

## Short Picks

Welcome PFN fans to what should be another exciting year of Pennsylvania high school football! Opening night is just a few evenings away as football fever hits the Commonwealth. I'm sure many of you have your game faces on, noise makers in hand and a few bucks for the concession stand. I know the players have been working hard in the off-season and extremely hard in the post season. Your coaches are bugged-eyed from long hours of analysis of this week's opponent. The scouting reports are in the computer and the game plan is at hand. Now only if "Short Picks" preparation could be as good. My sources of information are excellent, my crystal ball is polished, and I have coin just in case I get in a bind. Bring on the journey to "Chocolate Town".

The first week has some classics for openers. In AAAA, Rich Vetock's number one team in the state, Bethlehem Liberty, travels to Lansdale home of the Knights of North Penn. Richie V. has North Penn ranked number three statewide! Both the Knights and the Hurricanes won district titles last year. The Hurricanes went on to win the whole shooting match in Hershey! This should be a must see game for football fanatics in District 1 and 11. In the slobberknocker of the week, I like...**North Penn.**

Woodland Hills is pegged in the seven spot of the PFN rankings. Head coach, George Novak, looks like he has put together a team that could make a run for the title after a 4-6 season in '08. Woody High's Wolverines travel to Steubenville, Ohio to face a very strong defensive unit and wide open offense. Ohioans like to think their football is the best in the nation, but I think the Wolverines can bring home the bacon...**Woodland Hills.**

In another AAAA matchup, the always powerful Wilson West Lawn Bulldogs trek to Shillington to do battle with the Mustangs of Governor Mifflin. Year in and year out, the Mustangs usually get double digit victories for a season. Governor Mifflin finished '08 season 10-3 and will probably do the same or better this year. Wilson's Bulldogs will find the Mustangs to be very tough. Opening night on the road against a solid Governor Mifflin team might be closer than the Bulldogs expect...**Wilson.**

The Little Lions of State College fared very well playing in the AAAA District 3. State College capped off a great year in '08 with a 12-1 record. Head coach, Al Wolski, and his Little Lions welcome an old District 6 rival, Hollidaysburg, to Happy Valley for their opener. The Golden Tigers moved to AAA a couple of years ago and should do quite well again in the AAA bracket. The Tigers will find the short drive to State College on the recently completed I-99 to be quite smooth, but the game could be a little bumpy...**State College.**

Penn Hills opens the season ranked 10th in the state (PFN). The Indians will get a stiff test of the ranking when they host the Gateway Gators. The Gators are coming off a 12-1 season and I don't think they are quite as talented as last year's team, but Gateway will give the Indians all they can handle...**Penn Hills.**

It looks like Manheim Central is back again with a star-studded team. Mike "Huff" Williams always puts a competitive team on the gridiron. His Barons are ranked second statewide in AAA. The Barons have a ferocious defense led by linebacker, Dakota Royer. The Barons travel to Glen Rock home

of the Warriors of Susquehannock. The Warriors are coming off a 2-8 season and are optimistic for better results in '09, but this is not the opener the Warriors needed...**Manheim Central**.

How about this opener in District 4? The Red Tornadoes of Mt.Carmel visit the Seals of Selinsgrove. Should not this game be the grand finale of the regular season? What a great matchup! The Seals and the Red Tornadoes combined for a 26-3 record last year. Are these guys good? District 4 fans are in for a real treat, but you had better get to Selinsgrove early if you want a seat as this one should be SRO! Look for a field goal to be the difference for the home team...**Selinsgrove**.

Two long time rivals lock horns in District 10 when General McLane rolls out the red carpet for the Colonels of Strong Vincent. Both schools like to get into the inter-districts each year with McLane winning a state title in '06 in AAA. The Colonels might just have the firepower to get to Hershey this year...**Strong Vincent**.

District 10 has another team that could find its way to Hershey. Could it be the Greyhounds of Wilmington? You bet because this team is loaded! The Greyhounds will rely heavily on the running of Derrick Burns. The Greyhounds travel to District 7 to tangle with the Spartans of Brentwood. Even a Spartan effort won't slow these 'Hounds...**Wilmington**.

The Charleroi Cougars get a snootful in each season's opener when they play the Centurians of Greensburg Central Catholic. The Centurians lose good players to graduation, but simply reload for the next year's campaign. Cougars got to do something about that scheduling...**Greensburg Central Catholic**.

One of the biggest openers in District 6 is the backyard brawl that takes place every year between the Bellwood-Antis Blue Devils and the Tyrone Golden Eagles who are ranked 10th in PFN. Cousins vs. cousins, friends vs. friends! Memorial Stadium in Bellwood will be rocking when John Franco (newly inducted into the Pa. Coaches Hall of Fame) brings the Golden Eagles across the railroad tracks to take on the Blue Devils. Tyrone got the better of Bellwood in last season's opener winning by a 27-6 score. I'm sure the Blue Devils have not gotten over that loss. Bellwood is much improved so I see a much closer game this year. My crystal ball is a bit blurry. Could we be looking at a mild upset? Close but no cigar for the Blue Devils...**Tyrone**.

I don't see any teams from District 9 in any of PFN's top 10. What's up with that? I think Cameron County could sneak into the top 10 by season's end. The Red Raiders have a solid nucleus, but will face some strong opposition from a couple of teams in District 9. The Wolves of Kane should provide some of that opposition in this week's opener as the Wolves host the Red Raiders in Paul R. Miller Stadium. The Wolves finished 8-3 in '08 and are hoping the winning ways will continue. The Red Raiders take the first step in moving up toward those rankings...**Cameron County**.

Hazleton and Abington Heights are coming off identical records of 10-2. Hazleton beat the Comets in last year's opener by a 18-17 score. This year the score should be Hazleton 17 and the Comets 18...**Abington Heights**.

District 12 power, George Washington, invited the Trojans of Parkland to intercity Philly to have a little inter-district battle. Both schools are heavyweights. Parkland in District 11 and G.W. in District 12. For this game I am going strictly with the home field advantage...**George Washington.**

In other games:

Cambria Heights over Somerset.

Bishop McCort over Bishop Guilfoyle

LaSalle College over Plymouth-Whitemarsh

Neshaminy over Souderton

Pittsburgh Central Catholic over Ursuline, Ohio

Hopewell over Knoch

Cathedral Prep over McDowell

Clearfield over Dubois

Allentown Central Catholic over Pottsville

Beaver Falls over Riverside

Moniteau over Clairon Area

Clairton over Laurel

Southern Columbia over Shamokin

Schuylkill Haven over Tri-Valley

Springdale over Monaca

Windber over Chestnut Ridge