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Christian Brothers take heavy hearts into football season

BY CHRIS BIDERMAN
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The Christian Brothers football teams will take the field this season with heavy hearts.

The death of star tight end and University of Oregon standout Spencer Webb remains fresh for players, coaches and administrators. His memory will serve as a unifying force after delivering powerful message to the program just weeks before his cliff-diving accident earlier this month.

“He just had a talk with the team,” said head coach Larry Morla.

The message: “Play every day like it’s your last because tomorrow’s never promised. So this season’s going to be dedicated to him,” Morla said.

The 15th-ranked Falcons will memorialize the 22-year-old by wearing a No. 4, his jersey number from varsity seasons in 2016 and 2017, on the back of their helmets this season. Webb overcame tough odds to play at one of the country’s preeminent college programs despite being saddled with a challenging backstory. A memorial service was held Saturday at Christian Brothers in his honor.

Between the lines, the Falcons are looking to rebound from November’s playoff loss to Lincoln in a Division III quarterfinal that included dropping a 21-7 third-quarter lead. Morla said his team, which finished 7-5 and 3-3 in the Capital Athletic League, took care of teams it should beat — but struggled with programs on equal footing.

The Falcons finished the season ranked No. 13 in The Bee’s metro rankings.

“We have to learn how to finish games and not let up,” Morla said. “When we get too comfortable, when we have a lead, we let teams back in and that’s how it’s always been in the past few years at our school. When we get a lead, we gotta keep it, and we got to keep adding to that lead. So we can’t let teams into games when they’re not supposed to be on the same field as us.”

Fortunately for Morla, he has three standout sophomores getting attention from college programs. Receiver Phillip Bell, a second-team All-Metro honoree as a freshman last season, has garnered interest from reigning national champion Georgia, schools from the Pac-12 and Texas A&M.

Bell had 56 catches for 12 touchdowns last year and is expected to keep getting better as he matures. Morla said he’s grown an inch to 6-2 and gained 5 to 10 pounds of muscle in the offseason.

“Last year, he was a freshman but he didn’t play like one,” Morla said. “So he’s still grow-

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ing, he’s getting better. Obviously, he’s picked up a lot of Division I offers this summer. He’s excited to go. He’s bound to be one of the best players in the section this season.”

Two players in the Falcons’ secondary are also getting looked at to play in college: Ezekiel Castex and Isaiah Jordan. Castex has received offers from

Arizona State and Colorado State. Jordan has interest from the University of Colorado.

The Falcons will have to find a replacement for departed senior quarterback Jake Elorduy, who led the Sac-Joaquin Section with 2,522 passing yards and earned second-team All-Metro honors. The team will rely on

junior William Littlejohn, who started the last two seasons on junior varsity.

“He’s a fiery quarterback, a great leader and he can spread the ball around everywhere,” Morla of Littlejohn. “In practice, he gets everyone going. He doesn’t miss any days. In the offseason, he put in a lot of work, and he’s ready to take over.”

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