

Top 20 High School Football Rankings

Southeastern Pennsylvania Football

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

October 11, 2005

(All teams are 4A unless indicated otherwise)

1. Saint Joseph's Prep (5-1) Remember last week we were talking about how balanced and powerful Prep's offense had become? We said a few words about their understated defense as well. Last week revealed again just how much the Hawk's defense has grown this season when they held Monsignor Bonner to *minus 2 yards rushing*. Bonner had 84 yards total offense for the night to St. Joe's 258. The Hawk's won 34-7 to remain atop the Red Division at 3-0, tied with Cardinal O'Hara. St. Joe's has 3 more games, Judge, LaSalle and North Catholic, before squaring off with the Lions November 5th. In other words, O'Hara has 3 games to find the offense left in Lansdale 5 weeks ago when they put up 28 in a losing effort against North Penn. For Prep, the 28, 28 and 19 scored against Neshaminy, St. Ignatius and Gilman respectively, says their O is good to go. Father Judge (2-4) is up next, coming off a 13-6 win against North Catholic. That was their first win since the opener so they'll be up, but the Hawk's are way too much for Judge, as they were in last year's 31-7 win.

2. North Penn (6-0) Late score from Monday, North Penn beat Bensalem 27-14? Can't keep them intense for every game. They play at Abington Friday.

3. Cardinal O'Hara (5-1) Talk about a misleading score! Cardinal O'Hara beat LaSalle last week in a match between undefeated Catholic League Red Division opponents by a final score of 14-0. That suggests a tight game. And because field conditions were sloppy in an ever present mist that spawned an intermittent rain as the game grew longer, a slip by a defender, or a turnover was a reality that could turn things around quickly. But all of that was potential. In the real world, LaSalle was held to 3 first downs, 9 yards rushing and 39 yards total for the game! O'Hara dominated this one at the line of scrimmage, and pressured the young sophomore quarterback all night. As punchless as the Explorer's attack was, and this was a big attack coming in at 37 points per game, the Lion's was impressively substantial at 210 rushing yards and 100 through the air. Archbishop Ryan (2-4) is up next. Ryan's offense vanished the last 3 games where they've scored just 6 points. They were shutout in the other 2 so they enter this game primed for disaster. O'Hara swamped them in the regular season last year 36-0 and in the postseason 34-6.

4. Neshaminy (5-1) Neshaminy slammed the door shut on Pennridge's slender conference and playoff hopes by stunning the Rams 24-0. They remain deadlocked with North Penn atop the SOL-National Conference at 3-0. Those two face off October 21st at Neshaminy. Before that comes what could be a competitive encounter with an improved team from Council Rock North. It would be dangerous overlooking the Indians (4-2) for North Penn, especially with CR North coming off a disappointing 26-21 loss at Abington last week. A young Neshaminy team shutout CRock North's 3-7 team last year 24-0. They'll probably score at least that many Friday with their season average at 38. CRN is at 34, with a defense allowing 15. For this one, some might ask "who has CRN played?"

On the other hand, except for the St. Joe's loss, Neshaminy has played a schedule similar to North's. Still, CR North has played no one near St. Joe's abilities. So, if you deduct the SJP game from the Skins' schedule, they're scoring 43 ppg and allowing 8, making them too much for the Indians to handle.

5. Conestoga (6-0) Late score from Monday, Conestoga beat Lower Merion 28-0. They're at home Friday against Radnor.

6. Strath Haven (5-1, 3A) Some folks in Wallingford got smart and moved Friday night's game up to 4 PM to beat the inevitable downpour that washed away so many games in the area last week. The move seemed fine for Strath Haven who fought off a tough Marple Newtown team to gain their 2nd shutout of the year, 27-0. This one was statistically the opposite of the LaSalle-O'Hara game that seemed tight, but wasn't. Here we have a 27-0 game where the opponent went up and down the field almost at will, 213 rushing yards, but couldn't punch it in. Matt Moccia was a bull at 164 yards on 23 carries. Haven rushed for 199 yards, got another 26 through the air, but dented the end zone 4 times. 9.1 yards per point is pretty sweet! Jared Bradley pounded away for 87 yards on 16 carries with understated Kevin Kaminski getting another 58 yards on 10 rushes. Marple Newtown didn't score but they threatened enough to make it seem like they could on a number of possessions. The win sets up a critical game against Upper Darby with far reaching implications in the Central League, and playoff situation in the AAAA and especially the AAA classification. Because District 12 gets an auto bid, Bok (5-0) and-or Franklin (5-0), there are only 3 spots left for District 1 teams, unless one of the D-12 teams outdistances them in points. Bottom line, it looks to be a race between the Philly teams who meet October 28th, Strath Haven (5-1), Chichester (5-0), Unionville (6-0) and Phoenixville (5-0). Barring the upset, Bok and Franklin will be undefeated when they meet, with both winning their final game the following week. One will be 10-0, the other 9-1. Phoenixville must play the games of their lives to get past Lansdale Catholic October 21st and Pottsgrove November 4th. LC is fighting for an AA playoff spot while Pottsgrove is battling for an AAA position, and both are postseason vets. Boyertown is sandwiched between those two games with Perkiomen Valley up this week. Unionville should run out against Oxford, Avon Grove, Kennett and Garnet Valley to go 10-0 by playoff time. Chichester has a tough road to the playoffs beginning this week with Salesianum followed by Academy Park. They close with road games at Penn Wood and Interboro. Chi is a under rated, veteran, team (triple option) that's playing very good football right now, pressing all the right buttons. For Strath Haven, all that matters is the next game, and it's a huge one against Upper Darby. The Royals used to be the team Strath Haven measured itself against. You beat Upper Darby, you're good-to-go against the best AAA comp the state had to offer. In the back to back years they won state titles, 1999 and 2000, they beat UD 14-7 and 7-0 respectively, with the Royals going 9-3 in both seasons. In 2001 and 2002, the Panther's again returned to the state championship where they lost in '01 to West Allegheny 28-13, and to Hopewell in '02, 21-10. They waxed Upper Darby those two years 24-0 and 35-0. The 2003 game was another exceptional encounter between old adversaries with Haven edging the Royals 16-10. Haven lost to eventual state champ Manheim Central that year in the semifinal 3-0. And finally, last year's 8-2 edition beat Upper Darby's 5-7 team 14-0 and missed the playoffs.

This year's game will again be decisive for Strath Haven and Upper Darby. The great thing about this one is it's too close to call. Both have explosive talent so it will be exciting!

7. Coatesville (5-1) Had a little surprise last week out in Chester county where the Bulls of Glen Mills charged into Coatesville to give the Red Raider's far more than they bargained for. After all, Glen Mills was weak this year at 2-3, getting wins against D.C.'s lesser lights Woodson and Roosevelt, and losses to anything resembling a team. They lost at home to Dunbar (D.C.) 14-7! At the top of the season they lost *at home* to North Penn 30-6 and Parkland 27-0. We all know about North Penn. Parkland can field some strength but are inconsistent this year at 3-3. One thing Glen Mills brings to a football field is anywhere from 90 to 100 suited players, and often a lot of talent. Because it's a court adjudicated school, there are no feeder systems, no CYO's, so there is no solid foundation to the program. They rebuild every year. This year's team showed heart by stepping up at a tough venue to give the Raider's a football game. They held a 7-0 1st quarter lead that had to hush the home crowd. But it also served to awaken the Raider's who exploded for all 21 of their points in the 2nd quarter. The Bulls got a late one on a Daries Hodge's 45 yard run at the 2:11 mark of the 4th quarter. Hodge was the story here. He's one of the top tail backs in the area with 1072 yards rushing in 6 games after 142 carries. Coatesville had no answer as he sliced through their defense for 183 yards on 20 carries. C.J.Gray had his typical day at 131 yards after 27 attempts for 4.9 yards per carry, but nothing like Hodge's 9.2 ypc! Coatesville won 21-14. A game like that may have been needed to snap the Raider's out of the funk of wins against overmatched teams the previous 2 weeks, and prepare them for Pat Devlin and company from Downingtown East this week.

8. Malvern Prep (5-0) Late score from Monday, Malvern Prep beat Salesianum 48-21. Inter-AC play begins Saturday at home against Haverford School.

9. Downingtown East (5-1) Sloppy field conditions brought on by last Friday's rains seemed good portent to Downingtown West for the game against Downingtown East and QB Pat Devlin. Like the line in *Jurassic Park* where Jeff Goldblum said "life finds a way", good teams also find a way to win regardless of circumstance. And so it was Friday when the Cougar's of East High shutout the Whippets of West on scoring runs, not TD strikes, of 4, 8, 9, and 45 yards. West came into this one on a 3 game winning streak, with an offense averaging 38 points in those 3 wins, yet they were shut out. And that's the best kept secret about this year's team, the defense. Last year's was good, but not good enough with a power like Coatesville in the same conference. The East team from Downingtown has good special teams and a very improved defense allowing 10 points per game, as compared to last year's 14 ppg. Last year's team came into the Coatesville game 6-0, same as the Raiders, and lost 10-0, in torrential downpour conditions. This year's is more mature on both sides of the ball, against a team allowing 5 more points a game than last year.

10. West Catholic (5-1) LaSalle provided the opening in the Top 10 by losing to O'Hara, but West still needed to take advantage and did they ever! This one got real ugly real

early as the Burr's raced out to a 12-0 first quarter lead against Conwell Egan that grew to a 34-0 lead by half time. When it was over, West Catholic earned a decisive 53-0 drubbing of Egan, and the # 10 spot in this week's rankings. Well done Burrs! Last week we mentioned how West stacked up against last year's edition from a statistical point of view. The conclusion that no doubt seemed exaggerated was that this year's group is better, at least from a statistical perspective. Sunday's game against CE added more weight to that with West getting their 4th shutout of the year! Maybe they're more focused this year. Whatever it is, the stats suggest they are collectively a better *team* this year. They're scoring 27 a game and allowing 4 as compared with last year's that averaged 26 while allowing 10. So put West's D up there with O'Hara (as O'Hara found out), and St. Joe's as one of the very best in this part of the state. West is home Saturday against Kennedy Kenrick. They beat KK away last season 27-6. Looks like more of the same this year.

11. LaSalle (5-1) Whoa! Did the Explorer's run into a buzz saw or what last week against O'Hara? LaSalle lost 14-0, and far worse on the statistical scoreboard. But they stayed in the game and never gave up. Although they couldn't match the Lion's man for man in terms of size, strength and maturity, they stayed with them in terms of desire and heart. They were banging and hustling out there until the end. In the end they were overmatched, sometimes overwhelmed at the line of scrimmage. O'Hara has the better team right now but LaSalle's isn't bad. Actually, after O'Hara's first half scores, credit LaSalle for hunkering down, and shutting the Lion attack down. Some conservatism from the O'Hara side for sure, but some good adjustments by the LaSalle staff as well. Monsignor Bonner is up next. Last year's Explorer team was 4-8 while Bonner was 4-9. The Explorer's won 27-0. You want to say it shouldn't be that easy this year against a team led by a quarterback like Marc Verica. He warmed up well (2nd game back from injury) against St. Joe's last week in a 16/23/0 for 86 yards outing. You also want to say Bonner shouldn't be 1-5, but they are. Still, this could be quite a football game with both getting their bell rung last week. The game is at Bonner Friday.

12. Ridley (4-2) Upper Darby couldn't stop Radnor's ground game in the 2nd game of the season, allowing the Raiders 309 yards on the ground. Strath Haven couldn't stop them either, 2 weeks later with Radnor again rolling for 234 yards rushing. So, no one really expected Ridley to stop them, and they didn't. But they did do a better job than Darby or Haven by slowing Radnor down to 165 yards on the ground. Some rain helped too. Go figure how Radnor is 1-5. They held Ridley to 91 rushing yards on 31 carries. But Ridley is about the forward pass, rain or shine. So on a cool, wet night, quarterback Al Humes warmed after a cold start to complete 12 of 19 for 141 yards and 1 interception. Both scores were TD strikes of 33 and 31 yards in a 14-7 win. Up next is Haverford's (4-2) much improved team. The losses were to undefeated Chichester (3A, 5-0) 34-27, and Strath Haven, 35-6. They're coming off their 2nd road win of the year, this one at Penncrest 32-7. Ridley had to play 4 quarters against the Ford's 3-9 team last year, and won 21-7. This year's edition should be more difficult at home.

13. Upper Darby (5-1) Mimicking the O'Hara-LaSalle game, Upper Darby and Springfield played a tight game won narrowly by Upper Darby 14-6, despite their

dominating the statistical charts. One exception to the comparison, Springfield is not at LaSalle's level. A lot of good players returned this season but it just didn't happen. The Royals held Springfield to 23 yards rushing and 53 total for the game. Springfield's score came on an 86 yard kickoff return immediately after UD's first score of the game with 1:16 to go in the 3rd quarter. The last score of the game came with no time remaining in the 3rd quarter, meaning all 20 points were scored in the last 1:16 of the 3rd quarter! Otherwise, the mud, rain, penalties and turnovers helped keep the score down. As always, Simoni Marco Lawrence was unstoppable, running for 183 yards on 28 carries. There are a few big games in Delaware county Friday night with Salesianum visiting Chichester, and Interboro at Academy Park. But the biggest is Upper Darby at Strath Haven where simply put, both must win. It will likely be a slugfest where which ever premier tailback breaks the big one will win. Haven's go to guy is Jared Bradley, having another good season at 672 yards on 125 carries. He's well supported by Kevin Kaminski at 305 yards in 66 carries. *Thanks to HavenFootball.net for those statistics.* On the other side, it's all about S.M. Lawrence who has carried it 147 times for 1044 yards! At 7.1 yards per carry, you know he's broken more than a few big ones. Another weapon is kicker Dan DiBona, who has made lengthy field goals from 31 and 39 yards out. He could be the difference in a game that historically is tight. Oddly, this is only Upper Darby's 2nd road game of the year. The other was at Conestoga 3 weeks ago in a losing effort, 14-7. This one should be just as close.

14. Pennsbury (5-1) Nice turnaround for Pennsbury with the 30-0 shutout at Truman. Truman's season fell apart the last two weeks with the Pennsbury loss, and a 44-7 drubbing by Neshaminy the week before. These two are headed in opposite directions with the Falcons responding positively to the 35-13 loss to North Penn the week before. You take a road win anyway you can get it but Pennsbury's have been large with Truman last week, and York High 3 weeks before. Nice wins! Let's see if they can sustain themselves Friday at Bensalem, who's coming off the big effort at North Penn. Pennsbury struggled with the Owls last year at home, but beat them 13-7.

15. Pottsgrove (4-1, 3A) Like Pennsbury, Pottsgrove jumped 2 spots in the rankings because of solid road wins, and the demise of Penridge and Tennett. With the Falcon's huge win the week before against Lansdale Catholic, there was the possibility of overlooking the 2-2 Indians. It was about this time of the season last year where the wheels fell off in a 2-4 finish, after a 4-1 start. And it was this Upper Perkiomen team that took a big chunk out of the first tire with a 35-21 win at Pottsgrove. But Coach Pennypacker and staff had them focused this time as the Falcs rolled to a 47-12 win. Rival Pottstown is up next. They're struggling at 0-6. Quickie down memory lane: It was just 3 years ago when Pottstown had a powerful team that didn't allow a regular season opponent to score a single point, not one point, until Spring-Ford booted a field goal in game # 8. They got the FG early, and paid mightily in a 60-3 loss. They went 10-1 that year with the loss to Strath Haven in the 1st round of playoffs. Back to the present: Rivalries are a bear but the Falcons should win big here at home.

16. Lansdale Catholic (5-1, 2A) Lansdale Catholic's road weary Crusader's won another away game last week at Perkiomen Valley, 34-21. 5 of their first 6 games this year have

been on the road where they banged out an impressive 4-1 mark. 3 of their final 4 games are at home, starting this week with Upper Perkiomen. The Indians are probably feeling no pain after the bashing Pottsgrove gave them last week. LC rolled last year against one of Upper Perk's better teams, winning 48-7 against last year's 8-3 squad and can name it here.

17. Abington (4-2) The Ghosts and Indians gave us a Heckle-Jeckle performance last week that had the offensive and defensive coaches pulling their hair out on both sides of the field all night. Abington opened with an explosive 1st half to lead 26-7. That's got to have you scratching your head about a CR North defense that allowed 13 a game coming in. Then in the 2nd half they flip flopped, with North outscoring Abington 14-0. That's the second week in a row Abington got a 1st half lead, only to go scoreless the 2nd half. Turnovers proved critical in this one with the Ghosts returning a CRN fumble 48 yards for the score. The win should revitalize them for North Penn Friday at Abington. The Knights beat them last year at home 34-7. But this year's team has a lot more offense, up from last year's 17 points per game average to 27. But the D is the same porous unit that's actually yielding more points this year, 25, than last year's 22 ppg average. North Penn will score a pile of points and it's doubtful Abington can counter.

18. Council Rock North (4-2) 3 and 5 point road losses are all that separate Council Rock North from a 6-0 record! We used to joke that "close" didn't count except in horseshoes, hand grenades and nuclear warfare. But it's still a very nice football team that is now up against the wall because of those close losses. Neshaminy is in town Friday for a game the Indians must win to have a shot at the postseason. Someone could do the math and find a scenario where they would get in but they'd be a profound long shot. The Skins won last year 24-0 and could be looking ahead to North Penn next week. Miracles happen but a win at Abington last week would have been the tonic for them here.

19. Central Bucks East (5-1) Central Bucks East got their 2nd shutout of the season last week as the D continues slamming the door on opposing offenses. The schedule shows 1 winning team, Council Rock North, who rocked them on East's field 28-10. They have road wins at Hatboro and Norristown, two 3-3 teams, and home wins against CB West, Souderton, and Dobbins. All of that breaks down to a team averaging 25 points per game while allowing 8. Not bad. They get their 2nd test of the year, CRN being the 1st, when Quakertown visits Friday. Both are 3-0 atop the SOL-Continental Conference. Both need a win to stay in the playoff picture, but East hasn't defeated Quakertown in years. Qtown won the last 3, since 2002 by large scores; 37-23, 33-7 and last year 16-13. They're on a 3 game winning streak, and are undefeated on the road. East has won their last 4, so it looks like a very competitive game. Quakertown is here after an impressive 19-16 overtime win at Tennett.

20. Pennridge (3-3) The 24-0 loss to Neshaminy last week destroyed any divisional hopes the Rams had and for the most part eliminated them from playoff contention this year. But don't feel too bad for a team that's gone 56-18 from 1999 to 2004. *Thanks to ePaSports.com for that information.* Without minimizing the loss of key personnel, the Rams returned good numbers this year. But not enough to negotiate a rugged National

Conference schedule. Games against winnable teams were always followed by a monster game, denying the Rams rhythm. The winning opener against Hatboro Horsham was followed by a loss at Central Dauphin. A home win against Bonner occurred before a loss at North Penn. And finally in the last two games, the Abington win was followed by the loss to Neshaminy. At 3-3 it can still be a good season but they'll have to do it on the road where 4 of the last 6 games will be played. They're at Truman (4-2) Friday. Truman hit a wall recently with consecutive 37 and 30 point losses following a great 4-0 start. They're capable but will have to rediscover their disappearing offense that scored 1 touchdown the last 2 games. It was an easy 42-6 home win for the Rams last year against Truman's 2-10 team but this one should be more exciting.

Honorable Mention

VFMA (4-0)

Archbishop Wood (4-2)

Henderson (3-3)

Tennett (4-2)

Truman (4-2)

Norristown (3-3)

Quakertown (4-2)

Souderton (3-3)

Chichester (5-0, 3A)

Interboro (3-2, 3A)