

## STATE CHAMPS

By Tom Dugan '78

Unbridled joy is the best way to describe the Prep sideline as the final whistle sounded in this incredibly tense match for the Pennsylvania State Rugby Championship on Sunday May 15. The Prep faced a very massively sized Burrell High School team, the defending State Champs.

To advance to the championship, the team beat Father Judge in the quarterfinals and Malvern in the semis.

In the Championship game, the Prep started off the scoring with a penalty kick from **Pat Kardish '11** but Burrell utilized their extreme size to bull their way into the end zone to score their first "try" but missing the conversion kick thereby taking a 5-3 lead early in the game. The Prep nearly scored on a long run down the sidelines as **Dillon Phillips '11** took a pass from **Ryan Keely-Cain '11** and outran the last defender only to step out of bounds just before leaping into the end zone. The Prep "forwards" kept pace with the strong running Burrell forwards and after a number of goal line stands by the Prep, the half ended with the score 5-3.

The second half can only be described as pandemonium. Two full sidelines going crazy as two great teams refused to back down. Burrell had several chances inside the Prep 22, but each time the Prep defense rose to the occasion. The forwards again under pressure made the ball available to the backs and Phillips took a pass on an inside break, kicked the ball down the field and chased it down for the team's first try. Prep ahead, 10-5.

Eventually, the forwards captured the ball at midfield and the ball made its way out to Phillips, who faked out a defender before running in for the team's first try extending the Prep lead 15-5. Shortly thereafter Burrell scored closed the gap to 15-12. Later, co-captain **Albert Velez '11** took the ball into traffic drawing all defenders leaving Phillips free on the outside. With a perfect pass, Phillips was off to the races for another score with **Glynn Hill '11** and Kardish right behind him in support.

At the end of the game, the referee announced, "last play, gentlemen" on a Prep scrum at the Prep's own 20 meter line. All the Prep needed to do is kick the ball out of bounds and the game would be over. Burrell stole the ball in the scrum and proceeded to pound the Prep with everything they had – run, tackle, run, tackle – the Prep refused to break. This went on for several agonizing minutes. Finally, the Prep was able to kick the ball out of bounds and the final whistle sounded. The Prep sidelines erupted with players, alumni, coaches and students running out to the field.

If ever there was a shining example of all that can be good in sport, this match was it. It was a championship match in every sense of the word.

***Final score: Prep 22, Burrell 17.***