

Coach Chris Stevens '83

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CHSFL Injured Player Award – Sean Carley

Starting for the Varsity Basketball team in his sophomore year, I had to convince this three-season athlete and two-time Xavier Athlete of the Year Award winner to stick it out and continue to play football instead of focusing on just one sport. He came out and played a big role in our 2008 AA-A Division Championship run as our strong side Tight End and we were both glad that he decided to continue to play football. At the end of his junior year, he was also named to the under-19 U.S. Eagle Rugby team and he began to realize his potential as a multi-sport athlete. For the first time, in the off-season he really began to train hard to make his senior year his best year yet. He was named as one of our five Varsity Football team captains and was set to start both ways for us at Defensive End and Tight End. Unfortunately, in our first game this season against Xaverian, he suffered a season ending knee injury. This injury was tragic on multiple levels, but he endured it with poise and grace and in the end we all realized as good of an athlete as he was and as much as we missed him on the playing field, we really missed him most in the huddle because he is just a great guy to be around. The CHSFL awarded Sean Carley with the John Bromm Injured Player Award as the most valuable player to be lost to injury in the AA-A Division.

Most Improved Player - Micheal Potter

When I first saw this guy on film playing in his freshman year, I knew that he would be a player for us some day on the varsity level. As a lineman, he had great feet and he was athletic enough to even block little people down field. Last year, with as deep in talent as we were, he did not get a chance to start as a junior. Then in the off-season between junior and senior year, he got very serious about fitness dropped about 50 pounds while maintaining most of his strength and got even more athletic. All the while, both the rugby coaches and I were worried that he was “fitnessing” himself out of his niche as an athletic “big” man, but we were wrong. As a matter of fact, as it turned out we were lucky he got himself into such good shape because we eventually needed him to start both ways, usually against much bigger guys, but he had a great motor and really came up big for us this season. Our Most Improved Player who started at both Defensive End and Pulling Tackle is Mike Potter.

Best Offensive Lineman - Patrick Nilsen (Captain & CHSFL ALL LEAGUE)

I have to admit I have underestimated this kid for at least two years, but over the course of this season, I have really grown to love this boy and realize how hard it will be to try to replace him next year. Last year, he started a number of games for us a linebacker, but I still did not give him enough credit. In the off-season, he went to town in the weight room and came back, the strongest kid I have ever coached achieving a 335-pound bench press. As the year started, we were very young and he also got pressed into starting on both offense and defense. Early in the year while our defensive line was struggling to grow up this poor linebacker would literally get double and triple teamed and still come up with at least a piece of the tackle, he was just a man out there. Also early in the

season we were blocking very conservatively on the offensive line, but when we finally loosened up and got this kid out in front of our backs from the backside guard position our offense really started moving. Our strongest player and Best Offensive Lineman is Patrick Nilsen.

Best Defensive Lineman - Patrick Coleman (Captain)

This next player was one of the guys who helped to keep me sane during that season. I love your boys, but you know your sons, some times they can make you pull the hair right out of your head. SEE! Even though he caught some ribbing about it, this guy was a mature, dedicated and serious presence, who I would often turn to when I thought that everyone around me needed to be medicated. His sympathetic knowing smile would reassure me that he felt my pain and that I wasn't going crazy. Thin and young on the Defensive Line as well were, we had lost two starters to injury by game two so yet another guy was pressed into two way service. Along with my favorite fireplug Luna Mishoe, this guy really helped to firm up the middle of our defense. His contribution was especially apparent when we held the "Best Football Player in Bronx/Manhattan," Mount St. Michael's 6'2" 240-pound FB Gary Acquah to 60 yards them in the AA playoffs. Yet, my favorite story about this guy took place a week later when we defeated defending AA-A Division Champ Archbishop Stepinac in the CHSFL Consolation Game. Down 6-0 with only minutes left to play, this guy suffered a serious sprained ankle and things were looking bleak as we slogged around in the mud only able to move the ball only between the 30s. Realizing the situation, he refused to be taken out and told the trainer to tape the ankle around the outside of his shoe. His refusal to give up, lit a fire under every guy on the team that day and I credit him with the energy that put us over the top as we went on to score the winning touchdown on the very next drive. Our Best Defensive Lineman is Patrick Coleman.

Coaches Award Defense - Domenic DeFalco (CHSFL ALL LEAGUE)

Domenic DeFalco was listed on our JV Roster in 2007 as 5'3" 110 pounds and he was listed on our varsity roster last year as 5'6" 125 pounds. Yet, watching him play Football and Rugby, it was obvious that this kid played much bigger than his height and weight on the roster would lead you to believe that he could. Yet, we still had our concerns about what type of impact that he would have on the varsity level. Not really quick enough to overcome his size disadvantage to play cornerback, he patiently waited for Zolen Rodriguez to graduate so that he might get a chance to start at Free Safety. Yet, even when this year started even though we were all rooting for him, he was coming off of an injury and we were still uncertain. Boy, I am happy to say that he proved our concerns to be utterly wrong. A 90+ student in the classroom, having a chip on his shoulder from dealing with all of the you're too small crap all of his life, this guy overcame any limitations that he might have had by being a student of the game. He really knew how to play the Free Safety position and he used his smarts and his savvy to be the quarterback of our secondary not only knowing his position, but knowing everything that was going on around him. Yet, no amount of savvy in the world can help you when a 240-pound fullback breaks into the 3rd level, then it is all moxie and boy does this kid got moxie he finishes every tackle. This year our Free Safety was listed as 5'8" 160 pounds and as I stood next to him the other day waiting for an elevator I realized that he is not a little kid

anymore. Those of you who were at our games this year saw him make the most of that 160 pounds, not only does he finish his tackles, he really brings the wood when he does. I am awarding Dom DeFalco our defensive coach's award to let him know that he could come back and play Free Safety for me every year.

Coaches Award Offense - John Wilson

Mad Jack Wilson gained 888 All-Purpose yards for us this season finishing 6th in the division in All-Purpose yardage. He rushed for 633 yards on 81 carries and led the team averaging 8 yards per carry. He scored a touchdown in seven of our 11 games. He was named CHSFL Player of the Week against Cardinal Spellman when he rushed for 208 yards on four carries scoring three TDs. He caught five balls for 137 yards during the season including a 68-yard game winning touchdown reception against St. Peter's Prep on a play that was ranked as the third best play in the Tri-State area by MSG High School Sports Weekly. He was a captain of the team and named to the CHSFL Golden 11 for his high degree of academic success. He was the fastest players on the team and he could also could bench press 300 pounds, so when he was not rushing, receiving, returning kicks or playing defense, he was actively involved in the blocking that let our tailbacks rush for over 1600 yards. He was the fourth leading scorer in the division with 56 points scored. Jack Wilson finishes his varsity carrier with 2228 yards gained and 20 TDs scored Unfortunately, with all these amazing statistics, he seems to feel that because he did not match some of his numbers from last year, that this was not a great year for him. I am awarding him our offensive coaches award to let him know that I do not agree.

Best Offensive Player - Chris Mattina

Our best offensive player this year is so much more than just an offensive player. Honestly, he really got some serious consideration for our most valuable player award. Yet, being a junior and splitting time on offense and playing defense sparingly though impactfully, we are happy to recognize him with this award. Chris Mattina led our team in All-Purpose yards with 1022 yards. He was the 2nd leading rusher in our division with 930 yards on 131 carries for a seven yard per carry average. He was 3rd in our division in scoring with 72 points scored. He was 12 for 19 kicking extra points (63%) and he was the 3rd most accomplished kickoff kicker averaging 43.4 yards per kickoff which means over the course of 47 kickoffs he would put the ball down inside our opponent's seven yard line on average. He rushed for over 100 yards in three different games. He tied Jack Wilson also scoring a touchdown in seven of our 11 games and he was named CHSFL Player of the Week in our win over Bishop Ford. He scored all of our 14 points in our amazing win over Stepinac and he had game ending interceptions against both Stepinac and Fordham Prep. The job he did shutting down Fordham Prep's best receiver on Thanksgiving has us very excited that he is returning next year. Our Best Offensive Player is Chris Mattina.

Best Defensive Player - Sean Kelly (Captain & CHSFL ALL LEAGUE)

I guess sometimes it can be tough playing in the shadow of your brother, especially when your brother is best running back in Xavier history, but Coach McMahon assured me having coached this boy for many years in youth

football, that he was always better the year after his brother would graduate to the next age bracket because it seemed that then he was really able to make his own mark on the team as a leader. When making a junior highlight tape for this boy last Spring, I noticed that even though he was often one of the first defenders on the scene to make a play and that his physical impact definitely effected the ball carrier in our favor that he often times did not finish his tackles and we talked about not really being able to use the film as a recruiting tool because it did not portray him in the best possible light. Well, either that conversation must have made an impact on the boy or Coach McMahon is just an amazing prophet because this kid came back bench pressing over 300 lbs. eating lightning and crapping thunder. This year's captain of our defense, not only finished his tackles, he often beasted either the ball carrier or the blocker and the ball carries in the process. Although he did it all season, anyone present at our Thanksgiving game could see that the biggest difference between our loss last year while giving up 288 yards and three scores to Fordham's speedy running back Bruce Grant and our win this year while holding him to less than 100 yards and no scores was this guy's performance. Battling back from three injuries in two years, our leading tackler played each defensive play of every game and will be one of the hardest pairs of shoes for us to fill next year. Varsity Defensive Coordinator Kelly believes that he is one of the best linebackers that he has ever coached. Our Best Defensive Player is Sean Kelly.

Most Valuable Player - John Gearity

The basic advice our most valuable player's Dad gave this kid was to be happy in life and boy did he take that advice to heart. He is one loosey goosey goofy kid, there were days at practice, I thought about calling the Pope to begin the process of try to have his mother canonized because if she dealt with everyday at home with what I dealt with for a few hours on the practice field, I thought that she qualified for sainthood. Yet when he was competing on the game field, this kid was serious as a heart attack. When speaking to our team's leading scorer, Virginia new comer junior tailback Jonny Clark, about how his team back home compared to this Xavier team he said, we really have no one as athletic as John Gearity. In games likes Stepinac and Fordham Prep he had the ability to change the outcome of a game. Our most valuable player this year was a real iron man this season; he was the only back that played every snap for us on offense and defense this season. On offense, from the Fullback/Quarterback position he rushed for 519 yards on 86 carries for a 6-yard-per-carry average. He scored a touchdown for us in six different games including two scores on Thanksgiving. He threw the ball for 242 yards including a game winning touchdown pass against St. Peter's. He lead blocked for our tailbacks as they rushed for 1600+ yards. He was the leading punter in the CHSFL with a 40.4 yard average, all while he played every down on defense. On defense, he was the one guy who was big and strong enough to play the contain position yet athletic enough to drop back and play the safety position in pass coverage as well. Although other guys had better stats in various individual categories, no one on our team made as much an impact in as many different categories as he did. Our Most Valuable Player is John Gearity.