

Short Picks – Week 11

The playoffs are now in full swing. The weather has turned a bit more like we are accustomed. It looks like colder temperatures throughout the state and maybe some snow in the western half of the state. I talked to a couple of coaches who did not enter their teams into the playoffs despite having the opportunity to do so. One coach explained his decision not to take his 4-5 team into the playoffs like this. "It would be like PFN entering Rich Vetock and Tom Elling into a beauty contest." I promised not to reveal the coach's name.

As for this week, many great games are on the card beginning in District 1 where head coach Rick Pennypacker and his Falcons of Pottsgrove host the Golden Knights of Bayard Rustin. Both squads have 8-2 records. I like the Golden Knights on the road...**Bayard Rustin.**

PFN has Ridley ranked # 3 in the AAAA Class. The Green Raiders open the playoffs by welcoming Interboro (8-2) to Prevost Field. This game could be closer than most might expect...**Ridley.**

Strath Haven's Panthers travel to Garnet Valley. The Jaguars are sporting a very nice 8-1 record. Can the Panthers regain the title they once held for so many previous years? Not this year...**Garnet Valley.**

The Mountaineers of Dallas get a chance to redeem themselves in that early season loss to Berwick. The Mountaineers will have a second shot at the Bulldogs in Crispin Stadium in Berwick. It looks like Bulldog head coach Gary Campbell, Jr. has done a good job in turning around the Bulldog fortunes from a disappointing '06 season. Look for a better effort from the Mountaineers, but pretty much the same effort by the Bulldogs...**Berwick.**

In what should be one of the best games this weekend, Delaware Valley travels to Wyoming Valley West home of the Spartans and legendary coach George Curry. Delaware Valley lost its first game of the season last week by a 33-13 score at West Scranton. The Warriors will have a tough time regrouping after last week's loss. Look for a close game right down to the finish...**Wyoming Valley West.**

The Blue Devils of Greencastle-Antrim enter the playoffs against the Blazers of Daniel Boone. The Blue Devils will need to find a way to keep Blazer QB Anthony Heimbach from having one of those games that destroys opponents. I don't see that happening...**Daniel Boone.**

Mike "Huff" Williams and his Barons of Manheim posted a very uncharacteristic 6-4 record. "Huff" takes his Barons on the road to Red Land. The Patriots lost last week for the first time this season. Red Land is heavily favored, but I have a feeling the Barons might surprise. First big upset of the playoffs...**Manheim Central.**

The Muhls of Muhlenberg travel to Mechanicsburg, home of the Eagles of Cumberland Valley. The Eagles started the season on a red hot pace with a high scoring offense. The Eagles stumbled along the way picking up three losses to finish at 7-3. Meanwhile the Muhls racked up six straight wins before finishing the season at 8-2. I'm not sure which Eagle team will show up for this one, but the home field excitement should be a factor...**Cumberland Valley.**

Eric Foust has his Greyhounds of Shippensburg in the playoffs for the first time in a couple of years. The Greyhounds take a bus ride (probably a Greyhound) over to Elizabethtown where head coach Jeff Polites and his Bears narrowly missed going undefeated this season. The Bears got beat last week for the first time. The Greyhounds will find E-town in a nasty mood...**'Da Bears.**

Wilson West Lawn will give the Altoona Mt. Lions all they can handle at Mt. Lions' home field, Mansion Park. The Bulldogs feature QB Tyler Smith who is coming off a six TD performance last week. The weather in Altoona may be in the Mt. Lion favor as snow and rain are predicted for Friday night. The weather and the home field give a slight edge to...**Altoona.**

District 4 has a couple of blockbusters on tap with the first one being Canton at the Panthers of Bloomsburg. Canton has a very impressive 8-2 record and should be a solid test for the 9-1 Panthers. That Panther win over So. Columbia in week # 1 impressed me more than anything...**Bloomsburg.**

The Eagles of Line Mountain visit the Tigers of So. Columbia. The Tigers have been the Class A District 4 champions since 1991. Is that awesome or what? Can the Eagles stop the streak? This is the best chance the Eagles have had in some time. This one is so close I must resort to the coin toss. By a whisker...**So. Columbia.**

The Red Tornado Nation of Mt. Carmel are not accustomed to a 10 win and 10 loss record over the past two years. Mt. Carmel enters the playoffs with a 6-4 record against a pretty solid Montoursville's team having two losses against eight wins. The Warriors feature a strong rushing attack led by running back Mike Steele and a stingy defense led by Zach Kremer. Can the Red Tornadoes regain that swagger of old? Not this year...**Montoursville.**

In District 5/6 action, Chestnut Ridge's Lions have their work cut out for them as they travel to Johnstown to battle the Crimson Crushers of Bishop McCort. McCort has too many weapons...**Bishop McCort.**

Tussey Mountain and Northern Bedford get together again for a rematch of their week three game. Northern Bedford's Black Panthers won the initial meeting. It's tough to beat a team twice in one year, but the Black Panthers pull out a close victory...**Northern Bedford.**

In another rematch in District 5, the Cougars of North Star travel to Windber Stadium to attempt to avenge the week four loss to the Windber Ramblers. The Ramblers at home are one tough cookie...**Windber.**

Hollidaysburg's Golden Tigers are loving the move from AAAA to AAA. The Tigers are the number 1 seed in District 6. The Tiger's opponent, the Somerset Eagles, are having one of their finest seasons in quite some time. The emotion of the playoffs will bode well for the upstart Eagles, but the size and speed of the Golden Tigers will prevail in the end...**Hollidaysburg.**

Westmont Hilltop traveled into District 10 last week to take on a top seed in the Wilmington Greyhounds. This week the Hilltoppers meet another top seed in District 6 in the Golden Eagles of Tyrone. Two weeks, and two top seeds add up to two losses...**Tyrone.**

What got into Central Cambria last week? After a couple of weeks of a slumbering offense the Red Devils put up 53 points against a good Somerset team. I'm sure that effort has head coach Ken Buzzard scratching his head. The Red Devils will need a similar effort this week against the Rams of Penns

Valley. I can't make a pick based on just one game, so I'm going with... **Penns Valley.**

The Richland Rams are riding the arm of QB Marco Pecora. This week's opponent the Mounties of Phillipsburg-Osceola should be looking very closely at films to find some weakness in Marco's game. Good luck, because Marco is for real. This one should be a great game with a win for the home team...**Phillipsburg.**

Steel Valley's Ironmen ride into the playoffs with a 10-0 record. The Ironmen host the Tigers of Beaver Falls. Ironmen QB Ryan Sabo is considered one of the best QB's in the WPIAL, but the Tigers will have to contend with more than just Ryan and that would be the Ironmen defense. Beaver Falls will need to find a way to get running back Todd Thomas loose if they hope to stay in the game. I think they will...**Beaver Falls.**

Chartiers Valley travels to Pine-Richland. Pine-Richland won the WPIAL AAA title in '03. Chartiers Valley has not played for the title in quite some time. Chartiers Valley is loaded in the skill positions and the Colts record shows it. The Rams lost their skill positions from last year, but have rebuilt around a veteran offensive line. I like Chartiers Valley, but that playoff experience of the Rams tips the scales...**Pine-Richland.**

Running back, Billy Bair, has led the Fightin' Planets of Mars to a 9-1 record. The Planets enter week two of the playoffs against perennial power Aliquippa. The Quips will find a way to slow down Billy, but will it be enough? Barely...**Aliquippa.**

Ford City is 10-0 while this week's opponent Riverside is 9-1. This game will be a battle between two outstanding running backs in Ford City's Carter Haponski and Riverside's Jake Wickline. I would think that Ford City is the slight favorite, but I'm going with the underdog in a possible OT thriller...**Riverside.**

The Flying Dutchmen of St. Mary's travel over Penfield Mountain to Clearfield. The Bisons beat the Dutchmen earlier this season and I see no reason to predict anything but another Bison victory...**Clearfield.**

Harbor Creek puts a 10-0 record on the line in this week's game with the Tigers of Sharon. The Tigers (7-3) will find the Huskies of head coach Dan Budziszewski (one of my favorite names in the coaching profession) a formidable team especially in Harbor Creek. Huskies fans will fill the stands and the Tigers will bring a huge throng as well. My second upset special of the playoffs...**Sharon.**

District Two Hazleton (9-1) hosts District 11's Red Rovers of Easton (7-3). Don't let those three Red Rover losses fool you into thinking this game won't be close. I think the Red Rovers have a good chance to win this one, but I'm going to go with the home team favorite...**Hazleton.**

In other games:

Parkland over Emmaus
Souderton over Dowingtown
Neshaminy over Upper Dublin
Harrisburg over Lower Dauphin
State College over Gov. Mifflin
Purchase Line over Laurel Valley

Bishop Guilfoyle over So. Huntingdon
Portage over Penns Manor
Ligonier Valley over Bellwood-Antis
Thomas Jefferson over West Allegheny
Trinity over Montour
Titusville over Storn Vincent
Northwestern Lehigh over Lehigh
Jim Thorpe over Northern Lehigh
Saucon Valley over Pen Argyl