

## 2009 RYE GARNETS SEASON PREVIEW

By The Old Garnet

The '09 campaign marks a first in the history of Rye football! Yes indeed, it's a whole new ballgame for the Rye Garnets, players, coaches, parents, and fans alike. This sage can recall way, way back in '04 when the Rye coaches and parents rejected voluntarily moving up into **Class A** as one of the alternatives to preserve the '04 Rye/Harrison rivalry football game. Well what Rye didn't do voluntarily in '04 has become a stark reality for '09 and the foreseeable future, as the steady enrollment growth of Rye High School pushed the Garnet student numbers over the threshold and just marginally into **Class A**. Just to review, Class A encompasses schools within an enrollment range of 625-1050 in grades 9-11 surveyed the previous October ('08) – thereby counting only those students eligible to participate on the varsity level in this fall season. Interestingly in last year's '08 Football Journal the Old Garnet predicted as follows: *"Watch out - sitting at 604 this year, the Garnets could find themselves above 624 and in Class A as soon as the '09 football season."*

With close to two dozen schools now populating **Class A** teams are slotted geographically into four leagues – North (Beacon/Brewster/Byram Hills/Fox Lane/Horace Greeley/Poughkeepsie), South [Eastchester/Harrison/Roosevelt (Yonkers)/Rye/Saunders (Yonkers)], West (Nyack/Ossining/Pearl River/Port Chester/Spring Valley/Tappan Zee and Central (Hendrick Hudson/Lakeland/Panas/Peekskill/Somers/Yorktown). By the way, while we are on this "league assignment" topic; anyone out there know why the Port Chester Rams were exiled across the Tappan Zee Bridge to oppose Rockland County teams exclusively, especially when a sixth spot in the South League with neighboring Rye and Harrison remained open and available? PC, Rye and Harrison seem like such a compelling natural to me. I'm perplexed but been advised that the sixth place in South was being reserved for Yonkers High, but the Bulldogs failed to form a team. Elsewhere other notable interclass migrations involve Byram Hills joining the Garnets in cresting over into A from B, while after spending only a single season in A, Sleepy Hollow drops back to compete for the '09 B crown.

Now for another pet peeve which I know is shared by Rye Head Coach Dino Garr. Can't the Section One Superintendents decide permanently on an appropriate length of a football season? In recent years regular season has been seven, eight, seven and now six games. In '09 in the entire State of New York, only one section is playing six regular season contests – Section One. Why?

If Rye places first or second in A-South during the regular season, the Garnets will advance to the first week of two rounds of **Class A** playoffs followed by entry into the state tournament. Rye's '09 season has three Friday night home games. Should the Garnets place first in A-South one could anticipate the first round playoff game to be a fourth home contest under the lights.

### RYE'S 2009 GARNET FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Is Rye the target of all the venom in Section One or is the success of the Garnet program attracting section-wide envy? The Garnets now boast a 57-game unbeaten streak against all Section One opponents irrespective of class stretching back to 2002 including playoffs. Even with the jump up into **Class A**, once again the Garnets will be anointed as a "team to beat".

The sole holdover from Rye's '08 schedule is none other than perennial archrival the HHS Huskies (who else?), who along with Eastchester are both long-standing adversaries and familiar SWIAC (Southern Westchester Interscholastic Athletic Conference) foes. Class B's Sleepy Hollow, also a SWIAC enemy, interestingly selected Rye over Eastchester and Ossining as its '09 cross-over game. Last seen on the Rye schedules forty and twenty years ago respectively, we find two of the five Yonkers public high schools, Roosevelt and Saunders Trade and Technical. **Class A-West** power Ossining meets Rye for the first time since 1957 to kick-off the '09 campaign in what is being billed in pre-season circles as the as the "**Class A Game of the Year**".

Looking way back in the RHS football annals the Garnets hold a 107-63-7 (.629) advantage over all their '09 foes. Harrison, who represents 78 or 44% of those 170 games played against all '09 adversaries, will rumble with the Garnets for a 79<sup>th</sup> time. Removing the Huskies from these stats yields a gaudy 73-22-4 (.768) historical dominance by Rye over the other five regular-season '09 opponents.

There may have been high expectations a year ago as the Garnets sought to defend their NYS Class B Title, but there were also position holes to be filled and character questions to be answered. But the '08 Garnets added to the Rye football tradition and legend game-by-game. They even met everyone's robust pre-season expectations by returning to the NY State Class B Championship Game for the fifth time in six years. Even Chenango Forks fell by the roadside (and now has dropped down to Class C). Oneida "represented" quite well, but fell short, and we all know the outcome - **RYE GARNETS – 2008 NEW YORK STATE CLASS B FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS !**

As seemingly happens every year, the specters of annual graduation losses loom large as the Garnets attempt to continue their 57-game local, Section One win streak. As Coach Garr says, "Tradition never graduates". **STRIVE FOR SIXTY-FIVE ! GO 2009 RYE GARNETS !**

Pinch me for in '09 the Garnets attempt to extend their mastery of the Huskies to a new precedent-setting seventh straight win over Harrison? **SEVEN WOULD BE ABSOLUTE HEAVEN ! GO 2009 RYE GARNETS !**

Friday, September 11

Ossining vs. Rye @ Nugent Stadium

7:00 PM

“Welcome to **Class A**,” said the schedulers as Rye’s interclass crossover game features an ‘08 **Class A** playoff squad and a top ‘09 **Class A** team. Is it the OSSINING INDIANS, the OSSINING RIVER HAWKS, or the OSSINING O? ? ? ? Not since Ike’s administration have these Indians raided Rye. In the five games, two in ‘41/’42 and a three-game set from ‘57 to ‘59, the Garnets claimed all the wampum 4-0-1 (1.000%). The **Maroon and White** have waves of braves as the OHS student count dwarfs that of meek, little, old Rye High by a whopping 62%. Circle the wagons! Hide the squaws! Secure the teepee! Smoke the peace pipe! People are calling this the “**Class A Game of the Year**”, and its only Week One of the season. I call it a “**Statement Game**” for the Rye Garnets. **INJURE THE INDIANS ! INJURE THE INDIANS ! INJURE THE INDIANS !**

Thursday, September 17

Rye @ Saunders (Yonkers)

4:30 PM

It’s not Duke. It’s not Chenango Forks. It’s the SAUNDERS TRADE AND TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL BLUE DEVILS, one of the five Yonkers city high schools. The game is on a Thursday afternoon to accommodate seasonal religious observances. Recently these Devils have been elusive and shadowy. Rye is hopeful they don’t disappear as they did in ‘08 when the Devils forfeited their season opener due to lack of players. As the **Blue and White** usually have been in AA or in a league exclusively of Yonkers schools, Rye hasn’t had to avoid the Devil’s fork but three times - once in ‘48 and a duet in ‘90 and ‘91. It’s the usual Rye story at 3-0-0 (1.000%). Watch out Garnets, this might not be the breather you expect. **FORK THE DEVILS !**

Saturday, September 26

Rye @ Eastchester

7:00 PM

Oh how the EASTCHESTER EAGLES soared in recent seasons. Two straight wins over Harrison coupled with playoff aspirations have these birds preening. This is the 56<sup>th</sup> renewal of a football relationship that goes back to the 1920s. A fellow SWIAC and CWL (Central Westchester League) charter member, the **Red and Blue** rank 2<sup>nd</sup> of all Garnet foes in games played as Rye and the Eagles pecked each other for 50 straight years from ‘38 to ‘87. The Garnets have clipped the Eagles’ wings and domesticate the birds at 42-11-2 (.792%). Not since ‘84 have the Eagles’ talons pierced Garnet flesh. It will be crazy just off the Hutch, probably Homecoming in the Eagles’ nest. It’s a test of wills and a character check. Pass or fail. **EGG THE EAGLES !**

Friday, October 2

Sleepy Hollow vs. Rye @ Nugent Stadium

7:00PM

Oh does the Hollowmen Head Coach have a thing for Rye. Given the choice of an intra-class, cross-over game against Eastchester, Ossining their historical “River Rival”, or Rye the SLEEPY HOLLOW HEADLESS HORSEMEN chose the Garnets. Be careful what you wish for. Bad choice SHHS, but it won’t be easy for Rye as the Horsemen seek revenge for an ‘07 regular season drubbing followed by a devastating 12-6 playoff final squeaker. The eerie squad from Icabod Crane’s and Rip Van Winkle’s Hudson Valley ‘hood trot in for a Friday night rumble. This 34<sup>th</sup> paranormal match-up has its roots in two games with North Tarrytown High in the ‘40s and five in the ‘50s against Washington Irving HS, both Horsemen predecessor schools. These tilts are always scary, never sleepy although Sleepy snoozed for the past two decades while the Garnets galloped to a 22-11-1 (.667) nightmare extending Rye’s chilling of all the T-town schools over the years. Shhh – don’t wake the slumbering Zeemen. The sinister “Hollow Hit” chant coupled with the horseshoe helmets give the **Red and White** an aura and mystique beyond that of Washington Irving’s legendary stories. With their last stomping of Rye coming close to two decades ago and now covering twelve straight losses, these stampeding spirits strike fear into the Garnets. **HAUNT THE HEADLESS HORSEMEN !**

Friday, October 9

Roosevelt (Yonkers) vs. Rye @ Nugent Stadium

7:00PM

It’s Rye’s year for politically incorrect opposition mascots as the ROOSEVELT INDIANS come off the Blind Brook Trail and into Nugent Stadium for their first game since ‘68/’69. Rye rules at 2-0-0 (1.000%) plus the **Red and White** warriors haven’t fared well since coaching dean Tony DeMatteo left for Somers more than a decade ago. **TOMAHAWK THE INDIANS !**

Saturday, October 17

Rye @ Harrison (@ Feeley Field)

2:00 PM

Oh how the worm has turned from **Maroon and White** to **Garnet and Black**. In the ‘90s - HHS 9, RHS 1. So far in the ‘00s – Garnets 7-3 over the HARRISON HUSKIES. With both schools now in the same classification, “The Game” returns to its rightful place as the coup-de-gras, piece-de-resistance, icing on the cake, sprinkles on the sundae, final game of the regular season. This rivalry extending back some three generations over eight decades has now reached its 79<sup>th</sup> renewal as Westchester’s Premier Football Rivalry Game. Hey boys, its time to strap on the old leather helmet, cinch up the chinstrap and suck it up – you are representing generations of your communities in this one. This week’s game is for all the marbles, all the bragging rights. It’s the **BIG ONE** as Rye seeks an unprecedented (for Rye) seventh straight trying to edge ever closer to parity in the long-standing series currently logged at 34-41-3 (.453%). If you want prime seats arrive early, long before the 2:00 PM kick-off of Westchester’s finest high school football game. **HANG THE HUSKIES ! HANG THE HUSKIES ! HANG THE HUSKIES !**

Rye and Harrison are extremely fortunate to have a long-standing, tradition-rich football relationship that has weathered 78 previous games. It is the envy of all other Westchester high schools. Although the games are eagerly anticipated and hotly contested, former players and local historians will attest to the mutual respect that develops and endures among the players, coaches and community members weaving the game into the cultural fabric of each town. Hats off to the community agencies and many volunteers that orchestrate and manage a football game that annually attracts 10,000 fans and generally is safe and incident free. Let’s keep it that way this year and forever.