

Who will gain last hurrah in Big 8?

By RAY DI LISSIO
Courier Times Sports Writer

There is one obvious, extra incentive for all member schools of the Big Eight Football Conference this season.

The 1975 campaign will mark the 13th and final year of the formidable conference.

Unquestionably, every team would like nothing better than to have the right to claim it was the last champion of the highly-respected conference.

Take Pennsbury for example. The Falcons have won the crown the last three years. Furthermore, Pennsbury (which also shared the title in 1966 and 1969) has not lost a league encounter since Nov. 20, 1971. It was on that day undefeated Neshaminy, under head coach Jack Swartz, made Pennsbury its 11th straight victim, 21-17.

Since then, Pennsbury hasn't tasted defeat in 20 games, which includes a scoreless battle with Bethlehem Liberty two years ago.

First and Last

Or how about Neshaminy? The Redskins won the crown in the league's infant season (1963), under head coach John Petercusk.

In years to follow, Neshaminy claimed two more outright banners while sharing two others.

But for present coach Pal Allison, now in his third season, it would mark his first league crown.

What would it mean for the two Allentown schools? Allentown Louis Dieruff has never won the crown outright, although it shared the banner in '64 and '69. Allentown William Allen, despite several strong bids, has never reached its goal.

What about the Bethlehem schools? Liberty only turned the trick in 1970 under head coach Bob Buffman, while Freedom has come up short every year.

For Easton Area, it would represent their fourth claim to fame. The Red Rovers won it outright in '67 and '68 and were co-holders with Pennsbury in '66.

The final member, Reading High School, didn't join the fold until 1973 and was nowhere near the title picture then or even last season.

Which brings us to the point in question. Which teams figure to battle it out for the coveted crown this year? Or, is there one club so superior that it threatens to make shambles of the entire conference?

Rough off the hat, chances of any one team running away with the title are somewhat remote. Not even Pennsbury, despite its wealth of talent and size, will coast home.

Of course, the Falcons still rate as the team to beat. But, there are two other legitimate contenders who figure to eye Pennsbury a run for its money.

In fact, one would've even been reaching too far in saying there is an excellent chance of two, possibly three, teams finishing in a dead heat at the season's end.

Definite contenders are Dieruff and Liberty. Both schools have experience on their side, with key men returning at key positions.

If there is a darkhorse, it would have to be Allen which figures to be particularly strong defensively.

Neshaminy could surprise, but the 'Skins figure to be a little short due to the school's split. However, a solid defense and good running backs could help Neshaminy throw the conference into a real turmoil.

Easton, Freedom and Reading don't figure in the title picture at this time. Easton has plenty of backs returning, but that's about all. Heavy losses in the line rule out the Red Rovers.

Freedom has one major problem—size. The Patriots are small and have just one outstanding running back in Jim Garcia. Reading is much like Easton with some good backs returning. However, the quarterback situation is definitely a problem and the possibility of a teacher's strike further compounds the problem.

Here is a capsule look at the up-state Big Eight clubs:

LOUIS DIERUFF — For the first time in coach Bruce Trotter's four-year tenure at Dieruff, the Huskies are a legitimate threat.

Year	School	Coach	Record		
			W	L	T
1963	Neshaminy	John Petercusk	4	0	0
1964*	Neshaminy	John Petercusk	3	0	1
1965	Dieruff	Ernie Wescoe	3	0	1
1966	Neshaminy	John Petercusk	3	0	1
1966*	Pennsbury	Erle Baugher	4	1	0
1967	Easton Area	Bob Rutte	5	0	0
1968	Easton Area	Wayne Grube	5	0	0
1969**	Neshaminy	Jack Swartz	4	2	0
	Pennsbury	Erle Baugher	4	2	0
	Dieruff	Jeep Bednarik	4	2	0
1970	Liberty	Bob Buffman	5	1	0
1971	Neshaminy	Jack Swartz	6	0	0
1972	Pennsbury	Chuck Kane	6	0	0
1973	Pennsbury	Chuck Kane	6	0	1
1974	Pennsbury	Chuck Kane	7	0	0

Trotter has his entire backfield returning, including quarterback John Gilly and running backs Mark McCants, Mike Marks and Sonny Arnold. There are good backups in Pete Parmer and Mark Howard.

Seven veterans on the line also bolster the Huskies' chances this year. Veterans include Roger Young (tackle-noise guard), Lee Krisk (guard), Dave Howells (guard-defensive end), Keith Bowers (center-linebacker), Mike Cherwin (guard), George Atiyeh (tackle) and Kirk Kohler (linebacker).

The only thing which could hurt Freedom is lack of depth. The Huskies quite possibly may go with eight or nine two-way men.

LIBERTY — Coach Barry Feterman, who formerly was an assistant coach at Lehigh University, replaces Buffman (who retired at the end of last season). Feterman has a wealth of talent which figures to improve a somewhat disappointing 6-4 record last year.

The Hurricanes have an explosive offense with the return of an outstanding quarterback in Rich Villani and running backs Brian Statum, Mike Lutsew and Ron Davis.

Two-way performer Rick Garza (a potential All-State candidate) heads Liberty's line play. Garza will see

double duty as a linebacker-tackle. Liberty is strong at defensive end with veterans Kevin Cousins and Chuck Kilpatrick.

Offensive line is also solid, helped by end Chuck Gimbar. The question mark lies in the Hurricane secondary where four new faces figure to play.

ALLEN — Les Kish, now in his sixth year, will go back to the Delaware offense which proved so successful for the Canaries two years ago.

Eight lettermen make Allen a possible sleeper. The Canaries are especially strong defensively, particularly at linebacker where Don Long, Mike Turner and Neshaminy transfer Pat Raymond figure to start.

Question lies with offense, especially quarterback Andy Polony who has the potential but has been known to be erratic. Scott Long is the Canaries' strongest running back.

EASTON AREA — Wayne Grube will have a hard time in watching last year's outstanding season which saw the Red Rovers compile an 8-2 record.

Now in his eighth season, Grube has a club similar to two seasons ago. One which is quick, but relatively small.

Easton is strong in the backfield with quarterback Van Ransom and running backs Bob Steeek, Joe Costanz, Joe Hepp and Tyrone and Rodney Knighton.

Both lines are critical, especially defensively where only Jack O'Donnell returns at end.

FREEDOM — Thirty-three coach Rich Andrews may be in for a long season. In fact, the Patriots will be hard pressed to even better last year's 2-8 record.

The Patriots' success will lie heavily on the output of a backfield, led by speedster Garcia. Line is in question, with one two-way tackle Fred Rice and tight end Dan Abbanno top-flight starters.

READING — Jim Clontz, who was an assistant coach at Adrian College (Mich.) last year, takes over for John Schonewolf who has since moved on to Tyrone Area High School.

Clontz' first problem is finding a replacement for top-notch quarterback John Schonewolf Jr. Jerry Calabrese looks like best bet to take over the QB duties.

Backfield is quick with Curt Ellison, Guy Gilmp and Connie Brockington.

Overall team size is a definite disadvantage. The line is suspect with only post-time starters Rick Wand, Eric Miller, Kevin Rudy and Tom Nye back from last year.

LBC grid schedule

(Continued from preceding page)

Time	Location	Time	Location
1:30 p.m.	Lower Merion at Bristol Springfield (Monroeville)	1:30 p.m.	Easton Area at Reading
1:30 p.m.	Bishop Egan vs. Father Judge (at Northeast Public)	2 p.m.	Pennsbury at Reading
2 p.m.	Perkasie School at George School	2 p.m.	Bishop Kenrick vs. Archbishop Wood (at Court St. Hts.)
2 p.m.	Bishop Kenrick vs. Archbishop Wood (at Court St. Hts.)	2 p.m.	Freedom at Reading
2 p.m.	Pennsbury at Reading	2:30 p.m.	Woodrow Wilson at Reading Township
2:30 p.m.	Woodrow Wilson at Reading Township	2:30 p.m.	Son Valley at Archbishop Kenrick
2:30 p.m.	Son Valley at Archbishop Kenrick	3 p.m.	William Tennent at Norristown
3 p.m.	William Tennent at Norristown	3 p.m.	Easton Area at Neshaminy
3 p.m.	Easton Area at Neshaminy	3:30 p.m.	St. James (Clayton) at Neshaminy
3:30 p.m.	St. James (Clayton) at Neshaminy	3:30 p.m.	St. Joseph at Neshaminy
3:30 p.m.	St. Joseph at Neshaminy	3:30 p.m.	George School at Andromeda of the New Church
3:30 p.m.	George School at Andromeda of the New Church	4 p.m.	Bishop Kenrick at Bishop Egan
4 p.m.	Bishop Kenrick at Bishop Egan	4 p.m.	Archbishop Kenrick vs. Archbishop Wood (at Court St. Hts.)
4 p.m.	Archbishop Kenrick vs. Archbishop Wood (at Court St. Hts.)	4 p.m.	Reading Township at Mt. Pleasant
4 p.m.	Reading Township at Mt. Pleasant	7:30 p.m.	Pennsbury at Neshaminy
7:30 p.m.	Pennsbury at Neshaminy	7:30 p.m.	Delbas at Centerville
7:30 p.m.	Delbas at Centerville	7:30 p.m.	Cowell at Reading
7:30 p.m.	Cowell at Reading	8 p.m.	Archbishop Kenrick at Bishop Egan
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