

NORTHWEST SPORTS

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ATHLETICS IN NORTHWEST WASHINGTON

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D.C. Lacrosse Classic has squads eager for season

■ Boys lacrosse preview

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Monday's City Title games brought together the top private and public school basketball teams, and the second D.C. High School Baseball Classic in May will showcase talent on the diamond. Now local coaches are hoping to do the same for lacrosse.

Eight boys teams, including all six from Northwest, will participate in the first D.C. Lacrosse Classic at St. Albans on May 16.

The games will take place after teams have wrapped up their conference tournaments, but Bulldogs coach Malcolm Lester, the lead organizer of the event, said he expects it to be a marquee day.

"I think for most of the teams, it will be the focal point of the season," he said.

Turnover of coaches has been an obstacle to such an event in the past, Lester said, but coaches recently formed a citywide association. This made it possible to organize this spring's games, which coaches hope will promote a sport already popular in the District.

"It's to help spread a sport in the city of Washington and make it more noticeable," said Gonzaga coach Casey O'Neill.

The Northwest schools will be joined by Archbishop Carroll from Northeast and Eleanor Roosevelt from Greenbelt, Md. The

schedule will consist of four evenly matched games rather than a tournament, as different programs compete at different levels, Lester said.

The District's strongest two squads, Gonzaga and St. Albans, will face off in the day's final game, at 6 p.m. Maret and Eleanor Roosevelt will play at 10:30 a.m., and matchups between Georgetown Day and Carroll and Sidwell and St. John's will follow in the afternoon.

IAC

Two years have passed since **St. Albans** won its first Interstate Athletic Conference banner, and last year marked the departure of most of the remaining standouts who guided the Bulldogs there. Coach Lester, though, is approaching this season just the way he has the last 17.

"It's been such a tough conference," he said. "We feel like we should be as good as anybody."

The Bulldogs still have gaps to fill after graduating four of their top five scorers, but they are guided by a group of senior captains.

They look to be particularly strong on defense, led by midfielder Roger Ferguson (Brown University) and defender Chris Landon (University of Virginia). Up front, St. Albans will look to attackmen Greg McKillop, its leading scorer last season, and

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Matt Petros/The Current

St. Albans senior attackman Ramsey Bates moves the ball against Highland of Virginia in the Bulldogs' first game of the season Tuesday.

LACROSSE

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Ramsey Bates.

St. Albans will miss longtime goalie Guy Van Syckle (Johns Hopkins University), but Lester said Bo Johns has played well as the new starter behind the solid backfield. At midfielder junior Jimmy Cahill returns along with seniors Nick Devane and Ned Lockwood.

MAC

The Mid-Atlantic Athletic Conference emerged as a more competitive league last season as Flint Hill went undefeated and won the banner. **Sidwell**, which had won the last two titles, would like to regain its old form after its fourth-place finish.

"I have more kids that are excited to play lacrosse this year," said coach Jeff Ransom. "They want to play with a lot of effort, and with effort anything can happen."

Sidwell is experienced in the front, with seniors Robby Carpenter-Israel and Ian Johnson leading the attack. Senior Brennan Shank anchors the midfield. Defensively, the Quakers are young but will look for steady play from juniors Nicky Jones and Xian Siew.

New coach Jon Gilden said he hopes to re-energize **Maret**, which last year won just four games and this year has only 23 players, many of whom are new to the sport. Gilden, who was a former captain at Lynchburg College in Virginia and assistant coach at Park near Baltimore, said he is eager to face the challenge.

"I'm here to start a new tradition," Gilden said.

"They're at the beginning. My objective is to win the MAC."

That will take some time, the coach said, but the Frogs are looking for improvement as the season goes on. They are heavy on underclassmen, with only two seniors: defenseman Elliot Abrams and attackman Drew Welters. Two juniors, defenseman Alex Reade and midfielder Lucas Tcheyan, will join them as captains. They will assume leadership roles after the departure of the team's most valuable player, Willie Fix, now a midfielder at Brown University.

WCAC

Gonzaga was part of a three-way tie for second last year in the Washington Catholic Athletic Conference; it fell in the tournament semifinals. The veteran Eagles return 22 players and expect to be in the mix for the championship, which they haven't won in 11 years.

Second-year coach Casey O'Neill said the team is particularly strong in the faceoff circle and in goal. Senior Conor Baucum has started all four years in front of the net, and junior midfielder Chris May has been exceptional on faceoffs.

The Eagles will look to seniors Josh Furnary and Taylor Hanley at midfield, and juniors Conor Kenny and Jacob Ruffing will lead the attack. Gonzaga is looking for new leaders on defense around senior Hank Stoeber, its only returning starter in the backfield, but O'Neill said he's happy with what he has seen so far.

"I really like these young guys," O'Neill said. "We're going to rely on them a lot to make plays and contribute. With a great goalie, that's going to help a lot."