

Top 20 High School Football Rankings

Southeastern Pennsylvania Football

Featuring District 1, 12, the Philadelphia Catholic League and the Inter AC

November 8, 2005

(All teams are 4A unless indicated otherwise)

1. Saint Joseph's Prep (9-1) Whether you score 21 points in the span of 2 ½ minutes or distribute that production more evenly over the course of a game, the end result is the same, especially when you add 10 points to the 21, while holding the other guy to 7. Wow, the Hawks really torn into the Lions last Saturday. Their unsung defense held O'Hara to 8 first downs and kept the offense out of the end zone the entire game. A 2nd quarter fumble recover by the Lions' was the only score. While O'Hara's offense was shooting blanks, the Hawks turned 315 total yards into 31 points. Quarterback Chris Whitney had a good game completing 5 of 10 passes for 108 yards. As always, sophomore Jamir Livingston was strong with 134 yards on 30 carries. Since running back John Shaw went down against Roman, Jamir rushed for 667 yards on 111 carries. When he couldn't go verses North, Bradley Wright filled in with 112 yards on 18 carries. Nice having depth, and a line like that. The win earns St. Joe's a bye in the Red Division playoffs that begin this weekend.

Correction: Thanks to Ted Silary of TedSilary.com for emailing St. Joseph's correct number of consecutive regular season wins. It should be 41 with the O'Hara win last week, not 45 as shown in last week's write ups.

2. Neshaminy (9-1) After sharing the SOL-National Conference title with North Penn and Pennridge last year, Neshaminy has it all to themselves this season with the 35-14 win against Pennsbury in Fairless Hills Friday. Nice win! It's easy taking wins by sizeable margins for granted with a team like Neshaminy, but that understates the accomplishment of going into an environment like Falcon Field and coming away with a big win. It also underrates the quality of the Falcon team this year. The score was 14-7 through 3 quarters. But with more weapons and a magnificent offensive line, it was only a matter of time until the Skins broke through. Credit the Falcon's for resisting as long as they did, although two costly interceptions resulted in 14 Neshaminy points. The Falcons held Jarred Kinney to 55 yards rushing in exchange for 153 yards through the air. There's nothing one dimensional about Neshaminy. As good as Neshy's big (267 average) defensive line is, Pennsbury's offensive line and backs got the job done by rushing for 173 yards. Well done! Few do that to Neshaminy. Great game and great tune up for Friday's playoff opener at home against Plymouth Whitmarsh. After viewing Neshaminy at Pennsbury, you've got to conclude there is no way the Colonials, who allow 17 ppg, can defend against the arsenal of weapons the Redskins possess. At 37 ppg, the Skins offense is just as big as Plymouth Whitmarsh's. But it's supported by a defense that allows 11 a game. Factor in pedigree, National verses American and it looks even worse for the Colonials.

3. North Penn (9-1) The Knight's continued therapy last week by getting their 2nd consecutive win since the debacle in Langhorne 3 weeks ago. Council Rock North didn't

go easy, but then when have they gone easy this year. North Penn won 25-9 and move on to 1st round PIAA District action Friday at home against Coatesville. This should be one of the higher scoring games of the weekend with the National Conference's 2nd place North Penn team scoring 32 a game, against the Ches-Mont's 2nd place finishing Red Raiders of Coatesville who average 35 a game. The Raider's allow 19 a game and that's a concern with this year's Ches-Mont in a down or rebuilding cycle. The Knight's are allowing 17 a game, a number dramatically influenced by Neshaminy scoring 41 of the 170 points scored on North Penn this year. Deduct that game and they're at a healthy 14 ppg, and that should make the difference here. Running back Gray will break a few, maybe more, but the Raider's should have more trouble stopping the Knights than the opposite, so long as NP doesn't fall into the offensive funk displayed a few times this season.

4. Cardinal O'Hara (8-2) There's an old saying in rural America cautioning the "*changing of horses in mid stream*". So after winning 7 consecutive games by an average score of 24-7 since the North Penn loss in week 2, O'Hara changed horses so to speak by replacing tried and proven senior quarterback Anthony Walters with sophomore Tom Savage. Prior to the SJP game, Walters' had a 42 % completion rate after connecting on 22 of 53 passes for 473 yards. He threw 6 interceptions. Savage who is said to be "*the future*", was at 29 %, completing 8 of 25 for 195 yards with 2 picks. The problem here is "*the present*" came thundering down on the young quarterback in the form of St. Joseph's unrelenting defensive charge that hounded Savage all night. When it was over, the Hawk D intercepted 3 passes while allowing only 4 completions of 19 thrown for 55 yards. The bright spot for O'Hara was junior running back John Dempsey who rushed for 137 yards on 11 carries, meaning the Hawk's are not impenetrable. O'Hara lost 31-7 but earned the 2nd seed for the Red Division playoffs. They have a bye this week.

5. Malvern Prep (9-0) Malvern Prep has 4 wins in 4 outing against Inter-AC teams. 3 of the 4 were shutouts with last week's 39-0 trouncing of Episcopal Academy. That's their lowest output in the league this year, 39 points! As a reminder how big this attack is, the Friars generated 285 rush yards in 43 carries against Downingtown East 7 weeks ago. Running back Jim Cotton ran for 114 yards while quarterback Ian Mitchell got another 104 on the ground. East will need to tighten that up in Districts. Up next is undefeated Valley Forge Military Academy (6-0). The Trojans are coming off a 6-3 season. This year they beat Roman 14-6, Poly 31-14, and Penn Charter 26-0, so they pose a threat. But the game's at Malvern where the Friar's are especially tough to beat, particularly against a foe that beat them the year before as VFMA did, 20-15.

6. Downingtown East (9-1) Downingtown East topped the 50 point mark for the 3rd consecutive week and clinched the Ches-Mont by downing Henderson 56-28. Topping the 50 point mark came against teams with a combined 10-18 record including Shanahan, West Chester East and Henderson. But those are still outrageous numbers. With the win comes the 4th seed in the playoffs against the 6th seed from Pennsbury. Downingtown's game is a fast breaking offense with underrated receivers. Quarterback Pat Devlin's exploits are well documented. Less known are the quality of his receivers, primarily SE Justin Blye and running back Richie Walls. Vasso from Ridley and Clark from Conestoga

get a lot of ink but these two are superglue fingered receivers that have much to do with Devlin's high completion rate. Pennsbury won't contain them. It's a matter of what pressure they choose to bear on Devlin. Drop too many into coverage and Devlin will take off with it. On the other side, Pennsbury needs to shorten the game with its big offensive line and bevy of backs. Dtown East hasn't had to deal with large, physical lines that gets a push like Pennsbury's, and come with so diverse an array of running backs from Renaldi and Lee, to the bulldozer Josh Parks.

7. Strath Haven (3A, 8-2) In spite of an awkward playoff format for District 1 and 12 at the AAA classification, order was restored to the AAA playoff universe last week when Strath Haven disposed of Penncrest 28-10 in the Media Bowl to gain the 4th and final seed in the AAA playoffs. The win, coupled with Interboro's 28-7 defeat of Chichester allow the Panther's to return to the postseason after a one year absence. This year's team is back with a vengeance fueled in part by their powerful backfield of senior Jared Bradley, 6-0, 205, and Kevin Kaminski, another senior at 6-2, 195. Those two, behind a strong but quick offensive have worn down more than a few opponents this year. The latest was Penncrest who succumbed to Jared Bradley's bruising 38 carries that dented the Lion D for 233 yards, and all 4 of the Panther's touchdowns. Kaminski had 71 yards on 14 carries. The Lions were held to 5 first downs and 35 yards rushing. Strath Haven ends the regular season in a 2nd place tie with Upper Darby in the Central League at 7-2. First round District action begins Friday in Phoenixville against the 9-0 Phantoms. Phoenixville is home and that counts for a lot. But they have no playoff experience in the way Strath Haven does. This year's group has a strong line supported by great backs. The line isn't huge, but it's quick and strong enough to go toe to toe with Stoga's and Upper Darby's huge lines. Because they ran on those two, they'll run against the Phantoms who have not seen anything remotely like the Panther's in the PAC, not with a schedule of 2 Quad A's, Perkiomen Valley and Boyertown, 5 AAA's and 2 AA teams. A defense allowing 9 ppg against that schedule isn't the same as Strath Haven's allowing the same verses stiffer comp. The Panther's allowed 27 to Upper Darby and 18 to Conestoga *in overtime*, and still have a per game yield of only 9.

8. Coatesville (8-2) The Red Raider's are playing with a purpose since the 34-20 loss to Downingtown East back on the 14th of October. That was a hard loss for the defending Ches-Mont champ coming as it did on a muddy field that reduced the effectiveness of tailback C.J. Gray. But they seem recovered with huge wins in subsequent games by an average score of 52-19. They'll want that explosiveness Friday in Lansdale against top seeded North Penn. In a perfect world, the Raider's get seeded higher than 8th, and North Penn who lost large to 2nd seeded Neshaminy, yields their top spot for a 2 seed. But it's not a perfect world and because of that North Penn gets the tougher end of the bargain by having to face Coatesville instead of say, Plymouth Whitmarsh. Either way, the Raider's were getting a tough opponent at 8 verses Knights, 7 against Neshaminy, or in the 6th spot against Downingtown East. They'd rather face a familiar opponent like Downingtown East but North Penn is a better place to land on the road than Neshaminy.

9. Central Bucks East (9-1) Central Bucks East won their 8th straight by defeating Council Rock South last week 33-13, the same score Interboro beat CRS earlier in the

year. Who would have thought at the beginning of the season East would have the 4th seed in Districts? Incredible. With it comes a home date against Central League champ Conestoga. With East blasting through the Continental with little resistance and a 7-0 record, Conestoga may represent a step up. No one on the schedule approaches them except Council Rock North, a team the Pats lost to by 18. Stoga's record the last 3 years is 27-6, and 19-2 the last two. So they've been doing many things well over time. Despite having real weapons on offense, Coach played it close to the vest, relying on a stubborn defense that allows 8 ppg. The offense scores 19 a game. The Patriots also allow 8 a game, and have a tremendous advantage being home. But Stoga has a 5-1 record on the road this year where they also garnered 4 shutouts. They've allowed a mere 36 points on the road with 30 coming in the upset at Haverford. Whether the Continental's best is stronger than the Central League's best is debatable. What isn't debatable is the competitiveness we should see in a game between 2 capable teams.

10. Conestoga (9-1) Conestoga responded to the bewildering upset to Haverford two weeks ago by beating a strong Marple-Newtown team 26-0. The win secured their second consecutive Central League title and the 5th seed in the playoffs against 4th seeded Central Bucks East. If ever there was a Rodney Dangerfield of high school football in the district it'd have to be the Pioneers from Conestoga. They didn't help themselves by narrowly defeating some teams they should have swamped. And the upset to Haverford was a shocker. Still, this is a team that's won a lot of football games recently by putting good talent on the field. They'll do the same Friday at CB East.

11. Pennsbury (9-1) Pennsbury lost to Neshaminy last week 35-14 but earned respect for a number of reasons as a result of that loss. First, they were supposed to get crushed, not have a chance. That was the perception of many. They weren't supposed to open the game by going on a 14 play, 55 yard drive for the score using 7 ½ minutes of clock, run through the Redskin's defense for 173 yards while holding the Skins to 139, hold Neshaminy to a 14-7 lead through 3 quarters, or control the clock for nearly half the game. They were just supposed to get crushed. Instead we were provided with a knock down, typical, physical National Conference battle that let us all know the National is more than a 2 team conference. Neshaminy's more than Pennsbury but the Falcon's aren't bad. If they can keep from falling behind early at 3rd seeded Downingtown East Saturday, they have a chance. The longer they stay close, the more frustrated East becomes. Pennsbury has the attitude, size and backs to challenge East in a slowed down ball control game, so long as they don't self destruct with turnovers. Can't shorten the game then turn the ball over against a quick scoring team like East.

12. Archbishop Wood (8-2) Archbishop Wood asserted itself last week by holding powerful West Catholic to 7 first downs and 30 rushing yards in a thorough 23-12 handling of the Burrs. West passed for another 213 yards. On the other side of the field, Wood rushed for 99 yards on 44 carries. Quarterback Joe Kosich had a spectacular night, hitting 12 of 21 passes for 3 touchdowns and 274 yards passing. The big Viking attack got 20 first downs against the vaunted West defense. A game like Wood played shows how much a team can grow from the first game of the season where they were drubbed by Cardinal O'Hara 26-0. In years like this don't you wish the Red and Blue faced off at

the end of the season? The Viking's win, their 4th over the Burr's in the last 5 games, earned them the top seed and a bye in the postseason Blue Division playoff beginning this weekend. 6 teams from each division make the playoff with the top 2 getting a bye.

13. West Catholic (8-2) West plummeted in the rankings with the 23-12 loss to Archbishop Wood. While West was doing their thing on a 6 game winning streak, the Vikings were going unnoticed despite being on their own 6 game winning streak. They'll enter the playoffs with real momentum. But the Burr's will be driven as well because of the loss so don't expect them to disappear. They get a bye this week.

14. Ridley (7-3) Ridley didn't make the playoffs but they got a good payoff the past few weeks with 2 strong wins since the upset by Marple-Newtown 3 weeks ago. Since then they've cranked it up a notch with impressive wins against Upper Darby 32-17 and Springfield last Friday 32-0. Unfortunately, by defeating Upper Darby they knocked a fellow Central League member out of the playoffs. 4 weeks ago it appeared Upper Darby had done the same against Strath Haven with their overtime win on the Panther's field. Not to be denied their chance at some headlines, neighboring Interboro defended the home turf by blowing Chichester off the field and out of the playoffs with a decisive 28-7 handling of the Eagles last week in Del-Val action. Ridley faces Interboro next on Thanksgiving Day morning.

15. Upper Darby (8-2) The Royals rebounded from the Ridley loss that knocked them out of the playoffs by slipping past Penn Wood 21-12. There wasn't much left after the 32-17 pasting Ridley put on them but they did reach down enough to get the win. Penn Wood rushed for 185 yards plus 121 more through the air. They had 14 first downs, 3 interceptions and 2 fumbles. UD ran for 222 yards. Simoni Marco Lawrence did his thing with 154 yards on 24 carries while quarterback Blaine Fox was strong at 6/8/1/122. The Royals were penalized for 76 yards on 6 infractions. It was a bad night, but a win is a win. West Chester East at 3-6 is in town Friday. Last year's 9-3 team routed UD's 5-7 team 27-7. That's about how bad the Royal's should handle them this week. The following week they close out the season at Haverford. Assuming they defeat East, a win there gets them to 10-2.

16. Roman Catholic (6-4) The Cahillites have come around since the beginning of the season where they got off to a 1-3 start. Since then they've won 4 of 5 counting the double overtime 26-23 win against LaSalle last week. Although it was a tight overtime game, Roman owned the stats by getting 140 on the ground in 50 carries, and another 137 through the air with quarterback Cory Jackson completing 9 of 17. LaSalle isn't always that lenient. Conversely, Roman stuffed the Explorer's by holding them to 13 rush yards and 119 passing yards. The win puts Roman into a first round Red Division playoff game Friday night at Widener University against Father Judge, a team they beat 34-13 three weeks ago.

17. LaSalle (7-3) LaSalle not only lost a tough one to Roman last week, they also lost the 3rd seed in the Blue Division playoffs. Instead of playing Father Judge, a team they handled in the regular season 24-0, they get Archbishop Ryan, a team they struggled with

13-0. Ryan's non-league schedule may have toughened them with games against Pennsbury, Neshaminy and Archbishop Wood. They beat Wood 28-26, then Bonner before getting crushed by SJP, RC and CO on consecutive weekends. But over the last 3 games they've leveled off with a win against North Catholic 20-0, the tight loss to LaSalle and the win against Judge last week 26-21. In the same span of time LaSalle lost 2 of 3.

18. Plymouth Whitmarsh (8-2) The Colonials are the Suburban One League-American Conference champ. Maybe it's time to give them a little respect. They pretty much had to run out after opening the year with big losses to LaSalle and Abington, and that's exactly what they did in winning 8 straight to earn the 7th seed in the playoffs. Not bad after a 0-2 start! During the streak they've averaged 40 points a game while yielding 17. That was accomplished against SOL-American Conference competition, but those are high levels to reach in any league. The number of things you have to do right to average 40 points a game is significant, with turnovers and penalties just the tip of it. This is a good football team with a great running back in De'Rel Scott. If this guy can't get by you with speed he can probably jump over you with his extreme leaping ability. His rushing stats this year are awesome at 2442 yards. The Colonials have recently been one of those teams, never quite there, but always on the periphery, influencing. Over the last 7 years they've been in a cycle of a strong year followed by 2 mediocre years. So you had the 1999 squad at 9-3, followed by 6-6 and 6-5-1 seasons. 2002's 9-3 team was followed by 6-6 and 6-5 campaigns. And now they're at 8-2 entering a playoff game with Neshaminy.

19. Phoenixville (9-0, 3A) How about these Phantoms! A whole bunch of us didn't think they'd get through the Pioneer Athletic Conference unscathed, but they did. They blew through what we were calling *the gauntlet* of Lansdale Catholic, Boyertown and Pottsgrove as though it were tissue. 2 of the 3 were played on the road. LC is not an easy out, not at home. But the Boyertown's Bears bore little resemblance to the program that went 46-26 from 1999 to 2004 without a losing season. Pottsgrove at 42-16 the last 5 years is a different story. They came to play. And except for inexplicable losses to Boyertown by 4 and Owen J. Roberts by 3, they'd have entered this game undefeated. But by this point of the season, Phoenixville was a poised, confident team that was ready for the challenge a team of Pottsgrove's caliber presented. Phoenixville held the Falcons to 84 yards rushing yards and 140 passing yards. Their featured back Brent Carter was held to 34 yards. The Phantoms were also held to 84 rushing yards but on 26 carries, not the 40 carries Pottsgrove had. Senior QB Bill Shirk was sharp at 10/20/1/199 for. After Pottsgrove scored first in the opening quarter, the Phantoms responded with 7 points in the 1st quarter and another 13 in the 2nd to hang on for a 20-13 win. The win locked up the top seed in the AAA playoffs. What a reward! They get to play one of the most successful AAA teams-programs in the state over the last 10 years. Apart from excellent coaching, Strath Haven is stronger, quicker, and more experienced than any District 1-12 AAA team in the field. Whatever is thought of the Central League, Strath Haven faced a variety of schemes there that have proven over time to prepare them well for a run in the playoffs. This year's team is more fun watching since they've added a few wrinkles involving junior speedster Roy-Al Edwards, their 6-0, 177 pound split end. Quarterback Mike Wray, another junior, has hit Edwards with some pinpoint passes this season that

opened up the Wing-T for running backs Bradley and Kaminski. And the defense has rounded into a physical, athletic unit. They're going to be very difficult to beat.

20. Abington (6-4) Since opening the season on a promising 3 game winning streak, Abington has gone 3-4 in the tough National Conference. 3 of the losses were at home to Neshaminy, North Penn and Pennsbury, meaning the Ghosts' young team is not ready for prime time. With that said, they are still a very respectable missed 2 point conversion from being 7-3. Wins in their next two games get them to 8-4, and that's lofty stuff for this program. They're at Boyertown Friday hoping to avenge last year's 22-13 loss. Part of Abington' success this year may be attributed to last season's strong finish where they won road games at Pennsbury and Cheltenham, and the home game against Truman giving them a 3-1 finish. In the middle of all that was the loss to Boyertown denying them a 4-0 finish. The Bear's, a *District Three* team playing in a District One league, the PAC, are 5-4 with a road win at Pottsgrove and a road loss at Owen J. Roberts. Who knows which version shows up Friday. It won't matter if Abington continues their strong showing on the road where they are 3-1 to date.

Honorable Mention

Soudertown (7-3)

Tennett (6-4)

Council Rock North (5-5)

Pennridge (5-5)

Marple Newtown (6-4, 3A)

Pottsgrove (6-3, 3A)

Lansdale Catholic (8-2, 2A)

Interboro (7-3, 3A)

Chichester (7-1, 3A)

Unionville (10-0, 3A)