

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

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

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

**1. St. Joseph's Prep (1-1)** In a battle between two of the best teams in the East, St. Joseph's dropped a close decision to Don Bosco Prep, 31-28. But the Hawks proved they "belonged" by racing out to a 21-7, 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter lead. It's safe to say they gave Don a rare scare. Unfortunately for the Prep, it also served as a wake up call. Up to that point, the Hawks had shut down the Ironmen. Not many teams shutout Don Bosco Prep for an entire half on their field. And not many teams score 24 points on the Hawks in the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. But that's exactly what the Ironmen did, icing the thing in the final 12 seconds on an 18 yard field goal. Tough loss for St. Joe's. Coach Paterno always said the most important aspect of football is special teams, followed by defense, then offense, in that order. That's what won it for Don Bosco Prep. The defense scored on a 38 yard interception in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter, then Brian Hanly's field goal. Up next is their 3<sup>rd</sup> straight road game against a tough opponent, Hilliard Davidson. Davidson is a Division 1 (large school) team playing in the Ohio Capital Conference, Buckeye Division. It's a tradition rich program with playoff appearances in '93, '94, '00, '01, '02, '04 and '05. They had undefeated *regular seasons* in '78, '94, '01 and '05. Last year's team went through the regular season unscathed, winning 3 playoff games before losing in the Semi Final to Cincinnati power St. Xavier, 17-10. St. Xavier won Ohio's Division 1 title to finish 15-0. To date, the Wildcats are 3-0, scoring 30 points per game while allowing 14. The wins came against Middletown 35-26, Mason 13-10 and Independence 43-6. They are on a 22 regular season winning streak, and haven't lost since the first game of '04 to Brother Rice (New Bloomfield, MI) 28-12.

**2. LaSalle (2-0)** LaSalle is on a roll aren't they? That's 3 wins in a row counting the 14-13 win against St. Joe's to end last season. And they are winning impressively. Last week saw them get their first shutout of the season, a 40-0 rout of Neumann-Goretti. Before that they beat Plymouth Whitmarsh 29-8. They are off to a promising start. The triumvirate that is quarterback John Harrison, running back Chris Ashley and receiver Jack Forster, has proven to be productive. QB John Harrison completed 8 of 10 passes for 146 yards and 3 touchdowns. Chris Ashley caught a 51 yard touchdown pass and rushed for another 57 yards on 6 attempts. Receiver Jack Forster had 2 touchdown catches and 4 receptions for 56 yards. Combined, the Explorer's rushed for 145 yards on 26 carries. The next opponent is West Catholic who will try to end a 2 game slide. The 22-7 loss to Roman at the top of the year was followed by a loss last week to St. John's (D.C), 29-13. The game is Saturday at LaSalle University where LaSalle will likely go to 3-0.

**3. Cardinal O'Hara (1-1)** Cardinal O'Hara rebounded from the Easton loss by shutting out North Penn 14-0. Because running back John Dempsey was still sidelined, the Lion's were forced deep into the depth charts to find freshman Corey Brown and sophomores Evan Higgins and Bill Morgan. Brown rushed for 60 yards on 16 carries while Higgins got 58 on 11 totes. How good is Bill Morgan feeling after scoring on a 7 yard run, and

getting 13 carries and 46 rushing yards for the night? All totaled, O'Hara ran through North Penn for 181 yards. In the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter, Chichester transfer Chris Smith, a junior, caught a 35 yard TD strike from sophomore quarterback Tom Savage to seal the win. How's that for a frosh, 3 sophs and a transfer? For the second week in a row, O'Hara's defense did not allow an offensive touchdown. North Penn was held to 6 first downs and 90 yards rushing. That's the good news. The bad news, Ohio powerhouse Colerain is next. *McDonald's Kirk Herbstreit Ohio versus USA Challenge* pits many of Ohio's best teams against top teams from across the country. And they're playing in Ohio's hottest of scholastic football hotbeds, Cincinnati and Massillon. It's too special not to list the entire schedule so here goes. Ohio teams are listed on the left of all match ups.

**Sept. 15 at University of Cincinnati's Nippert Stadium:** 6:30 p.m. Findlay vs. Texas High (Texarkana, Texas); 8:30 p.m.- *Colerain vs. Cardinal O'Hara (Springfield, PA.)*

**Sept. 16 at University of Cincinnati's Nippert Stadium:** 11:30 a.m. Moeller vs. Byrnes, S.C.; 2 p.m. - St. Xavier vs. Lakeland; 6 p.m.- Centerville vs. Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey, N.J.); 8:30 p.m. - Elder vs. De La Salle.

**Sept. 16 at Massillon High's Paul Brown Massillon Stadium:** 2 p.m. *Hilliard Davidson vs. St. Joseph's Prep (Philadelphia)*; 5 p.m. - Lakewood St. Edward vs. Springdale, Ark.; 8 p.m - Massillon vs. Hamilton High (Chandler, Ariz.).

Colerain is a public school powerhouse from Cincinnati. They beat one of Texas' top teams last year, Tyler Lee, in the inaugural "Herbstreit", 27-12. The actual name of the school is Robert E. Lee, from Tyler, Texas. Talk about a hotbed! Cincinnati is also home to St. Xavier, Elder and Moeller! To date the Cardinals are undefeated at 3-0, with wins against Mason, 41-14, Columbus Brookhaven, 70-0, and Fairfield last week, 51-0. They have a huge attack, scoring 54 ppg! The defense has allowed a total of 14 points, and registered 2 shutouts. They are coming off a 10-2 season where the only losses were to Division 1 champ St. Xavier. In Colerain's second game this season, they ran up 558 total yards of offense while holding Brookhaven to negative 4 total yards. This sure looks like a tough spot for O'Hara. In Easton and North Penn, they faced modest offenses, nothing near Colerain's size. Against Colerain's explosive speed, they'll be in trouble if they don't show more offensively. The defense is there but in truth, it hasn't been fairly tested. Colerain's scores suggest they haven't been tested either, but it is rare when Brookhaven is beaten so decisively.

**4. Pennsbury (2-0)** Pennsbury showed some offense last week, running effectively in their 22-0 home win against Frankford. Frankford didn't have much, but they were able to rush for 123 yards on 33 carries. The week before, Archbishop Ryan got 58 on the ground. The Falcons kept it simple against Frankford with the big back Josh Parkes getting 100 yards on 14 carries. Running back Jackson Fagan had a spectacular outing with 3 touchdowns and 168 yards rushing in 18 carries. 9.3 yards per carry is heady stuff. And it's always nice getting the shutout. The feeling here is they'll get their first real test Friday at Glen Mills. The Bulls broke into the win column last week by routing Simon Gratz, 45-12. This year's showcase running back is Raymone West. He's quickly making

Darius Hodges a dim memory. In the opening week against respected Parkland, he exposed them in some ways by rushing for 229 yards on 29 carries, 7.9 yards per carry. You knew he'd run at will against Gratz, and did he ever by rushing for 182 yards on 18 carries. That's 10.1 ypc! It is even more special knowing the first unit was pulled at the end of the first half. West's backfield mate is fullback Travis Lintz, a real bull at 6-1, 222. QB Tyree Bryant got in on the fun by completing 4 of 6 for 108 yards. He had 1 interception and 1 touchdown pass. Maybe Coach Kevin Owens has turned it around. One thing is certain, this is the best team Pennsbury has played to date and it's on the road. Despite having a ton of talent, the Bulls usually shoot themselves in the foot through turnovers and penalties. Still, this is a tremendously athletic team that has weapons. Playing teams like North Penn from '02 to '05, Neshaminy from '02 to '03, St. Ignatius, Ohio from '99-'01, and more recently Parkland, the District 11 power from '04 through this year, says they're used to playing top programs and will not be intimidated. This could be a surprise and minimally, should be a good game.

**5. Archbishop Wood (2-0)** Wow, that's a solid win, coming on the heels of the momentous win at North Penn the week before. Wood beat Penn Charter 35-14. That's two strong performances, both on the road, with a rebuilt line, and a first year sophomore quarterback at the helm. In game 1, you just hoped quarterback Sean McCartney made good decisions. He did. In game 2 he played a more integral part of the game plan by completing 8 of 13 passes for 166 yards and 3 touchdowns tosses. Impressive numbers. Running back Matt Little had another strong outing, gaining 97 yards on 17 carries. All totaled, the Vikings had 154 yards rushing. On the other side, the Quakers have some players to, but their yardage figures of an impressive 176 yards rushing (31 carries), and another 63 through the air (completed 6 of 8), netted them a lowly 14 points. That's 17.1 yards to get a single point, or, yards per point. That's a long way to go to get a point. Conversely, the Vikings 320 yards of total offense translates to 35 points, or 9.1 ypp. The opponent this week is 0-2 Archbishop Ryan. They're a spooky bunch that hung with Pennsbury 2 weeks ago before falling 10-7. Last week they gave Neshaminy a scare by holding a 7-0 half time lead. The Skins recovered to win 27-7. Depth? And guess who inflicted 1 of only 2 losses on Archbishop Wood last year. Right! And that's the last time Wood lost a football game, September 16<sup>th</sup>, on the road to Ryan, 28-26.

**6. Souderton (2-0)** The Indians came in 2<sup>nd</sup> place last year in the Suburban One Continental Conference. Judging by their performances to date, they are poised for a serious run at it again. This year the conference promises to be more fiercely contested. 4 teams are undefeated going into the weekend, Council Rock North, Hatboro Horsham, Norristown and Souderton. Tennett will recover from the Downingtown East loss and CB East will be heard from if they get healthy. Hang on for what should be the most competitive race in the area. Souderton routed hapless Quakertown last week, 41-10. What can you say about a team whose running back gets over 200 yards rushing in the first half? What does that say about the opponent? For Tennett, it says they have a good line and back. Ronnie Powell rushed for 252 yards in 10 carries. 10 carries! It suggests junior quarterback Mike Franklin isn't making many mistakes and that they are balanced. For Quakertown, at this point you have to think about morale with back-to-back blowouts. Their ballyhooed line clearly isn't getting it done. And at some point you think

injuries or lack of team speed. Souderton has a favorable schedule that should have them undefeated at 5-0, September 29<sup>th</sup> for a home game against Council Rock North. The favorable part of the schedule has them playing Methacton this weekend, followed by Central Bucks West. Imagine not so long ago finding anything favorable about a game with the Bucks!

**7. Neshaminy (1-1)** Neshaminy returned to the win column after a hard fought game with Archbishop Ryan. Ryan put up a fight, taking a 7-0 lead into the locker room. 142 yards rushing against the Skin's D is respectable, but it was unsupported by anything from the air, with the Raiders completing just 5 of 12 thrown for 49 yards. For Neshaminy, it took a half to work the kinks out from the Prep game the week before. Once that happened, they erupted for 27 2<sup>nd</sup> half points and held Ryan scoreless. Andrew Fogel had a good game that included a 75 touchdown run, a 74 yard strike to Ian Capanna, and another score through the air to Jason Ulmer of 40 yards. Jason also ran one in from 6 yards out. The Redskins get an opportunity to build off the momentum of that 2<sup>nd</sup> half when Germantown comes in Friday night. The Bears cannot have anything left after devastating losses to DeMatha and Coatesville.

**8. Coatesville (2-0)** The preseason is over and it's time to play a serious football team. Coatesville breezed past Carroll and Germantown by a combined score of 65-6. About Germantown, your heart goes out to them after facing a schedule of DeMatha in the opener, Coatesville last week, and Neshaminy this week. Coatesville won't have an easy time of it either this weekend. If you want to see a great game, go to Coatesville Friday night to see one of the best rivalries you never hear about, Coatesville and J. P. McCaskey. These two go way back. A more recent peek at epasports.com shows the Red Tornadoes owning the Raiders in 5 of the last 7 games. In '99, a 2-8 McCaskey team beat an 8-3 Coatesville 28-0. The powerful '04 Raider team that went 11-1, struggled with a 7-4 McCaskey team before winning 21-14. Last years 8-3 Raider team barely edged a 3-7 JPM team 34-29. Clearly the Red Tornadoes get up for this one. This year's team has enough speed but can also play power football. They beat Downingtown East in the opener 24-21. East showed their capabilities last week against Tennett. In the second week of the season, McCaskey handled York High's heralded line by beating the Bearcats on the road, 31-14. This is a legitimate team that can and will beat Coatesville if they don't play at their best.

**9. Ridley (2-0)** The Green Raiders won the home opener on new artificial turf by defeating bitter rival Strath Haven, 14-0. This is Ridley's spot but a word on Strath Haven. They are in a real spiral downward! Last season ended with an embarrassing playoff shutout by Pottsville, 35-0. This year began with a 12-7 loss at Sun Valley. Good for Sun, but Strath Haven doesn't often lose games like that. Then last week they looked bad again, putting them in a un-Clancy like 3 game losing streak. They've been outscored 61-7. The one thing you could always say about Coach Clancy's teams is they didn't turn the ball over and never beat themselves. Against Ridley they had 5 turnovers; 3 fumbles and 2 interceptions. Back to Ridley; what jumps out about them is what we mentioned in the preseason write-ups, defense. Haven was held to 6 first downs, 56 yards rushing and 142 total yards of offense. The week before they held Bensalem to 38 yards rushing.

They are a swarming, quick, yet physical team that gets after you. The myth of having to have a powerful running team to have a physical defense is just that, a myth. The offense is always just big enough. QB Al Humes had a great night completing 12 of 18 for 150 yards and 2 touchdown tosses. The backs ran for 97 yards on 41 carries. Looking ahead finds few opponents that can beat Ridley, meaning they could be undefeated, 7-0, going into Upper Darby October 20<sup>th</sup>. They are at Penncrest Friday.

**10. Upper Darby (2-0)** We have another strong edition out of Upper Darby this season. What's new? Actually something is new. Running back Aaron Duncan, the Roman Catholic transfer, settled in at the fullback position. He gained 123 yards rushing last week in a 20-12 win against Marple Newtown. He's a good addition to Brandon Murray who can beat you up the gut or outside. Topping that is maturing quarterback Blaine Fox who completed 12 of 21 for 172 yards and 2 TD passes. This is new for the Royals, having an effective air attack to help the ground game that's always there. They crushed the Tigers with 236 yards rushing, pounding them with 52 carries. The final score is a good example why final scores in and of themselves are often misleading. Marple got 4 first downs, 79 yards rushing and 16 through the air in a game they lost by 8 points. The Royals are home Friday against Conestoga.

**11. Downingtown West (2-0)** At this time last year the Whippets were 0-2, losing at 3A Allentown Central Catholic 25-20 and at home to Middletown, DE, 42-14. Middletown often fields some of the best teams in Delaware. They were 9-2 last year. This year's team began the season ranked 5<sup>th</sup> in the state, but they didn't have enough for West and fell 25-13. Barring a major dose of complacency, they'll get win # 3 Saturday in their 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive away game. The opponent is Chester. Not only are they winless at 0-2, they are scoreless with losses to Henderson 26-0 and Malvern Prep 42-0.

**12. Roman Catholic (2-0)** Roman Catholic crushed 2A Milton Hershey last week 31-13. Balial Lewis rushed for 98 yards on 14 carries following his 198 yard effort against West Catholic the week before. Add to that the dimension of strong armed quarterback Chris Johnson and you have the makings of a potent attack. Johnson completed 5 of 9 for 140 yards. They rushed for 161 yards on 33 carries. Valley Forge Military Academy is up next. VFMA went 7-0 last year and won their opener against Fork Union Military Academy of Virginia, 35-12. Roman would like to even things up from the 14-6 loss last year. Need to focus here with St. Joe's on deck.

**13. North Penn (0-2)** Like Strath Haven, North Penn is in a 3 game losing streak counting last year's season ending playoff loss to Liberty. The difference is that North Penn is showing a pulse, however weak, by scoring 30 points in those 3 games. Strath Haven scored 7. With that said, both were shut out last week by the final score of 14-0. How unusual is that for household names like North Penn and Strath Haven to lose 3 straight? Speaking of showing a pulse, what was felt to be a much improved Archbishop Carroll team is up next for the Knights. They got their first win last week against 3A Upper Merion, 20-6. The week before that they lost at Coatesville, 21-6. In both, they showed decent balance, with Rush/Pass yardage against Coatesville of 125/111, and 161/102 against Upper Merion. Quarterback Matt Cantafio has completed 15 of 29 passes

on the year, while wide out Wiley Flowers has 9 receptions for 149 yards. This is an offense that can hurt the Knights if they don't show some "O" themselves. The Cardinal O'Hara loss is a tough game to recover from. It was emotionally intense and a hard hitting game. But the Knights are home and if healthy, will have enough to handle Carroll.

**14. West Chester East (2-0)** Our neighbors to the South in the great state of Delaware had a special season opener last week when Salesianum (10-3 last year), the top ranked team in one preseason poll, faced off against Newark (9-4), the 2<sup>nd</sup> rated team. As fate would have it, preseason hype was as exciting as it got. Salesianum rolled, 48-14. To give you a hint of Delaware ball compared to Pennsylvania football, last year's team edged an average Interboro team at home 26-21, then got it handed to them at Malvern Prep, 48-21. That says a 2-0 West Chester East can go with Newark this year. East has it going with a 33-13 win against Conestoga followed by a 40-20 win last week against Owen J. Roberts.

**15. Council Rock North (2-0)** Council Rock North followed the opening game win against Father Judge but defeating Truman on the road, 27-7. Looking at their schedule says they should go 7-3 at worst. The hardest games come right after this week's opponent, Conwell-Egan, when they play Tennett, Hatboro and Souderton in consecutive games. That's looking WAY too far ahead, but it is interesting reading the schedule to come up with the 16 teams that will make the playoffs this year. If they stay healthy, this is certainly one of them. Egan is up next and they are in free fall. They lost the opener to Upper Moreland 27-21, after rushing for 268 yards! Last week they were routed by North Catholic, 55-21, and rushed for 35 yards. Council Rock is on the road again, but if form holds, they will handle the Eagles as easily as they did last year where they won 39-0.

**16. Hatboro Horsham (2-0)** Hatboro-Horsham passed a test last week by getting a road win at West Chester Henderson, 21-16. It wasn't easy as Henderson got out to a 10-0 lead. Thereon, it was all Hatboro as the Hatters outscored them 21-6. Hatboro has a decent passing attack and defense, but they'll have to get the ground game going for encounters that await them in the Continental Conference. They got 114 yards rushing against Henderson on 31 carries. That's improvement over the 58 yards gained against Pennridge in 26 carries. There could be a few balls in the air this weekend when Hatboro travels to Plymouth Whitmarsh. QB Marshall Vogel will air it out but needs to find more accuracy after throwing 5 interceptions in 2 games. He's completed 21 of 45 for 320 yards, meaning he's just over 15 yards per completion. They owe them one for last year's narrow loss at Hatboro, 27-21. That was one of three games lost by 6 points. Should be a good one.

**17. Central Bucks South (2-0)** It's early, but the Titans are starting to look like something with runaway scores of 34-7 and 47-20 against Council Rock South and Central Bucks West respectively. That's not the stiffest of competition, but it does build momentum. So does the schedule that has them home for the first 4 games, and 5 of the first 6. Despite CB East getting dinged early in the season and winless at 0-2, they are the

best team South has faced. East played a more difficult schedule to, and routed them 41-13 last year. It should be a tight one, and with a win, a good stepping stone for South.

**18. Downingtown East (1-1)** After last week's 23-21 win at Tennett, and the preceding week's narrow loss at McCaskey, 24-21, Downingtown East is back in the Top 20. For those just arriving in southeast PA, or District 1, their biggest graduation loss was record setting quarterback Pat Devlin. He passed for 8164 yards. Not bad! Backup Leo Hamilton also graduated. This season they are young but talented. Junior quarterback Pete O'Connor, 6-3, 175, has an arm. And tailback Richie Walls has bulked up to 185 from last year's 175. After the first two games, you've got to like a few things about this team. The new quarterback is obviously poised. The scare they gave J. P. McCaskey shows a lot for a young team. And the comeback win at Tennett, where they were down 21-7, says something about their ability to not wilt under pressure, *on the road*. The defense stepped up real big, shutting Tennett down while the offense scored the last 16 points of the game. QB O'Connor completed 27 of 40 passes for 287 yards and 2 touchdowns. After the display Downingtown East put on last year, you'd think Tennett might be ready for the hurry-up offense. They weren't. This week finds East home against last year's best kept secret out of District 3, Hempfield. The Black Knights went 10-2, losing to Bishop McDevitt in the 2<sup>nd</sup> round by one, 31-30. Much of that team graduated. They are 1-1 with a 28-24 win against Conestoga Valley and a 34-10 loss to Harrisburg's Bishop McDevitt.

**19. Plymouth Whitemarsh (1-1)** The Colonials responded to the LaSalle loss by beating Abington 26-9. The margin of victory was in part due to Abington losing their quarterback to injury. The opponent this week, Hatboro Horsham, will be just as dangerous as Abington would have been with a healthy quarterback. They are 2-0, with wins against Pennridge 26-7 and Henderson, 21-16. They gave Whitemarsh a good game last year before losing 27-21. Quarterbacks Lance Wilson for the Colonials and Vogel for Hatboro Horsham should make for an exciting game.

**20. Abington (1-1)** What was expected to be a competitive game turned into something less when Abington lost at Plymouth Whitemarsh 26-9. It didn't help that the future was made cloudy by quarterback Kevin Morton's injury. The opponent this week is Philly Pub member Northeast. The Vikings are 0-2, with a competitive loss to Norristown 17-14, followed by a 27-7 loss to Father Judge. Northeast is a running team. Against Norristown they got 121 yards on 31 attempts, but had the door slammed on them against Judge where they rushed for 62 yards. They are of little threat through the air. Defensively, Judge ran at will, getting 218 yards on 36 carries and another 182 yards passing. Quarterback Morton's status is unknown. With or without him, Abington should roll here to a big win.

## **Honorable Mention**

**Malvern Prep (1-0)**

**Archbishop Carroll (1-1)**

**Father Judge (1-1)**

**George Washington (2-0)**

**Tennett (1-1)**

**Henderson (1-1)**

**Glen Mills (1-1)**

**Interboro (1-1)**

**Unionville (3A, 2-0)**

**Phoenizville (3A, 2-0)**