

Top 20 High School Football Rankings

Southeastern Pennsylvania Football

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

October 3, 2006

All teams are 4A unless indicated otherwise

A peek at the playoffs.

Already and unbelievably we've arrived at the mid point of the regular season where thoughts of making the playoffs are openly discussed and things like schedules, playoff points and opponents take on greater meaning. In simple terms of winning and losing a football game, all that matters is the final score. During the regular season, half time leads and better box scores that don't equate to victories are no more than fleeting moments of exhilaration and frustrating thoughts of *what if*. When you add up all those games at the end of the year, it's a simple matter of wins and losses that show how well you've done. Now that all but a handful of teams have played five games, it might be surprising to see the importance of a team getting off to a good start. What is meant by a *good start*? This study used two groups, those that went 4-1 in their first 5 games and those that got off to a perfect 5-0 start. The time period was from 1999 to 2005, using PIAA District One 4A teams only. The quest was to see the *final won-loss* of all teams in each category.

Let's look at the teams that got off to a 4-1 start.

<u>Year</u>	<u>W/L</u>	<u>%</u>	<u># of teams each year</u>
1999	43-13	77	5
2000	74-40	65	10
2001	53-28	65	7
2002	59-23	72	7
2003	47-18	72	6
2004	65-27	71	8
2005	73-32	70	9
Totals	414-181	70	52

Interestingly, only 3 of the 52 teams that got off to a 4-1 start ending the season with a losing record, Penn Wood, 2000, 5-7; Council Rock North 2005, 5-6 and Truman, 2005, 5-7. Another 4 ended the year at .500, Plymouth Whitemarsh, 2000, 6-6; Glen Mills 2001, 4-4; Norristown, 2001, 6-6 and Truman, 2001, 6-6. In other words, of the 52 teams that began the season 4-1, 87 % would have winning seasons, averaging 7.96 wins and 3.48 losses. Not bad! Here are the 4-1 teams through last week; Interboro, Downingtown West, Downingtown East, Coatesville, West Chester East, Neshaminy, Pennsbury and Hatboro Horsham.

Here's a look at teams that got off to a 5-0 start.

<u>Year</u>	<u>W/L</u>	<u>%</u>	<u># of teams each year</u>
1999	93-16	85	9
2000	70-14	83	7
2001	23-4	85	2
2002	20-4	83	2
2003	41-9	82	4
2004	52-9	85	5
2005	22-4	92	2

Totals 321-60 84 31

The results here are even more profound. *Every* team that got off to a 5-0 start had a winning season. 25 of those 31 teams, 80.6 %, won 9 or more games! The other 6 saw 4 teams win 8 games and 2 teams win 7 games. The average won-loss of teams going 5-0 in their first five games is 10.35 wins and 1.93 losses. Here are the 5-0 teams through last week; Ridley, Upper Darby, Council Rock North, Souderton and Wissachickon.

Counting the eight 4-1 teams listed above, that's 13 teams that stand a high percentage chance of making the playoffs. But because 16 make the playoffs this year, teams with 3-2 records like North Penn, Abington, CB South, Norristown, Tennett (2-2) even Glen Mills at 2-3 should keep the faith.

* *Used epasports.com as a resource.*

1. St. Joseph's Prep (3-2) It looks like things have returned to normal for the Hawks. The preliminaries are out of the way and they're destroying Red Division opponents with ease. The preliminaries that were Neshaminy, Don Bosco Prep and Davidson could have gone better, but the Hawk's demonstrated on the field, not in some contrived National Top 50, they belong with the best programs in the country. Unfortunately for the rest of the Red Division, they've also demonstrated it is *business as usual* by routing a decent Roman Catholic team two weeks ago, 40-0, and a solid Archbishop Ryan last week, 31-12. Up next is poor Monsignor Bonner, 0-5. They've only scored 46 points to date while allowing 171. A look ahead shows the following opponents; the Prep Saturday, followed by LaSalle, O'Hara, Judge, North and Malvern Prep. It looks like a L O N G season for the Friars.

2. LaSalle (5-0) The Explorers came out swinging in this one, jumping all over Judge for a 28-0 half time lead that ballooned to 35-0 early in the third quarter. The offense looked more like a pro attack than a high school game with quarterback John Harrison and company throwing for 289 yards on 22 completions. Andrew Dean completed a pass for 19 yards. Tack on another 100 rushing and you've got yourself one explosive offense. You may shut down one aspect of LaSalle's attack, with Chris Ashley held to 47 yards on 15 carries, but you do so at the risk of another going wild. QB Harrison completed 21 of 33 for 270 yards and 3 TD tosses. Receivers Jack Forster and Joe Migliarese caught 6 passes for 113 yards and 7 for 53 yards respectively. On the year QB Harrison has completed 70 of 109 passes, 64 %, for 885 yards and 14 touchdowns. The defense

smothered Judge, holding them to 15 yards rushing! Cardinal O'Hara is up next. They're on a 3 game losing streak with a 1-4 record. Not so long ago many of us thought O'Hara might be 4-1, not 1-4. The scary thing is the pieces are there, they just haven't come together.

3. Souderton (5-0) Souderton had one of those games last week but like all good teams they managed to pull it out and prevail against Council Rock South. When the offense has an off night as all offenses do, it's good having a rock solid defense to fall back on. The Indians struggled but pulled out a 12-0 win to remain unbeaten. Nice game South. Talk about having a nemesis, CR South beat Souderton three of the preceding four years, from 2002 through last year where their 5-6 team, upset the 9-3 Indians 17-7. Since that loss, they've reeled off 11 straight wins. To get number 12, they'll have to beat another team from Newtown, Council Rock North. So it's the Indians verses Indians Friday night in Souderton for a Continental Conference match up of unbeaten teams. Both are 5-0 overall and 2-0 in conference play. The CR North team will be Souderton's toughest opponent to date and first legitimate test of the season. North has already passed two tests at home against Father Judge 20-14 and last week against Hatboro Horsham 24-14. The road win at stubborn Tennett (2-2) two weeks ago and two other road wins (Truman, CE) says North will not be intimidated by the crowd. We'll see if they're ready for Souderton's power and speed.

4. Neshaminy (4-1) Neshaminy rolled out four consecutive wins to get right back in the thick of things for a serious run at the National Conference title and high seeding for the coming playoffs. Well done! How's that for a positive response to a season opening loss to St. Joseph's. And now they're home for two straight against Pennridge this week, followed by Central Bucks South the following week. About the 2-3 Rams, they just don't have it this year. They've been outscored by Hatboro Horsham, North Penn and Abington by a combined score of 89-43. The wins came against CB East and Bonner. After giving North Penn a game two weeks ago, there was nothing left for Abington where the Rams fell 44-23. It's doubtful they'll put that many up against Neshaminy's quick defense. The Skins are averaging 34 points a game and allowing just 9 since the opener. They may not have the wide bodies they've typically had over the years, but it's still a stingy, fast, hard hitting group that is so well coached.

5. West Chester East (4-1) It was a pleasure visiting West Chester on a cool Friday evening to see East High's encounter with Downingtown West before a full house. It did not disappoint! You had the feeling throughout the game that Downingtown would get it right after not showing up the first half. And they finally did, belatedly in the second half scoring 24 points to make a game of it. But by then it was too late. East blanked them in the first half 14-0, then kept pace by tacking on another 21 points in the second half. East has a pile of skill people that West could not corral. Quarterback Bob Brice is one of the better kept secrets in the district. He handled the ball well and completed 11 of 18 passes for 168 yards and three touchdowns. Running backs Fred Maldonado, Jarrod Williams and John Ray ran at will for the Vikings. One of the reasons East is so explosive is because all the running backs can catch as well as they run. The final score was East 35, Downingtown West 24. The win establishes them as the leading contender for the Ches-

Mont with Coatesville and Downingtown East coming to West Chester October 13th and 27th. It also propelled them past Upper Darby, CR North and Ridley in the rankings. They were that impressive. Avon Grove is up next.

6. Upper Darby (5-0) Upper Darby mimicked Souderton last week with an offense that didn't quite make the bus being saved by a defense that did, barely. How do you explain a strong 4A team struggling to get past winless 3A Springfield? You don't. It was a bad game the Royals will put behind them. On the other hand, credit Springfield for rising to the occasion before falling to powerful Upper Darby 13-6. Strath Haven is in this week and they are really struggling at 2-3. They lost to two other 3A playoff hopefuls in Sun Valley 12-7, then last week to Marple Newtown 24-0. Marple at 4-1 has a nice team. Their only loss was to Upper Darby 20-12. To get a better understanding about Strath Haven, think Cardinal O'Hara because both are reasonable facsimiles of the other. Each returns a good nucleus to build around, both have good young talent moving up, talented skill people and excellent coaching, yet both are struggling. Upper Darby's hope is that the Panther's don't awaken this weekend. They sure owe them one for last year's overtime loss in Wallingford.

7. Ridley (5-0) Ridley got back in stride last week with a dominating 42-7 victory over Radnor. The previous two games saw them eke out 11 and 7 point wins against Penncrest and Conestoga. Considering they've yet to play a winning team, a 14-3 win at Penncrest followed by a 7-0 win at home against Conestoga isn't scaring anyone. The combined won loss of their opponents to date is 8-17. Haverford is next at 2-3, meaning they won't get anything approaching a test until Marple Newtown (4-1) visits October 13th. Marple opened on the road at Avon Grove winning 7-6 and followed that up with a 20-14 loss to Upper Darby. Thereon they blew out Lower Merion 54-0, Springfield 36-0 and Strath Haven last week, 24-0.

8. Council Rock North (5-0) Council Rock North is passing real tests of character and quality over the course of the season thus far. First, they are beating winning teams in the form of Father Judge and Hatboro Horsham. Second, they are winning on the road where they stand 3-0. And finally, they are winning pressure games. Hatboro Horsham came in undefeated, averaging 25 point a game and allowing 9. They went from one end of the field to the other against North, even outdistancing them in total yardage, but only put up 14 points. That's a quality response from the Indian D that was put under a lot of pressure. Hatter's Marshall Vogel did damage completing 16 of 31 for 262 yards, but the ground game wasn't there as North held them to 68 yards rushing. Quarterback Scott Bradish had an awesome game by completing 13 of 16 attempts for 179 yards and a touchdown strike. That's an 81 % completion rate. Running back Dan Collins showed North's balance by denting the Hatter's defense for 84 yards on 15 carries. A 21-6 halftime lead held up as North prevailed 24-14. Souderton is next. They represent the quickest, most physical and capable team North faced so far. Unlike Hatboro, they are quite comfortable ramming it down your throat behind the bruising running of Ronnie Powell and Josh Kramarenko. Junior running back Ryan Brown can burn you as can wide out Ryan Dickerson. Quarterback Mike Franklin is solid. Souderton's D has allowed just

37 points or 7 a game. The offense averages 33 a game. A win here for North would go a long way towards clinching the Continental as they've already defeated Tennett and Hatboro.

9. Downingtown East (4-1) Following a tough loss to McCaskey at the top of the season, Downingtown West has reeled off four straight wins. They've won two of three on the road and are undefeated at home. That's where they are for the next two against Springfield and Bishop Shanahan. Barring the upset, the Cougars will be 6-1 going into their big rivalry game with Downingtown West October 20th.

10. Coatesville (4-1) Like Downingtown West against West Chester East last week, Glen Mills didn't start their engines until the second half against Coatesville. By then, they were in a 13-0 hole that was too deep to escape despite outscoring the Raiders 21-14 in the second half. Coatesville beat the Bulls 27-21 but knew they were in a football game. Glen Mills out-rushed them 233 yards to 132. Raymone West got 199 yards on 27 carries. Kieron Hutchinson was the big gun for Coatesville rushing for 80 yards on 20 attempts. Senior quarterback Scott A'Hara kept em guessing completing 9 of 15 passes for 115 yards. You can believe after playing the Bulls the Raiders would like a little R & R. That's just what they'll get at home Friday against 0-5 Bishop Shanahan.

11. Archbishop Wood (4-1) Archbishop Wood found some rhythm last week bombing Kennedy Kenrick 42-0. The big win couldn't come at a better time. Their confidence had to be shaken after the 21-19 upset by Ryan three weeks ago, only to have Archbishop Carroll jump out to a 25-0 lead the following week before the Viking clawed their way back for a 26-25 win. Sometimes a second half comeback like that can leave you satiated. That would be a bad idea against a revived Saints Neumann-Goretti team coming in with a 3-2 record and two game winning streak They've played the same opponents Wood played, KK and Carroll, but won more convincingly against Carroll last week, 32-14, and impressively against Kenrick 28-7. The Vikings beat them handily last year 28-7.

12. North Penn (3-2) Since North Penn's season opening losses to Catholic League powers Archbishop Wood and Cardinal O'Hara, they've done well with wins against Carroll and Penridge. Last week they got a key National Conference win at home against Pennsbury 22-16, putting them in a dead heat atop the National at 2-0 with (who else) Neshaminy. The Knights showed a lot of class in this one, coming back from a 16-14 half time deficit with a second half opening scoring drive of 60 yards. Let's hear it for field position! Bensalem is up next and before you call this a rout remember last year's game where the Knight's struggled in the mud and rain before defeating a then 1-4 bunch of Fighting Owls 27-14. The Owls have improved the defense over last year's by 11 points per game on average, 29 to 18. Unfortunately, the offense has failed them by averaging an anemic 13 ppg. So they're losing a lot of close games. The Knights have not been impressive on the road this year with a 14-0 loss to Cardinal O'Hara and a narrow 19-13 win at Penridge.

13. Pennsbury (4-1) Nice try Pennsbury but not quite enough as the Falcons went down in Lansdale last week 22-16. It was theirs for the taking but an interception and 2 lost

fumbles won't get it done on the road, especially against an adversary like North Penn. Pennsbury didn't do a bad job defensively. They held Tyrece Ervin to 61 yards on 17 carries. Falcon back Jackson Fagan was again unstoppable with 94 yards gained on 15 carries. All in all you've got to say the Falcons are off to a fine start with home wins against Ryan and Frankford, followed by tough road wins at Glen Mills and Central Bucks South. North Penn was the third consecutive away game, meaning the coming two game home stand against Truman and Bensalem is a good thing.

14. Downingtown West (4-1) Wow, is this a big, physical, talented team! They suffered their first loss of the season last week in West Chester against another talented Ches-Mont team, East High. But rest assured they'll win their share of games this year. They could have won last week, or at least been more competitive but East shut them out in the first half to take a 14-0 lead. West came out in the second half, received the kick off and scored on their first possession. But East countered with there own score to dampen West's spirit. The Whippets have a fine running back in Roshann McCain and a big strong armed quarterback in Nolan Kearney, a 6-4 220 pound junior. He's got a rocket and also has touch. Some of their lineman are of the huge variety, 6-3, 280 to 305 and can move! If they can eliminate the first half funk that befell them in West Chester, they're going to be difficult to beat, especially with Downingtown East and Coatesville visiting them. They're home Friday against Henderson.

15. Hatboro Horsham (4-1) Hatboro felt the sting of defeat last week at Council Rock North but gave the Indians a good game until succumbing 24-14. After playing their last four games on the road, the Hatboro Horsham crowd will be pleased to know four of the final six games are home, beginning this week where they should recover against a 2-3 team from Central Bucks West. The Bucks are having a difficult time on the road lately going 1-5 last year and 0-2 this year. They' are also coming off a big 14-7 rivalry win against CB East last week that should compound things here, leaving them flat against a charged up bunch of Hatters that will be looking to bounce back from the CR North loss.

16. Malvern Prep (3-0) There's a big game in Wilmington, Delaware Friday night where Delaware's number one big school team and historic power Salesianum plays one of our own historic powers, Malvern Prep, in a game that matches two undefeated teams. It's just 20 minutes south on I-95 from Chester so no excuses for not showing! Salesianum is the defending Division One champion in the state after defeating Newark in the final last year 28-0. They are coached by Bill DiNardo who stands at 172-52-1 in his 21st season! Salesianum is a Roman Catholic affiliated school with an enrollment of 757 boys in grades 10 through 12. They are 4-0 with wins against Newark 48-14, William Penn 28-6, Bel Air 42-0 and Dover 35-0. They're averaging 37 points a game and allowing 5. The primary back is Sal Viscount, 5-10, 175, with 652 rush yards on 66 carries, 9.8 yds per carry. He's complimented by John Prisio with 242 yards on 44 carries. Quarterback Will Salus is 5-9, 185 and will air it out as evidenced by TD strikes of 45 and 48 yards against Newark. Coach says they have good team speed. The lines are 235- 240. Malvern Prep comes in undefeated with a great coach of their own in Gaspare "Gamp" Pelligrini. Coach is 195-83-8 in his 29th season at Malvern Prep and 252-141-9 overall in 40 years of coaching. He is particularly high on this team despite last year's graduation of quality

skill players. Paul Ostick anchors the DL and OL at 6-4 270 and is well supported by Rob Bates, 6-3, 245 and Jim Downey, 5-11, 235. Running back Chris Layne is back at 5-8, 160. Malvern is undefeated with wins against Chester 42-0, Henderson 31-7 and Peddie School of New Jersey, 37-6. The Friars won last years game 48-21 with a team that was much further along than this group. The roles may be reversed this year but it's always about controlling the line of scrimmage and the Friars have a pretty good one.

17. Roman Catholic (4-1) Roman Catholic crushed Monsignor Bonner last week with 46 rush attempts generating 270 yards of real estate in a 29-6 rout. Bonner was held to 21 yards rushing and 86 through the air. After five consecutive games on the road, Roman finally gets a home game. It couldn't come at a better time with Archbishop Ryan in for a key Red Division contest. Ryan has shown they are capable with an upset of Archbishop Wood, a 3 point loss to Pennsbury and a competitive loss to Neshaminy. A win by either team puts them in better position for a higher seed in the Red Division postseason action. Roman won last year's game 28-0.

18. Abington (3-2) You know it's a brave new world when you mention Abington and Central Bucks South in the same sentence as the word *playoff*. After the game Friday between those two, one will be sitting much better off than the other in the fight to make the 16 team 4A playoffs. But the thing is, the loser will still have a chance to get in. Whoever wins will be 4-2 with road games remaining at North Penn and Pennsbury in the case of Abington, and Neshaminy and North Penn for Central Bucks South. Tough road to hoe however you look at it. This should be a great game!

19. Wissachickon (5-0) Few teams gets to 5-0 unless they are doing a lot of things right, regardless of the schedule. Wissachickon hasn't played the toughest of schedules but they have won them all and that's all you can ask of a team. They scored 160 while allowing 50, for an average of 32 *points for* and 10 *against*. They seem destined for a 7-0 start if they win their next two games. Both are home against Cheltenham this week followed by Upper Moreland the following week. They finish on the road the last three games against Quakertown, Plymouth Whitemarsh and Upper Dublin.

20. Central Bucks South (3-2) Remember the Titans! Ok, this in no way resembles the movie back in 2000 about T.C.Williams High (Alexandria, Virginia) breaking down the barriers of racism, integrating in 1971 and winning a state championship. But we may remember these Central Bucks South Titans one day for breaking through the barrier of two losing seasons to become the first winning team in school history. Give them credit. They are playing in the Suburban-National Conference this year after 2-9 and 1-9 campaigns in the Continental Conference. They're scoring 22 points a game while allowing 11. Last year's offense averaged 17 points per game and allowed 34. To date they are 3-2 and should be 4-1 after statistically pounding CB East 283 to 181 in total yardage yet losing 10-7. Eight penalties for 60 yards, 3 fumbles and 5 sacks for 40 yards will do that. South rushed for 175 yards in that one. Against CB West they rushed for 277 yards but allowed 298 through the air. They allowed Pennsbury 263 yards rushing but only 17 points in a 3 point loss to the Falcons. Seems they're a *bend but don't break defense*, with an offense balanced just enough with running back Eric Reynolds and

quarterback Storm Miller. Miller was 7 of 11 against CB East, 4 of 4 verses CB West and 12 of 20 against Pennsbury. Abington is in Friday to see if they can get back to back wins for the first time this season. For South, they're home feeling pretty good after winning in their first road outing of the year at Bensalem.

Honorable Mention

Interboro (4-1)

Glen Mills (2-3)

Father Judge (3-2)

North Catholic (3-2)

Chestnut Hill Academy (4-0)

Frankford (2-1)

Tennett (2-2)

Marple-Newtown (4-1, 3A)

Garnet Valley (4-0, 3A)