra@newjerseyhills.com



Above: Team captains are, from left, Zack Polley (LB/RG); Giuseppe Canino (RB/LB/K) and Reid Randolph (RB/S). **Left:** Mendham senior running back Giuseppe Canino will have a heavy role in the backfield this season.

Photos by Paul Hamilton

MENDHAM MINUTEMEN

Head Coach: Brett Ressler (second year)

Section: North 1, Group 4

Last year's record: 3-6

Playoffs: Didn't qualify.

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 at Morris Hills, 7 p.m.

Sept. 16 Mount Olive, 1 p.m.

Sept. 22 at Jefferson, 7 p.m.

Sept. 29 Roxbury, 3 p.m.

Oct. 6 at Vernon, 7 p.m.

Oct. 14 Randolph (Homecoming), 1 p.m.

Oct. 21 Indian Hills (Senior Day), 1 p.m.

Oct. 27 at West Morris Central, 7:30 p.m.

Nov. 4 at Morris Knolls, 2:30 p.m.



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MONTVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

MONTVILLE AIM IN 2017: MAKE THE PLAYOFFS

By **JOE HOFMANN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

MONTVILLE – When last season wrapped up, the Montville High School coaching staff staged exit interviews with the underclassmen.

The coaches told the players what was expected of them in the offseason, what they needed to work on, and what they wanted to get out of 2017.

“Almost to a man, everyone said, ‘Playoffs!’” second-year coach Rick DeBonta said. “That’s the attitude of the kids.”

Montville finished 3-7 last year, but they split their final four games, including a 27-21 overtime victory over a strong Pequannock team that wound up winning a playoff game.

The promising way everything ended last year has spilled over to the offseason.

Since last year ended, DeBonta has raved about the enthusiasm his team has shown.

“The offseason has gone well,” he said. “We had a great summer. The kids have bought in. We have 54 kids, and 48-50 showed up at 7 every morning. That says a lot about the kids.”

The Mustangs got a taste of what going the distance against a playoff-caliber team was like and they wanted

more games like the Pequannock one.

“That’s what they use as fuel,” DeBonta said.

The quarterback position will be manned by either Nick Billand, a junior, or Mike Burke, a sophomore. Billand is a returning starter.

“They’re two good athletes, but Nick has experience,” DeBonta said. “Mike is up and coming. They’ll both play somewhere on the field for us.”

The receivers in the up-tempo, multi-spread will be Anthony Manna, Dean Ninche, and Colin Regan with Grant Shine in the slot.

“There seems to be a different feel this year,” DeBonta said. “The kids understand the playbook. The staff is gelling with the kids.”

Mike Riola and Kyle Cooney will play running back with four returning starters up front: Nick Gauweiler at center, tackles Nick Cocomello and Ethan Mersing, and guard Alex Khalaf. Matt Fall, Kyle Riccelli, and Vin Acquaviva are batting for the final guard spot.

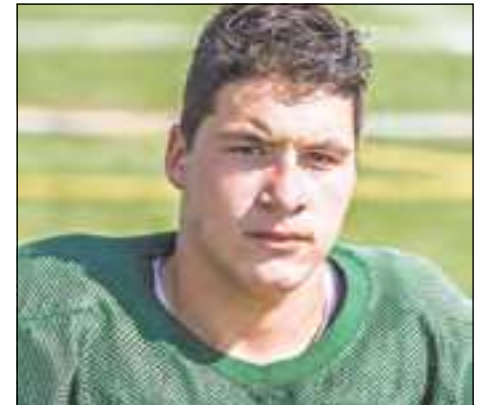
DeBonta wants his team playing at the fastest tempo possible under offensive coordinator Ian Schwindel.

“Our tempo will be phenomenal,” DeBonta said. “We want to play as fast



Photos by Warren Westura

Above: Rick DeBonta enters his second year as head football coach for Montville. Top right: Montville High School’s Nick Cocomello will be at left tackle for the Mustangs this season.



MONTVILLE MUSTANGS

Head Coach: Rick DeBonta (second year).

Section: North 1, Group III

Last year’s record: 3-7.

Playoffs: Did not qualify.

Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 7/6.

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 Vernon

Sept. 16 at Sparta

Sept. 23 West Milford

Sept. 28 High Point

Oct. 6 at Caldwell

Oct. 13 at Jefferson

Oct. 20 Pequannock

Oct. 27 Morris Hills

Nov. 3 at Parsippany

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MONTVILLE

FROM PAGE 24

as possible.”

The offense performed well in 7-on-7s at Rutgers, Indian Hills, and Livingston. DeBonta isn't a big fan of 7-on-7s, but he does like seeing his team get after it. And they got after it in the summer.

“We played really well,” he said. “It's good competition. The kids hustled.”

Defensive coordinator Keith Runne has the Mustangs in a 3-3 look.

“It gives us options to move linebackers around,” DeBonta said. “We're more athletic than we are big. We have more speed than size.”

Matt Cuozzo will play nose with Co-cumello and Mersing at tackle. The linebackers will consist of Gauweiler, Acquaviva, Khalaf, Mike Riola, and Ninche.

Billan, Shine, Cooney and Regan will play cornerback, with Manna at free safety.

“Our philosophy is that we'll swarm to the ball,” DeBonta said. “Eleven guys to the ball, team defense, team tackling. With the 3-3, we'll have a different look every time. We want to cause as much confusion as possible.”

DeBonta enters his second season as head coach after 18 as an assistant.

“What I learned is that you need great assistants and that is what I have,” he said. “It certainly makes my job easier. It was my 18th year at Montville, but my funnest year coaching. All the guys are dedicated. Football is a grueling sport and it is a long year so you need the coaches and the kids to have as much fun as possible.”



Montville High School senior Anthony Manna will be a threat at receiver for the Mustangs this season.



Montville junior Nick Bolland, at left, is listed at quarterback/cornerback this season. He's a returning starter.



Montville sophomore Mike Burke is one of two quarterbacks for the Mustangs this season.

Photos by Warren Westura



Good Luck This Season, Montville Mustangs

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MORRIS CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

TEAM CHEMISTRY WILL KEY SUCCESS

By **JOE HOFMANN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

DENVILLE TWP. – If youth and talent were classroom subjects, Morris Catholic would receive an ‘A’ in the early going.

Now if the Crusaders can achieve an ‘A’ in chemistry, they could be headed to a big season.

Thus far, they seem to be on their way in Year 3 of the John Hack Era.

“I’m really happy with the attitude so far,” said Hack, who guided the team to a 2-8 season after going 5-5 in his first year. “The kids have come in with a positive attitude and they are a tight-knit group. We have a good culture. We talk to them all the time about mental toughness and hopefully when it is time they’ll play that way.”

Hack has seen how far team chemistry can go. In his first year, Morris Catholic won four of its final five games.

“We saw some success even though the team was not overly talented,” he said. “We won the turnover battle by a 2-1 margin and that is how we won. Last year, we had some talent but the team took awhile to find itself. But now that youth has grown up.

“We’re big on culture. Right now, we’re not the biggest or the fastest team but we know that we work the hardest and we hope to play with more discipline. We love each other and we care for each other. Every day, we preach mental toughness and discipline. Our motto is ‘all-in.’”

Hack raved about his new offensive coordinator Patrick Vogelsang, who moved to New Jersey from Florida.

“He’s been a godsend, he really has,”

Hack said. “Combine him with our defensive coordinator, Mike Arekalian, who’s one of the best defensive coordinators around, and we are very excited.”

Hack will have the Crusaders operating a multiple, up-tempo offense. Nasir Clerk is a dual threat quarterback who can hurt defenses with the run or the pass.

“He’s looked very good,” Hack said. “He’s very quick. He was a great defensive back last year, one of the best in the area. He scored some touchdowns as a freshman wide receiver and is one of our best players. He’s getting better every day at grasping the offense.”

The backfield is also talented with runners Kumar Fitzgerald and Naim Redding and fullback Carlos Navarro.

“Kumar was injured most of last year,” Hack said. “He came from Paramus Catholic two years ago and we must get him the ball. Naim had a 100-yard game against Sussex Tech at the end of last year, when he became a starter. Carlos is a bruiser, a good blocker.”

There is also an abundance of talent at receiver, with Darrell Sellers, a transfer from DePaul, Damon Lattuga, Ryan McAndrew, Jimmy Blind, Khayrie Banton, and Justice Fitzgerald. The tight ends will be Matt Luttenberger, Patrick Wickenheisser and Alex Benedetto.

“We want to establish the run first and we hope to throw as well,” Hack said.

The line is built around center Anthony Forgione, who started last year, and guard Chris Carter, who has started three years.

PLEASE SEE MORRIS CATHOLIC, PAGE 27



Left: Sophomore quarterback-defensive back Nasir Clerk will look to have a big year for the Crusaders. Bottom left: Morris Catholic High School head coach John Hack enters his third season at the helm.

Photos by Chris M. Junior

MORRIS CATHOLIC CRUSADERS

Head coach: John Hack (third season).
Section: Non-Public Group II
Last year’s record: 2-8.
Playoffs: Didn’t qualify.
Returning starters (Offense/Defense): 3/3

SCHEDULE

Sept. 2 Weequahic
Sept. 9 at Whippany Park
Sept. 16 Hudson Catholic
Sept. 22 at Marist
Sept. 29 Hopatcong
Oct. 6 at Butler
Oct. 20 Immaculate
Oct. 28 at Newark Collegiate
Nov. 4 Sussex Tech



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MORRIS CATHOLIC: Crusaders in search of team chemistry

FROM PAGE 26

The rest of the line consists of guard Joe Onoratti, tackles Lucas Kaelin, and Joe Riotta. Duncan Stevenson is also vying for time.

"The line looks good," Hack said. "They're not huge, we're not 300 pounds, but we're quick, strong, and disciplined."

Hack has switched to a 3-4 defensive front, with Carter, Forgione, Stevenson, Wickenheisser, Kaelin, and Dom Castellano battling for reps.

"They're all interchangeable," Hack said. "They can play all three spots, which is what we want. They're all good, quick guys. I coach the D-Line and we pride ourselves in being the hardest-working guys on the entire field."

Riotta is back at outside linebacker after a strong year at inside linebacker last year. He'll be joined at the position by Luttenberger, Onoratti, and Kumar Fitzgerald, who moves in from safety.

Redding, Blind and Kiar Barnes will play cornerback. Sellers, Lattuga (five INTs last year), McAndrew, Justice Fitzgerald, and Banton will play safety.

"We have 42 guys on the roster, the most I've had by far," Hack said. "We're a bad injury or a bad attitude away from a bad year, so we've worked very hard to be in great shape."

Morris Catholic begins its second season in the North Jersey Super Football Conference United Blue, where it finished fourth in a five-team league last year. The division lost St. Anthony's, which beat the Crusaders last year, 36-10.

Morris Catholic replaced St. Anthony with Weequahic, which was 12-0 and won Section 2, Group I last year.



Photos by Chris M. Junior

Morris Catholic head coach John Hack works with linemen on their stances.



Far left: Senior offensive-defensive lineman Anthony Forgione. Left: Morris Catholic sophomore running back-defensive back Naim Redding.

Go CRUSADERS!



Wishing you a Successful
2017 Season from all of us at

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MORRIS HILLS HIGH SCHOOL

AFTER A SECTIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP, TIME TO TURN THE PAGE

By **JOE HOFMANN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

ROCKAWAY – Morris Hills' shiny new sectional football championship trophy is proudly on display. The hoopla and celebrations are over.

Now it's time for the Scarlet Knights to go for another one.

"We've had a great offseason," coach Mike Sabo said. "We have had a lot of support from the community and the school. The kids were honored in New York City along with such schools as Wayne Hills and St. Joe's of Montvale. For some of our kids it was their first time ever in New York City, so it was a pretty big deal.

"But last year was last year. It was a great experience, but now it's time to turn the page."

The Scarlet Knights were hit hard by graduation, losing the bulk of last year's team, which won the school's first sectional title since 1975.

Sabo is looking toward all four of his captains to repeat the run of success they had as individuals last year.

Devin Caruso, a tight end-linebacker, rolled up 135 tackles last year and had 30 catches, eight for touchdowns, last year.

"It's great having him back," Sabo said. "He leads by example. We have asked him



Photo by Warren Westura

The 2017 Morris Hills High School football captains, from left, are linebacker/tight end Devin Caruso, running back/defensive back Ray Almodovar, running back/cornerback Sam Valerio and running back Angelo Macera.

PLEASE SEE HILLS, PAGE 29

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HILLS

FROM PAGE 28

to step into the captain's role and ask him to be one of our leaders."

Ray Almodovar, meanwhile, will play receiver and cornerback.

"Last year, we spread the ball around and he was able to make big plays in our playoff win against Orange," Sabo said. "He had a 50-yard touchdown catch and he'll be one of our playmakers once again. He can catch the ball and run with speed."

Two running backs return and Sabo raved about both.

Sam Valerio will play running back and cornerback.

"He has a great personality," Sabo said. "He is fun to be around and he has a lot of energy. Our AD, Rob Hraka, visits eighth graders before they come to Morris Hills. Sam says to him, 'Mr. Hraka, I'm gonna get you a state championship ring!' That wasn't boastful but it did turn out that way because we won the championship. Sam is a two-year starter with a lot of personality and brings a lot of juice to practice every day. He was a big part of last year and will be a big part of this year."

Angelo Macera, who scored a touchdown in the sectional final, will join Valerio in the backfield.

"He caused a fumble in the state final and that was a big play," Sabo said. "He's a true football player and we're real fortunate to have him. We're really fortunate to have him and Sam in the backfield. They are 1 and 1A. I'd be lying to you if I said that we didn't have good skill kids."

The new quarterback will be Nick Carlotti, who replaced Morris County Player

of the Year Daymon Fleming, who was a four-year starter.

"He'll be a good one," Sabo said. "We've had some good quarterbacks here and he could be another one. He can run and pass. He fared well in the 7-on-7s this summer and we feel good about him. We were 4-0 in the Monmouth 7-on-7 and we reached the finals at the Indian Hills 7-on-7 against Old Tappan. You'll never replace a kid like Daymon Fleming but Nick will do fine."

Jeremy Busel, who was brought up to the varsity despite being only a freshman last year, will play fullback and linebacker.

"He played mostly in JV games, but he worked with the varsity and had the experience of practicing with a state championship team," Sabo said. "He saw the dividends. He rushed for 100 yards against High Point, so he showed what he can do."

The leading lineman figures to be tackle Shane Heslin, who transferred from Jefferson last year.

"He's 6-2 and cut down to 275, which will help him because he moves better at 275," Sabo said.

Other linemen include guards Jason Baum, a Dover transfer, Omar Acevedo, Ryan Ginder, and Carlos Franco, centers Luke Malatesta and John Schaefer, Jeremy D'Alessio and Mario Maddaloni, and tight ends Kyler Hatke, Andrew Morano and Lucas Novak.

"We have a lot of sophomores, juniors, and seniors vying for jobs," Sabo said. "Even our four best kids from last year — Caruso, Almodovar, Macera and Valerio — are not guaranteed spots. There is a lot of competition going on. We have to have a Red-White scrimmage for the first time in a long time to give everyone an equal opportunity."



Left: Morris Hills head football coach Mike Sabo looks for equal success in 2017. Bottom left: Nick Carlotti will step into the quarterback position for Morris Hills this season.

Photos by Warren Westura



MORRIS HILLS SCARLET KNIGHTS

Head coach: Mike Sabo (14th year).

Section: North 1, Group IV.

Last year's record: 9-3.

Playoffs: Sectional champions.

Returning starters (Offense/Defense): 4/4.

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 Mendham
Sept. 15 at Morris Knolls
Sept. 23 Chatham
Sept. 28 at Sparta
Oct. 6 at High Point
Oct. 14 West Milford
Oct. 21 Jefferson
Oct. 27 at Montville
Nov. 4 Vernon

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MORRIS KNOLLS HIGH SCHOOL

KNOLLS LOOKING TO TAKE NEXT STEP

By **DAN BREEMAN**

BY CONTRIBUTING WRITER

ROCKAWAY – The 2016 season ended in familiar yet disappointing fashion for the Morris Knolls High School football team, as the Golden Eagles were defeated by Wayne Valley in the opening round of the North Jersey Section 1, Group IV playoffs for the second straight year.

But with 15 returning seniors back in the fold and depth at many key positions from a team that finished at 6-4, this could very well be the season when the Golden Eagles take the next step in the postseason.

“The kids are really focused and are a dedicated group,” said Morris Knolls’ head coach Bill Regan, who returns to the sidelines for his 43rd season. “We have a solid group of seniors back and we’re looking forward to getting the season started.”

The Golden Eagles’ biggest hole to fill will be at quarterback, where they lost three-year starter Nick Vittorio, who guided Rockaway school to back-to-back playoff appearances over the last two seasons while totaling 13 victories.

The preseason finds a three-way battle for the starting quarterback spot among senior David Kaiser and juniors Patrick Gallagher and Connor Chegwiddden. Regan says all three are getting reps in the preseason and that all are capable of guiding the Golden Eagles’ run-oriented Veer offense.

“They are all multi-sport guys and have a good grip on what we want to do,” Regan said.

One of the 15 returning seniors that will be excited to get back on the field is running

back Derek Ferguson, who burst onto the scene as a sophomore before missing all of last season due to a shoulder injury. Nate Howell is another key returning senior that will line up in the backfield and is certain to see his share of carries. Juniors Mike Kaiser and Chris Mara add backfield depth.

“We have a lot of seniors this year and experience behind the starting group as well,” said Morris Knolls’ senior Joe Taylor, a three-year varsity starter at cornerback who will also line up as a wide receiver. “Nick (Vittorio) was the focal point of our offense last year but we have a lot of talent and guys capable of moving into the quarterback position.

“There’s no doubt that our offense is unique and that works to our advantage. But it’s really our defense that I expect to be much improved.”

In their four losses last year, the Golden Eagles yielded nearly 40 points per game. So while the offense is likely to continue to pile up points despite Vittorio’s departure, it may be an improved defense that leads the way back to the playoffs and perhaps trigger a postseason run.

“We need to be tighter on defense and so far in the preseason we’ve looked sounder in that regard,” Regan said. “We have guys that we want in the slots we want them in early and that certainly helps. We just need to be consistent.”

The rest of the returning senior core should bolster a Golden Eagles’ attack that scored 35 points in each of three straight victories heading into last year’s playoff



Left: Bill Regan is in his 43rd year as head coach of the Morris Knolls High School football team. **Below:** Morris Knolls quarterback/linebacker Pat Farrell.

MORRIS KNOLLS GOLDEN EAGLES

Head coach: Bill Regan (43rd year).

Section: North 1, Group IV.

Last year’s record: 6-4

Playoffs: Lost in first round to Wayne Valley.

Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 6/7

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 at Mount Olive

Sept. 15 Morris Hills

Sept. 23 at Randolph

Sept. 29 Wayne Valley

Oct. 6 at Roxbury

Oct. 14 West Morris

Oct. 21 Millburn

Oct. 27 at Columbia

Nov. 4 Mendham



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Photos by Paul Hamilton

The 2017 Morris Knolls' seniors. Back row, from left, are Joe Taylor, Derek Ferguson, Jayven Perdomo, Kareem Payton, David Kaiser, Nate Howell and Mike Seely. Front row, from left, are Tom Cicchetti, Tom Griese, Dylan Berchin, Billy Tuttle, John VanLenten and Derek Sainz.

KNOLLS

FROM PAGE 30

game against Wayne Valley before coming up short against their divisional rival.

Three-year starter Billy Tuttle should help secure defensive line along with nose guard Tom Griese and end Nick Gitelman. Other key returning seniors include Dylan Berchin (G/LB), Tom Cicchetti (TE/LB), Spencer Kaldi (T/T), Kareem Paton (WR/DB), Jayven Perdomo (WR/DB), Derek Sainz (T/T), Mike Seeley (WR/DB), and John van Lenten (TE/DE).

A solid junior class is also expected to contribute, with the likes of Joe DeSimone (G/DT), Kevin Doran (TE/DE), Brydon Gibbs (S), and Ryan McEntee (LB/C).

"We're excited about the season and we're working hard to take steps forward every week," Regan said. "We're not worried about what happens at the end of the season, we're concerned with getting ourselves ready for the start of the season."

Taylor added, "Since my sophomore year we've lost in the first round of the playoffs and our goal is to advance further this year. If we continue to work hard and with the talent we have, we should have a good chance."



Morris Knolls running back/defensive back Mike Dutko.

Go GOLDEN EAGLES!



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THE SCHEDULE

SCHEDULES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

Friday, Sept. 1

Pennington at Mo-Beard, 11 a.m.
Livingston at Randolph, 7
Shabazz at Bernards, 7

Saturday, Sept. 2

Weequahic at Morris Catholic, 1

Friday, Sept. 8

Morristown at Roxbury, 7
Sparta at Randolph, 7
Morris Knolls at Mount Olive, 7
Vernon at Montville, 7
Madison at Lenape Valley, 7
Dover at Hackettstown, 7
Cedar Grove at Hanover Park, 7
Pequannock at Boonton, 7
Parsippany at Mountain Lakes, 7
Mendham at Morris Hills, 7
Pingry at Newark Academy, 7
Ridge at Montgomery, 7
Union at Watchung Hills, 7
Parsippany Hills at West Morris, 7:30

Saturday, Sept. 9

Bernards vs. Roselle (at Rahway), 1
West Essex at Nutley, 1
West Side at Caldwell, 1
North Hunterdon at Summit, 2
Voorhees at Gov. Livingston, 2
St. Anthony (Long Island) at Delbarton, 2
Barringer at Chatham, 2
People's Prep (Newark) at MoBeard, 3
M. Catholic at Whippany Park, 7 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 15

Roxbury at Wayne Hills, 7
West Morris at West Essex, 7
Morris Hills at Morris Knolls, 7
Chatham at Parsippany Hills, 7
Kittatinny at Dover, 7
Hanover Park at Newark Central, 7
Whippany Park at Kinnelon, 7
Boonton at Weequahic, 7
Parsippany at Caldwell, 7
Johnson at Bernards, 7
Warren Hills at North Hunterdon, 7
Pingry at Manville, 7
Westfield at Ridge, 7
Cranford at Voorhees, 7
Elizabeth at Watchung Hills, 7

Saturday, Sept. 16

Mountain Lakes at Lincoln, 12
St. Joseph-Montvale at Delbarton, 1
Randolph at Morristown, 1
Mount Olive at Mendham, 1
Montville at Sparta, 1
Verona at Madison, 1
Sussex Tech at Morristown-Beard, 1
Hudson Catholic at Morris Catholic, 1

Friday, Sept. 22

Parsippany Hills at Roxbury, 7
Morris Knolls at Randolph, 7
Mendham at Jefferson, 7
Mount Olive at High Point, 7
West Essex at Orange, 7
Mountain Lakes at Hanover Park, 7
Morris Catholic at Marist, 7
Hoboken at Dover, 7
Watchung Hills at North Hunterdon, 7
Linden at Ridge, 7
Voorhees at Somerville, 7:30
Morristown at West Morris, 7:30

Saturday, Sept. 23

Chatham at Morris Hills, 1
Lincoln at Whippany Park, 1
Caldwell at Millburn, 1
Madison at Kinnelon, 1
Parsippany at Boonton, 1
West Milford at Montville, 1
Delbarton at Pope John, 1
Bernards at Hillside, 1
Pingry at Pennington, 1:30
Morris Knolls at Randolph, 7

Thursday, Sept. 28

Fieldston (NY) at Morristown-Beard, 4
Pingry at Hackley (NY), 5
High Point at Montville, 7
Dover at Hanover Park, 7
West Morris at Mount Olive, 7
Lenape Valley at Mountain Lakes, 7
Boonton at North Warren, 7
Madison at Pequannock, 7
Morris Hills at Sparta, 7
Watchung Hills at Westfield, 7
Voorhees at Rahway, 7
New Providence at Bernards, 7
Immaculata at North Hunterdon, 7
Caldwell at West Essex, 7

Friday, Sept. 29

Wayne Valley at Morris Knolls, 2
Whippany Park at Wallkill Valley, 2
Roxbury at Mendham, 3
Hopatcong at Morris Catholic, 7
Delbarton at Don Bosco, 7

Saturday, Sept. 30

Columbia at Morristown, 1

Sunday, Oct. 1

Ferris at Chatham, 1:30

Friday, Oct. 6

Morristown at West Orange, 7
Morris Knolls at Roxbury, 7
Mendham at Vernon, 7
Mount Olive at Hackettstown, 7
Morris Hills at High Point, 7
Montville at Caldwell, 7

Chatham at West Essex, 7
Hanover Park at Mahwah, 7
Dover at Newark Central, 7
Shabazz at Boonton, 7
Morris Catholic at Butler, 7
Delaware Valley at Bernards, 7
Bridgewater at North Hunterdon, 7
Ridge at Hillsborough, 7
North Plainfield at Voorhees, 7
Phillipsburg at Watchung Hills, 7
Randolph at West Morris, 7:30

Saturday, Oct. 7

Whippany Park at M. Immaculate, 1
Mo-Beard at Riverdale C.D. (NY), 1
Seton Hall Prep at Delbarton, 2:30
Mountain Lakes at Madison, 2:30
Fieldston (NY) at Pingry, 3

Friday, Oct. 13

Vernon at Mount Olive, 7
Montville at Jefferson, 7
West Essex at Parsippany Hills, 7
Hanover Park at Pequannock, 7
Kinnelon at Dover, 7
Lincoln at Caldwell, 7
Boonton at Hopatcong, 7
Hackley (NY) at Morristown-Beard, 7
Mountain Lakes at Whippany Park, 7
Bernards at Bound Brook, 7
Immaculata at Ridge, 7
Voorhees at Delaware Valley, 7

Saturday, Oct. 14

DePaul at Delbarton, 1
Morristown at Montclair, 1
Roxbury at Sparta, 1
West Morris at Morris Knolls, 1
Randolph at Mendham, 1
West Milford at Morris Hills, 1
North Hunterdon at Scotch Plains, 1
Pingry at MKA, 1
Watchung Hills at Plainfield, 1
Newton at Chatham, 7

Friday, Oct. 20

Mount Olive at Roxbury, 7
Randolph at Columbia, 7
Pequannock at Montville, 7
Ferris at West Essex, 7
Hanover Park at Kinnelon, 7
Pequannock at Montville, 7
Dover at Boonton, 7
Caldwell at Mountain Lakes, 7
Whippany Park at Parsippany, 7
Montclair Immaculate at M. Catholic, 7
Bernards at Voorhees, 7
North Hunterdon at Hillsborough, 7
Ridge at Union, 7
Watchung Hills at Linden, 7
Sparta at West Morris, 7:30

Saturday, Oct. 21

Indian Hills at Mendham, 1
Millburn at Morris Knolls, 1
Newark Central at Madison, 1
Jefferson at Morris Hills, 1
Delbarton at Hudson Catholic, 1
Livingston at Morristown, 1
Morristown-Beard at Pingry, 1
Nutley at Chatham, 2

Friday, Oct. 27

Whippany Park at Caldwell, 7
Pequannock at Dover, 7
Madison at Hanover Park, 7
Chatham at Mount Olive, 7
West Essex at Barringer, 7
Morris Hills at Montville, 7
Roxbury at Randolph, 7
Morris Knolls at Columbia, 7
Bernards at Belvidere, 7
North Hunterdon at Phillipsburg, 7
Ridge at Elizabeth, 7
Voorhees at Warren Hills, 7
Hunterdon Central at Watchung Hills, 7
Mendham at West Morris, 7:30

Saturday, Oct. 28

East Orange at Morristown, 1
Morristown-Beard at MKA, 1
Delbarton at Mater Dei, 1
Mountain Lakes at West Side, 1
Pingry at Riverdale (NY), 1
West Essex at Barringer, 1
Morris Catholic at Newark Collegiate, 1
Boonton at Verona, 2:30

Friday, Nov. 3

Morristown at Bloomfield, 7
West Morris at Roxbury, 7
Randolph at Mount Olive, 7
Montville at Parsippany, 7
Hanover Park at West Essex, 7
Chatham at Orange, 7
Caldwell at Pequannock, 7
Mahwah at Mountain Lakes, 7
Butler at Boonton, 7
Dover at Madison, 7
North Hunterdon at Voorhees, 7
George School at Pingry, 7
Watchung Hills at Ridge, 7

Saturday, Nov. 4

West Side at Whippany Park, 1
Mo-Beard at Hopkins School (Conn.), 1
Sussex Tech at Morris Catholic, 2
Paramus Catholic at Delbarton, 2
Vernon at Morris Hills, 2
Mendham at Morris Knolls, 2:30

Thursday, Nov. 23

Madison at Millburn, 10 a.m.

3 TEAMS REACHED FINALS IN '16, WHICH TEAMS WILL THIS YEAR?

By **JOE HOFMANN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The Madison and Morris Hills football teams finished their seasons celebrating on the MetLife Stadium field last December.

Bernards, meanwhile, had its state championship dreams come to an end at Kean University.

Those three schools had the most successful postseasons among the New Jersey Hills Media Group schools last year.

Here is a look at each of them.

DODGERS FINISH UNDEFEATED: Two years ago, Madison dominated Rutherford to win the Section 2, Group II championship at MetLife.

Last year, the Dodgers showed that they can pull out a thriller when quarterback Michael Kearney completed two passes in the game's closing moments, the second one a 16-yard touchdown to Matt Mulcahy with just 54 seconds left to go ahead for good as Madison beat Lenape Valley, 13-7.

It was only Kearney's third completion of the game in what was a defensive struggle.

Oddly, the Dodgers captured a wild, 45-42 victory over Lenape Valley in the season-opening game for both teams in Madison back on Sept. 10.

In the semifinals, the Dodgers came through in the clutch once again in a 34-33 semifinals victory over Hanover Park. The Hornets had pulled to within one point with just 1:14 left in the game by scoring two touchdowns in the final four minutes.

But Madison defenders Dante DiIono, Griffin Meister, Max Downing and Brian Kraska set up a wall and stopped Hanover's workhorse running back Rory DeLuca at the line of scrimmage for no gain on the Hornets two-point attempt that would have sent them to MetLife.

Madison closed 2016 with a 21-game winning streak and its fifth state championship in seven years. It has been one of the best runs of football ever in Morris County.

Down through the years after the NJ-SIAA began the state playoffs in 1974, not many schools have had the run Madison has.

Morris Knolls had a run of three



straight sectional titles under Bill Regan from 1994-96. Morristown won three championships in a row from 1997-99 under John Porcelli.

And who can forget Randolph's incredible winning streak of 54 games, unbeaten streak of 59 games, and five sectional championships from 1986-90 under John Bauer (not to mention nine straight championship game appearances from 1986-94)?

There were other dynasty-like efforts that come to mind among the smaller schools.

The Dodgers won three straight sectional championships under Ted Monica from 1977-79.

Butler rode the run and shoot to four straight championships in North 2, Group I from 1994-97 under Bob Jones. The Bulldogs also made the finals in 1992 and won it in 1990.

Pequannock, under Cosmo Lorusso, made the finals three years in a row with from 1998-2000, winning two of them. Mountain Lakes was on quite a roll under legendary coach Doug Wilkins and his replacement, Darrell Fusco. From 2008-14, the Herd won four titles and made the fi-

nals two other times.

After that, you'd have to search far and wide to find a school that has had the run of excellence that the Dodgers have had lately.

SCARLET KNIGHTS WIN FIRST TITLE SINCE 1975: Morris Hills played ball control for most of the game and wound up riding the old-school strategy all the way to a 27-14 victory over Parsippany Hills for the school's first sectional crown since 1975.

The Scarlet Knights accumulated 295 yards rushing, but the biggest single yard of all may have been Dajon Chappel's innocent-looking 1-yard run on fourth-and-1 at the Scarlet Knights own 40-yard line a mere two minutes into the game.

The result was a first down — and the Scarlet Knights had set the tone that would last the entire afternoon.

Nick Walls' 2-yard burst up the middle completed a 16-play, 80-yard march which put Morris Hills ahead for good. Fifteen of those 16 plays were running plays.

There was still about 42 minutes left to play after Walls' TD, but the Scarlet Knights came away with an enormous psychological edge as linemen Devin

Caruso, Troy Dawson, Damian Gonzalez, Nick Merz, Billy Nieman, Thomas Stoback, and Peter Stobinski controlled the line of scrimmage throughout the day.

Morris Hills' brutish running game came into play early in the second half as well. After Parsippany Hills tied the game on Nick Verducci's 12-yard touchdown run, the Scarlet Knights struck again for a 75-yard drive in 14 plays.

The first 13 were running plays, which helped set up the pass. The Scarlet Knights saved their first pass of the second half for the right moment and quarterback Daymon Fleming (15 for 102 rushing) connected with Caruso for a 25-yard touchdown that saw the 6-foot-3 inch Caruso outwork the Vikings defensive back for the ball.

A short time later, Angelo Macera — one of six Morris Hills players to run the ball — went 23 yards for a touchdown run on the fourth play of the fourth quarter. Chappell caught a two-point conversion pass from Fleming to build their lead up to 21-7.

Later, Fleming rolled right and scored a 55-yard touchdown run, making it 27-7. He wound up being Morris County's Player of the Year.

CINDERELLA RUN COMES UP SHORT: Bernards began the year with some wild games, beating Shabazz, 54-40, but then losing to Roselle, 61-54, and Johnson, 43-14. But the Mountaineers defense righted itself and went on the road to win two state playoffs games and reach the finals in Central Jersey, Group II.

First, fifth-seeded Bernards went to the Jersey Shore and beat Point Pleasant Boro, 31-27, before going to Caven Point in Jersey City and beating Lincoln, 34-26.

The playoff run ended abruptly as Shore Conference powerhouse Manasquan overpowered the Mountaineers at Kean in the final, 42-6.

Running back/wide receiver/return man Matt Tantleff had one of the best all-around seasons in school history, compiling 2,384 yards of total offense and scoring 28 touchdowns.

He rushed for 1,017 yards and 17 touchdowns and caught 43 passes for 843 yards and seven more TDs. Running back Marc Murphy chipped in with 796 yards rushing and eight touchdowns and scored four TDs receiving.

KEY GAMES TO WATCH IN 2017

By **JOE HOFMANN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Madison drove downfield and scored a touchdown in the final minute to defeat Lenape Valley, 13-7, and win the Section 2, Group II championship at MetLife Stadium last December.

The two schools won't have to wait too long to renew their rivalry in 2017.

The Dodgers and Patriots will go at it once again on opening night in Stanhope.

Madison, which has won five sectional titles in the last seven years under coach Chris Kubic, will begin its drive for another crown on Sept. 8, which is the opening weekend for most football teams in New Jersey.

Bernards opened its season Friday night, Sept. 1, against Shabazz. Last season, the Mountaineers captured a wild 54-40 victory over Shabazz in Week Zero on the way to a berth in the Central Jersey Group II finals before losing to Manasquan at Kean, 42-6. The Mountaineers hope to go all the way this time.

Morris Hills, another New Jersey Hills area team coming off of a state championship, will begin its season on the same night. The Scarlet Knights, who beat Parsippany Hills, 27-14, to win Section 2, Group III at MetLife, will host Mendham.

Those two games will highlight what is opening weekend for most schools, but there are plenty more games to keep an eye on. Here is a week-by-week look at some of the most interesting games in the New Jersey Hills Media area each week.

Sept. 8-9

Watchung Hills begins a brutal stretch of games on Friday night against Union. Elizabeth, North Hunterdon, Westfield and Phillipsburg are on deck in successive weeks.

Whippany Park's defense held off Morris Catholic last year on the way to a 14-12 victory and the Wildcats hope they can pull out another victory under the lights in Whippany on Sept. 8.

Delbarton stormed back with two late touchdowns to beat St. Anthony (Long Island) last year and the Green Wave play host in the rematch on Saturday.

Sept. 15-16

Morris Hills travels to sister school Morris Knolls for a rivalry game under the lights in Denville on Sept. 15.

Roxbury almost stunned eventual sectional champion Wayne Hills last year and the Gaels hope to pull off the upset in Wayne on Sept. 15.



Photo by Glenn Clark

The high school football season opened Sept. 1 and 2 for four New Jersey Hills area teams: Bernards, Morris Catholic, Morristown-Bedard and Randolph.

St. Joseph-Montvale, which won its 17th state championship last year, makes the trip to Morristown for a matchup against Delbarton.

Sept. 22-23

Former Iron Division rivals West Morris and Morristown will go at it in Long Valley on Sept. 22.

Parsippany and Boonton, who used to square off the Old Shoe back in the old IHC-Hills days, will get together Saturday afternoon in Boonton.

Randolph, under new coach Mike Lyons, will entertain Morris Knolls and legendary coach Bill Regan on the night of Sept. 23 in a rivalry that goes back to the IHC-Iron days.

Sept. 28-Oct. 1

In a terrific backyard rivalry, Caldwell travels to nearby West Essex on Thursday night. West Essex beat Caldwell last year, 18-10.

Pequannock had Madison on the ropes in a game that the Dodgers pulled out in a 28-21 thriller last year. If Madison wants to beat Pequannock again, it will have to do it on enemy turf on Sept. 28.

Meanwhile, Route 206 rivals West Morris and Mount Olive will face off in Mount Olive on Thursday night.

Mendham will entertain Roxbury on Friday afternoon in a matchup that was postponed, and later cancelled, due to the

Coxsackie Virus outbreak at Mendham.

Oct. 6-7

Last year, Hanover Park dealt Mahwah a 36-29 setback, which was the Bergen County school's lone setback on the way to a sectional title last year. The Hornets will have to go on the road in the rematch on Oct. 6.

Delbarton pulled out a thrilling 23-19 victory over Seton Hall Prep with a late touchdown pass at West Orange High School last year and the two will get together for a rematch at Delbarton.

Madison will entertain Mountain Lakes on Saturday in a battle between winners of the last seven North 2, Group II championships.

Oct. 13-14

West Essex defeated Parsippany Hills during the regular season last year, 28-14, but the Morris school captured a 37-13 victory in the rematch, which propelled the Vikings into the Section 2, Group III finals. The Knights are looking for a different outcome at Par Hills this time.

Pequannock rolled to a 41-15 victory at Hanover Park last year and the Hornets hope to bring home a victory on Friday night.

Chatham will host Newton on Cougar Night Saturday night.

Oct. 20-21

Montville will entertain Pequannock

and hopes to come away with another victory. The Mustangs finished 3-7 but stunned the Golden Panthers in overtime last year, 27-21. Pequannock wound up finishing 6-3-1 and made the playoffs.

West Morris almost pulled off a stunner when it traveled to Sparta and came home on the short end of a narrow 35-28 defeat. The Wolfpack hope to come up with the W in front of their home fans in Long Valley.

Mendham came away with three victories last year, one of them a 40-0 victory at Indian Hills in Bergen County. The Minutemen host Indian Hills on Oct. 21.

Oct. 27-28

Madison captured a wild, 34-33 victory over Hanover Park in the sectional semifinals last year in what was arguably the best game of the year in Morris County last year. The Hornets are seeking revenge in the rematch on Friday night at home.

Mendham will visit West Morris in a matchup of sister schools that is always tightly contested and packs the house.

Randolph will entertain Roxbury in what is one of Morris County's longest rivalries.

Nov. 3-4

Boonton traveled to Butler and came away with a victory that iced the NJS-FC-National White Division. This may be the last meeting between the two schools because Butler announced it is moving to the NJIC — consisting of Bergen and Passaic schools — next season.

West Morris travels to Roxbury on Friday night in what is arguably Morris County's most intense rivalry.

In another big rivalry game, Voorhees entertains North Hunterdon on Friday night.

Nov. 10-11

The first round of the state playoffs gets underway at the field of the higher seed.

Nov. 17-18

Which area teams will win their sectional semifinals and advance to MetLife Stadium or Kean University for the finals?

Nov. 23

Madison will travel to Millburn in the annual Thanksgiving Day game.

Dec. 1-2

Last year, Madison and Morris Hills won sectional championships and Bernards reached the finals. Which area teams will vie for titles this year?

IT'S TIME TO RE-ALIGN NORTH JERSEY SUPER CONFERENCE

By **JOE HOFMANN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

The founding fathers of the North Jersey Super Football Conference assembled a six-county, 113-school monster into one massive, mega conference for the 2016 and 2017 seasons. It was a monumental, incredibly difficult task: Pulling schools together from Morris, Sussex, Warren, Passaic, Bergen, Essex and Hudson counties was a gigantic undertaking.

They gave it their best shot and, now that we are into the second season.

Indeed, there are some great concepts and some head scratchers.

Now it's time to make it better.

After some mixing and matching, slicing and dicing, I think I've hit onto some improvements with a new alignment.

Broken rivalries and insane travel — the two major criticisms of the NJSFC by ADs, coaches and fans — are fixed.

Years and years of rivalries and tradition should never be cast aside like they aren't worth anything, which is what some of the realignment did.

Schools no longer facing longstanding opponents but then traveling near those schools in order to reach new opponents that are two counties away — or well over an hour away — was just a terrible idea. That had to be addressed and I believed I solved many of those issues. Playing a longtime rival in a crossover game with essentially nothing at stake in the standings is something else I tried to eliminate.

Another concept that needed fixing: Grouping schools solely according to Group size.

The NJSFC wanted to group all schools solely according to Group size. So as it stands now, there are too many square pegs in round holes.

I addressed this in my new proposal.

Another area that desperately needed to be addressed: Divisions with just four, five, or six schools, which is a laughable concept. Winning a division that is so small is simply no big deal.

How can one all-division team come from 9-10 schools and another come from 4-5 schools? That has to be dealt with.

Here is what I have come up with:

UNITED RED (now) (What it should be)
Bergen CatholicBergen Catholic
St. Peter's Prep..... St. Peter's Prep
St. Joe's (Montvale)..... St. Joe's (Montvale)
Don BoscoDon Bosco
Paramus CatholicParamus Catholic

UNITED WHITE (now) (What it should be)

Pope John.....Pope John
Seton Hall PrepSeton Hall Prep
DePaulDePaul
DelbartonDelbarton
Hudson Catholic

UNITED BLUE (now) (What it should be)
Hudson CatholicNewark Collegiate
Newark CollegiateMorris Catholic
Morris CatholicImmaculate
Immaculate Marist
Marist

What's new about the new United: Hudson Catholic makes the switch up from the Blue, where it is probably the best team, to the White. Morristown-Beard, MKA, Newark Academy, Sussex Tech, and Pingry would be a logical fit for the United Blue. Dwight Englewood is another good fit for the United Blue.

LIBERTY RED (now) (What it should be)
RidgewoodRidgewood
Passaic Tech..... Passaic Tech
Kennedy..... Kennedy
HackensackHackensack
CliftonClifton
EastsideEastside
PassaicPassaic
Bergen TechBergen Tech

LIBERTY WHITE (now) (What it should be)
Union City..... Union City
North Bergen..... North Bergen
KearnyKearny
Bayonne..... Bayonne
Dickinson..... Dickinson
Memorial (WNY)..... Memorial (WNY)
Newark East SideNewark East Side

LIBERTY BLUE (now) (What it should be)
BloomfieldBloomfield
Montclair..... Montclair
West Orange..... West Orange
East OrangeEast Orange
ColumbiaColumbia
LivingstonLivingston
Morristown

What's new about the new Liberty: The Red and the White remain the same. The big change is Morristown leaving the Liberty Blue and dropping down to the Freedom Red.

FREEDOM RED (now) (What it should be)
Morris KnollsMorristown
MendhamMorris Knolls
West MorrisMendham
RoxburyWest Morris
RandolphRoxbury
Mount OliveRandolph
Mount Olive
Parsippany Hills
Chatham

FREEDOM WHITE (now) (What it should be)

Wayne ValleyWayne Valley
IrvingtonIrvington
Belleville..... Belleville
Wayne Hills..... Wayne Hills
MillburnMillburn
Passaic ValleyPassaic Valley
Northern Highlands
Fair Lawn
Teaneck
Indian Hills

What's new about the new Freedom: Morristown drops from the Liberty Blue to the Freedom Red. Parsippany Hills and Chatham come up from the Patriot White. The five-team Freedom White was dissolved, with four of the schools (Northern Highlands, Fair Lawn, Teaneck, and Indian Hills) coming to the Freedom White. The fifth school, Old Tappan, drops to the Patriot Blue (see below).

PATRIOT RED (now) (what it should be)
Jefferson..... Jefferson
SpartaSparta
VernonVernon
MontvilleMontville
Morris HillsMorris Hills
High PointHigh Point
West Milford..... West Milford
Lakeland

PATRIOT WHITE (now) (what it should be)
West EssexWest Side
BarringerBarringer
Parsippany HillsOrange
OrangeNutley
NutleyHoboken
Chatham..... Shabazz
FerrisWeequahic
Lincoln

PATRIOT BLUE (now) PATRIOT BLUE (what it should be)

Demarest..... Demarest
EnglewoodEnglewood
Paramus..... Paramus
Ramapo..... Ramapo
SnyderSnyder
TenaflyTenafly
Mahwah
Ramsey
Westwood
Old Tappan

PATRIOT GOLD (now) PATRIOT GOLD (what it should be)
Ridgefield Park..... Ridgefield Park
River DellRiver Dell
Bergenfield..... Bergenfield
Fort LeeFort Lee
Pascack ValleyPascack Valley
Cliffside ParkCliffside Park

Dumont
Pascack Hills

What's new about the new Patriot: The Patriot Red adds Lakeland, which comes up from the American Red. Parsippany Hills and Chatham leave the Patriot White in order to join the Freedom Red, which creates an all-Morris league. Shabazz, Weequahic, and Hoboken come up from the five-school National White to form the new Patriot White. (The Group I National White would be dissolved). The Patriot Blue takes three schools from the American Gold (Mahwah, Ramsey, Westwood) and one from the Freedom Blue (Old Tappan). Lincoln goes from the American Blue up to the Patriot White. West Side comes up from the American Blue, replacing West Essex.

AMERICAN RED (now) (what it should be)
Lenape Valley..... Lenape Valley
LakelandNewton
NewtonHackettstown
Hackettstown..... Wallkill Valley
Wallkill ValleyKittatinny
KittatinnyHopatcong
North Warren

AMERICAN WHITE (now) (what it should be)

MadisonMadison
Hanover ParkHanover Park
PequannockPequannock
DoverDover
KinnelonKinnelon
Newark CentralNewark Central
Butler
Boonton

AMERICAN BLUE (now) (what it should be)
Lincoln..... Caldwell
CaldwellParsippany
ParsippanyWest Essex
West SideWhippany Park
Whippany ParkMountain Lakes
Mountain Lakes..... Verona
Cedar Grove
Glen Ridge

What's new about the new American: Lincoln goes from the American Blue to the Patriot White. Boonton and Butler come up from the defunct National White. Verona, Hopatcong and North Warren come up from the National White. Cedar Grove and Glen Ridge come up from the National Red, which is dissolved. Lakeland moves to the Patriot Red. West Essex comes down from the Patriot White.

MORRISTOWN HIGH SCHOOL

COLONIALS LOOK TO BE RELEVANT

By **PAUL BRUNO**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

MORRISTOWN – As he enters his second season directing the sideline for the Morristown High School football team, John Power is intent on restoring the proud program's importance on the gridiron.

"It has been a while since Morristown has been relevant," said the 1988 Union High graduate who played football, basketball and golf before heading to play football at the University of Georgia. "But we will be this year. We feel we have a strong team but we just need to taste success early. We have a strong leadership group and a bunch of really hard workers."

Recent seasons have presented disappointing outcomes for the Colonials, who have posted a 19-40-1 overall record over the past six seasons. Morristown's last winning campaign came in 2010, when the squad finished at 8-4 and defeated Nutley, 40-6, for the North Jersey Section 1, Group 4 title. Morristown's program has claimed six state sectional championships and boasts an overall post-season record of 19-8. The Colonials closed out 2016 at 2-8.

With a full season of installing his systems and overseeing the club's skill and depth Power believes a big step in the positive direction is in store in 2017. A berth in the North Jersey Section 1, Group 5 tournament is definitely a goal.

"It's a step by step process," Power said. "Since last December we knew we needed to get stronger, and we have. There were

growing pains last year as a first-year coach at Morristown and for the players learning our system. Our job as coaches is to prepare the players and allow them to get better."

Last season the Morristown offense was mostly productive and averaged just under 28 points per game in its last four contests but was 1-3 over that stretch.

But several key starters are returning to that multiple-set unit this fall, led by quarterback Jake Buchner along with backs Jhamil King, Drew Chilson and Nathan Estiverne. King, a senior, is one of the top talents in New Jersey.

That solid backfield, which should deliver a versatile ground game, is expected to get strong blocking from linemen expected to include Thomas Hussey, Will Culmone, Rob Schneider, Paul Rickershauser and El-Amin Bashir. Additional blocking along with reliable situational receiving should come from tight ends Josh Berman and Eric Hasenbein.

In fact, the line on both sides of the ball is an area that has impressed Power.

"We are definitely looking for our offensive and defensive lines to dictate what we do," said the coach. "Both lines have really improved. We have skill at key positions but you still need to block and tackle and the line has shown huge improvement. It's been noticeable."

On the flanks Buchner will look downfield for wideouts Dan Wagner and Jason Jones.

"We have several key guys on offense



Left: Morristown High School lineman El-Amin Bashir. Below: Morristown second-year football coach John Power is trying to bring his team back on the map.

Photos by Paul Hamilton

MORRISTOWN COLONIALS

Head coach: John Power (2nd year).

Section: North 1, Group V.

Last year's record: 2-8

Playoffs: Did not qualify.

Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 5/4.

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 at Roxbury
Sept. 16 vs. Randolph
Sept. 22 at West Morris
Sept. 30 vs. Columbia
Oct. 6 at West Orange
Oct. 14 at Montclair
Oct. 21 vs. Livingston
Oct. 26 vs. East Orange
Nov. 3 at Bloomfield



PLEASE SEE MORRISTOWN, PAGE 37

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MORRISTOWN: Colonials in search of relevancy under Power

FROM PAGE 36

and they know how they have to perform this season," Power said. "With Jhamil King, Jake Buchner and Drew Chilson we have players who can change a game."

On the other side of the line of scrimmage the Colonials possess a strong front against the run with Liam Carragher, Hussey, Bashir and Rosse Conway. Chilson helps anchor a strong linebacker corps that includes Matt McNally, Ken-shin Dobbs and Hasenbein.

Morristown's secondary is fast and experienced against the run or pass with Estiverne, King, Dan Wagner and Jason

Jones.

Morristown will again open this season with a Sept. 8 kickoff on the road against Roxbury. In last season's opener, the Colonials dropped a 28-13 decision against the Gaels. Morristown dropped its first three games last season before defeating Columbia, 36-26, for its first victory.

"That first game against Roxbury is the only game we are thinking about," Power observed. "Roxbury is always a super program. We have to learn how to play at a high level for four quarters. Our players have done very well in preseason. Physically and mentally they are in good shape. We will be better than last year."



Above: Morristown players to watch, from left, are: Thomas Hussey, OL/DL; Nathan Estiverne, WR/HB/DB; Drew Chilson, RB/LB; El-Amin Bashir, OL/DL; Jhamil King, RB/DB; Matt McNally, RB/WR/DB. **Left:** Morristown quarterback Jake Buchner looks to have a strong year for the Colonials.

Photos by Paul Hamilton

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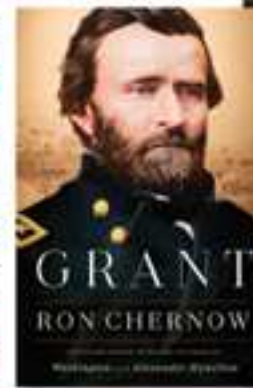
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MORRISTOWN-BEARD SCHOOL

SENIOR CAPTAINS LOOK TO LEAD MORRISTOWN-BEARD IN 2017

By **LOU MONACO**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

MORRISTOWN — With key starters returning on both sides of the ball, the Morristown-Beard School football team looks to improve on a 2-6 campaign a year ago.

Senior running back/defensive back Tahj Valentine and senior quarterback/defensive end Declan Kelly provide a 1-2 punch on offense and confident stability and leadership on the defensive end.

The 5-foot-10, 165-pound Valentine was the team's leading rusher last season with close to 800 yards on the ground on just 107 carries, totaling a team-leading six touchdowns, in only five games played. He was also the team's second leading tackler with 23 tackles and one interception.

The 6-foot-2, 200-pound Kelly, who started every game on offense and defense, combined for over 1,200 yards of offense through the air and on the ground, totaling nine touchdowns and a team-leading 24 tackles and two fumble recoveries.

"We struggled toward the end of last season, mainly due to injuries, however we have a number of strong returning players, including all three captains in seniors Valentine, Kelly and wide receiver/defensive back Ryan Russo," said Morristown-Beard head coach Tim Fell, who is entering his

PLEASE SEE CRIMSON, PAGE 39



Above: Morristown-Beard School football coach Tim Fell enters his ninth year at the helm. **Left:** Morristown-Beard senior running back/defensive back Tahj Valentine gathers in a pass.

Photos by Paul Hamilton

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CRIMSON

FROM PAGE 38

ninth year at the helm. "If those three guys stay healthy, we should be able to compete in every game. The three of them will all play in college, and I think each will get some scholarship offers from FCS schools."

Last season, Russo provided a second option for Kelly, with over 20 receptions and 300 yards of offense. Defensively, Russo led the team with five interceptions.

Other seniors looking to provide contributions this season include: wide receiver/defensive back Andrew Sokolowski, offensive/defensive lineman Isaiah Aldea, wide receiver/kicker Brad Dallas and wide receiver/defensive lineman Henry Hawkins.

Five juniors: offensive lineman/linebacker George Burke, running back/linebacker Will Dallas, offensive/defensive linemen Joe DePoalo and Patrick Salazar and offensive lineman/linebacker Jesper Trapness will all be looking to raise their game to another level and make contributions.

Eleven sophomores, along with nine freshman (Matt Butler, Michael Dangler, Mike DeSantis, Charlie Ehrbar, Major Jones, Mikail Patankar, Sean Pelinsky, Aaron Skolnik, and Greg Sutton), all look to gain some valuable playing time and experience.

Morristown-Beard, members of the NJ-SIAA Non-Public, Group 2 section, participates in the Metropolitan Independent Football League (MIFL), which includes three teams from the Garden State (Pingry and Montclair Kimberley), along with three schools from New York (Hackley, Riverdale Day and Fieldston).

The Crimson, which enters this season on a four-game losing streak, will host Pennington in its season opener on Friday, Sept. 1, with a scheduled 11 a.m. kickoff.



Morristown-Beard football captains, from left, are Tahj Valentine, Declan Kelly and Ryan Russo.

MORRISTOWN-BEARD CRIMSON

Head Coach: Tim Fell (ninth year)

Section: Non-Public, Group 2

Last year's record: 2-7

Playoffs: Didn't qualify

Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 6/7

SCHEDULE

Sept. 1 Pennington, 11 a.m.

Sept. 9 at Peoples Charter of Newark,
3 p.m.

Sept. 16 Sussex Tech, 1 p.m.

Sept. 28 Fieldston School (N.Y.), 4 p.m.

Oct. 7 at Riverdale County (N.Y.), 3 p.m.

Oct. 13 Hackley (N.Y.), 7 p.m.

Oct. 21 at Pingry, TBD

Oct. 28 at Montclair Kimberley Academy,
TBD

Nov. 4 at Hopkins School (Conn.), 2 p.m.



Left: Morristown-Beard senior quarterback/defensive end Declan Kelly. Above: Morristown-Beard senior wide receiver/defensive back Ryan Russo.

Photos by Paul Hamilton

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MOUNT OLIVE HIGH SCHOOL

HIGH EXPECTATIONS AND FINISH STRONG

By PAUL BRUNO
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

MOUNT OLIVE TWP. – The emerging topic for the Mount Olive High School football team was stamped firmly into the team's demeanor when the 2016 season concluded.

The developing theme was simply this – "Finish Strong."

The Marauders scored 20 or more points in six games last year, yet struggled to a 1-9 finish. The team's offense produced 68 points in the opening three contests but was unable to earn a victory. Despite winning just one game, the Marauders were quite close to pulling out victories in many of those battles before their opponents pulled away late in the second half.

Much of the time it came down to a talented but younger squad learning how to secure those victories. Now, the Marauders are intent on earning their first playoff berth since 2005.

"Last year we were close in a lot of those games," said Mount Olive coach Brian O'Connor, who enters his second year guiding the Marauders' program. "I know our record was 1-9 and that doesn't show it, but we were close. I think our players understand that.

"Now, we definitely have high expectations for this year. As a staff, we know what to expect and our players know what to expect from us."

The outlook is bright for O'Connor's spread offense, which will be directed again by skilled quarterback Liam An-

derson. The multi-talented 6-2, 210-pound senior, who's being recruited by Harvard, Yale and Princeton, possesses a strong arm, impressive field sense and can bolt from the pocket when necessary.

"He is a very key player for us," O'Connor said of his quarterback, "and he's the perfect player for our offense. He's got a full year of our schemes under his belt and his learning curve last year improved every game. Liam can throw, run and he's versatile and smart. He really helps make our offense go."

Anderson won't be alone in directing the Marauders' offense. He'll have plenty of help. Joining him in the backfield will be sturdy 5-9, 210-pound senior running back Anthony DiJoseph and junior Flynn Brown. Mount Olive will also feature a potent attack on the flanks in sure-handed senior wideouts Robert Bakovic and Evan Kelson and talented Lance Johnson, a 6-2, 215-pound tight end who is being recruited by Monmouth University and the University of Connecticut among others.

The Marauders also possess depth among the receiver corps as O'Connor has high hopes for juniors Ryan Huisa and Ed Mastrodeminico.

Anchoring the offensive line will be senior Corey Weiss (5-9, 240) and juniors Chris Cherry (5-10, 220) and Patrick Olson (6-5, 310). Vying for plenty of plays on the line are senior Dominic Roucco (5-8, 210) and sophomore Essex DeBerry (6-5, 235).

"We feel we have the speed and talent to utilize in the spread offense," said

PLEASE SEE MAURADERS, PAGE 41



Photos by Nick Scalera

Above: Mount Olive head coach Brian O'Connor talks with his team in preparation for the season. **Below:** Mount Olive senior center Dom Roucco.



MOUNT OLIVE MARAUDERS

Head coach: Brian O'Connor (2nd year)
Last year's record: 1-9
Section: North 1, Group IV
Playoffs: Did not qualify.
Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 7/8.
SCHEDULE
Sept. 8 vs. Morris Knolls
Sept. 16 at Mendham
Sept. 22 at High Point
Sept. 28 vs. West Morris
Oct. 6 at Hackettstown
Oct. 13 vs. Vernon
Oct. 20 at Roxbury
Oct. 27 vs. Chatham
Nov. 3 vs. Randolph

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MARAUDERS

FROM PAGE 40

O'Connor. "We want to extend the whole field and we have a lot of assets to do that. We've got two very good runners in DiJoseph and Brown and with Bakovic and Johnson on the perimeter and Kelson as a slot receiver and Anderson throwing and running, we can attack anywhere on the field on any given play."

Mount Olive returns much of its defensive unit with eight starters returning. Keying the unit is senior inside linebacker Ryan Hodgins, who the coach calls "the heart and soul of our defense." The 6-2, 220-pound Hodgins is being recruited by several Division 1 AA colleges.

The Marauders will switch to a 3-4 set on the defensive side to take advantage of their team speed.

Cherry, Olson, Weiss and Paul Moore, who transferred from Pope John, will lead the line along with Tom Karradimas, Alex Bramble and Chris Carpini. The veteran linebacker corps includes Hodgins, DiJoseph, Johnson, Jim Bencivego, Dylan Mayer and Dominic Spera. The impressive secondary includes Anderson, Kelson, Brown, Bacovic, Tamar Albritton and Ed Mastrodiminico.

"Since last season ended we've all stressed that we can't take a play off in any game," said O'Connor. "We have to finish each game in a strong way this year. We want to come out of the gate and get that win at home in our first game (Morris Knolls). That will be an excellent measuring stick for us. If we can get that win in the first game it would be a huge boost for us."

Mount Olive will play host to Morris Knolls on Sept. 8. Morris Knolls defeated the Marauders, 38-21, in last year's opener.



Photos by Nick Scalera

Mount Olive High School head coach Brian O'Connor talks with the defense.



Mount Olive center Dom Roucco, right guard Pat Olson and right tackle Alex Bramble prepare for the upcoming football season as their teammates watch the upcoming play.



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MOUNTAIN LAKES HIGH SCHOOL

HERD CONFIDENT OF REBOUND

By DAN BREEMAN
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

MOUNTAIN LAKES – After uncharacteristically finishing the 2016 season with just two wins, Mountain Lakes High School head football coach Darrell Fusco is counting on a proven formula that has traditionally guided the Herd to a multitude of winning seasons and state championships as his team embarks on a new campaign.

“We had a lot of things happen last year and we learned a great deal but the one thing that doesn’t change is that it’s always about our senior class and what you get from them both on and off the field,” Fusco said.

Last year, Mountain Lakes had just 10 seniors on its roster, with only about half that number playing significant minutes. This year that number has climbed back up to 16, with many seniors returning with valuable experience under their belts.

“We had sophomores starting two ways last year and that has never really happened before,” Fusco said. “While we knew we were going to have some issues heading into the season we didn’t expect it to reach the level it did. We had some issues that both as a team and as a coaching staff we had never really dealt with before. Add to that some key injuries and it was something of a perfect storm.”

So how does the Herd get its mojo back after what was its worst season in recent memory?

“I think our mojo came back almost immediately when we started the pre-season,” Fusco said. “We played a lot of young kids last year and we knew by the end of the season that we were developing them for this year. Many of our juniors stepped into key roles by midseason and gained valuable experience.

“We won two of our final three games, and I think the kids are ready to move on and take the next step. But like I said, it’s really all based on our 16 seniors. This group is fully committed and ready to get back to meeting our standards. We’ve had a great summer and start of camp.”

One of the key seniors on this year’s roster is third-year starter AJ Kloza, who anchors the offensive line and also plays a key role at linebacker.

“We worked hard last year but unfortunately things just didn’t go our way,” Kloza said. “We learned some valuable lessons from last year and are ready to move forward with a clean slate. We’re working really hard and we have a good group and a ton of guys coming back who should be ready to contribute. We know we made some mistakes last year but we’ve cleaned them up and are ready to be the best team that we can be from week one.”

Another key player the Herd will be counting on is 6-foot-5 junior quarterback Jack Baker, who began last season as the starting signal caller before



Photos by Warren Westura

Above: Mountain Lakes High School head football coach Darrell Fusco talks with his team. **Below:** Junior quarterback Jack Baker will look to have a strong year for the Herd.



MOUNTAIN LAKES HERD

Head coach: Darrell Fusco (7th year).

Section: North 2, Group II.

Last year’s record: 2-8

Playoffs: None

Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 6/7

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 Parsippany

Sept. 16 at Lincoln

Sept. 22 at Hanover Park

Sept. 28 Lenape Valley

Oct. 7 at Madsion

Oct. 13 at Whippany Park

Oct. 20 Caldwell

Oct. 28 at West Side

Nov. 3 Mahwah

PLEASE SEE HERD, PAGE 43

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HERD

FROM PAGE 42

going down with a season-ending injury in week four.

“He’s a big, strong kid and a three-sport athlete who can throw the football,” Fusco said. “We’re very excited to have him back and healthy.”

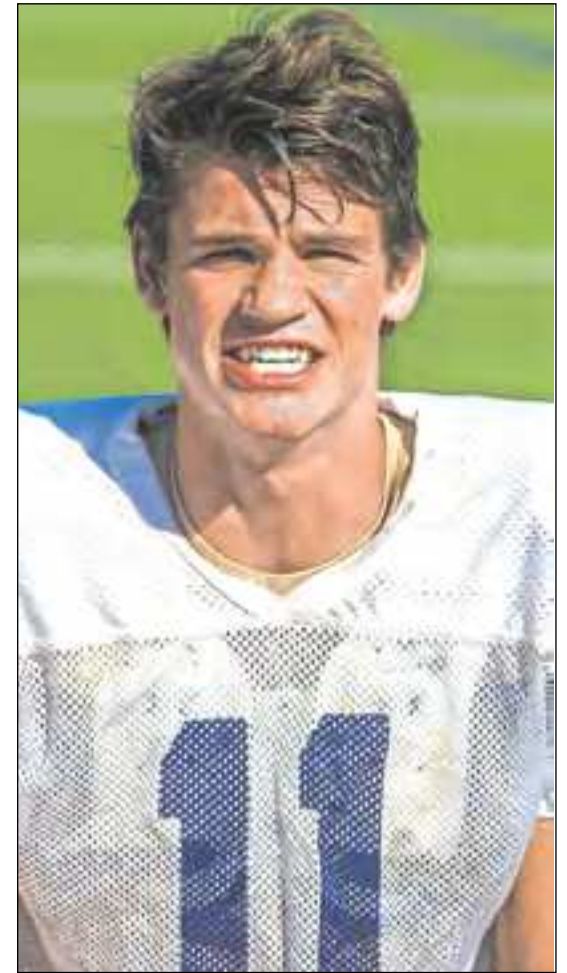
Jake Marshall is another senior captain who at 6-foot-4 should be one of Baker’s favorite options from his split end slot. Fusco calls Marshall one of the team’s vocal leaders.

More reason for optimism is the return of several key two-way senior performers.

Both Frank Patracuolla and Matt Barkauska should be forces at fullback and at linebacker for the Herd while Alec Ratchford should provide a different look at halfback and in the secondary. Senior left tackle Andrew Donohue (6’2”, 270 pounds) will be a key factor on the defensive side of the football as will nose guard Tommy Wyciskala, whose season was cut short last fall due to injury in week five.

Mountain Lakes opens its season on Sept. 8 against Parsippany. Last season, the Red Hawks stunned the Herd on opening night, handing them a 17-6 defeat that was the beginning of a very long year for Mountain Lakes.

“We know how important a good start is this year and the tradition here has always been to win every game you play,” Fusco said. “But right now, our biggest goal is to be 1-0 after our first game. This is a group that is eager to get back on the field and prove themselves. If we stay focused on that, we’ll have a chance to get back to the playoffs.”



Photos by Warren Westura

Above: Mountain Lakes running back Alec Ratchford looks for a big season in 2017. **Above left:** Mountain Lakes’ football captains are OLB/LG A.J. Klosa, left, and WR/S Jake Marshall. **Left:** Mountain Lakes tackles Conrad Christ, in blue, and Andrew Donohue, No. 75 in white, work on blocking in camp.

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NORTH HUNTERDON HIGH SCHOOL

NORTH HUNTERDON AIMS RETURN TO STATE PLAYOFFS

By **LOU MONACO**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

CLINTON TWP. — With a total of 14 returning starters back in the mix (seven on each side of the ball), the North Hunterdon High School football team is working hard for its first state playoff appearance since 2014.

Last season, the Lions ended its year winning two of its last three and three of its last five games to finish with a 6-4 record, carrying some confidence and energy into its season opener at traditional power and Mid-State 38-Raritan Division foe Summit on Saturday, Sept. 9, with kick-off scheduled for 2 p.m.

Quarterback Matt Busher, last year's Hunterdon County Player of the Year, returns to lead the offense.

The 5-foot-11, 200-pound senior, who also is the team's punter, threw for 1,386 yards with 12 touchdowns and ran for close to 600 yards with 14 TDs (a school record for rushing TDs by a quarterback) last season.

Busher, who set six school records a year ago, has his number one target back in senior wide receiver Jared McMahon, who had a school record 53 receptions for 624 yards and two touchdowns last year.

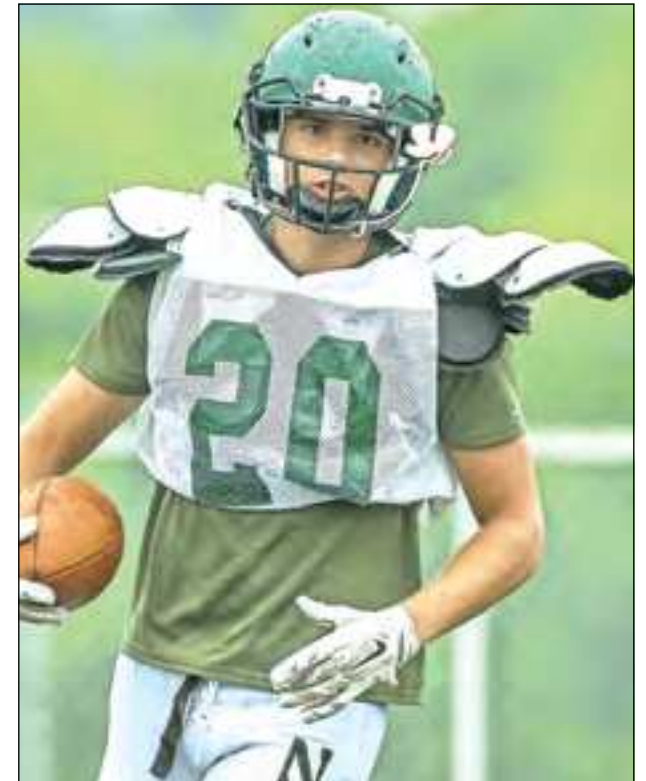
Other players looking to provide

PLEASE SEE LIONS, PAGE 45



Photos by Nick Scalera

North Hunterdon senior quarterback Matt Busher set six school records last year and was the Hunterdon County Player of the Year.



North Hunterdon's Luke Ingenito prepares for the upcoming football season.

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LIONS

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offensive contributions are senior running back Luke Wain (26 carries, 137 yards, 2 TDs) and junior wide receiver/defensive back/punt-kick returner Griffin Honthy (9 catches, 68 yards, 1 TD; 13 punt returns, 99 yards; 14 kick returns, 333 yards).

"We have a lot of players returning who have varsity experience. Our goal is that we want to play our brand of football known as the "Hard Hat Mentality," said North Hunterdon head coach Jared Mazzetta, who is in his fourth year at the helm. "On the defensive side of the ball, we bring our entire linebacker corps back and all but one of our secondary. The skill positions on both sides of the ball have a lot of experience as well."

Senior defensive back Connor McMahon spearheads the Lions defense, totaling 35 tackles with three interceptions and six pass deflections last season.

Senior defensive back Kyle Hensler returns as the team's leading tackler (83 tackles, 1 sack, 1 interception), and senior linebacker Erik Dehkes added 73 tackles for the Lions, which gave up a total of 257 points (25.7 points per game) as a 4-2-5 defensive unit last year.

The Lions will play four of their first five games at home with the second road contest of the season not coming until a road trip to Scotch Plains-Fanwood on Saturday, Oct. 14 at 2 p.m. That game will begin a stretch of three of North Hunterdon's final four games of the regular season on the road.

North Hunterdon is looking for its first state playoff berth since a 39-17 loss at Linden in the first round of the NJSIAA, North Jersey, Section 2, Group 5 playoffs on Nov. 14, 2014.



Photos by Nick Scalera

North Hunterdon head coach Jared Mazzetta directs his players.



North Hunterdon High School's Griffin Honthy prepares for the upcoming football season.



North Hunterdon's Quadree Smith prepares for the upcoming football season.

NORTH HUNTERDON LIONS

Head Coach: Jared Mazzetta (fourth year)

Section: North 2, Group 4

Last year's record: 6-4

Playoffs: Didn't qualify.

Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 7/7

SCHEDULE

Sept. 9 at Summit, 2 p.m.

Sept. 15 Warren Hills, 7 p.m.

Sept. 22 Watchung Hills, 7 p.m.

Sept. 28 Immaculata, 7 p.m.

Oct. 6 Bridgewater-Raritan, 7 p.m.

Oct. 14 at Scotch Plains-Fanwood, 1 p.m.

Oct. 20 Hillsborough, 7 p.m.

Oct. 27 at Phillipsburg, 7 p.m.

Nov. 3 at Voorhees, 7 p.m.



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THE PINGRY SCHOOL

PINGRY SET FOR PLAY IN NEW LEAGUE

By **HARRY FREZZA**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

BERNARDS TWP. — Enough has been written about The Pingry School football team's move to the new Metropolitan Independent Football League to fill a couple notebooks.

Now it's time for the Big Blue to play ball. After years in the Mid-State 38 Conference, Pingry will face a whole new diet of opponents.

"We are going to have to play well to win games," said head coach Chris Shilts.

The new league is made up of the Hackley School, Fieldston School and Riverdale of New York, and The Pingry School, Montclair Kimberley and Morristown-Beard in New Jersey. The Big Blue also have non-conference games with Newark Academy, Pennington and the George School (Pa.). Manville is the one holdover on the schedule from the MS 38 Union Division.

The season opener is Friday night (Sept. 8) at Newark Academy in Livingston.

Shilts said the new league's foundation is built on watching out for each other's programs' health, the number of healthy players week-to-week being paramount.

"We all have each other's backs," said Shilts.

The Big Blue's numbers are very good – 40 players from ninth through 12th grades are on the roster. Several have had two and even three years of varsity experience. Shilts said the club had a productive summer, pointing out that 26 players ran a 2:50 or faster in the 800-meter training run.

"We have a lot of guys back," said Shilts, adding that the program's junior varsity team has six games scheduled. "We had one senior (lineman Clayton Galiardo), who played the entire season for us last year. Our kids got a lot of reps last year, our younger guys. The way I talk about it is our younger kids are now older.

"Our junior class is fantastic and our new seniors are fantastic, so we have some pieces back. I think we are pretty strong skill position wise. Our skills stuff, our special teams stuff is back in tact. We have great depth at the skill positions."

The skill players feature senior back Obi Nnaeto, a three-year starter. He was moved from receiver to tailback last year. He ran for 492 yards and four touchdowns on 80 carries. He led the team with 38 points last season.

"He's getting some looks from the Ivy's (Ivy League schools)," said Shilts.

Versatile senior wide receiver Channing Russell, who caught seven passes for 101 yards and a touchdown last year, will be an impact player. Senior back Clyde Leef, a long snapper as a freshman, caught 16 passes for 179 yards in a season-shortened seven games. He also rushed 41 times for 239 yards and two scores. Nnaeto and Leef are captains. Junior back Nate Hefner returns after missing last season with an elbow injury.

"Having Nate back is like getting a transfer in – he's going to be a boost," said Shilts.

Junior quarterback Joe Shilts – the coach's son – got a start against Newark



Photos by Chris M. Junior

Above: Pingry School head coach Chris Shilts watches junior quarterback Joe Shilts run a play. **Below:** Senior Pingry linemen George Mychajluk (64) and A.J. Weaver (51) work on tackling technique.



PLEASE SEE PINGRY, PAGE 47



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PINGRY

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Academy last season before he was hurt in the first series of the game. He returned the next week late against Bernards, relieving graduated starter Spencer Spellman.

Shilts will start and backed by sophomores Lance Perlow and Ryan Geller. Chris Shilts knows about needing depth at quarterback. He has had just one quarterback start an entire season in nine years at Pingry. That was Tim Landers in 2012. Shilts said Geller and Perlow will be on the field somewhere.

“Joe knows the offense — he knows where the kids have to line up and where the ball should go,” said the coach. “He understands football. Ryan throws the best deep ball and Lance has the best football IQ. But we won’t have a quarterback carousel.”

The offensive and defensive lines should straighten out, said Shilts. All Mid-State 38 Union Division two-way senior linemen Jack Baulig and offensive lineman Tommy Dugan return.

“Baulig and Dugan had great defensive seasons last year,” said Shilts.

Senior A.J. Weaver won the center job and will be a first-year starter. Senior lineman Ish McLaughlin and junior tackle Jake Austin are two other starters. Junior Zach Dobson is one of the linebackers along with senior Ryan Feeley, Dugan and Leef. Leef and Dugan had an interception apiece in 2016.

Junior Patrick Stefurak, Hefner, Russell (also first team MS 38 Union last year) and Nnaeto will spearhead the secondary. Sophomore kicker/punter James Draper is back after hitting on 11-of-13 conversion attempts last season.



Left: Pingry sophomore James Draper works on his kicking game with junior holder Nathan Hefner. Below left: Pingry sophomore receiver-linebacker Sam Williams (33) prepares to haul in a pass from head coach Chris Shilts.

Photos by Chris M. Junior

PINGRY BIG BLUE

Head Coach: Chris Shilts (10th year)

Section: Non-Public, Group 3

Last year's record: 3-6

Playoffs: Didn't qualify.

Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 8/7

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 at Newark Academy, 7 p.m.

Sept. 15 at Manville, 7 p.m.

Sept. 23 at Pennington, 1:30 p.m.

Sept. 28 at Hackley (N.Y.), 5 p.m.

Oct. 7 Fieldston School (N.Y.), 3 p.m.

Oct. 14 at Montclair Kimberley Academy, 1:30 p.m.

Oct. 21 Morristown-Beard, 1 p.m.

Oct. 28 at Riverdale Country (N.Y.), 1 p.m.

Nov. 3 George (Pa.), 7 p.m.

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RANDOLPH HIGH SCHOOL

LONGTIME ASSISTANT LYONS HAS THINGS LOOKING UP FOR RAMS

By **JOE HOFMANN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

RANDOLPH TWP. – What is better, returning a wealth of experience in the backfield and no experience up front? Or veterans on the offensive line and none in the backfield?

Randolph High School and new head coach Mike Lyons are about to find out.

Four members of last year's line return, giving Lyons reason for optimism in his first year as head coach.

"If you have no O-Line, you can just about forget it," he said. "We have some nice, quality linemen returning."

With an entirely new cast of running backs, that could spell success for the Rams. Center Ryan Knox returns and so do guards Nick Petruzziello and Alex Heilman, and tackle Chandler Boykins. Ryan Cimbal is a newcomer at the other tackle spot. Ahmir Perry is also in the hunt for playing time, as are Mike Tahiri, Jared DiPerna, and Chris Dean.

"We have some stocky kids on the line," said Lyons, a 31-year assistant coach who replaces Tarig Holman, who left after two seasons to coach at Neptune High School.

Quarterback Justin Suarez also returns after a promising season in his first

PLEASE SEE RAMS, PAGE 49



RANDOLPH RAMS

Head coach: Mike Lyons (first year).
Section: North 1, Group IV.
Last year's record: 7-4.
Playoffs: Lost in the sectional semifinals.
Returning starters (Offense/Defense): 6/5

SCHEDULE

Sept. 1 Livingston
Sept. 8 Sparta
Sept. 16 at Morristown
Sept. 23 Morris Knolls
Oct. 6 at West Morris
Oct. 14 at Mendham
Oct. 20 at Columbia
Oct. 27 Roxbury
Nov. 3 at Mount Olive



Randolph High School players to watch, from left, are Justin Suarez, QB FS; Tony Fodali, FB FS; Chandler Boykins, OL DL; Nick Petruzziello DE G and Alex Heilman, G DT. Randolph High School first-year head coach Mike Lyons. He was a 31-year assistant coach who replaces Tarig Holman, who left for Neptune High School. Lyons is optimistic with a veteran group of offensive linemen.

Photos by Paul Hamilton

Go RAMS!



Wishing you a Successful
2017 Season from all of us at the
Randolph Reporter



Photos by Paul Hamilton

Left: Randolph starting quarterback Justin Suarez looks to have an impact year for the Rams. Above: Randolph wide receiver/linebacker Nick Wolmart.

RAMS

FROM PAGE 48

year at the position.

"He looks great," Lyons said. "He's developed quite a bit. Our quarterback coach, Gary Baumwoll, is a great quarterback coach and they work well together. Justin is a great leader on the field. He talks and everyone follows. He commands every kids' respect.

The backfield will be a committee con-

sisting of Matt Kuntz, Ryan McDermott, Joe Buttafoucco, Derek Rooney, Dominic Scali, Dylan Glinzman, and George Houston. Freshmen Justin Townsend and James Pepe may also get some snaps.

"I can start any one of them," Lyons said. "They're all vying for the three positions in the backfield. Every one of them are young with no varsity experience, but they look like they have been back there for awhile."

The receivers are in the same boat with kids who have a lot to prove on the varsity, including Nick Wolmart, Andre Burke,

Anthony Fodali, Darren Rice, Liam Revelle, and Jacob Flowers.

"Overall, it's a decent group," Lyons said. "We're pretty balanced. We plan on running and throwing."

The defense, like the offense, will be strong in the trenches, with Brian Murphy, Petruzzello, Boykins, Knox and Cimbal leading the way.

The linebackers will consist of Fodali, Burke, Wolmart, Rice, Revelle, and Rooney. Nick Rampone, Kuntz, Flowers, McDermott, Tito Suarez, and Justin Moreno are vying for playing time in the

secondary.

A first-year head coach values a good staff, and Lyons loves the crew he inherited, a group that includes Baumwoll, Gangemi brothers Nick and James, Joe Scali, Paul Convoy, T.J. Hill, Ben Eaton, and Antonio Rodriguez.

"Tarig left me with a great staff," Lyons said. "He brought in some great guys when he was here and I am just glad to have them. They are a very hard-working group of guys. Sometimes I arrive at practice and they are already working. I am blessed to have them."

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ROXBURY HIGH SCHOOL

HIGHER STANDARDS THAN WINS AND LOSSES

By **JOE HOFMANN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

ROXBURY TWP. – The Roxbury High School football team returns several pillars from last year's team, so the foundation is in experienced hands.

Quarterback? Check. Strong-armed Donovan Brady is back after a solid junior year.

Running back? Check. Returnee Michael Roumes can do a little bit of everything out of the backfield. And he is strong in the defensive backfield as well.

Linebackers? Check. Michael Christiansen and Connor Mahoney had good seasons last year and are back.

Senior leadership in the trenches? Check. Two-way tackle Joe Hills returns on both sides of the ball.

"We're optimistic because those kids established the early tone," coach Cosmo Lorusso said. "They have a physical presence about them. They're great kids and have experience and they get that experience across to the inexperienced guys."

The growth of the younger players will dictate where the Gaels fall in the rugged North Jersey Super Football Conference Freedom Red Division. If some of the newcomers can contribute, Roxbury could well walk away with the title.

"This year will be a challenge," Lorusso said. "We're not the biggest or the fast-



Photo by Paul Hamilton

Returning starters, from left, are: Donovan Brady, QB; Michael Christiansen, TE/LB; Joseph Hills, OL/DL; Kyle Kaiser, OL/LB; Connor Mahoney, RB/LB; Michael Roumes, RB/DB/P and Riley O'Connor, RB/DB/K.

est team, but we have a great group of kids who are working very hard and they love to compete. When kids put on a Roxbury uniform, they expect to compete for a conference and state championship and that is what we are striving for."

Joining Hills up front will be Vinny Mangarella, guards Dante Gibson, Kyle Kaiser and Cole Gibson, and center Patrick Tucker. All but Kaiser are untested.

"Hills does a tremendous job," Lorusso

said. "He's spent a lot of time in the weight room and has gotten stronger, faster and more explosive. We look for him to dominate on both sides of the ball."

Christiansen, and Nick Amendola are battling for time at tight end. Speedy Kevin Sembrat and Brian Dachowski will line up at split end.

Mahoney, Evan Vasquez, and Riley O'Connor will join Roumes out of the backfield. The Gaels will be back in the pure Del-

aware Wing-T this fall, an offense Lorusso has run for many of his years as a coach.

"It's deceptive and it's what is best for this team," he said. "We don't have the size to zone block. We have to do it with deception. We'll double-team and we'll have traps and do those kinds of things."

Brady had a good year throwing last year and Lorusso is excited to have him back.

PLEASE SEE ROXBURY, PAGE 51

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ROXBURY

FROM PAGE 50

“Donovan is a throwback athlete who plays three different sports,” Lorusso said. “He’s got a strong arm, as strong as any arm you’ll see in a quarterback. He can really throw it.”

On the defense, Matt Cordileone will play nose tackle and will be surrounded by Tucker, Hills, and Mangarella up front.

Gibson and Nick D’Anna will flank Christiansen and Mahoney at linebacker. The secondary will consist of Sembrat, Antony Perhacs, Vasquez, Anthony Hayek, Roumes, and O’Connor.

Higher Standards

If things fall right, the Gaels will be in the mix in the Freedom. Roxbury finished

“It’s up for grabs,” Lorusso said. “West Morris is probably the favorite. They always do a nice job. I think Mount Olive will be improved because (second-year coach Brian) O’Connor does a great job. Mendham will rise up. It’s the beginning of the Mike Lyons Era at Randolph and they’ll be good. And Morris Knolls will good. Billy Regan is one of the greatest coaches in the history of New Jersey high school football.”

Winning or losing aside, Lorusso wants to set higher standards for his team off the field.

“I have learned over the years that you’d better have a bigger mission than championships,” said Lorusso, who has coached Pequannock and Roxbury to a total of four sectional titles.

“Most years, you’re not going to win a championship, so what experiences are the kids taking with them? What lessons are they learning? Our mission is always about



Above: Roxbury High School senior running back/defensive back Michael Roumes. **Below:** Head football coach Cosmo Lorusso.

young men being better versions of themselves, whether it is being a better teammate, a better son, a better citizen. What can we do to make this country or this world a better place?

“One of my biggest thrills is when we won the state championship at Roxbury in 2012. The kids chose to print on the championship ring: ‘Men built for others.’ They chose to have that put on the ring and we couldn’t have been more proud of them for doing that.”



Photos by Paul Hamilton



Roxbury High School senior quarterback Donovan Brady.

ROXBURY GAELS

Head coach: Cosmo Lorusso (16th year).

Section: North 1, Group IV.

Last year’s record: 5-5.

Playoffs: Lost in the first round.

Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 5/4.

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 Morristown
 Sept. 15 at Wayne Hills
 Sept. 22 Parsippany Hills
 Sept. 29 at Mendham
 Oct. 6 Morris Knolls
 Oct. 14 at Sparta
 Oct. 20 Mount Olive
 Oct. 27 at Randolph
 Nov. 3 West Morris

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RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL

HEALTHY RADICE BACK TO LEAD RIDGE

By **HARRY FREZZA**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

BERNARDS TWP.— Quarterback Brandon Radice's season ended last year before it began when he was hurt in a scrimmage. The good news for Ridge High School and head coach Bill Tracy is that Radice was a junior.

The 6-foot-4, 205-pound Columbia University-bound Radice is healthy and has looked sharp in the preseason as Ridge prepares for its season opener Sept. 8 at Montgomery.

Radice has quite a bit on offense to work with as fullback R.J. Mulligan, left halfback Devin Stieglitz and right halfback Ryan Gogerty and left end receiver Andrew Lusardi return. All three backs are good receivers... Lusardi also punts. Senior Nolan Hughes and Chris Byrne will both play end. Hughes has handled the kicking job for three years.

"We have some talent. There are some good guys, we are blessed with some good guys, some hard working guys," said Tracy. "I think we are going to be a tough team to play against."

Double OT Loss

The Red Devils finished 2016 8-2, winning seven straight after losing to two-time defending North Section 2, Group 5 champ Westfield. The streak ended with a 41-34 double overtime home loss to Union in a first round sectional game. The Red Devils had beaten Union 34-21 in a regular season game three weeks earlier.

That's part of Red Devils' history now.

Nine returning starters – six on offense – make a third straight berth in the section-

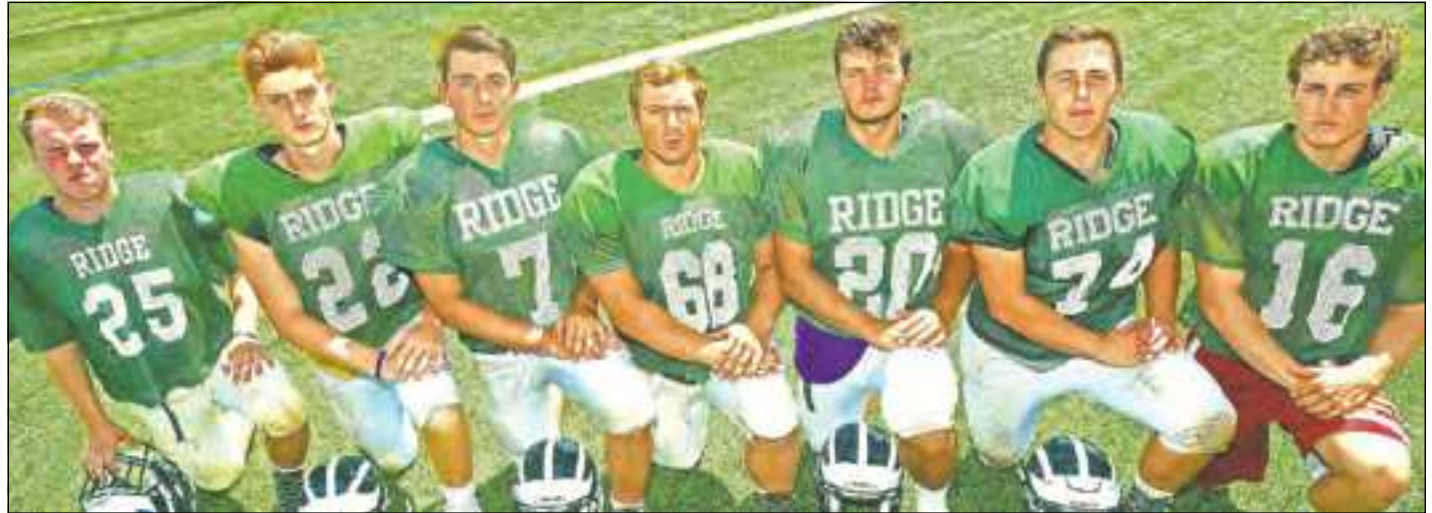


Photo by Paul Hamilton

Ridge players to watch in 2017: Jack Forand, linebacker, offensive lineman; Brandon Radice, QB, safety; Andrew Lusardi, tight end, defensive end; Matt Giordano, offensive lineman, defensive lineman; R.J. Milligan, fullback, linebacker; Chris Breault, offensive tackle, defensive tackle; Ryan Gogerty, running back/cornerback.

al playoffs a real possibility. Ridge has been to the playoffs five times in Tracy's eight years, winning the section in 2013 and making the section final in 2009, his first season as coach.

"We need consistency of health and attendance and working together in practice," said Tracy, who enters his ninth season at Ridge with a 51-34 record. "I think we'll have a very good season. I'm excited. We've had some injuries in the summer and in the preseason, some of it away from football that caused it, some of it with foot-

ball."

The graduated quarterback Aidan Murphy navigated the team in Radice's absence. Standout back Danny Skea, the workhorse Reed Handabaka and receiver Matt Rusiniak were the spearhead of the attack. Radice returned in week eight against Elizabeth, but was reinjured Radice took baseball season off to make doubly sure he'd start the football season healthy.

Tracy calls Radice a 'winner,' the same word he used to describe Murphy. Radice got some starts at halfback as sophomore

because of injuries and got a start in the defensive backfield in a North 2, Group 5 section game against Bridgewater-Raritan.

"Aidan was a real technician — he really worked hard at the position and was very accurate," Tracy said. "He knew the offense upside down. Brandon is going to have to do that. It's challenging..so far he's been good with that. Aidan knew where Brandon has come along with that, but Brandon also gives us physical size and he runs very well.

PLEASE SEE RIDGE, PAGE 53



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RIDGE

FROM PAGE 52

“He’s a special guy, he’s fast, he has got good moves, has a great arm. He’s an excellent leader, a high character guy. You don’t get too many guys like that. He’s a winner, too.”

The coaching staff is optimistic about the offensive line. Senior left tackle Chris Breault and senior left guard Matt Giordano are returning starters. Senior center Matt Minsch, senior right guard Kevin Park and senior right tackle Dan Gattoni return.

“The offensive line has really come together,” said Tracy.

‘Choppy Preseason’

Giordano, Breault, Park and senior Chris Byrne will be the defensive front backed by linebackers Milligan, Lusardi and Stieglitz. Sophomore Chris Sweeney will also be part of the linebacker rotation. Radice, Hughes and Gogerty will be in the secondary along with senior Sean Spina, who missed last season with an injury.

Seniors Louis Lafakis and Nick Giacchi, Spina and junior Nolan Haddad are the backfield reserves. Senior tight end/defensive end Daniel Devine is another of the reserves. Gogerty and junior Wes Hudkins will back Radice on offense. Gogerty will once again return punts and kicks.

“We are just starting getting some guys back now on, so it has led to a very choppy preseason camp for us and we’ve also had some sickness go through the team,” added Tracy. “It’s been a little frustrating because we haven’t had the kind of continuity going just like we like to have. But the positive is we have developed a lot of kids, we feel we have a lot of depth now.”



Photos by Paul Hamilton

Above: Ridge High School senior Andrew Lusardi will play tight end/defensive end for the Red Devils. **Below:** Senior Brandon Radice will be at quarterback and safety for the Red Devils this season.



Ridge High School head football coach Bill Tracy will enter his ninth year at the helm.

RIDGE RED DEVILS

Head coach: Bill Tracy (ninth year)

Section: North 2, Group 5

Last year’s record: 8-2

Playoffs: Fell to Union, 41-34, in first round of NJSIAA North 2, Group 5

Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 8/7

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 at Montgomery, 7 p.m.

Sept. 15 Westfield, 7 p.m.

Sept. 22 Linden, 7 p.m.

Sept. 29 at Plainfield, 2 p.m.

Oct. 6 at Hillsborough, 7 p.m.

Oct. 13 Immaculata, 7 p.m.

Oct. 20 at Union, 7 p.m.

Oct. 27 at Elizabeth, 7 p.m.

Nov. 3 Watchung Hills, 7 p.m.



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VOORHEES HIGH SCHOOL

BIG TURNOUT, RETURNING 'D' SHOULD SPELL SUCCESS FOR VIKES

By **CHRIS ORLANDO**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

LEBANON TWP. – After four straight winning seasons, the Voorhees High School football team suffered through an uncharacteristic 3-7 campaign a year ago.

But senior Jack McCabe is confident that the Vikings will be back to their winning ways in 2017.

“We have our entire defense back and our practices and scrimmages have been going very well,” said McCabe, who starred as a receiver and free safety a year ago. “We definitely have more skill than last year and everything seems to be coming together.”

McCabe caught 32 passes for 365 yards and also led Voorhees in tackles with 79 while recording five sacks as the Vikings struggled through a 2-8 season.

Voorhees lost its first four games last season before finishing 3-3 in its final six contests, including a 42-28 decision over Chatham in a regional crossover game – formerly called a consolation game – on Nov. 12.

The Vikings had made the state tournament for four years straight from 2012-'15 finishing with a 6-4 record each time under Bob Angstadt, who is set to begin his sixth season at the helm of the Alexandra school.

“We are really looking forward to this season after a disappointing 2016,” said



Voorhees High School players and coaches prepare for the upcoming football season.

Angstadt. “We are led by eight to nine returning starters on both sides of the ball but for us to be successful we need to stay healthy and run the ball effectively.”

Angstadt, who owns a 27-23 record at

Voorhees, will be assisted on the sidelines this season by Ricky Kurtz, Steve Gross, Marc Cahill, Nick Perkalis, Cory Kent, Ben Perlowski and Travis Branche.

In addition to McCabe, Voorhees returns



Voorhees High School junior quarterback George Eberle fires the ball to a receiver during summer practice.

senior receiver/free safety Will Rodenberger (29 catches for 613 yards, two touchdowns; 36 tackles, one interception) and

PLEASE SEE VOORHEES, PAGE 55

Go VIKINGS!



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VOORHEES

FROM PAGE 54

senior receiver/linebacker Colin Tong (36 catches for 566 yards, four touchdowns; 77 tackles, three sacks).

"Those guys definitely add another dimension to the offense and will be a big part of our success," said McCabe.

Other returning players include seniors John Roncoroni, Luke Marturana, Tommy Driscoll, Jon Davis, Scott Fernandes, Josh Trudel, Kyle Enchill and Alex Hufford and juniors George Eberle and Sam Huff.

Top newcomers include juniors Charlie Eberle, Evan Andersen, Athan Magalio and Harry Toth and sophomores Collin Letters and Warren Orlando.

"We had one of our biggest turnouts in years with 50-70 players coming out," said McCabe. "We have a lot of players looking to make an impact this season."

Voorhees, which is in the Mountain Division of the Mid-State 38 Conference along with Cranford, Gov. Livingston, North Plainfield, Rahway and Somerville, will get its season underway on Saturday, Sept. 9 when it takes on Gov. Livingston in Berkeley Heights at 2 p.m.

The Vikings will play its first five games against divisional foes with its final four games against out-of-conference opponents.

As usual, one date that is always circled on the calendar is the team's final regular season game against rival North Hunterdon in the annual Milk Can game. This year's contest, the 42nd in the series, will be played at Voorhees on Friday, Nov. 3 at 7 p.m.

North Hunterdon won last year's game, 42-10, to earn its fifth straight victory against the Vikings extending its lead in the series to 28-12-1.



Voorhees senior Jack McCabe will be one of the top playmakers this season for the Vikings.

"The North game is always huge," began McCabe. "Along with finishing over .500 and making the playoffs, beating them is always a goal."

In a quirk of its schedule, Voorhees will have three of its first four games on the road and will play away from home in five of its nine games.

"It's definitely going to be different playing away so often early on but it's not a huge obstacle," said McCabe. "We're more focused on playing hard and avoiding the kind of start we did last season."

"We want this to be a memorable season and I feel we're very capable of doing that."



Photos by Nick Scalera

Voorhees High School head football coach Bob Angstadt instructs players during practice in preparation for the upcoming season.



Voorhees' Fred Clucas catches a pass in camp.

VOORHEES VIKINGS

Head Coach: Bob Angstadt (6th year)

Section: North 2, Group 3

Last year's record: 3-7

Playoffs: Did not qualify

SCHEDULE

Sept. 9 at Gov. Livingston

Sept. 15 Cranford

Oct. 22 at Somerville

Sept. 28 at Rahway

Oct. 6 North Plainfield

Oct. 13 at Delaware Valley

Oct. 20 Bernards

Oct. 27 at Warren Hills

Nov. 3 North Hunterdon

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WATCHUNG HILLS REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

SEUBERT PREPARES FOR SECOND YEAR WITH WARRIORS

By **AMIT BATRA**
SPORTS EDITOR

WARREN TWP. – Second-year head coach Richard Seubert, former Giants offensive lineman and Super Bowl champion, is trying to change the culture of football at Watchung Hills Regional High School.

His inaugural season with the Warriors saw a 2-8 record. Leading into his second year at the helm, Seubert wants to put this team back on the map.

“We’re trying to put Watchung Hills back on the map and get these kids to buy into what we as a coaching staff believes in, and what these kids are starting to believe in,” he said. “When I played football, the first thing you have to do is have fun while you’re playing. If you have fun when you’re playing and truly enjoy your teammates, the winning will come.”

Seubert and his coaching staff are instilling these values in camp, working on various team drills and conditioning. They believe that winning first starts in August.

“Our boys are working hard,” Seubert said. “We had over 90 percent participation in the summer voluntary offseason workouts. Our numbers are up 20 percent. The kids are buying in, having fun and showing up with smiles on their faces. We expect a lot out of them; they get coached on every

play. We’re getting better.”

Seubert finished his playing career with the Giants in 2010. He moved to California after finishing out his playing career.

After moving to Warren two years ago, he found himself on the Watchung Hills coaching staff as an offensive line coach. Seubert said that his passion for the game brought him into coaching.

“I love the game of football,” he said. “I just love giving back. I had some really good coaches when I was a little kid all the way up to the Giants. This is a special game. This is more than just football – this is about boys becoming men. I really enjoy being at this school, I enjoy coaching these guys and trying to find a way to bring the community together. People in this community want to be able to come out here and support the football team.”

Watchung Hills quite a bit of depth on its roster this year, from freshmen to seniors. Senior tight end/linebacker Jeff Poggi and senior Clayton Bush, a defensive lineman, will be the team captains this year. Others expected to make an impact are senior tight end/linebacker Jon Taub, senior quarterback Connor James, senior running back Zahveae Thorne, senior wide receiver Michael Asante, senior offensive lineman Christian ‘Cross’ Zampetti, senior offensive lineman Devin Moffitt and junior defensive



Photos by Glenn Clark

Watchung Hills Regional High School head coach Richard Seubert will be entering his second year with the Warriors in 2017.

back Kevin Badger.

James will be playing QB for the first time this season. He started playing on



Watchung Hills senior quarterback Connor James looks to be an impact player on the offense this season.

the team his sophomore year. This will be his first year on the offensive end, having

PLEASE SEE WARRIORS, PAGE 57



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WARRIORS

FROM PAGE 56

played on defense after transferring from Piscataway High School.

"It's always a struggle coming in," James said. "It's a lot of stuff to get used to, but it's going great. Receivers, linemen, everyone is doing the best they can. We're out here every morning at 7 a.m. It's a lot to look forward to. I think people will be surprised when they see us on the field."

"He's getting there," Seubert said of James. "We all need a lot of work. Connor is no different than anybody else. He's getting coached everyday by one of the best quarterback coaches in the state of New Jersey (Chad Henry). I've seen what Coach Henry has done with some of the quarterbacks we've had in California. He's the guy I wanted here."

Seubert has three freshmen and sophomore Trevor Schmidt playing at QB in addition to James.

"Connor is smart...he's picking it up fast," Seubert said. "He's the guy we're going to go with."

The Warriors, which play in the Watchung Division of the Mid-State 38 Conference, open with games at home against Union and Elizabeth before traveling to North Hunterdon and Westfield. Other games will feature a home game against Phillipsburg, away at Plainfield, away at Linden, home to Hunterdon

Central and at Ridge.

"Every game is a big game," Seubert said. "We're probably in the toughest public school division in the state of New Jersey. Every week is tough. We open with Union and that's really all we're thinking about right now. Union is the tradition that I want to build here. All the teams that we play, that's where I want to get to."

Three linemen starters return for Watchung Hills. Seubert expressed how important it is to win up front.

Bright Spot

"I coached the line two years ago, I was the head coach last year and now I'm the coach this year, so this is the third year of listening to me talk my gibberish to them," he said. Offensive line play and defensive line play, I don't care what level; you have to be solid up front. I could let my senior O-lineman Moffitt, Zampetti and Bush, those guys can do the drills the way I want them done. They have stepped up big time."

Thorne was a bright spot for the Warriors in 2016. He continues to work on getting better in camp.

"I've been working on trying to get better with my conditioning and my cuts," the senior RB said. "Making sure I know the line is supposed to do so I know where to go on the field. I think we're going to have a really good season."

email: abatra@newjerseyhills.com



Photos by Glenn Clark

Watchung Hills assistant coach Chad Henry speaks with senior quarterback Connor James and the rest of the offense in a scrimmage against Old Bridge.

WATCHUNG HILLS WARRIORS

Head Coach: Rich Seubert (second year)

Section: North 2, Group 5

Last year's record: 2-8

Playoffs: Didn't qualify.

Returning Starters: 7

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 Union, 7 p.m.

Sept. 15 Elizabeth, 7 p.m.

Sept. 22 at North Hunterdon, 7 p.m.

Sept. 28 at Westfield, 4 p.m.

Oct. 6 Phillipsburg, 7 p.m.

Oct. 14 at Plainfield, 1 p.m.

Oct. 20 at Linden, 7 p.m.

Oct. 27 Hunterdon Central, 7 p.m.

Nov. 3 at Ridge, 7 p.m.



Watchung Hills Regional High School senior wide receiver Michael Asante makes a play in a scrimmage against Old Bridge.

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WEST ESSEX HIGH SCHOOL

YOUNG SQUAD HAS SAME INTENSITY

By **CHRIS ORLANDO**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

NORTH CALDWELL – While the West Essex High School football team will have substantial turnover from last season's squad, fans of the Knights can still anticipate a year with the same intensity of past successful campaigns.

"We are very young but we do return some experienced underclassmen," said seventh-year head coach Chris Benacquista. "We lost a lot of great talent to graduation and our current senior class is very small so we've been working very hard to get our players ready for opening week."

The Knights finished 7-4 a year ago, reaching the semifinal round of the North Jersey, Section 2, Group 3 state tournament where it bowed to Parsippany Hills, 37-13. West Essex had defeated Parsippany Hills, 28-14, in a regular season game five weeks earlier en route to winning the championship of the Patriot White Division of the North Jersey Super Football Conference with a 5-1 mark.

West Essex, which garnered over 3,000 yards on the ground last season, will still be a team focused on running the ball out of its multiple Wing-T formation. And while two of its top three rushers – Mike Lacovara and Brian O'Neill – have graduated, the Knights will still return senior running back Vin Scaglia (912 yard, seven touchdowns in '16), senior fullback Anthony Sangillo (172 yards, two TDs I '16) and junior running back Will Perez (two TDs in '16).

Senior quarterback Zach Lemanski will be at the helm under center coming off a junior campaign where he completed 59 of 119 passes for 1,200 yards and 10 touchdowns.

"Running the ball will always be a top priority for us and we have some talented backs in Scaglia, Perez and Sangillo," said Benacquista. "(junior) Nick Celenzano, (senior) Luke Garcia and (junior) Dorian Gashi will also see carries for us.

"And Lemanski has progressed nicely since his sophomore season," Benacquista added. "He's bigger, stronger and faster and has become a real leader of the team in that period despite being relatively young."

The West Essex offensive line is a work in progress but making quick strides.

"We have an undersized line but we have worked all off-season on our strength and speed off the ball and hopefully that will be our biggest asset up front," Benacquista began. "(senior) Eamon Morrissey, (senior) Frank Lagreca, (senior) Carmen Cucuzza and (junior) Mike Cuzzo are all great examples of that aggressive 'O-Line' mentality that we like to have."

A year ago, West Essex showcased one of the stingiest defenses in the area, allowing an average of just 15.6 points per game. It allowed 10 points or less five times in 2016 and only surrendered more than 28 points once, which occurred in its season-ending loss to Parsippany Hills.

"Like the rest of the team our defense has a lot of new faces but we are working

PLEASE SEE **KNIGHTS**, PAGE 59



Above: West Essex High School football coach Chris Benacquista is in his seventh year at the helm. Left: West Essex senior quarterback Zach Lemanski will be back under center for the Knights this season.

Photos by Glenn Clark

As the West Essex High School class of 1967 celebrates our 50th Reunion,
we wish the West Essex Knights Football Team Great Success in 2017!



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KNIGHTS

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hard to build an aggressive, attacking style defense,” explained Benacquista. “Leaders of the ‘D’ should be Morrissey at nose guard, Sangillo and Gashi at linebacker and Scaglia and Perez at safeties.

Other top newcomers this season for the Knights include junior running back/linebacker Luke Dignazio, sophomore offensive/defensive linebacker Bardhyl Gashi and junior receiver/cornerback Phil Lutz.

Benacquista, who led West Essex to the North Jersey, Section 2 state title in his first season at the helm of the North Caldwell school in 2011, has all of his team’s energy devoted to the Knights opening game on Sept. 9 at Nutley.

“Right now we are focused solely on Nutley,” Benacquista said. “We know how tough an opponent they can be and with such a young team taking it one game at a time will be very important.”

Benacquista owns a career mark of 48-18 and has never had a losing season at the North Caldwell school.

In 2013 he took West Essex to the North Jersey, Section 2, Group 3 championship game where the Knights were edged, 20-17, to finish its season with a 10-1 mark.

“We are very fortunate to have great stability with our coaching staff and I feel that helps our players to better understand what is expected of them in all three phases of the game,” said Benacquista. “Right now with such a young group there is a lot of teaching and learning going on so it’s still too early to tell, but we do have talent in key spots and an overall strong work ethic.

“Hopefully that will lead to good things down the road.”



Photos by Glenn Clark

Above: The 2017 West Essex football captains, from left, are Vincent Scaglia, Anthony Sangillo and Eamon Morrissey. **Below left:** West Essex football coach Chris Benacquista addresses his team. The Knights finished 7-4 last season. **Below right:** West Essex senior co-captain Eamon Morrissey will look to have an aggressive mentality on the line for the Knights this season.



WEST ESSEX KNIGHTS

Head Coach: Chris Benacquista
Section: North 2, Group 3
Last Year's Record: 7-4
Playoffs: Lost in sectional semi-finals

SCHEDULE

Sept. 9 at Nutley
 Sept. 15 West Morris Central
 Sept. 23 at Orange
 Sept. 28 James Caldwell
 Oct. 6 Chatham
 Oct. 13: at Parsippany Hills
 Oct. 20: Ferris
 Oct. 28 at Barringer
 Nov. 3 Hanover Park



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WEST MORRIS CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL

PIECES COMING TOGETHER AT WEST MORRIS CENTRAL

By **JOE HOFMANN**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

WASHINGTON TWP. – Like he does every summer, West Morris High School coach Kevin Hennelly opened up the jigsaw puzzle box, emptied out all of the pieces, rolled up his sleeves, and got to work.

He has spent the last two months sorting through pieces big and small, mixing and matching. The puzzle is near completion.

We'll soon see just what Hennelly has come up with. Opening night is Friday, Sept. 8 against Parsippany Hills.

"We're like everyone else," the 22nd-year coach said. "We're putting the pieces together. We have some very capable pieces and we're looking to see who else steps up."

The Wolfpack reached the Section 1, Group IV semifinals before losing to eventual champion Wayne Hills last year. Hennelly has guided his program to four sectional titles and 18 postseason appearances.

He has several returning players from last year and has spent the summer trying to find out who can fill in the spots vacated by graduation.

As always, he gives seniors that first crack at the starting spot.

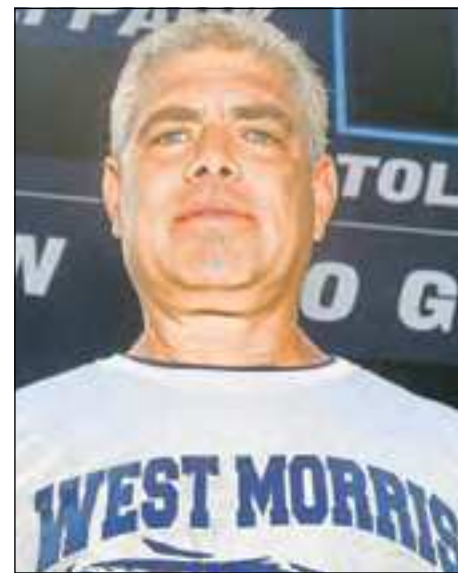
"What I have done is waited for seniors to come through," he said. "They think, 'Now is my chance to play.' The light seems to go on in their heads. 'I've got one year left, I'm gonna train harder.' No seniors want to spend Friday nights standing on the sidelines. So seniors usually step up."

One of the team's strengths figures to be on its offensive line, where Tom Pellegrino, P.J. Wright, and Rourke Colligan bring their experience onto the field. Hennelly doesn't know exactly where they'll line up on the line, but he does know they'll be starting somewhere. He will fill the remaining two spots with Seaver Riccordella, Brandon Iorio, Hunter Booth, Austin Gross, Adrian Hefner or Gerard Stefanelli.

Chad Lusardi and Jake Ligos, both of whom saw action at tight end, return for another year.

"I know I have three solid kids up front, but I need two serviceable kids to fill out the line," Hennelly said. "Hopefully, they can pan out. It's the same thing every year. If we're good up front, we'll be OK."

Bryce Sokolowski returns in the backfield and figures to be the leading



Above: There are a number of players to watch for West Morris Central this season. Back row, from left, are: Hunter Porrao, Anthony Ruggiero, Jake Ligos, Chris Colatriano, Rourke Colligan, Dean Jinks, Jehlan Williamson, Brandon Iorio and Drew Morgan. Front row, from left, are: John Hagler, P.J. Wright, Bryce Sokolowski, Thomas Pellegrino, Chad Lusardi, Matt Foster and Joseph Vazquez. **Left:** West Morris Central High School football head coach Kevin Hennelly enters his 22nd year at the helm for the Wolfpack.

Photos by Paul Hamilton

PLEASE SEE WMC, PAGE 61

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Far left: Cornerback/running back Joseph Vazquez will try to be a spark for the Wolfpack secondary this season. Left: West Morris Central senior quarterback/cornerback John Hagler will look to make an impact in 2017.

Photos by Paul Hamilton

WEST MORRIS CENTRAL WOLFPACK

Head coach: Kevin Hennelly (22nd year).

Section: North 1, Group IV

Last year's record: 9-2.

Playoffs: Lost in the Sectional semifinals.

Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 5/5.

SCHEDULE

Sept. 8 Parsippany Hills

Sept. 15 at West Essex

Sept. 22 Morristown

Sept. 28 at Mount Olive

Oct. 6 Randolph

Oct. 14 at Morris Knolls

Oct. 20 Sparta

Oct. 27 Mendham

Nov. 3 at Roxbury

WMC

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ground gainer. Chris Colatriano figures to get carries as well. Matt Foster, Anthony Ruggiero, and Jack DiPietro are vying for fullback minutes.

"Sokolowski did a nice job last year and he needs to stay healthy for us," Hennelly said. "The fullbacks are dead even. We'll rotate 3-4 backs. The kids who block the most will be in there."

The quarterback position is a battle between senior John Hagler and junior Jack Lydon.

"Both are smart and know the offense," Hennelly said. "Hagler is a

year older and more seasoned. Both have adequate arms. Hagler's a senior, so it's his job to lose right now. I don't know how much we'll throw, but the quarterback needs to step up and assert himself."

Dean Jinks, who saw some action last year, will play wide receiver along with Hunter Parrao. Keep an eye on Jehlan Williamson.

The defense has some experienced hands as well. Pellegrino, Wright, and Ligos were solid on the line last year and will be joined by Lusardi, Booth, Riccordella, Gross, Hefner, and Zach Miller. Colligan leads the linebackers and will be joined by Foster, Iorio, and Ruggiero.

The secondary is paced by returning

starters Sokolowski, Jinks, and Colatriano. Other names to watch out for include Joe Vasquez, DiPietro, Williamson, and Bryan Schilling.

"My first impression is, the returning kids look good," Hennelly said. "They are better now than when they left as juniors. Some kids look good, but they are not varsity tested."

Hennelly has lined up a terrific scrimmage schedule — Wayne Hills, Passaic Tech, Elizabeth, Pope John, and Hunterdon Central — to see just which member of the Wolfpack is ready for varsity football.

"It's a very tough scrimmage schedule," he said. "We'll know when we're done scrimmaging those teams who is ready for varsity football and who isn't."



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WHIPPANY PARK HIGH SCHOOL

WILDCATS LOOK FOR RETURN TO STATE PLAYOFFS

By **PAUL BRUNO**
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

HANOVER TWP. – If the fall of 2016 was a sound indication of what the Whippany Park High School football team produced, then it's reasonable to expect the Wildcats to embark on a more promising 2017 on the gridiron.

"Much better," is how second-year coach Don Morgenroth responded when asked about his club's prospect this season.

Morgenroth, a 1987 graduate of Livingston where he played football, fashioned an impressive 39-6 record coaching at Brookdale Community and Montclair State the previous 10 years before he took command of the Wildcats in 2016.

Back In The Playoffs

Coming off a 3-7 finish in 2015, the Wildcats took the field last fall and built a 5-1 record after their 28-0 verdict over Parsippany Hills on Oct. 22 (2016). During that initial six-game span Whippany Park outscored their opponents by a 123-79 margin. The Wildcats eventually concluded last season with a 6-4 record that includ-

PLEASE SEE WHIPPANY PARK, PAGE 63



Whippany Park assistant coach Anthony Egidio works with Robert Annino (50) and Dean Carlson (19) in a drill.



Nick Racz is one of the quarterbacks for Whippany Park this season.

Photos by Chris M. Junior

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WHIPPANY PARK: Wildcats seeking return to state playoffs

FROM PAGE 62

ed the team's first playoff berth since 2001, when they went 7-3 overall.

Whippany Park bowed to Rutherford, 28-14, last Nov. 12 in the first round of the North Jersey Section 2, Group 2 tournament. But that defeat did not diminish the Wildcats' campaign as the team posted a 6-3 conference record. Their American Blue Division opponents include Lincoln, Caldwell, Mountain Lakes, Parsippany and Newark West Side.

Last season Whippany Park defeated Mountain Lakes (29-21), Parsippany (29-0) and West Side (36-6) while it was defeated by Lincoln (40-0) and Caldwell (14-0).

Still Enough Skill

The team will surely miss recently graduated players like Andrew Lake, Dylan Haduk and Tyler Haduk. But despite those losses Whippany Park still returns seven starters on offense and eight on defense — enough skill and experience for some lofty expectations.

The Whippany Park offense, which totaled 173 points in 2016, returns several top-level players in an attack that can operate out of the shotgun, triple option and multiple formation schemes. Talented senior quarterback Luke Papa took over the offense last year and finished with 1,034 yards rushing while throwing for 538 yards and five touchdowns. Papa should again be the spark of the offense.

Whippany Park is expecting to offer a strong running game and steering

that will be the backfield duo of seniors Jake Crane and Matt Wong and junior Mike Roma. Crane rushed for 489 yards and five TDs and added 140 yards in receiving with an additional three touchdowns. Launching that ground game is a sturdy offensive line that includes seniors Nick Folgia, Anthony Auriemma, Dean Carlson and Iverson Vincent.

"I think this season is very promising for us," said Morgenroth. "We have great leaders in our four captains in Nick Folgia, Luke Papa, Mike Dimeo and Anthony Auriemma along with our other 18 seniors.

"Luke Papa will be even better in his second year leading our offense and his supporting cast with make the offense stronger than last season."

An Aggressive Defense

On the other side, the defense appears quite rugged with Folgia leading the way. The senior tackle had over 12 sacks and finished with 95 tackles while Crane came through with 70 tackles at linebacker. Senior defensive back Connor Woytas had 38 tackles will be a key performer along with Papa (DB), Roma (SS), Crane (LB, 70 tackles), Auriemma (DT), Wong (DB), Carlson (DT), Vincent (DT) and Jimmy Casalino (LB).

"Our defense plays with an attitude and we're expecting to play very well this season."

The Wildcats will open this season on Sept. 9 when they play host to Morris Catholic. Whippany Park edged the Crusaders, 14-12, in last year's contest.



Photos by Chris M. Junior

Above: Don Morgenroth is in his second season as head coach at Whippany Park. **Below:** Assistant coach Nick Dilworth watches receiver Eric Kingston.



WHIPPANY PARK WILDCATS

Head coach: Don Morgenroth (2nd year).

Section: North 2, Group 2.

Last year's record: 6-4.

Playoffs: Lost in sectional first round.

Returning Starters (Offense/Defense): 7/8.

SCHEDULE

Sept. 9 vs. Morris Catholic

Sept. 15 at Kinnelon

Sept. 23 vs. Lincoln

Sept. 29 at Wallkill Valley

Oct. 7 at Immaculate

Oct. 13 vs. Mountain Lakes

Oct. 20 at Parsippany

Oct. 27 at Caldwell

Nov. 3 vs. West Side



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