

Sports

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Our Athletes

Third time's the charm Knights remain focused on the ultimate goal

By JOHN GORALSKI
SPORTS WRITER

Coach Bill Mella leaned back in his chair, staring at his answering machine's blinking lights. Outside his door a silence had fallen across the weight room. The off-season preparation has moved outdoors. For the past nine months, Mella has been haunted by the same nagging questions. Is this the year?

Football

Every interview has focused on Southington's quest for a title. Every fan has been circling the date at the end of the season. Every opponent has been circling

the Blue Knight contest on their schedule. In a few days these questions will be answered.

"There's no looking past anybody on our schedule," said the coach as he gazed at his team's calendar. "Let's see if we can do it. Maybe people want to follow us to see if we fail, but I think that the third time's the charm."

Few teams have shared Southington High School's recent success over the past two seasons. The Blue Knights have cruised unblemished through the regular season schedule, earned a top seed in the postseason, and advanced to the championship game. The dreams didn't end with the loss. Each team has shouldered the burden in the off-season, and each has returned with greater resolve.

"This team is not going to be any-

thing like last year's team, just like last year's team wasn't really a lot like the team before that," said the coach. "They're going to have a different personality and a different make-up, but the goal remains the same."

The bull's-eye on their back has been painted with sharper colors. The Blue Knights have graduated 27 players and 18 starters. They boast a new offensive line with an array of unknown receivers and a defense with few returning stars. They'll face their toughest schedule with non-conference opponents like Bloomfield and Cheshire. They'll face CCC North battles with well-coached teams like New Britain and Glastonbury along with the excitement of new coaches at Simsbury and Manchester.

"When you look at the teams on that schedule, every single one of them can be a world beater. There are no softies," said Mella. "It's definitely one game at a time."

Mella will focus on defense as the Knights look to dominate both sides of the ball. "We're still going to do what we've been doing, but we've added a few wrinkles because of our personnel," he said. "I think that you're going to see the same style and philosophy of defense, but the volume is definitely going to be turned up."

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2007 Preview

Football



Coach: Bill Mella
Last season: 10-0-0, CCC North champions
Postseason: Earned the top seed in the Class LL tournament. Beat Shelton, 36-9, in the first round, but lost to Greenwich, 28-7, in the championship.

Key returning players (captains*): Chase Mayoussier*, PJ Small*, Elliott Turek*, Matt Danko*, Savino Melluzzo, Daniel Balch, Matt Freer, Brett Kucharczyk, Kyle Bruetsch, Anthony DePaolo, Israel Burgos, David Badgley, Tyler Lentini, Domie Irizarry, Austin Adaskaveg, Domenic Perone, Tom Testa, Bryan Trombley, Marc Babineau, Geraldo Neziraj, Ryan O'Connell, Kyle Gaedeke.

Key losses: Brian Makles, Pat Kaminski, Brian Patenaude, Joe Izzo, Gary Coles, Nick Florian, Adam Dubois, Paul Clements, Tyler McLellan, Tim Schumacher, Josh Gemmill, Jim Rossignol, Paul Florio, Rod Szwelicki, Aaron Pelletier, Chris Vose, Dan Howley, Scott Paxton, Josh Sazinski, Nick Lee, Kyle Seddon, Jon Myers, Dan Proffitt, Spencer Charette, John Sazinski, Paul Babineau, Jerry Boudreau.

Outlook: For the first time in school history the Knights hope to advanced to their third straight Class LL championship game. Coach Bill Mella hopes that this season Southington will come away with the victory.

"There's no looking past anybody on our schedule," he said. "Let's see if we can do it. Maybe people want to follow us to see if we fail, but I think that the third time's the charm."

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