

WEEK TWO GAMES

**PANTHERS KICK OFF SEASON WITH A SENSE OF 'TUDE AND PURPOSE**

For all those who think the Paschal football program is forever destined to bridesmaid status, who believe the Panthers will yet again be labeled homecoming patsies for every opponent on the schedule, prepare yourself for a shock.

Hey, these ain't your grandpa's Panthers.

Think of it this way: President John F. Kennedy meets Twisted Sister.

"Let the word go forth from this time and place, to friend and foe alike, that the torch has been passed to a new generation of Americans -- born in this century, tempered by war, disciplined by a hard and bitter peace. And let friend and foe alike know this: We're not gonna take it, no, we ain't gonna take it, oh we're not gonna take it anymore."

It is an inarguable fact that the program has been down in recent years. But as JFK once said, "Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future." For Panther Nation, the future is now. For all those who said, "Wait 'til next year," this is next year. It's go time, baby, and the Panthers are good to go.

The varsity is anchored by seniors such as Robert Gallagher, Taylor Burton, Gus Narez, Lee Davis, Zach Waters, Dion Briley and Gerrick Flores. Don't forget about Ryan Barnes, Ben Hernandez, Chris Knowles and Marcos Guiljado. The team is further leavened with junior standouts such as John Withers, Matt Parker, Alec Baker, William Hix, Kieffer Clegg, Ryan Wilkerson and Michael Schroeder, not to mention Sasha Lovett, whose pre-season hand injury temporarily has him on the shelf.

True, the varsity squad is young, including a host of talented sophomores from last year's successful freshmen team. Sophomores include Brian Gallagher, Tyler Nurdin, Nick Escamilla, Emmanuel Smith, Alex Koger, Angel Argueta, Luis Aguero, Alex, Deeds, Travoy McCarver and Kirby Campbell. What they lack in experience they make up with zeal, and they are united with the upperclassmen in their dedication to achieving a new mission: Turning the Paschal program around.

Led by first-year Head Coach Matt Cook, the 2007 Paschal Panthers will look to exorcize the demons of seasons past even as they build a new culture of success, earning a heightened sense of respect in the difficult District 4-5A along the way.

Oh you're so condescending

Your gall is never ending

We don't want nothing', not a thing from you

Your life is trite and jaded

Boring and confiscated

If that's your best, your best won't do [because]...

...We're not gonna take it anymore

These Panthers are proud and won't come skulking back to the school with their tails between their legs. These Panthers have a sense of purpose.

While only the Psychic Friends Network would wager a guess on the team's final 2007 record, one thing is clear: The Panthers will give each team on the schedule something to think about.

It's oft' said that what is past is prologue. Such sentiments can offer little succor for Panther Nation, conjuring up images of another win-starved season. But remember this: Phoenix, the great bird of myth, consumed itself in flames every 500 years and arose anew. Or as Kennedy put it, "Those who dare to fail miserably can achieve greatly."

Panther fans, the time for achieving greatly is at hand, because these Panthers ain't gonna take it anymore.

Panthers Show Determination in the Face of Adversity v. Dallas Molina

Cynical minded and jaded observers might be tempted to look at the results of the Panther's season-opener against Dallas Molina and scoff, "Different chef, same menu." And that would so miss the point as to be ludicrous.

True, the Panthers came up on the short-end of the scoreboard. But turn around a couple of stalled offensive drives and throw out a couple of big plays against the defense, and Paschal emerges victorious.

Of course, there are no mulligans in life or in football. Some promising drives did stall, and the defense did give up some big plays. But the Panthers never gave up, playing hard to the final whistle. Indeed, QB Brian Gallagher played most of the game on what was later diagnosed as a broken foot. RB Emmanuel Smith was horse-collared after a fine run, doing damage to his Achilles tendon. Both finished the game, though they're expected to be out for this week's contest versus Arlington Heights.

Paschal enjoyed a number of highlight reel moments. TE Michael Schroeder made a fine catch of a Gallagher pass to set up an Alex Koger field goal. Smith broke off some nice runs before hurting his Achilles. The defense forced a number of three and outs. The punt team forced and recovered a fumble. Robert Gallagher scampered for a 14-yard touchdown from the quarterback position.

It was a fine enough effort that some fans couldn't help but wonder how the team would have fared had it not been decimated by injuries. QB Sasha Lovett's pre-season hand injury, QB Tyler Nurdin's concussion, and now Gallagher's injury all had a bearing on the outcome, not to mention the drop in depth at running back because of a concussion to Lee Davis.

More importantly, it was an effort that gained the respect of Molina players, who instead of the normal post-game smack talk said things like, "Hang in there, guys. It'll come."

The Panthers made a statement against Molina, Not perhaps the statement they wanted, a win, but a statement that the program is on an upward trajectory. It's hackneyed but true: A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. The 2007 Panthers took more than a single step against Molina, and look to make even greater strides in Friday night's homecoming contest against Arlington Heights. The game will be played at Farrington Field at 7:30 p.m.

JV PANTHERS PULL OUT LAST-MINUTE VICTORY AGAINST MOLINA

It's often said that many Americans will never embrace soccer because there isn't enough scoring.

And yet, many Americans will embrace a taut defensive struggle in football, as evidenced by the rollicking crowd that witnessed the JV Panthers pull out a last-minute win against Molina Sept. 5.

The Panther defense was awesome, keeping Molina in check throughout the evening. But as the game clock wound down, it appeared the game would end in a 0-0 draw.

But then the offense started clicking. TE Rochelle Johnson made a nice catch and run, and the Panthers were in business. With less than a minute to play, QB Kevin Deal showed he's the real deal when he found daylight and pay dirt to give the Panthers the lead and the victory.

Next up for the JV Panthers is Arlington Heights. The rivals will clash at 5:30 p.m. Sept. 13 at Paschal.

FRESHMEN DOMINATE MOLINA IN IMPRESSIVE SEASON-OPENING VICTORY

The freshmen Panthers, like the class before it, hit the field clicking on all cylinders for its season opener Sept. 5, dominating Molina in all phases of the game.

Whether it was a choking defense or a full-throttle offense, the freshmen demonstrated they will be tough to stop in '07.

RBs Conner Curtis and Aaron Stafford had big games, as did QBs Blake Barrow and Marshall Norment and WR Tyler Anderson. By night's end, the defense had stuffed Molina while the offense had amassed in excess of 40 points. Still, the freshmen realize it's a long season, and a first-game blowout is merely the first step in the process of becoming a true juggernaut. The team's second step comes Sept. 13, when the A and B squads face off against Arlington Heights at Heights beginning at 5:30.

Questions or comments? email PHSFootballBooster@msn.com.

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If you have not already done so, please consider joining the PHS Football Booster Club. Please encourage others in the Panther family to join. Just complete the attached application.

Special thanks to Geoff Campbell for his insightful game day analysis.