

Top 20 High School Football Rankings

Southeastern Pennsylvania Football

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

November 21, 2006

All teams are 4A unless indicated otherwise

The East:

AAAA District 2/4/11/Sub Regional Playoffs:

Looking back, District 2 got wiped out by District 11 in head-to-head playoff games, losing by a combined score of 112-20. Wyoming Valley West lost to Easton 28-0, Delaware Valley lost to Bethlehem Liberty 42-13 and Abington Heights got pounded last week by Liberty 42-7. Easton (11-1) surprised some by beating top seeded Parkland 17-15, meaning they'll get a second go at Liberty (11-1). The Hurricanes gave Easton their only loss, 17-7, in the next to last game of the regular season. Liberty's only loss was to AAA power Bethlehem Catholic, 21-20. Let's hear it for tradition with Easton playing a 9:00 AM Thanksgiving Day *morning* game in the 100th meeting against rival Phillipsburg, NJ. Looking ahead, the District 11 winner will play the District 12 champ Frankford (9-1), who has a bye after defeated George Washington 15-14. While Frankford sits, District 1 teams pound away at each other with 16th seeded Abington traveling to 4th seeded Pennsbury. 7th seeded North Penn is also on the road against 3rd seeded Ridley.

The West:

AAAA Districts 3, 6, 7, 8 and 10 overview:

Out west in District 7, WPIAL Section 4 boss Upper St. Clair (12-0) got past North Allegheny 24-3, while 10-1 Penn Hills, the Section 3 kingpin, won in a mild upset of Pittsburgh Central Catholic, 14-6. Coming into the season, many felt Pitt CC was the favorite. They did make a strong run for it to end the year at 10-2. Guess who won the District 10 title this year? Just kidding. Erie Cathedral Prep (10-1) is coming off a bye week after beating 5-5 McDowell 35-14. They face Pitt Brashear (8-4) who lost to AAA Pitt Oliver in the District 8 final. The winner plays whoever survives the USC-Penn Hills game. And finally in District 3, a young Bishop McDevitt team (a AA!) got past quick and shifty Altoona 24-21, then followed up with a big revenge win against fellow Mid Penn Conference member, just down the street city rival Harrisburg High, 20-18. Wow! That raised more than a few eyebrows and brought a sigh of relief too others seeing the Cougars removed from the equation. McDevitt moves on to play one fine looking 10-2 State College team that got past Central Dauphin 29-26. Back in game 5, McDevitt beat State 24-16, so look for another tight game here. In the other bracket, Governor Mifflin (11-1) beat Conestoga Valley (9-3) 35-20, while 11-1 Wilson had the day off against Lancaster McCaskey (7-5), cruising to a 42-7 win. Guess who gave Wilson their only loss of the year? Right, so won't this be a great semi when the Reading burbs of Shillington and West Lawn tee it up one more time. The winner plays the State-McDevitt winner who will be the favorite, but not by much.

** The number following a team's won-loss is the seeding order for the playoffs.*

1. St. Joseph's Prep (9-2, 7-0, #1 CL Red) St. Joseph's Prep had no trouble defeating North Catholic in the Red Division semifinal, winning 36-0. As fine as North's season was, this was their second shutout by the Hawk's, losing in the regular season game 28-0. Up next is the division final against LaSalle where St. Joe's goes for their 5th Red title in the last seven years. With all the recent news of the Catholic League joining the PIAA, it hopefully won't be long until this thing is unified. Let's hope it's done more effectively than the Philadelphia Public League was and that it serves as impetus for the Inter Ac to follow suit. (5th year players?) The plan to date if approved is to merge the Catholic League with District 12. Presently D-12 gets 8 teams in at 4A. That could expand to 12 (or more) with the top 4 seeds getting a bye. Apart from all of this, the Catholic League is in a state of flux. Which schools will remain open, merge, go private or become regional schools? How do you define "feeder schools?" Some schools barely have a feeder system. What about open enrollment? The coming weeks and months should prove momentous as the landscape of Pennsylvania high school football, in particular southeastern Pennsylvania football, seems destined for dramatic change.

2. Ridley (12-0, 9-0, #3) After routing Hatboro Horsham 38-14, Ridley is now 3-0 against the Suburban One League for the year. To go 4-0 they'll have to beat the team many consider the favorite coming into the tournament, North Penn. Back to Hatboro; the Hatters never knew what hit them with the Raider speed demons jumping all over them and out to a 35-0 lead at the 2:20 mark of the 2nd quarter. Hatboro countered with a late score in the quarter to get the clock going again just before the half but it wasn't enough. They did find success through the air where senior quarterback Marshall Vogel threw for 236 yards after completing 17 of 33 attempts. They were shutdown on the ground to 30 yards rushing on 30 carries. For Ridley, it was a historic night. Quarterback Al Humes is the first QB in Delaware county to pass for 2000 yards in consecutive seasons. For the team, it was first time they've won 12 games, so it was quite a night.

3. North Penn (10-2, 7-0, #7) North Penn got by 2nd seeded Downingtown West in a hard fought 21-17 contest. The win sets up a game with explosive Ridley, the 3 seed that easily dispatched Hatboro Horsham. Against Ridley, the Knight's will face a team very much opposite from the one played last week in Downingtown. Ridley is all about quickness and more quickness combined with one of the best passing attacks in the state. Their historic problem has always been running into teams with as much quickness combined with size. While this isn't a typical behemoth of a North Penn team, they are larger than Ridley's lineman and possess enough team speed to give them problems. If the Knights overpower the Raiders at the line of scrimmage, they win. If not, quarterback Al Humes will likely pick them apart, forcing them out of character by playing from behind.

4. Pennsbury (11-1, 6-1, #4) Pennsbury's defense handcuffed the areas top offense, all but shutting down West Chester East's prolific attack in a lopsided 34-14 romp. What a shocker! We're talking about an offense that averaged 39.4ppg coming into the game,

from the respected Ches-Mont League. As recently as last year we saw Pat Devlin's 11-2 Downingtown Air East team tear through most opponents, while the year before witnessed roadrunner CJ Gray's ensemble out of Coatesville power through all but Eastern champ Neshaminy during a 11-1 season. All of that is not to build up the Ches Mont, rather, to put in perspective the scale of their accomplishment Saturday in dismantling a very good West Chester East team. The reward, a second date with Abington in the district semi final.

5. Abington (8-4, 4-3, #16) Abington made the leap from 16th in the ranking to 5th, not for any subjective reason here, but because they've literally played their way there. There are only 4 teams standing in the district playoff and these Ghosts are one of them. They haven't been in the Top 10 since the Preseason Rankings released August 30th where they were the 10th ranked team. Because many see 16th seeded Abington as being the playoffs Cinderella story, I think it's appropriate we at least get the gender right and call them Cinderfella. Seriously, we diehards feel Abington is anything but a 16th seed! What's more relevant, they're beating good football teams on the road. Last week they toppled Souderton 25-22, pounding them with 276 yards rushing! You know the OL is firing with those numbers, especially when they spring a back for 196 yards on 23 carries as they did for running back Kahlil Pittman! About the Pennsbury game, all the pressure is on them, the 4 seed, not Abington. As a talented 16th seed, this is probably the very last team Pennsbury wanted to play after beating them 4 weeks ago in 4 overtimes. That was Abington's last loss. You've got to respect what Abington has done in the playoffs, but it's still hard going against a Pennsbury team that gets better with each passing week.

6. West Chester East (10-2, 7-0, #5) In a game that mimicked Ridley's destruction of Hatboro Horsham, West Chester East suffered a similar fate in Fairless Hills last week when Pennsbury sent them packing after inflicting a painful 34-14 defeat on the previously high flying Vikings. Some said the score was worse than it looked because Pennsbury's starters were yanked early in the 4th quarter. That's when East scored their only points in the game, after the 1st unit left the field. A game like that makes you wonder how East would have done this year had their games with Downingtown East, Downingtown West and Coatesville been *away* games. They looked awesome at home. They get a shot at redemption Wednesday where they close out the season at home against Henderson.

7. Downingtown West (10-2, 5-1, #2) Season over

8. Archbishop Wood (9-2, 6-1, #2 CL Blue) Archbishop Wood held off a determined Saints Neumann Goretti team 18-6 and advance to the final against West Catholic in the quest for their 4th consecutive Blue Division title. They *do not* come into the game with any momentum. Two weeks ago they lost the season final to West Catholic 13-12. Following a bye week as the 2 seed, they just got past Neumann Goretti 18-6. Now they're up against a young West team that is showing every indication of growing up quickly. They'll have to play a very fine team and game to get the 4-peat.

9. Council Rock North (10-1, 7-0, #1) Season over.

10. Souderton (9-3, 5-2, #8) Souderton fell to Abington's Galloping Ghosts at home on the strength of a field goal with 4 seconds left in the game. The week before, Abington edged another Suburban One Continental member, Council Rock North, by a point, 21-20. You can talk about *defense winning championships* and offenses exciting the crowd but don't forget the profound role *special teams* play, especially at the high school level where just making an extra point can be cause for celebration. And how about Souderton, quietly doing something very few teams do, winning 9 games in 3 consecutive years. Well done!

11. LaSalle (8-3, 4-3, # 3 CL Red) LaSalle evened the score against Roman Catholic last week, easing the pain of a regular season overtime loss by routing the Cahillites 28-7 to move on to the Red Division final against St. Joseph's this weekend. This is the Red final so forget their regular season 42-14 loss (at Wissachickon) to the Hawks. That loss seemed to stun the Explorers, who went into a 0-3 spiral only to emerge 2 weeks ago against Cardinal O'Hara in the 1st round with a 39-38 OT win.

12. Tennett (6-4, 5-2, #12) Season over.

13. Hatboro Horsham (9-3, 5-2, #6) At the risk of starting a mini insurrection here in Delaware county, Hatboro Horsham probably isn't as bad as a 34-14 score suggests, anymore than Ridley is as good as we might assume. They were not on their game against Ridley but that shouldn't overly detract from a fine season. Against Ridley, the Hatters were clearly not the team that pummeled erratic but capable Pennridge 26-7 in the season opener, nor the team that beat Plymouth Whitmarsh three weeks later 24-7 and Souderton 21-14 on October 20th. Those teams aren't as fast as Ridley but they are good football teams. 9 and 3! How many teams wish for a season like that? Congratulations to the Hatter's for showing us some pretty exciting football this year.

14. Penn Charter (8-2, 5-0) Season over.

15. Malvern Prep (7-2, 4-1) Malvern Prep had an open week and will close the season Wednesday at Villanova against Monsignor Bonner. Poor Bonner, 0-10 against a schedule of eight winning teams and only two losers, Archbishop Ryan and Cardinal O'Hara, two of the best losing teams in the area. But hey, check out the venue! What a great experience for the players getting a taste of it at Villanova.

16. Frankford (9-1, 5-0) Frankford won the District 12 Philly Public League title by defeating George Washington 15-14. Who knows why but somehow that earns them a *bye week* awaiting the winner of the Easton-Bethlehem Liberty game. You'd think a bye week might be reserved as an award for excellence or something close to it (e.g. CL Red-Blue) like the seasons Council Rock North and Ridley had. Most of us would buy that. We'd fuse and fight over schedule difficulty and rightly so but it could be sold. Regardless, we wish Frankford well. They'll need it against whoever survives the Easton-Liberty game.

17. West Catholic (7-4, 6-1, #1 CL Blue) Is West on a roll or is West on a roll! From here it looks like they turned things around during the LaSalle game in week number 3. They came in 0-2 but hung tough with the Explorers before losing 42-34. Thereon they won 7 of their last 8 games including the last 5 to enter the Blue Division final against Archbishop Wood on a real roll. This sure looks like their year with Wood looking more vulnerable and West evidently peaking.

18. Roman Catholic (8-3, 5-2, #2 CL Red) Roman saw their Catholic League Red Division title hopes go up in flames as LaSalle smoked them in the semi 28-7. Still, they can reach a 4 year high in wins (11-3 in '02) with a win at Roxborough Thanksgiving Day. Roxborough is actually having a renaissance of sorts at 9-2, not having had a winning season since 2000! They're scoring 24ppg while allowing 10. That's probably not good enough but it's not bad for Roxy. Roman won 33-6 last year.

19. Downingtown East (7-4, 4-2, #9) Season over.

20. Plymouth Whitemarsh (6-5, 5-2, #14) Season over.

TIE

Upper Moreland (10-1, 6-1, AAA-1 seed) It's probably time to pay one of our more potent AAA programs some respect. The Golden Bears are the top seed in the District 1 AAA playoffs. Along the way they won the Suburban One American Conference title by defeating Wissahickon and Plymouth Whitemarsh. Since then they've routed a good Sun Valley team 48-17 in 1st round action, then held on to edge Unionville 26-25 in overtime last week. You may recall that Sun opened the season with a shocking 12-7 win over Strath Haven. Unionville did the same against Interboro in their opener, 34-0, so we're talking good football here. To get out of *Districts* they'll have to beat a fine 10-1 team from Garnet Valley. The Jaguars only loss is to Unionville, 29-28. The old Southern Chester County League, the SCCL, is going out with a bang this season by having two teams like Unionville and the Garnet Valley representing so well. Uville will go to the Ches-Mont next year while the Jags become a welcomed addition to the Central League after serving a year as an indy. How about Upper Moreland, carrying the Suburban One banner well into the playoffs?

Honorable Mention

North Catholic (7-5, 4-3, #4 CL Red)

Chestnut Hill Academy (7-3)

Interboro (8-3, 4-0, #10)

Upper Darby (7-3, 6-2, #11)

3A Garnet Valley (10-1, 5-1, 2 seed)

3A Marple Newtown (8-3, 7-2, 3 seed)

3A Unionville (9-3, 6-1, 4 seed)

3A Upper Perkomen (8-3, 7-1, 5 seed)

3A Strath Haven (7-3, 7-2)

