

C-C hasn't lost spine Patriots remain strong up middle

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By Conor Nevins, Globe Correspondent | September 9, 2007

There are certainly worse wagers to lose. Upon receiving a Gatorade shower and accepting **Concord-Carlisle's** Division 2 state championship last year, coach Ray Pavlik knew the subsequent congratulations and celebrations would eventually give way to a different kind of ceremony, one that would make his head considerably lighter. Pavlik and his staff made a bet with his players, one born from the days when he was a C-C player under longtime coach Jack Murray.

"[Murray] said, 'If you guys ever win a state championship, I'm going to get a mohawk,'" Pavlik said.

The coach's fate was sealed before the halftime whistle, as the Patriots ran up a 6-0 lead over Leicester heading into halftime, finishing the game with a 9-1 win.

"I was happy to do it," said Pavlik. "I'll be happy to do it again."

That will be difficult, considering C-C lost eight starters from last year's team that played so well in the tournament (19 goals in final three games) it arguably could have captured the Division 1 crown as well, (although St. John's Prep would beg to differ). But teams in and around the Dual County League won't be weeping for the Patriots. Division 2 Player of the Year Jean Fauchet is now at Fairfield, but the three returning starters are among the best in the area. Ryan Miller (center back), Theo Terris (central midfield), and Mike Burke (striker) form the spine of a Patriot lineup that Pavlik hopes will, at the start, compensate for the team's relative inexperience, especially in the back.

"How they play is going to shape who we are," Pavlik said of his defense, "We're going to need it sooner rather than later."

Pushing C-C for the DCL title will be **Acton-Boxboro**, last year's co-champs, and **Lincoln-Sudbury**. Dave Baumritter's Colonials also graduated eight starters, and they will have to replace three of the league's four leading scorers, including Steve Rose (Seton Hall). L-S lost some of the size and strength that was its trademark, but remain a difficult side to play. **Westford** will try to have something to say about the triangular logjam at the top of the league.

The expectations surrounding **St. John's Prep** coming into last season were clear: championship or bust. The Eagles had the talent, balance, and motivation to run the table, and they did, tying only twice in a 21-win season that culminated with a Division 1 state championship.

"Everybody's always ready to play us," coach Dave Crowell said. "The bull's-eye's even bigger this year."

The Eagles will look to seniors Alex Farr and Evan Ersing to try to match the prolific total left by last year's striking tandem of Tim Prior (Bowdoin) and Jeff Dell'Orfano (St. Anselm). The biggest loss will be Division 1 Player of the Year and midfield general Ben Slingerland (Georgetown). Crowell had a ready replacement in Hunter Clark, who played ably alongside Slingerland and was poised for a breakout season but suffered an ACL injury playing for his club. He may be able to return toward the end of the season. Versatile Sean Bishop will anchor the back line and look to get involved on the offensive end.

BC High and **Catholic Memorial** may find themselves fighting for second place in the Catholic Conference.

Third-year CM coach John Finn will look to improve upon a Division 1 South championship with an intriguing mix of youth and experience. CM will feature a starting 11 with six sophomores and five seniors. Will Donovan, who led the Knights in scoring as a freshman, will lead the front line, with senior and second leading scorer Jeff Stone anchoring the midfield. Finn also boasts a game-changing goalkeeper in sophomore Connor Askins. "I'll be having nightmares about him for the next three years," said St. John's Crowell.

Woburn and **Lexington** distinguished themselves as the teams to beat in the Middlesex League last season, though the Tanners will expect to mount a more threatening challenge for the league this year. Paul Sands's Woburn team boasts three of the four runners in Woburn's New England championship winning 4 x 100 relay team in this year's starting 11, with junior Ryad Bencheikh and senior Mike McDonough deputizing in the midfield, and senior Matt Pereira leading the line in attack. Sands tabs Pereira, last season's second leading scorer on the team, to terrorize

opposing defenses with his "breakaway speed and finishing." An all senior back line in front of junior goalkeeper Steve O'Donnell, who tied for the league lead in goals against, will make Woburn difficult to break down.

Lexington had only St. John's Prep in between itself and a spot in the D1 EMass final last year. With All-Scholastic Bryan Longo (Seton Hall) and Alex Driscoll (Wheaton) gone, junior Diego Garcia will assume some of the play-making responsibility for the Minutemen. **Winchester**, **Watertown**, and **Stoneham** should round out the league and challenge the top two.

One of the hardest leagues to predict is the Bay State Conference. Last year's winner, **Weymouth**, returns three starters, including leading scorer Kyle Cronin, and has a new coach, Bill McEachern. The Weymouth grad takes over for Steve Schoff, who retired after 16 years as head coach. The Wildcats received a much needed boost of experience when sweeper Mike Guilfy transferred from Archbishop Williams, but still may find themselves looking up at a deep **Framingham** team. Dan Avery lost All-Scholastic goaltender Peter Rosoff, but will contend, led by captains Ronaldo Vieira, Adam Skaggs, Ryan Pennie, and Jefferson Silva. **Needham**, which lost 17 seniors from last year's team, **Newton North**, **Brookline**, and **Stoneham** will all challenge. ■

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