

Gridder predicts success in '85

By Jimmy Allinder

With the success of winning comes the pressure of having to live up to past performances.

And that's why Mike Bastkowski, certainly an important cog in East Brunswick High School's 1984 football success, looks forward to the upcoming season with anticipation, yet with a little trepidation.

"I know that having won the Middlesex County Athletic Conference title," Bastkowski said last week, "and finishing with the 11-1 record and all, everybody will be gunning for us. That puts a little extra pressure to perform at the same high level week after week.

"Still," he added, "I'd much rather have gone through the experience of winning and having to continue winning rather than start with a losing team and learn what winning's all about."

Bastkowski, a hard-nosed linebacker on defense and frequent halfback in the multifaceted Bear offensive attack last year, will return to play a leading role in the Bears' attempt to defend the MAC title in addition to whatever other honors they can reap. As one of the captains, he will be closely scrutinized by fellow team members and opponents alike, who will be looking to gauge his success. Judging from the amount of effort he is putting into preparing for this upcoming season, Mike has no qualms about his role and what he expects of this year.

"I've added about 15 pounds since the end of last year," he said, "which puts me at 180. I'm 5-11 and I think I have enough size and bulk to do the job at both linebacker and halfback. I've been working on increasing my upper body strength, my thighs and legs. I know I've sacrificed some of my speed, but I believe I have the right balance."

Bastkowski, along with other East Brunswick players who are not resting on their laurels, has increased the frequency of workouts from three to five days a week.

"It's an indication of the dedication we have toward doing just the best we can," Bastkowski said.

He also admits that playing under Coach Marcus Borden has been an inspiration.

"I'm not going to make comparisons between George Tardiff and Coach Borden," says Bastkowski, who played under both. "But I can tell you that we can really relate to him. We're on the same wave length. Maybe it's because he's younger, but if we recognize something when we come off the field, he'll listen to what we have to say. I have respect for someone who's willing to hear us out."

Bastkowski also understands the importance of putting in the effort to prepare for the season.

"I don't have any problems with working out five days a week," he said. "As a matter of fact, I remember working out as a freshman, not putting in the total effort I knew I could. As a senior, I realize that this is it. I won't have another chance to prove myself."

Proving himself an important member of the team is big in Mike's mind, but he is also seeking that coveted college scholarship.

"I've received some letters from college coaches, and I've heard from schools like Villanova and Bucknell," he said. "I know that their programs are the most highly respected in football in terms of caliber of play. But I figure I would have a better opportunity to start when I'm a sophomore or early on than if I attempted to play at a school with a bigger reputation."

His 2.7 average is also evidence that Mike could succeed academically at a number of colleges throughout the country if he should so desire.

When asked about playing offense this year, Bastkowski said he is prepared to do a lot of ball-carrying, but recognizes that there are any number of candidates who could do the job.

"We have Andy Wehrenberg coming back," Mike said, "and he was really an important man for us last year. I know our quarterback situation is a little unsure with Steve Hughes graduated, but we have some possibilities. Ken Prus, who started last year at defensive back, may be challenging for the job."



GREAT BEAR

Mike Bastkowski, a linebacker and halfback for the East Brunswick football squad, will be one of the Bear captains this fall and is hoping to successfully defend his team's Middlesex County Athletic Conference title.

As for his own challenges, Bastkowski is aware that the rest of the Middlesex County Athletic Conference will be keyed up to play the defending champion Bears. That translates into having to come up with a peak performance each week. "I like the challenge," he said. "I know it's going to bring out the best in us. We enjoyed the success of winning last year and I think it will carry over this season to where it will benefit our team. I'm looking forward to 1985."