



WEEK ZERO PREVIEW

*Panthers Set to Open Season against Arlington Sam Houston Friday Night*

And so it's come to this.

On Friday night, the Paschal Panthers football team heads for Wilemon Field to take on the Arlington Sam Houston Texans in a matchup between teams that went winless in 2007.

The Panthers have shed the disappointments and heartaches of the past, the near victories in 2007, the what-might-have-beens, the already happened. The players are ready to embrace a new future of high hopes, ready to enter the Promised Land, ready, in the words of Henry David Thoreau, to "go confidently in the direction of [their] dreams" and to "live the life [they've] imagined."

The past need not be prologue. Patriot Patrick Henry perhaps said it best: "I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past."

There's nothing the Panthers can do about 2007 or 2006 -- or 2005, for that matter. All they can do is take care of 2008, and the journey begins Friday.

Of course, the Texans enter the contest battling their own demons of seasons past. The Texans are a pass-happy, athletic and hungry team looking for redemption. Though led by a sophomore quarterback, the Texans have speed, skill and desire.

So do the Panthers, who also have something else, a je ne sais quoi, that special something.

Maybe it's the chip they're carrying on their shoulders, a desire to show that, while they may lack a multi-million dollar workout facility or the kinds of numbers rolled out by other 5-A schools, hard work still matters and desire accounts for something. Maybe they're tired of the snickers and eye-rolling. Maybe they're tired of having schools schedule them for homecoming. They've reached the point where, like Twisted Sister, they're just "not gonna take it anymore." So to condescending, gall-filled outsiders, the Panthers say simply, "Just don't pick our destiny 'cause you don't know us, you don't belong.... We're not gonna take it anymore."

The Panther offensive attack will be led by QB Brian Gallagher, a game-savvy junior with moxie to burn. Backing him up will be junior RB Emmanuel Smith, a second-team all-district selection in 2007, and hard-charging senior RB William Hix. Gallagher will have a number of aerial targets as the team boasts a talented receiver corps that includes, among others, junior Travoy McCarver, senior Michael Schroeder and junior Rochell Johnson.

On the defensive side of the ball, the Black Shirts will be anchored by seniors Alec Baker, Matt Blum and Keafer Clegg. Joining them will be junior DE Doug Parkhurst, who has impressed throughout camp, sophomore SS Aaron Stafford, junior LB Kevin Deal and junior FS Kirby Campbell.

The Panthers enter the season knowing that, their wildest dreams notwithstanding, they face an uphill climb. No team will take them lightly. No team will want to lose to them.

And yet.... The Panthers have put in the hard work necessary for a highly successful 2008 campaign. Led by Head Coach Matt Cook, the Panthers have learned the habits of excellence. And, as Aristotle once said, "We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act but a habit." The Panthers have the habit of excellence, and that will show on the field.

The Panthers also have the power of their dreams. "The future," Eleanor Roosevelt said, belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." The Panthers believe. And the future is now.

Panther Nation can watch as the Panthers embrace the future and their destiny at 7:30 p.m. Friday at Wilemon Field, just east of the Sam Houston High School campus.

*What JV Panthers Lack in Numbers They Make Up with Heart*

At least it should be easy to pick out your favorite player.

The 2008 JV Panthers may have a thin roster, but they've got everything needed for success. They've got talent, they've got determination and they've got that little thing called heart.

And following the season, they'll have accumulated a wealth of experience that will pay dividends in the 2009 campaign. Sure, they'll be bruised and tired. They may well be exhausted. But they will have shared an experience that will indelibly brand them for life. "We have shared the incommunicable experience of war," Oliver Wendell Holmes said of the Civil War. "We felt, we still feel, the passion of life to its top. In our youths, our hearts were touched by fire."

The JV squad will get its first touch of fire Thursday night when the team squares off against the Arlington Sam Houston Texans in front of what team members hope will be a sizeable and boisterous home crowd at Paschal's Bill Allen Field. Kickoff is set for 6 p.m.

Frosh Panthers Excite Coaching Staff and Fuel High Expectations

They're big. They're talented. And there are a lot of them.

The 2008 freshmen Panthers have a lot going for them, and coaches have great expectations for the group as the season begins Thursday against the Arlington Sam Houston Texans.

Split into two squads, purple and white, the freshmen figure to get plenty of playing time and valuable experience in their first taste of 5-A competition. And with any good fortune, the group will stay together in subsequent seasons to help further fuel the resurgence of Panther football already underway.

Kickoff for the freshmen white game is 6 p.m. at Wilemon Field, just east of the Sam Houston High School campus. Kickoff for the freshmen purple game is scheduled for 8 p.m. at Wilemon.

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