

Top 20 High School Football Rankings

Southeastern Pennsylvania Football

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

October 25, 2005

(All teams are 4A unless indicated otherwise)

1. Saint Joseph's Prep (7-1) St. Joseph's got a dose of reality Sunday when LaSalle stepped up to the challenge and gave them their biggest scare of the year in Red Division play. It was also a reality check for many of us who had come to think of the Hawk's as some all conquering force no team could compete with. Whether it was mistakes on St. Joe's side of the ball, and there were many, or a gut check all-out by the Explorer's, whatever side you're on, the game reminds us these are high school football teams, not larger-than-life mythic figures from Mount Olympus. St. Joe's won the game 21-14, but give LaSalle credit for forcing-creating some of those turnovers (4). The Explorer's weren't perfect either, with quarterback John Harrison throwing 2 interceptions. The first one saw DB Dave Mendez of St. Joe's returning it 27 yards for a 1st quarter score. LaSalle answered in the 2nd quarter with Harrison hitting running back Chris Ashley with an 11 yard strike. Here's a first. The Explorer's kept St. Joe's offense out of the end zone until the 2nd half. But with a quarterback like Chris Whitney, it's just a matter of time until he breaks one, and break one he did in the 3rd quarter by taking it up the middle for a 66 yard touchdown run. Again, LaSalle came right back with their own score, a 19 yard toss from Harrison to Rick Cosgrove, getting them dead even entering the 4th at 14-14. That's were it stayed until Hawk's running back Jamir Livingston capped a lengthy drive for the score with 7 minutes left in the game. LaSalle intercepted with 3 minutes left, getting to St. Joe's 23 yard line where the Hawk's held. So did LaSalle, forcing a punt with time expiring just after the tackle. Heck of a game! North Catholic is up next, Saturday, then O'Hara.

2. Neshaminy (7-1) Neshaminy jumped to 2nd in the rankings this week on the strength of a surprisingly easy 41-13 dismantling of North Penn. The win puts them alone atop the SOL-National at 5-0 with 2 to go. All that's left is a home game Friday against Bensalem, followed by a road game at Pennsbury November 4th. While most of us say "no way" to a Pennsbury win, who thought Neshaminy could or would hang 41 on North Penn while holding them to 13? Last week's game got out of hand early for the Knights with Neshaminy scoring twice in the 1st quarter to take a 14-0 lead. In the 2nd quarter, the Knights' found pay dirt when Coach went for it all on 4th a 4 on their own 45 yard line. QB Kyle Feiser hit TE Josh Neubert for a 55 yard score. Their only other score came from the defense with Neubert returning a fumble 45 yards. That wasn't nearly enough with Neshaminy adding to their 1st quarter lead by rolling up 27 more points in the final 3 quarters. Running back Jared Kinney was one of the stories in this one with 4 touchdowns and 218 yards rushing. The other story was Neshaminy's defense that shut the Knights down hard, holding running back Pete Stoll to 6 yards, and the entire team to 55 yards rushing. The Skins are playing great ball at the right time of the year. The offense is throwing up a ton of points and the D is everywhere, shutting everyone down with an 11 ppg average. Bensalem's Fighting Owls are up next. They're at 1-7 on a 5 game losing streak.

3. Cardinal O'Hara (7-1) Here's where the rankings get troublesome, even annoying in the quest to keep things reasonable. Last week's rankings from 1st through 4th had SJP on top, followed by North Penn, O'Hara and Neshaminy. This week the Hawk's hold onto 1st, but North Penn dropped to 4th after being overwhelmed by 28 points at Neshaminy. Conversely, the Skins' performance was so compelling as to leap frog them above O'Hara to 2nd. That part's ok. But by dropping North to 4th, we put them beneath a team they beat earlier in the season 35-28. That was back in week # 2. Since then the Knights' have had winning but listless performances against Pennsbury, Bensalem and now Neshaminy. And while off nights are understandable, it's typically the O that suffers, not a defense that vanishes. Nothing listless about the Lion's who put up big numbers the last 2 weeks against Archbishop Ryan and Monsignor Bonner. Last week's 42-7 dismemberment of Bonner was near total by holding the Friars to zero yards rushing! Quarterback Marc Verica was slowed to a paltry 108 yards on 25 throws. Lion running back John Dempsey was awesome, getting 192 yards on 16 totes! Joe Justi had another 66 with quarterback Anthony Walters getting 57. Almost every week shows a different tailback stepping up. 2 weeks ago it was Justi getting 148 yards on 15 carries against Ryan. All totaled O'Hara got 354 total yards (none passing) to Bonner's 108 that was all passing. Roman is up next on Saturday.

4. North Penn (7-1) The Knights' suffered their worst loss in 3 years with the 41-13 pounding administered by Neshaminy last week. To find something even approaching a loss of that magnitude, you've got to go back to 2002 when they lost to Parkland in the State Semifinal 33-13. Parkland went on to win the AAAA title by defeating Western rep Woodland Hills, 34-12. Interestingly, Parkland's only loss that year was the opener to Bethlehem Catholic 29-28, a loss they avenged in the playoffs to give the Golden Hawks (11-1) their only loss of the year, 14-11. A lot of people thought Becahi (some said Central Dauphin, lost to Parkland 28-21), was the 2nd best team in the state that year. Anyway, since that playoff loss, all North Penn did was run off 17 straight and bring home an AAAA title in 2003 before last year's 21-20 loss at O'Hara. Who knows if all that will happen again but it sure suggests a difficult night for Truman Friday in Lansdale. The Tiger's allowed 133 points the last 4 games. Making matters worse, they're coming off a Monday game. North Penn's mood and Truman's lack of defense the last 4 weeks says North will name it here.

5. Conestoga (8-0) Quagmire. How do you come up with a word like that? So a visit to Webster and a web site came up with the following definition. Quagmire; a soft, boggy, marshy area that gives way underfoot. That's the key part, where it says, *gives way underfoot*. Anything else isn't so bad. In football, soft, boggy and marshy is a nice place to land. But when the earth moves beneath you, aside from being way too much fun, it makes playing football nearly impossible. So much ground gave way last week at Springfield that the players seemed knee deep in it at times. Seriously, it was well beyond the ankles very early into the contest between Conestoga and Springfield. A number of factors conspired to make this a good game. First off, Stoga's schedule may have lulled them to sleep facing Radnor, Lower Merion and Springfield consecutively, after the tight one with Ridley on September 30th. Weather was a major factor as well. Delco saw lots

of rain last week, ranging from intermittent showers to downpours. Another significant reason was a determined effort by a 2-6 team that is easily 6-2 barring 1, 3, 5 and 8 point losses. The AAA Cougars entered the season with high expectations but haven't been able to finish. That's how this one went. They got a touchdown in the 1st quarter but had the extra point blocked. Conestoga roused themselves in the 2nd quarter for the go ahead and extra point to lead 7-6. And that's how it ended. Say what you will about Conestoga but they're winning the close ones. They close out the season on the road with Haverford this week followed by Marple Newtown the following.

6. Malvern Prep (7-0) Malvern Prep got their 2nd Inter AC win of the season by defeating Germantown Academy 42-0. They've yet to allow a single point in league play this season with their duplicate 42-0 shutout of Haverford School 2 weeks ago. And the offense is in another zone since topping the 40 point mark 3 consecutive weeks. Last week they wore the Patriots down with a run-pass ratio of 8-2. Despite that, they got 100 yards passing verses 226 on the ground, while holding the Pats to 142 total yards. Altogether they've matured into a special team that seems headed for an undefeated season. Penn Charter is next at Malvern Friday. They're off to a decent 5-2 start with losses to Archbishop Wood at the top of the schedule, 21-14, and to Valley Forge Military Academy three weeks ago, 26-0. Since that loss they've shutout Pius X (Bangor) 49-0 and Episcopal last week, 27-0. A few words about Single-A Pius X from District Eleven; They are down on hard times this year with grad losses but year in and year out this is pound for pound one of the toughest programs in the state. Their won-loss from 1999 through 2004 is 56-18. And it wasn't compiled against light weights. This is a tiny Class A program that plays anyone. Over the years they've faced Brooklyn's Poly Prep a number of times, as well as teams like Steelton-Highspire, York High, Southern Columbia, Mount Carmel and others. Last year's team routed AA District Three power Littlestown 42-15. That's the same Littlestown team that advanced to the State Semifinal before losing to Lansdale Catholic. The Royals have had a relationship with Germantown Academy and Penn Charter for a number of years. Back to Malvern Prep; The Friar's owe Penn one for hanging a 21-8 loss on them last year. And because it's at Malvern, the pay back could get large.

7. Downingtown East (7-1) Except for the 3 point loss to Malvern Prep in week 4! Even so, they've survived the loss of one of the top quarterbacks in the country missing the first 2 games to be here looking good for a high seed in the postseason. They were 3rd entering last week's games and should remain as much this week although their latest win, a 56-17 rout, came against AAA Bishop Shanahan. All the wins since the Malvern loss were by impressive margins of 28, 28, 14 (at Coatesville) and 39 points. They're on a roll and it's hard finding another loss on the schedule. Henderson looked like they emerged from the fog with 3 straight wins before falling flat on their face at home in a 29-7 disaster last week against Downingtown West. Except for the Cougars and Coatesville, the Ches-Mont is down. Their opponent this week, West Chester East (3-5), will see their string of 3 consecutive 9 win season come to a halt. And Henderson at 4-4 never got the wake up call and will likely see their streak of 4 winning seasons come to an end. Getting a good handle on Downingtown East isn't as easy this year with so many

Ches-Mont teams in a building cycle. One thing is for certain, with a quarterback like Pat Devlin in the playoffs, the Cougars are a threat to beat anyone on any given night.

8. Upper Darby (7-1) In gambling parlance the term “sandwich” refers to a game against a lesser opponent scheduled *between* two more difficult opponents. At 3-4 coming into the game, having lost 4 of their last 5 games, Penncrest was the perfect sandwich game for Upper Darby, coming as it did between Strath Haven and Ridley. Compounding this, Penncrest wasn’t fooling around. They shut down Upper Darby in the 1st quarter and nailed a 28 yard field goal for the 3-0 lead. At the 9:45 mark of the 2nd quarter they struck again, this time with talented quarterback Greg Tyrrell connecting with Kenny Kull on a 5 yard strike for 6. Tyrrell was the man for Penncrest by completing 23 of 37 passes for 239 yards. Well done. The kick made it 10-0 Penncrest! Dan DiBona’s 22 yard field goal narrowed it to 10-3 at the half. And that seemed to revive the Royals because thereon it was all Upper Darby with quarterback Blaine Fox (4/9/2/65yards) demonstrating UD’s balance by throwing two 2nd half touchdowns to his big split end, 6-2, 190, Nick Ciccone. UD’s final score came on a Simoni Marco Lawrence 2 yard plunge with 4:17 to go in the 4th. They scored 24 unanswered points after trailing 10-0. The Lion’s scored a harmless touchdown with 30 seconds left in the game making the final a well fought 24-16 game. Upper Darby’s Lawrence proved unstoppable again on a rainy night by rushing for 151 yards on 28 carries. Penncrest was held to 17 yards rushing. Ridley’s up next Friday, in Folsom.

9. West Catholic (7-1) This is getting repetitive but what a defense! West’s defenders allowed 28 points the entire season. Half of those came against O’Hara in a 14-12 loss, with the rest coming against Dougherty and Kennedy Kenrick who got 6 each, and Neumann Goretti who got a safety. All the other teams, meaning Roman, St. John’s (D.C), McDevitt and Egan were shutout. Last week’s D held Neumann to 2 points and 38 yards rushing in a 21-2 win. West threw 12 passes but this was primarily about pounding ahead to the tune of 195 rush yards in 37 carries. Running back Dennis Shaw as always was a blur at 188 yards rushing on 25 attempts. Carroll’s up next at 5-3 and 4-1 in the Blue Division. West and Wood are tied for the Blue lead at 5-0. So Carroll is right there. The loss was to Wood 5 weeks ago, 21-6. Carroll’s coming off a 21-6 win against McDevitt Monday. Fatigue could be a factor until they recall last year’s 14-12 loss to the Burrs in the 2nd round of the Blue Division playoffs.

10. Strath Haven (6-2, 3A) Late score from Monday night, Strath Haven beat Lower Merion 69-0. Quick hits; it was 41-0 at the half, with running back Jared Bradley gaining 242 yards on 10 carries for 5 touchdowns.....in the 1st half!

11. LaSalle (6-2) LaSalle lost to St. Joseph’s Prep 21-14, but held their position in the rankings after such a strong effort against the Hawk’s. St. Joe’s veteran secondary better tighten up after Explorer QB John Harrison wrecked it for 192 yards and 2 touchdowns. For the night, Harrison went 18/35/2/192 against a defense that knew LaSalle must pass to gain yardage. LaSalle got 9 yards rushing against O’Hara. What could they possible hope to accomplish against an equally aggressive and impenetrable rushing defense like St. Joe’s? Probably not much. In fact they got less than “not much” with the Hawk’s

holding them to minus 11 yards rushing. Running back Chris Ashley caught 6 for 93 yards with Drew Wilkins getting another 64 yards on 4 receptions. Those are serious chunks or yardage, averaging 15.2 yards per catch combined. In the end, St. Joe's dented them for a lot more, particularly on the ground where 41 rushes generated 283 yards of real estate. Running back Jamir Livingston was special, getting 173 yards on 25 carries. Double-threat quarterback Chris Whitney got 83 yards rushing and another 59 through the air. LaSalle played a strong game but the Hawks were more. How about these Explorer's at 6-2, with competitive losses to O'Hara and St. Joe's. Ryan's up next as LaSalle goes for win # 7. Ryan may be 3-5 but they're used to playing the big boys after facing Pennsbury, Neshaminy, St. Joe's and O'Hara already this season.

12. Pennsbury (7-1) Pennsbury kept the focus (teacher's strike) to pound out a hard fought win against always tough Pennridge, 14-7. This one had all the trappings of a playoff game with its tightness, and neither team able to effectively dent the other's defense until late in the 3rd quarter when the Rams marched downfield on a 65 yard drive to score with 2:30 left in the quarter. For Pennsbury, it was a playoff game, especially with a road game at dangerous Abington Friday, and rival Neshaminy in the following week. The Falcons responded to Pennridge's score by putting together an even more impressive 88 yard drive for 6 and a 2 point conversion with 9:45 to go in the 4th. Another touchdown with 2:35 left in the 4th iced it for the Falcons. Because the Neshaminy game is already penciled in as a loss by so many, the Abington game takes on heightened importance in Pennsbury's effort to get to the playoffs.

13. Coatesville (6-2) Coatesville took all their frustration out on West Chester East last week by overwhelming the young Vikings 56-21. This was total domination without letup as the Red Raider's scored 14 points in each quarter. Part of the impetus for so large a win came as a result of Downingtown East embarrassing them at home the week before. And the Viking team itself received extra attention with their 27-21 upset of Downingtown West the week before. Maybe not, maybe it was East jumping out to a 13-6 first quarter lead, because thereon the Raider's outscored them 50-8. C.J. Gray was again awesome, getting 278 yards on 27 carries. Entering last week's games Coatesville was tied with Plymouth Whitmarsh in the 9th position for the playoffs. Coatesville is still in the hunt. Unpredictable Henderson (4-4) is in this weekend. With the 2 point loss to Governor Mifflin, 1 pointer to Malvern and 5 point loss at St. Marks, they're a threat.

14. Central Bucks East (7-1) Is East rolling or what! They let it all hang out last week in the 41-13 romp against Central Bucks South. Here we had 2 teams going in opposite directions, with South at 1-7 losing 6 in a row, while East is on a 6 game winning streak. A 41 point explosion skews the stats, but it's still indicative of a team's ability, and the other guy's defense. East hasn't scored 40 points in a league game in many years. In the non-league opener this year they beat Dobbins 47-7. But in the real world that is the Suburban One League, they haven't reached that plateau since 2001 when they beat Council Rock 40-18. The year before they did it twice, against Tennett, 49-0, and again verses Council Rock, 42-19. They'll need that offense Friday against the defending SOL-Continental champ Tennett on the road. East is undefeated at 5-0 in conference play. Tennett is 4-1. So we're talking conference title and likely a spot in the postseason.

Tennett won last year's game 32-20 against an East team that finished 4-6. Last year's East squad gave up too many points at 20 a game. This year's edition is yielding 7 ppg. Of course, the Continental was stronger last year with the explosive Hatboro Horsham team going 10-2, an 8-3 Tennett team who nearly beat Coatesville, and surprising Souderton along with ever present Quakertown at 9-3 and 7-5 respectively. That said, East is averaging 26 a game and allowing 7 meaning they have enough to go into Tennett and win.

15. Tennett (6-2) Last year's Panther group won a ton of close games, including Council Rock South 37-36, Norristown 21-17, Quakertown 14-13, Central Bucks South 14-12, Hatboro Horsham 27-26, and Souderton 30-27. That shows the competitive nature of the Continental last year, and why they were able to win 8 games. This year, with an offense scoring 29 a game backed by a defense allowing just 14, they are for the most part blowing teams away, albeit, in a weaker conference. The last time Tennett was home was 3 weeks ago where they lost a heartbreaker to Qtown in overtime 19-16. It's hard seeing Tennett losing another home game, especially with this being their last home game of the season. There's a lot of emotion in this one with East looking for revenge and Tennett defending their title and trying to stay in the postseason picture. This should be one of the best games of the weekend.

16. Archbishop Wood (6-2) Late score from Monday night, Archbishop Wood beat Conwell Egan 35-0.

17. Ridley (5-3) The Green Raider's typically loses 3 games a year counting the playoffs. That's the way its gone for the last 4 years, and 5 of the last 6. So to be 5-3 at this point in the season says that streak is probably over, as well as the 3 year run in the postseason. It's been quite a run. This team has done more than many expected. Still, it came as a shock seeing them lose to Marple Newtown last week due to a missed extra point. In the end it's always more than that in a 1 point loss and this game was no different. QB Al Humes had a huge night, throwing for 290 yards! He's only a junior so stay tuned, but he also threw 2 interceptions. Other turnovers in the form of 2 drive stopping fumbles were big. And the team on the other side of the field did what they had to do to win the thing by playing almost error free football. No fumbles, no picks, just 3 innocuous penalties. QB Liberty kept them honest by completing 6 of 8 for 83 yards. Marple's defense held the Raider's to 50 yards rushing so this was no fluke. Plus, although they're a long shot, don't tell the Tiger's they're out of the AAA picture. Pottsgrove wasn't suppose to lose. Things happen. Up next for Ridley is a powerful Upper Darby team gunning for the playoffs. But when is Ridley an easy out, especially at home and particularly following a loss. Since 1999 they're 11-2 after losing a regular season game. Interestingly, Upper Darby got a wake up call last week at Penncrest. So the contest should see 2 focused teams in a real battle. The Royals are more than Ridley, but they'll need their A game to get past these Raiders.

18. Pennridge (4-4) As it turns out it was too much to ask a less than potent Pennridge team to win consecutive road games in the tough National Conference. But they gave Pennsbury a run for the money before losing 14-7. This is only the second time in 7 years

they've lost 4 games. Don't be surprised at an 8-4 finish with their toughest opposition coming to them in the form of Council Rock North Friday, and Quakertown well down the road the 23rd of November. In between are road games against Bensalem (what happen there?) and Cheltenham.

19. Council Rock North (5-3) Late score from Monday night, Council Rock North beat Truman 38-0 to snap a 2 game losing streak. They're at Pennridge Friday.

20. Plymouth Whitemarsh (6-2) The Colonials play out of the Suburban One League's American Conference. To say this is a down year in the American would grossly understate things. To date the American stands at 5-19 against non-conference teams. That's a big drop even from last year's disappointing 13-18 won-loss. But if intra-conference games mean anything, the Colonials have separated themselves from the pack by pounding other conference foes by an average score of 42-11. That's separation! And it suggests real growth from season opening losses to LaSalle and Abington. Since then they've run off 6 straight wins. Friday's game at Wissahickon (5-3, 4-1 Am Conf) will tell us if they're ready for prime time and a possible slot in the postseason picture.

Honorable Mention

Removed VFMA, use post grad players.

Roman Catholic (5-3)

Henderson (4-4)

Abington (5-3)

Soudertown (5-3)

Marple Newtown (5-3, 3A)

Boyertown (4-3)

Phoenixville (7-0, 3A)

Pottsgrove (5-2, 3A)

Lansdale Catholic (6-2, 2A)

Interboro (6-2, 3A)

Chichester (6-1, 3A)

Unionville (8-0, 3A)