

# Top 20 High School Football Rankings

## Southeastern Pennsylvania Football

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

September 13, 2005

(All teams are 4A unless indicated otherwise)

**1. Saint Joseph's Prep (2-0)** The Top 4 performed as expected last week with top ranked St. Joseph's and 4<sup>th</sup> ranked Neshaminy winning big, while 2<sup>rd</sup> ranked North Penn managed to hold off 3<sup>rd</sup> rated Cardinal O'Hara. Thereon the next 16 teams went 7-7, not counting the head-to-head (ranked teams) double overtime match up between Strath Haven and Conestoga. One consolation, admittedly weak, is that two losing teams ranked in the Top 10, Coatesville and Henderson, suffered losses to *out of area* teams, meaning the losses did not impact their standings in the rankings as much as a loss to an *in area* team would have. The exception here is Pennridge, who was embarrassed while losing to an out of area team, and fell from the 7 spot (replaced by Conestoga), and out of the Top 10 to 11<sup>th</sup>. What a week! Did someone say parity? Parity is a word you'll rarely use this year regarding the Hawks who shut down Saint Ignatius 28-14. A late TD with less than 3 minutes remaining in the game made it look close. It wasn't. The Hawks got 416 total yards of offense to the Wildcats 240. To a large degree they controlled the clock by out rushing Ignatius 274 to 58! On the heels of Neshaminy and Ignatius wins comes an encounter with another formidable foe, The Gilman School (9-1 last year) from Baltimore, MD. Gilman (1-0), a non sectarian all boys school (roughly 300 enrolled in grades 10, 11, 12) opened the season as USA Today's 6<sup>th</sup> ranked team in the Eastern Region. They are probably that and more following last weeks 22-19 win against perennial national power DeMatha, MD. The Hawks get them at home.

**2. North Penn (2-0)** North Penn demonstrated on the field they are ready for a deep run in the playoffs following their 35-28 win against Cardinal O'Hara. What contrast this one was to last year's 21-20 overtime defensive struggle. Actually, most of this one was a defensive struggle with North Penn holding a 14-7 lead entering the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. That's when things heated up with each side scoring 21 points. On the plus side, the Knights showed outside speed in Brandon Turner and Tyrece Ervin. Inside, power and quickness was evident with senior fullback Peter Stoll getting 146 yards on 19 carries. Going 0 for 8 in the passing department and losing your top two QB's to injury is a concern. Despite this disadvantage and resultant imbalance, the Knights destroyed the Lions with big plays of 42, 41, 59 and 24 yard rushing scores. You don't see that too often against an Algeo coached team. Now it's on to Archbishop Carroll Friday. Carroll is 1-1 after an opening game loss to Coatesville, 28-7, followed by a 35-28 win at rapidly disappearing Upper Merion.

**3. Cardinal O'Hara (1-1)** Some stats: O'Hara rushed for 4.2 yards per carry, completed 7 of 17 passes for 79 yards without an interception, held the other guy to 11 first downs, zero yards passing, and made him punt 9 times. 9 punts! Sounds pretty good. Unfortunately for O'Hara, they lost 4 of 4 fumbles, while suffering costly defensive breakdowns that allowed too many big plays, despite North Penn seldom throwing the ball and rarely throwing it well. What North Penn lost in terms of ground-air balance they

gained in a one dimensional but well conceived inside, outside ground attack the Lions never solved. North Penn rushed for 289 yards on 42 carries, or 6.9 yards per carry. About those 9 punts, they averaged 46 yards per punt. So between tough field position, turnovers and an opponent who just rammed it down your throat, it's surprising the winning margin wasn't greater than 7. Next up is a battle with West Catholic (2-0) Friday. The Burr's haven't been scored on to date with the opening shutout of Roman 14-0, followed by last week's 21-0 shut down of St. John's (D.C.).

**4. Neshaminy (1-1)** How about Neshaminy, bouncing back from the disappointing St. Joe's loss to lay a serious licking on Archbishop Ryan 47-18. Seems out of place mentioning it the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of the season, but a number of teams are already on the precipice, looking into the black hole of playoff elimination, especially 3A players like Strath Haven (1-1), Upper Merion (0-2), who's over the precipice in apparent free fall, Garnet Valley (0-2) and Great Valley (1-1). In the 4A ranks, Neshaminy and Pennridge have a loss, as does Quakertown and Tennett. Central Bucks West at 0-2 has played itself right out of the playoffs, perhaps the season without a turnaround and there's still plenty of football to go. Coatesville and Henderson also have a loss. So for teams like Neshaminy and many more, every game from here on out is a playoff game. For the Skins, it's a road game, their first, at improving Central Bucks South (1-1) who is fresh off a 28-7 win at C.B. West. The Skins won last year's match at Neshaminy 28-7 against South's 1-9 team.

**5. Ridley (2-0)** For the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in a row Ridley came out flat, going scoreless in the 1<sup>st</sup> half against Lower Merion. Shades of Bensalem the week before. But a 2<sup>nd</sup> half wake up call saw them put 19 unanswered points on the board to win their Central League opener 19-0. Junior QB Al Humes had his 2<sup>nd</sup> successful outing, going 11/23/0 for 157 yards. The line opened enough holes to secure another 176 yards on the ground for a 6.1 yards per carry average. That bodes well for the Raider's who travel to Strath Haven Friday night. Ridley won last year at home 20-3. They are making good progress this year but have not settled into a comfortable rhythm offensively against Bensalem or Lower Merion despite good 2<sup>nd</sup> half production in both games. Strath Haven just went toe to toe with a legitimate 4A playoff contender, losing on the road in double overtime. This is a big test for both teams but it's the first test for Ridley this year.

**6. Downingtown East (2-0)** For the 2<sup>nd</sup> straight week Downingtown was quarterbacked by reserve QB Leo Hamilton, subbing for the injured Pat Devlin. Because of that, more than a few people felt Tennett's Panther's could stay with the Cougars. But East is clearly more than their QB, especially with an underrated backfield and capable senior QB Hamilton filling in with 7 completions on 9 attempts totaling 55 yards. Running backs Walls and Burke got 164 and 77 rush yards respectively. So then, add Downingtown East to the list of balanced teams fighting for Ches-Mont supremacy. The 34-7 final says the defense played with inspiration. QB Devlin is scheduled to return to the lineup Friday at Elizabethtown (1-1). Elizabethtown is in District 3's Lancaster-Lebanon League, Section 2. East won last year 44-10 against E-town's 4-6 squad. The Bears dropped from 4A to 3A that year and are the same this year. The prior two years saw them go 0-10 in 2002 and 2-8 in 2003. So while they are improving, they seem way out of their league here.

The season opening 42-7 loss at Lower Dauphin was telling. They bounced back against Solanco last week, 35-0 and will be pumped in their home opener Friday.

**7. Conestoga (2-0)** Conestoga crashed the Top 10 this week by upsetting Strath Haven in double overtime, 18-12. You knew it was going to be a great game, especially with both teams fielding powerful defensive units. What you didn't expect was Conestoga's quarterback to again be a large part of the win, not with the graduation of record setting Josh Cohen. Leroi Leviston had a solid game by completing 6 of 11 passes for 57 yards and 1 interception. But he really came through by tucking the ball away for significant chunks of rushing yards to keep the Panther's honest. He finished the night with 58 yards on 13 carries, including the final 5 yard TD burst that won it in the 2<sup>nd</sup> overtime. The win puts the Pioneers in the driver's seat in the Central League race with Upper Darby and Ridley also coming to Berwyn. First they need to get past improving Penncrest (2-0), a team they handled with ease last year 49-6. This one's in Media. The Lions slipped to 3-8 last year with the drop from 4A to 3A, following a 9-2 season in 2002 and an 8-3 campaign in 2003. Dangerous spot for Stoga against the Lions.

**8. Strath Haven (1-1, 3A)** Phew, how do you start this write up? The column last week suggested a narrow Strath Haven win over a combative Conestoga team. But it turned out just the opposite, with Conestoga winning on the scoreboard and in the trenches. The Pioneers out distanced Strath Haven on the ground for 169 rushing yards on 44 carries, to 142 yards on 56 carries for Strath Haven. That's a 3.8 yards per carry average for Stoga verses a 2.5 ypc for Haven. You don't see that too often. We mentioned Conestoga's talent at the DL and LB positions last week but expected nothing near that level of play. And on a night where Strath Haven's QB went 4 for 13 with 2 picked off, who would have guessed that 2 of those tosses would go for their only scores of 49 and 12 yards. Although the loss puts the Panther's on the hot seat playoff wise, it was still one heck of a battle and learning experience against a strong 4A who will be heard from in the postseason. Strath Haven will be heard from in the postseason if they can beat Ridley at home Friday night. The Raider's won last year 20-3 in Folsom but should not find the going as easy in Wallingford.

**9. Coatesville (1-1)** You've got to respect Coatesville for upgrading the schedule this year by adding Archbishop Carroll and Bethlehem Catholic. They also repeat with J.P. McCaskey (Lancaster High as it's called back there), so the schedule is dangerous. That was demonstrated last week when they ventured North to take on 3A power Bethlehem Catholic in a losing 28-16 effort. The Golden Hawks play in District 11's Lehigh Valley Interscholastic Athletic Association, Northampton Division, and are having quite a year. After opening with a 21-0 win at Parkland, they came home for the convincing win against Coatesville, who was playing without running back C.J.Gray. Gray was on a 1 game suspension. Things are not looking as good as they were a week ago with an early season loss and expected rough ride in the Ches-Mont this year. Hard imagining *anyone* going unscathed in that league. Then again, if things continue at this pace they'll be more than a few teams getting in with 2 losses. Coatesville travels to Lancaster Friday to play J.P. McCaskey (0-2). The Red Tornado lost their opener to Abington 37-21, and last

week against William Penn (York High), 45-41. Coatesville won last year against JPM's 7-4 team in a 21-13 battle in Coatesville.

**10. Henderson (1-1)** Here's another big surprise with the Warriors going down at home to District 3's Governor Mifflin 20-18. Maybe it wasn't a surprise considering Mifflin's near upset of Downingtown East the week before. East rallied from a 14-0 deficit to pull it out 21-14. Perhaps the Mustangs are District 3's dark horse! For Henderson, the reality of losing should focus them for this week's challenge in the form of Malvern Prep (1-0). The Inter-AC Friar's opened last week with a 35-0 win at Chester. Last year's young group had it handed to them at home by Henderson 52-35. They're a year older but so are the Warriors who need to get it together Friday against an improved Malvern bunch.

**11. Pennridge (1-1)** Pennridge tumbled from the 7<sup>th</sup> spot all the way down and out of the Top 10 to the 11<sup>th</sup> position following an ugly 42-7 loss in Harrisburg to District 3 power Central Dauphin. This one got ugly early, with CD scoring on a 26 yard run at the 8 minute mark of the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter, and again at the 1 and change mark of the same quarter on a 46 yard bomb from QB Dietz to Mark Quick. The back breaker came a few seconds later at the 1 minute mark of the 1<sup>st</sup> when CD recovered a fumble and raced 37 yards for the score. The lead grew to 28-0 at half time following another 80 yard bomb from Dietz to Mackey. Two scores in the 3<sup>rd</sup> upped it to 42-0, with the final of 42-7 barely reflecting how one sided the game was. CD's QB Mike Dietz was impressive, going 10 of 11 for 196 yards. Conversely, Pennridge QB Blake Hughes was hounded *all night* with unrelenting pressure. He went 6 of 21(29 %) for 119 yards. Central Dauphin's quickness shut down every aspect of Pennridge's attack, holding the Rams to 61 yards rushing, 2.2 yards per carry! It will be interesting seeing how the Rams respond at home Friday against Monsignor Bonner. Bonner was easy prey last year, falling 35-13. That may not be the case this year with Bonner stoked after the 20-15 upset of Interboro. But they'll need talented QB Mark Verica who went down hard last week with an apparent shoulder injury.

**12. Pottsgrove (2-0, 3A)** Pottsgrove came out the gate smokin this year with a 42-6 win over Radnor followed by a 47-0 rout of Perkiomen Valley. The opponents weren't playoff quality teams but that's still a high level of offense so early in the season. That's just the production needed against a winless bunch of Bears from Boyertown coming in for a Friday night game. Last year's season started to unraveled in the 8<sup>th</sup> week with a bitter 40-34 loss to Phoenixville, dropping the Falcons to 5-3. On the following weekend they were again edged, this time by Boyertown 20-12. So although the Bears are winless, their losses came to undefeated Muhlenberg (D-3, 3A, 2-0) and Lansdale Catholic (2-0). The Bears aren't losers so they'll probably put up a stiff fight here.

**13. LaSalle (2-0)** Admittedly, this does look unusual seeing LaSalle from the Catholic League Red Division ranked so high. But when you're playing good football and everyone above you is losing, there's nowhere else to go but up. Besides, LaSalle is simple a good football team. After running wild against Plymouth Whitemarsh (183 rush yards), they went to the air against GW with QB John Harriston completing 14 of 16 passes for 133 yards. The week before he went 15 of 20 for 151 yards. The Explorer's

opened the season with a 42-21 destruction of Plymouth Whitemarsh followed by a 35-6 pounding of Public League historic power George Washington. Both games avenged losses from last year. This week they're home against Germantown Academy, a team they beat last year 7-3.

**14. West Catholic (2-0)** Here's another CL team, but from the Blue Division who is off to a terrific start, particularly on defense where they've yet to allow a point. The opener was impressive enough beating Roman Catholic 14-0 down at the shore. They topped that with a 21-0 win last week against a strong St. John's team from Washington, D.C. The Burr's are a team that was suppose to disappear with last year's 11-2 team graduating so many key players, especially on the offense. Well they haven't disappeared. In fact they seemed poised to make another run at the Blue Division. First they must get past O'Hara. Results against RC and St. John's suggest they can be competitive. They held up well against the big St. John's team and the Lion's may be a nicked following the physical clash with North Penn. But, don't expect them to provide gifts in the form of 4 fumbles lost last week against the Knights.

**15. Lansdale Catholic (2-0, 2A)** This will be the Crusader's 3<sup>rd</sup> straight road game when they travel to Pottstown Saturday to face Saint Pius X. They had no problem with them last year and rolled 48-0. That about approximates this year's likely score with Pius limping in at 0-2. Last year's team went 1-10, and this year's edition seems headed for the same following a 33-0 opening day loss to Delone (District 3, York League) and last week's 33-14 loss to Phoenixville. In stark contrast is LC's 48-7 win over Methacton, followed by last week's 34-12 win against Boyertown. The Crusader's are beginning to look like the real deal all over again.

**16. Norristown (2-0)** The big win against Methacton was just what the doctor ordered following a narrow 17-13 win against Upper Merion the week before. Norristown crammed all their points into the middle 2 quarters where they scored 33 points en-route to the 33-3 win. Things get a little dicey this week when they take to the road for the first time against quirky Cheltenham. Chelty opened the season as the 19<sup>th</sup> rated team only to fall flat on their face with a 35-7 loss to Tennett. Last week saw a turnaround with the 21-14 win against Souderton. The Panther's return some good numbers and will be tough here. This first road test will tell us more about the Eagles potential this year.

**17. Abington (2-0)** Remember the explosive group from Hatboro Horsham last year that burst onto the scene and almost made the playoffs? Abington appears to be this year's version of that, following big displays of offense in the first two games. In the opener they defeated always tough J.P. McCaskey 37-21. Last week produced even larger numbers with the 46-26 rout of Plymouth Whitemarsh. They are currently just above the Hatter's level of 40 points scored per game. The defense is allowing far too many points but the competition has been high quality in terms of opponent's offenses. PW's production against the Ghosts especially Da'Rel Scott's was to be expected. Da'Rel is a special talent who will break loose against many teams this year. The big story for Abington has to be sophomore quarterback Kevin Morton who completed 18 of 24 passes for 363 yards. Then there's the comeback from a 12-0 deficit to outscore the Colonials

46-14. It's nice seeing good things happen at Abington, especially after so long a draught that yielded a 19-48 record from 1999 through 2004. The Ghosts are home again Friday where they should gallop against Upper Dublin. Then Neshaminy is in on the 23<sup>rd</sup>.

**18. Council Rock North (2-0)** The Indians are off to a good start, great start actually, with the 41-0 shutout of University City at home, followed by a road win at Central Bucks East, 28-10. This is their best start since 2000, two years before the split, when they went 7-4 after a 2-0 start. Since the North-South split, they've started the season on the wrong foot, going 1-1 in '02, 0-2 in '03 and another 1-1 start last year. They have a relatively favorable schedule this year that should allow them to get off to a strong start before getting into the more jarring competition that is the SOL National Conference. Conwell-Egan (2-0) is in Friday, followed by a road test at Pennsbury. About Conwell-Egan: despite losing their all time rusher Steve Slaton, they are still running rough-shod over their first two opponents. Against Pottstown (41-0), they rushed for 363 yards. Against North Catholic (27-20), they struck for another 237 yards. That's good stuff. But they haven't shown any pass proficiency so C.R. North can pack em in tight.

**19. Upper Darby (2-0)** The Royals won the opener against Monsignor Bonner 34-6, then woke up the rest of the Central League by blasting Radnor 43-13. With huge numbers returning from last year's 5-7 team, big things are expected. There are numerous quality skill players with speed returning, and a sizeable OL. What's new? The only question mark was the quarterback position. That seems solved with QB Blaine Fox going a perfect 7 of 7 for 87 yards against Bonner, then tossing another fine performance by completing 7 for 12 for 135 yards against Radnor. This week sees the Royals in their 3<sup>rd</sup> consecutive home game. The opponent is Marple-Newtown (3A, 1-1), in following a 14-7 loss to Haverford after winning 21-7 in the opener against Avon Grove. Darby should roll here to set up an exciting encounter with Conestoga the 23<sup>rd</sup>. Both should be 3-0 so long as Stoga doesn't slip at Penncrest.

**20. Hatboro Horsham (1-1)** Wasn't last year's 10-2 team the best team in the District 1 to miss the playoffs in who knows how long? And it all came down to a Friday night homecoming game at Tennett, October 22, 2004. What a game. The Hatter's jumped out to a 20-0 1<sup>st</sup> quarter lead that for all intents and purposes should have sealed it. But a balanced blend of pass and rush, resulting in a 39 yard QB Kull air strike, a 32 yard Pirrone rushing score, followed by another 2 yard touchdown by Brandon, and finally a 2<sup>nd</sup> TD toss, this one of 22 yards by QB Justin Kull yielded 4 TD's over the next 3 quarters to ice it for Tennett, 27-26. That was last year, and what a year it was. This season shows the Hatter's with a BIG E for effort after the defeat at Pennridge 21-15, followed by a 41-13 rout of Upper Dublin. This year's schedule mimics last years, putting them home Friday against Plymouth Whitmarsh, a team they beat 42-21 a year ago.

## **Honorable Mention**

**Malvern Prep (1-0)**

**Archbishop Wood (1-1)**

**Roman Catholic (1-1)**

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

**Interboro (3A, 1-1)**

**Truman (2-0)**

**Pennsbury (2-0)**

**Central Bucks South (1-1)**

**Quakertown (1-1)**

**Wissahickon (1-1)**