



NADMI BROOKNER/THE GAZETTE

Ivan Tagoe (7), seen here getting loose for a long touchdown against Blake on Friday, has a county-high 418 yards receiving and 7 touchdowns this season.

FOOTBALL

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But top honors go to Alex Kantor of surprising Churchill. How about this for balance: Kantor has thrown for 397 yards and rushed for 396. He has also found the end zone 12 times and makes the decisions that have powered the Bulldogs to a 5-0 start.

Running back

Seven of last year's top 10 in rushing yardage were underclassmen. Yet somehow, only one is on The Gazette's shortlist for top back of the first five games.

That one is Blake's Kwabena Asante, who piled up 1,422 yards in 2008, the county's second-best total. Talk about consistency. Halfway through this season, Asante is also exactly halfway — 711 yards — to his '08 rushing total.

Just down New Hampshire Avenue, junior Devon Pestano has burst onto the scene for Springbrook. His summer audition landed him the leading role in the Blue Devils' pounding offense and he has earned rave reviews for his 617 yards and 10 touchdowns.

But nobody pounds like Ben Sasu. Finally Quince Orchard's main man, Sasu has the Cougars off to a 5-0 start. He leads the county with 13 touch-

downs and is second behind Asante with 705 yards; his monster effort against Damascus was the highlight.

Wide receiver

Louis Young, tracked by BCS schools for three years, was a known quantity coming into 2009. His numbers are hardly off-the-charts — 12 catches, 218 yards — but Good Counsel has had little need to go to the air. Young is clearly the favorite target for first-year starting quarterback Zach Dancel.

Poolesville's Ben Hessels, on the other hand, flew under the radar until his 172-yard outburst in week one. He has fallen to fourth in the county in yardage (338) and fourth in receptions (19), and does not compete against the big boys. But check out his YouTube video: The kid is a player.

The clear star of the first half, though, has been Ivan Tagoe of Paint Branch. He leads the county in yards (418) and touchdowns (7) and is living up to his billing as the next coming of former Panther Dayon Arrington.

All-around

Springbrook's Mitchell Pollard will rarely post jaw-dropping receiving numbers with Pestano around. But he is over 200 through the air, and is always a threat on kick returns. He is

also among the backs.

Good Counsel's Diggs' ludicrous outing against Damascus in the conference returns of 87 yards and a 12-yard run.

But this one is a tough one. With 434 yards and 12 offenses among the county, what puts him in the secondary, wide receiver, or touchdown category?

Coach

Plenty of coaches are well. Churchill's Jim K... Together, the season and ward.

Former Cilento and yet in their Despite being a player, Crus... at Rockville... ing the shoe... tore both v...

Then th... Year Larry... straight reg... beat that.

"He's a very, very valuable guy," Milloy said.

team's top player, prompt-

I'm not going to be ta...