

# C-J Sports

## High school football '87: Aquinas, ND are teams to watch

By Richard A. Kiley

For everyone but Aquinas, last year was an off one in diocesan high school football. McQuaid fell from its perch atop other Section 5 grid teams with a rare disappointing season, while Bishop Kearney and Cardinal Mooney struggled to put points on the scoreboard.

Over in Class C, DeSales sputtered under a new coach, and even Elmira Notre Dame in Section 4 Class C was hit hard last fall — first by players lost to graduation and then repeatedly by the bigger opposition on the field.

But with the beginning of fall comes renewed hope and optimism for diocesan players and coaches, who begin the 1987 season next weekend.

### Sectional snub

After a hard-earned 5-3 mark last year, including the best record in the City-Catholic League — five wins in six league battles — Aquinas and third-year-coach Chris Battaglia were rudely snubbed when Section 5 officials tabbed East as the league representative for the post-season-playoffs. The league's rationale was that the Orientals had a few more sectional points than the Little Irish.

"We just came up a little short," Battaglia said.

But the AQ coach — who happens to be a Chicago Bears fanatic — is big on talent in some key areas this season, meaning his third time around may be the charm.

Despite losing "Butkus-like" linebacker Joe Altobelli and a bruising bunch of offensive linemen in Brian Mackey, Jim Walzer, Pat Phelan, Jim Merer and Robin Wihle, Battaglia is still rich in talent.

All-purpose player Mark Chapman is back, but will not be quarterbacking due to a reoccurring shoulder problem, which plagued him throughout last season. Because the all-star senior was too valuable a player to leave on the sidelines last fall, Battaglia and his assistants moved Chapman to other skill positions like running back, wide receiver and defensive back. They saw outstanding results.

"You'll see him (Chapman) doing everything this year; he's a definite Division 1 prospect," Battaglia said.

Unlike the situation of his favorite franchise in the National Football League, which is still trying to decide which one of four quarterbacks will run its offense, Battaglia's quarterback slot should be filled quite proficiently by Brian Monteleone this season. The AQ senior will no doubt benefit from the year of playing experience he saw last season. Senior running back Tony Postell, junior backs Jermaine McGowan and Corey Collins, and All-City-Catholic receiver Chris Culver should make the AQ offense a potent one.

Collins was a highly touted player on the junior varsity last season, but missed the first half of the year due to an injury. After Collins returned, the JV won its last four games, including a victory against an undefeated and unscored-upon Canandaigua team.

The offensive and defensive lines are also somewhat intact with the return of Jim Wells, Matt Gerhart and John Mesura.

Barring injuries, the Little Irish — who open the season against Gates Chili at home on September 12 — may have a big season.

### Kearney green

Bishop Kearney grid coach Nick Teta is missing his entire crew of linemen from last year's 2-4-2 team. Dan Aspenleiter, Mark Young, Chris Masterson, Kevin Consul, T.J. Luciano and Greg Becoats all graduated, leaving the Fighting Kings a little green in both offense and defense.

But don't feel too bad for the Kearney coach; senior linebacker Carlos Schippy, whom Battaglia calls "the Lawrence Taylor of the City-Catholic League," will reacquaint himself with any offensive backs who think they're home free after getting through the inexperienced Fighting King defensive line.

A strong supporting cast of players is back, including senior Frank Valente (tackle), junior Tim Dieter (defensive back), junior Steve Smith (linebacker-fullback), junior Wendell Spiva (defensive-offensive end), senior Pat Ryder (halfback-defensive back) and senior Jeff McCullough (fullback-defensive back).



The fight in the Kings' offensive and defensive lines may determine what kind of season Kearney will have.

Michael N. Aydogan

Returning senior quarterback Tim Englert should also be able to move the offense a little easier in his second year as a starter.

"We have got some experience, and we seem to be ahead of last year in the passing game," said Teta, a guidance counselor at Kearney.

And although the graduation bell tolled for many of last seasons' Fighting Kings, Teta has the services of many players from last year's 6-1-1 JV team, which captured the junior varsity championship.

The key to Kearney's season will be the ability to generate more offense than it did last year. The loss margins for three separate Kings defeats totaled only 10 points.

"With the experience we have at QB, we're hoping to turn some of those (losses) around," Teta said.

Bishop Kearney will open the season against Victor.

### Tough schedule

Losing a slew of close games was also a problem for McQuaid coach Tom Sprague, who last season watched his Knights nipped by a single touchdown or less in four of their five losses. McQuaid finished with a disappointing 3-5 record for the year, after two consecutive seasons of making it to the sectional finals.

Turning it around won't be that easy this year, with linemen Jason Jenkins (now playing at Cornell), middle linebacker Scott Hebert, quarterback and free safety Joe Williams, and fullback Dave Schroeder all gone.

To make matters more difficult, all eight of McQuaid's games will be away from home while its football field is being renovated for the '88 campaign. "It's going to be a tough schedule with all eight games away, but not being able to practice on our field (is even more disrupting)," Sprague said. "It is a factor in practice because you're trying to get your timing and passing down, but unless you have 25,000 fans there I don't believe there is a home-field advantage in football."

The McQuaid coach has a tremendous trio of returning starters in two-way starter Brad Davis, Jeff Fenton and Peter Dean.

His three captains all have size and ability in their favor. Davis, a senior, is 6'3", 210 lbs. at the right guard and defensive end spots, and Fenton (5'11", 190 lbs.) will be playing in his third year at the left guard position. Dean, also a senior, is an aggressive outside linebacker with ample size (6'0", 185 lbs.) and speed.

But Sprague believes the strength of this year's football Knights will be in the offensive line, with a potential All-League center in Brian Laudadio (5'11", 215 lbs.). Tackles Terry Quirk and Kelly Finnegan will also start on the line.

McQuaid also looks solid with Dean, free safety Sean O'Neill, senior Paul Schaefer, and junior defensive end Greg Beale at some other key defensive spots.

Punter Steve Schott and kicker Kevin Flanagan also bring stability to the kicking game, even though they've been practicing without benefit of goal posts on the field. "I've been telling Kevin Flanagan, 'Just imagine the goal posts are there and tell me if you made it or not,'" Sprague joked.

The area McQuaid will have to improve from last year is on offense. The Knights averaged a mere 14 to 17 points a game, after seasons in which the numbers were more like 24 to 28 points per game. Tom Cahill (tight end), Matt Bergin (flanker), Joe Ritchie (tailback) and QB Pete Clark will have to pick up the pace.

"Pete was on the team last year, but he didn't see much playing time because Joe Williams was there. But I'm looking for good things from him this year," Sprague said. "He's got a good throwing arm and he went to a couple of quarterback camps (over the summer). He's much improved."

Sprague hopes his offense is too.

McQuaid will open up its season against Pittsford on September 12. Last season, the Knights began the season by playing Canandaigua, owners of a 29-game winning streak at the time.

The McQuaid coach likes knowing what kind of team he has or doesn't have early in the season. "I like it better that way," Sprague said regarding tough season openers. "It intensifies pre-season (play) when the kids know they are going to be exposed (to a good team) early."

### Healthy optimism

DeSales Coach Jim McNicholas and his team limped through a 2-5 season last fall. In his first year after taking over for Harry Furman — who left for Georgia for business reasons just weeks before the high school grid season — McNicholas was plagued with a rash of injuries early on. He lost four starters to bruised ribs in the season's second game alone.

This fall, McNicholas and his Saints will begin the season with healthy but inexperienced bodies. All-Conference and All-League linemen and linebacker Kevin Powers graduated, as did All-League defensive back Joe Anastasio and fullback Phil Sindoni. In all, 13 players are gone from last year's Saints team.

But DeSales' three captains — seniors Sean Sturgeon, Ronnie Buckley and Matt Quigley — as well as a sophomore transfer from Waterloo have McNicholas sleeping better at night.

Sturgeon is a more than capable linebacker, and Buckley was an All-Finger



C-J file photo

McQuaid coach Tom Sprague would like to see a return to the days when Knight touchdowns were more common.

Lakes West center as a junior last year. McNicholas refers to Quigley as his utility man, who should see a lot of action on the offensive line.

The DeSales coach received quite a pleasant surprise this summer when he found out that Chris Ike, a sophomore running back from Waterloo High School, would be playing for him this fall. "He (Ike) really knows how to follow his blockers and pick his holes," McNicholas said. "He makes his blockers look real good."

Paired with fullback Steve Bedora, who broke his ankle a week before the season started last September, Ike and the Saints should have a decent year running the ball.

McNicholas is not sure who will be quarterbacking this year though. The decision is not in yet on whether it will be senior Mark Walters or junior Ronnie Cercee.

The second-year coach knows the key to DeSales' season will be staying healthy.

"Everything went kind of backwards last year with Harry leaving just before the season started and all the injuries; the kids were kind of disoriented," McNicholas explained. "We're feeling a little more confident this year. But we'll have to stay injury free because we're very light and very green behind (the starters)."

Continued on Page 15