

## ***Top 20 High School Football Preseason Rankings Southeastern Pennsylvania Football***

***Featuring District 1, 12, the Philadelphia Catholic League and the Inter Ac  
September 6, 2006***

***All teams are 4A unless indicated otherwise***

What an opening week of high school football! When was the last time Cardinal O'Hara, North Penn, Neshaminy, Interboro, and Strath Haven all lost on the same weekend? It doesn't matter *when* but it sure was unusual. As bad as it was, our Top 10 went a respectable 6-4. Actually, it was disappointing that four teams lost. Compared to a newspaper Top 10 located in a large, nearby city going 3-7, we didn't do all that bad. The bottom line, the Top 20 was shaken to its core last week with many teams dropping out after poor performances. How about Interboro shut down by Unionville 34-0, and held to 40 yards rushing? We just knew Sun Valley was going to beat Strath Haven 12-7, right? And didn't we all bet the house on Archbishop Wood beating North Penn! What happened to a decent Quakertown team getting shellacked at home by Emmaus, 28 to zip? No disrespect to the winning teams, but those were surprising scores. Some teams will probably work their way back into the rankings since the lower 10 are often more volatile than the Top 10. It's only the second week of the season but don't you feel a heightened sense of anticipation, maybe even change, after last week's games?

**1. St. Joseph Prep (1-0)** The Hawks won their opener by defeating rebuilding Neshaminy 16-6. Tropical depression Ernesto blew through, reducing playing conditions to a bare minimum. Most of our area teams played in windy, rainy conditions. But that didn't stop St. Joseph's running back Jamir Livingston from punching through Neshaminy's defense for 127 yards on 23 attempts. He went up the middle at will against the scrappy but undersized Skins. By games end, the Hawks had 206 yards of total offense. The defense played well, except for a 4<sup>th</sup> quarter breakdown where Neshaminy's Mike Ellershaw broke free on a 55 yard touchdown run. Physically, it was a mismatch, with St. Joe's larger lines, especially the DL, largely dominating the Skin's OL. Neshaminy was held to 136 total yards. This week, the Prep faces a more talented opponent in Don Bosco Prep, from Ramsey in northern New Jersey. Don Bosco Prep has a male enrollment of 875 in grades 10 thru 12, making them the equivalent of our AAAA teams. Simply put, they are loaded, with many returning from last year's 11-1 team. They're probably the best team the Hawk's will face this year unless Hilliard-Davidson (game 3) successfully replaced a number of key graduates. DBP returns senior quarterback Matt Simms, 6-2, 190, the son of New York Giant great Phil Simms. He threw for 2744 yards and 30 touchdowns last year. Both running backs return, junior Guy Germina, 5-10, 205, 847 rush yards, and senior Dale Fava, 5-7, 180, who got 561 rush yards. Most of the receivers are back and enough linemen, notably, center Eric Gormeley, 6-1, 260. Key people returning to the defense are DE Justin Trattou, 6-4, 240 (Notre Dame), DE Ike Garrow, 5-11, 245, and LB Sam Griffin, 6-4, 220. They have size and speed, and won't be pushed around as Neshaminy was. The Ironmen will be a difficult team to beat.

**2. LaSalle (1-0)** With North Penn and Cardinal O'Hara losing, LaSalle moves into the 2 slot behind St. Joseph. New head coach Drew Gordon got his first win at LaSalle as the Explorer's opened in near mid season form by routing Plymouth Whitemarsh 29-8. The Colonials got their score with less than a minute left against LaSalle's reserves. That's two years in a row that they've pounded PW. Last year's score was 42-21. Running back Chris Ashley always comes up big in the stat department, this time getting a career high 135 yards rushing. He's 5-8, 170 pounds. Last year he gained 728 rushing. Next up is the home opener against what should be an improved Neumann Goretti team. The Saints (want to say Pirates) come in off of a hard fought win against North Catholic in Wildwood, 16-12. They're led by senior QB Matt Hatty. 1242 pass yards and 13 TD's from last year says the Saints are capable of giving LaSalle a challenge.

**3. Cardinal O'Hara (0-1)** Couldn't drop the Lions too far, not after losing to a quality opponent like Easton. Easton scored as a result of a 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter blocked punt run in from 25 yards out. So the D played well. But what happened to the offense, and an offensive line that was supposed to be a team strength? This will look like a misprint, but the Lion's rushed for a total of 19 yards! Although top running back John Dempsey went down with a sprained ankle in the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter, those are nearly unbelievable statistics for a program of this level. Other stats show Easton holding them to 6 first downs and 131 total yards. Receiver Wedderburn caught only 2 balls. Quarterback Tom Savage completed 6 of 24 passes for 114 yards, and had 3 intercepted. The Red Rovers had 186 total yards of offense. Moving ahead, North Penn is in this week to set up one of the more important games in the area. The Knights are themselves coming off a disappointing 25-18 loss at home to Archbishop Wood. Whoever losses here drops to 0-2. It doesn't seem possible we're having a conversation like that about these two teams. Going back to last season, both teams have lost their last 2 games. North Penn closed out last year with a loss to another Lehigh Valley team, Bethlehem Liberty, who play in the same conference and division as Easton. Talk about District 11 earning some bragging rights toppling these two! For Cardinal O'Hara, a win evens the count for last years 35-28 loss at North Penn. Going back to last year, a win will also end a skid that has seen them lose 3 of their last 4 games. Here's where the skid ends.

**4. Pennsbury (1-0)** Right up front, Pennsbury did not look good in defeating Archbishop Ryan last week 10-7. And a whole bunch of teams looked even worse in losing to provide space for them here at # 4. In openers, especially with remnants of a hurricane dumping rain and wind on you, you take the win anyway you can get it. So while the Falcon's offense was a no-show, defense and special teams came through to save the day by holding Ryan to 58 yards rushing and 26 passing. Dan Johnson ran in an interception from 30 out to tie the game in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Then, special teams won it with C.J. Marck booting an 18 yard field goal. Frankford is up next. Pennsbury handled them last year 28-7, and should do the same here.

**5. Archbishop Wood (1-0)** This is about as radical a adjustment as possible, moving Archbishop Wood from 19 to 5. But, when you beat a team of North Penn's stature, especially in their house, it's justified. And it wasn't a fluke. Quarterback Sean McCartney was poised, leading an offensive unit that gained 245 total yards. McCartney

rushed for 32 yards on 13 carries, and completed 2 of 8 for 28 yards. How about that, a sophomore, winning his first start on the road at North Penn. Underrated Matt Little filled in well for graduated Bryan McCartney with 125 yards in 12 carries. The Viking's ripped into the Knight's defense for 217 yards on the ground. What a great win for the Catholic League's Blue Division that is too often perceived as a weak sister. This one turned heads across the state and sent a message to others that Blue Division contenders must still go through this team. Scary thinking how they will develop as the season progresses. The next game is at Penn Charter, a team they beat last year 21-14.

**6. North Penn (0-1)** It's fortunate for North Penn the 4A playoff format expanded to 16 teams this year since they stand a good chance of losing their first 2 games. The feeling here is the Knight's will get it together and become a solid team. But they do have strong challengers in the Suburban National this year, more than last year. Their old nemesis Neshaminy will recover from the loss to St. Joseph to field a dangerous team. Pennridge is down, but Abington and Pennsbury are stronger than last year's editions. The Titans from Central Bucks South shouldn't be overlooked either. At the end of the day, losing to a team like Archbishop Wood with their 3 consecutive Blue titles, and a coach of Coach Powell's stature is no disgrace. Wood is clearly a good football team. About O'Hara this week; the Knight's showed a decent enough offense considering conditions and their opponent. But the D was not there. O'Hara showed no offense at Easton last week but did bring a strong defense. Because good coaches and teams usually show great progress in game two, we'll probably have one heck of a football game Friday.

**7. Souderton (1-0)** Souderton began the new season with an impressive 27-7 road win against Spring-Ford. The Indians had it going with a balanced attack. QB Franklin threw for 150 yards on a 7 for 11 outing. The ground game was also productive with 36 carries gaining 176 yards. Defensively, they held the Rams to 70 rushing and 96 through the air. Souderton is really on a roll. Going back to last year, they've won 7 straight. That includes 4 on the road. This week they have their home opener against a disappointing Quakertown team. The Panther's had nothing in their home opener last week against Emmaus, and were shutout, 28-0. An embarrassing loss of that magnitude will have them amped up for Souderton.

**8. Neshaminy (0-1)** Tough start for the Redskins who battled until the end but came up short against St. Joseph Prep 16-6. Considering how outmanned they were along the line of scrimmage, they did about as well as could be expected. A positive is their getting to St. Joe's QB Chris Whitney for at least 4 sacks. The game was largely a one man show with running back Kit Anderson sidelined. With him healthy, quarterback Flogel and a swarming defense, they'll be fine in upcoming games. They came out of this one healthy and won't play a better team for the rest of the season. The schedule is favorable with Archbishop Ryan up next, followed by Germantown. All are home games. Then they play Abington in their 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive home game.

**9. Coatesville (1-0)** Here's another team with a sweet schedule of 4 consecutive home games to start the season. It began with Archbishop Carroll giving them a competitive game while losing, 21-6. The score was 14-0 through 3 quarters. Carroll wasn't a

pushover. They managed 125 yards on the ground without running back Brent Christie, and passed for another 111 yards. Coatesville meanwhile was a bullsh on the ground, with FB/DE Derrick Morgan, 6-4, 255, plowing ahead for 120 yards. Kieran Hutchenson got another 64. Senior quarterback Scott A'Hara opened up early, hitting Kahlil Brewer with a 23 yard 1<sup>st</sup> quarter scoring strike. Last year's team had the ability to run around you with diminutive tailback C.J. Gray. This year's edition will run over you, keeping you honest with an experienced senior quarterback. They are something like North Penn, run after run, followed by more running. The difference, Coatesville will use their quarterback to pass the football. Exciting team! Next up is Germantown High from Philadelphia's Public League, or District 12. Good for the Bears, getting out of the city and scheduling Coatesville and Neshaminy this year. Why not? G-town is one of the more successful programs in the city, with a 52-23 won-loss the last 7 years. Only George Washington at 66-17, Frankford at 63-16, and Northeast at 58-20, have done better over the same period. The Bears are coming off a 49-0 loss to (sit down for this one) DeMatha, from Hyattsville, Maryland. Dematha is essentially a Washington, D.C. suburban school that has fielded some of the best football and basketball teams in the East. They were 11-1 last year and loaded again this year. For Germantown, stepping up is one thing, but stepping beyond your ability to compete raises real questions. Coatesville isn't DeMatha, but it should be a big win for them.

**10. Abington (1-0)** The Ghosts got off to a good start by coming from behind to defeat a tough bunch from Central Bucks East, 21-14. It looked bleak, with East jumping out to a 14-7, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter lead. Abington responded by shutting down the Patriots and scoring the last 14 points of the game. They showed a lot of maturity marching on a clock-eating 70 yard drive with just over 8 minutes left in the game. Co-Captain, senior running back Jon Natter punched it in with 2 minutes and 30 seconds left on the clock. Not bad clock management for a high school team. Abington gets their first road test of the young season at Plymouth Whitemarsh Friday.

**11. Ridley (1-0)** Ridley opened with a 21-7 road win at Bensalem. The new offensive line played well with Raider backs getting 127 yards on 27 carries. It was a balanced attack with quarterback Al Humes going 13/21/2 for 169 yards. Heralded wide receiver Marcus Payton caught scoring strikes of 18 and 68 yards. Ridley's quick, swarming defense held the Owls to 38 yards rushing and 127 through the air. Talented running back Raju Easterling was held to 26 yards on 20 carries. That's 1.3 yards per carry. Strath Haven is up next on Friday. With the Green Raider's looking good early in the year, coupled with Strath Haven's poor performance at Sun Valley last week, it appears the Panther's could be looking at a 0-2 start. Add to that the huge turnout and home field advantage, and Ridley looking to get even for last season's worst loss, 28-6, and you've set the *emotional bar* sky high along the Green Raider sideline.

**12. Upper Darby (1-0)** Upper Darby opened with a comfortable 20-14 win against Monsignor Bonner. Many contributed but two seniors had strong season opening performances for the Royals. Quarterback Blaine Fox completed 8 of 14 with 1 interception for 115 yards. Running back Brandon Murray contributed by gaining 94 yards on 8 carries, and another 9 yards on 2 completions. Roman Catholic transfer Aaron

Duncan had 5 carries for negative 4 yards. Marple Newtown is up next in their home opener, feeling good after securing a win last week at Avon Grove, 7-6. They're coming off back to back 7-4 seasons, looking to get one of the six slots for the 3A playoffs.

**13. Downingtown West (1-0)** Downingtown West won a big game last week. The win came against an unspectacular team from Warwick (District 3, 4A), of the Lancaster Lebanon League. The Warriors won 9 games the last 3 years. What made it a big win is that it broke a 3 game losing streak from last year. It was worse than that actually as they lost 5 of their last 6 games! Since the split in 2003, the Whippets have gone, 5-6, 4-7 and 4-7. So with some good looking talent back this year, all they needed was a win to set a positive stage. Adding to that, it was a road win. This week's opponent is Middletown, DE, a perennial power who went 9-2 last year. Middletown pounded West last year 42-14, and are expected to again be strong. One service has them as the 5<sup>th</sup> rated team in the state.

**14. Roman Catholic (1-0)** Roman Catholic went to Wildwood last week and came home with an easier than expected 22-7 win against West Catholic. The Cahillites ran all over West, gaining 238 yards on 44 carries. Questions about the running back position were answered, in particular by Balial Lewis who rushed for 198 yards on 23 carries! West Catholic was held to 64 yards rushing and 94 through the air. That's an impressive win. This week they are at Milton Hershey, a 2A team playing in the Mid-Penn Capitol Division. Curious game for Roman, but the Spartans have put 4 winning season together, totaling out to a 30-11 won-loss record. They regularly face some of the better programs in the area, and the state in the case of Steelton-Highspire. Others include Camp Hill and Lancaster Catholic. They lost their opener to bitter rival Hershey High, and should not have anything for Roman.

**15. Tennett (1-0)** Tennett is gunning for their 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive winning season. Unusual scheduling saw them on the road 7 times last year. Still, they ended the year at 7-4, in large part after winning 5 or those 7 road games. You've got to like that! They started this year off with a bang by destroying Cheltenham 35-0. Things are looking up for Tennett, more so if they can handle the pedigree that Downingtown East brings to the field. They should answer that in the affirmative. The game is at Tennett.

**16. West Chester East (1-0)** Looks like it's going to be a long year at Conestoga after West Chester East took them apart 33-13. East High held Stoga to 66 yards on the ground. Well done! They have another home game this weekend against Owen J. Roberts from the PAC. The Wildcats are rebuilding. That's not good for a young team, on the road, against a confident East team that has one game under its belt. East should roll here. Then they need to suck it up for a tough road game at always strong Newark of Delaware.

**17. Council Rock North (1-0)** The outlook for the Indians is good if for no other reason than they moved from the SOL National to the Continental Conference. No more North Penn, Pennsbury, and Neshaminy. Pennridge and Abington aren't on the schedule either. Central Bucks East, who they beat last year, Souderton, Tennett and Hatboro-Horsham aren't lightweights, but this isn't the National. Last week's 20-14 win over Father Judge

may not be appreciated as it should. Judge is not an abject, talentless team. Having said that, North did a decent job of holding them to 93 yards rushing and 82 passing. Their next 3 are on the road starting with Truman Friday. Then they're at Conwell-Egan before the Tennett game. They should be 3-0 going into Tennett.

**18. West Catholic (0-1)** You've got to think the Burrs have more in them than was shown in Wildwood last week against Roman. They had little offense. 64 rushing yards says they are having trouble with the new line. Yet they are loaded at running back. The defense was non-existent. How often have you seen West yield 238 yards rushing the last few years? With a road trip at St. John's of D.C on Saturday, they need to regroup fast. No rest for the weary after that with LaSalle on deck. Without a turn around, West stands the real likelihood of going 0-3.

**19. Hatboro Horsham (1-0)** The Hatters got off to a great start last week by defeating Pennridge 26-7. They'll need the confidence gained in so thorough a win with the next 4 games away. It begins Friday in West Chester against Henderson. The Warriors are in their home opener, fresh off a 26-0 win at Chester. Maybe the Warriors will surprise us this year because they really disappointed us last year. They seemed poised for a special season, but couldn't recover from tight losses early in the season. 8 points is all that separated them from being undefeated facing Downingtown West at home in game # 7. One of the losses was to Malvern Prep, 28-27. Instead, they were 4-3, before losing their next 3. They managed to win their last 2, meaning they're on a 3 game winning streak with the Chester win. This is a tough spot for the Hatters. But if they can duplicate the balance shown last week, with a good enough ground game and senior quarterback Marshall Vogel cool under fire (completed 13 of 26, 2 TD's, 204 yards) then they can beat Henderson. This is a good, early season test for the Hatters.

**20. Central Bucks South (1-0)** It gets murky down here but the Titans seem ready to emerge from the doldrums of two listless campaigns, to field a competitive team. In truth, they had their moment last year. In game 4, they lost a close one at Souderton 29-22. Following that one, they lost at Quakertown, 28-20. And finally in the 7<sup>th</sup> game of the year, they lost competitively to Tennett, 20-7. "Close", only goes so far. The area is growing and big numbers are coming out for the sport. Central Bucks South is now the 9<sup>th</sup> largest school in the district, with 926 boys in grades 10 thru 12. None of that means a thing if they can't win on the field. In that regard, they got off to a good start by defeating Council Rock South 34-7. A quick schedule read says they should beat CB West, Truman, Pennridge, Bensalem, and a win a tight one at home against CB East. It's safe to say they should lose to North Penn, Neshaminy, Pennsbury and Abington. But, Pennsbury and Abington are at South, and North Penn and Neshaminy are diminished. Last week showed us the possibilities on any given night. Central Bucks West is in Friday.

## **Honorable Mention**

**Malvern Prep**  
**Archbishop Carroll (0-1)**

**Newmann Goretti (1-0)**  
**Central Bucks East (0-1)**  
**Henderson (1-0)**  
**Downingtown East (0-1)**  
**Glen Mills (0-1)**  
**Strath Haven (3A, 0-1)**  
**Unionville (3A, 1-0)**  
**Sun Valley (3A, 1-0)**