

**Babylon Football:
PANTHERS HEAD INTO THE 2012 SEASON**

by Tony Spota

The Babylon Panthers are looking forward to the football season which opens tomorrow, Friday evening, September 7. Babylon's Friday home games are now scheduled to begin at 6 pm at Williams Field. The club is seeded third in Suffolk County's Division IV. They've gone to the playoffs every year since 1996 and will vie for a seventeenth straight postseason slot. During that stretch, the Panthers have garnered four Long Island Championships and have gone to the County final fourteen times, winning eight Suffolk playoff titles.

Division IV will continue with fourteen teams. The East Hampton Bonackers will move from Division III to Division IV and the Amityville Warriors will move back to Division III. The top six seeds in the division are Glenn (last year's Long Island Champs), Mount Sinai, Babylon, Shoreham, Bayport and East Hampton.

Coach Rick Punzone is in his tenth season at the helm and carries a 75-19 record into the year. Returning to the coaching staff will be Vinny DiLapi and Chris Morra. Kevin Delaney and Andrew Slawson will coach the JV club.

Twenty players have graduated from last year's club and twenty-one will be back. Among the returnees are a number of the Big Cats, the linemen who starred last year through the season and into the playoffs. Starters John Dertinger and Andrew Watson will be joined by Tyler Christensen, Joe Cosby, Matt Pinto, Greg Rueda and Kevin Smith. Blocking fullback Jeann Cruz will move up front into a guard slot. All will see action on both sides of the ball. Jake Carlock will be in at tight end and running back and will handle the punting duties.

Nick Santorelli will guide the offense as a quarterback from the T and will work from the shotgun, as well. He'll be backed up by Eric Schweitzer, who'll have more action as a tailback. The other returning running backs are Jon Bell, Joe Mankiewicz, Brian LosKamp and Luke Zappia. The receivers will be Jack Curcio, Ryan McSweeney, Ray Wardell and Alec Zamet. All will be backs or linebackers on defense. Alex Malhas will do the place kicking and blast the kickoffs. Up from the JV are linemen Matt Desiderio and Richard Wilson, receivers A. J. Giuliano and Joe Savastano, and running back Nick Crawford.

In 2011, the Panthers were 7-3, falling to Glenn in the Suffolk semifinals. The Panthers outscored their opponents 280-137. They rushed for 2449 yards and passed for 488, a total 2937 yards on offense good for 129 first downs. The defense held the opponents to 1042 combined yards and 78 first downs. In turnovers, Babylon had 21 takeaways and yielded 11 giveaways.

The current regular season schedule for 2012 will have five night games and three afternoon games.

9/7 (Friday night) vs. East Hampton 6 pm.
9/14 (Friday night) at Glenn 7 pm.
9/21 (Friday night) vs. Greenport 6 pm.
9/29 (Saturday) at Mount Sinai 2 pm.
10/6 (Saturday) at Bayport 1:30 pm.
10/13 (Homecoming Saturday) vs. Hampton Bays 2 pm.
10/19 (Friday night) vs. Shoreham 6 pm.
10/26 (Friday night) at Center Moriches 6 pm.