

Sports

FOOTBALL

Immaculate Conception enjoys winning season



Immaculate Conception quarterback Chase Anderson rolling out versus Morris Catholic. GENE NANN/SPECIAL TO MONTCLAIR TIMES



Sideline Chatter
Steve Tober
Guest columnist

Regardless of what had ensued recently in Denville as Immaculate Conception was dominated by Morris Catholic in a 35-0, season-ending loss in a Non-Public Group 2 first-round playoff contest Nov. 16, the sport of football itself appears to be on steady terrain moving forward for the Montclair Catholic school. That makes one of its most ardent supporters from the past half-century quite pleased indeed.

At a school that had dropped football for five years after a player was paralyzed on Codey Field in 1963, the sport has experienced a revival of sorts thanks to the continued moral support and long-standing efforts of people such as Father Francis Burla. He, along with school administrators, dedicated alumni, and area business leaders, has kept the gridiron sport alive and moving forward for what is hoped to be many years to come.

Add in the fact that IC itself came close to closing for good in the summer

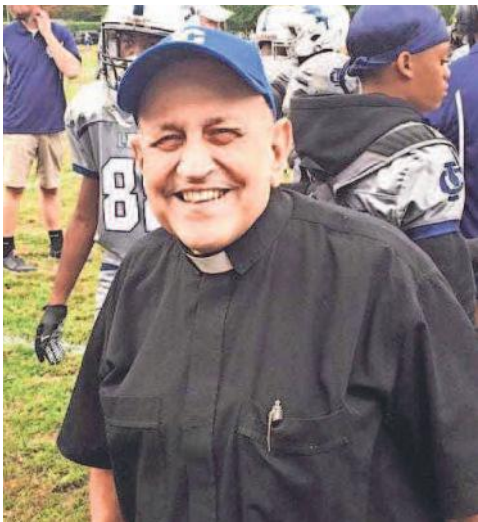
of 2014 before alumni and others rose to the occasion to keep the doors open, and you have plenty of reason to take pride in a 6-3 season.

The 2019 campaign was highlighted by the return of an alum in John Finnegan, who was part of the team in 1969 when football was brought back after its five-year hiatus, and now is in his second tour of duty as coach at his high school alma mater. He helped to maintain the lifeblood of the sport some 50 years after the '69 team he was a part of played just three varsity games as the sport was slowly being revived.

And, although the 83-year-old Father Burla has since left the parish, retiring to The Monsignor Michael E. Kelly House alongside St. Aloysius Church in Caldwell, his heart and mind still remain fully connected to IC football.

"I love Immaculate football," said Father Burla. "I enjoy being around the team for each game, it's been great to have 'Finn' back on the sidelines, and I look forward to getting together with all the coaches and other alumni for dinner as often as we are able to."

"Immaculate football is in good hands and the school itself is doing well, which is the most important thing of all!"



Father Francis Burla on sideline with Immaculate Conception football team.
STEVE TOBER/SPECIAL TO MONTCLAIR TIMES

Ryan Horan, the school's young athletic director who was football coach last fall, was thrilled to learn this past spring that Finnegan would be coming back to the Montclair parochial school he graduated from in 1973. He had guided IC to 100 victories and two Non-Public playoff state championships (1994 and '98) during his 17 years at the helm

(1986-2002) before becoming the coach and a teacher at nearby Seton Hall Prep.

"Having coach 'Finn' come back to Immaculate has been simply tremendous for all of us," said Horan, a Pope John graduate who has found a new Catholic school home base. "When (IC President) Mike Malkinski reached out to him last spring about the possibility of returning when I was pursuing my master's degree, I thought it was a fantastic idea and the program has benefited greatly!"

The Lions put together a solid season, highlighted by victories such as a 36-34 triumph over Hudson Catholic. And there were narrow regular-season defeats to Morris Catholic (21-14) and Sussex Tech, both of which were winnable games.

Meanwhile, Father Burla simply continues to smile and greet all his friends - including the old and relatively new ones - all of whom maintain a genuine dedication to the Immaculate Conception tradition as a school and the football program.

And if not for the persistence of a certain, young athletic director who arrived in 1966 from the Darlington Seminary in

See TOBER, Page 2B

MSU coach to speak about various youth sports issues

Darren Cooper NorthJersey.com
USA TODAY NETWORK - NEW JERSEY

Jack Smithlin thinks the parents of athletes don't know what they don't even know.

So he wants to help.

"You need to understand that you are the parent of a growing athlete and you need to know that there is a right way and a wrong way to bring children up in athletics," Smithlin said last week. "Don't push them. Let them choose their path."

The long-time Fair Lawn coach, and member of the Fair Lawn Athletics Hall of Fame, has begun a speaking tour on Sports Parenting and Recruiting Issues

where he discusses all the pertinent topics for parents raising a young athlete.

Smithlin, currently an assistant softball coach at Montclair State, will be speaking at the Fair Lawn Community Center, Wednesday, Dec. 4 at 7 p.m.

Admission is \$20. Teens and seniors are \$10.

Joining Smithlin will be noted broadcaster and author Rick Wolff from WFAN.

Wolff is an expert on sports psychology for young athletes.

Among the topics to be discussed are the importance (or not) of club sports, the right age to specialize in one sport and the college recruiting process.

The Fair Lawn Sunrise Rotary is sponsoring the event and all proceeds are being donated.

Darren Cooper is a high school sports columnist for NorthJersey.com. For full access to live scores, breaking news and analysis from our Varsity Aces team, subscribe today. To get breaking news directly to your inbox, sign up for our newsletter and download our app.

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Pictured right, former Fair Lawn HS coach Jack Smithlin is on a speaking tour discussing youth sports issues.
SPECIAL TO NORTHJERSEY.COM

FAIR LAWN SUNRISE ROTARY
Presents
Sports Parenting & Recruiting Issues
featuring
Fair Lawn Hall of Fame coach and current
Montclair State University softball coach
Jack Smithlin

TOPICS:
★ What's the right age to specialize?
★ Is playing a club/travel team essential to one's success?
★ The unknown secrets to college recruiting.

Jack recently hosted WBGG 1240 Sport Radio, discussing current sports parenting issues. Jack has appeared several times as a guest on WFAN's Sports Edge Program hosted by his mentor, Rick Wolff, a nationally recognized expert in the field of Sports Psychology and Sports Parenting.

What: Wednesday, December 4, 2019 at 7:00pm
Where: The Fair Lawn Community Center
16-18 20th Street, Fair Lawn, NJ
Admission: Adults: \$20, Teens and Seniors: \$10
For Tickets: Contact Jack Smithlin at 201-697-7557. Tickets may also be purchased at the door.

Rick Wolff

"We were happy to be playing football at Immaculate and were thankful the game was back," said Finn. "The sport has gone on to have quite a tradition at the school with much success, and people like Father Burla and Bebe Lennon helped make that happen."

The Crusaders utilized an effective passing attack versus the Lions as their 6-foot-3, 220-pound tight end Matt Luttenberger hauled in a pair of TD passes from Chaplin and a first-quarter Chaplin to Thomas Stark TD toss helped the Denville-based parochial build an early 14-0 lead which they later built on with three more scores.

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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9. For the answer, turn to the Classified Section.

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CROSSWORD by David Levinson Wilk

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ACROSS

- Faux ____
- Translation of "je suis" or "yo soy"
- Some plum tomatoes
- Gasteyer formerly of "Saturday Night Live"
- ____ buco
- Rake over the coals
- Carefree, comfortable existence
- Masthead title
- In the manner of
- Largest country in Africa since the breakup of Sudan in 2011
- "La Dolce Vita" director
- Alpo alternative
- Eye
- To's partner
- Ambulance crew, for short
- Like Sartre's "No Exit"
- Focuses for podiatrists
- ____ deferens
- Well-chosen
- Corn on the ____
- German chocolate brand
- Functions
- 2022's Super Bowl
- Tearjerkers?
- Allude (to)
- Tried to catch one's breath
- What to flash when you need a lift?
- ____ Miss

DOWN

- Buddy
- Singer DiFranco
- Call at home
- Asimov or Newton
- ____-backwards
- Cartoon seller of Duff Beer
- Antares and Betelgeuse, for two
- East, in España
- Mother: Prefix
- To you, in Toulouse
- Hospital fluids
- "The Book ____" (2010 Denzel Washington film)
- Prop for Quasimodo
- Sticks in the water?
- Audrey Hepburn or Hoptimus Prime
- Pulitzer-winning cartoonist Jules
- ____ go on?"

- Overplay a part
- Chooses
- Attorney's charges
- Periods just following sunset
- Policy statement
- Roman ____
- Infamous 2017 mis-tweet from @realDonaldTrump
- "Fun, Fun, Fun" car in a 1960s song
- WNBA part: Abbr.
- More densely foggy
- Spanish "a"
- Pigs out (on)
- One with second thoughts
- "Another card, please"
- They may be Dutch or French
- "The Nutcracker" dip
- Soaks (up)
- Massage target
- "Don't give up!"
- It might cause a draft
- Hoarder's possible condition, briefly
- Long of "Soul Food"
- ____ Joaquin Valley

Answers to this week's Crossword can be found in the Classified Section.

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