Short Picks

Pennsylvania High School football gets back into action this coming Friday with a couple of excellent matchups of top ranked teams. Many of you will no doubt be traveling to see your favorite high school squad kickoff the 2011 season. However, for those looking for the best game in your area, we have some really good games on the schedule in various venues across the state.

Looking at Rich Vetock's pre-season rankings you will notice many familiar names in the top ten, but you will also see some new teams not accustomed to PFN's ranking. Hopefully these newcomers will continue to hold down a top ten position. Also, as I checked around the state regarding the strengths of the high school teams, there seems to be a plethora of top notch players throughout the state. The D-1 and D-1 AA college coaches will be pounding the state highways as they recruit the abundance of talent here in Pennsylvania. 2011 looks like a very fruitful year.

In what seems like an annual opener in District one, the Knights of North Penn visit the Explorers of LaSalle College. The Explores have been to the state finals the past two years with a win two years ago. North Penn participates in the playoffs most every year, but the Knights haven't visited Chocolate Town since winning the whole thing in 2003. Get to the gate early if you want a seat as this should be a "doosie"... **LaSalle College.**

Another District 1 game features Council Rock South vs. Central Bucks South. Council Rock South is ranked in the AAAA top ten and the Golden Hawks would like to duplicate last year's great season of 11-2. The Hawks just might be taking the up-and-coming Titans of CB South a bit lightly. CB South is building an offense around highly touted QB Matt Johns. I'm hoping Titans head coach Dave Rackovan has put together a defense to keep Mr. Johns on the field for more offensive plays. Just maybe closer than expected...**Council Rock South**.

District 3 Bishop McDevitt (AAA) travels to the Pittsburgh area to face off with the Gators of Gateway in a rare Sunday game. The Crusaders rock solid defense is led by one of the finest lineman in the country, Noah Spence. The unranked Gators will be no pushover for the Crusaders, but that defense should be the difference...**Bishop McDevitt.**

The Gateway/McDevitt game is one of two games on Sunday in the Pittsburgh area with the other being PFN's # 1 Pittsburgh Central Catholic hosting PFN's # 3 AAA team the Vikings of Archbishop Wood. Wood is loaded with D-1 players on the offensive line, tight end and running back. Central Catholic's offense is led by QB Perry Hills (verbal to U. of Maryland). I look for the last team with the ball to pull out the win...**Pittsburgh Central Catholic.**

Back in District 3, two teams making the top ten rankings year in and year out will meet in week one, those being the Trinity Shamrocks and the Lancaster Catholic Crusaders. The Crusaders travel to Camp Hill hoping to duplicate last season's 11-1 record. The Shamrocks (12-2 in 2010) are looking to avenge the 35-7 thumping at the hands of the Crusaders in last season's opener. Not nearly as bad as last year, but the same outcome...**Lancaster Catholic.**

Selinsgrove's Seals travel to Mount Carmel where the Red Tornadoes football program seems to be returning to the greatness of the past. The Silver Bowl will be awash with red and white as the rabid "Red Tornado Nation" comes out in full force. The Silver Bowl will be tough on opponents this year...**Mount Carmel.**

In District 5, the pre-season favorite in single A looks like the Cougars of North Star. The "Cougs" travel to Conemaugh Valley for a Saturday afternoon game. I always hated those afternoon games. The Cougars most likely will like this one...**North Star.**

The headliner in District Six for the opening night is always the "backyard brawl" between the Blue Devils of Bellwood Antis and the Golden Eagles of Tyrone. Tighten your chin straps fellows. This rivalry is one of the most heated in the state. Two hall of fame coaches in the Blue Devils' John Hayes and the Golden Eagles John Franco along with a outstanding fan base, and players who play their hearts out make this a must see game for fans from miles around. This game is exactly what high school football is all about as each team has respect and admiration for the other guy. Too bad somebody has to lose. Golden Eagle QB, Steve Franco, might be just a bit too much for the Blue Devils...**Tyrone.**

I see the light at the end of the tunnel for the fans at Cambria Heights as the Highlanders look like a team poised for a good season as they open Friday night at home against the Bisons of Bedford. With new head coach Jarrod Lewis at the helm and three former experienced head coaches as his assistants, I look for the Highlanders to win their share of games in '11**...Cambria Heights.**

Central Cambria's Red Devils host the always tough Crimson Crushers of Bishop McCort. The Red Devils would love to get the season off with a win for new head coach Sam Shutty. McCort is also being guided by a new head coach in Kevin Sheridan. "Close but no cigar" for the rookie Crusher coach...**Central Cambria.**

PFN's # 7 ranked Thomas Jefferson (AAA) ventures into "Wolverena Stadium" to battle the Wolverines of Woodland Hills. The Wolverena is a nasty place to play, but maybe, just maybe the "Jags" can bring home the bacon...**Thomas Jefferson.**

In a huge cross-town rivalry, Cathedral Prep rambles through the streets of Erie to pay a visit to the Trojans of McDowell. The Ramblers look like real contenders. Should be close...**Cathedral Prep.**

At Sharon's Tiger Stadium, the Tigers play host to the Steelers of Farrell. These two teams had a combined record of 24 wins against 5 losses during the 2010 season. Both squads have a rich tradition of football lore. The Tigers (double A) are ranked tenth by PFN while the Steelers (single A) are in the OTW. Not too often do I go against the home team in tight games...**Farrell.**

Quad A Downingtown East heads north to Allentown home of the Vikings of Central Catholic. The Vikes are number 1 in AAA. The Cougars will have their hands full with the passing game of Allentown CC led by returning QB Brendan Nosovitch (verbal to South Carolina)...**Allentown Central Catholic.**

In district 11, North Schuylkill's Spartans travels to Shenandoah Valley. Both schools are ranked 8th in their respective classes. In another vote for the road team I'm picking...**North Schuylkill.**

West Catholic is ranked #1 in double A while the Burrs' opponent this week, the Roman Catholic Eagles are a OTW in PFN's quad A ranking. The Eagles won the opener over the Burrs last year, but I think the Burrs step up in class to smite the Eagles...**West Catholic.**

In other games:

Coatesville over J P McCaskey

Ridley over Malvern Prep

Dunmore over North Pocono

Abington Heights over Hazleton

Central Dauphin over Manheim Twp.

Cumberland Valley over Red Lion

Bloomsburg over South Williamsport

Lewisburg over Milton Area

Glendale over Everett

Penn Cambria over Somerset

Greater Johnstown over Bishop Guifoyle

Hollidaysburg over Altoona

Aliquippa over Laurel

Hopewell over Belle Vernon

North Hills over Perry Traditional

Curwensville over Smethport

Port Allegany over Ridgeway

General McLane over Strong Vincent

Hickory over West Middlesex

Bethlehem Liberty over Glen Mills

Parkland over Harrisburg

Edward BOK Vo-tech over South Philly

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