Big Sky 2010 Preview
By Kent Schmidt

Predicted Order of Finish

1. Montana
2. Eastern Washington
3. Montana State
4. Weber State
5. Northern Arizona
6. Sacramento State
7. Northern Colorado
8. Portland State
9. Idaho State

Offensive Player of the Year: Cameron Higgins, QB, Sr., Weber State
Defensive Player of the Year: J.C. Sherritt, LB, Sr., Eastern Washington

Biggest Shoes to Fill: Marc Mariani, WR, Montana
Mariani was an All-Big Sky and All-American a year ago. He caught 80 passes for 1,479 yards and 13 touchdowns in 2009. He also was one of the top return men in the nation. Mariani averaged 15.8 yards per punt return with one touchdown in 2009. He also returned one kick for a touchdown. Mariani was one of the mainstays on a Grizzly team that advanced to the Division I national championship game each of the last two seasons. He set Grizzly records with 3,018 career receiving yards and 29 receiving touchdowns. He was selected in the seventh round of the NFL draft by the Tennessee Titans.

The Big Sky Conference in 2009 was much like it has been for the last 12 years — with the Montana Grizzlies on top. In fact, Montana not only made the postseason for the 17th straight season, it made it to its second national title game in as many years. Furthermore, Montana was the winningest team in all of Division I football in the last decade — finishing with 119 victories.

Unfortunately, the Grizzlies could not grab their third national title — losing for a second straight season to a CAA team. They lost to Villanova last year after losing to Richmond in 2008.

As are most seasons, the Big Sky was not a one-team complete runaway in 2009 despite the Grizzlies' undefeated regular season. Two other Big Sky teams also made it to the postseason (Weber State and Eastern Washington). Both lost opening-round games to William & Mary and Stephen F. Austin, respectively.

The entire Big Sky Conference is on FBS conference watch as out West there might be changes that could mean movement of schools to other leagues. But for 2010, the league will have the same nine teams it has had for the last four years.

This year's Big Sky race appears to again be headed by Montana despite losing several key members who appeared in the two title games. Weber State and Eastern Washington also could be championship material as does Montana State.

That championship game defeat wasn't the only thing **Montana** lost. Coach Bobby Hauck decided to take his luck to the FBS level in accepting the same position for FBS Nevada-Las Vegas. Taking over the reigns in Missoula will be Robin Pflugrad, a former Grizzly assistant who coached wide receivers as well as helping the offense a season ago after spending time as an assistant at Oregon, Arizona State and Washington State. He also was a Griz assistant from 1986 to 1994.

Pflugrad helped lead a prolific Montana offense last season that ranked on top in the nation in scoring (36.9 ppg), ninth in total offense (427.40) and 14th in passing (267.2 ypg). Leading the offense in 2010 will be two seniors in quarterback Andrew Selle and runningback Chase Reynolds. Selle was seventh in the nation a year ago with a 153.78 rating while throwing for 3,043 yards and 28 touchdowns. Reynolds was an All-American in 2009 and broke his own UM records last season by scoring 24 touchdowns. He scored 144 points and had 1,502 rushing yards and 22 rushing touchdowns. Reynolds ranks third in Montana history with 3,085 rushing yards.

Two experienced offensive linemen - junior guard Jon Opperud and senior center Alex Verlanic - aid the two standouts. Both were named to All-BSC teams last year. The receiver position is the only other area with starting experience as sophomore Sam Gratton and junior Jabin Sambrano saw split starts a season ago. Sambrano appears to be the top receiver for Selle after spring practice and also is the leading returning wideout (31 receptions, 512 yards, 5 TDs). Gratton added 28 receptions for 234 yards and two scores a season ago.

Like the offense, the Griz defense returns just five starters, but those starters should have no problem leading the way. Mike Breske, the Grizzlies' defensive coordinator from 2000-02, returns to that

same post this season after similar positions at Wyoming (2003-08) and NDSU a season ago. The Griz defense returns All-BSC performers senior Tyler Hobbs at tackle and senior Severin Campbell at end. The Griz secondary will be headed by junior Trumaine Johnson at corner and senior Erik Stoll at strong safety. Campbell led the team in tackles for a loss with 10.5 while Johnson led the team in interceptions (five) and pass deflections (12). Stoll is the leading tackler returning after recording 98 tackles a year ago.

The defense has a good weapon on the special teams in junior punter Sean Wren. He had a 41.2-yard average with 17 punts inside the 20 a year ago.

Eastern Washington is looking for its fifth FCS playoff appearance in seven seasons in 2010 and second under Coach Beau Baldwin. The Eagles will need to replace All-American and four-year starter Matt Nichols, who finished his career as the Big Sky's all-time leader in passing and total offense. One of the biggest offseason news items in Cheney was the changing of the natural grass turf at Woodward Field to a predominately red synthetic turf much in the same vein as former Big Sky member Boise State's blue turf. EWU, like Montana, returns just five starters on each side of the football.

The Eagle offense will not only lose Nichols, but it also loses two other All-BSC performers in tight end Nathan Overbay and tackle Chris Thomas off an extremely prolific offense — ranked fourth in the country with 462.2 ypg in total offense. EWU, however, does return an All-American in junior Taiwan Jones at runningback. He scored 19 touchdowns in 2009 and ranked second nationally in all-purpose yards per game at 195.4. He also had 1,213 rushing yards.

The replacement for Nichols appears to be FBS Southern Methodist transfer Bo Levi Mitchell, who beat out junior college transfer Greg Panelli in spring ball. The junior started all 19 of the games he played at SMU. In his career, Mitchell has completed 385-of-676 passes for 4,590 yards with 36 touchdowns and 33 interceptions. He will be under junior center Chris Powers, who is the lone returning All-BSC lineman for the Eagles.

Senior linebacker J.C. Sherritt, who led the nation in tackles in 2009 by averaging more than 14 tackles per game, returns to anchor the defense. He will be joined by twin brothers Matt and Zach Johnson at safety and linebacker, respectively. Matt finished his sophomore season with 102 tackles and six interceptions while Zach is back after a blood clot in his leg sidelined him for the entire 2009 season. As freshmen in 2008, the brothers combined for 179 tackles to rank as the top two Eagle tacklers that year. Junior tackle Renard Williams will be one of three starters returning on the defensive line. He finished his sophomore season with 16 tackles for a loss, 9.5 sacks, and 35 total tackles in being named to the All-BSC first team.

While Montana and EWU need to replace several starters, **Montana State** doesn't have this inconvenience. Coach Rob Ash's Bobcats will return 16 total starters to give hope in Bozeman for a possible playoff appearance for the first time since 2006. The Bobcats finished 5-3 in the Big Sky and 7-4 overall in 2009.

Among those returning are eight defensive starters. MSU has led the Big Sky in fewest yards allowed each of the last two seasons. In 2009, the Bobcats allowed 343.9 ypg.
This side of the ball for 2010 should again be the strength with six All-BSC returning players despite the loss of All-American end Dane Fletcher. The returning players include senior Dan Ogden and junior Jason Da'Alba at the tackle spots with junior John Laidet at end. Junior Clay Bignell (team-leading 71 tackles, 3 INTs) and sophomore Jody Owens (61 tackles, 1 INT) will secure the linebacker spots while senior and captain safety Michael Rider (team-leading 4 INTs and 71 tackles) heads the secondary. Special Teams All-BCS Tanner Ripley likely will fit in also at linebacker.

The Bobcat offense will have its strength upfront with four of five starters returning. This group will be headed by senior tackle Mike Person. The Bobcat running game took a hit with the departure of sophomore back Ricky Evans and will look to CJ Palmer (510 yards, 5 TDs), Blayde Becksted (215 yards, 2 TDs) or possibly junior college transfer Orenzo Davis to step up and become the feature back. As for the passing game, quarterback Cody Kempt (1,108 passing yards, 9 TDs, 4 INTs) returns as he spent time as the starter a year ago. One area that will not be a concern for the quarterback will be wide receiver. All-BCS wideout Everett Gilbert returns after leading the team a year ago with 46 receptions for 556 yards and six touchdowns.

The Bobcats will have a new offensive coordinator. Brian Wright has assumed the role after taking over for Jim Svoboda, who is now the head coach at DII Central Missouri. Wright previously held the same position at Youngstown State.

The Bobcat kicking game appears to be in good

hands with placekicker Jason Cunningham. The junior hit 14-of-18 field-goal attempts a year ago, including a long of 47 yards.

As do the first two BSC contenders, **Weber State** also needs to replace several key components from its 2009 playoff team. The Wildcats have made the postseason two consecutive years after not reaching the postseason previously since 1991. To make it three straight years will be a true feat for Coach Ron McBride considering all the new faces as well as the Wildcats schedule — sandwiching two FBS opponents to start and end their season in Boston College and Texas Tech.

But not all is lost as WSU's offense still has senior quarterback Cameron Higgins as its team leader. The two-year starter has eclipsed 7,798 yards with 66 touchdowns the last two seasons. His main target during that span was Tim Toone, who was drafted as the last pick in April's NFL draft by the Detroit Lions. This year, Higgins will look to seniors Joe Collins (48 receptions, 455 yards, 4 TDs) and Mike Phillips (39 receptions, 704 yards, 6 TDs) as his main targets.

The WSU running game also took a big hit with the graduation loss of Trevyn Smith. Plus, junior Bo Bolen left to go on a two-year LDS mission. Redshirt freshman Josh Booker looked good this spring after eclipsing 100 yards in the spring game, and he might break into the starting lineup. The Wildcat offensive line will be headed by All-BSC junior guard J.C. Oram.

The losses are not unique to the offense because the Wildcats also have concerns on defense. Tackle Ryan Eastman transferred to Hawai'i. Defensive lineman Caldwell Taylor opted to focus on his studies and defensive tackle Maiah Fa'atoafe was forced to quit because of health reasons. That's in addition to the eligibility exhaustion of safety Beau Hadley, end Kevin Linehan and cornerback Josh Morris — all of whom were All-Americans during their time in Ogden.

What WSU does have back are All-BCS members in junior linebacker Nick Webb (57 tackles, 4 TFL, 1 INT) , senior linebacker Taylor Sedillo (team leader in tackles last year with 100), senior safety Jordan Brown (97 tackles, team leader with 3 INTs) and junior defensive end Caldwell Taylor (39 tackles, 2.5 TFL).

Northern Arizona seems to end up somewhere near the middle of the pack of the Big Sky race as it has the last five years. This year appears to be no different. NAU tends to start well, but it has difficulty finishing the season. The Lumberjacks last year started 5-2 but lost their last four games to finish 5-6 overall. In fact, the Lumberjacks have lost their last four games in each of the last two seasons, but they look to improve on that this year with three of four at home to close out the season. NAU returns 12 starters, including seven on defense and five on offense.

Offensively, NAU ranked among national leaders in 2009. They were fifth in total and passing offense and ninth in passing efficiency. The Lumberjacks again will have the trigger man to this offense in senior quarterback Michael Herrick. He completed 66.3 percent of his passes for 3,356 yards with 22 touchdowns and just eight interceptions in his first full season as starter. He will have new targets, however, with the top three statistical performers gone from a year ago. FBS San Jose State transfer Khalil Paden, a junior, senior Daiveun Curry-Chapman and junior Austin Shanks all look to be the top targets for Herrick.

NAU also will have a new runningback with the departure of Alex Henderson, last year's top rusher. Sophomore Giovannie Dixon or perhaps incoming freshman Zach Bauman will take over the workload. In any event, the new back will have two quality linemen to open up holes in guard Kris Poindexter (senior) and center Jeff Hines (senior).

The Lumberjack defense will be headed by senior All-Conference safety Matt Estrada, who tallied a team-high 78 tackles last season. The defense in total returns eight players, who at some point in their careers received all-conference recognition. That group includes from a year ago: junior tackle Dwight Boyd (16 tackles, 1 sack, 1 TFL) and junior end Isaac Bond (team-leading 11 TFL and 8.5 sacks with 49 total tackles).

A team that seems to be on the rise is **Sacramento State**. The Hornets have had only two winning records in the last 17 seasons, but they have made strides under fourth-year coach Marshall Sperbeck. In his tenure, the Hornets made a three-win improvement from his first season in 2007 (3-8) to 2008 (6-6) and then posted a .500 mark in the Big Sky (4-4) last season while going 5-6 overall. They hope to eclipse the .500 mark for the first time since finishing 2000 with a 7-4 mark. Another change takes place at their Hornet Stadium. As is EWU, Sacramento State is replacing its natural grass field to a FieldTurf surface. The Hornets also will be sharing their home stadium with the upstart Untied Football League's Sacramento Mountain Lions.

Senior quarterback McLeod Bethel-Thompson (746 yards, 4 TDs, 5 INTs) shared snaps with the departed Jason Smith (1,707 yards, 12 TDs, 9 INTs) last season, and has won the top job this spring. He will target talented senior wide receivers Brandyn Reed (46 receptions, 731 yards, 7 TDs) and Dylan Reed (40 receptions, 409 yards, 3 TDs)

Defensively, the Hornets need to improve as this side yielded more than 430 yards and 33 points per game in 2009. The improvements will need to come via the veterans in senior defensive tackle Christian Clark (team leading 15.5 TFL and 10 sacks), who was an All-American a year ago and senior strong safety Zach Schrader (team-leading 103 tackles and 4 INTs), a first-team All-BSC member. A newcomer to watch is junior college transfer Kyle Monson in the secondary.

The Hornets display probably the best duo of kickers within the Big Sky with senior placekicker Chris Diniz and junior punter Augie Heath. Diniz made 12-of-13 field-goal attempts with a long of 52 yards. Heath averaged 39 yards per punt and aligned 15 of his kicks inside the 20.

Northern Colorado is another team that hopes to rekindle its winning ways. Since the team's first DI season in 2002, UNC has had just one winning season after gaining DII titles in 1997 and 1998 before their move up. The Bears, however, have started to turn things around in finishing 2009 with a 3-8 mark — the best win total since joining the BSC in 2006. This year's team under Scott Downing will look to better that mark.

The big change on offense is that Greg Peterson becomes the Bears' new offensive coordinator. Petersen has been an assistant coach for more than 20 seasons, including spending the 2008 season as FBS Colorado State's offensive coordinator. The Bears lone returning All-BCS offensive member is junior center Alex Shapiro. The Bears wide receivers will be two players coming off injuries in sophomore Dominic Gunn and junior Brandon Smith. The quarterback position likely won't be decided until fall practice as redshirt freshmen Matt Baca and Cameron Deen as well as sophomore Dylan Orms all are in the running.

The Bears defense returns its top four tacklers from 2009, including senior linebackers Matt King and John Eddy. Eddy, who has battled injuries much of his career, recorded 80 tackles, 5.5 sacks and 8.5 tackles for loss in just eight games a year ago.

The Bears' secondary will be led by All-BSC member senior safety Max Hewitt and junior cornerback Korey Askew. Hewitt had 75 tackles and three interceptions as a junior. Askew is coming off a season in which he recorded 74 tackles, nine pass breakups and three interceptions.

The running and shoot experiment is over at **Portland State**. Former coach Jerry Glanville resigned after last season and Nigel Burton takes over the Vikings' reigns. The new coach is a former PSU and Oregon State assistant and was most recently the Nevada defensive coordinator. He will install a "pistol" offense (unique, option-style formation) and a traditional 4-3 defense, which had been the 3-4 defense.

Another change for 2010 will be that the Vikings will play their home games in Hillsboro Stadium. PGE Park is getting transformed into a soccer stadium as the Vikings will share their home with the new Major League Soccer team that will start its inaugural season in 2011. Ironically, PSU last played its home games in Hillsboro Stadium, the one and only season in 2000 the Vikings made the FCS playoffs.

With the change of venues, PSU will play just four home games and will visit two FBS opponents in Arizona State and Oregon. The Vikings return 14 starters from last season's 2-9 team.

Ray Fry is the top returning wide receiver. Fry caught 67 passes for 904 yards and three touchdowns last year in the run-and-shoot offense. Throwing him the ball might be senior Drew Hubel (6,358 career passing yards and 42 touchdowns), but he's still recovering from an injury and didn't participate in spring drills.

The Viking defense has two all-conference performers to try to change to the 4-3 from the 3-4 alignment. Junior Ryan Rau anchors the middle linebacker spots after leading the team in tackles (72), tackles for loss (10), sacks (4) and quarterbacks hurries (6). Fellow junior and two-year starter DeShawn Shead will be the secondary leader from his cornerback spot. He has 96 tackles, nine interceptions and two fumble recoveries in two seasons as a Viking.

Idaho State has recorded back-to-back one-victory seasons, winning each year in the final game of the season to avoid winless seasons. Idaho State coach John Zamberlin is entering his fourth season in Pocatello and his coaching staff underwent offseason changes because of the dismal records. Phil Earley takes over as offensive coordinator while Jon Clark is

the new offensive line coach. Josh Fetter takes over as defensive line coach.

The Bengals are slated to return 13 starters. Among those expected to return is All-Conference linebacker A.J. Storms, who recorded a conference-best 120 total tackles in 2009. The offense returns one All-BSC selection in junior wideout Kelvin Krosch, who had a team-best six touchdowns with 37 receptions and 540 yards.

The Bengals quarterback should be the same starter that ended 2009 in senior Russel Hill. He started six games a year ago and recorded 1,388 yards and eight touchdowns and eight interceptions.

Big Sky Games of the Week

Eastern Washington @ Nevada, Sept.2
The Eagles play at former BSC member Nevada. Can EWU pull off the upset in Reno?

Northern Colorado @ Weber State, Sept. 11
These two will play the first BSC game of the year. Can the Bears give the Wildcats a loss in Ogden?

Montana @ Eastern Washington, Sept. 18
Two title contenders meet early in Cheney. Will the new turf cause any issues for the Grizzlies?

Eastern Washington @ Montana State, Sept. 25
The Eagles get the other Montana school but this time on the road. Will these two consecutive games cause any concerns for EWU?

Idaho State @ Portland State, Oct. 2
These two teams might be playing to stay out of the BSC basement in this contest in the Vikings temporary home of Hillsboro Stadium.

Northern Colorado @ Sacramento State, Oct. 9
The Hornets likely will know if they are contenders or pretenders by this contest. They will not be able to overlook the improving Bears.

Weber State @ Idaho State, Oct. 16
This rivalry has been rather one-sided during the last few years. Will the home turf help the Bengals in this one?

Northern Arizona @ Montana, Oct. 23
Will the Lumberjacks come into this game with a good record like the last few seasons at this point in the season? If so, this might be a game that will help determine the BSC title.

Montana @ Weber State, Oct. 30
This has been a new but increasingly intense battle. How will this year's game end, and will the winner be the BSC champion as has been the case the last two years?

Weber State @ Montana State, Nov. 6
Like EWU earlier, the Wildcats get the two Montana schools on consecutive Saturdays. Will a late-season visit to Bozeman cause any issues for the Wildcats?

Weber State @ Northern Arizona, Nov. 13
The Wildcats beat the Lumberjacks easily late in the season last year. Will the change of scenery help the Lumberjacks this year?

Montana State at Montana, Nov. 20
The Grizzles get the home game this year in the Brawl of the Wild. A conference title might be on the line as well in this contest to go with the Treasure State's bragging rights.

Conference Capsules

Eastern Washington Eagles
Location: Cheney, Wash.
Stadium: Roos Field (8,600)
Head Coach: Beau Baldwin (14-9, EWU, 24-12 Overall), 3rd Season
Who's Gone: QB Matt Nichols, WR Aaron Boyce, TE Nathan Overbay, DB Brett Igbinoba.
Who's Back: LB J.C. Sherritt, RB Taiwan Jones, OC Chris Powers, DT Renard Williams, S Matt Johnson.
Historical Fact: Former Eagle quarterback Erik Meyer won the 2005 Walter Payton Award. He and wide receiver Eric Kimble were the Eagles' first back-to-back All-America selections at their positions.
Last Season: The Eagles returned to the playoffs for the fifth time in seven years but bowed out to Stephen F. Austin in the first round of the playoffs.
This Season: Coach Baldwin's team will look to build on the playoff season from a year ago and try to duplicate those efforts despite the loss of record-setting quarterback Matt Nichols.

Idaho State Bengals
Location: Pocatello, Idaho
Stadium: Holt Arena (12,000)
Head Coach: John Zamberlin (5-29, ISU, 68-70 overall), 4th Season
Who's Gone: OC Ryan Henry, K Jarrett Huk, LB Phillip Arias, S Chris Holmesly.
Who's Back: WR Kelvin Krosch, LB A.J. Storms, QB Russel Hill, S Chris Holmesly, OG Braeden Clayson, OG Mitch Rudder.
Historical Fact: Idaho State won the FCS 1981 national title with a 34-23 victory over Eastern Kentucky.
Last Season: Coach Zamberlin's team again won its

last game of the year after doing the same in 2008. The Bengals defeated Portland State to avoid the winless season.
This Season: The Bengals hope to turn things around after the two consecutive one-win seasons.

Montana Grizzlies
Location: Missoula, Mont.
Stadium: Washington-Grizzly Stadium (25,217).
Head Coach: Robin Pflugrad (0-0, UM & overall), 1st Season
Who's Gone: WR Marc Mariani, S Shann Schillinger, OT Levi Horn, FB Kevin Klaboe.
Who's Back: OG Jon Opperud, OC Alex Verlanic, RB Chase Reynolds, K Brody McKnight, DT Tyler Hobbs, DE Severin Campbell, CB Trumaine Johnson, S Erik Stoll, P
Sean Wren, ST Cole Lockwood.
Historical Fact: The Grizzlies have made it to seven national title games, including last year and won two titles in 1995 and 2001.
Last Season: The Grizzlies won their 12th straight BSC title last year enroute to the national title game, which they lost to Villanova.
This Season: Another year of high expectations for the Grizzlies even though they lost head coach Bobby Hauck to FBS UNLV. Robin Pflugrad takes over at the helm.

Montana State Bobcats
Location: Bozeman, Mont.
Stadium: Bobcat Stadium (13,500)
Head Coach: Rob Ash (20-14, MSU, 196-113-5, Overall), 4th Season
Who's Gone: DE Dane Fletcher, OG Jeff Hansen, TE Joe Schriebeis, LB Jeff Price.
Who's Back: WR Everett Gilbert, OT Mike Person, K Jason Cunningham, DT Dan Ogden, DT Jason Da'Alba, DE John Laidet, LB Jody Owens, LB Clay Bignell, S Michael Rider, ST Tanner Ripley.
Historical Fact: The Bobcats are the only school to win a national football title at the NAIA, Division II and Division I levels. Their FCS title came in 1984 in a 19-6 victory over Louisiana Tech.
Last Season: Coach Ash's team finished 2009 with a 7-4 mark, just missing out on the playoffs.
This Season: The Bobcats look to take the next step to become a playoff-caliber team in Coach Ash's third full season at the helm.

Northern Arizona Lumberjacks
Location: Flagstaff, Ariz.
Stadium: Walkup Skydome (15,300)
Head Coach: Jerome Souers (66-70, NAU & Overall), 13th Season
Who's Gone: RB Alex Henderson, TE Shaun Fitzpatrick, WR Ed Berry.
Who's Back: QB Michael Herrick, DE Isaac Bond, DT Brandon Vance, OG Kris Poindexter, OC Jeff Hines, K Matt Myers, DT Dwight Boyd, DE Isaac Bond, DE Brandon Vance, LB Reid Worthington, S Matt Estrada, ST Taelor Worrell.
Historical Fact: NAU made its first FCS Playoff Quarterfinal appearance in 2003 after winning a share of the Big Sky Conference title for the first time since 1978.
Last Season: The Lumberjacks started the season strong with a 5-2 mark but finished with four straight losses to wind up 5-6 overall.
This Season: Coach Souers will look to start out like last year but to finish 2010 much stronger to improve the win total.

Northern Colorado Bears
Location: Greeley, Colo.
Stadium: Nottingham Field (8,500)
Head Coach: Scott Downing (6-39, UNC & 19-44-1 Overall) 5th Season
Who's Gone: DB/KR Ryan Lutz, QB Bryan Waggener, WR Alex Thompson.
Who's Back: OC Alex Shapiro, DE Nick Hernon, LB John Eddy, LB Matt King, CB Korey Askew, S Max Hewitt.
Historical Fact: The Bears moved up to the FCS ranks in 2002 and were members of the Great West from 2003 to 2006 before moving the Big Sky.
Last Season: Northern Colorado finished with three victories, which equaled the win total from the prior three seasons.
This Season: Coach Downing hopes to build his 2010 team around the better 2009 season and several returning starters.

Portland State Vikings
Location: Portland, Ore.
Stadium: Hillsboro Stadium (*Temporary)* (7,825)
Head Coach: Nigel Burton (0-0, PSU & overall) 1st Season
Who's Gone: LB Ryan Pedersen, WR/KR KR Aaron Woods.
Who's Back: K Zach Brown, LB Ryan Rau, S Cody Worthen, CB DeShawn Shead, ST
Nick Kalpin, QB Drew Hubel, FB Bobby McClintock, RB Ben Bowen.
Historical Fact: PSU appeared in one Division II national title game — in 1988, a loss to North Dakota State.
Last Season: Coach Jerry Glanville's last season in Portland was the Vikings' worst season in 29 years at 2-9 overall.
This Season: The Vikings hope for a better season with new Coach Burton taking the reins in Oregon's largest city.

Sacramento State Hornets
Location: Sacramento, Calif.
Stadium: Hornet Stadium (21,195)
Head Coach: Marshall Sperbeck (14-20,CSU-S, 123-73 Overall) 4th Season
Who's Gone: OG Matt Lemley, OG Peter Lenz, DL Kevin Moore.
Who's Back: WR Brandyn Reed, WR Dylan Lane, K Chris Diniz, DT Christian Clark, S Zach Schrader, P Augie Heath, ST John Feaster.
Historical Fact: Hornet Stadium was the home of two professional football teams - the World League of American Football's Surge and the Canadian Football League's Gold Miners. Now, it will be the home of the United Football League's Mountain Lions.
Last Season: The Hornets finished the 2009 campaign 5-3 after an 0-3 start to finish 5-6 overall.
This Season: Coach Sperbeck hopes his team can exceed the .500 mark this season and will have several components back for Coach Sperbeck.

Weber State Wildcats
Location: Ogden, Utah
Stadium: Stewart Stadium (17,500)
Head Coach: Ron McBride (33-26, WSU & 121-89 Overall) 6th Season
Who's Gone: RB Trevyn Smith, WR Tim Toone, OL Kyle Mutcher.
Who's Back: QB Cameron Higgins, OG J.C. Oram, WR Joe Collins, WR Mike Phillips, LB Nick Webb, LB Taylor Sedillo, S Jordan Brown, DE Caldwell Taylor.
Historical Fact: Jamie Martin, now a former NFL quarterback from WSU, was the 1991 Walter Payton Award winner.
Last Season: Weber State finished with its second-straight playoff season but lost in the opening round to William & Mary.
This Season: The Wildcats and Coach McBride will need to replace several key players to return to the postseason but will look to rebuild around quarterback Cameron Higgins. ■

2010 Big South Preview
By Myron Hosea

PredictedOrder of Finish
1. Liberty
2. Stony Brook
3. Charleston Southern
4. Gardner-Webb
5. Coastal Carolina
6. Presbyterian College
7. VMI

Offensive Player of the Year
Mike Brown, Quarterback/Wide Receiver, Liberty
Defensive Player of the Year
Arin West, Defensive Back, Stony Brook

Biggest Shoes to Fill
Stan Doolittle, Quarterback, Gardner-Webb
A multiyear starter and contributor, Doolittle did most of the quarterbacking for the Bulldogs a year ago. He completed 215 of his 347 passes for 2,268 yards. He tossed 11 touchdown passes to just five interceptions, and he led the conference in total yards and passing yards. At least three players will be trying to take Doolittle's place in the Gardner-Webb backfield.

Liberty and Stony Brook Will Battle for Big South's First Automatic Playoff Bid

Part I is complete and in the books. It's time for Part II in the football history of the Big South Conference to begin.

In its ninth year of football as a league sport, the Big South reaches a point of greater relevance when its 2010 champion will fill an automatic qualifier spot in the FCS playoffs. The NCAA's decision to expand the playoffs from 16 teams to 20 with the 2010 season opened the door for the conference, which had been taking steady steps forward to be positioned for this occasion. One of those steps included adding Stony Brook as a football-only conference member to give the league the necessary six fully functioning FCS football squads. The Seawolves promptly helped increase the overall competitiveness of the Big South and would have won the AQ in 2009 by virtue of beating Liberty.

The winner of the choice playoff appointment in 2010 (this writer says Liberty) will be just the second Big South team to reach the postseason. Coastal Carolina lost a first-round game (to eventually national champ Appalachian State) as an at-large participant in 2006.

Competitiveness might well stand as the best description for the Big South's 2010 football season. Liberty and Stony Brook enter the race as they finished last year's – side by side on row 1. The league's other teams, however, plan to push the pair and one another. Last season, half of the 20 Big South conference games sported margins of seven points or less while 15 came in at 14 points or less. Liberty and Stony Brook were the winners in the five games that would count as blowouts. So, little separates Charleston Southern, Coastal Carolina, Gardner-Webb, Presbyterian College and VMI. All of these teams look to draw closer to the Flames and Seawolves. Can any one of them challenge the front-runners and steal the title?

The run **Liberty** has made under Danny Rocco has been impressive indeed and nothing indicates it won't continue in 2010 as 14 starters and 43 lettermen return. A stumble in the season finale against Stony Brook might have kept the Flames from an at-large playoff berth, but other than that, Liberty rolled through much of its 2009 schedule.

Liberty led the FCS in scoring a year ago, and the vast majority of the offensive punch returns. Mike Brown, who split time between wide receiver and quarterback, is expected to move full time to quarterback after producing 1,567 yards rushing, passing and receiving and contributing to 15 touchdowns. Tyler Brennan stepped up in the spring and will back Brown.

The runningback corps is deep and talented. Aldreakas Allen ran for 530 yards and nine scores but will have to rebound from a spring injury. SirChauncey Holloway scored seven touchdowns. Chase Barnett and Korrey Davis add depth.

Brown will have plenty of targets among the receivers. Rocco calls wide receiver Chris Summers a NFL-caliber player. He caught 46 passes for 603 yards and four touchdowns in 2009. Ervin Gardner, B.J. Hayes and Pat Kelly will catch passes along with tight end Tommy Shaver.

Though they missed spring practice, Rocco expects

his top two offensive linemen – Alex Stadler and Justin Vargas – to clear the way for all of the skill position talent.

Liberty's defense didn't always live up to a rock wall image last season. It yielded 31 to Gardner-Webb (all first half) and 36 to Stony Brook in the last two weeks. Rocco thinks this year's group will have more depth and speed in key positions, leading to improvement.

Up front, the Flames count on defensive end Terry Adams and Corey Freeman and nose guards Asa Chapman and Greg Schuster in the base 3-4. They are backed by linebackers Doncel Bolt and Omar Clark.

Kajuan Lee (five interceptions), Brent Vinson and Brandon Robinson are key members of the secondary.

Another serious weapon for the Flames is placekicker Matt Bevins, who scored 107 points by hitting 41-of-42 extra points and 22-of-26 field goals, including a 50-yarder.

Liberty plays a winnable FBS game at Ball State in week two and faces a key FCS game at James Madison on Sept. 25. The closing stretch features a road game at Presbyterian College (where it lost two years ago), Gardner-Webb, at Coastal Carolina and Stony Brook.

The season appeared to have hit a snag when **Stony Brook** fell in an upset loss at Charleston Southern in the 10th game. The Seawolves broke loose in a big way the next week, however, defeating Liberty to earn a tie for the Big South crown – winning it if you go for the head-to-head tiebreaker stuff.

Winning a league title in your second season in Big South football shows the growing strength of head coach Chuck Priore's program. He brings an experienced team into the 2010 battles.

The running game has powered a lot of Stony Brook's success the last two seasons. Half of the team's dynamic duo in that time, runningback Edwin Gowins (Conte Cuttino finished his eligibility) returns. Gowins ran for 890 yards and nine touchdowns last year. Eddie Mateo, Miguel Maysonet and Brock Jackolski could provide depth.

Michael Coulter had to step in early to replace injured Dayne Hoffman. He performed well, throwing for 2,060 yards and giving the Seawolves a legitimate passing threat. He completed 55 percent of his passes and fired 15 touchdown passes. His targets will include wide receivers Jordan Gush (26 catches, six touchdowns), Matt Brevi (26), Donald Porter (25, five) and Michael Lepore (16).

Returning starters Emmett Phillips (left tackle), Brian Crew (left guard) and Paul Fenaroli (center) anchor the line.

The Seawolves, particularly in key games, made just enough stops to finish with that 6-5 record. In fact, they outscored the opposition on average 24.3 to 23.3.

Free safety Arin West leads the defense after making 80 stops a season ago. He also recovered three fumbles in timely situations. The rest of the secondary's starters graduated, requiring players such as Corey Stringer and Taj Johnson to step up.

Stony Brook loses Tyler Santucci at linebacker, but there's talent returning, especially 2010 captain Stephen Schwicke (68 tackles, 7.5 for loss). He'll be joined at linebacker by Chevar Rankins and Kenny Tuiloma. They'll play behind nose tackle Michael Marino and defensive tackle Ryan Haber.

Placekicker Wes Skiffington proved to a strong weapon in a conference full of good placekickers. He missed only two of his 17 field-goal attempts and scored 71 points.

The Seawolves open 2010 with a trip to Tampa to face South Florida. They also have decent nonconference FCS games at Brown, home to UMass and at Lafayette. The season still should come down to the last week, though, when Stony Brook visits Liberty.

It doesn't have the most talented roster in the conference, but you don't want to meet **Charleston Southern** late in the season. Since 2004, head coach Jay Mills' second at the CSU helm, the Bucs have gone 39-27, but they are 14-5 in November. That includes victories over Presbyterian College, Stony Brook and Coastal Carolina in the final month of the 2009 campaign.

This season, Mills brings a senior-laden squad to a schedule that begins with an unusual – for the Bucs – three-game homestand and includes trips to play Hawaii and Kentucky. Such an experienced team gives Charleston Southern hope for challenging for the title in the conference portion of the schedule.

For the first time in years, the Bucs have a returning starter at the quarterback position. Senior A.J. Toscano threw for 2,092 yards while completing 58

percent of his passes. He tossed 12 touchdowns and 12 interceptions. Toscano also showed some wheels by rushing for 325 yards and four scores. He has weapons around him, particularly dynamic wide receiver Gerald Stevenson, also a senior. He rushed for 364 yards and three touchdowns and caught 55 passes for another three scores. Senior Kwame Krakue (40 catches, three touchdowns) adds a threat to the passing game. Senior runningback DeMarcus Moon should get a lot of carries while wide receivers Deon Lee and Estevan Cintron provide depth.

Three starters return up front: tackle Levi McFatter, center Jordan Lancaster and guard B.J. Baker. James Nicholson and Nick Kemper could push for time as blockers.

Defensively, Charleston Southern possesses lots of depth in the secondary after leading the conference in pass defense a year ago. Leading the way are Chris Kuzdale (three picks and 64 tackles) and Jacques Bazile (50 tackles). Support comes from defensive backs James Antaplyn, L. B. Cravey, Charles James, Kenny Johnson, Anthony Velez and Austin Wald.

Four seniors headline the linebacking corps. Chris Patrick (64 tackles, five sacks), Fred Godfrey (67 stops), David Jackson (42), and C.J. Lee give the Bucs experience in the middle tier of the defense. Cornelius Sterling and Bradley Sweatt will get in the mix, too. The defensive line features senior Joel Walton (six sacks), Damon Middleton and Delvon King.

Senior placekicker John Paglia represents a key weapon for Charleston Southern. He connected on 16-of-22 field-goal attempts and scored 76 points last year. Paglia nailed a 51-yarder and booted three field goals in each of the two season-ending victories.

Two of the Bucs' key games this year figure to be a week two home game against Wofford and the conference opener Oct. 9 at Liberty. The latter will determine Charleston Southern's chances for a title run.

Gardner-Webb would love to get off the merry-go-round of the last six seasons that has kept it just above or just below the .500 level. In fact, the Runnin' Bulldogs have played at par in the conference each of those seasons except for 2008 when they dropped to 2-3.

In 2010, head coach Steve Patton and staff will rely on what should be another solid defense and a few potential game-breakers on offense.

The offense welcomes back runningback Patrick Hall, who rushed for 599 yards but more importantly 12 touchdowns. Kenny Little (294 yards, 5.0 yards per carry) will spell Hall.

Gardner-Webb will have a new quarterback when the season opens as Stan Doolittle completed his playing tenure in Boiling Springs. John Rock (8-12-0, 133 yards, two touchdowns) is the candidate with some experience, brief though it is. Keenan Grissett, who played well in the spring game, and Chandler Browning also are in the mix.

Talented receivers will be hand to help out whoever becomes the starting quarterback. Wide receiver James Perry III led the Big South in receiving with 61 catches for 749 yards and three scores. Tyson Petty and Marquis Sanders provide depth. Josh Miller is the tight end.

Three starters – guard Corey O'Daniel, center C. J. Bryant and tackle James Dunaway – return on the offensive line, but the right-side starters graduated. Guard Zach Welch and tackle Harrison Martin could fill those spots.

Marty Patterson became the Bulldogs' latest standout to emerge at linebacker. He paced the conference with 110 tackles a year ago and tallied five sacks. Gardner-Webb should have another solid linebacking unit, especially if Jeffrey Williams returns after missing the last four games of 2009. Devin Johnson, Garrett Trusler and Dami Teniola round out the unit.

The secondary brings experience to the field. Cedric McGowan returns from a redshirt year and relocates to safety where he'll play alongside Lyndrez Leslie. Bryce Nixon and Ricky Rhodes return at corner with help coming from Sean Davis.

Gardner-Webb has developed a reputation for a stout defensive line, and a couple of players should keep that going. Nose guard Matthew Goods came on strong as a freshman and teams with defensive end Jordan Woods to make the line tough. Nick Stone, Nelson Rushing, Evan Short and Cam Lyles provide depth.

The Bulldogs possess a key weapon in placekicker Ryan Gates, who hit all 38 extra-point attempts and made good on 13-of-16 field-goal attempts with a long of 44 yards.

They'll get few breaks in their schedule this year. The Bulldogs have to travel to Akron, Old Dominion

and the top three in the Big South – Liberty, Stony Brook and Charleston Southern.

Because the program's initial group of players completed eligibility, **Coastal Carolina** has failed to find the right formula to stay at the top of the league. The Chanticleers will be challenged again this year to reach the top.

Head coach David Bennett's team fields a defense that could be among the league's best. Unless the offense discovers consistency and some playmakers, however, this squad won't see the top spot. The Chants finished last in the league in total offense and averaged a meager 18.6 points a game. That must improve for the team to move up in the standings.

The Chanticleers have playmakers in the secondary, beginning with Josh Norman. He picked off eight passes in 2009 and demonstrated a knack for being in the right spot. The secondary also features Dominique Davenport, who made 56 stops and three interceptions.

Three returning linebackers were among the top five tacklers on the team a year ago: Desmond Steward (60 tackles), E. J. Brown (58) and Derrick Frasier (44). Brian Harrison also should see playing time at linebacker.

Along the front, look for B.J. Jenkins and Johnny Hartsfield to fill gaps left by the loss of players such as Phillip Oboh.

Three players will compete to call signals for the offense, create plays and provide consistency. Zach MacDowall and Jamie Childers shared time last year and will compete with South Carolina transfer Aramis Hillary (younger brother of Appalachian State wide receiver CoCo Hillary). MacDowall (1,664 yards and nine touchdowns) has the most starting experience and has shown flashes of stellar play in the passing game. Hillary offers a stronger mix of running and passing. Childers brings size and speed, and Bennett stated at the end of spring practice the big man will be on the field in some capacity whether he wins the quarterback spot or not.

A team with a stout defense typically leans on a tough running game to control the ball, but the Chanticleers haven't been able to generate significant ground yardage in recent years. The spring game didn't show progress in that area. Senior Eric O'Neal brings some experience, but injuries kept him out of spring practice. Coastal will be looking for someone to step forward in the running game.

Brandon Whitley and Marquel Willis are experienced players at wide receiver. Wide receiver Trae Long and tight end Ben Collins bring experience to their roles. Experience counts up front, as well, and Seth Smalls, Tim Franklin, Alex Wolfe and Bryan Brooks bring that to the offensive line.

Justin Durham is a three-year letter-winner at placekicker, and Bed Erdman is an experienced punter.

The Chanticleers open at West Virginia and also play at Towson and Richmond. They'll need to try for victories at home against Georgia Southern and Delaware State.

Clearly, 2009 proved to be a disappointing and forgettable experience for the **Presbyterian College** football program. The team suffered through a winless season as a young team gave up too much defensively and couldn't generate enough offense consistently. The plus of a young team is that it gains experience and hopefully shows continued improvement. Of course, that depends on your opponents already ahead of you not improving as well.

Second-year head coach and PC alum Harold Nichols hopes to build on the lessons of last year to create a better outcome in 2010, though the Blue Hose might find more significant improvement a year further out.

Quarterback Brandon Miley has started most of the games since midway through the 2008 season. He threw for 1,736 yards on 151 of 276 passing. His interceptions exceeded touchdowns by a 16-11 count. Myron Gary could see time behind center as well after throwing for 157 yards in the spring game. Wide receiver Patrick McCoy is the go-to guy after snaring 47 passes for 615 yards and four touchdowns. Wide receivers Tyler Robbins and Hunter Counts will play key roles in the passing game, too.

The Blue Hose welcome the return of two good runningbacks – Trandon Dendy and Lance Byrd. Dendy started early in the season but missed the last three games. He still ran for 554 yards and five scores. Byrd rambled for 700 yards and four touchdowns on the ground. They will be integral parts of the PC offense. They'll run behind an experienced line whose returners include Michael Butler, Grayson Sumner, Jared Tavernier and Max Travis.

Defensively, PC surrendered 40 points and 478 yards

a game, numbers that must be improved for the team to gain ground in the standings. The Blue Hose will look to eight returning starters for that improvement.

Defensive end could be a strength with the return of Brian Leonardi (51 tackles, eight tackles for loss) and Derren Evans (four sacks) and with support coming from Iouli Burroughs and Keyadd Miller. Linebacker Derek Brown made 60 stops a year ago. CeeJay Harris also will be counted to lead the linebacking unit.

In the secondary, the Blue Hose have talented players. Cornerback Justin Bethel paced the team with 79 tackles. He also made 4.5 tackles for loss. Damon Lawrence led PC with two interceptions from the cornerback spot. Connor Norman adds depth as does Bo Tribble, who missed the spring with injury.

PC made progress as the season went on, losing by just four to Coastal Carolina and seven to Gardner-Webb in the final two games. This remains a young team in transition, however. Sixty players on the 2010 roster are sophomores, redshirt freshmen or true freshmen. Everybody will have to grow up quickly as the Blue Hose open with road games at Wake Forest and Clemson followed by the first FCS game at The Citadel.

VMI began 2009 with hopes for making some noise but instead slipped from four victories to two despite experience on both sides of the ball. For head coach Sparky Woods, the search for the right formula continues into 2010.

The core group that sparked the ground-oriented option offense of the last few seasons has moved along, opening the door for a move to more passing and perhaps more pro-style formations. Three players are vying to take over at quarterback: junior Cam Jones and redshirt freshmen A. J. Augustine and Adam Morgan. The 2010 roster will feature a lot more wide receivers, including Mario Scott, Tracy Hairston and Justin Hickman along with tight end Josh Favaro.

There are still runners on board, though, such as experienced halfbacks Gabe Itoka and Chaz Jones. Julien Bowers will provide depth. They'll run behind an offensive line led by returning starters Aaron Blue and Mark Tomlin at tackles and guard Rob Bailey.

The Keydets need continued improvement on defense. They'll have depth up front with linemen Josh Wine and Ben Brandt and end Damiso Alexander.

A. J. Gross, Emilio Calvin and Eric Church offer experience and talent at linebacker with help coming from Kris Ware.

Byron Allen returns in the secondary, welcoming Michael Rainey-Wiles from the offense. Greg Walker, Trae Watkins and Michael Johnson will get time in the defensive backfield as well.

Jeff Sexton continued to show reliability as placekicker, booting three field goals in the spring game.

VMI's 2010 schedule makes improvement challenging. Three tough road trips within Virginia – to William and Mary, Virginia and Old Dominion – will push this team as will another trip to West Point to face Army.

Big South Games of the Week

Stony Brook at South Florida – Sept. 4
It's not a glitzy pick, but it's an opportunity for the Big South's defending champs to test themselves against a FBS team.

Wofford at Charleston Southern – Sept. 11
A couple of years after losing a home game with the Terriers to a hurricane, the Bucs finally get their home game with Wofford. For Charleston Southern and the Big South, this represents a big opportunity to gain respect.

Georgia Southern at Coastal Carolina and Western Carolina at Gardner-Webb – Sept. 18
These are two more games of opportunity for the Big South. Coastal Carolina finally gets home after two tough road games. It will face a Georgia Southern team continuing to develop its new offense. Last season, Gardner-Webb won a tight game at Western Carolina. This battle of neighbors should be just as good this time.

Liberty at James Madison – Sept. 25
Liberty didn't get the breakthrough victory against James Madison a year ago in Lynchburg. It will try again, this time on the road.

Coastal Carolina at Richmond – Oct. 2
This game represents the end of the four-week run of nine games Big South teams will play against the two power conferences (Colonial and Southern) that bracket the league. Coastal Carolina will have a tough go of it in this one.

Charleston Southern at Liberty – Oct 9
Charleston Southern has managed to finish in the top half of the league the last few years, but it's been looking up at Liberty as has most everyone else. While Liberty plans to stay aloft, the Bucs will seek to set a tone for change.

Gardner-Webb at Charleston Southern – Oct. 16
This could be a critical game for both teams. The winner still has the opportunity to push for the league title, but the loser could be in serious trouble.

Stony Brook at Coastal Carolina – Oct. 23
Can the Seawolves handle wearing the target of a defending champ? This road game will be a good time to find out.

Coastal Carolina at Gardner-Webb – Oct. 30
Whether this contest has a bearing on the league title or not, these two teams always seem to play an outstanding football game.

Gardner-Webb at Liberty – Nov. 6
The Runnin' Bulldogs just haven't been able to get past Liberty the last few years. The Flames will need to hold them off one more time to ensure another run at the conference crown.

Liberty at Coastal Carolina and Gardner-Webb at Stony Brook – Nov. 13
Liberty and Stony Brook are the top contenders for the 2010 title. To get there, they'll have to avoid these trap games. Coastal Carolina and Gardner-Webb would love to upset the planned course of things.

Stony Brook at Liberty – Nov. 20
All roads lead to Lynchburg. Well, sort of. The co-champs of 2009 will be the favorites heading into 2010. If they've managed to make it to the last week to fight for the crown, this year's winner has a greater prize – a trip to the playoffs.

Conference Capsules

Charleston Southern Buccaneers
Location: Charleston, S.C.
Stadium: CSU Stadium (4,000)
Head Coach: Jay Mills (40-38 at CSU, 43-59 overall)
Who's Back: WR Kwame Krakue, DB Chris Kuzdale, PK John Paglia, LB Chris Patrick, WR Gerald Stevenson, QB A.J. Toscani
Who's Gone: DE Ryan Ard, DB Matt Bach, TE Tyrese Harris, LB Andrew McKain, OL J.W. Myers
Last Year: 6-5/4-2, 3rd – Wrapped season with upset of Stony Brook and victory over rival Coastal Carolina
This Year: 6-5/4-2 – Experienced team could make noise.
Fun Fact: The university will have a reunion celebrating the 1985 club team, which served as the beginning of football at the school. Charleston Southern, known as Baptist College then, played club football for six years before playing at the Division III level starting in 1991.

Coastal Carolina Chanticleers
Location: Conway, S.C.
Stadium: Brooks Stadium (7,322)
Head Coach: David Bennett (50-29 at CCU, 113-46 overall)
Who's Back: LB E.J. Brown, QB Jamie Childers, DB Dominique Davenport, QB Zach MacDowall, DB Josh Norman, WR Brandon Whitley
Who's Gone: OL Ryan Boehm, RB Tommy Fraser, WR Paul Nicholas, DE Phillip Oboh
Last Year: 5-6/3-3, tie for 4th – Chanticleers came up short in season finale, slipping under .500 for the season.
This Year: 5-6/2-4 – Offensive playmakers will be needed for higher finish.
Fun Fact: Coastal Carolina has been competitive. Only four of its six losses in 2009 came to FCS teams, and three were decided by seven points or less.

Gardner-Webb Runnin' Bulldogs
Location: Boiling Springs, N.C.
Stadium: Spangler Stadium (9,000)
Head Coach: Steve Patton (83-59 at GWU, 113-82-1 overall)
Who's Back: PK Ryan Gates, DL Matt Goods, RB Patrick Hall, OL Corey O'Daniel, LB Marty Patterson, WR James Perry III
Who's Gone: LB Mario Brown, QB Stan Doolittle, DL Quinnon Isom, RB David Montgomery, DB Darren Rogers
Last Year: 6-5/3-3, tie for 4th – Late-season losses once again cost the Bulldogs.
This Year: 6-5/3-3 – Bulldogs can't find formula to break string of 6-5/5-6 records.
Fun Fact: In 13 years under Steve Patton, the Bulldogs never have won fewer than five games in a season but have not won more than six in the last six.

Liberty Flames
Location: Lynchburg, Va.
Stadium: Williams Stadium (12,000)
Head Coach: Danny Rocco (32-13 at Liberty and overall)
Who's Back: RB Aldreakis Allen, PK Matt Bevins, QB/WR Mike Brown, DB KaJuan Lee, OL Alex Stadler, WR Chris Summers
Who's Gone: QB Tommy Beecher, LB Wes Cheek,

DL Trey Jacobs, OL Bryan Mosier, DB Chris Rocco, OL Josh Weaver
Last Year: 8-3/5-1, tie for 1st – Many felt Liberty missed playoff trip with loss to Stony Brook.
This Year: 9-2/6-0 – Another unbeaten Big South season gives Flames that elusive playoff spot.
Fun Fact: The Flames led all of FCS in scoring in 2009, averaging 36.4 points a game. They scored 48 touchdowns and finished second nationally in Red Zone Offense scoring at a 92 percent pace.

Presbyterian College Blue Hose
Location: Clinton, S.C.
Stadium: Bailey Memorial Stadium (6,500)
Head Coach: Harold Nichols (0-11 at Presbyterian College and 0-11 overall)
Who's Back: DB Justin Bethel, LB Derek Brown, RB Lance Byrd, RB Trandon Dendy, WR Patrick McCoy, QB Brandon Miley,
Who's Gone: QB Tim Webb
Last Year: 0-11/0-6, 7th – Young Blue Hose suffered school's worst season.
This Year: 3-8/1-5 – Blue Hose show improvement and climb out of cellar.
Fun Fact: The good news for PC football is that the Blue Hose lost only five starters and 12 lettermen – so almost everyone returns to turn around the team's fortunes.

Stony Brook Seawolves
Location: Stony Brook, N.Y.
Stadium: Kenneth P. LaValle Stadium (8,136)
Head Coach: Chuck Priore (22-22 at Stony Brook, 61-31 overall)
Who's Back: QB Michael Coulter, RB Edwin Gowins, WR Jordan Gush, LB Stephen Schwicke, PK Wes Skiffington, DB Arin West
Who's Gone: RB Conte Cuttino, DE Christopher Perri, CB Chris Richards, LB Tyler Santucci, WR Stephen Towns
Last Year: 6-5/5-1, tie for 1st – Seawolves could claim bigger share of title by having beaten Liberty.
This Year: 7-4/5-1 – Seawolves will just miss league title.
Fun Fact: The Seawolves know a thing or two about good, close football games. Nine of their 2009 games averaged a margin of just six points.

VMI Keydets
Location: Lexington, Va.
Stadium: Alumni Memorial Field at Foster Stadium (10,000)
Head Coach: Sparky Woods (6-16 at VMI, 68-63-5 overall)
Who's Back: DE Damiso Alexander, FS Byron Allen, LB Emilio Calvin, LB A.J. Gross, SB Gabe Itoka, QB Cam Jones
Who's Gone: RB Howard Abegesah, OL George Handler, QB Kyle Hughes, Ath Tim Maypray, DE Patrick McKinney
Last Year: 2-9 overall, 1-5 Big South (6th) – Dynamic offense just wasn't enough to generate more wins.
This Year: 2-9/0-6 – Rebuilding at the military school continues.
Fun Fact: The graduated trio of RB Howard Abegesah, QB Kyle Hughes and Ath Tim Maypray accounted for 70 percent of VMI's rushing yards, 92 percent of its passing yards, 74 percent of its total yards, and 19 of 23 rushing touchdowns.■

COLONIAL ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION 2010 PREVIEW
By Terence Thomas

PREDICTED ORDER OF FINISH:

VILLANOVA
MAINE
NEW HAMPSHIRE TIED for 3rd
WILLIAM & MARY TIED for 3rd
JAMES MADISON TIED for 5th
DELAWARE TIED for 5th
MASSACHUSETTS
RICHMOND
TOWSON
RHODE ISLAND

PLAYERS OF THE YEAR
Offense – WR/KR/QB, **Matt Szczur**, Sr. Villanova
Defense- LB, **Terence Thomas**, Sr. Villanova

BIGGEST SHOES TO FILL

R.J. Archer – QB, William & Mary
Archer was second in the CAA in passing avg./game, with 198.4 yards per game. Archer was eighth in passing efficiency at 122.2, second in total offense with 255 yards rushing and 2,778 yards passing while averaging 216.6 yards per game. Archer's 261 completions helped the Tribe end the season in first in pass completions and passing yards. Archer was tied for second with 16 TD passes. Archer led the Tribe to an 11 – 3 record and their first appearance in the NCAA Playoff Semi-Finals, and came with 15 minutes of advancing to the National Championship game. The Tribe will be hard-pressed to find someone within their QB ranks to duplicate Archer's accomplishments.

Adrian Tracy – DE, William & Mary
Tracy was third on the Tribes in tackles with 78. Tracy led the CAA in sacks with 15. He helped lead the Tribe in rushing defense as William & Mary was first in the CAA with 61.1 yards allowed per game. The Tribe also was first in scoring defense behind Tracy's efforts in allowing only 12.1 points per game. Tracy also helped the Tribe come place second in pass defense as well as first in total defense. Tracy was a sixth-round draft pick of the New York Giants in April's NFL draft. The Tribe still will be formidable on defense but not the threat they were in 2009.

Mike London – Head Coach, Richmond
Coach London led the Spiders to their first national championship in 2008 and a quarterfinal appearance in the 2009 playoffs. During that time, Richmond compiled a 24-5 record. New head coach Latrell Scott arrives to find the UR cupboard bare and his work is cut out for him to try and repeat the coaching performance of his predecessor.

VILLANOVA WILDCATS
Location: Villanova, Pa.
Stadium: Villanova Stadium (12,000)
Head Coach: Andy Talley, 179-102-1 (25 years), 207-120-2 (30 years)
Who's Back: The Wildcats return 17 starters (8 Offense, 7 Defense, 2 Special Teams).

All-Star Candidates:

LT**, Ben Ijalana**, Sr., 2009 First-Team All CAA Football, 2009 Sports Network First-Team All American, 2009 Walter Camp All-America Team, Sporting News and Athlon Sports Preseason All American, 2010 Top 10 Offensive Linemen as noted by The Sports Network, ranked No. 4 by CBSsports.com, started all 39 games of his career.

WLB, **Terence Thomas**, Sr., 2009 First-Team All CAA Football, 2009 Sports Network, Second-Team All American, Sporting News and Athlon Sports Preseason All-American, 2010 Top 10 Linebackers as noted by The Sports Network, led the Wildcats in tackles in 2009 with 116, ranked No. 69 by CBSsports.com of OLBs in the country, started all 39 games of his career.

WR, **Matt Szczur**, Sr., 2009 CAA Football Offensive player of the year, Special Teams Player of the year, 2009 First-Team All American by The Sports Network, Associaed Press and Walter Camp Foundation, Sporting News and Athlon Sports Preseason All American, ranked No. 23 by CBSsports.com as a wide receiver, 2010 Top 10 WR/Specialist as noted by The Sports Network, most Outstanding Player in the 2009 national championship game, rushed 108 times for 813 yards and 10 TDs, caught 51 passes for 610 yards and 4 TDs, returned 30 kickoffs for 816 yards and 1 TD.

QB, **Chris Whitney**, Sr. 2009 First-Team All CAA Football, ESPN The Magazine/COSIDA Academic All District, ranked No. 52 by CBSsportsline, 2010 Top 10 Quarterback as noted by The Sports Network, was second in the CAA in passing efficiency with a rating of 151.6, led the Wildcats potent offense, which was second in the CAA in scoring with an avg. of 31.4 points per game. Behind Whitney's direction the Wildcats were first in TDs scored (62), and first in total offense (385.6 yards per game). Whitney was first in the CAA among QBs in

total TDs having thrown 18 TD passes and rushed for 6.

Who's Gone: The Cats lose 7 starters (3 Offense, 4 Defense). WR Brandyn Harvey, who was signed by the Atlanta Falcons, Safety Ross Ventrone, who was signed by the New England Patriots, NG Phil Matusz, who was their run stopper in the middle, OL John Bugli, who played RG and RT when the team needed to switch due to injuries on the line.

Last Year: 14 – 1 Overall, 7 – 1 CAA, NCAA Division 1 Champions.
This Year: 10 – 1 Overall, 8 – 0 CAA. A quest for another title as Nova looks to repeat.

Coach Andy Talley states he's "cautiously optimistic" about his team's chance for success. He's concerned about where the leadership will emanate from. Talley also is concerned with the development of his defensive line. Losing Tim Kukucka and Phil Matusz to graduation will test the Wildcats defensively, and he's hoping that some of the younger players can step in and fill the void. Along with Kukucka and Matusz, the Wildcats lost safety Ross Ventrone and LB Osayi Osunde. With those players gone, the Wildcats lost a lot of senior leadership and chemistry.

With the return of Matt Szczur and Chris Whitney on offense, Talley believes his Wildcats can be just as good as last year's team. Dan Shirey was a true freshman in 2009 and saw a lot of playing time due to injuries on the offensive line. He will move to the starting center spot. Chidozie Ekweozor, So., will return to his right tackle spot. Jordy Paulemon, who transferred from Hofstra, will play right guard. Brant Clouser, Sr., returns to play left guard with Ben Ijalana, Sr.,back at left tackle. The Cats' ground game featuring Aaron Ball, Sr., and Angelo Babbaro, Sr., should have gaping holes for these fast little backs to run through. Incoming freshman Ransford Quarrie is a big runningback built like a linebacker and will see time at "H" back if he can pick up the offense quick enough.

Another freshman, Dustin Thomas, will be the primary backup for Chris Whitney. The receiving corp will feature Szczur in the slot with Norman White and Dorian Wells split out. You also can expect to see freshmen Corey Reeder and Joe Price see time at wideout, too. Chris Farmer, Sr., will return at tight end and look to have more balls thrown his way.

As will many other teams in the CAA this season, the Wildcats will rely on their LBs and DBs to carry them until their defensive line play improves. Returning for the Cats at linebacker are seniors, Marquis Kirkland, Terence Thomas and Jacob Wade. James Pitts, Jr., and Eric Looper, So., return at the corners while John Dempsey, Sr., and Fred Maldonado, Sr., return at safety. Replacing Ventrone will be sophomore Ronny Aikens, who saw time as a true froshman in 2009. Thomas Weaver, Sr., has the task of replacing Matusz at nose guard, and Antoine Lewis, Fr., has shown promise and will be the leading candidate for one of the defensive end spots with the other one to be determined in August.

Talley will say there are no easy games in the CAA, however, three road games give him great concern. He knows Temple will be loaded and looking to exact revenge for last year's loss to the Cats. Back-to-back road trips to William & Mary and Maine also give Talley cause for concern. The one silver lining is that there is a bye between the two games.

Understandably, the Cats are everyone's preseason No. 1 team on virtually every FCS poll published. Expect the Wildcats to repeat last year's regular-season record - if not exceed it - in winning the CAA and marching toward the playoffs for a repeat at a national championship crown. There are not many teams like them that return so much talent within the CAA or outside of it.

MAINE BLACK BEARS
Location: Orono, Maine
Stadium: Morse Field at Alfond Stadium (10,000)
Head Coach: Jack Cosgrove, 93 – 101 (17 years)
Who's Back: The Black Bears return 17 starters (9 Offense, 7 Defense, 1 Special Team).

All-Star Candidates;

DB, **Steven Barker**, Sr., started 10 of 11 games he played in last season, 2009 Third-Team All-CAA Football honoree, ranked first in the CAA in passes defended with 13 and 25th in the league among DBs in tackles, seventh on the Black Bears last season with 48 tackles, third on the team and tied for 8th in the CAA with 4 interceptions.

WR, **Tyrell Jones**, Sr., started 10 games last season, is the top returning wide receiver with 48 receptions for 547 yards, ranked 9th in the CAA with 4.36 receptions per game, and 10th with 49.7 yards per game, caught 9 passes for 78 yards and 2 TDs against then No.1 ranked Richmond, had 9 receptions for 112 yards and a score against Rhode Island.

LB, **Donte Dennis**, Jr., started all 11 games last season, 2009 Third-Team All CAA Honoree, led the Black Bears and ranked 5th in the CAA, and 32nd in the country with 106 tackles, was 3rd on the team, and tied for 8th in the CAA with 4 interceptions, had a game-high 23 tackles against Delaware, named the CAA Football Player of the Week after notching 11 tackles in a victory over No. 19 Massachusetts.

LB, **Mark Masterson**, Sr., was a 2009 preseason honorable mention All-American by Consensus Draft Services, played only two games before getting a medical redshirt, in 2008 started all 13 games and ranked 39th overall, 21st among CAA LBs with 68 tackles.

Who's Gone: The Black Bears lose six starters (3 Offense, 3 Defense). Offensive lineman Tyler Eastman, who signed with the Kansas City Chiefs, WR Landis Williams, who signed with the Denver Broncos, WR Mike Brusko and DL' Eric Lee and Jordan Stevens.

Last Year: 5 – 6 Overall. 4 – 4 CAA
This Year: 8 – 3 Overall. 6 – 2 CAA

At the conclusion of spring practice, Coach Jack Cosgrove was pleased with his defense. The Maine Black Bears are known for their "Black Hole" defense. A young team in 2009, the Bears suffered growing pains. However, Cosgrove is confident that his 2010 team is driven with CAA championship expectations. Mark Masterson, Sr. linebacker is back from injury to lead the LBs along with a strong secondary. The defensive line averages 6-foot-3, 260 pounds and has regained its menacing form. It looks to be ahead of the CAA curve. The Black Bears were fortunate enough to pick up Omar Jacobs, a transfer from Hofstra who can start right away on the defensive line. Cosgrove says his defense still can be considered young, but it's a year wiser, athletic and strong. The goal is to reach the level of the "Black Hole" defenses of years past.

On offense, the Black Bears get the services of Jared Turcotte Jr., returning from a back injury. He is expected to lead the Black Bears' rushing attack. Cosgrove likes the fact that his offense will be more balanced as Maine, for years, primarily had been a running team, but in 2009 the passing game took off giving Maine more options on offense. The quarterback job will be determined in August as Warren Smith Jr. is coming off a foot injury, and during his absence, Chris Treister Jr. played well. Cosgrove is uncertain on what kind of production he will get out of his offensive line, but it averages 6'4, 290. The development of the young players helped the team improve from the bottom up.

Expect Maine to surprise a few people and be included in the playoffs in 2010.

NEW HAMPSHIRE WILDCATS
Location: Durham, N.H.
Stadium: Cowell Stadium (6,500)
Head Coach: Sean McDonnell, 80 – 53 (11 years)
Who's Back: The Wildcats return 15 starters (6 Offense, 8 Defense, 1 Special Team).

All-Star Candidates;

RB, **Sean Jellison**, Sr., rushed 97 times for 424 yards and 7 TDs, caught 19 passes for 169 yards, 1 TD, 1 kickoff return for a TD, was 2nd on the Wildcats and 5th in the CAA with 9 TDs, ranked 2nd on the team in rushing and rushing TDs.

QB, **R.J. Toman**, Sr., led the Wildcats to the highest-scoring offense (31.8 points per game) in the CAA, ranked 5th in the league in total offense (202.7 yards/game) and 6th in passing yards/game (181.8), enters the 2010 season ranked 4th on UNH's career passing yards list (5,601).

DE, **Brian McNally**, Jr., played 12 games as DE for the Wildcats last year, recorded 29 tackles, including 6.5 for a loss of 26 yards, also tied for 2nd on the team with 4 sacks and a forced fumble, named 2008 CAA Football Defensive Rookie of the Year after leading the team in tackles for loss (9.0) and sacks (2.5) to go along with 55 tackles.

CB, **Dino Vasso**, Sr., selected to the CAA Football All Conference 2nd Team in 2009, ranked 5th on the Wildcats in tackles (76), tallied 2nd most interceptions on the squad with 5, totaling 89 yards and two returned for TDs, posted 11 passes defended, racked up 279 yards on 10 kick returns.

Who's Gone: The Cats lose 12 starters (5 Offense, 6 Defense, 1 Special Team). On offense, runningback Chad Kackert, wide receiver Travis Negron, tight end Scott Sicko. On defense, defensive back Ryan Hinds, linebacker Terrence Klein, linebacker Sean Ware. On special teams, kicker Tom Manning.

Last Year: 10 – 3 Overall, 6 – 2 CAA
This Year: 7 – 4 Overall, 5 – 3 CAA

Coach Sean McDonnell will tell you that the biggest difference from his 2009 team and this year's squad is the loss of senior leadership. However, at the end

of spring practice, McDonnell felt good about the competitive nature of this team. While the battle for the quarterback spot is intense, McDonnell believes senior R. J. Toman is ahead of junior Kevin Decker. Terrance Fox, a senior wide receiver, returns after a season off and was the best receiver on the field this spring. The defense will be anchored by senior captain Devon Jackson, linebacker, and senior Brian McNally, who returns from a torn labrum. Both had outstanding springs.

The Wildcats are looking to play "smash-mouth" football on defense and improvement in their running game. McDonnell believes this year's schedule is the most challenging he's had in several years.

Expec the Wildcats to claw their way to their seventh-straight playoff appearance, but to do so, they will need to repeat 2009's performance of winning all their home games, then try to steal one or two on the road from the likes of Pitt, URI, Maine, JMU and Villanova. If they can reach that "smash-mouth" level of play that McDonnell is looking for, it might come in handy toward the end of the regular season.

WILLIAM & MARY TRIBE
Location: Williamsburg, Va.
Stadium: Walter J. Zable Stadium at Cary Field (12,259)
Head Coach: Jimmye Laycock 200-141-2 (30 years)
Who's Back: The Tribe return 13 starters (6 Offense, 6 Defense, 1 Special Team).

All-Star Candidates

OLB **Evan Francks**, Sr., started all 14 games for the Tribe in 2009, ranked 2nd on the team with 89 tackles, finished the season with 7.5 tackles for loss, 2.5 sacks, 6 pass breakups, and a team high 3 fumble recoveries, honored as the QB Club Defensive Player of the Week after totaling six tackles in a victory at URI.

MLB **Jake Trantin**, Jr., was named 2009 All CAA Football Second Team, started all 14 games, led the Tribe with 90 tackles, finished the season with 2.5 sacks, 10 tackles for loss, 3 INTs, a forced fumble, a fumble recovery and three pass breakups, honored as the CAA Defensive Player of the Week" after totaling eight tackles, a sack and an interception in a victory against Towson.

RB **Jonathan Grimes**, Jr., selected to the 2009 All CAA Football First Team as a runningback while garnering Third Team All league honors as a kick returner. He became the fastest player in school history to rush for 1,000 yards, reaching the milestone in just 13 games. He led the conference with 1,294 rushing yards last year, a figure that ranks 3rd on the Tribe's single-season list. He was ranked 18th nationally with 92.4 rushing yards/game, 2nd in the league and 13th nationally with 145.9 all-purpose yards/game, honored as the CAA Offensive Co-Player of the Week after rushing for 158 yards with a TD in a win over JMU, rushed for 133 yards with a career high 3 TDs in the NCAA Quarterfinal win at #1 So. Illinois. 2010 Top 10 RBs as noted by The Sports Network.

CB **B.W. Webb**, So., honored as the CAA Defensive Rookie of the Year, and the ECAC Rookie of the Year following the 2009 season, selected to the all CAA Football Second Team as a cornerback and to the all league Third Team as a punt returner, rank tied for 2nd nationally with 8 INTs. Became the first FCS player honored as the FWAA Bronko Nagurski Defensive Player of the Week after intercepting three passes, one of which he returned for a TD in a win at Virginia to open the 2009 season. Added to the Bronko Nagurski Trophy Watch List, and was selected as the Sports Network National Player of the Week, a College Sporting News National All-Star and the CAA Defensive Player of the Week following his performance at Virginia.

Who's Gone: The Tribe lose 11 starters (5 Offense, 5 Defense, 1 Special Team). On offense, QB R.J. Archer, WR D.J. McAulay, TE Rob Varno, C C.J. Muse. On defense, safety, David Caldwell, signed with the Indianapolis Colts, DE Adrian Tracy signed with the New York Giants, DE Sean Lissemore. Special teams, PK Brian Pate.

Last Year: 11 – 3 Overall, 6 – 2 CAA
This Year: 7 – 4 Overall, 5 – 3 CAA

Laycock will say the major difference between last year and this year's 2010 Tribe is the loss of his two all-star defensive linemen (Tracy and Lissemore) and his all-star quarterback Archer. With the graduation of those three, the Tribe lost a lot of leadership. Laycock is relying on the linebacking trio of Trantin, Francks and Sr. Wes Steinman for leadership. He also is confident about his secondary in 2010.

Laycock also is hoping to get improved play from his offensive line and wide receivers. There is good competition on the offensive line with the youngsters, however, breaking in a new center is

giving the coaching staff concerns. Senior Keith Hill returns at right tackle to lead the offensive line.

At the end of spring practice, Laycock liked the work ethic displayed by his team. He also stated that this was a hardworking, focused group, but it's fairly young. William & Mary isn't far enough along with the maturation of the quarterback to name a starter. The Tribe has received a transfer from the University of North Carolina in Mike Paulus. But all of the QBs have a lot more learning to do before a starter can be named.

The Tribe was 6 – 0 at home in 2009, but in 2010, it entertains heavy weights Villanova and Delaware. However, it's the away games against Massachusetts, Old Dominion, Maine, North Carolina, New Hampshire and James Madison that will tell the tale. The Tribe need a .500 record road record to have a shot at making the playoffs. William & Mary might not be a semifinalist in 2010, but it should still be good enough to find its way into the playoffs.

JAMES MADISON DUKES
Location: Harrisonburg, Va.
Stadium: Bridgeforth Stadium, Zane Showker Field (15,500)
Head Coach: Mickey Matthews, 82 – 51 (11 years)
Who's Back: The Dukes return 15 starters (6 Offense, 7 Defense, 2 Special Teams).

All-Star Candidates

DL **Ronnell Brown**, Sr., returning starter, who finished 3rd in 2009 for the Dukes in tackles for loss and is the team's leading returnee in that statistical category. Last year, Brown had 26 tackles, 8.5 TFL, and 3.5 QB sacks.

LT **Theo Sherman**, Sr., three-year returning starter. Sherman has started JMU's last 26 games, and 36 of 37 contests during the last three seasons. He was Third Team All-CAA Football Team honoree in 2008 and 2009. Last year, Sherman was Second Team All Virginia among players from the state's 10 Division I programs as selected by the state's Sports Information Directors Assn. He was a leading performer on JMU's offensive line that last year helped the Dukes average 180.5 yards/game, the No. 17 mark nationally and the No. 2 figure in the CAA Football.

QB **Drew Dudzik**, Sr., named starter for 2010 season after a strong spring practice period, threw for 472 yards, 6 TDs and ran for 158 yards and a score in limited play last season.

LB **Pat Williams**, Jr., was the No. 2 tackler in 2009, and the Dukes' top returning tackler. Williams had 87 tackles, 8 TFL and a QB sack as a linebacker. Williams was the CAA Defensive Rookie of the Year as a safety in 2008.

Who's Gone: The Dukes lose nine starters (5 offense, 4 defense). Arthur Moats, defensive tackle, drafted by the Buffalo Bills, Scotty McGee, kick returner, drafted by the Jacksonville Jaguars, Dorian Brooks, offensive line, signed with the Pittsburgh Steelers, Mike Caussin, tight end, signed with the Jaguars, Rockeed McCarter, wide receiver, signed with the Denver Broncos.

Last Year: 6 – 5 Overall, 4 – 4 CAA
This year: 6 – 5 Overall, 4 – 4 CAA

The descriptive statement that comes out of the Dukes' camp is that the 2010 team is "… an athletic group that runs well." The team is fairly young with only two senior starters. But it's not that inexperienced and it has a chance to be fairly good.

The offensive line is a bit of a question mark. Griff Yancey, Sr. has been converted from safety to runningback. Scott Noble, Jr., tailback, missed the spring due to academic issues. The Dukes picked up a transfer in Nick Emmons, 6-foot-4, 260 pounds from Army to play defensive tackle. Ronnell Brown, Sr., will replace Moats at defensive end. Jamie Veney, Jr., and Pat Williams, Jr., will start at linebacker. Neither is big, but the Dukes have more depth at linebacker than they've had in prior years. All three safeties return. The Dukes are seeking to be competitive in the playoffs in 2010 as well as the CAA race.

Unfortunately for the Dukes, the CAA will be as tough as it's ever been and being light on the offensive line does not help. The loss of Moats and company on defense also will make the Dukes vulnerable against the run.

The Dukes will travel to Virginia Tech, Villanova, Richmond and end the season up in Orono against Maine. The home slate includes tough games against Liberty, Delaware, New Hampshire, Massachusetts and William & Mary. The Dukes will need plenty of depth to navigate that schedule as their bye is during week No. 3.

DELAWARE BLUE HENS
Location: Newark, De.
Stadium: Tubby Raymond Field at Delaware Stadium (22,000)

Head Coach: K.C. Keeler 150-60-1 (16 years), 62-39 (8 years)
Who's Back: The Blue Hens return 17 starters (8 offense, 8 defense, 1 special team).

All-Star Candidates

SS **Anthony Bratton**, Jr., Third-year starter at strong safety, has played 29 career games, made 170 tackles, 8 pass breakups, earned Second Team All-CAA Football in 2009 when he played in nine games. He registered 49 tackles, tied for the team lead in interceptions, Blue Hen TD Club Defensive Player of the Week vs. JMU when he had a season-high, nine tackles with an interception.

LB **Matt Marcorelle**, Sr., Sixth-year player who was granted extra year of eligibility by NCAA in the offseason, will serve as captain for the fourth time, Blue Hens' active career leader with 15 sacks, 31.5 TFL and seven forced fumbles, earned honorable mention in the Sports Network All-American Honors in 2007 and was Second Team All-CAA Football in 2008 and Third Team All-CAA Football in 2007, has played defensive end for most of his career, but is slated to play middle linebacker in 2010.

QB **Pat Devlin**, Sr., 2010 Co-Captain, Candidate for the Walter Payton Award as the top offensive player in the nation at the NCAA FCS Division I level after placing 17th in 2009. Devlin is a CoSIDA Academic All-American candidate. He led the CAA in total offense per game (253.73) and passing yards per game (242.18), and was No. 2 in passing rating (139.12) in 2009 when he completed 220 of 344 passes for 2,664 and 16 TDs with just nine interceptions. He also ran for 4 TDs. Devlin was ranked No. 17 in passing yards per game, No. 21 in total offense and No. 27 in total passing rating among NCAA QBs in 2009. He was ranked No. 8 among returning NCAA QBs in passing yards.

FS **Anthony Walters**, Sr., versatile defensive back who can play cornerback and safety. He will move to free safety this fall. He's started all 37 of his career games, including nine at cornerback and two at strong safety in 2009. Walters is the Blue Hens' active career leader in tackles (183), INTs (8), pass breakups (23, No. 10 all-time at Delaware), and fumble recoveries (4). He was ranked No. 2 among Delaware defensive backs with 55 tackles in 2009 as well as earned First Team All-CAA honors.

Who's Gone: The Hens lose eight starters (3 offense, 4 defense, 1, special team). On offense, wide receiver Mark Duncan, tight end Trevor Mooney, left guard Corey Nicholson. On defense, end Brandon Gilbeaux, signed contract with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, end John Higginson, tackle Demitrius Hester, free safety Charles Graves.

Last Year: 6 – 5 Overall, 4 – 4 CAA
This Year: 7 – 4 Overall, 4 – 4 CAA

The Blue Hens believe they're stronger on defense and much improved on offense. In recent years, the trend has been that the Blue Hens have had success in the second year of their transfer quarterbacks. This being Pat Devlin's second year, high hopes are riding on his and the Blue Hens' play in 2010.

The Blue Hens are pushing to get back to playoffs after a two-year absence. The Blue Hens have not missed the playoffs three years in a row since 1982-85. The offensive line is as deep as it's ever been. The Wildcat offense might not be used in 2010. Jr., Colin Naugle will get the nod at tight end to replace Trevor Mooney. Sr., Mark Mackey is the top returning wide receiver. Sophomores David Hayes and Leon Jackson will be the primary running backs this season.

The biggest concern on defense is the line. Sr., Demitrius Hester will not be with the team in 2010. Filling in for Hester will be So., defensive lineman Irvin Titre, 6-foot, 300 pounds. The Blue Hens did pick up three transfers in the offseason. One transfer was sophomore defensive end Quincy Barr, 6-foot-3, 250 from Hofstra. The Blue Hens also picked up a couple of players from Northeastern, So., linebacker Kyle Hunte and Sr., defensive back Darryl Jones. The strength of the Blue Hens defense will be their linebackers and secondary as all of their starting linebackers return, including Marcorelle, and three defensive backs, including include Bratton and Walters.

The Blue Hens' nonconference schedule is favorable and one they should sweep to likely enter CAA play with a 3-0 record. However, given the strength of the CAA, and the weakness in the Blue Hen defensive line, the Hens will be hardpressed to do better than 4 – 4 in conference. The Hens travel to Richmond, JMU, William & Mary and UMass this year, and host heavyweights Maine and Villanova. The West Chester game might keep the Hens home for the playoffs.

MASSACHUSETTS MINUTEMEN
Location: Amherst, Mass.
Stadium: Warren McGuirk Alumni Stadium (17,000)

Head Coach: Kevin Morris 29 – 38 (7 years), 5 – 6 (1 year)
Who's Back: The Minutemen return 9 starters (4 offense, 4 defense, 1 special team).

All-Star Candidates

Runningback **John Griffin**, Sr., transfer from Northeastern, was named First Team All-CAA Football, NU's Most Valuable Player and Most Improved Player in 2009, ran for 1,009 yards on 207 carries with 5 TDs while catching 25 passes for 178 yards. Griffin was named to the 2009 New England Football Writers FCS All-Star Team and was named CAA Football Offensive Player of the Week for his efforts against Towson as he rushed for a career high 200 yards, including a 70-yard TD run.

Linebacker **Tyler Holmes**, Jr., 2009 All-CAA Football Second Team, led the Minutemen in tackles with 110 (2nd in CAA Football, and 8th in NCAA), 11 per game, team leader with four interceptions, and team-best nine passes defended, 6.5 TFL, 4TH in CAA Football in interceptions per game (.44), Athlon Sports Preseason All American, 2010 Top 10 Linebackers as noted by The Sports Network.

Runningback **Jonathan Hernandez**, Jr., Third-year tailback who is seeing more time in place of All-CAA Football runningback Tony Nelson, played in 10 games and started four last year, had 121 carries for 577 yards and a team-best eight rushing TDs while averaging 57.7 yards/game (8th in CAA), caught 10 passes for 107 yards, named CAA Offensive Player of the Week after the New Hampshire game.

Tight end **Emil Igwenagu**, Jr., great athlete who played as a H back last season, has also played runningback, tight end and linebacker at UMass. Igwenagu was tied for 3rd on the team with 24 catches for 288 yards and a TD, playing in all 11 games with three starts as "H" back.

Who's Gone: UMass loses 15 starters (7 offense, 7 defense, 1 special team) left tackle Vlad Ducasse, drafted in the second round by the New York Jets, wide receiver Victor Cruz signed with the New York Giants, wide receiver Jeremy Horn signed with the Kansas City Chiefs, safety Jeromy Miles with the Cincinnati Bengals, fullback Chris Zardas with the Philadelphia Eagles, runningback Tony Nelson signed with the CFL's Toronto Argonauts.

Last Year: 5 – 6 Overall, 3 – 5 CAA
This Year: 5 – 6 Overall, 3 – 5 CAA

Last year, I picked this team to finish 4 – 7 and it finished one game better at 5 – 6. The 2009 team had more talent than the 2010 team as evidenced by the players going pro in April.

Coach Kevin Morris' focus this fall is creating turnovers defensively and not turning the ball over on offense. The Minutemen will look to knock people off the ball and be physical. The offensive line averages 6-foot-4, 300 pounds while the defensive line averages 6-foot-2, 265. UMass picked up wide receiver Anthony Nelson, Sr., from Hofstra, runningback John Griffin, Sr., from Northeastern, and left tackle Greg Niland, Sr., from Northeastern to help out on offense. Quarterback Kyle Havens, Sr., had a good spring and will lead the offense in 2010. Defensively, the Minuteman will depend on recruits to fill in on the defensive line.

Morris states the team is young, has good speed and is hungry to win. Unfortunately, the schedule-makers were not kind. UMass opens at home against 2009 semifinalist William & Mary before facing off against Patriot League leader, Holy Cross, FBS Michigan and Big South leader Stony Brook. After its bye, it must face Richmond, at New Hampshire, at JMU before coming home to Maine and Delaware. UMass will continue to experience growing pains before the ship is righted hopefully in 2011.

RICHMOND SPIDERS
Location: Richmond, Va.
Stadium: E. Claiborne Robins Stadium (8,700)
Head Coach: Latrell Scott, First year
Who's Back: The Spiders return 7 starters (3 offense, 4 defense).

All-Star Candidates

Wide receiver **Kevin Grayson**, Sr., Three-time All-CAA Football selection, winning First-Team honors in 2007 and 2008 along with the league's Offensive Rookie of the Year in 2007. Grayson averages 13.4 yards/catch during his three-year career. Grayson enters 2010 2nd on UR's all-time list for receptions (177), 3rd in yardage (2,368), and 10th in TD catches (12). Grayson was 2nd on the team in receptions (48) and yardage (545) in 09.

Defensive tackle **Martin Parker**, Sr., 2010 Sr. captain, Second Team All-CAA Football in 2009, finalist for the Buck Buchanan Award, All-American Selection (First Team from College Sporting News, Second Team by The Sports Network). Parker collected a team-leading 6.5 sacks and 15.5 TFL in 2009. Parker was named CAA Defensive Player of the Week after

a victory over William & Mary. Parker was the anchor of the Spiders' defense that finished as the nation's fifth-best against the run in 2009 (79 yards/game). Sporting News and Athlon Sports preseason All-American, 2010 Top 10 Defensive Linemen as noted by The Sports Network.

Linebacker **Eric McBride**, Sr., 2010 Sr. captain, Three-time defending First Team All-CAA Football pick, Two-time defending First Team All-America pick by College Sporting News, 3rd on the team in tackles in 2009 (93), led the Spiders in forced fumbles (4), and recovered fumbles (3), enters 2010 with 327 career tackles and is just shy of cracking the Spiders top 10 list. McBride has started all 43 games in his career and was the CAA preseason player of the year in 09. 2010 Top 10 Linebackers as noted by The Sports Network.

Cornerback **Justin Rogers**, First Team All-America (AFCA) in 2009, enters 2010 as a three-time First Team All-CAA Football selection, has 10 career interceptions (3 in 2009) that ties for 7th all-time for Richmond. Rogers is the Spiders' career leader in kickoff return yardage (2,102). Athlon Sports Preseason All American, and 2010 Top 10 Defensive Backs as noted by The Sports Network.

Who's Gone: UR graduated 16 (7 offense, 7 defense, 2 special teams) starting seniors last Spring. Among them were quarterback, Eric Ward, runningback Justin Forte and four-fifths of the starting offensive line. On defense, the entire line, which included Parker Miles, three defensive backs and placekicker Andrew Howard.

Last Year: 11 – 2 Overall, 7 – 1 CAA (Co-Champs)
This Year: 3 – 8 Overall, 2 – 6 CAA

New coach, Latrell Scott admitted he lost 15 good football players to graduation, and that his job will be to try and get the most out of the young guys. UR will have to reload just like everyone else. Scott acknowledges that the 2010 team will be inexperienced, and it will be young on the offensive line.

UR picked up two transfers in the offseason to help offensively. Quarterback Aaron Corp, Jr., transferred from the University of Southern California, and left guard Richard Muldrow, 6-foot-6, 285 transferred in from Rutgers. Center Drew Lachenmayer, Sr., is the lone returning starter on the offensive line, and Scott will depend on Lachenmayer's senior leadership.

Scott feels good about his quarterback situation as Corp and John Laub, So., battle for the starting position.

The defensive line will be comprised of defensive end Brandon Scott, RsFr., defensive tackle Corey Jackson, Rs.Jr., Parker, and DL, Kerry Wynn, Rs.Fr. Both cornerbacks return, but the safety jobs have yet to be won. Parker and McBride will provide the senior leadership on defense.

Scott understands the strength of the CAA and will do his best to get the most out of his players. The Spiders had a good three-year run under two different coaches. Now on their third coach in four years, the cupboard of players might be bare, but the expectation of winning remains high in Richmond. The Spiders will go through a rebuilding phase and hopefully be back in the playoff mix in a couple of years.

TOWSON TIGERS
Location: Towson, Md.
Stadium: Minnegan Field at Johnny Unitas Stadium (11,198)
Head Coach: Rob Ambrose 5 – 16 (2 years), 2 – 9 (1 year)
Who's Back: The Tigers return 16 starters (7 offense, 9 defense)

All-Star Candidates

Runningback **Tremayne Dameron**, So., led the Tigers in rushing in 2009 with 588 yards on 177 carries, averaged 53.5 yards/game, 10th in the CAA, scored team-high 8 TDs, ranked 7th in the CAA.

Defensive tackle **Yaky Ibia**, Sr., two-year starter at defensive tackle named to the FCS Academic All-Star team by FCS Athletic Directors Association and the CoSIDA Academic All American District 2 University Division team. Ibia had 52 tackles in 10 games last year, ranking seventh on the Tigers, ranked 10th in the CAA in TFL, ranked ninth in the CAA among defensive line in tackles per game, has 94 career tackles with 15 TFL.

Cornerback **Jeremy Gardner**, Sr., three-year starter at cornerback for the Tigers who has started all 30 games of his career. Gardner had 64 tackles last year, third on the team and eighth among CAA defensive backs in tackles. Gardner led the Tigers in pass breakups (4), has 124 career tackles with two interceptions and has returned 8 kickoffs in his career for a 17.6 average.

Wide receiver **Hakeem Moore**, Sr., was tied for the team lead with 28 receptions for 286 yards and 1 TD last year. Moore was the Tigers' top kickoff return

specialist, who finished fourth in CAA Football with an average of 22.5 yards/carry in 2009. Moore led the Tigers in all-purpose yards for the second straight year with 1,046, ranked 3rd in the CAA by averaging 116.2 all-purpose ypg.

Who's Gone: The Tigers lose eight starters to graduation (4 offense, 2 defense, 2 special teams), most notably, wide receivers Casey Cegles and Dave Newsom along with linebacker Alex Butt and defensive lineman Brady Smith.

Last Year: 2 – 9 Overall, 1 – 7 CAA
This Year: 3 – 8 Overall, 1 – 7 CAA

Coach Rob Ambrose expects the Tigers will be better in 2010. The first season under Ambrose was a learning year. The players are excited and know what is expected, and they know what it takes to play against good competition. The Tigers are over the mental hump, they're a year smarter and a year stronger, but they still have a long way to go.

The 2010 team is physically bigger and stronger. There's a night and day difference between the two teams size wise. Ambrose is pleased that it will have much better depth this season, too. The offensive line averages 6-foot-4, 290 pounds while the defensive line averages 6'3, 280. Depth at wide receiver and linebacker does give Ambrose worry as the Tigers are a bit thin in those areas.

A few Tigers have made position switches to better serve the needs of the team. Junior Danny Collins switched from defensive back to outside linebacker. Junior Josh McCants switched from defensive back to linebacker. The Tigers picked up sophomore Jordan Dangerfield from Hofstra to play strong safety and junior Chris Hart, a JUCO transfer, to compete at the quarterback spot.

Due to injuries, the Tigers had to play five quarterbacks last year. Sophomore Peter Athens was a big contributor as a freshman at quarterback and he's back from injuries and ready to go according to Ambrose. Hart did well in the spring as did sophomore Brian Potts. Ambrose is pleased with his depth at quarterback and with the overall conditioning and strength of his team, believing that the offseason workouts will help deter injuries during the season. Ambrose is working on leadership development on his defensive line and is admittedly trying to do 15 years of work in five.

The Tigers are on the upswing, but are still a year or two away before they can ascend the CAA ladder.

RHODE ISLAND RAMS
Location: Kingston, R.I.
Stadium: Meade Stadium (6,555)
Head Coach: Joe Trainer 14 – 30 (4 years), 1 – 10 (1 year)
Who's Back: The Rams return 18 starters (7 offense, 9 defense, 2 special teams)

All-Star Candidates

Linebacker **Matt Hansen**, Sr., registered 287 career tackles, which ranks 6th all time. Hansen ranks 5th all time with URI in TFL (28.5), and finished second on the team in 2009 with 103 tackles. Hansen earned All-CAA Football Second Team and All New England honors as a sophomore in 2008.

Wide receiver **Billy Morgan**, So., transferred to URI from Hofstra in the offseason. Morgan caught six passes for 100 yards in the Blue/White game at Meade Stadium this spring. Morgan finished his freshman season at Hofstra fifth on the team in receptions with 13.

Defensive tackle **Willie McGinnis**, Jr., had 41 tackles and 6.5 TFL in 2009, started 23 consecutive games at defensive tackle.

Defensive tackle **Matt Rae**, Jr., earned CAA Football and CoSIDA/ESPN The Magazine All Academic honors. Rae was a mainstay for the Rams at defensive tackle as he logged 10 starts, and finished the year with 26 tackles and 2.5 TFL.

Who's Gone: The Rams lose six starters (4 offense, 2 defense). Most notably on offense are wide receivers Joe Bellini and Shawn Leonard along with center Matt Vitti. On defense, cornerback Rodney Mitchell and defensive end Steve Weedon will be missed.

Last Year: 1 – 10 Overall, 0 – 8 CAA
This Year: 3 – 8 Overall, 1 – 7 CAA

Coach Joe Trainer will tell you that " ... the maturation process has taken place." Trainer is excited about the product he's putting out on the field in 2010. Athletes who were 265 in 2009 are now up to 285/290. The offensive line averages 6-foot-5, 295 pounds while the defensive line averages 6-foot-3, 280 pounds. The defensive line has beefed up from 255/265. Trainer is comfortable that this year he will get to redshirt some of his freshmen. Leadership will come from his senior

class, featuring linebacker Matt Hansen and defensive tackle Willie McGinnis.

The Rams were fortunate to pick up three transfers from Hofstra in wide receiver Billy Morgan, So., quarterback Steve Probst, Jr., and safety Chris Edmond, Jr. All are expected to make an impact.

The Rams came out of the spring fairly healthy, but there's not a lot of depth on the offensive line and the secondary is unproven. While every game in the CAA is a challenge, Trainer believes his squad could get six or more wins out of the 2010 season.

With the depth and talent in the CAA, figure that the Rams are still a year or two away from reaching that mark, but they're moving in the right direction.

2010 GAMES OF THE WEEK

William & Mary @ Massachusetts, Sept. 4
The Tribe are retooling after their semifinal run of a year ago with unproven quarterbacks and a new defensive line. The Minutemen are rebuilding on both sides of the ball after getting hit hard by graduation. Offseason preparation gets an early test. To the victor go the spoils.

South Dakota State @ Delaware, Sept. 11
The Jackrabbits were a playoff team in 2009, the Blue Hens wish to become one in 2010. Two preseason top 25 teams playing what could be a playoff preview come December. Can the Jacks overcome the cross country travel and be ready to take on one of the CAA' s best? Get your tickets early because this game likely will be sold out.

Elon @ Richmond, Sept. 18
The last time these teams met was in the 2009 playoffs with the Spiders hanging on for victory. Now Richmond entertains the Phoenix in their home opener inside their new stadium on the Richmond campus. The Phoenix will be looking for revenge and would love nothing more than to spoil the Spiders' debut at Robbins Stadium.

Liberty @ James Madison, Sept. 25
The Big South vs. the CAA. Previous matches have gone the way of the Dukes, but the Flames are getting closer. Is this the year they pull off the upset? The Dukes are still rebuilding and more than just their stadium. Should the loser of this game miss the playoffs, they might point to this game as the reason.

Villanova @ William & Mary, Oct. 2
This game could be billed as "The Battle of the Titans." In the 2009 semifinal, the Wildcats came from behind in the fourth quarter to win a 14 – 13 thriller, which helped propel them to their National Championship triumph over Montana. The Tribe has had the entire offseason to ponder that they were 15 minutes away from the national championship game. Do the Tribe have enough to overtake the Wildcats in 2010? In Week No. 5, we shall find out.

Maine @ Delaware, Oct. 9
The last time the Black Bears visited Tubby Raymond Field, they soundly defeated the Blue Hens on national TV. You can bet the Hens haven't forgotten, and they'll be looking to exact revenge. Pat Devlin will use everything in his arsenal to try and outpoint the Black Bears, but Maine coach Jack Cosgrove will use everything in his power to summon the spirits of the "Black Hole" past. Look for an unstoppable force to clash with an immoveable object.

Richmond @ Massachusetts, Oct. 16
In 2009, the No. 1-ranked Richmond Spiders did a number on visiting UMass. In 2010, look for the young Minutemen to return the favor. While the Spiders will not be ranked No. 1, they will have veteran players looking to repeat their 2009 performance. This game will feature a lot of new players. At the end of the day, whichever team's defensive line has progressed the furthest will have the upper hand.

James Madison @ Villanova, Oct. 23
Everyone remembers the "Hail Mary." A memory just recently vanquished by many Villanovans. Revenge was had in 2009 as the Cats soundly defeated the Dukes in Bridgeforth. Nonetheless, the Dukes own the last victory over the Cats on the Main Line. One more score to settle for the Wildcats. Meanwhile, the Dukes also will be looking to erase the memory of their 2009 loss to the Cats. In late October, the weather gets a little funny, and it could be raining cats and dogs. This game could well come down to another 4.3-second finish.

Rhode Island @ Towson, Oct. 30
As CAA victories will be few and far in between, these teams would have been looking at this game all year as the one they had to and needed to win. Whichever team wants it more will gain what well could be their sole CAA win.

William & Mary @ New Hampshire, Nov. 6
The Tribe is undefeated of late against the Cats. Both teams will be seeking to establish

themselves as strong playoff contenders besides battling for CAA supremacy. The winner will have advanced their claim in both.

New Hampshire @ Villanova, Nov. 13
This game could possibly be a playoff preview much like it was in 2009. Injuries notwithstanding, both teams will be looking to flex their offensive muscles while playing smash-mouth football on defense. The question that remains is whether they'll save some for the playoffs. Game on.

James Madison @ Maine, Nov. 20
Even though it's the regular-season finale for these two, for one, the playoffs begin as the loser will most likely be left out. The Dukes have to leave the warmth of Virginia to travel to the cold of Orono trying to fight their way into the postseason. The Black Hole defense of the Black Bears awaits all visitors and will be especially rude on the eve of Selection Sunday. No one gives you a playoff pass, you must earn it. The winner will have done just that.■

2010 Great West Preview
By Kent Schmidt

Predicted Order of Finish

1. UC Davis
2. Cal Poly
3. North Dakota
4. Southern Utah
5. South Dakota

Offensive Player of the Year: Tysson Poots, WR, Sr., Southern Utah
Defensive Player of the Year: Marty Mohamed, LB, Sr., Cal Poly

Biggest Shoes to Fill: Mike Morales, LB, UC Davis
Morales finished his career second on the Aggies' career charts for solo tackles (135), third for career stops (261) and sixth for assisted tackles (126). He also posted five career interceptions. He helped anchor the Aggie defense in 2009—posting a team-high 81 tackles, nearly 30 more than anyone else on the team. Included in his total stops were 4.5 tackles for losses and a half-sack.

The Great West Conference enters its seventh year of existence this fall and just as most years of it existence, the conference school total is one below the minimum to become an automatic bid conference like the two new conferences of the Big South and Northeast gaining this achievement this year with the expanded playoffs.

One thing that will be common with the GWC is that the race for its championship could have any one of the five schools conceivably win. Last year, UC Davis won the title on their last conference game of the season—a win over North Dakota that gave the Aggies their second GWC title in their history in finishing 3-1 inside the conference and 6-5 overall. UND, meanwhile, finished in a three way tie with South Dakota and Southern Utah for second with 2-2 records. The conference's most consistent short historical performer in Cal Poly finished last in the conference for the first time ever with just a 1-3 GWC mark.

North Dakota and South Dakota will remain as ineligible for postseason play. The two Dakota schools will be eligible for the FCS playoffs in 2012.

The Great West may see its existence fad if some of the western FBS conferences look for new teams to backfill openings. The two California schools are rumored to be members of the Western Athletic Conference and if the Big Sky loses any members, Southern Utah likely would be a candidate for that league for all of SUU's sports.

In any event this year will still go on with the Great West and UC Davis looks like the class of the conference again this year and hopes that even though the expanded playoffs does not include an automatic bid for this conference champion that the two extra at-large spots will generate a spot for them. It is not inconceivable that either that improving teams in Southern Utah or South Dakota also finish atop of the standings.

UC Davis finished 2009 just 6-5 overall, struggling early in the season before finishing strong. The Aggies lost three of their first four but finished winning five of six to gain their first ever out right GWC title—they did share the 2005 title with Cal Poly. Overall, the Aggies will need to replace seven All-GWC performers but still have some key components to defend their title.

On offense, UC Davis will need to replace would-be senior quarterback Greg Denham, who left Davis a year early to go into ministry. His replacement will be selected from sophomore Austin Heyworth, junior Sean Maraz, or freshman Randy Wright. Heyworth likely has the edge as he led the Aggies last year to scoring two touchdowns in just a quarter of action in substituting for Denham in a win over Portland State. Coach Biggs' team will also need to find a new favorite target for the new quarterback after the losses of Great West Offensive player of the Year Chris Carter, as well as Bakari Grant. The top receiver should be Sean Creadick after caught 39 balls for 466 yards and five scores a year ago.

The Aggies will also return two All-GWC offensive linemen to protect the new quarterback in senior Mark Tos and sophomore Sean Davies. The line will also have All-GWC tight end Dean Rogers back after he recorded 29 receptions for 326 yards and two touchdowns.

The Aggie defense will likely be the more

experienced side of the ball but like the offense, it will need to replace a key piece in linebacker Mike Morales. The leadership role for this side of the ball will likely go to senior free safety Danny Hart, who was named to the All-GWC team after recording a team second best 53 tackles a year ago. Two other All-GWC performers in defensive linemen; senior Eric Sobotka (32 tackles, 5 TFL) and junior Jake Maxson (36 tackles, 7.5 TFL) should also be leaders for the Aggie defense.

On special teams, UC Davis has a top performer in place kicker Sean Kelley. The junior finished 2009 hitting 12-of-15 field goal attempts with a long of 52 yards in being named to the All-GWC team.

A team that hopes to rebound after a poor 2009 season is **Cal Poly**. The Mustangs first year under Coach Tim Walsh was rather dismal, at least for Cal Poly standards at 4-7. It was the first losing season in San Luis Obispo since 2002. The former Portland State coach can take solace in that he had a very young team—in fact just six seniors comprised the 2009 Mustangs, meaning this year's team should be experienced to improve with 19 starters returning. The biggest issue last year was playing away from the friendly confines of Alex G. Spanos Stadium. The Mustangs lost all six of their games away from home and scored just 20 points in the second half of those games. The Mustangs will be tested in the middle part of the schedule with five straight road games after starting the season with two at home but will finish with three of four at home.

Historically, the defense has been a key component for Cal Poly—winning three consecutive Buck Buchanan Awards with three different performers from 2004 to 2006. Last year, the Mustangs converted to a 4-3 alignment versus the 3-4 version they used previously. The leader of this year's defensive squad should be senior linebacker Marty Mohamed, who was the top tackler in 2009 with 93 and also tallied three sacks and 8.5 tackles for loss. Sophomore Kenny Jackson may also be in line for future awards after a highlight filled freshman season where he tallied 58 tackles with 4.5 for a loss. Senior safety Scottie Cordier finished with a team high four interceptions and should be the secondary's leader, along with junior cornerback Asa Jackson. The Great West rookie of the year in 2008 notched 48 tackles and also intercepted two passes with one of his thefts was returned for a touchdown.

The Mustang offense looks to be led by senior quarterback Tony Smith. A year ago, Smith threw for 1618 yards and 15 touchdowns. He also ran for 230 yards and another five scores. One thing Smith should have in front of him with including three All-GWC members in senior guard Will Mitchell, senior center Hal Kelley, and junior tackle Scott Winnewisser. That line should also be able to open up holes for running backs junior Jake Romanelli and senior Jordan Yocum. Romanelli rushed for a team-leading 492 yards in 2009 and two scores a year ago while Yocum gained 459 yards and scored once.

The leading receiver for the Mustangs also returns with senior Dominique Johnson. He caught 43 passes for 741 yards and six touchdowns a year ago. He underwent shoulder surgery in January and did not practice this spring but is expected to be ready to go this fall.

The big offseason news for **North Dakota** has been their battle over the Fighting Sioux nickname. The state's Board of Higher Education agreed to retire the name but could still be saved if North Dakota's Standing Rock and Spirit Lake Sioux tribes agree by August 2011 to give the university permission to use them for at least 30 years. On the field, the Sioux was an up and down team a year ago. They lost to NAIA Sioux Falls but defeated perennial GWC power Cal Poly and had a chance to win the GWC title outright but lost narrowly at UC Davis to finish in the tie for second. This year's team returns 15 starters overall to try to improve on the 6-5 mark from a year ago.

If the team improves, it likely will be due to improved play from senior quarterback Jake Landry, who passed for 1,968 yards and 12 touchdowns but also threw nine interceptions. He will be helped on the offense by junior running back Josh Murray, who is back after sitting out the 2009 season due to academic reasons. He was the 2008 Great West Freshman of the Year after logging 1,146 yards and 12 touchdowns. The backfield will be also joined by last year's leading rusher in sophomore Mitch Sutton, who was named as an All-GWC member after rushing for 704 yards and six touchdowns. Sutton was also named as the GWC Rookie of the Year last year.

The Sioux defense will be the more experienced side of the ball this year. Leading the UND defenders are senior linebacker Ryan Kasowski and senior nose guard Ty Boyle up front. Kasowski was a first team All-GWC member after leading the team in sacks with 4.5 and recorded 35 tackles. Boyle added 19 tackles and 2.5 of those for a loss. Middle linebacker Curtis Dublanko, also a senior, should provide further leadership. He was already drafted 15th overall in the CFL Draft by the Montreal Alouettes

after finishing second on the team in tackles (59) a year ago despite starting just seven games.

The Sioux secondary will have two leaders in junior Dominique Hawkins at a corner position and senior Kris Ankenbauer at safety. Hawkins led the team in tackles a year ago with 61 and pass breakups with four, while intercepting two passes. Ankenbauer added 56 tackles and three pass breakups in 2009.

Southern Utah is a team that is on the rise and just may finish better than the predicted fourth place just as they did a year ago in tying for second. The turnaround in Cedar City is nothing short of miraculous by Coach Ed Lamb. A year ago, SUU finished 5-6 overall, which was the best record for the Thunderbirds since 2004 when the team finished 6-5. Last year, two of the losses were by a three or less and two were two FBS teams as well. This year, SUU plays two FBS opponents on the road in Wyoming and San Jose State but will have 18 total starters back to help improve on the five win total.

The offense for SUU will be highlighted by All-American wide receiver Tysson Poots, who finished 2009 with 85 catches for 1,081 yards and 15 touchdowns—setting single-season school records for receptions and touchdown receptions and leading the GWC in all three categories. He helped led SUU to score over 33 points per game and over 400 yards per game. One of the primary concerns for the Thunderbirds heading into the season is who will be throwing Poots the ball. The heir apparent to record-setting quarterback Cade Cooper appears to be sophomore Brad Sorensen, a transfer who redshirted at FBS Brigham Young last fall. Sorensen, however, was pressed by junior Zack Olsen.

Poots is not the only receiver that the new signal caller will have as Fesi Sitake, who on any other team in the GWC would be the top receiver given his numbers. He tallied 79 passes for 848 yards with nine touchdowns and finished the season tied for 10th in the nation in receptions per game (7.18). Sitalke is also a strong special teams performer as he ranked seventh in the nation in punt returns with an average of 14.79 yards per return with one returned all the way for a score.

The T-Bird defense will find its three leaders in the secondary as they try to improve on giving up over 33 points per game a season ago. They return three All-GWC performers in three of the four positions in senior cornerbacks Akeem Anifowoshe and Colin Pretlow and junior safety Erron Vonner. Anifowoshe tallied 68 tackles, 2.5 tackles for loss, forced one fumble, and recovered a team-high four —returning one for a school-record 99 yards for a score. Pretlow led the team in interceptions (4) and passes broken up (7) and finishing second on the squad with 83 tackles. Vonner finished third on the team in tackles with 68 and added 2.5 tackles for losses with an interception that was returned for a score.

Like SUU, **South Dakota** does not seem like a lower division team either, as they shared the tie for second in the league with UND and SUU and finished 5-5 overall. The Coyotes, like their transitional partner of UND, were an up and down team in 2009. One overtime defeat actually cost USD the GWC title. The home game in mid-October against UC Davis that a blocked point after touchdown cost them the game and ultimately the Great West crown. This year's team will have 13 starters back but will need to replace two top performers one each side of the ball in quarterback Noah Shepard and defensive tackle Ko Quaye.

The offense, while with a new quarterback, will have returning All-GWC running back Chris Ganious back for his senior year for Coach Ed Meierkort's team that scored over 32 points per game. Ganious rushed for 828 yards and four touchdowns as the top Coyote back in 2009. The offensive line in front of him will be headed by junior tackle Tom Compton. The line and the new quarterback will also have All-GWC tight end London Landry back for his senior season after he caught 24 balls for 248 yards and five scores. Sophomore wide receiver Tom Flanagan looks to be the top target for the new signal caller after leading the team his freshman season with 45 catches and four touchdowns—both of which set USD freshman records in receptions and touchdown receptions. In total, he had 530 yards receiving.

Throwing the ball this year likely will be a junior but it probably will be into fall camp before a definite starter is known. The two juniors vying for the spot are Dante Warren and JUCO transfer Brandon Gorsuch. Warren saw limited action a year ago in throwing for 127 yards and rushing for 21 with a touchdown. Gorsuch comes to Vermillion via Arizona Western CC, where he threw for 1,945 yards and 14 touchdowns.

Like SUU, the Coyote defense must improve to get a win total improvement in giving up over 27 points per game. The Coyotes will rely on two returning All-GWC performers in juniors; linebacker Adam Broders and free safety Shane Potter. Broders led the team in tackles in 2009 with 78, while Potter tied for the team lead in interceptions with two and was tied for second in tackles with 67.

Great West Games of the Week

North Dakota @ Idaho, Sept.2
The Sioux open up with former Big Sky member Vandals in what could be a good chance for a FCS upset.

Montana @ Cal Poly, Sept. 11
The Grizzlies have never lost to the Mustangs in the regular season. Will this year be the year Cal Poly can pull it off?

UC Davis @ San Diego, Sept. 18
Two non-conference California schools face off in southern California. Will the Aggies be up for this road trip?

Cal Poly @ McNeese State, Sept. 25
This is the Mustangs second straight trip to a Southland foe. Will facing Texas State in the prior week have any effect on the Mustangs?

North Dakota @ South Dakota, Oct. 2
These two Dakota schools no longer play for a trophy after previously playing for the Sitting Bull trophy but still will be a bragging rights game for the winner.

Southern Utah @ North Dakota, Oct. 9
SUU handed the Sioux a loss last year in Cedar City. Will the T-Birds be able to do it again but this time in Grand Forks?

Cal Poly @ Southern Utah, Oct. 16
SUU defeated the Mustangs in San Luis Obispo last year so can they do it again at home?

North Dakota @ Cal Poly, Oct. 23
These two likely will be in the thick of the GWC race at this point in the season. Who will have the upper hand after this contest?

Southern Utah @ UC Davis, Oct. 30
The favored Aggies can not overlook the Thunderbirds in this game.

Cal Poly @ South Dakota, Nov. 6
Will the DakotaDome in Vermillion cause any issues for the visiting Mustangs?

UC Davis @ Cal Poly, Nov. 13
Battle for the Golden Horseshoe is in San Luis Obispo this year.

Sacramento State @ UC Davis, Nov. 20
The Aggies second straight rivalry game. This one's for the Causeway Carriage in the Causeway Classic in Davis this year.

Conference Capsules

Cal Poly Mustangs
Location: San Luis Obispo, CA
Stadium: Alex G. Spanos Stadium (11,075 Capacity)
Head Coach: Tim Walsh (4-7, CP & 121-89 overall) 2nd Season
Who's Gone: DE Ryan Shotwell, DE, LB Carlton Gillespie, S David Fullerton, CB Xavier Gardner.
Who's Back: QB Tony Smith, FB Jake Romanelli, WR Dominique Johnson, OT Art Munoz, OG Will Mitchell, OC Hal Kelley, OT Scott Winnewisser, DT James Chen, LB Kenny Jackson, LB Marty Mohamed, CB Asa Jackson.
Historical Fact: Cal Poly won the Division II national title in 1980 by defeating Eastern Illinois 10-3.
Last Season: The Mustangs had their first losing season (4-7) since 2002 in Coach Tim Walsh's first season in San Luis Obispo.
This Season: After a rebuilding season, the Mustangs hope to get back to their winning ways in 2010.

North Dakota Fighting Sioux
Location: Grand Forks, ND
Stadium: Alerus Center (12,748 Capacity)
Head Coach: Chris Mussman (12-9, UND & Overall) 3rd Season
Who's Gone: WR Ismael Bamba, K/P Brandon Hellevang,
Who's Back: LB Ryan Kasowski, OT Kyle Bondy, NG Ty Boyle, CB Dominique Hawkins, RB Mitch Sutton, DB Joel Schwenzfeier, LB Curtis Dublanko. QB Jake Landry, S Kris Ankenbauer, DE Ross Brenneman.
Historical Fact: UND made the DII playoffs 14 times and have one national title and another championship game appearance in their football history.
Last Season: The Sioux, in their second season as a DI team, finished 6-5 overall.
This Season: This year's team will have 15 starters back to try to improve on the six win total from 2009.

South Dakota Coyotes
Location: Vermillion, SD
Stadium: DakotaDome (10,000 Capacity)
Head Coach: Ed Meierkort (44-23, USD & 99-78 Overall) 7th Season
Who's Gone: QB Noah Shepard, WR Dan Skelly, DT Ko Quaye, OL Jake Arthur, LB Ryan Routh.
Who's Back: RB Chris Ganious, TE London Landry, LB Adam Broders, S Shane Potter, OL Tom Compton.
Historical Fact: The Coyotes have made the playoffs three times, including a championship game appearance in 1986 as a Division II member.
Last Season: USD finished 5-5 a year ago after a 6-5 mark in 2008.
This Season: The Coyotes hope to rebound from last year in their second Division I campaign.

Southern Utah Thunderbirds
Location: Cedar City, UT
Stadium: Eccles Coliseum (8,500 Capacity)
Head Coach: Ed Lamb (9-13, SUU & Overall) 3rd Season
Who's Gone: OL Steven Boyer, QB Cade Cooper, WR Mitch Jessop, LB Rob Takeno, DL Chad Westwood, P Trevor Ward.
Who's Back: WR Tysson Poots, WR Fesi Sitake, OL Zach Brackus, RB Major Gray, RB Austin Minefee, DT Cody Larsen, CB Collin Pretlow, CB Erron Vonner, LB Drew Willard.
Historical Fact: SUU was an independent DI football team from 1997 to 2003 before joining the Great West in 2004.
Last Season: New Coach Ed Lamb came to Cedar City to start the T-Bird turnaround two years ago with a 4-7 record and improved to 5-6 last year.
This Season: Lamb hopes to continue his team's upward climb this year in Cedar City with 18 starters returning this year.

UC Davis Aggies
Location: Davis, CA
Stadium: Aggie Stadium (10,849 Capacity)
Head Coach: Bob Biggs (130-66-1, UCD & Overall), 18th Season
Who's Gone: WR Chris Carter, LB Mike Morales, QB Greg Denham, WR Bakari Grant.
Who's Back: OT Mark Tos, OG Sean Davies, TE Dean Rogers, WR Sean Creadick, S Danny Hart, DL Eric Sobotka, DL Jake Maxson, K Sean Kelley.
Historical Fact: The Aggies were a DII power — playing in the national title game in 1981, a loss to then SW Texas State. UC Davis moved to the DI ranks in 2002 but still holds the DII record of 18 playoff appearances.
Last Season: The Aggies finished above the .500 mark (6-5) for the first time in three years and won the GWC title outright for the first time ever. Prior to the losing season in 2007, the Aggies had 37 straight winning seasons.
This Season: UC Davis hopes for at least one more win more than in 2009 to get consideration for the FCS postseason for the first time in their short DI history. ■

Ivy League 2010 Preview
By Charles Burton

Predicted Order of Finish

1. Harvard
2. Penn
3. Brown
4. Yale
5. Columbia
6. Dartmouth
7. Princeton
8. Cornell

Players of the Year
Offense: QB Kyle Newhall-Caballero, Brown
Defense: FS Collin Zych, Harvard

Biggest Shoes To Fill: LB Jake Lewko, Penn
Football is the quintessential team game, but Penn's Jake Lewko last year was the sort of team leader that made the Quaker defense from a very good unit in 2008 to the best unit in FCS in 2009. It wasn't so much the numbers he put up last year – 76 tackles, 8 tackles for loss, 2 forced fumbles and 1 blocked kick – but the team numbers his entire unit put up, including allowing a FCS-low 217 yards per game and allowing less than 10 points per contest. Lewko would make his reputation in the biggest games of the year as well: in the Ivy League championship-clinching game against Harvard, he would have 15 tackles and 2 tackles for loss.

Ivy League Postseason Is A "Non-Starter"
In the past, Franklin Field hosted something it had never hosted before: a postseason game.

Unfortunately for the Ivy League football champion Penn Quakers, it wasn't a home game in the FCS playoffs.

It was a lacrosse postseason tournament, held in the spring of 2010 - and was the first Ivy League conference tournament in history.

But the circumstances behind the tournament's creation gave fresh ammunition to the scores of Ivy League football players and fans about the Ivy League's self-imposed ban on postseason play.

"We've heard that the leading argument for a lacrosse tournament — to the exclusion of other sports — is that two or possibly even three Ivy League teams could qualify for the NCAA tournament," said Dave Solomon of the New Haven (Conn.) Register. In other words, when multiple teams can qualify for a postseason tournament, it's perfectly OK to overturn 50 years of "principle" in not allowing any postseason events.
"The league stands on haughty ceremony when it comes to football, but it's OK to stuff the NCAA with lacrosse teams?" Solomon asked.

When asked by the Philadelphia Inquirer's Jonathan Tannenwald if the Ivy League postseason ban in football might be lifted in the wake of other Ivy League postseason tournaments, executive director Robin Harris shut the door almost immediately to that notion. "That's an issue that with the presidents is absolutely a nonstarter, and it has to do with more than class time and exams," she said. "It also has to do with focusing on the tradition of intra-league competition in football, and our history, and the tradition of culminating with certain games at the end of the season - certainly the Harvard-Yale tradition."

Ah, yes. Class times and exams – those old chestnuts that have been bandied about for decades as to why the Ivy League does not participate in the FCS playoffs. In this response, Ms. Harris simply was upholding the tradition of her predecessor, Jeff Orleans, who also did not touch the Ivy League's long-standing ban on postseason competition for football.

The sad thing is that the two tired, old defenses of the status quo that Ms. Harris offered up – the tradition of intra-league play, and class time and exams – are even more threadbare than ever once you consider the actions of the Ivy League in the last year.

Prolonging the postseason ban in football due to class time and exams? Princeton's men's lacrosse team, playing in the NCAA tournament, played its last game in the NCAA quarterfinals on May 16 – exactly one day before its spring semester finals were scheduled. The team it lost to? Cornell – whose team was already missing final exams (finals for Cornell started May 13).

It's astounding that the Ivy League cares so much about the final exam scores of its football teams, but don't seem to care at all as long as the athletes are carrying lacrosse sticks instead of footballs.

Tradition of inter-league competition? First, if you have a postseason ban in football for 50 years, that

doesn't leave a lot of "tradition" for anything else but inter-league competition. But to argue that postseason competition diminishes huge rivalries such as Harvard/Yale is just ludicrous. Montana/Montana State, Lehigh/Lafayette and countless other FCS rivalries survive and even thrive alongside postseason play, and it doesn't affect the prestige or tradition of those rivalries.

Montana and Montana State still dislike each other, and Lehigh and Lafayette have continued to sell out their games every year since the Patriot League received an autobid.

It seems obvious to everyone except the eight Ivy League presidents – and, evidently, the new executive director of the Ivy League – that the postseason ban on the Ivy Champion playing in the FCS playoffs has no real logical defense.

Unfortunately for fans and players of the schools, their shortsightedness will mean that the Ivy League will continue to be frustrated to wonder what could have been had their champion been allowed to participate.

The champion in 2010 that could have qualified for the FCS playoffs this year could well be the **Harvard Crimson,** with a young, talented squad returning filled with all-Ivy League performers. With so much production returning on offense, including league standouts such as quarterback Collier Winters, the Crimson will not be hurting for offensive production. And with the Crimson's traditionally stellar secondary, this year anchored by free safety Collin Zych, Harvard looks like the team to beat. Harvard will be starting the Ivy League season with a huge home opener at Harvard Stadium against Patriot League champions Holy Cross, and the Crimson will host Lehigh, Cornell and Columbia before hosting Yale for the 127th installment of "The Game." It will be difficult for the Crimson to top last year's thrilling 14-10 last-minute victory over Yale, but Harvard will try to outdo itself to make it four straight over the Eli.

The **Penn Quakers**, who would have been the great beneficiary of the lifting of the post-season ban last year, look to repeat their Ivy league-winning ways of 2009 where Al Bagnoli's squad finally broke out to win the championship. The Quakers' eight-game winning streak and a perfect record in Ivy League play last year was a season to remember. In 2010, they will struggle to replace linebacker Jake Lewko and several seniors from last year's defense, but with a solid core of players such as quarterback Keiffer Garton and linebacker Zach Heller, they will be strong contenders to repeat as Ivy League champs. As always, the Quakers will be tested early when they face perennial Patriot League powerhouse Lafayette to open their season at Franklin Field, and will face a big challenge when they visit "Big 5" rival and defending FCS national champion Villanova. Dartmouth, Columbia, Brown and Harvard highlight the Quakers' fall home schedule.

Phil Estes' **Brown Bears** ended the season with a disappointing 28-14 loss to Columbia, but at 6-4 and featuring an offense with the best quarterback in the Ivy League in Kyle Nehall-Caballero, the Bears will have a potent offense in 2010 that will be difficult to slow down. But the defense, which will be led by linebacker Andrew Serrano, has questions to answer. If the defense comes together, Brown has the horses on offense to make a serious run at another championship. Estes' squad starts the year with two tough games at home at Brown Stadium against Big South champion Stony Brook and perennial Ivy league title contender Harvard, before taking on in-state rival Rhode Island in the 95th "Governor's Cup." Cornell, Yale and a season-ending game against Columbia round out Brown's home schedule.

You have to feel for **Yale Bulldog** head coach Tom Williams. With a shocking victory in sight against Harvard in the 126th playing of "The Game," a failed fake punt deep in his own territory – stopped seven yard short of the first down marker– would end up to be the defining play of his first season. Instead of a 10-7 victory, Harvard's late touchdown would give Yale a 14-10 defeat and the third straight to Harvard in the series. Still, Williams managed a respectable 4-6 record in his first year, and with young talent like cornerback Adam Money and runningback Alex Thomas, it's not hard to see the Eli as a dark horse to make a run at the championship. After their home opener against Georgetown of the Patriot League, the Eli will face perennial NEC powerhouse Albany to the Yale Bowl in nonconference play. Penn, Columbia and Princeton will invade New Haven in Yale's other home football contests while the game which coach Tom Williams will be looking to enact his revenge will be taking place in Cambridge where Yale's season will be made or broken for 2010.

Norries Wilson's **Columbia Lions** have been knocking at the door when it comes to competing for the Ivy League title, but last year's 4-6 record shows that the Lions still have some ways to go to get to the upper echelon of the league. Still, Wilson will build off two solid triumphs to end the year – against Cornell and traditional season-ending opponent Brown – and still look like they could, if everything

comes together, break into the championship conversation. They'll have to do it after losing a lot of last year's team to graduation, though linebacker Alex Gross and wide receiver Mike Stephens should be a strong nucleus for the 2010 squad. The Lions start the season hosting cross-town rival Fordham at Kraft Field (in the ninth annual "Liberty Cup") and then, interestingly, play three more home games against Towson of the CAA, perennial Patriot League power Lafayette, and Princeton to start their bid for the Ivy League title. They'll also have to win two more Ivy League games at home versus Dartmouth and Cornell to have a chance at the championship.

The Lions seem one step ahead of Buddy Teevens' **Dartmouth Big Green,** which have improved since their 0-10 record in 2008 with two victories in conference play in 2009. Still, in his sixth year after returning to the Big Green from Stanford in 2005, fans have to be expecting better than a two-victory season. There's plenty of reason to be hopeful, though: last year Dartmouth was a young team, and with solid performers like wide receiver Tim McManus and cornerback/kick returner Shawn Abuhoof returning, there's a good chance that the Big Green can get back into the Ivy League upper half. The Big Green's home opener comes against Sacred Heart of the NEC, and they also will welcome Holy Cross, last year's Patriot League champions, to Memorial Stadium this year. In the Ivy League, Dartmouth will welcome Yale, Harvard and Brown to Hanover this year.

The theme to the 2010 season of the **Princeton Tigers** will be "change we can believe in," as new head coach Bob Surace will install a new no-huddle offense. Mobile quarterback Tommy Wornham should be the great beneficiary of the retooling of their offense while linebacker Stephen Cody hopes to keep together a strong defensive unit from last year. The key to the Tigers' season will be their ability to adjust to the new offense. Princeton's home opener will come against Colgate of the Patriot League – where it'll be looking for revenge for the double-overtime 14-7 loss last year, shown on ESPNU – while Brown, Harvard, Penn and traditional season-ending opponent Dartmouth invade Princeton Stadium in 2010.

Speaking of new head football coaches, the **Cornell Big Red** also will be ushering in a new head coach in Kent Austin. After bringing to Ithaca an experienced, talented coaching staff, he'll look to build behind senior runningback Marcus Hendren and a talented secondary led by strong safety Anthony Ambrosi, to restore the roar for the Big Red. Austin's debut at home in the friendly confines of Schoellkopf Stadium will come in a key early season contest against Yale, while Colgate of the Patriot League, Princeton, Dartmouth and its traditional season-ending contest versus Penn round out the home schedule.

Ivy League Games To watch in 2010

Sept 18, Holy Cross at Harvard. Expect to see a thriller in Harvard's season-opening game against last year's Patriot League champions: While these gridders will be meeting on the field for the 64th time, the last three contests have gone down to the final minutes. Last year, a late sack and fumble allowed the Crusaders to hold on to a 27-20 victory, and the Crimson will be aiming to avenge that loss.

Sept 25, Penn at Villanova. The Ivy League champions take on the CAA and FCS National champions in an old-fashioned "Big 5" grudge match. Think Villanova will take the game seriously? You bet: In 2008, the Quakers lost an overtime heartbreaker to the Wildcats 20-14 on a last-second interception, and last year Penn held Villanova to its lowest offensive point total on the year in a 14-3 defeat.

Oct 2, Brown at Rhode Island. The 95th meeting of URI and Brown in the Rhode Island's "Governor's Cup" will be a highlight for both teams, and is always circled on the calendar. Last year, Brown broke a three-game skid to the Rams with a 28-20 triumph, behind 274 all-purpose yards from WR Buddy Farnham.

Oct 9, Cornell at Harvard. If Cornell hopes to get back into the elite of the Ivy League, a victory against the Crimson in the 75th meeting between the two teams would go a long way toward that goal. The Big Red have lost the last four against the Crimson, and haven't won in Harvard Stadium since 2000.

Oct. 16, Brown at Princeton. If Princeton hopes to be in the running for the Ivy League championship, it will have to find a way to get by Brown in this 77th meeting between these squads. The Tigers have lost four of their last five games against the Bears, including a 34-17 setback last year.

Oct. 23, Dartmouth at Columbia. The 81st meeting between these two schools will once again be circled on the calendar as it offers a chance for both teams to get a key Ivy League victory. Columbia has won four of its last six against Dartmouth at Kraft Field,

including a 21-13 victory in 2008.

Oct. 30, Brown at Penn. Last year, Brown was held to a touchdown at home versus Penn's stingy defense in a 14-7 setback. In this 79th meeting between these two Ivy schools, QB Kyle Newhall-Caballero will be looking to exact revenge after last year's 14-7 defeat to give the Bears the inside track at the Ivy League title.

Nov. 6, Penn at Princeton. In this 103rd clash between the Tigers and Quakers, Princeton will be hoping to turn around its offensive woes against Penn. In the last three meetings – all Quaker victories – the Tigers have scored a grand total of 16 points combined.

Nov. 13, Harvard at Penn. Always a tough game and one that generally has Ivy League title connotations, this 81st meeting has the potential to be another classic just like last year. LB Jake Lewko's 15 tackles and Penn's dominant defense gave the Quakers a 17-7 triumph – and, eventually, the Ivy League title.

Nov. 20, Yale at Harvard. "The Game" always seems to be the highlight of the Ivy League football season, and the 127th meeting hopes to once again play a part on the Ivy League title for both teams. Yale will have had a full year to kick themselves over the missed fake punt late in the game – deep in its own territory! - and the late touchdown pass from QB Collier Winters to WR Chris Lorditch gave Harvard an improbable 14-10 triumph after trailing almost the entire game.

Conference Capsules

Brown Bears
Location: Providence, R.I.
Stadium: Brown Stadium (20,000)
Head Coach: Phil Estes (72-473-0, 72-47-0 overall)
Key Losses: FB Matthew Mangiacotti, WR/RS Buddy Farnham, WR Bobby Sewall, TE Andrew Fertig, OL Paul Jasinowski, DE James Develin, DT David Howard, LB Kelley Cox, LB Brendan Gallagher, SS Chris Perkins, CB David Clement
Key Returners: QB Kyle Newhall-Caballero, RB Zachary Tronti, RB Spiro Theodhisi, WR Matthew Sudfield, OL Patrick Conroy, DT John Anderson, LB Andrew Serrano, LB Robert Gillett, CB A.J. Cruz, P Nate Lovett
Historical Note: This year marks the 100 year anniversary of what the Pittsburgh Press described as "the greatest disaster in Yale's football history" – a 21-0 smackdown from 7-2-1 Brown. "There's no way to describe the gloom that pervades every Yale quarter tonight," they reported as QB/K Earl Sprackling converted four goals and ran roughshod over the Eli in 1910.
Last Year: After the Ivy League co-championship in 2008, expectations were high that the Bears could repeat the feat in 2009. But after an early heartbreaking loss to Harvard 24-21 and a rough 14-7 overtime loss to Penn, Phil Estes' team would limp to a 6-4 record.
This Year: Brown loses much to graduation, including no fewer than three players that could find themselves playing in the NFL this fall. But with experienced QB Kyle Newhall-Caballero returning, you have to figure the Bears will light up the scoreboard. Will the defense, led by LB Andrew Serrano, hold?

Columbia Lions
Location: New York, N.Y.
Stadium: Robert K Kraft Field at Lawrence A. Wien Stadium (17,000)
Head Coach: Norries Wilson (12-28, 12-28 overall)
Key Losses: QB A.J. Olawale, RB Ray Rangel, WR Austin Knowlin, WR Taylor Joseph, C Evan Sanford, DL Lou Miller, LB Corey Cameron, SS Andy Shalbrack
Key Returners: QB Sean Brackett, RB Zack Kourouma, WR Mike Stephens, TE Andrew Kennedy, OL Jeff Adams, DT Bruce Fleming, LB Alex Gross, LB Matt Moretto, FS Adam Mehrer, CB Ross Morand
Historical Note: 1930 marked the first year of legendary Columbia head coach "Lou" Little. He struggled to a 5-4 record that year, but would end up with a 26-year career and become the winningest Lions head coach ever with 110 victories and a victory in the Rose Bowl.
Last Year: A .500 record eluded Norries Wilson's injury-plagued squad, but a young group of gamers won two tough games to end the year at 4-6: at Cornell (30-20) and versus Brown (28-14).
This Year: Despite a large graduating class, this team is one to watch after its two late-season victories with a young core. Anchored by LB Alex Gross and WR Mike Stephens, it has a real chance to break into the championship discussion.

Cornell Big Red
Location: Ithaca, N.Y.
Stadium: Schoellkopf Field (25,597)
Head Coach: Kent Austin (first year as head coach)
Key Losses: QB Ben Gantner, RB Randy Barbour, WR/RS Bryan Walters, OL Quentin Bernhard III, DE Ricky Ballou, LB Chris Costello, DB T.J. Hochanadel
Key Returners: QB Adam Currie, RB Marcus

Hendren, WR Shane Savage, OL Matt Green, DE Matt McFarland, LB Brandon Lainhart, CB Rashad Campbell, SS Anthony Ambrosi, FS Ben Heller, P Drew Alston
Historical Note: The star of the 1900 election campaign in Ithaca would not be presidential candidate William McKinley, but his running mate, then-New York Gov. Theodore Roosevelt. In a rousing speech for the Republican nomination, he said that his ticket would be victorious over William Jennings Bryan, "and by a score greater than 24-6." The reference to the resounding football victory over Dartmouth the previous week electrified the crowd.
Last Year: Another promising start led to a disappointing 2-8 record and the resignation of head coach Jim Knowles to become the defensive coordinator at Duke.
This Year: The Big Red get Kent Austin from Ole Miss to try to turn around Cornell's dismal record in October and November the last two years. RB Marcus Hendren and SS Anthony Ambrosi are the returning stars.

Dartmouth Big Green
Location: Hanover, N.H.
Stadium: Memorial Stadium (15,000)
Head Coach: Buddy Teevens (35-63-2, 69-140-2 overall)
Key Losses: QB Alex Jenny, RB Rob Mitchelson, WR Niles Murphy, OL Alexander Toth, FS Pete Pidermann
Key Returners: QB Connor Kempe, RB Nick Schweiger, WR Tim McManus, WR Tanner Scott, TE John Gallacher, OL William Montgomery, DL Charles Bay, LB Garett Wymore, CB/KR Shawn Abuhoof, PK Foley Schmidt
Historical Note: Curiously, for a 10-year year stretch from 1912 to 1922, Harvard dropped Dartmouth from its schedule. Why? Harvard wanted a "lighter schedule" in 1913 and powerful Dartmouth, who would finish at 7-1 with its only loss coming to powerful Carlisle Indian School 35-10, didn't fit the bill.
Last Year: After a winless 2009, head coach Buddy Teevens rebuilt with youth – and got a couple of Ivy League triumphs over Columbia and Cornell for their efforts. They still, however, had a relatively disappointing 2-8 season.
This Year: The Big Green will continue to build on its Ivy League victories from last year and will look for even more improvement this year. WR Tim McManus and CB/KR Shawn Abuhoof will provide the sparks.

Harvard Crimson
Location: Cambridge, Mass.
Stadium: Harvard Stadium at Baker Field (30,898)
Head Coach: Tim Murphy (104-55-0, 136-100-1 overall)
Key Losses: RB Cheng Ho, WR Matt Luft, OL James Williams, OL Alex Spisak, DT Carl Ehlrich, LB Sean Hayes, LB Jon Takamura, SS Ryan Barnes, PK Patrick Long
Key Returners: QB Collier Winters, RB Gino Gordon, RB Treavor Scales, WR Chris Lorditch, WR Marco Iannuzzi, TE Nicolai Schwartzkopf, OL Ben Osborne, DT Josue Ortiz, LB Alex Gedeon, FS Collin Zych
Historical Note: This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Harvard team led by legendary RB Percy Langdon Wendell that would go 9-0-1 and capture the mythical national championship of 1910. Its only tie was a bitter one, though: a 0-0 struggle against heavy underdogs Yale.
Last Year: A date on Nov. 14 with Penn was all that was stood between the Crimson and a third straight championship in the Ivy League. Their 17-7 loss at home to the Quakers, however, would result in a bitter 7-3 season and a second-place finish in the Ivy.
This Year: Led by QB Collier Winters and so many of the Harvard skill players on offense returning, Tim Murphy's team will be awfully tough to stop in 2010. But can the defense, led by FS Collin Zych but losing a lot of seniors from last year, be enough to hold off Penn?

Penn Quakers
Location: Philadelphia, Pa.
Stadium: Franklin Field (52,958)
Head Coach: Al Bagnoli (122-56-0, 208-75-0 lifetime)
Key Losses: QB Kyle Olson, WR Kyle Derham, OL Matt Shaefer, DT Joe Goniprow, LB Jay Colabella, LB Jake Lewko, CB Chris Wynn
Key Returners: QB Keiffer Garton, RB Michael DiMaggio, FB Luke DeLuca, WR Matt Tuten, OL Joe D'Orazio, DE Brian Levine, LB Zach Heller, FS Josh Powers, RB/RS Bradford Blackmon, K Andrew Samson
Historical Note: A hundred years ago, college football's "new rules" outlawing mass plays such as the "flying wedge" came into effect, and Penn was an early victim of these changes. The 1910 team would go 9-1-1, but its only loss would come to tiny Ursinus College 8-5 in one of the biggest upsets of the era.
Last Year: In 2008, Penn's two losses to Brown and Harvard kept it from an Ivy League title. In 2009, with smothering 14-7 and 17-7 triumphs over the Bears and Crimson, respectively, Al Bagnoli's squad won its first league championship since 2003.
This Year: Many parts of Bagnoli's dominant defense have graduated – can LB Zach Heller and company step into the shoes of LB Jake Lewko and company? If they can, QB Keiffer Garton will have an

opportunity to give Penn back-to-back Ivy titles for the first time since 2003.

Princeton Tigers
Location: Princeton, N.J.
Stadium: Princeton Stadium (27,800)
Head Coach: Bob Surace (first year as head coach)
Key Losses: RB Jordan Culbreath, RB Kenny Gunter, OL Andrew Hauser, OL Mark Paski, DE Joe Karacozoff, LB John Callahan, FS Dan Koplovich, CB Cart Kelly
Key Returners: QB Tommy Wornham, RB Meko McCray, FB Matt Zimmerman, WR Trey Peacock, WR Andrew Kerr, TE Harry Flaherty, DE Matt Boyer, LB Stephen Cody, CB Glenn Wakam
Historical Note: Current Supreme Court nominee Elena Kagan started her undergraduate career at Princeton covering football games. No word if she enjoyed Princeton's triumph over Yale 35-31 during her senior year in 1981, a time when the Eli spent time in the AP Top 20.
Last Year: After his third straight 4-6 season – and presiding over an offense that failed to score more than 24 points in a single game all year – head coach Roger Hughes was dismissed after the 2009 season.
This Year: Surace's brings a high-octane offense – something that should make QB Tommy Wornham and the offense pretty excited. The defense, led by LB Stephen Cody, will have to improve, however, if the Tigers hope to return to the top flight of the Ivy.

Yale Bulldogs
Location: New Haven, Conn.
Stadium: Yale Bowl (61,446)
Head Coach: Tom Williams (4-6, 4-6 lifetime)
Key Losses: RB Jordan Farrell, TE John Sheffield, LB Paul Rice, LB Tim Handlon, LB Travis Henry, FS Larry Abare, P/K Tom Mante
Key Returners: QB Patrick Witt, RB Alex Thomas, FB Shane Bannon, WR Jordan Forney, OL Gabriel Fernandez, DE Tom McCarthy, LB Sean Williams, CB Adam Money, WR/RS Gio Christodoulou
Historical Note: This year marks the 50th anniversary of coach Jordan A. Olivar's dominant 1960 Ivy League squad, which went 9-0-0 and averaged a margin of victory 20 points in those contests.
Last Year: Tom Williams came from the NFL's Jacksonville Jaguars and led the Eli to a respectable 4-6 record. But a bitter 14-10 loss to Harvard in "The Game," which Yale led until 1:32 remaining, was a bitter way to finish 2009.
This Year: With a year under his belt, Williams hopes to continue to improve behind players such as RB Alex Thomas and CB Adam Money. Defense and special teams should continue to be the Bulldogs' calling card, but will it be enough to compete for the championship?■