

So far, so good for Marple Newtown

by Joseph Santoliquito



JOHN TAGGART/For the Daily News

Marple Newtown defensive end Pete Massaro will be heading to Penn State.

MARPLE NEWTOWN High coach **Ray Gionta** is not jumping to any conclusions - yet. The Tigers have started 2-0, with the chance to improve to 3-0 when they travel to face Lower Merion at 1:30 p.m. Saturday.

Ridley, Strath Haven and Conestoga appear to be the preseason favorites in the Central League. But Marple Newtown might merit a wary eye among the league's elite, especially after a very impressive, 20-0 victory over Upper Darby last Friday.

"It's a long season and anything can happen, and the Central League is a very good league, so we'll worry about the next one, and that's Lower Merion," Gionta said. "People are separating the league after 1 week, and obviously Conestoga and Ridley are very good, and Strath Haven is still a very good football team. Penn-crest, Haverford, Springfield and Radnor are better than they were last year."

It's still to be determined where Marple Newtown fits in, according to Gionta. But the Tigers did hold Upper Darby to 90 yards of total offense.

The Tigers are doing it with defense. **Rob Gow**, a 5-10, 180-pound senior, has filled in nicely at defensive tackle, a new position for him. **Brian Hulsey**, a 6-foot, 190-pound senior defensive end, plays opposite Penn State-bound **Pete Massaro**, and has four sacks in two games. **Sam Hafez**, a 5-10, 190-pound senior linebacker, also has been a plus.

"Those three have really stepped up and have done a very nice job for us," said Gionta, referring to Gow, Hulsey and Hafez. "They're better than they were last year. We're a defensive football team. Defense is going to win games for us."

Marple Newtown also has received a solid job by former tailback **Steve Giordano**, the senior quarterback. He completed seven of 11 passes in the Upper Darby victory.

"Steve is learning how to manage the game; he didn't even practice at quarterback last year," Gionta said. "He's learning all of the nuances of being a quarterback. He hasn't managed the clock very well, but that will come as he gets more experienced. Steve is a competitive kid. Steve's a good athlete, so it's not a surprise he's doing well."

NFL help

A little experience helps. A little NFL experience helps even more. Garnet Valley, the defending District 1 Class AAA champions, is playing with a lot of confidence, getting off to a 2-0 start, while outscoring opponents 69-3.

Part of that confidence derives from offensive-line coaches with NFL experience, like **Patt Evans**, a Strath Haven grad who played for the Dallas Cowboys, and **Joe Valerio**, a Ridley grad who played with the Kansas City Chiefs and caught three touchdown passes from Hall of Famer **Joe Montana**.

"What Patt and Joe add is instant credibility and they do a great job seeing the game and communicating what they see to the kids," Jaguars coach **Mike Ricci** said. "They're very good teachers. They've enabled the kids to acquire a quiet confidence about themselves."

The offensive front of the Jags, who host Chichester at 7 p.m. Friday, features tackles **Tim Putman** and **Alex Portale**, guards **Alex Diggory** and **Jon Deardorff** (who has received an offer from Army), center **Mike Fesile** and tight end **John Travia**. Putman and Fesile are juniors, and the other four are seniors. Junior **Connor Price** and senior **Jordan Annunziato** have rotated in at guard and tackle.

"They're all hard-working and selfless, but they're also a cohesive, mobile group, they can move and that's important to what we're doing," Ricci said. "These guys have been together for 2 years, and it helps with a two-platoon system, because they get their reps in on the offensive line."

Margetich tradition

Brian Margetich is following a tradition at Interboro, as captain of the Bucs. He is following his brother **Billy**, who was once an Interboro captain and is now a tight end and captain at Lycoming. Brian, a 6-1, 290-pound senior defensive tackle/offensive tackle, bench presses more than 400 pounds and is getting some looks from Division II schools.

Margetich opened the floodgates for a potent ground game as the Bucs chewed up 150 yards rushing in their 28-14 victory over Monsignor Bonner last Friday. Margetich is making the move from center to tackle this season.

"Brian did it willingly," said Bucs coach **Steve Lennox**, whose team visits West Chester East at 7:15 p.m. Friday. "That says something about Brian as the captain of the team. The switch is different, but we like what Brian has done for us this year. I also need to stress that he's a good kid. What is neat is that Billy would come over and work out with the kids. They have a great relationship."

The top five teams in the DelVal and Central leagues and independents:

1. Ridley (1-0)
2. Garnet Valley (2-0)
3. Marple Newtown (2-0)
4. Strath Haven (1-1)
5. Glen Mills (1-1)

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