

Gleason's key basket gets Bonner & Prendie revenge on Carroll

UPPER DARBY – Bonner & Prendergast needed somebody to make a shot in the fourth quarter of Tuesday's Catholic League game against Archbishop Prendergast.

The Pandas saw their cozy 15-point advantage at the end of the third quarter, punctuated by a Dakota McCaughan buzzer-beater from beyond the arc, sliced to three points with 1:52 to play in regulation.



Archbishop Carroll's Grace O'Neill defends against Bonner & Prendergast's Dakota McCaughan in the second half Tuesday. The Pandas went on to win 47-40, McCaughan had 11 points, six assists and two steals. (PETE BANNAN – DIGITAL FIRST MEDIA)

Alexis Gleason had been held without a shot in the fourth quarter when she received the ball inside the paint, made a move and laid up an easy deuce with 33.9 left on the clock. It was only one basket, but the Pandas needed someone to right the ship.

“Oh, we wanted it bad,” said Gleason, a junior forward. “We were throwing the ball away and not making good decisions. We really had to calm things down, set our offense up, don’t try to rush. I got the ball and was able (to get the basket). Confidence is a big thing.”

Despite a 26-point performance by Carroll junior Erin Sweeney, Bonner & Prendie held on for a 47-40 victory.

Last season, the Pandas (3-1, 1-0 PCL) lost twice in blowout fashion to the Patriots, once in the regular season and a second time in the Catholic League playoffs. Revenge was on the Pandas’ minds Tuesday night.

“I’ve never beaten them and I’m a senior,” said guard and co-captain Maeve McCann, who had four of her six points in the final quarter. “They’re definitely a really good team and we’ve always wanted to beat them. It’s also a big rival of ours. It’s definitely a win that sets the tone for our season and proves that we’re a different team from last year.”

Sweeney, the team’s second-leading scorer, shouldered the load Monday night for the Patriots, who were without senior forward Harlem Jennings. Sweeney had 11 of Carroll’s 13 points at intermission.

Dakota McCaughan with the stepback and 3-pointer as time expires in the third quarter. [@pandas_bball](https://twitter.com/pandas_bball) 33, Carroll 18 pic.twitter.com/6qvSbPMH6U

– Matt Smith (@DTMattSmith) [December 19, 2018](#)

Freshman Grace O'Neill, who is the niece of former Carroll coach Chuck Creighton, finished with six points, including a 3-pointer in the fourth quarter to kickstart the Patriots' 12-0 run. Mary DeSimone hit a pair of treys in the final stanza, but by and large it was the hot shooting of Sweeney that helped keep Carroll (3-3, 1-1) afloat. The do-everything junior drilled a 3-pointer from the elbow to pull Carroll within two points, 41-39, after Gleason's layup.



Archbishop Carroll's (24) Grace O'Neill drives to the basket in the fourth quarter as Bonner & Prendergast's Dakota McCaughan defends.

McCann answered by dribbling the length of the floor and hitting a layup with 40 seconds to go. Carroll threw the ball away on its next possession, which allowed the Pandas to clinch the victory from the foul line.

"We had to stay calm and make sure we kept our energy up," said Bonner & Prendie forward Ariana McGeary, who tallied eight points. "It was a big (win) for us."

McCaughan, the Pandas' exciting junior guard, scored all 11 of her points in the second half. But she was particularly dangerous when setting her teammates up with on-the-money passes. McCaughan led the Pandas with six assists and two steals, and she made four free throws in the waning seconds to seal the win.

Reagan Dolan came off the bench to score six points for the Pandas.

"We're rotating four guards in Dakota, Maeve, Bridie (McCann) and Alexis Eagan. It does keep us pretty fresh," B&P coach Tom Stewart said. "Then we have Reagan Dolan playing for us, a sophomore, who didn't play last year. Then we have McGeary and Gleason, so we have a solid seven this year.

"Towards the end, we kind of lost sight of what we were trying to do defensively. We had to pull it together. No. 22 (Sweeney) is such a good player, she is 5-10 and can shoot the 3. We caught a break because Jennings didn't play. ... It's a big win. Carroll beat us twice last year, so it was good to get one of them back."

Gentile to coach one more season at Upper Darby

Upper Darby High School is moving on from longtime head football coach Rich Gentile following the 2019 season.

In an email sent Thursday night to parents and guardians, Upper Darby athletic director Frank Nunan explained the decision to part ways with Gentile, who has been coach of the Royals since 1994.

"After careful evaluation, it has been determined that the administration and Coach Rich Gentile do not share the same the same vision of the future of the football program," Nunan wrote. "As a result, Coach Gentile will be leaving the head coaching role after the 2019 season."

In a voicemail message to the Daily Times, Nunan declined to give further comment beyond what was stated in the email.

"All of the information that we're releasing was in the statement," he said.

Gentile told the Daily Times that he was not voluntarily resigning or retiring from his coaching job. Gentile will remain in his teaching position beyond 2019.

"The school district is going in a different direction," Gentile said. "That's all."

Gentile added that he is happy to return on his year-to-year contract with the school district and looks forward to coaching the Royals one more year.

Gentile owns an overall record of 170-125-1. He is the fifth longest-tenured active football coach in Delaware County behind Garnet Valley's Mike Ricci, Haverford High's Joe Gallagher, Interboro's Steve Lennox and Strath Haven's Kevin Clancy.

According to a source with knowledge of the situation, Gentile's imminent departure as head coach was accelerated by the firing of offensive coordinator Eric Ruffenach. A 2002 Upper Darby graduate, Ruffenach had in recent months posted pictures on Twitter and Facebook of the school's deteriorating field conditions and poor facilities, much to the chagrin of Nunan and acting superintendent Dan McGarry, according to the source.

Gentile was told to stay on board for one more year with the provision that Ruffenach does not return.

Ruffenach confirmed he was relieved of his duties and issued no other comment.

“A plan will be developed for the hiring of a new head football coach and transitioning that coach into the role for the 2020 season,” Nunan wrote in the email. “The high school and the district are excited to move the football program in a new direction and appreciate your support of Upper Darby Athletics.”

Several former Upper Darby football players do not share that sentiment. One of Gentile’s biggest success stories is All-Delco Simoni Lawrence, who is an all-star player for the Hamilton Tiger-Cats in the Canadian Football League (CFL).

Lawrence voiced his displeasure of the news on Twitter Friday.

“Very disappoint about how #UPPERDARBY school district is handling Coach Rich Gentile,” Lawrence tweeted from his account, @Simoni_Lawrence. Lawrence said he would “fly in” to support his former coach.

Very disappoint about how [#UPPERDARBY](#) school district is handling Coach Rich Gentile I have a lot to say and would love to fly in and do a sit down interview or even a phone interview with [@delcotimes](#) and [@DTMattSmith](#) .

– Simoni Lawrence (@Simoni_Lawrence) [December 14, 2018](#)

Several teachers, who are fighting for new contracts, rallied on school grounds on Gentile’s behalf Friday morning.

During the past season, parents of players complained on Facebook and other social media sites about the school district’s failure to improve locker room facilities and field conditions.

The same source with knowledge of the football program

believes the school district, by firing Gentile and Ruffenach, is doing more harm than good.

“Frank Nunan and Dan McGarry are totally derailing the program right now,” the source said.

Gentile has been the head coach at Upper Darby since the 1994 campaign and has coached at the school since 1982. A lifetime Royal, Gentile is a 1978 graduate of the school.

“Rich is one of the nicest people you will ever meet and he has given his life to improving the lives of thousands of children in the school district,” said one former coaching colleague of Gentile, who requested anonymity. “What Upper Darby is doing is disgraceful.”

In a meeting with Gentile after the season, according to the source with knowledge of the coaching situation, Nunan gave his mostly negative evaluation of the football program. Qualifying for the District 1 Class 6A playoffs this year, which the Royals have accomplished five times during Gentile’s tenure, was not satisfactory to Nunan or the administration.

Upper Darby won seven games and advanced to the district playoffs for the third time since 2015. They have 27 wins over that period.

“Since 1982, Coach Gentile has influenced the lives of countless young men, both athletically and academically, and we wish him the best in his future endeavors,” Nunan wrote.

Gentile coached Floyd Wedderburn and Todd Rucci, who enjoyed lengthy NFL careers. Lawrence is in the midst of great career in the CFL.

That’s just the start of what Gentile has done to improve the lives of many student-athletes who’ve played under him at Upper Darby.



The field at Upper Darby Memorial Stadium was neglected by the school district this season. Members of the coaching staff, parents and players have all voiced their displeasure to administration regarding the poor conditions.

In the last five years, Gentile and his staff have hosted a Thanksgiving dinner for more than 25 of the team's players. Each player eats their meal with the coaches' families and shares what they are thankful for. Five turkeys and other goodies are provided by the Upper Darby coaching family each year.

Earlier this year, when senior Shawn McCullough lost his home in a fire, coaches and their families raised \$1,500 and several bags of clothes and other necessities. The Daily Times told McCullough's story in September.

One player's family had to be relocated to a hotel during the 2018 season. Gentile and the coaches donated \$400 worth of groceries and \$300 in cash to the player and his family the next day. Several coaches and their families are actively helping the family during the holiday season.

Gentile and his coaches have escorted players on college trips. For example, Ruffenach drove three players to the University of New Hampshire in 2015 when the players expressed interest in the program. Coaches Sean Pickett and Shawn Quinn have taken players to colleges to tour campuses and meet with coaches.

Over the years, Gentile has been willing to pay for a player's physical in the event the player's parents or guardians are unable to afford it.

More than 60 of Gentile's players have furthered their education at a university, the military, the trades and the police academy in the last five years.

McGurk, Pina shine again for perfect Notre Dame

Senior guards Mandy McGurk and Maggie Pina are a big reason for Academy of Notre Dame's fast start to the year.

The undefeated Irish won their fourth in a row Thursday with a 58-36 thrashing of Bonner & Prendergast in nonleague action.

Once again, it was the McGurk and Pina show.

McGurk poured in a game-high 27 points and Pina finished with 19 points for the host Irish (4-0), who led 34-21 at halftime.

Ariana McGeary scored 11 points and Maeve McCann had eight to pace the Pandas (2-1).

In other nonleague games:

Chester Charter School for Arts 56, Plumstead Christian 52 >>

Logan Handy stepped up for the Sabers when they needed her the most.

Handy exploded for 22 of her team's 25 points over the final six minutes of the fourth quarter as Chester Charter rallied for the win.

Handy was 12-for-12 at the free-throw line and scored a game-high 33 points to go with five rebounds, five assists and four steals.

CCSA trailed by five points when Handy returned from the bench with six minutes to go.

Ceyrah Williams added seven points, eight rebounds and two steals for CCSA. Yari Laguna (nine points) played well in her first varsity game.

Sacred Heart 53, Agnes Irwin 26 >> In a game Wednesday, Kyra Quigley scored 16 points to go with 13 rebounds, five assists and five blocks, and Caitlin Hughes added nine points for the Lions.

In the Central League:

Upper Darby 56, Lower Merion 44 >> Jasmine Forrester wanted to show her former teammates what they are missing.

The Royals' junior guard, who transferred over from Lower Merion, overcame a box-and-one defense to score a game-high 22 points to go with six steals. She was 11-for-14 from the free-throw line to help the Royals (3-0) stay undefeated.

Upper Darby has matched last season's win total and is 2-0 in

the Central League.

Gabby Liberio paired 11 points with five steals and Natalie Koskinas (five points) pulled down a team-high nine rebounds for the Royals. Freshman guard Aubrey Ennis scored nine points.

In the Ches-Mont:

W.C. Rustin 68, Sun Valley 27 >> A tough one for the Vanguard, who trailed 15-4 after one quarter and couldn't keep up with the Golden Knights. Abby Seacock scored 14 points in the setback.

Forrester's patience pays off as Upper Darby starts 2-0

RIDLEY TWP. – Jasmine Forrester had to sit on the bench with foul trouble in the third quarter of Upper Darby's Central League contest Tuesday.

The junior guard was understandably frustrated. She had drilled a trio of 3-point field goals in the second period, and her layup early in the third gave the Royals a two-point advantage.

But with Forrester limited, Ridley scored 12 straight points to take an 11-point lead. Upper Darby, which had defeated Ridley last season for its only Central League victory, needed a spark.

UD coach Tony Zambino had to shuffle players in and out of the lineup all night. For the Royals to win, though, he needed to rely upon his newest player to pull the Royals out of a rut.

Forrester ignited a 10-0 spurt and the Royals eventually grabbed the lead on a Kaitlyn Johnson 3-point field goal late in the third quarter. Forrester nailed a pull-up jumper early in the fourth to put Upper Darby ahead for good on the way to a 65-57 victory.

The Royals improved to 2-0 for the first time since the 2009-10 campaign.

Forrester scored 27 of her game-high 29 points in the final three quarters in her Central League debut with the Royals. She transferred from Lower Merion at the beginning of the school year.

“Upper Darby has been like a family, a close organization,” said Forrester, who made four 3-pointers and added eight rebounds, two assists, one steal and one blocked shot. “It’s why I came out to the team, there’s a lot of energy. It’s really exciting. At Lower Merion, I was a varsity player but I knew coming here I could do what I am supposed to do. It feels like a dream come true.”

Ridley (1-2, 0-1 Central) trailed by nine points in the fourth period, but eventually took a short-lived lead on a pair of free throws by Morgan Chapman. On the ensuing UD possession, Forrester hit the go-ahead basket and the Royals scored the next eight points.

“I hope I bring energy and motivation. I just want everyone to play together, that’s my main goal,” Forrester said. “I don’t want to be stingy with the ball, I don’t want to be selfish.”

Zambino smiled at the notion of Forrester being more of distributor than a scorer.

“No,” he said, “We need her to score here for us and just continue to make plays.”



Upper Darby sophomore guard Gabby Liberio

When the Royals were seemingly down and out, Forrester put the team on her shoulders, but received plenty of assistance from guards Gabby Liberio (nine points, six rebounds, three steals), Aubrey Ennis (10 points, two steals) and Kaitlyn Johnson, who hit three treys and tallied 11 points off the bench. Forward/center Natalie Koskinas totaled eight points, nine boards and one block.

UD defeated Ridley on a buzzer-beater last year.

“I just think it’s the rivalry. I see it in other sports, too,” Liberio said. “I think we compete well against each other, so when we play each other it’s always a tough game and every time it gets real exciting. ...

“Being 2-0, it’s new for us but it feels good. Jasmine obviously helps the team, but she fits right in, too. She helps in so many ways.”

Zambino was satisfied with his team’s ability to come back and go home with a well-earned win.

“It just shows that the kids have heart, character,” Zambino said. “We had to really manage the game, we had three girls

with four fouls each and Jasmine was one of them. They showed a lot of heart and came back three times tonight.”

Paige Gabriele led the way for Ridley with 18 points. Shannen Hinchey added 14 points, while Danielle Simister, Makenzie Griffith and Chapman all contributed seven points.

In other Central League games:

Haverford 51, Lower Merion 18 >> A balanced effort paced the Fords (2-1) to a rout of the Aces. Erin Kelly led with 11 points, and Arden Guilfoil scored nine. Erin Doherty and Sara Walsh tossed in eight points apiece.

Springfield 61, Radnor 37 >> Jordan D’Ambrosio scored 17 of her 20 points in the first half, Alexa Abbonizio poured in 18 points and Rachel Conran scored 13 in a lopsided win for the Cougars (1-0).

Ellie Mueller led the Raiders (1-1) with 11 points.

Strath Haven 65, Harriton 54 >> Faith Raymond (15 points), Alisha Lewis (14) and Cayden Frazier (11) each scored in double figures for the visiting Panthers (3-0), who’ve already matched last season’s win total.

Marple Newtown 41, Penncrest 24 >> Lindsay Kane tallied 15 points and five assists as the Tigers (1-0) downed the Lions (2-1). Olivia Coary was 5-for-5 at the free-throw line and finished with 10 points.

Megan Arndt paced Penncrest with 11 points.

In nonleague action:

W.C. Rustin 34, Penn Wood 33 >> Dakiya Daniels made a desperation shot with six seconds left to propel host Rustin to the win. The Patriots (1-2) grabbed the lead moments earlier on a layup by Ashley Cyrus, who finished with nine points.

Jada Hutt totaled a team-high 10 points to go with nine rebounds, four steals and three blocks.

Notre Dame 55, West Catholic 46 >> All-Delco guard Mandy McGurk poured in 25 points and Maggie Pina added 14 as the Irish (3-0) stayed unbeaten.

Germantown Academy 59, Archbishop Carroll 41 >> Jaye Haynes scored 13 of her game-high 20 points in the third quarter to give GA the winning edge.

Grace O'Neill paced Carroll with 12 points, and Harlem Jennings chipped in with 10.

Avon Grove 54, Interboro 38 >> Amanda Floyd scored 11 of her 14 points from the charity stripe, and Riley Szatny had 11 points in the loss for the Bucs.

In the Catholic Academies:

Mount St. Joseph 52, Sacred Heart 35 >> Kayleigh Doyle and Sami Smith netted eight points apiece and Liz Franz tossed in seven, but the host Lions couldn't overcome an early deficit.

Lewis happy to be back home at Strath Haven

MIDDLETOWN – Alisha Lewis has spent her entire childhood living in the Wallingford-Swarthmore School District.

Until this year, the new senior guard at Strath Haven hasn't been home too often.

She was a starting player as eighth grader for Ursuline

Academy in Delaware where she won three state championships. As a sophomore she earned Delaware Sportswriters and Broadcasters Association Player of the Year honors as the top player in the state.



PETE BANNAN –
DIGITAL FIRST MEDIA
Strath Haven point guard Alisha Lewis dribbles up court in the second quarter against Sun Valley.

After her sophomore year, she lived with a host family in New York and attended Long Island Lutheran High School (LuHi). Away from home Lewis made a name for herself and caught the attention of several Division I coaches. In November, she signed her National Letter of Intent to play basketball at Georgia Tech next week.

One of the top point guard recruits in the nation – ranked No. 34 by ESPN.com – decided it was in her best interest to stay home in Wallingford for her senior year and attend Strath Haven, where she could reunite with her lifelong friends.

Her family filed the necessary transfer documents and Lewis was permitted to play her senior season on a Strath Haven team that doesn't quite have the reputation of an Ursuline or LuHi. Lewis says she doesn't mind that she is the proverbial big fish in a small pond.

"I love being at home and surrounded by people I grew up with," Lewis said after helping Strath Haven to a season-opening victory over Strath Haven, 50-39, at the Penncrest Tip-Off.

"We lived in Wallingford since she's been in first grade and we're happy that she's back," said Lewis' mother, Lisa. "She's competed a lot in travel ball and she's worked really hard to get where she is, so it's nice to have her back home with family and friends. It's nice to get that last year back at home before she goes away."

Lewis' talents are making an immediate impact on the Panthers, who won only three games last winter. With her in the lineup the Panthers are clearly a much-improved team, as evidenced by their one-sided win against Sun Valley.

"I just want to be a leader for everyone and (step) up to help the team as best as I can," she said. "I know I have to prepare for college because I know I'll have to fulfill that role when I get there."

Lewis did not make the Panthers' game on opening night about herself. She mainly stayed out of the spotlight. Instead, her main priority was to



Strath Haven's (15) Danielle McNeeley completes a layup against Sun Valley in the third quarter at Penncrest.

distribute the ball and provide open looks for her teammates. That's not a surprise as Lewis has been an unselfish player throughout her high school years. When she won Delaware Player of the Year, she averaged just 10.7 points per game. Friday night, she made a pair of 3-pointers and finished with 10 points. Power forward Faith Raymond led all Panthers with 12 points.

Lewis' mere presence on the team has given the Panthers a boost and a belief that they can compete in the Central League.

"We have some good returning players and, obviously, with Alisha joining us that is a big addition. Everyone has been having a positive outlook," Strath Haven coach Allison Price said. "I think the positive attitude is encouraging to everyone on the floor, so that automatically makes everyone feel comfortable. Having a couple of weeks of playing

together, they're all getting used to each other. Her knowledge is definitely a strength."

Lewis cut her teeth playing AAU ball for two of the premier travel organizations in the state, the Comets and Philadelphia Belles.

Now Lewis gets to compete against some of the top players in Delco and the Philadelphia area. She is familiar with many of them, too. When she was younger, she was a teammate of Garnet Valley seniors Emily McAteer and Brianne Borcky on the Comets.

Any school would love to have her, but Lewis is thrilled to be at Strath Haven. She is where she feels she belongs, she is home.

The Panthers sure are glad to have her.

"I think after a couple of weeks of playing together, we started to jell and we will continue to get better," Lewis said. "It's a great environment to play in and I'm happy to be here."

Abby Seasock of Sun Valley led all scorers with 18 points. She drilled five 3-point baskets.

Doogan leads Cardinal O'Hara into new era

Chrissie Doogan was the perfect fit to take over the Cardinal O'Hara girls basketball program.

An assistant coach under the legendary Linus McGinty, who retired in March after 24 years as head coach of the Lions,

Doogan is well-aware of the expectations. She is, after all, one of the school's all-time greats, a two-time Catholic League MVP and Daily Times Player of the Year.



PETE BANNAN – DIGITAL
FIRST MEDIA

Cardinal O'Hara senior guard Kerry Patterson at practice Thursday.

There's no such thing as rebuilding at O'Hara, although Doogan admits the squad will look different.

Maura Hendrixson, the 2018 Daily Times Player of the Year, and fellow All-Delco guard Kenzie Gardler (Villanova) are no longer around. Their graduation officially ended an amazing era of girls basketball at O'Hara.

Hendrixson and Gardler comprised one-half of a Division I quartet, joined by two-time Player of the Year Hannah Nihill (Drexel) and All-Delco Mary Sheehan (Saint Joseph's), that led the Lions to back-to-back Catholic League titles. The superstar foursome was largely responsible for O'Hara's status as the No. 1 team in Delco, three years running, and one of the best programs in the state.

Doogan trusts the 2018-19 Lions can maintain the tradition of excellence. Former role players will be called upon to lead. Kerry Patterson, a senior guard, can dribble, shoot and defend. She was a perfect complement to Hendrixson and Gardler, and has been a varsity member since her freshman year.

Erin Welde excelled off the bench in recent years, but like Patterson, the senior guard is expected to see her duties expand. Stephanie Huseby transferred to O'Hara last winter and thrived in a starting role. Huseby and sophomore Siobhan Boylan are 5-10 power forwards who give the Lions a dual inside presence.

"We will have a new look from the past few years, but a similar style," said Doogan, who was an assistant at O'Hara



Cardinal O'Hara
junior forward
Stephanie Huseby at
practice Thursday.

the last five seasons. "I expect Patterson and Welde to provide senior leadership and help the newcomers adjust early to high school basketball."

Amaris Baker, a 5-9 sophomore guard, is a transfer from Baldwin. Freshmen incoming talent include guards Sydni Scott (5-9) and Nicole Blanch (5-4), and forwards Annie Welde (5-11) and Maggie Doogan. Welde is the younger sister of Erin, and Doogan is the coach's daughter.

"If the newcomers can mesh with the core group we have coming back," Chrissie Doogan said, "this could be a fun team to watch."

Elsewhere in the Catholic League:

Bonner & Prendergast is set up to make another run in the PIAA playoffs, and perhaps this season take a step closer to vying for a Catholic League crown.

The Pandas made a somewhat surprising journey to the PIAA Class 4A semifinals last season, falling to undefeated Lancaster Catholic, which captured the state title.

"We return four players who played a lot of minutes last year in our run through states," longtime Pandas coach Tom Stewart said. "We have some newcomers who will provide depth over the course of the season. We're hoping to be very competitive in the Catholic League and hoping to make another run at a state title."

The pieces are in place for the Pandas to do just that. Junior guard Dakota McCaughan is one of the most electrifying players in the county. Maeve McCann is a savvy senior guard. Senior center Arianna McGeary (5-10) and junior forward/center Alexis Gleason (5-11) give the Pandas a one-two punch inside the paint.

Archbishop Carroll is also coming off a run to the final four of the state tournament. The Patriots lost to Mars Area in the Class 5A semifinals.

The Patriots will have a tough time replacing All-Delco guard

Molly Masciantonio, who was among the top scorers in the county the last three years. Harlem Jennings, a senior guard/forward, was excellent in her initial season at Carroll. Jennings is a stellar defensive player who is at her best offensively when driving to the basket.

Other key returners for the Patriots include sharp-shooting junior guard/forward Erin Sweeney, sophomore guard Karli Dougherty and senior guard Mary deSimone.

Despite losing top players, a Bright outlook for Academy Park girls basketball

Academy Park will have a different makeup this season following the graduation of its leading scorers, Mahya Woodton and Shantalay Hightower, both of whom were four-year starters. Woodton became the program's all-time leading scorer during her All-Delco senior season.

The reigning Del Val League champions will feature senior returners Taylor Flores (guard), Taylor Smith (forward), Anissa Fleming (center) and Kiasa Cunningham (forward). Junior guard Gabrielle Jackson and sophomore guard Lashay Jackson will play key roles for the Knights, who last season posted a 15-7 record and qualified for the District 1 Class 5A playoffs.

"We should be harder to game plan for without Woodton and Hightower," third-year coach Ron Bright said. "Shooting and defense will again be the key to our success. Along with five seniors our rotation will include one junior, two sophomores

and one freshman, so contributions from the underclassmen will be expected. We will have to overcome a lack of varsity experience, but I am hopeful that a tough non-conference schedule will prepare us for a run at a third consecutive Del Val title and playoff appearance.”

Penn Wood moves on without its best players from the previous two seasons, Carle Andrews, a 1,000-point scorer. Forward/center Jada Hutt averaged 8.9 points as a sophomore for the Patriots, who went 10-12 and lost in the first round of districts. Others to watch include senior forward Awa Dicko and sophomore guard Raquel Curry.

Interboro is beginning a new season with its third head coach in as many years. Ty Taylor takes over at the helm for a Bucs team that went 10-11 but closed the season on a three-game winning streak and narrowly missed qualifying for the District 1 Class 5A playoffs. Sophomore combo guard Keri Barnett started every game as a freshman.

This could be another trying season at Chichester, which won three games in 2017-18. Ava Franz showed potential as a freshman last winter.

Preseason information on Chester was not made available to the Daily Times.

Thomer's debut season could be memorable at Notre Dame

A new era is under way at **Academy of Notre Dame**.

Lauren Thomer replaces Mary Beth McNichol, who was one of the

winningest coaches in Delaware County history. McNichol is now the head coach at Neumann University in Aston.

Thormer has 10 years of college coaching experience, most recently at Manhattan College and Yale. A Philadelphia native, Thomer played collegiate ball at Rider University.

The Irish are led by their two Division I bound senior guards, All-Delco Mandy McGurk (Penn) and Maggie Pina (Boston University). Emma Kichula (forward) and Caitlin Mullen (guard) also return to the starting lineup for Notre Dame, which finished 15-11 last season.

Elsewhere in the Inter-Ac League:

Episcopal Academy welcomes back senior guard Olivia Dirks, junior guard Cara Harty and junior forward Raeleen Keffer-Scharpf on a team that went 12-12 last winter. Dirks earned Daily Times Girls Soccer Player of the Year honors this fall.

EA is 1-1 in the early going this season.

Chuck Simmonds has begun his 15th season as head coach of the Churchwomen.

“We will be working to find consistency from a group that will be emerging into larger roles and newcomers that will be given an opportunity to contribute,” Simmonds said.

Bicentennial League

The Christian Academy made history last season. The Crusaders enjoyed a 19-10 campaign, highlighted by a trip to the quarterfinal round of the PIAA Class A tournament.

Four-year starter and senior guard Grace Gormley is among several players on this year’s roster who were pivotal to last season’s success. Others key returnees include senior forward Britney Dike and sophomore guard Kiera Cryan.

Delco Christian looks to make another run to the District 1 Class 2A final. Seniors guards Monica Lebaudy and Shekinah Yanes return to the lineup.

Catholic Academies

Sacred Heart Academy has the talent to compete for a second consecutive District 1 Class AA championship.

While losing standout guard Eileen Piombino to graduation hurts, the Lions (15-11 last year) are loaded with experience, led by 6-0 senior center Kyra Quigley, junior guard Kayleigh Doyle, senior forward Sami Smith, and senior guards Liz Franz and Caitlin Hughes. After a one-year hiatus from playing basketball, coach Zach Shuler looks forward to the return of senior guard Jaycee Webster, a standout volleyball player.

“I’m looking forward to coaching a group of players who have now played together for three years,” Shuler said. “Our strengths will be our experience, team chemistry and depth. I’m hoping that a tough league schedule will prepare us for another deep run in the postseason.”

Ches-Mont League

Sun Valley is hoping for a better outcome than last season when the team endured a 4-17 campaign. Abby Seasock, a senior guard, give the Vanguarders a viable outside shooting threat.

The Ches-Mont will go through West Chester Henderson, which captured the District 1 Class 5A and league titles last winter.

Long's return means Springfield is no longshot in Central League and beyond

SPRINGFIELD – Alyssa Long is happy to be playing sports again.

The junior guard of the reigning Central League champion Springfield Cougars was itching to get back to doing what she does best. Whether it's lacrosse or basketball, Long's intensity and dedication to whichever sport is in-season sets her apart from so many other athletes her age.

In October, Long was medically cleared from a devastating knee injury that cost her virtually her entire sophomore lacrosse season. And now she's ready to be the frontcourt leader Springfield's basketball team.



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Alyssa Long dribbles during a scrimmage with Episcopal Academy Tuesday.

"I missed my high school and summer lacrosse seasons, I was able to come back and play a couple of fall lacrosse games. Just having the chance to play a couple minutes on attack was so much fun, to be able to get out and run around again," said Long, a North Carolina lacrosse recruit. "Everything is going perfectly well. I know at first, I was a little careful. Do I sprint there or should I make that move? I knew I have to be cautious and conserve myself for the entire season."

Long is among a quartet of returning starters. Four-year starting forwards Jordan D'Ambrosio and Belle Mastropietro have been two of the best players in the county since they were freshmen. As a rookie, sophomore guard Alexa Abbonizio tied for the county lead with 65 3-pointers and, along with D'Ambrosio, averaged a team-high 12.0 points per game.

"We're excited, especially because we're the same team," D'Ambrosio said. "We have that connection and we don't have to get to know new people. That's a good thing."

Carli Johnston and Rachel Conrad will see their roles increase. Both players can slot in at guard or forward, shoot from long range and play solid defense.

"Rachel has been shooting a lot more and she is making her shots, and Carli Johnston has been getting a lot of offensive rebounds for us and is boxing out and guarding the big girls for us," Mastropietro said. "That's important for us, especially since we are such a small team."

Lack of height shouldn't be too much of an issue. Fifth-year coach Ky McNichol emphasizes versatility from every



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Belle Mastropietro
shoot a free throw
during a scrimmage
with Episcopal
Academy Tuesday.

player on the roster.

Anyone who earns playing time can look to the returning four starters for inspiration. Their ability to do a bit of everything on the floor has made Springfield one of the county's top programs in recent years. Last season the Cougars advanced to the PIAA Class 5A tournament and finished 21-6. Two years ago, when Long was a freshman and D'Ambrosio and Mastropietro were sophomores, the Cougars captured the team's first District 1 title.

There's no question the Cougars have the potential to make 2018-19 their best season yet.

"We pick each other up and we play as one," Long said. "How we start our season is how we want to continue it. Never stop playing together."

Elsewhere in the Central League:

Garnet Valley, Haverford and the Cougars are the presumed favorites.

The Jaguars saw their reign of four straight titles end last winter. But with 6-0 forwards Brianne Borcky and All-Delco Emily McAteer back in the fold, the Jags will be tough to beat as always. Both four-year starters, McAteer is a 1,000-point scorer and Loyola (Md.) commit, while Borcky will play collegiate ball at Drexel.

Head coach Joe Woods, back for his 16th season, also returns senior guards Morgan Falcone and Jill Nagy, senior forward/center Madi McKee, junior guard/forward Abbey Anderson and junior forward Liesl Dentinger. GV advanced to the PIAA Class 6A playoffs and grabbed third place in the District 1 tourney last season.

Haverford welcomes back virtually its entire starting lineup from last season's 16-10 team, which includes leading scorer and senior guard Erin Doherty, and twin towers Sara Walsh (6-1) and Lindsey Lane (5-11), both senior forwards. Seniors Erin Kelly and Annalena O'Reilly give the Fords solid defense and balance on the frontcourt.

"We'll look to use last year's development and experience to grow on both ends of the floor," coach Lauren Pellicane said.

Radnor starts another journey with Mark Jordan, who is entering his 24th year of coaching high school basketball.

The Raiders are loaded with experience as they look to return to the state playoffs after seeing their season end in the district playback round last winter. Junior forward Ellie Mueller averaged 15.6 points per game as a sophomore. Brienne Williams had a solid freshman campaign at shooting guard. Other returning starters include senior forward Holly Holtsberg, senior guard Audrey Rosenblum and junior guard Julia Rigolizzo.

“Mueller, a Princeton lacrosse commit, and Williams will look forward to leading the team at both ends of the floor again,” Jordan said. “Holtsberg will provide a lane presence and will increase her scoring around the basket. Rosenblum has started since freshman year, and Rigolizzo and Massimino have experience. (Sophomore forward Cierra) Hopson will be counted on to provide rebounding relief. We will look to play fast and use our team speed.”

Penncrest starts anew with first-year head coach Tim Brown, who was an assistant for former boss Bob Higgins the last few seasons. The Lions are looking to build upon a successful 15-10 season, including a win in the District 1 Class 5A playoffs. Key returners include four-year varsity players Kylie Chelo, Megan Arndt, and Annalee Doyle.

Ridley intends to contend after a 4-18 season. Coach Bryant McCombs has seven varsity returners including versatile sophomore guards Lindsay Boyd and Shannen Hinchey, junior center Morgan Chapman, senior guards Paige Gabrielle and Emma Layden, and senior forward Breanna Harrison.

Following three-win campaigns, **Strath Haven** and **Upper Darby** received a boost in the form of transfer athletes.

Junior guard Jasmine Forrester comes to Upper Darby after averaging 9.4 points per game at Lower Merion last season. As for coach Tony Zambino’s returning players, junior guard Gabby Liberio is a steady hand with scoring instincts, and twin sisters Natalie and Angelina Koskinas give the Royals plenty of height and power inside the paint.

Strath Haven has added senior guard Alisha Lewis, a highly touted senior guard from Delaware. Lewis is scouted as the 34th-ranked guard point in the nation, according to ESPN.com. and will play at Georgia Tech next season. Senior guard Rosey Iannello, junior guard Cayden Frazier and sophomore forward Faith Raymond are the Panthers’ top returners.

Marple Newtown's leading scorers from last year, Devon Adams, Halle Robinson and Olivia Young, graduated in the spring. Senior guards Kaely Cristello and Lindsay Kane are among the few players with significant varsity minutes.

All-Delco Football: Defense – Garnet Valley's Brennan, Springfield's Clemens boosted their teams' stopping abilities

The All-Delco defensive team includes:

Cade Brennan, Garnet Valley: The two-time All-Delco was the engine of the Jaguars' defense. The most productive defensive end in the Central League improved upon an outstanding junior campaign and was the catalyst of one of Delco's top units. Featuring a potent combination of size, strength and quickness, Brennan was the top tackler on the Jags (57.5) and ranked second in sacks (7.5). The Cornell commit's play helped the Jags to their first Central League title in five years and an appearance in the District 1 Class 6A semifinal round for the third straight season.

Mike Moore, Interboro: A senior, Moore was a workhorse for the Bucs. At defensive end, he was dominant, racking up 60 tackles, six sacks and an interception. The All-Del Val League selection was the Bucs' No. 1 running back, too. He amassed 1,139 yards and 19 touchdowns en route to leading the Bucs to the quarterfinal round of the District 1 Class 5A tournament.

He also had a kick return for a touchdown.

Jack Purcell, Episcopal Academy: A senior, Purcell was stellar on both the offensive and defensive line units. With plenty of size and speed, Purcell's play as a two-way standout helped the Churchmen to a 7-3 record. Purcell finished with 40 tackles, including 11 behind the line of scrimmage and 3.5 sacks. He earned All-Inter-Ac League honors as an offensive and defensive lineman.

Da'Shawn Brickle, Penn Wood: A senior, Brickle made a huge impact in his lone season at Penn Wood. A transfer from Jacksonville H.S. in North Carolina, Brickle flourished at defensive end on arguably the best defensive unit in the county. He posted 105 tackles, including 22.5 TFLs, and registered 12 sacks and a forced fumble. Brickle's performance earned him All-Del Val honors.



Haverford junior Trey Blair was flourished on offense, defense and special teams. He finished tied for the county lead in interceptions (six) and had 513 yards receiving with six touchdown catches.

Pat Clemens, Springfield: A two-time All-Delco, he was the heart and soul of a Springfield defense that once again ranked among the top units in Delco. In helping the Cougars qualify for the District 1 Class 5A playoffs, the senior linebacker posted 163 tackles, good for nearly 15 per game. He also notched three fumble recoveries and an interception. Clemens will play lacrosse at Saint Joseph's.

Aliyoh Turay, Penn Wood: A senior, Turay was another on a long list of playmakers for the Patriots. The outside linebacker tortured opposing running backs and quarterbacks. He finished with a team-high 144 tackles, seven TFLs and 3.5 sacks. Thanks in part to Turay's efforts, Penn Wood's defense held opposing rushers to 3.2 yards per carry, An All-Del Val selection, Turay (5-10, 185) also returned an interception for a touchdown.

Richie Kimmel, Archbishop Carroll: A junior, Kimmel was the backbone of the Patriots' defensive unit. The linebacker posted 166 tackles, including 18 TFLs. An All-Catholic League selection, he forced three fumbles, returning one to the end zone, and recorded a pair of interceptions. Kimmel's play helped the Patriots to a 5-6 record, their most victories since 2007, and advance to the Catholic League Class 4A final.

Dan Bradley, Garnet Valley: A senior, Bradley was regarded as Garnet Valley's top all-around performer, according to coach Mike Ricci. He excelled as a defensive back and outside linebacker during the Jags' run to the District 1 Class 6A semifinals. Bradley was one of few Jaguars to go both ways on offense and defense. By midseason, Bradley became a go-to player in GV's running back rotation. He ranked second on the team in rushing yards (619) and scored seven touchdowns.

Omar Ba, Penn Wood: Ba was a ballhawk in the defensive secondary for the Del Val League champions. The senior free safety made a slew of big plays and scored three defensive touchdowns (one interception, two fumble recoveries). With Ba

roaming the defensive backfield, the Patriots ranked as the top defensive passing unit in the county. An All-Del Val honoree, Ba finished with 60 tackles, three interceptions, two forced fumbles and seven pass deflections.

Edmund Dennis, Penn Wood: A senior, Dennis was a shutdown cornerback for two straight seasons. Quarterbacks simply avoided throwing the ball in Dennis' direction. He totaled 45 tackles and one interception, indicative of how effective he was in pass coverage. Dennis also earned All-Del Val honors. With offers from Morgan State and Stoneybrook, college programs are well-aware of Dennis' talent. In addition to his exploits on defense, Dennis was the team's kicker and punter. He averaged 38.9 yards per punt. On offense, Dennis contributed 10 catches for 255 yards and three touchdowns.

Trey Blair, Haverford: A junior, Blair is another in a handful of All-Delco performers recognized for their all-purpose abilities. He did a little of everything for the Fords, who qualified for the District Class 6A tournament and finished 9-3 overall. Blair tied for the county lead in interceptions with six and was the Fords' No. 1 playmaker on offense. As a receiver, he made 25 catches for 513 yards and six touchdowns. As a rusher, he gained 407 yards with three scores. Blair was also the team's starting punter.

Elijah Yakpasuo, Ridley: "Yak," as he is nicknamed, was vital to the Green Raiders' midseason resurgence. The senior was a multi-purpose force. As the team's leading rusher, Yakpasuo amassed 1,271 yards and 12 touchdowns. He returned a pair of kickoffs for touchdowns, as well. Yakpasuo was a standout in the defensive secondary, leading the team in interceptions with three. Yakpasuo's performance was crucial in helping the Green Raiders win seven of their final eight decisions and qualify for the District 1 Class 6A tournament. Said coach Dave Wood: "He is a huge part of our turnaround and is a total team kid."