

In Suburban One, much of the same

By Gary Miles
Inquirer Staff Writer

The names of the players may have changed, but one thing remains constant: The 22-team, four-division Suburban One League consistently plays the best football in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Do you doubt that? Consider that Central Bucks West, a member of the Colonial Division, set a state record last year by winning its 53rd straight game and enters this year with a 54-game unbeaten streak, the longest current high school unbeaten streak in the nation. The Bucks, who had one tie last season, also ended the year as the No. 1 team in The Inquirer's Top 10 Poll.

Consider that West and cross-town rival Central Bucks East, also of the Colonial Division, consistently draw 10,000 fans to their annual Thanksgiving Day game, rain or shine.

Consider that second-ranked Neshaminy, a member of the Patriot Division, was one of two area teams to qualify for the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association state playoffs. (St. Pius X of the Pioneer Conference was the other.)

Consider that Souderton (eighth) and Methacton (honorable mention), members of the Liberty Division, also were ranked in the Top 10.

And finally, consider that the league last year sent recruited players to such well-regarded programs as Miami (Fla.), Penn State, Maryland, Duke, Tulsa, William & Mary and Lafayette.

This year should be more of the same.

The Central Bucks West players are saying they could be part of the best West team ever. Converted tailback George "Puddy" Gilbert (1,091 yards last year) takes over at quarterback, and fullbacks Travis Thompson and Thad Brennan and tailback Bill Tomlinson may be the best rushing trio in the area. Every offensive lineman except one weighs more than 200 pounds.

Central Bucks East is not as deep defensively or as talented overall as Central Bucks West, but quarterback Mike Morelli has a fine arm, and the offensive backfield is deeper than usual. Lynn Pynce, a 6-foot-4, 240-pounder, is being touted as the perfect two-way tackle.

Norristown, 5-5-1 last year, could gain some ground on C. B. West with its experienced offensive backfield. In the Patriot Division, Council Rock and Pennsbury are the biggest threats to Neshaminy's dominance. Quarterback Adam Voyles (6-3, 220), a wide receiver last year, will run Council Rock's run-and-shoot offense, and Pennsbury is depending on an experienced offensive line to protect new quarterback Dante Mucci.

Jon Hall, a versatile rusher-receiver, James Franklin, the returning quarterback, and Mike Frederick, a 6-5, 240-pound tight end, are the star attractions at Neshaminy.

Although Plymouth-Whitemarsh finished third in the Liberty Division last year and lost its entire offensive line and quarterback, the Colonials are the favorites this year. Running back Dwight Shirley (1,000 yards last year), split end Kris Kofler and junior quarterback John Per-



George Gilbert, a tailback last year, takes over as QB for West.

gine are expected to provide the big plays.

Souderton won't be the dominating team it was last year. The Indians just don't have the size.

The Freedom Division is the weakest of the league's four divisions. Harboro-Horsham won the title handily last year, but the Hatters have just 40 players on the team and only four have much experience.

Wissahickon is the favorite this year. The Trojans feature tailback Andrew Hyde. The 6-4, 217-pounder rushed for 1,707 yards and 17 touchdowns last year.

Central Bucks West and Neshaminy always were first or second in last year's Top 10, and Ridley of the Central League remained firmly entrenched in the No. 3 spot — with good reason. The Green Raiders went 11-0. In fact, Ridley has won 10 straight Central League titles and has not lost more than one game in a season since 1977, when it went 7-3.

Coach Joe McNicholas is 152-12-2 over 16 years. This year, times could be tougher. The Raiders lost all but one starter to graduation, and that starter — three-year veteran linebacker Chris Bell — will have the added responsibility of playing guard this year.

Likewise, Springfield Delco, second in the Central League, could be hard pressed to repeat its 9-2 record. The Cougars lost their starting quarterback to injury last month.

Bishop Egan, fourth in the Catholic League North Division, excelled in the playoffs last year, beating regular-season champ La Salle in the quarterfinals before losing to Archbishop Ryan by just a touchdown in the finals.

This year, Egan could be the class of the division all season. The Eagles return reserve quarterback/safety Scott Haws (four interceptions), running back Bill Buffalo, and linebacker/running back Sean Corrigan (out for three weeks with a knee injury). Ken Carroll is a 6-7, 280-

pound tackle.

La Salle rebounded from a 3-7 season two years ago to go 10-1 last year. The Explorers lost a lot of players, but they still have size. Junior defensive lineman Keith Conlin is 6-7, 245. Archbishop Ryan, the division and league champion last year, is inexperienced this season. Only one offensive letterman is back.

In the Catholic League South Division, Archbishop Carroll will have a tough time defending its division title since it has just five starters back from last year. Fullback Russell Kingsbury is a key to offensive success.

Cardinal O'Hara has gone through two straight seasons without a regular-season Catholic League loss and will be shooting for a third, a feat no team has accomplished. Running back Jason Ragukas and split end Jeff Toal are the Lions' scoring threats. In 14 years, coach Bob Ewing is 113-40-3.

Penn Charter broke Malvern Prep's stranglehold on the Inter-Ac League title last year. Malvern had won or tied the title the previous four years. It tied with Penn Charter in 1986. The Friars could regain their crown, though, if returning quarterback Luke Leslie can generate some offense.

Penn Charter has its quarterback, Ed Wojdon, back, too. It also has tailback Ken Klingler and tight end Bill Gallagher back. But the Quakers lack depth on the line.

Coatesville is the defending champion of the small but powerful Chestnut League, but the Red Raiders are already battling injuries — they have three starters out. However, the Coatesville offense is a high-powered one, thanks to running back Dwayne Miller. Miller isn't big (5-9, 170 pounds), but he drew 50 college scouts last year after rushing for 1,580 yards.

Penn Wood has won the Del-Va National Conference title four of the last five years. Although the team

has just four returning lettermen, one of them is 6-4, 270-pound offensive lineman Keith Novak.

Second-place Glen Mills lost all-state defensive end James Spears to graduation, but the Bulls still have size along their interior lines. Tackle Mike Tenant is 6-2, 235.

In the American Conference, Chichester lost a talented running tandem to graduation, so the offense may revolve around quarterback John Ireland and wide receiver Rob Craig.

Defending co-champion Phoenixville is the team to beat in the Pioneer Conference. Three-year linebackers Brian Edens and Eric Rice are the anchors on defense. Baseball star Creighton Gubnich is the quarterback.

Fullback Jeremy Delton and tailback Fred Ebert make Owen J. Roberts the team most likely to challenge Phoenixville.

The four-team Bicentennial League is in trouble because teachers at two of its schools — Bristol and Morrisville — are on strike (though the Morrisville team is playing this week). The four-team Independence League should be a battle between defending champion Chestnut Hill Academy and the Academy of the New Church.

Valley Forge Military Academy, a team for which postgraduates play, looks as though it will once again be the best of five area independent teams. Linebacker Charles Williams, a transfer from St. John Neumann, is a big-time college prospect.

Tobin lifts Radnor to 2-0 victory

Mike Tobin notched two goals — boosting his total to six in three games — as Radnor knocked off host Delco Christian, 2-0, in a nonleague soccer game yesterday.

Eric Holt and Andy Tudo combined for the shutout for the Raiders.

Suburban One American. Jason Bachelor scored on a penalty kick with 11 seconds remaining in the game to lift host Quakertown, past Lower Moreland, 3-2.

Suburban One National. Kevin Stanley registered the first two goals of the game to help visiting Pennsbury blank Abington, 3-0.

Scott Osmers scored half of Central Bucks East's goals as the Patriots dumped visiting Neshaminy, 4-0.

Bicentennial. A hat trick by Clay Rosenberg boosted Christopher Dock past host Archbishop Kennedy, 5-1.

Field hockey

Lauren Van Demark scored twice. Traci Massiolo and Jen Reitano added single goals and Michonne Dorward registered a shutout as Ne-