

Top 20 High School Football Rankings

Southeastern Pennsylvania Football

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

November 22, 2005

(All teams are 4A unless indicated otherwise)

The AAAA Playoff Picture Across The State

EAST: In *Philadelphia's District 12*, Frankford (9-3) won their 3rd consecutive playoff game by 2 point or less in defeating fellow Philly Public League member Northeast (10-2) 14-13. They advance to the Quarterfinal at J.Birney Crum Stadium in Allentown Saturday night against Liberty High from Bethlehem. The Hurricanes (11-1) are the *District 2/11* champ, playing out of Lehigh Valley's Northampton Division. They are here by way of last week's 42-7 rout of Hazelton (10-2) 42-7. Here in *District 1*, North Penn and Downingtown East, both sporting 11-1 records, tangle on North Penn's home field Friday night. North Penn is here after defeating Central Bucks East (10-2) last week in the Semifinal, 19-16. Downingtown East beat last year's state runner up Neshaminy (10-2), 45-38. The winner's play December 2nd or 3rd at a site to be determined.

WEST: Out West in *District 10*, Erie Cathedral Prep (9-3) crushed *District's 8's* Brashear High (6-6) 59-0. The Quarterfinal match is at Slippery Rock University Saturday against *District 7's* McKeesport (11-2). The Tiger's beat Woodland Hills (10-3) 19-7. In the other bracket, two Mid-Penn foes square off at Hershey Stadium Saturday in a rematch of the season opener where Harrisburg's Bishop McDevitt (12-0) nipped State College (9-3) 28-26. The Lion's from State went on to lose another 2 games to Harrisburg 13-10 and Cumberland Valley 18-17 before going on a 9 game winning streak where they defeated Central Dauphin, Erie Cathedral Prep, Manheim Township and last week's victim, previously undefeated Central York (11-1), 21-6. Should be a tight one.

The AAA Playoff Picture Across The State

EAST: Perennial *District 3* and state power Manheim Central (11-1) from the Lancaster-Lebanon League's 2 Section, may as well be home this weekend with all the visits they've had to Hershey over the years. That's where they play Friday evening against another D-3 hopeful from Muhlenberg. The Muhls (10-2) are Co-Champs with Pottsville of the Berks Inter County Conference, Section 2. Manheim Central beat Northern (9-3) last week 42-14, and are looking to go to the State Final for the 3rd consecutive year! The Polar Bears, referred to as *Northern* in those parts, are often shown incorrectly in the media as Northern York, leading you to believe they're on the North side of York. They're not! The proper name of the school is Northern York County, 20 miles to the Northwest of York on Route 15. They play in the Mid-Penn Conference, Colonial Division. Muhlenberg (10-2) also beat another Mid Penn team, this one from Gettysburg, 35-21, to reach the Quarterfinal. The bracket below them has Strath Haven (10-2) playing Pottsville (11-1). See below.

WEST: Here's where the muscle is this year with two outstanding teams, General McLane (11-0), and Franklin Regional (12-1) looking to keep the gold out West where it's been 3 of the last 4 years. Perry Traditional Academy (11-1) will have something to say about that. The top bracket has General McLane out of the *District 10 League*, Region 5, playing Pittsburgh's Perry Academy (*District 8, City Champ*) noon Saturday at Slippery Rock University. McLane proved itself by beating Erie Strong Vincent, once in the regular season and again last week 23-20. They also have a 35-28 win against 4A quarterfinalist Erie Cathedral Prep. Perry's only loss this year was to Erie McDowell (7-3), 35-32, the same McDowell team that was eliminated in the playoffs by Erie Prep 20-19. Perry swamped Clearfield (6-4) last week 55-14. The other bracket has Franklin Regional of the *WPIAL-Section 4* playing Selinsgrove (11-1). The Seals from *District 4* are the Central Susquehanna Conference, Division 1 representative. Their only loss was an ominous one, to Berwick 40-0. They beat Huntingdon (9-3) last week 29-13. Their opponent, Franklin Regional, is peaking at just the right time with consecutive playoff wins against teams many prognosticators penciled in as most likely to get the gold, West Mifflin (11-1) 24-21, and Thomas Jefferson (11-2) last week 31-14. That's like beating Texas and USC on consecutive weekends. Incredible!

1. Saint Joseph's Prep (10-1) St. Joseph's Prep unloaded on Father Judge who paid the price of stunning Roman Catholic in Red Division 1st round action a week ago. The 53-9 win says Judge got Prep's full attention as the Hawk's got their largest winning margin of the year at 44 points. Statistically, St. Joe's rushed for 347 yards to FJ's 72. In the passing department where you might expect Judge to have some success with a quarterback like Justin DeCristofaro, Chris Whitney and company out dueled their counterparts 116 yards to 74. The big Hawk effort produced 2 runners over 100 yards with Jamir Livingston getting 11 carries for 132 yards, complimented by Bradley Wright's 121 yards on 5 carries. The Hawk's take a break from CL playoff action Thanksgiving Day for their traditional game with LaSalle. The Explorer's put up a stiff fight in that one, losing 21-14 after failing to score from the Hawk's 23 yard line with 3 minutes left in the game. One of St. Joe's scores was a gift with DB Dave Mendez returning a 1st quarter interception 27 yards for the score. LaSalle's out of the playoffs with nothing to lose. Nothing like getting another shot at the top dog! The game's at LaSalle University.

2. North Penn (11-1) North Penn moved into the vacancy created by Neshaminy's loss to Downingtown East with a hard fought 19-16 win against Central Bucks East. The thoughts in last week's write up about NP's game with CBE were as follows "*Could be a surprise, but more likely a narrow Knight win*". Sometimes a team like CB East doesn't get the respect they deserve because of the widely held perception that says you must face a demanding schedule to be a good team. Therefore, if you come from the SOL-Continental Conference, you are somehow flawed or inferior. East held a 16-12 lead well into the 4th quarter by holding North Penn scoreless the middle 2 quarters, despite playing out of the Continental. But the playoff veteran Knights went back to their trademark of power football down the stretch to pull this one out. The big back Pete Stoll rushed for 188 yards and 2 touchdowns on 30 carries. North Penn's next challenge is huge, that of *slowing down* the juggernaut of Pat Devlin's led Downingtown East team, fresh off a 45-38 win at Neshaminy. East's Achilles Heel is defense. Granted, it's not much of a heel.

Against the same opponents North Penn played, Pennsbury, Coatesville and Neshaminy, Dtown East allowed 79 points. North Penn allowed 67, with 61 % of the total, 41 points, scored by Neshaminy. Anomaly? Although East hasn't had that kind of a game yet, passing in high school football is always risky business. Then there are the effects of bad weather, cold temps, and especially wind. A major area the Knight's will attempt to exploit is the clock. Neshaminy's game against Pennsbury and North Penn's against Central Bucks East are good lessons, if they can be followed.

3. Cardinal O'Hara (9-2) Cardinal O'Hara prevailed in the Red Division semifinal game by turning back scrappy LaSalle. The Explorer's made a good game of it by racing out to a 14-7 first half lead. But 28 unanswered Lion points doomed LaSalle to a 35-14 loss. All is not completely well with the O'Hara offense but there's nothing wrong with the D. LaSalle was held to negative rushing yards and 167 through the air. CO's defense also contributed when linebacker Scott Taylor returned 2 interceptions for scores from 17 and 41 yards out. QB Anthony Walters went down with an ankle injury (severity?) in the 3rd quarter but was well replaced by freshman Tom Savage who helped guide the Lion's to two 4th quarter scores. He went 3/5/0 for 38 yards and 1 TD toss. John Dempsey had an outstanding game by contributing 135 yards on 23 carries. Fullback Joe Juisti added 81 yards on 15 carries. With no Thanksgiving Day game, O'Hara has 2 weeks to prepare for the Red Final and St. Joe's at Northeast High December 3rd.

4. Downingtown East (11-1) Wow! How many expected Downingtown East to go to Neshaminy and score 45 points against one of the best defenses in the state? Pull the upset, get the win, ok, but 45 points! Those are the point totals you put up against also rans, not Neshaminy. The big statement, shock wave actually, Downingtown East made was in jumping on the Redskins' *early*, and taking a 14-0 first quarter lead. Neshaminy responded, but the damage was done as the Cougars' finished the game as forcefully as they began by scoring the last 14 points in the final 6 ½ minutes. Talk about shell shocking Neshaminy at both ends of the game! Quarterback Pat Devlin passed for 317 yards but snuck the last one in on a keeper with 18 seconds left in the game. In winning, the Cougars' closed a 10 point deficit to pull out the 45-38 win. Now they go to North Penn for the District One Final, or State Quarterfinal. You might say to yourself...if they can do that to Neshaminy? And that would be a reasonable view. If East can do Neshaminy and North Penn on consecutive weekends they certainly will have earned it. But that's a difficult task because the Knight's are not Neshaminy. They won't get in a running game with them like the Skin's did. Rather, they are much more like Pennsbury, but stronger, more talented, more veteran in playoff experience and, they are home.

5. Neshaminy (10-2) The thought of Neshaminy not returning to Hershey is a difficult reality for many to get their mind around. Since the beginning of the season, actually since the end of *last season*, most of us had them penciled in as the Eastern representative. And nothing they or any other team did throughout the year served to dissuade us from that premise. Except for the opening game loss to perhaps the best team in the state, St. Joseph's Prep, Neshaminy was overwhelming everyone, in a tough conference. We knew there was good stuff in District 11 at Liberty High, that the team in Lansdale was strong, and that Downingtown East had one of the top quarterbacks in the

country. But they hadn't really beaten anyone of distinction except for Coatesville in the rain, 34-20, and Pennsbury, 26-21 at home, the same Pennsbury team the Redskin's handled 35-14. Although they've produced powerful teams over the years, the Ches-Mont is not mentioned in the same breath as the Suburban One League. Who is? So the table was well set for a superb Downingtown team to come in to Langhorne and surprise a great many of us. How about Downingtown! They came in with a game plan that could not be stopped. At the end of the day, the performance put on by both teams may in actuality have been the State Final between the 2 best teams in the state. Time will tell.

6. Malvern Prep (9-1) Malvern Prep closes out its season with a *day before* Thanksgiving Day game at Villanova Stadium against Monsignor Bonner. Bonner is struggling with a 2-8 record. That may be an understatement knowing their 3 year won-loss is 7-25. Over the last 7 years they've won 27 and lost 50. The Friar's of Malvern are going the opposite direction with a glittering 42-19 won-lost the past 7 seasons. They beat Bonner 36-12 last year and could add to that margin this year.

7. Strath Haven (3A, 10-2) Following Strath Haven's 21-3 win at Unionville in the District 1/12 Sub Regional Final, a major newspaper in the area said the Indians showed they could run on Strath Haven's defense. Here are the stats. Unionville rushed for 89 yards on 34 carries, a 2.6 yards per carry average. They completed 2 of 7 passes for another 16 yards bringing their total yardage figure to 105. That's about as dominating as a defense can perform short of holding the other team to negative yardage. Still, Unionville was game with the score 7-3 in Haven's favor entering the 4th quarter. Their huge line, averaging near 270 pounds was impressive in freeing running back Eric DiProspero *early* for nice gains. He ended the night with 55 yards on 15 carries. But Haven's experienced and quick line was up to the challenge as yardage totals suggest. On the other side, the offensive line controlled their larger counterparts by providing for 249 rush yards on 45 attempts. Junior quarterback Mike Wray unleashed a few lasers with pinpoint accuracy keeping Uville's D off balance by completing 5 of 7 for 73 yards. Jared Bradley led the ground attack with 182 yards on 29 carries. By winning, the Panther's won their 9th District One title since 1996! 10, counting the 1993 title. The win moves them to the Quarterfinal Friday in Coatesville against Berks Inter-County, Section 1 co-champion Pottsville (11-1). Pottsville beat Wyoming High (8-3) 14-6 in 1st round action and Whitehall (9-3) last week, 31-22. The Crimson Tide averages 32 point a game and allows 10. That's against a regular season schedule with 3 winning teams. They've played 2 Quad-A teams in Reading (1-9) and Pocono Mountain East (3-7), 5 AAA teams, 2 AA teams and a Single-A. Strath Haven averaged 31 a game in the regular season while allowing 9 against a schedule of 6 winning teams. The Classification breakdown shows 6 Quad-A's and 5 Triple-A's. Pottsville likes to run at a ratio of 7-3. They average 193 rushing and 117 yards passing. Best I can find on starters goes like this; Lineman; NG Cody Vidal, Sr, 5-10 181, splitting time with Scott Yeastadt, Sr, 5-10, 184, DTs Pat Flannery, Sr, 6-4, 312 and Gary Bardzik, Jr, 6-3, 282, Other lineman; Sr's Luke Lynch and Zack Matz, 6-0, 248 and 6-0, 260 respectively. OLB/DE; Matt Feeney, Jr, 6-1, 212 and Cory Fisher, Jr, 6-1, 212, ILB; Paul Gianfagna, Sr, 5-11, 197 - Dave DeMarkis, Sr, 6-0, 206, and Andy Buziak, Sr, 6-0, 205. DB; Steve Pilconis, Sr, 6-5, 197, Dan Hedeman, Sr, 6-1, 189, Cory Brown, Sr, 6-2, 184, J.J. Moran, Sr, 5-8, 169. Others per # of tackles

are Kyle Masser, Jr, 6-0, 191, and Cody Milliman, Jr, 6-1, 176. The primary backs are FB Matt Feeney, 83 carries for 572 yards, HB Thomas McFarland, also at 83 carries for 423 yards and J.J. Moran at 474 yards. QB Jake Wartella completed 72 of 158 for 1228 yards. His top receivers are WO Steve Pilconis with 422 yards on 26 receptions and TE Corey Fisher with 17 receptions for 374 yards. With wins against Wyoming Area and Whitehall you know they're a good team. Whitehall beat Bethlehem Catholic, Allentown CC and Abington Heights. WA beat Berwick 21-7 at Berwick, so Pottsville's the real deal. This will be a difficult-dangerous game for Strath Haven, the kind of game where their character, toughness and excellent coaching usually combine with superior conditioning, team speed and experience in pressure situations to see them through.

8. Central Bucks East (10-2) Central Bucks East saw their 9 game winning streak end in the 2nd round of playoffs when North Penn came from behind to edge the Patriots 19-16. What a great effort by CB East going into Lansdale where few gave them any chance of being competitive against the Knights. The loss concludes their season but what a rebound from last year's forgettable 4-6 campaign.

9. Coatesville (8-3) *Season over*

10. Conestoga (9-2) Conestoga ends the year at Great Valley Thanksgiving Day. At 6-5, the Patriot's have had an up and down year in the Southern Chester County League after winning the title last year and going undefeated in regular season play. They trounced Bok in the opening round of the AAA playoffs 35-0 then lost a 20-19 decision to Upper Merion in the 2nd round. This season began with a loss, but a competitive one to a strong Phoenixville team, 23-19 (9-2, 3A, # 1 seed in playoffs). In the next game they beat Conrad Weiser (7-3, 3A) 31-27, one of 2 teams to beat Muhlenberg (10-2), who faces Manheim Central in the State's AAA Quarterfinals this weekend. Then the wheels came off at Unionville (11-1, 3A, # 2 Seed in playoffs) 41-0. Two weeks ago they lost at Lower Merion 31-21? Unless they discover the team that beat Conrad Weiser, they're in for a very long day against the Pioneers.

11. Pennsbury (8-3) *Season over.*

12. Archbishop Wood (8-2) Archbishop Wood, winner of two consecutive Blue Division championships, opened defense of its title by routing Conwell-Egan in the Semifinal 43-0. Wood brought out all their weapons in this one with tailback Bryan McCartney gaining 131 yards on 24 carries and quarterback Joe Kosich completing 11 of 19 for 98 yards and 2 touchdowns. Kosich is red hot having thrown 9 touchdown strikes the last 3 games. And the D is tight by allowing Egan 81 yards on the ground and 56 through the air. Wood got 326 total yards. They're off this week preparing for West Catholic in the Blue Division Final December 3rd, 4 PM at Northeast High.

13. West Catholic (9-2) West Catholic shutout Archbishop Carroll 12-0 in Blue Division Semifinal action last week. The 12 point margin hides the reality of the Burrs' out rushing Carroll 237 yards to 26. The total yardage stat was 298 to 44. Running back Dennis Shaw had his best performance of the season by rushing for 215 yards on 28

carries. *See Ted Silary.com for more.* The win puts them in the Final against Archbishop Wood December 3rd. Before that, they have a Thanksgiving Day game against 1-10 Penn Wood, a team they demolished last year 48-8.

14. Ridley (7-3) Ridley goes for win # 8 against their bitter neighborhood rival Interboro Thanksgiving Day morning at 10:30. Both teams come in hot. Ridley's won 2 straight since the upset at Marple-Newtown by defeating Upper Darby 32-17, then blowing out Springfield 32-0. Over the same period Interboro has won two, getting a 28-7 win against Chichester that secured the Del-Val, and a 29-19 win against Chestnut Hill Academy two weeks ago. The Interboro-Ridley series has see-sawed since 2000 with Interboro winning the even numbered years and Ridley the odd numbered years. The Bucs caught the Raider's flat last year following the narrow playoff loss to Pennridge and pounded them 33-0. That should add to the intensity of this year's brawl.

15. LaSalle (8-4) Lost to O'Hara in the Red Semifinal and face St. Joseph's Prep in a Thanksgiving Day game at LaSalle University. LaSalle gave them a good battle the first encounter October 22nd and could do the same here if the Hawk's stray ahead too far to the Red Final.

16. Abington (7-4) The Galloping Ghosts close out the 2005 campaign with a Thanksgiving Day game against Cheltenham. They won last year's game 21-7 and should take this one by a similar score to get their 8th win of the season and 3rd win in a row.

17. Souderton (9-3) Soudertown closed out another fine campaign and 2nd straight 9 win season by rallying at Phoenixville for a 21-15 win. The Indian's D swarmed all over the Phantoms, holding them to 108 yards rushing. Featured back Travis Ford-Bey was held to 14 yards on 8 carries! They passed for another 155 yards. The big Indian attack rushed over the smaller Phantom front for 227 yards. Running back Ronnie Powell motored for 110 yards with fullback James Butler getting 93. Still, it took a 15 point 4th quarter rally of 2 touchdowns in the final 6 minutes to pull it out. The Phantom's are a quick, aggressive team that didn't go down easy. A win against Spring-Ford Thanksgiving Day gets them to 10-2. How's that for a team that won 14 games from 2000 through 2004? For Souderton the season is over. But they go out hot, winning their last 6 games for positive momentum entering 2006.

18. Upper Darby (8-3) The Royals come into this year's Thanksgiving Day game with Haverford off a surprising 49-48 loss to West Chester East. That was East's 4th win of the year and Darby's 2nd loss in 3 games. Prior to that, they were 7-1, seemingly headed to the playoffs. Did their season turn around! Those aren't good vibes against a revived Haverford team who has won 3 straight. Overall the Fords are 7-4.

19. Plymouth Whitemarsh (8-3) *Season over.*

20. Tennett (7-4) *Season over.*

Honorable Mention

Pennridge (6-5)

Hatboro-Horsham (6-5)

Roman Catholic (6-5)

Interboro (8-3, 3A)

Chichester (8-2, 3A)

Phoenixville (9-2, 3A)

Unionville (11-1, 3A)

Lansdale Catholic (9-3, 2A)

Marple Newtown (7-4, 3A)

Haverford (7-4)