Malvern Prep blanks Fords

* cBy Terry Toohey

* Oct 23, 2008

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HAVERFORD - Maybe now, after posting its third shutout of the season and second in three weeks, the Malvern Prep defense will receive the credit it so richly deserves. No disrespect to the offensive unit, but the defense is pretty good. You will get no argument from Haverford School coach Mike Murphy or quarterback Dan Judge. It was supposed to be a showdown between the top two teams in the Inter-Ac League. It turned into a lopsided affair. Malvern cruised past the Fords, 43-0, Friday afternoon.

No holes

"That's a great football team," Murphy said. "It's a team without holes."

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The Fords (5-2 overall, 1-1 Inter-Ac) entered the game with the third-best scoring offense in Delaware County (29.6 points per game). Not only was the Haverford School shut out for the first time this season, but the Fords finished with a mere 99 yards in total offense.

"They're stifling," Judge said of the Malvern defense. "We couldn't do anything against them. They had an excellent game plan and executed it well."

That game plan was simple: Put a lot of heat on the Fords' Richmond-bound quarterback. Malvern (6-0, 2-0) sacked Judge six times and held him to 55 yards on seven-of-18 passing.

The running game was not much better. Haverford School managed 41 yards on 29 attempts.

"Our whole focus was to go after Judge," Malvern line-backer Robert McCabe said. "We figured if we could stop him, we would stop their team. We got a really good push from the defensive line and we did some things in our blitz package that we haven't shown before."

McCabe had one of the six sacks. Senior defensive end Charles Mooney dropped Judge twice.

"I knew they were going to bring pressure," Judge said. "And I thought our offensive line overall did a good job. It's just that their defense just kept coming and coming. They didn't let up. "That was the idea.

Getting noticed

"I think our defense is finally starting to get noticed," senior linebacker and Havertown native Joe Price III said. "In the beginning of the year, our offense was our strength. We relied on our offense a lot. Now, the defense is starting to step up. We're playing well and starting to make a name for ourselves."

The Malvern offense wasn't too shabby, either. Senior running back Neil Willis amassed 153 all-purpose yards and scored three times, twice on the ground. He carried the ball 10 times for 70 yards and caught three passes for 83 yards. Senior running back James Connelly added 92 yards on the ground and tallied the first touchdown. Quarterback William Conners connected on six of 10 passes for 139 yards and two scores. "I don't feel that we played particularly well in the first half and you can't do that against a team like that," Murphy said. "They capitalized on every mistake we made."

The Friars took advantage of a short punt to go up, 8-0, on Connelly's three-yard touch-down run. Willis broke several tackles and raced 61 yards with a Conners pass for his first score.

Even though the Haverford School coaches were screaming from the sideline to watch out for it, Price caught a skinny post for a touchdown and a 23-0 Malvern lead at the break.

Malvern's defense took care of the rest. The Friars limited the Fords to 43 yards and three first downs in the second half.

"We talked all about how we probably had to play the perfect game or a near perfect game against this football team to have a chance to win and we didn't do it," Murphy said.