

SHERIDAN: MacNeal, Wrisley generate a buzz about Carlsbad football

By TOM SHERIDAN tsheridan@nctimes.com | Posted: Monday, August 22, 2011 10:30 pm

As part of our annual summer regimen of gathering information for the high school football preview section, we collect the opinions of coaches on the other teams in the North County Conference.

Frequently that opinion could be brief, something like "I know nothing about them." Other times, under the grant of anonymity, coaches can offer up some revealing opinions.

One local coach I talked to last week caught me a little off-guard with his take on Carlsbad.

Bob McAllister stepped down after 17 seasons with the Lancers, giving way to a new Coach Mac, Thadd MacNeal, a former Carlsbad player who coached at Lakewood in the Southern Section's Pac-5 Division. It's big-boy pad football.

But until recently I hadn't heard much buzz about the Lancers, which coincidentally serves as the mascot for both Carlsbad and Lakewood. Carlsbad plays in the Avocado West League with perennial powers Oceanside and La Costa Canyon and an El Camino team that appears to be improved.

"They're going to be good," one coach said of Carlsbad. "I don't know if it's going to be this year. That guy, he's a good coach. We went against them in passing league.

"They got us pretty good. They were a machine against us."

That coach also noted the accuracy of senior quarterback Tanner Wrisley, who is another interesting story.

Wrisley was fourth on the depth chart behind three seniors during the summer passing league season in 2010. One switched to receiver and defensive back. Another got hurt.

Wrisley's big opportunity arrived in Week 9 when he came off the bench with Carlsbad trailing Poway by 15 points late in the fourth quarter. He didn't direct a comeback victory, but he did throw two touchdown passes in the final 84 seconds to make the final score a respectable 41-39.

Wrisley started the final four games of the season and finished with some respectable numbers: 31-of-56 (.553 percent) for 467 yards, five touchdowns and three interceptions.

He has good size at 6-foot-4, and carries a 4.2 grade-point average. A couple of Ivy League schools have shown interest, including Harvard, and this summer Wrisley attended quarterback camps at Stanford, San Diego State and the University of San Diego.

"Coach Mac, I love his offense," Wrisley said, referring to MacNeal. "We go four wides a lot. It's more spread out. We were a lot different last year. We ran an unbalanced line, it was more of a grind-and-run-the-clock, hold-possession offense.

"It'll be different this year. We have shotgun sets. We're under center. We have all different kinds of formations."

New home

San Marcos football coach Robert Cendro is feeling much more comfortable as he starts his third season with the Knights.

"I've been here for, what is it, 26 months now," Cendro said. "And it's just way different for me. I feel like this is our home now. And I know people, and I know our kids and know what to expect. I know what other teams are trying to do. It's just a whole different deal."

The Knights went 4-7 the last two seasons under Cendro, who won 108 games in 15 years at Sonora in the CIF Sac-Joaquin Section before coming to North County.

Cendro was hired in the spring of 2009 and recalled having to do media interviews about his team a few months later, when he was still figuring out who's who. He harbors no such apprehensions this summer.

"Just like when I was walking out here, knowing our kids, I feel a whole lot better about that," he said.

Prep chatter

Orange Glen has added **Tom Carroll**, a former Oceanside football player and the oldest son of Pirates coach **John Carroll**, to its staff. Carroll will be coaching the Patriots' special teams. ... Valley Center's **Tommy Aguilar** is back practicing with the football team just over 10 months after suffering a broken femur at the end of an interception return against Los Alamitos.

"We're taking it slow," Valley Center coach **Rob Gilster** said. Aguilar plays wide receiver and defensive back. ... Escondido High student **Austin Barnes** won a race in the Lucas Oil Modified Series race at Toyota Speedway in Irwindale earlier this month. It was his second win on the circuit this summer.