

Learning Lessons From Last Fall's Hard Knocks, PHS Football Sees Improvement on the Horizon

While guiding the Princeton High football team to a 0-10 record last fall in his debut season as head coach was painful, Joe Gargione believes he will be better for the experience.

"I have not stopped working since the day after last season, you never want to repeat something like that," said Gargione.

"I have been doing a lot more planning. I am keeping in touch with my former college coach and bouncing questions off of him."

Gargione's work ethic has been rubbing off on his players. "This is the first full year I have had since I have been head coach where I had the winter, spring, and then into

"Last year, we had a lot of sophomores and juniors on the field, now they will be juniors and seniors," added Gargione. "They won't have that deer in the headlights look, the game will be slower for them."

Gargione believes that senior quarterback Alex Mitko will display plenty of game this fall for PHS.

"Alex is not your stereotypical quarterback; he is a little short but he has a strong arm and runs well," said Gargione of the 5'10, 160-pound signal-caller who passed for 829 yards and four touchdowns last fall. "He can do a lot of different things; he is the leader of the offense."

The strength of the PHS offense could turn out to be its battle-tested offensive

line. "We have Jeff Barsamian, Fernando Silva, Jack Perico, Andrew Wenster, and Nick Gillette all back," said Gargione. "It definitely helps to have continuity there."

The PHS also features some talented receivers in seniors Eric Shorter (27 receptions for 535 yards in 2010) and Kevin White.

"We will be looking to get Eric the ball, but we also want to spread it out," said Gargione, who will also be using senior Timmy Miranda at receiver and sophomore Cal O'Meara at tight end. "Kevin White is the other starting receiver."

The ground attack will be led junior Ben Smallzman at tailback and junior Grant Schaefer at fullback with elusive junior Javon Pannell in the mix. Junior Zack DiGregorio is the back-up quarterback while versatile senior Collin Bell will get snaps at running back and quarterback.

The strength of the PHS offense could turn out to be its battle-tested offensive

"Based on what I have seen, we will be an improved team," asserted Gargione. "In the first scrimmage against Nutley and Edison, we did OK," said Gargione. "In the second scrimmage against Hightstown, we performed much better."

In Gargione's view, improving performance in 2011 will come down to basics. "We need to execute well," said Gargione.

"We need to stick together and be upbeat for all four quarters. Last year, we would start strong in the first quarter and then things would go wrong in the second quarter and we would get down."

Gargione is hoping that things start off well this fall when his squad travels to Northern Burlington this Friday evening.

"The kids are really excited," said Gargione. "It is a good way to start the season; it is a game we think we can win."

**BACK-TO-SCHOOL
1/2 PRICE SALE
LOW MATTRESS PRICES! FREE DELIVERY!**

In preseason action, the Little Tigers have been showing the fruits of their labor.



—Bill Alden