

# GAMEPLAN

A comprehensive guide to H.S. football season



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Tribune-Review SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 2024



## INSIDE



- » Previews, schedules, rosters for every school
- » Conference breakdowns
- » The Birdie's predictions

**Pictured left to right:** Latrobe linebacker Alex Tatsch, coach Ron Prady and QB John Wetzel  
**Above:** Penn-Trafford's Tasso Whipple

# ORANGE RUSH

LATROBE RIDING WAVE OF MOMENTUM - PAGE 18



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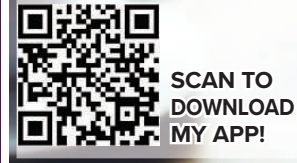
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**GREENSBURG (CITY) \$12,000**

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### July Agents of the Month

 <i>Nancy Helsel</i>	 <i>Lori Weig-Tamasy</i>	 <i>Bridget Fogarty</i>
 <i>Kim Reynolds</i>	 <i>Patti Garrigan</i>	 <i>Mary Ann Tegethoff</i>
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Dana      412.480.9552

**New Listing! Lease**

**Plum Boro**  
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**\$1,295/lease**      **MLS# 1666548**  
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**New Listing! Lease**

**Allegheny Twp**  
2BR, 1 bath townhome. Equipped kitchen w/appliances. Full basement. Hardwood fls and fresh carpet and paint.

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**Congratulations**  
Patti Garrigan, C21AHR CENTURION.  
Bridget Fogarty and Mary Ann Tegethoff  
Company-wide agents of the Month for July 2024.

Office Leaders, Kim Reynolds and Sandy Johnson in Lower Burrell. Sarver Office Leaders, Bridget Fogarty and Mary Ann Tegethoff and in the Allegheny Township location the Office Leaders are Lori Weig-Tamasy and Nancy Helsel.

*Nice Job Everyone, Thank You*

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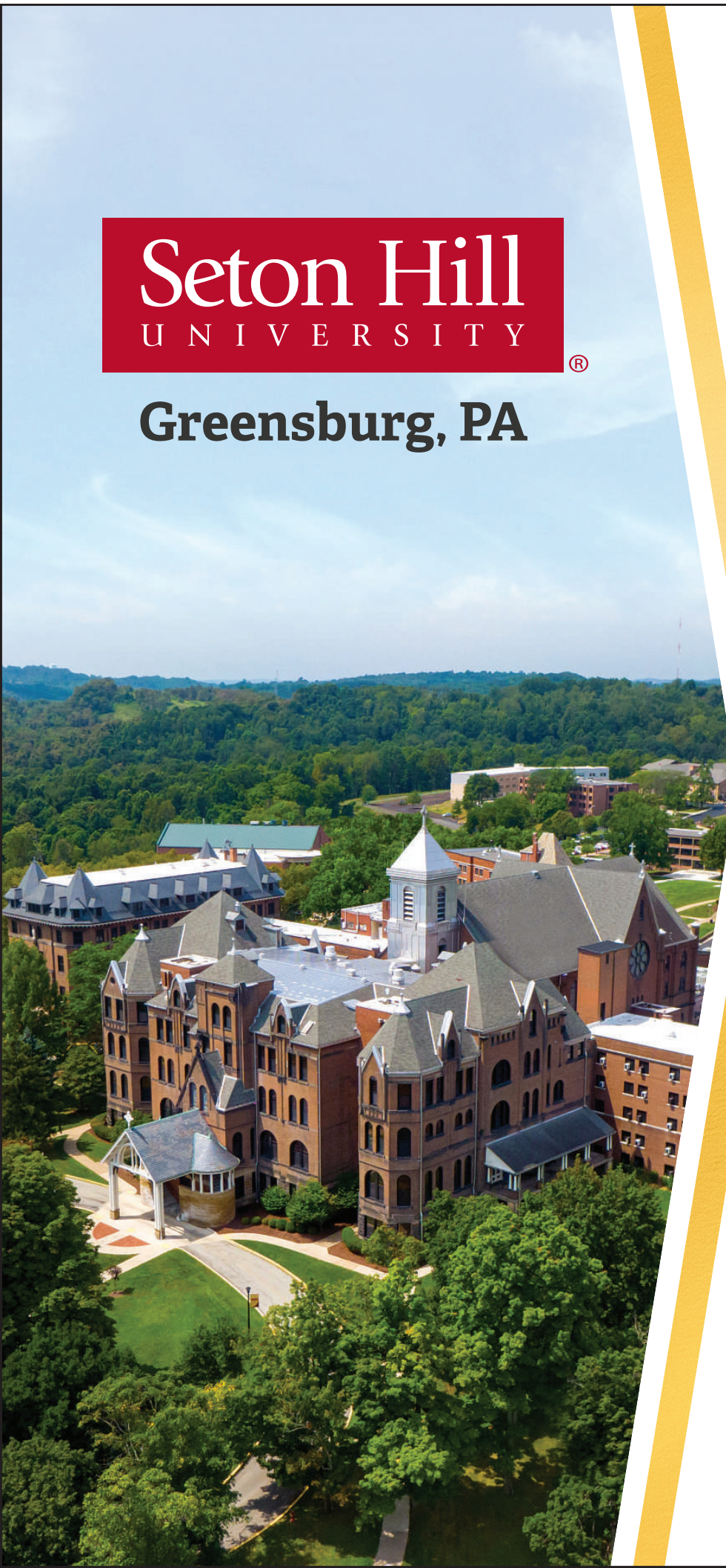
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**THE FAVORITES****1. North Allegheny (13-2)**

The Tigers only return five starters on each side of the ball from a team that won a second straight WPIAL 6A championship last fall before losing to state power St. Joseph's Prep, 45-23, in the PIAA title game.

**2. Central Catholic (10-2)****3. Canon-McMillan (6-5)****4. Seneca Valley (3-7)****5. Norwin (3-7)**

\*RECORDS FROM 2023

**THE STARS****MATT McMAHON****Canon-McMillan, sr., C/DT**

The Big Macs captain has started over 30 games in his three previous years. The 6-foot-2, 275-pound senior has anchored the offensive line at center and the defensive line at tackle.

**ELIJAH FAULKNER****Central Catholic, sr., RB**

Faulkner was the top running back in Class 6A a year ago in yards gained, rushing for 1,426 yards on 194 carries for an average of 7.4 yards per tote. He also led the Vikings in scoring with 19 touchdowns.

**TRISTYN TAVARES****Norwin, jr., QB/DB**

The 5-foot-11, 180-pound quarterback and defensive back broke school records for passing yards and touchdowns in a single season in 2023. He connected on 145 of 244 passes for 2,459 yards and 25 TDs.

**XXAVIER THOMAS****Central Catholic, sr., WR/CB**

One of the top athletes in the district, Thomas makes big plays on both sides of the ball. The 6-foot-2, 190-pounder has committed to play at Penn State as a defensive back.

**JACK YATCHENKO****North Allegheny, sr., OL/DL**

The four-year letterwinner and a Princeton recruit will anchor the offensive and defensive lines. In the spring, he finished eighth in the shot put at the WPIAL championships.

**DON'T MISS****9.20: Canon-McMillan at Mt.**

**Lebanon** South Hills rivals collide in a clash of teams expected to be in the playoff hunt. The Big Macs defeated the Blue Devils, 49-7, last year to secure third place in the standings.

**9.27: North Allegheny at Central**

**Catholic** The rematch of the 2022 and 2023 WPIAL 6A title games could be the game that decides the 2024 regular-season title.

**10.4: Norwin at Hempfield**

The two new kids returning to the Class 6A block collide in a battle of Westmoreland County rivals. In their clash last fall, the host Knights defeated the Spartans, 41-27.

**10.11: North Allegheny at**

**Canon-McMillan** To say this game could be a playoff preview is not a reach. Canon-McMillan is 0-11 against North Allegheny all-time, including 0-5 in the WPIAL playoffs.

**10.18: Seneca Valley vs. Central**

**Catholic** This is a rematch of the first Class 6A championship game eight years ago when Central Catholic defeated Seneca Valley at then-Heinz Field, 42-7, to win the 2016 title.

# TIGERS GO FOR 3-PEAT IN BEEFED-UP CLASS 6A

BY DON REBEL

For the first time since expansion to six classifications eight years ago, the number of teams playing in the highest class has actually gone up.

In 2016 and '17, there were 14 district teams playing in the newly formed Class 6A.

That number dwindled to nine in '18 and '19, eight in '20 and '21 and a paltry five teams in '22 and last fall.

However, the realignment winds of change have increased the 6A conference by two teams as Norwin and Hempfield return to the classification following two years as Class 5A schools.

"We are excited to be back in 6A and compete with some of the best in the state," Norwin coach Mike Brown said. "We will still be able to compete with some local rivals in nonconference and also play in the conference where we belong. It's going to be a challenge, but our program welcomes challenges."

It looked like the class would return to eight teams with Butler coming back, but the school district decided to remain independent for the next two-year cycle.

Not much has changed when it comes to the 6A postseason.

The top four teams will qualify for the WPIAL playoffs with the regular-season champion hosting the fourth-place team while the third-place finisher visits the second-place team in the semifinals Nov. 8 or 9.

The two winners meet in the Class 6A championship game Nov. 16 at Norwin. The WPIAL champion advances to the PIAA quarterfinals on Nov. 22 or 23.

While the top class postseason hasn't changed, big changes are coming under center for most of the 6A teams.

Five of the seven teams will have new quarterbacks this fall following the loss to graduation of some of the district's heavy hitters over the last several seasons.

Two-time defending champion North Allegheny, three-time runner-up Central Catholic and Canon-McMillan lost outstanding talents who started for them most of this decade when Logan Kushner, Payton Wehner and Michael Evans graduated.

"Defense and the run game will be important for the teams that have new quarterbacks,



North Allegheny's Liam Flaherty carries during last year's PIAA Class 6A semifinals.

including us," North Allegheny coach Art Walker said. "As the quarterbacks mature and gain confidence, offenses may change. We will see how that plays out."

"It's the hardest position to play in sports," Central Catholic coach Ryan Lehmeier said. "There's a ton of factors that come into play when you're talking about winning or losing a football game. In my opinion, quarterback play is as close to the top of list as it gets. The way the game has evolved, that position has to play well for your team to have success."

"There are some very good head coaches in this league, very good," Canon-McMillan coach Mike Evans said. "They will have their guys ready, no doubt about it."

Seneca Valley lost senior quarterback Sean O'Shea, but SV coach Ron Butschke believes the next group of top quarterbacks will take over with positive results.

"In 6A, there is always another guy in the pipeline," he said. "I think after Week Zero and the rust falls off, it doesn't matter if the quarterback is a first-year guy or a third-year guy. Athletes and football players will be who they are. We have four young guys competing. They are all capable, but they all have different

skill sets.

"We will all figure it out."

The new coaching 'kid' on the 6A coaching block is Greg Perry at Mt. Lebanon. He has a reputation of being a quarterback whisperer of sorts with the great success he has had with youngsters he worked with at Seton LaSalle, Keystone Oaks and other schools.

"(Class) 6A had a really good group of quarterbacks with Wehner, Evans and Kushner, all multi-year starters who were all good leaders as well," he said. "How those teams develop the next guy will go a long way in determining how 6A shakes out."

The two "new" teams returning to 6A are the only teams in the class with returning quarterbacks, led by Norwin junior standout Tristyn Tavares.

"Any time you have experience coming back at QB, it sure helps with the offense," Brown said. "Tristyn did some really good things for us last year, but we know he's not satisfied and will continue to keep working. We look for Tristyn to be one of the leaders of this team because of his work ethic and his toughness. Add that with his athleticism and skill, and he should really have a good year."

The one opposing 6A coach who knows Tavares best realizes

he is special.

"Great player who stays in the pocket and can deliver any throw he needs to make," Hempfield coach Nick Keefer said. "Making first team all-conference last year in the 5A Big East Conference tells you how much the other coaches thought of him."

Keefer returns his own starting quarterback from a year ago in Dom Detruf, who threw for over 1,000 yards last fall. The junior may miss time early in the season because of an offseason illness.

"Having a kid like Dom Detruf back is a huge advantage for us," Keefer said. "He is like another coach out there on the field. He is mature well beyond his years, and all the players look up to him as a leader. Our expectations are very high for him, and our offense is in good hands when he is running the show."

No matter how good the QB play is, everybody is chasing North Allegheny as the Tigers try to make history.

NA is the only football program to win three straight outright WPIAL championships in the highest classification when it captured 4A titles from 2010-2012.

After beating Central Catholic in the 6A district finals in 2022 and 2023, the Tigers are trying to repeat the three-peat this fall.



# HEMPFIELD READY TO TAKE ON CLASS 6A AGAIN

BY BILL BECKNER JR.

Year 2 appears to have greeted Nick Keefer with more structure and the feeling of a greater sense of eagerness among his lot of 80-plus football players.

“We have great kids here, and they are always ready to go to work,” said Keefer, the coach at Hempfield. “We were together four days a week since Jan. 4. We had our mini-camp and increased our 7-on-7 (tournaments). We had over 70 kids at every workout.”

Large participation numbers are important at large programs such as Hempfield’s, especially when you’re back to being part of the largest classification again.

Hempfield was bumped up to Class 6A after two years in 5A, meaning longer road trips and less room for errors in the team’s quest to win again.

Keefer is trying to unleash a tougher mindset among his group. “I grew up in Belle Vernon, and we’d go to DQ Park and play pick-up (basketball),” Keefer said. “I don’t think kids even play pick-up anymore. It’s about man vs. man and winning your matchup. That’s what we’re trying to teach here.”

“Legendary (softball) coach Bob Kalp always used to say, win the



**JACK KOPAS**

day. I’m not worried about who we play in Week 5 or Week 8. I am concerned with getting better each day. Plus, it’s not like our schedule was any easier last year.”

The Spartans finished 1-9, with

their lone win coming in Week Zero, 45-6 over Greensburg Salem. They were 0-5 and finished last in the Big East Conference.

Hempfield opens at North Hills, then hosts Franklin Regional in

Week 1 before the 6A conference presents games against North Allegheny, Central Catholic, Canon-McMillan, Norwin, Seneca Valley and Mt. Lebanon.

HEMPFIELD • 6



**NICK KEEFER**

**Coach:** Nick Keefer

**2023 record:** 1-9, 0-5 in Class 5A Big East Conference

**All-time record:** 304-342-13



**SCHEDULE**

Date	Opponent	Time
8.23	at North Hills	7
8.30	Franklin Regional	7
9.6	at Kiski Area	7
9.13	North Allegheny*	7
9.20	Central Catholic*	7
9.27	at Canon-McMillan*	7
10.4	Norwin*	7
10.11	at Seneca Valley*	7
10.18	Mt. Lebanon*	7
10.25	at Gateway	7

\*CONFERENCE GAME

**STATISTICAL LEADERS**

**Passing:** Dom Detruf 74-145, 1,016 yards, 9 TDs

**Rushing:** Lucas Moore\* 78-341 yards, 1 TD

**Receiving:** Mitchell Bitar 26-295 yards

\*GRADUATED

**ROSTER**

No.	Name	Pos.	Cl.	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94																																																	
	Andrew Jones	QB/HB/LB	jr.	Dave Reese	WR/DB	Dante Giannelli	RB/DB	Gino Chicko	RB/LB	Andrew Bentz	RB/DB	Ethan Zontek	HB/DL	Dylan Hall	WR/DB	Deron Hunter	RB/DB	Colton Kuhns	WR/DB	Ty Humes	WR/DB	Deniro Mongell	HB/LB	Frankie Dittmar	WR/LB	Hunter Zemba	WR/DB	Devon Shevlin	RB/LB	Caleb Stepinsky	HB/DL	Brenden Scott	RB/LB	Leroy Corey	HB/LB	Dennis Tang	HB/LB	Keegan Hrutkay	RB/LB	Peter Barton	HB/DL	Colton Reid	OL/DL	Nick Heasley	WR/DB	Nick Vaughn	WR/DB	Abraham Zontek	OL/DL	Jacob Hamilton	OL/DL	Angelo Apodaca	OL/DL	Brandon Stanislaw	OL/DL	Dom Heisler	OL/DL	Dom Meckling	OL/DL	Jacob Wiederstein	OL/DL	Declan Pillatzki	OL/DL	Jacob Hornyak	OL/DL	Patrick Braffet	OL/DL	Joshua Ohler	OL/DL	Ray Dougan Jr.	OL/DL	Brayden Sturm	OL/DL	Parker Cemuska	OL/DL	A.J. Ernlick	OL/DL	Everett Woodbury	OL/DL	Niko Horton	OL/DL	Finn Davies	OL/DL	Braxton Lindstrom	OL/DL	Landon Ferguson	OL/DL	Owen Linsenbiger	OL/DL	Patrick Moreman	OL/DL	Alex Fooks	OL/DL	Dominic Granata	OL/DL	Jaxon Rodriguez	OL/DL	Desmond Walker	OL/DL	Colin Namie	OL/DL	Noah Helfrich	OL/DL	Gavin Keller	OL/DL	Devin Bernd	HB/LB	Ezra Peluso	WR/DB	Cade Ballantyne	WR/DB	Anthony Brancato	OL/DL	Brice Kenwick	WR/DB	Carson Thomas	WR/DB	Lucas Brancato	WR/DB	Jacob Zerbin	WR/DB	Jaxon Hall	OL/DL	Sawyer Leuthold	K	Cullen Frye	OL/DL	AJ Farmerie	OL/DL

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**HEMPFIELD SPARTANS**

HEMPFIELD • CLASS 6A



# SPARTANS HAVE 'ATTITUDE' ON 'D'

HEMPFIELD · FROM 5

Gateway is the Week 9 matchup. "We have to be ready to play, no doubt," Keefer said. "Everyone is going to be good. If we're not ready and don't take it seriously, it's going to show."

Dom Detruf returns to play quarterback, a more experienced junior who guides the offense as a drop-back passer who threw for 1,006 yards after taking over as the starter.

Detruf has been dealing with myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart likely caused by a mid-summer viral infection. More medical tests were planned to determine if he could return to football.

"Dom is so mature, he's like a 30-year-old," Keefer said. "He's like another coach out there. He started half the season and earned the job. He did some 7-on-7 this year so he's had more reps."

Sophomore Carden Lippmann also saw time at QB during 7-on-7 play.

Detruf is one of 20 returning letterwinners.

"We have more experience with a lot of guys," Keefer said. "We're not just going into the fire. I think they are more ready."

Detruf is looking to develop chemistry with more receivers.

One of his main downfield targets graduated in Keiran Lippman, but leading receiver and senior Mitchell Bitar returns after catching 26 passes for 295 yards.

Junior Jack Kopas also shows promise as a receiver.

Junior Brayden Gerst and senior



CARDEN LIPPMANN

Rogan Katchur are running backs, with senior Reddik Katchur another pass-catching target, along with senior Owen Buchholz, who is back from a thumb injury, and junior Nick Marquis.

The Katchurs are twin brothers. "We might have five or six kids with 12 more catches," Keefer said.

"We're going to rotate a lot of kids (on offense). There are a lot of 1 and 1-As at receiver."

The top returning rusher is Rogan Katchur, who gained 238 yards.

A new addition who also could have an impact, particularly on defense as a nickel linebacker, is senior Aidan Allison, a speedy

transfer from Greensburg Central Catholic.

Allison, who has an offer from Division II Millersville, also could end up playing running back or slot receiver.

"He can play anywhere," Keefer said.

Junior Brock Heisler (6-3, 240) will

**"We have more experience with a lot of guys. We're not just going into the fire. I think they are more ready."**

NICK KEEFER  
HEMPFIELD COACH

join junior Jake Hornyak, sophomore Jack Wiederstein (6-0, 300) and junior Declan Pillatzki on the offensive line.

Hornyak, Keefer said, has been a vocal leader in the offseason.

Senior Jack Humes will be the tight end, and senior Ethan Zontek returns from a knee injury and will look to help the offense.

Heisler, who has an offer from Penn, and Humes make a formidable bookend pair at defensive end.

Hempfield will switch from a 3-4 defense to a 4-2-5, with Gerst and junior Jake Morgan at linebacker.

Keefer wants to build a defense that can slow down the run. The less big chunks of yardage allowed, the better.

His brother, Zach Keefer, is the defensive coordinator.

"I am such an offensive guy," Nick Keefer said. "But we have to be able to stop people, too."

Marquis, Buckholtz, junior Henry Mutschler, Reddick Katchur and Allison should hold down the secondary unit.

"I think we have some attitude on defense," Keefer said.

Another player to watch is sophomore Terrance Vaughns Jr. (WR/DB), the son of former Uniontown basketball standout Terrence Vaughns.

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MIKE BROWN

**Coach:** Mike Brown  
**2023 record:** 3-7, 2-3 in Class 5A Big East Conference  
**All-time record:** 399-604-36



**SCHEDULE**

Date	Opponent	Time
8.23	Penn-Trafford	7
8.30	at Kiski Area	7
9.6	Latrobe	7
9.13	Seneca Valley*	7
9.20	at North Allegheny*	7:30
9.27	North Hills	7
10.4	at Hempfield*	7
10.11	Central Catholic*	7
10.18	at Canon-McMillan*	7
10.25	at Mt. Lebanon*	7

\*CONFERENCE GAME

**STATISTICAL LEADERS**

**Passing:** Tristyn Tavares  
 143-289, 2,459 yards, 25 TDs  
**Rushing:** Christian Shogun  
 63-217 yards, 1 TD  
**Receiving:** Luke Denny\*  
 45-1,060 yards, 11 TDs

\*GRADUATED

# LED BY TAVARES, NORWIN RETURNS TO CLASS 6A

BY BILL BECKNER JR.

A summer paving project caused some temporary parking inconveniences at Norwin Knights Stadium.

For workouts, football players had to park high atop the field at the middle school and walk down the hill.

Similarly, Norwin is back in the WPIAL's highest classification for football. The Knights hope for a transition that is smoother than new blacktop.

"It sounds cliché, but we have to worry about Norwin, not the teams wearing different colors," second-year coach Mike Brown said. "We have to do what we do best. Be that team that others haven't seen in years."

Norwin finished 3-7 last season, its second straight in 5A. The team ended fourth in the Big East Conference, a game behind Franklin Regional, which made the playoffs.

The Knights hope their playoff drought doesn't reach seven seasons, but the climb will be steep.

"People talk about it being so tough in 6A, but it's about believing you can compete," Brown said. "Our kids are competing more (in practice). Other than quarterback, everything else (position-wise) is open."

Norwin had a knack for punching back last season when teams made big plays or scored on it. The



TRISTYN TAVARES

Knights rallied from a 14-0 deficit against Upper St. Clair before falling 24-21. They came back to beat Plum, 30-23, before losing by the same score to Woodland Hills in another game that was closer than expected.

"There were games where we didn't finish it," Brown said. "I liked how our kids responded and battled."

Quarterback Tristyn Tavares is the centerpiece after he broke onto the scene as a sophomore. He threw for a school-record 2,459 yards and 25 touchdowns, slinging YAC darts to big-play receivers Luke Denny and Jackson Pons, both of whom moved on to Division I programs — Denny to Lehigh and

Pons to Miami (Ohio).

Replacing that electric pair is easier said than done, but Norwin returns six starters on each side of the ball as it looks to be more balanced, even with Tavares back.

"We had 2,000 yards go out the door," Brown said. "I ask our guys, who wants to make plays?"

Don't expect the offense to slow down. The no-huddle is in full effect, with Brown asking Tavares and other QBs to get rid of the ball in eight seconds at practice.

Norwin did not incur a delay-of-game penalty last season.

"Never slow down," the coach said. "That is what we do. Playing this way takes the thinking out of it. We can have eight offensive

plays and five defensive plays and be very good at those. We talk about the game being slower than practice."

Key returnees also include senior running back Jackson Huss and junior receiver Jake Knight (29 receptions, 407 yards).

Senior Jake Sincak joins Huss in the backfield, and other potential rushers include sophomore Dylan Grievies and Giovanni Rothrauff.

Norwin averaged just 63 rushing yards a game. Tavares ran for 209 of the team's 630 yards.

Additional receivers are senior Michael Crnkovic, junior Zack Pawling, junior Cooper Wilson and sophomores Maddox Pivarnik and Evan Lee.

Junior Josh Lenart and junior Mike DeFazio are tight ends.

Brown said linemen are the key to a sound no-huddle attack, and the Knights have three senior starters back up front in Colin Bruno (6-1, 315), Evan Archer (6-0, 245) and Shane Flynn (5-10, 270).

"They should be set and ready to go before the ball is snapped," Brown said.

Sophomores Sebastian Summer-ville and Hunter Luchkiw, as well as junior Lucas Altier, are also in the linemen mix.

Defensively, Huss and Sincak are strong defensive backs and will be joined by Crnkovic, who made

NORWIN • 9

**ROSTER**

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht./Wt.	Cl.	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99																																																																																																																																																																
1	Jake Knight	WR/DB	5-11/170	jr.	14	Maddox Pivarnik	WR/DB	5-10/160	so.	30	Jake Sincak	RB/DB	5-9/163	sr.	44	Santino Brasco	HB/LB	5-10/185	so.	61	Gavin Gonda	OL/DL	6-3/270	fr.	1	Ashton Comunal	QB/DB	5-8/140	fr.	31	Nico Migliozi	WR/DB	5-8/125	fr.	45	Logan Hunter	HB/LB	5-8/150	fr.	63	Roman Bruno	OL/DL	6-0/235	fr.	2	James Scott	WR/DB	5-10/135	so.	32	Tyler Botta	WR/DB	5-11/130	fr.	46	Benard Spada	WR/DB	6-2/145	jr.	64	Zachary Nichols	OL/DL	6-1/190	fr.	3	Gabriel Nicholson	QB/DB	5-8/155	fr.	33	Locke Meyers	HB/LB	6-0/185	fr.	50	Mason Kugler	OL/LB	5-10/195	jr.	66	Bennett Braid	OL/DL	6-0/185	fr.	4	Michael Wills	WR/DB	6-0/160	fr.	34	Saully Guyaux	HB/LB	6-0/195	so.	51	Vinh Troung	HB/DB	5-10/180	so.	70	Colton Jordan	OL/DL	6-2/255	so.	5	Cam Knight	WR/DB	5-7/145	fr.	35	Aiden Alfera	WR/DB	6-0/160	fr.	52	Evan Jurgen	OL/DL	5-7/175	fr.	71	Liam Homer	OL/DL	5-9/215	so.	6	Dylan Grievies	RB/LB	6-1/200	so.	36	Madden Dietrich	RB/LB	5-6/175	fr.	53	Maxsym Fierle	OL/DL	6-3/215	so.	73	Wyatt Vogel	OL/DL	6-8/180	so.	7	Jackson Huss	RB/DB	5-10/175	sr.	37	Shawn Burton	WR/DB	5-7/110	fr.	54	Patrick Schmook	OL/DL	6-0/250	jr.	74	Michael Strutt	OL/DL	6-0/340	sr.	8	Brayden Houck	WR/LB	6-0/170	so.	38	Giovanni Pirillo	HB/LB	6-0/155	fr.	55	Evan Archer	OL/DL	6-0/235	sr.	77	Colin Bruno	OL/DL	6-2/310	sr.	9	Parker Rigo	RB/DB	5-7/145	fr.	39	Shane Flynn	OL/DL	5-9/265	sr.	95	Evan Pfeifer	K/P	6-2/150	jr.	10	Masyn Ritter	WR/DB	5-3/100	fr.	40	Lucas Altier	OL/DL	6-3/285	jr.	99	Camden Ash	K/P	6-2/190	sr.	11	Ethan Hunter	WR/LB	5-8/150	fr.	41	Sebastian Summerville	OL/DL	6-1/250	so.	80	William Bossart	OL/DL	6-4/230	fr.	12	Carson Miller	HB/LB	6-1/180	so.	42	William Bossart	OL/DL	6-4/230	fr.	13	Graham Gardner	WR/DB	5-8/140	fr.	43	Sullivan Fullem	OL/DL	5-8/155	fr.	81



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# KNIGHTS GETTING STRONGER

**NORWIN** · FROM 8

41 tackles and had an interception.

Some glaze over the fact Pons (77 tackles, two interceptions) and Denny (55 tackles) were active defenders and leave a large void on that side of the ball, too.

Junior Mason Kugler and Lenart are key linebackers, with Archer at defensive end. Sophomore Max Fierle also

shows promise at outside linebacker at 6-3, 225.

Brown said he has multiple plug-and-play guys, including Knight, Huss, Sincak and Crnkovic.

Also watch sophomore Potter Brozeski in the secondary. He also is the backup QB.

“Just athletic guys,” Brown said.

Bruno is a key, two-way leader who could draw Division I or II offers.

“Bruno is grasping the leadership aspect,” Brown said. “He is a different voice for the guys to hear.”

“Last year, they were coached a lot.”

Speaking of being fed, Norwin is well off there.

Twenty loaves of bread for peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and 20 gallons chocolate milk were routinely on the summer shopping list.

Carb-loading with the help

of a nutritionist and extra time in the weight room have bulked up the Knights.

“Overall, as a program, we’ve gotten stronger,” Brown said.

The team had a weightlifting session on the Fourth of July.

Norwin opens the season at home against traditional crosstown rival Penn-Trafford, Brown’s alma mater.



MICHAEL CRNKOVIC



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2023 STANDINGS

CLASS 6A CONF W L % W L % OVR W L %

CLASS 5A ALLEGHENY SIX

BIG EAST

NORTHEAST

CLASS 4A BIG EIGHT

GREATER ALLEGHENY

PARKWAY

CLASS 3A ALLEGHENY 6

INTERSTATE

Greensburg Salem ... 1 4 0.200 ... WESTERN HILLS

CLASS 2A ALLEGHENY

CENTURY

MIDWESTERN

CLASS A BIG 7

BLACK HILLS

EASTERN

TRI-COUNTY SOUTH

INDEPENDENT

DISTRICT 8 CITY LEAGUE

CITY LEAGUE

INDEPENDENT

WPIAL ALIGNMENT

CLASS 6A

CLASS 5A

CLASS 3A

CLASS 2A

CLASS A

INDEPENDENT

DISTRICT 8 CITY LEAGUE

NEW COACHES

WPIAL CHAMPIONSHIP RESULTS

CLASS 6A

CLASS 5A

CLASS 3A

CLASS 2A

CLASS A

INDEPENDENT

DISTRICT 8 CITY LEAGUE

2014 - Pine-Richland 21, Central Catholic 13 ... CLASS 3A

1987 - Aliquippa 26, New Castle 14 ... CLASS 2A

1987 - North Hills 21, Mt. Lebanon 0 ... CLASS A

1987 - Steel Valley 6, Center 0 ... CLASS 2A

1987 - Steel Valley 6, Center 0 ... CLASS 2A

1987 - Steel Valley 6, Center 0 ... CLASS 2A

1987 - Steel Valley 6, Center 0 ... CLASS 2A

1987 - Steel Valley 6, Center 0 ... CLASS 2A

1987 - Steel Valley 6, Center 0 ... CLASS 2A

1987 - Steel Valley 6, Center 0 ... CLASS 2A

2011 - Aliquippa 14, Jeannette 7 ... CLASS A

1987 - Wilmington 14, Monaca 7 ... CLASS 3A

1987 - Steel Valley 48, South Side Beaver 21 ... CLASS 2A

1987 - Steel Valley 48, South Side Beaver 21 ... CLASS 2A

1987 - Steel Valley 48, South Side Beaver 21 ... CLASS 2A

1987 - Steel Valley 48, South Side Beaver 21 ... CLASS 2A

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# LARGER PLAYOFF A WELCOMED CHANGE

BY CHRIS HARLAN

Upper St. Clair and Woodland Hills felt the disappointment last season, and Penn Hills experienced it two years ago.

They all had winning records and narrowly missed the WPIAL Class 5A playoffs in what was unquestionably the toughest classification to qualify. But there is added hope for 5A teams this fall since the playoff bracket has increased from eight teams to 12.

That's a welcomed change. "It was us last year, but there have been teams like us the past few years," said Upper St. Clair coach Mike Junko, whose team missed the playoffs on tiebreakers despite an 8-2 overall record.

At the time, WPIAL used mathematical formulas to determine wild cards and said each conference could have no more than one. The WPIAL has changed that policy starting this fall, largely because of some recent snubs in 5A.

"Sometimes you have a conference that's stronger and a conference that's not as strong," said Junko, who supports the change. "Some teams get in and you go, 'Wow!'"

Starting this season, the WPIAL will empower members of its football committee to choose the wild-card teams in all classifications. In 5A, the top three finishers in each conference qualify automatically, leaving three at-large spots for the committee to pick.

It's a change that has drawn support.

"It's going to be a pretty strong field coming into 5A because nobody is going to fall through the cracks," Junko said. "The teams that do get in are certainly going to be deserving, no doubt about it."

Class 5A is again deep in talent, starting with defending champion Peters Township. The Indians bring back 11 combined starters from a lineup that won its first WPIAL title and finished as the state runner-up.

Among those starters is junior quarterback Nolan DiLucia, the WPIAL's leading passer last season.

The Indians were coming off consecutive 2-7 seasons when coach T.J. Plack took over the program in 2016. This year, Peters Township will try to reach the WPIAL finals for the fourth time



Upper St. Clair coach Mike Junko talks with quarterback Ethan Hellmann at practice this month.

in six years.

"I always said from Day 1, 'We want people to respect us,'" said Plack, entering his ninth year. "We want Bethel Park and Upper St. Clair to treat us like a rival. We'll maybe never be a rival like Lebo, but I know they respect us now."

Peters Township entered this fall as the preseason favorite in 5A, which is a relatively new feeling for the Indians.

"We might have a target on our backs," Plack said. "I'm pretty sure we did last year, and I'm sure we will again this year. We've just got to keep everything in perspective."

Since the sport expanded to six classes in 2016, no team has repeated as WPIAL 5A champion.

The teams likely standing in Peters Township's way this fall are some of the same contenders from a year ago.

"It's going to be the usual suspects," Plack said. "I think 5A is absolutely loaded."

The six teams in the Allegheny Six remain the same as last year, but the two other conferences have changed. The Northeast's one switch was trading Woodland Hills for Plum.

The Big East changed the most with the addition of Woodland Hills, Armstrong, Kiski Area and Latrobe. Leaving the Big East was Plum, Norwin and Hempfield.

"We're probably going to have some late nights burning the midnight oil," Woodland Hills coach Brian Tarrant said about scouting

new opponents. "But those are kind of the fun things. I got into coaching for that stuff."

The size of the WPIAL bracket is determined by where the 5A champion enters the PIAA playoffs — either the state semifinals or quarterfinals. That switched for the next two years, letting the WPIAL go back to a larger bracket in 5A.

That switch also will let the WPIAL hold the 5A final at Acrisure Stadium. Still, being one of the final three teams to qualify via wild card might be stressful.

"If you find yourself hoping to get the vote of a committee member," Junko said, "somewhere along the line you didn't take care of business when you had the opportunity."

## THE FAVORITES

- 1. Peters Township (15-1)**  
The Indians won their first WPIAL title last season and finished the year as the state runners-up. They bring back five starters on offense and six on defense, making them the team to beat in Class 5A.
- 2. Pine-Richland (9-4)**
- 3. Woodland Hills (6-4)**
- 4. Penn Hills (9-3)**
- 5. Upper St. Clair (8-2)**

\*RECORDS FROM 2023

## THE STARS

### NOLAN DILUCIA

#### Peters Township, jr., QB

DiLucia was the WPIAL's top passer a year ago with 3,131 yards, and he added almost 500 more rushing. The 6-foot-2, 195-pounder passed for 30 TDs and led the Indians to their first WPIAL title as a first-year starter.

### RYAN PETRAS

#### Bethel Park, sr., WR/DB

Petras leads all returning WPIAL receivers with 52 catches. He turned those receptions into 734 yards, rushed for 409 more and scored 14 TDs. Petras committed to Northwestern baseball last year, but 14 football offers have changed his mind.

### SCOOP SMITH

#### Woodland Hills, jr., WR/DB

The WPIAL's 100-meter dash champion is a big-play threat for the Wolverines. Five of his 17 touchdowns were longer than 60 yards last season, including a 99-yard kickoff return. He had 44 catches for 851 yards.

### NATE STOHL

#### Upper St. Clair, sr., OL/DL

The Princeton recruit is an anchor on both sides of the ball for the Panthers. A third-year starter at guard and defensive end, Stohl earned all-conference honors both ways as a sophomore and junior. He has 10 career sacks.

### MICKEY VACCARELLO

#### Peters Township, sr., TE/LB

Opposing teams often found the Stanford linebacker recruit in their backfields. Vaccarello (6-3, 210) led the Indians with 29 tackles for a loss and 13 sacks, including one in the WPIAL finals. He had 61 total tackles.

## DON'T MISS

### 8.30: Penn Hills at Woodland Hills

Tough nonconference test in Week 1 for teams with playoff expectations.

### 9.27: Peters Township at Upper St. Clair

There's no easing into conference play with this matchup as an Allegheny Six opener.

### 10.4: Penn-Trafford at Gateway; Penn Hills at Pine-Richland

These conference matchups decided the Big East and Northeast titles last season.





**LANCE GETSY**

**Coach:**  
Lance Getsy  
**2023 record:**  
6-5, 3-2 in Class  
5A Big East  
Conference



**All-time record:** 310-275-12

**SCHEDULE**

Date	Opponent	Time
8.23	at Plum	7
8.30	at Hempfield	7
9.6	at Upper St. Clair	7
9.13	Latrobe*	7
9.20	at Gateway*	7
9.27	Kiski Area*	7
10.4	at Fox Chapel	7
10.11	at Penn-Trafford*	7:30
10.18	Woodland Hills*	7
10.25	Armstrong*	7

\*CONFERENCE GAME

**STATISTICAL LEADERS**

**Passing:** Chase Lemke  
86-170, 1,296 yards, 13 TDs

**Rushing:** Kyle Dupill  
179-1,175 yards, 14 TDs

**Receiving:** Ayden Hudock\*  
48-803 yards, 9 TDs

\*GRADUATED

BY PAUL SCHOFIELD

Lance Getsy doesn't seem to mind that people are overlooking his Franklin Regional football team.

The clamor surrounding the WPIAL Class 5A Big East Conference this preseason has mostly been about Latrobe, Penn-Trafford and Woodland Hills.

But anyone who forgets about Franklin Regional might be making a big mistake.

The Panthers return a lot of experience on offense in senior quarterback Chase Lemke and a trio of senior running backs — Kyle Dupill, Jude Gentile and Brent Hickey. The Panthers finished 6-5 overall and 3-2 in the conference but dropped their last three games last season.

"We did a lot of great things on offense," Getsy said. "We stopped the run on defense, and we have a special person kicking the ball in senior Joey Bayne. So I'm looking forward to the season."

"The end of the season didn't go well, but we lost to two great teams in Penn-Trafford and WPIAL champion Peters Township. The North Hills loss was a nonconference game."

Dupill, Bayne and senior tackle Andrew Devola were first-team all-conference.

Lemke completed 86 of 170 passes



**CHASE LEMKE**

for 1,296 yards and 13 touchdowns, Dupill rushed for 1,175 yards and scored 14 touchdowns, and Gentile rushed for 344 yards and three touchdowns. Hickey averaged 6.6 yards per carry in limited duty.

Lemke's top receiver, Ayden Hudock, graduated. He had 48 catches for 803 yards and nine scores, but senior Austin Kerns and Macallister Bresnahan are back.

Kerns caught 12 passes for 163

yards and two scores, and Bresnahan had four catches for 76 yards and a score. Dupill had seven catches for 49 yards and a score.

The loss of Hudock hurts because he did so much.

"You don't just replace an Ayden Hudock," Getsy said. "It will be a little more difficult."

Lemke will need to spread around the wealth, and Kerns and Bresnahan will need to step up.

Other possible targets are

seniors Heath Sliva and Elijah Bennett and junior Jaymeir Austin.

Devola is one of three offensive linemen returning. The others are junior center Troy Slezak and senior guard Hunter Reinhart.

"We're still looking for a couple others," Getsy said. "Andrew has been starting four years."

Bayne is another player Getsy will use.

"I've seen Joey make 56-yard field goals," Getsy said. "Anytime we're inside the 35, I feel comfortable that he'll make it. His other contribution is his ability to kick the ball into the end zone and have teams start at the 20. Doing that is a big plus for a defense."

Leading the way on defense is Devola at tackle, Kerns at line-backer and Sliva at safety.

Kerns had 92 tackles (57 solo) and 10 sacks, Devola had 59 tackles (34 solo) and 6½ sacks, and Sliva had 48 tackles.

Others back on defense include Bennett at defensive back, Matt Moore and Hickey at linebacker, Slezak at nose guard and Bresnahan at end.

"There are so many good teams in our conference," Getsy said. "Gateway is good, Kiski Area is strong, and you can't count out Armstrong. The teams who make it to the playoffs will be battle tested."

**ROSTER**

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht/Wt.	Cl.	2023	2024	2025	2026
1	Evan Chadwick	WR/DB	6-2/185	so.	14			
2	Darwin Jones	WR/DB	5-7/165	sr.	15			
3	Heath Sliva	WR/FS	5-10/170	sr.	16			
4	Jude Gentile	RB/LB	5-5/155	sr.	17			
5	Jake Virostek	QB	5-11/190	sr.	18			
6	Elijah Bennett	WR/DB	6-1/180	sr.	19			
7	Amauri Jones-Lane	RB/LB	5-9/152	fr.	20			
8	Chase Lemke	QB/DB	5-10/175	sr.	21			
9	Joey Bayne	K/P	5-9/165	sr.	22			
10	Macallister Bresnahan	TE/LB	6-5/220	sr.	23			
11	Logan Mocharko	WR/DB	5-9/160	sr.	24			
12	Mathew Moore	WR/DB	5-10/150	jr.	26			
	Jaymeir Austin	WR/DB	6-2/176	jr.	27			
	Lorenzo Azzolina	QB/DB	5-4/125	so.	28			
	Jordan Yates	TE/MLB	6-2/185	jr.	29			
	Tyler Pechar	QB/DB	5-11/160	sr.	31			
	Jake Weir	WR/DB	6-1/175	so.	32			
	Austin Kerns	LB/HB	6-0/212	sr.	34			
	Aaron Bennett	HB/LB	5-7/164	jr.	35			
	Kaydon Ferrell	TE/LB	5-10/160	fr.	36			
	Keyan Morrison	WR/DB	5-11/150	so.	39			
	Mason Mullooly	RB/LB	5-8/155	jr.	40			
	Tommy Verruggio	HB/SS	5-9/170	so.	42			
	Colin Mullooly	WR/DB	5-7/145	so.	43			
	Kyle Dupill	RB/LB	5-7/180	sr.	44			
	Jet Taylor	RB/SS	5-7/160	so.	45			
	Gage William	RB/DB	5-9/140	so.	46			
	Austin Vinsic	RB/LB	5-6/155	fr.	48			
	Sam Siegman	HB/LB	5-10/160	jr.	49			
	Dominic Devola	QB/DB	5-10/150	fr.	50			
	Sebastian Ponko	WR/DB	5-7/160	so.	51			
	Jake Pucka	QB/DB	5-6/130	fr.	52			
	Jack Silvis	HB/LB	6-0/175	sr.	54			
	Tyler Atkins	WR/DB	5-7/135	fr.	55			
	Noah Simmons	RB/LB	5-6/165	so.	56			
	Sean Holt	HB/LB	6-0/150	fr.	58			
	James Hlopick	WR/DB	5-4/110	fr.	61			
	Brent Hickey	RB/LB	5-9/176	sr.	62			
	Cole Devola	TE/LB	5-11/195	so.	63			
	Noah Simmons	RB/LB	5-6/165	so.	64			
	Hrithik Singh	WR/DB	5-6/106	fr.	65			
	Michael Faher	TE/LB	5-9/165	fr.	70			
	Logan Priest	OL/DL	6-0/240	fr.	72			
	Evan McManis	OL/LB	5-8/155	so.	74			
	Taquann McBride	OL/LB	5-11/220	jr.	75			
	Andrew Devola	OL/DT	6-1/265	sr.	77			
	Hunter Reinhart	OL/DL	5-11/215	sr.	81			
	Lochlan Bresnahan	OL/DL	6-1/200	jr.	86			
	Gavin Young	OL/LB	5-9/160	fr.	88			
	Damian Priest	OL/DL	6-0/220	jr.				
	Emmanuel Pepala	DL/OL	5-8/226	sr.				
	Matthew Faher	OL/DL	5-8/160	fr.				
	Austin Sossei	OL/DL	6-1	fr.				
	Isaac Marcano	OL/DL	5-9/184	so.				
	Ronnie Schall	OL/DL	6-3/199	jr.				
	Tyler Ley	OL/DL	5-10/195	jr.				
	Ben Chiarizo	OL/DL	5-11/203	so.				
	Troy Slezak	OL/DL	6-0/250	jr.				
	Antonio Delissio	OL/DL	5-8/185	fr.				
	Oliver Leven	WR/DB	5-11/145	fr.				
	Nathan Faher	TE/LB	5-8/164	fr.				
	Austin McClure	WR/DB	6-1/165	jr.				

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**2023 WPIAL PLAYOFFS**  
**CLASS 6A**  
**SEMIFINALS**  
 Central Catholic 42, Mt. Lebanon 7  
 North Allegheny 49, Canon McMillan 7  
**FINAL**  
 North Allegheny 44, Central Catholic 41  
**CLASS 5A**  
**QUARTERFINALS**  
 Peters Township 35, Franklin Regional 0

Moon 35, Gateway 31  
 Penn Hills 63, Penn-Trafford 28  
 Pine-Richland 51, Bethel Park 6  
**SEMIFINALS**  
 Peters Township 41, Moon 18  
 Pine-Richland 16, Penn Hills 9  
**FINAL**  
 Peters Township 43, Pine Richland 17  
**CLASS 4A**  
**FIRST ROUND**  
 Latrobe 39, West Allegheny 7  
 Mars 44, Chartiers Valley 19  
 Central Valley 28, Highlands 7

Trinity 49, North Catholic 0  
 Thomas Jefferson 57, Kiski 14  
**QUARTERFINALS**  
 Aliquippa 37, Latrobe 29  
 Mars 24, Central Valley 14  
 McKeesport 28, Trinity 14  
 Montour 51, Thomas Jefferson 21  
**SEMIFINALS**  
 Aliquippa 47, Mars 24  
 McKeesport 28, Montour 14  
**FINAL**  
 Aliquippa 35, McKeesport 21  
**CLASS 3A**

**FIRST ROUND**  
 Deer Lakes 48, Southmoreland 18  
 South Park 37, Knoch 20  
 Beaver 42, Shady Side Academy 7  
 West Mifflin 40, Mt. Pleasant 14  
**QUARTERFINALS**  
 Belle Vernon 49, Deer Lakes 6  
 East Allegheny 28, South Park 21  
 Avonworth 41, Beaver 21  
 Elizabeth Forward 42, West Mifflin 21  
**SEMIFINALS**  
 Belle Vernon 49, East Allegheny 8  
 Avonworth 21, Elizabeth Forward 10  
**FINAL**  
 Belle Vernon 26, Avonworth 0

**CLASS 2A**  
**FIRST ROUND**  
 Western Beaver 38, Serra Catholic 21  
 Imani Christian Academy 52, Waynesburg Central 14  
 Mohawk 42, Burrell 0  
 Beaver Falls 20, Keystone Oaks 7  
 Washington 48, Ellwood City 6  
 McGuffey 25, Derry 13  
**QUARTERFINALS**  
 Steel Valley 21, Western Beaver 18  
 Mohawk 17, Imani Christian Academy 12  
 Beaver Falls 14, Neshannock 13  
 Washington 18, McGuffey 7

**SEMIFINALS**  
 Steel Valley 34, Mohawk 21  
 Beaver Falls 28, Washington 26  
**FINAL**  
 Beaver Falls 14, Steel Valley 12  
**CLASS A**  
**FIRST ROUND**  
 South Side 39, Monessen 0  
 Greensburg Central Catholic 41, West Greene 22  
 Clairton 44, Laurel 7  
 Union 51, Burgettstown 37  
 Fort Cherry 50, Jefferson-Morgan 16

Rochester 20, Cornell 19 (OT)  
 Bishop Canevin 49, Leechburg 6  
 California 44, Jeannette 7  
**QUARTERFINALS**  
 South Side 48, Greensburg Central Catholic 21  
 Clariton 18, Union 6  
 Fort Cherry 42, Rochester 0  
 Bishop Canevin 34, California 8  
**SEMIFINALS**  
 South Side 28, Clariton 12  
 Fort Cherry 33, Bishop Canevin 21  
**FINAL**  
 Fort Cherry 42, South Side 28

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ANDY TATSCH

**Coach:**  
Ron Prady  
**2023 record:**  
8-4, 4-2 in Class  
4A Big Eight  
Conference  
**All-time record:** 475-556-38



**SCHEDULE**

Date	Opponent	Time
8.23	at Connellsville	7
8.30	Plum	7
9.6	at Norwin	7
9.13	at Franklin Regional*	7
9.20	Armstrong*	7
9.27	Woodland Hills*	7
10.4	Kiski Area*	7
10.11	at Pine-Richland	7
10.18	at Gateway*	7
10.25	Penn-Trafford*	7

\*CONFERENCE GAME

**STATISTICAL LEADERS**

**Passing:** John Wetzel  
69-119, 1,289 yards, 17 TDs  
**Rushing:** Wetzel  
159-1,117 yards, 16 TDs  
**Receiving:** Ja'Tawn Williams\*  
33-756 yards, 14 TDs

\*GRADUATED

# RESURGENT LATROBE FEATURES STAR POWER

BY BILL BECKNER JR.

Having coached at Penn-Trafford for a decade, Ron Prady has a good idea what it takes to win in Class 5A.

That should help the third-year Latrobe coach's team as it transitions back to 5A after two positive years in 4A.

"Depth is a big key," Prady said. "You need to be able to spell guys and have dependable (backups) you can sub in."

"Everyone says they don't have depth, but you have to develop guys. (Class) 5A is more of a grind week in and week out."

Back-to-back winning seasons and a pair of playoff victories, along with some Division I college talent and a renewed sense of pride, has Latrobe determinedly back in the hunt.

The team went 8-4 last year and 7-5 two years ago — the Wildcats hadn't won that many games in a season since 1971 — and has the talent to make a third straight postseason run.

Rejuvenated Latrobe upset West Allegheny in the first round last year before giving perennial power Aliquippa a scare in the quarterfinals with a 37-29 loss.

"Ultimately, we haven't won anything yet," Prady said. "But we're getting there. We'd love to be like a P-T or a Belle Vernon, programs like that. I feel like we can do some good things and build on what we've done."

Senior Division I commits Alex Tatsch (Penn State) and John Wetzel (Marshall) will lead the way. Tatsch is a physical linebacker who had 111 tackles and four sacks last season, and Wetzel is one of the WPIAL's top dual-threat quarterbacks and a gifted safety. He ran and threw for more than 1,000 yards as a junior



JOHN WETZEL

— the only player in school history to do so — and accounted for more than 30 touchdowns. He also made 73 tackles and pulled in three interceptions.

He was the team's leading rusher, but he should get significant help.

Tatsch also plays running back and gives the Wildcats a power ball carrier to complement hard-nosed senior Brady Prohovic (590 yards) and speedy senior Chris Cochran.

"We have a bunch of really good team guys who don't get a lot of recognition," Prady said, "and they are all right with that. But they are just as important to what we want to do."

Junior Andy Tatsch, who has an offer from West Virginia, should be among the go-to receivers along with junior Sawyer Butina,

junior Josiah Finch Kutzer and seniors Vince Gaskey and Tyler Bauer.

The Wildcats must replace deep threat and leading pass catcher Ja'Tawn Williams, who is now at Clarion. Williams also was a threat on kick and punt returns.

H-backs will be senior Jack Drnjevich, who tore his ACL in the playoff game against Aliquippa but has recovered, and junior Owen Burket, with senior Tim Meyers at tight end.

Drnjevich is the top returning receiver with 20 catches for 240 yards.

Two key linemen return in seniors Cody Krall and Caleb Lehman. Both are three-year starters.

The return of senior center Marco Scarton should benefit the line, as well. He broke his ankle last year during heat acclimation week.

Other linemen are senior right tackle Anthony Scarton (6-4, 250), junior Luke Kolenc, junior Wade Enick and sophomore John DiPasquale.

"One of the things I learned at Penn-Trafford was how valuable it was to play subs in the second half," Prady said. "Those reps are important for those guys going forward."

Defensively, Alex Tatsch (6-3, 220) will spearhead the pass rush and Wetzel (6-0, 185) will hold down the secondary — both are known for their hard hits — but keep an eye on senior middle linebacker and three-year starter Bradan Bronson, who quietly was second on the team in tackles behind Tatsch.

Wetzel and Andy Tatsch are the safeties, with help from junior Luke Tomko and sophomore Clayton Burket.

With both starting cornerbacks gone, Prady was looking at five players to compete for time there: Gaskey, Butina, junior Danny Noonan, Bauer and senior Aidan Roach.

**ROSTER**

1	Roman Agostoni	K	sr.	18	Cash Achhammer	RB/LB	jr.	37	Austin Coffman	TE/LB	so.	57	Michael Brosnick	OL/DL	jr.	81	Austin Hazen	TE/DL	jr.
2	Brady Prohovic	RB/LB	sr.	19	Eli Meeder	WR/CB	so.	39	Ben Slater	WR/LB	so.	58	Joe Poche	OL/DL	fr.	82	Patrick Shaker	WR/CB	fr.
3	Tyler Wisniewski	QB/S	so.	20	Danny Noonan	WR/LB	jr.	40	Nick Bauer	WR/CB	so.	59	Jon DiPasquale	OL/DL	so.	83	Trevor Krull	WR/S	fr.
4	Sawyer Butina	WR/CB	jr.	21	Mason Barley	RB/LB	so.	42	Nolan Mainer	WR/S	fr.	60	Sage Sevacko	OL/DL	so.	84	Daniel Fisher	HB/LB	jr.
5	Chris Cochran	RB/LB	jr.	22	Alex Smith	RB/CB	so.	43	Kalvin Clayton	RB/LB	fr.	62	Wade Enick	OL/DL	jr.	86	James Rafferty	WR/CB	jr.
6	Jack Dmjevich	HB/LB	sr.	23	Vinnie Gaskey	WR/CB	sr.	44	Bradann Bronson	HB/LB	sr.	63	Joe Lauber	OL/DL	jr.	87	Tim Myers	TE/DL	sr.
7	Izzy McMahon	TE/LB	jr.	24	Owen Burket	HB/LB	jr.	45	Dylan Frye	WR/CB	so.	65	Vince Wirick	OL/DL	fr.	88	Alex Ammond	WR/CB	so.
8	Clayton Burket	QB/S	so.	25	Alex Tatsch	RB/LB	sr.	46	Colton Calabrace	RB/LB	fr.	66	Vinny Calabrace	OL/DL	fr.	89	Vince Raza	WR/LB	fr.
9	Luke Tomko	QB/S	jr.	26	Russell Fry	TE/LB	jr.	47	Joey Favata	WR/LB	jr.	67	Seth Watt	OL/DL	fr.	91	Max Dominick	WR/S	fr.
10	John Wetzel	QB/S	sr.	27	Ethan Echevarria	WR/S	jr.	48	Joe Mahoney	TE/LB	jr.	68	Dylan Miller	OL/DL	so.	92	Aidan Maestrole	WR/CB	fr.
11	Aiden Roach	WR/CB	sr.	28	Grady DePalma	WR/CB	jr.	49	Gio Castillo	HB/DL	so.	71	Cody Krall	OL/DL	sr.	93	Ryan Haber	WR/DL	fr.
12	Logan Jeskey	QB/DB	fr.	29	Dakota Haupt	TE/LB	so.	50	Shawn Myers	OL/DL	fr.	72	Caleb Lehman	OL/DL	sr.	94	Luke Thompson	TE/LB	fr.
13	Dom Scarton	QB	so.	30	Ramone Williams	WR/CB	so.	51	Anthony Scarton	OL/DL	sr.	73	Luke Morrison	OL/DL	jr.	97	Warren Agostoni	K	so.
14	Josiah Finch	WR/CCB	jr.	31	Josh Hodge	RB/LB	sr.	52	Garmin Owens	OL/DL	fr.	75	Landon Nipar	OL/DL	fr.	99	Mitch Horner	K	jr.
15	Andy Tatsch	WR/S	jr.	32	AJ Yeboah	RB/LB	fr.	53	Brady Kronenwetter	OL/DL	so.	76	Dakota Mulooly	OL/DL	sr.				
16	Aaron Gaskey	QB/DE	fr.	33	Avery Chappel	RB/LB	fr.	54	Ray Firek	OL/DL	so.	78	Marco Scarton	OL/DL	sr.				
17	Austin Slezak	QB/LB	fr.	34	Dom Angelichio	RB/S	fr.	55	Sandro Castillo	OL/DL	sr.	79	Lucas Kolenc	OL/DL	jr.				
				35	Tyler Bauer	WR/CB	sr.	56	Gunner Deuel	OL/LB	fr.	80	Cass Helman	WR/CB	so.				

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Graham Crackers, Oreos, Pretzels  
*Sell for \$1.00 an item, you make 40%*







**JOHN RUANE**

**Coach:** John Ruane  
**2023 record:** 5-6, 4-1 in Class 5A Big East Conference  
**All-time record:** 331-206-10



**SCHEDULE**

Date	Opponent	Time
8.23	at Norwin	7
8.30	Mt. Lebanon	7:30
9.6	Moon	7:30
9.13	Woodland Hills*	7:30
9.20	at Kiski Area*	7
9.27	Plum	7
10.4	at Gateway*	7
10.11	Franklin Regional*	7:30
10.18	at Armstrong*	7
10.25	at Latrobe*	7

\*CONFERENCE GAME

**STATISTICAL LEADERS**

**Passing:** Jonny Lovre  
 102-193, 1,314 yards, 8 TDs  
**Rushing:** Tasso Whipple  
 200-1,388 yards, 14 TDs  
**Receiving:** Carmen Metcalfe\*  
 47-574 yards, 2 TDs

\*GRADUATED

# PENN-TRAFFORD OUT TO MEET LOFTY EXPECTATIONS

BY PAUL SCHOFIELD

When a team wins WPIAL and PIAA titles, expectations within the football program are set high.

With that said, the past two seasons at Penn-Trafford didn't reach the expectations set in 2021.

Injuries, inexperience, little mistakes and not playing up to their abilities saw the Warriors go 11-11, ousted from the WPIAL playoffs in the first round.

But a productive offseason has coach John Ruane excited.

"Our team chemistry is a lot better," Ruane said. "It's been a good summer. The team has worked extremely hard."

A year ago, the Warriors began the season with inexperience at the skill positions. The team finished 5-6 overall, the first losing record since 2010 when they finished 4-6.

But what was a weakness in 2023 is a strength in 2024.

Carmen Metcalfe was the lone returning wide receiver last year, and juniors Jonny Lovre and Derek Carr were set to share duties at quarterback.

But the quarterback plan was short-lived as Carr was lost for the season in the Week Zero game against Canon-McMillan after he ran six times for 31 yards.

Lovre was pressed into more playing time than planned, and he responded with a decent season,



**DEREK CARR**

completing 102 of 193 passes for 1,319 yards and eight touchdowns. But he also threw 13 interceptions.

"Turnovers are huge in a game," Lovre said. "It can be the deciding factor, and I threw too many. I have to protect the ball better."

Lovre will be sharing the load behind center with Carr, who has recovered from his injury.

"Derek and I are best friends and competing against each other all the time, so we've been battling each other every day," Lovre said. "Coach Ruane likes to use a two-quarterback system.

"The team has made a lot of strides, especially in the skill positions. We're looking a lot better."

Ruane said the team is having

a good summer and showing improvement.

"Last year, we were inexperienced at the skill positions," Ruane said. "But as the season went on, that group improved a lot. Now it's the strength this season. Jonny is more experienced and has made great strides.

"The best part of the summer is the internal camaraderie of the team. We're getting better at what we need to do."

Ruane said he likes how Lovre and Carr are meshing with the receivers.

"They have a friendly competition," Ruane said. "I'm comfortable with both. It's always good to have competition at that position. Derek will definitely play."

The wide receiver group is led by sophomore Nick Ponko, who caught 18 passes for 218 yards as a freshman. Senior Jack Weishaar returns after snagging 11 passes for 102 yards and a touchdown. Rounding out the unit is senior Jessie Lisbon, who had three catches for 85 yards and two touchdowns, and junior Tyler Boss, who had one catch for 9 yards.

Penn-Trafford's offense runs best when there is a balance between the running and passing game.

The Warriors running game

**ROSTER**

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht./Wt.	Cl.	16	Jessie Lisbon	WR/DB	6-2/205	sr.	32	Nathan Kravetz	TE/LB	5-11/185	so.	48	Brayden Tirpak	WR/DB	6-2/170	so.	65	Santino Moio	OL/DL	6-2/245	jr.	
1	Tyler Boss	WR/DB	5-10/175	jr.	17	Jacob Campbell	QB/LB	6-1/185	so.	33	Landyn Stikkel	HB/LB	5-11/195	so.	49	Blaise Burrell	TE/P	6-2/200	jr.	66	Brandon Long	OL/DL	6-3/235	sr.	
2	Colton Tyburski	WR/DB	5-9/175	jr.	18	Nate Desmond	QB/DB	6-0/175	jr.	34	Tasso Whipple	RB/LB	6-1/205	sr.	50	Logan Hunter	K/P	5-9/160	so.	70	Joseph Boulware	OL/DL	5-11/225	jr.	
3	Heath Dunlap	HB/LB	6-1/210	sr.	19	Will Sarsfield	WR/DB	5-9/160	so.	35	Nico Cox	RB/DB	5-10/180	jr.	51	Lucah Butler	OL/LB	6-0/220	jr.	71	Robert Volovic	OL/DL	5-10/225	sr.	
4	Joe Jackson	RB/LB	5-11/200	sr.	20	Nico Casciato	WR/DB	5-9/175	jr.	36	Noah Haslam	K/P	5-9/155	so.	52	Bryce Ruby	OL/DL	5-11/225	jr.	73	Dylan Ridley	OL/DL	5-10/215	so.	
5	Cody Yacamelli	QB/DB	6-1/180	fr.	21	Ben Lenart	WR/DB	5-11/180	jr.	37	Brayden Desantis	TE/LB	5-10/190	so.	53	Grant Burk	OL/DL	6-1/220	so.	76	Jayden Haggard	WR/DB	5-8/145	jr.	
6	Owen Gisi	WR/DB	6-3/185	sr.	22	Jacob Briggs	TE/DL	6-4/230	jr.	38	Alex Nicolette	RB/DB	5-9/165	jr.	54	Stew Pfeil	OL/DL	5-11/255	sr.	77	Kellan Taylor	OL/DL	6-1/225	sr.	
7	Michael Botti	TE/LB	5-11/215	sr.	23	Dom Smith	HB/LB	6-1/215	sr.	39	Elijah Pecorari	RB/DB	5-9/165	jr.	55	Aiden McCaw	OL/DL	5-11/265	so.	80	Donovan Hogan	WR/DB	5-8/155	so.	
8	Ben Grabowski	RB/LB	5-11/205	so.	24	Reese Radocay	HB/LB	5-11/205	jr.	40	Cal Doughty	WR/DB	5-8/160	so.	56	Travis Moorhead	OL/DL	5-10/265	so.	80	Jayden Connelly	WR/DB	6-0/165	so.	
9	Brady Newell	WR/DB	6-0/180	sr.	25	Trent Brown	WR/DB	5-11/175	so.	41	Caleb Kerstetter	WR/DB	5-9/160	so.	58	Ethan Septak	OL/DL	6-0/265	sr.	81	Alexis Brown	K/P	5-7/135	sr.	
10	Nick Laskey	TE/LB	6-4/215	jr.	26	Nick Ponko	WR/DB	6-2/180	so.	42	Quentin Lucov	TE/LB	6-0/200	sr.	59	Marlo Robinson	OL/DL	5-11/250	so.	82	Dustin Heidenreich	HB/LB	5-11/160	so.	
11	Derek Carr	QB/DB	5-11/195	sr.	27	Jamison Yurt	HB/LB	6-0/210	jr.	43	Brody Chappie	HB/LB	5-11/170	so.	60	John Zarod	OL/DL	6-0/270	jr.	88	Chris Conte	TE/LB	5-10/170	so.	
12	Jack Weishaar	WR/DB	6-0/180	sr.	28	Ben Miller	WR/DB	6-0/170	so.	44	Michael Cheplick	RB/DL	6-0/205	sr.	61	Aiden Corbett	OL/DL	6-2/245	so.						
13	Blake Branthoover	WR/DB	6-1/175	sr.	29	Jordan White	WR/DB	5-11/165	so.	45	Evan Sadler	K/P	5-7/155	jr.	62	Garrett Meyers	OL/DL	5-11/250	jr.						
14	Mason Driskill	WR/DB	5-9/165	jr.	30	Ian Savering	WR/LB	5-11/180	so.	46	Parker Wensel	RB/LB	5-8/170	so.	63	David Dziedzic	OL/DL	6-3/265	jr.						
15	Jonny Lovre	QB/DB	5-11/195	sr.	31	Ny' Shawn Morris	RB/LB	5-9/175	so.	47	Jonaven Klemm	WR/DB	5-8/155	jr.	64	Aiden Toth	OL/DL	5-11/250	jr.						



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# WARRIORS LOOK FOR BOUNCE BACK

P-T • FROM 16

features a tandem of senior Tasso Whipple and sophomore Ben Grabowski. The duo combined to rush for more than 2,100 yards and 24 touchdowns in 2023.

Whipple rushed for 1,388 yards and 14 touchdowns, and Grabowski gained 779 yards and had 10 scores.

Whipple also caught 19 passes for 313 yards and three touchdowns.

Ruane said opponents should not overlook senior Joe Jackson this season as well.

“Joe is more of a downhill runner,” Ruane said. “He’ll be in the mix this season.”

Ruane hopes the productive summer will carry over to the fall when the Warriors can display their offseason improvements and challenge for another WPIAL title. The first came when these seniors

were freshmen.

Another area Ruane is excited about is the progress of the offensive line.

All-conference center Ethan Septak is back. He is surrounded by a hungry group looking to make a name for themselves.

“We have a lot of good candidates fighting for jobs,” Ruane said. “We actually could two-plateau the group because they all are equal in talent. We’ll see how things work out once the pads are on.”

Kellan Taylor and Stew Pfeil are physical players who have caught Ruane’s eye.

Others include Brandon Long, Bryce Ruby, Aiden Toth, Lucah Butler and David Dziedzic.

“It’s going to be a battle,” Ruane said. “We have 10 to 12 players we like.”

Defensively, Ruane said the group has to tighten things up.

“We gave up too many big plays last year,” Ruane said. “We have to create more turnovers and force teams to work harder to move the ball against us.”

Pfeil, Taylor, Michael Cheplick and Jacob Briggs are a few of the players working up front.

Jamison Yurt, Whipple, Dom Smith and Nick Laskey return at linebacker, and Ponko, Boss, Lisbon, Grabowski, Brady Newell, Ben Lenart, Carr and Weishaar are in the secondary.

Both units have to be strong considering the rest of the Big East Conference. Others in the conference are Franklin Regional, Latrobe, Gateway, Woodland Hills, Kiski Area and Armstrong.

“Our conference is really strong, but so is Class 5A,” Ruane said. “There is a lot of talent in Class 5A.”



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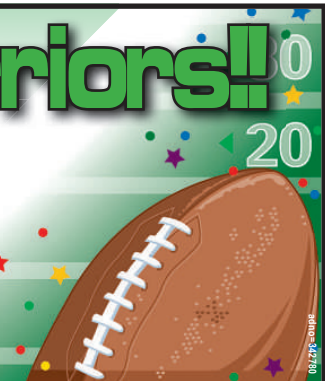
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# 'People are talking about Latrobe football'

## Program's revival brings preseason buzz as Wildcats seek 3rd straight playoff appearance

BY BILL BECKNER JR.

Mention Latrobe and football in the same breath and, to most people, Pittsburgh Steelers training camp comes to mind.

While the crowded summer staple where fans can get up close and personal with the pros was in full force again at Saint Vincent, the Latrobe Wildcats also were ramping up for their season with the customary three-week run-up to Week Zero. Their workouts may have lacked the allure to the public, but the team was creating a similar preseason buzz.

With the way Latrobe has played the last two years and the direction in which the program appears to be going, the toast of the town might just be the orange and black, not the black and gold.

Yes, something is happening here.

"There is an upshift in the mentality and the mood," senior linebacker and Penn State

commit Alex Tatsch said. "People are talking about Latrobe football."

A resurgent team that has put together back-to-back winning seasons and is chasing a program-record third straight WPIAL playoff appearance, Latrobe is ready to be taken seriously.

"The kids have bought in 1,000 percent," third-year coach Ron Prady said. "They go into every game expecting to win."

Prady has Latrobe holding itself to a higher standard and wanting to play for higher stakes.

### Breaking through

Two years ago, in Prady's first season in charge, Latrobe made the WPIAL 4A playoffs. It was an achievement coming from a tough Big Seven Conference.

But the Wildcats took the feat a step farther, forcing overtime and knocking off favored Highlands, 28-21, for their first playoff win since 1968. The Wildcats, despite a dim postsea-

son history, won the WPIAL championship in '68 with a 19-7 victory over Kiski Area at Forbes Field.

The highlight, while proud and impressive, waved like a tattered flag above the program as Wildcat faithful waited — and waited — for another reason to get excited.

Fifty four years and 10 tries later, they broke through. "Incredible feeling," Prady said. "We have guys around our program who have seen one winning season in 25 years. You could feel the satisfaction in these people. Playoff wins are addictive. You get one, you want two.

"That first senior class, I owe them a lot."

Then, last year, they did it again. A 39-7 runaway against better-seeded West Allegheny in the first round set the stage for a showdown with WPIAL big wheel Aliquippa in the quarterfinals. Latrobe didn't win, but the Quips wiped their collective brow, grateful to have escaped with a 37-29 win.

Latrobe rallied late, and a fourth-down throw from quarterback John Wetzel to Tatsch with about two minutes left was low and ruled incomplete. "He caught that ball," Wetzel said with insistence.

Tatsch also said the pass did not nip the ground and was complete. Still, the rally was impressive. "You're down 25-7 at halftime at Aliquippa," Prady said. "Most people thought, 'This one's over.' Give our kids and coaches credit. We got the ball to start the second half. It was 25-22, then 31-22, then 31-29. We got an inside (kick) with four minutes left. ... It wasn't to be. But I think we grew a lot from that. And expectations haven't changed."

Longtime equipment manager Jim Feather, affectionately known as "Fez," said the win over Highlands is one of the greatest in program history.

He also said a Latrobe team hasn't

created attention like this in four decades.

"The 1984 team went undefeated," Feather said. "We lost in the first round to Aliquippa. I'd say that's the last team here to have that buzz. This team is getting a lot of attention."

You probably won't find a more devout Latrobe fan and supporter than Feather, who has been a regular among game day personnel since he began moving the first-down sticks in 1971.

He has overseen equipment since 1994, making this his 30th season.

"(Prady) is the reason this is happening," Feather said, pointing at Prady during the WCCA 7-on-7 passing tournament last month at Latrobe's Rossi Field. "He came in and laid down the law. He means business. The (playoff) win (in 2022) at Highlands turned it all around."

### History lesson

Latrobe has been playing football since 1881.

Just four times have the Wildcats made the playoffs in back-to-back seasons, and they have only made the postseason 14 times overall.

So, two playoff wins in as many years was unheard of for a program starving to taste the richness of winning consistently.

"Doesn't happen too often" Feather said. "It means a lot to people who have been going to games for 50 years."

Said Prady: "That's why it's so special to people here."

Before last season, the Wildcats never had won seven games in consecutive seasons.

The eight wins were the most since 1984.

Only three coaches have taken the Wildcats to the playoffs in back-to-back seasons: Prady, Jason Marucco (2018-19) and Pat Murray, twice (2001-02, 2005-06).

Feather said the team started to believe it could win when it captured the WCCA 7-on-7 passing tournament championship two years ago. A repeat followed in 2023, and the Wildcats finished second this year.

He has both championship plaques hanging above the desk in his office inside the Arnold Palmer Field House.



### Latrobe football playoff history

Year	Results
2023	At Aliquippa, L 37-29; At West Allegheny, W 39-7
2022	At Thomas Jefferson, L 20-6; At Highlands, W 28-21
2019	At Penn Hills, L 56-17
2018	At Penn Hills, L 55-7
2009	At North Allegheny, L 47-0
2006	At Penn Hills, L 34-6
2005	At Central Catholic, L 40-7
2002	At Penn Hills, L 42-7
2001	At Central Catholic, L 40-7
1984	Vs. Aliquippa, L 20-0
1982	At Upper St. Clair, L 28-0
1980	At Gateway, L 29-7
1968	Vs. Kiski Area (at Forbes Field), W 19-7

### Finding the right coach

When Marucco resigned in 2021 after eight seasons as coach, Latrobe began its search for his replacement.

Superintendent Mike Porembka, principal Jon Mains and athletic director Zac Heide discussed Prady, knowing his 10-year run of success as an assistant at Penn-Trafford had just seen him capture WPIAL and PIAA Class 5A championships.

He knew football. He was in the district.

They approached him about the job. "He checked all the boxes," Porembka said.

Prady thought about it and politely said ... no.

The position was reopened, but Latrobe held out hope it could convince Prady to take the job.

"We had five applicants," Heide said. "But the door was still open on the side."

"In Southwestern PA, one of the most daunting tasks is hiring a foot-

ball coach. You want to get the right guy."

In the meantime, Prady weighed the pros and cons. He was intrigued by the power of suggestion.

Becoming a head coach again wasn't in his plans — he said he still would be working comfortably at Penn-Trafford had he not taken over at Latrobe — and he had not been a head coach since 2004 at Caroline County (Va.).

He felt some dread about a somewhat unsavory rebuild.

"I didn't apply," he said. "They came to me. I took a couple weeks, and they talked me into it. I got the OK from my wife (Liz Prady, an English teacher at Latrobe). She said, 'Go do it. And don't do it (halfway).' She said, 'I didn't marry a loser. Don't lose.'"

An assistant briefly at Latrobe in the mid-2000s with Pat Murray, Prady taking over as coach felt right.

"Now, I wouldn't change it for the world," he said.

Porembka had faith Prady would accept the position.

"He said, 'If I do it, I want to do it my way,'" Porembka said. "He wanted accountability in his players and his coaches."

"He knows when to push and when to pull. He related to the kids so well."

Prady is a Penn-Trafford alum and was an assistant with the Warriors for 10 years on coach John Ruane's staff.

They won WPIAL and PIAA 5A championships in 2021.

With his experiences in Harrison City, Prady has a blueprint for building a winner.

"Boomer is a really good football guy," Ruane said. "He knows how to treat other coaches and he's building a culture of winning, with accountability."

Prady often goes by "Boomer," a nickname he was branded with when he was a toddler learning to walk. It stems from him always saying "Boom" when he fell on his behind.

Like Latrobe, though, he got back up and kept chugging along.

His job wasn't appealing, and he didn't take it for the money.

"I remember being at a graduation party a couple years ago and a lady came up to and said, 'So, you're the sucker who took the job?'" Prady said. "I said, 'Yes, thanks for the support.' Another guy at a gas station asked me, 'Are you the new coach? Are you crazy?'"

"I tell the kids about that, and they feed off that stuff. They were upset to hear it."

Latrobe went 20-56 under Marucco with two one-and-done playoff trips.

Under Prady, the Wildcats are 15-9 with two postseason wins.

"Being in 4A definitely helped us some," Heide said. "You look at some of the teams Jason had to play; that was a tall task to overcome."

Former Latrobe coach Ray Reitz, who came from Jeannette where he won two WPIAL titles and a PIAA championship, said several factors go into winning.

Reitz, who guided Latrobe to the WPIAL playoffs in 2009, sees them with Prady and the Wildcats.

"When I coached, we were in 6A," Reitz said of the Wildcats. "It's a culture thing and getting the kids to believe they can win. You need a staff that will do a great job for you."

Feather told Prady, "If we hire you, we'll win with you."

### Change in attitude

Prady is a junior high math teacher at Latrobe, so he has encountered numerous players in class.

Something with them, though, didn't add up.

He admits previous football team members were not always the friendliest people in the halls or in the classroom. He witnessed and heard about it.

"It was the way the kids acted," Prady said. "They didn't carry themselves well in school. That needed to change."

"They need to be good people who set examples and treat people right. Teachers, bus drivers, custodians, cafeteria workers: say hello to them. We're not perfect by any means, but I have had teachers tell me they have seen a difference in the way they carry themselves."

Wetzel said he is more aware of how he talks to people.

"I am," he said. "It's about being more respectful to people."

Wetzel's said his dad, Latrobe longtime boys basketball coach Brad Wetzel, already had instilled similar traits in him.

"He'd kick my butt if I didn't (show respect)," Wetzel said.

If Latrobe is creating gentlemen, there are more of them.

Prady said he heard past summer workouts sometimes drew only 12 to 15 players, a dispiriting number

compared to the 87 players the coach was preparing to take to camp.

The roster before Prady took over showed 43 names.

"If you're not playing another sport, we want you to be here," he said. "We've gone from 60 two years ago to 72 last year. This year, we had to order more uniforms. We only had 80 (uniforms)."

Prady said the spike in wins two years ago was the genesis of the increase in numbers.

"The kids are the best salespeople," he said. "They got their buddies to come out. I didn't guarantee them we'd win, but I said we'd do things differently. Now, I feel like we can be competitive in every game."

Other coaches in the county are beginning to point to Latrobe as an example of what can happen with renewed commitment and belief that a turnaround is possible.

"You want to implement your values and have everyone in the program speaking the same language," Hempfield second-year coach Nick Keefer said.

"Latrobe has that. Same speech. Same language they all have learned. The kids all know the same answers, then, to the questions that arise all the time."

Even alums are paying attention from across the country.

"It's pretty cool seeing the team you just played on a couple years ago turn around," said ex-Latrobe lineman Trent Holler, who is set to play this season at Memphis.

"The program got something started six years ago and keeps improving every season. I think the kids have really bought in from (coach) Prady. He is a certified winner. ... He knows what it takes to win games at the end of the day."

Latrobe quarterback and safety John Wetzel, a Marshall recruit, accounted for more than 30 touchdowns last season.

Bill Beckner is a TribLive staff writer. He can be reached at bbeckner@triblive.com.



Latrobe's Alex Tatsch is a Penn State linebacker recruit.



Latrobe quarterback and safety John Wetzel, a Marshall recruit, accounted for more than 30 touchdowns last season.



## THE FAVORITES

## 1. Aliquippa (14-0)

The Quips were moved up to Class 5A in the offseason then returned to Class 4A. Despite the upheaval, the team hopes to again rise to the top of the heap in the WPIAL and PIAA.

## 2. Montour (10-2)

## 3. Mars (10-3)

## 4. McKeesport (11-2)

## 5. Thomas Jefferson (9-3)

\*RECORDS FROM 2023

## THE STARS

## ANTWAN BLACK JR.

## Laurel Highlands, jr., WR/RB/DB

The rising junior caught 24 passes for 363 yards and a touchdown, ran for two scores and returned an interception more than 100 yards for a score. Black owns scholarship offers from Pitt, West Virginia, Toledo and Penn State.

## TIKEY HAYES

## Aliquippa, sr., RB/DB

The 6-foot, 210-pound Penn State commit accumulated 2,137 yards and 26 touchdowns on 242 carries for the WPIAL and PIAA champion. He averaged 8.8 yards a carry. He collected 222 yards and three touchdowns on 18 rushes in the 60-14 state title-game victory over Dallas.

## ARMAND HILL

## West Mifflin, so., RB/DB

The Titans standout back broke out last year as a starter with 1,528 yards and 15 touchdowns on 114 carries. Hill, who already owns several Division I offers, including Pitt and Penn State, added seven interceptions to lead the Western Hills Conference.

## KEMON SPELL

## McKeesport, so., RB/S

Spell gave a verbal commitment last month to Penn State. The 5-10, 195-pounder had 13 Division I offers at the time of his decision. Spell scored 10 touchdowns on offense and made 67 tackles, three fumble recoveries and picked off three passes on defense.

## SHEP TURK

## Thomas Jefferson, sr., OL/DL

Turk's skill in the trenches on both sides of the ball garnered attention from several D-I colleges. In the end, Turk said Pitt is it, giving a verbal commitment to the Panthers in May.

## DON'T MISS

## 9.27: Belle Vernon at Thomas Jefferson

While in different classifications last year, the Leopards and Jaguars maintained their rivalry with a nonconference contest won by Thomas Jefferson, 24-19. They are back in the Big Six Conference and ready to renew pleasantries.

**10.11: McKeesport at Mars** The teams missed each other last season, but the Class 4A heavyweights won't be able to do the same this year as they are two of the favorites in the Greater Allegheny Conference.

**10.18: Aliquippa at Montour** The Spartans lost only one game in the regular season last year, and it was to the Quips, 42-18, at Aliquippa's Heinz Field. Montour hopes for revenge as it hosts this year's Parkway Conference clash.

## ALIQUIPPA AGAIN THE TEAM TO BEAT IN 4A

BY MICHAEL LOVE

No team in the WPIAL or throughout the state could come up with a game plan to stop Aliquippa from claiming all the gold last season.

The WPIAL top-seeded Quips defeated No. 2 McKeesport, 35-21, at Acrisure Stadium, then marched to Cumberland Valley where they overwhelmed District 2 champion Dallas, 60-14, for their fifth PIAA title.

In the wake of its 2023 dominance, the PIAA, under its competitive-balance rule, told Aliquippa it would move up to Class 5A.

The school district presented a lawsuit against the PIAA protesting the move, and a Beaver County judge in April granted Aliquippa an injunction to remain in Class 4A this season.

Despite the battle in the courtroom, Quips interim coach Vashawn Patrick said his players just wanted to play football.

"They weren't too concerned with what was going on around them," he said. "They just wanted to work to get better each day and be ready to show up Friday at 7 p.m. against whoever we're scheduled to play."

Coach Mike Warfield, 74-6 in six seasons at the helm, took a leave of absence last month for work-related commitments.

"Mike and I had discussed this previously, but it was a surprise to the kids," Patrick said.

"The kids were great through the transition as well as the coaching staff. It has been business as usual, making sure we are working out, practicing well and putting ourselves in the best position to win a championship."

Aliquippa hopes it has the right formula to defend its WPIAL and PIAA crowns, but Patrick knows it won't be easy with the likes of Montour, Mars, McKeesport, Thomas Jefferson and others looking to knock them off.

McKeesport, Mars and Montour punched their tickets to the Class 4A semifinals a year ago.

McKeesport wants to be in the mix again after making its run to the title game.

The Tigers hope to feed off the effort of sophomore running back and defensive back Kemon Spell, a recent Penn State verbal commit.



Aliquippa's Tikey Hayes celebrates against Selinsgrove during last year's PIAA Class 4A semifinals.

Belle Vernon returns to Class 4A after a two-year stint in Class 3A. The Leopards hope to make some noise this season despite losing several key players, including Quinton Martin (Penn State), from a team that rolled to WPIAL and PIAA Class 3A championships a year ago.

Belle Vernon coach Matt Humbert said his players understand the challenge.

Last year, the Leopards prepared for their conference slate with games against Class 4A foes Laurel Highlands, McKeesport and rival Thomas Jefferson as well as Class 5A Penn-Trafford.

"With our nonconference schedule being so robust over the past couple of years, we're just used to that caliber of team," Humbert said. "We now will get some of those rivalries back with games against Trinity and the Battle for the Bridge with Ringgold."

Knoch, with senior quarterback Codi Mullen at the helm of an experienced group, also is back in Class 4A after two seasons in Class 3A. The Knights' stay in the WPIAL playoffs last year was shorter than expected with a first-round upset loss to No. 12 South Park.

"It's going to be a challenge for us back up in 4A," Knoch coach

Tim Burchett said. "Every week will be a great test. ... It's good for the schools, the fans and for the players."

West Mifflin, led by sophomore Armand Hill, who broke out last year as a running and defensive threat for the Titans, and Jaiden Brown-Demery, a newly minted Akron verbal commit, made it to the Class 3A quarterfinals as the No. 6 seed before being eliminated by No. 3 Elizabeth Forward.

While those three teams return to Class 4A, gone to Class 5A are Latrobe, Kiski Area and Armstrong, while North Catholic, Highlands and Central Valley dropped down to Class 3A.

Mainstay Thomas Jefferson always is a factor in the classification, and veteran coach Bill Cherpak hopes his players, fronted in the trenches by Pitt commit Shep Turk, are able to make a run this season.

The Jaguars own 10 WPIAL titles but have not raised the championship trophy since winning four in five years from 2016-20.

With 18 teams, the second lowest of the six WPIAL classifications, Class 4A will have an eight-team playoff bracket. The top two teams from each of the three conferences will qualify, along with two wild cards.

"The margin of error is a little higher with only two, possibly three making it from your conference," Humbert said.

Also back for another two-year run in Class 4A are Ambridge, Blackhawk, New Castle, West Allegheny, Hampton, Indiana, Chartiers Valley and Laurel Highlands.

Three other new coaches — Blackhawk's Jake Wickline, New Castle's Fred Mozzocio and Ringgold's Robert Heller — will join Patrick in leading their new teams into battle for the first time.

Wickline, who served as an assistant at Beaver in 2023, is the fourth coach at Blackhawk since the legendary Joe Hamilton retired after the 2014 season.

Mozzocio also was hired as New Castle's athletic director and track and field coach. The New Castle graduate went 101-35 in 12 seasons through last fall at neighboring Neshannock.

Heller hopes to turn around a struggling Rams program. Ringgold was one of six teams to go winless in 2023, and it has lost 25 consecutive games.

Heller, a Ringgold graduate and standout athlete for the Rams, was an assistant with the team in 2018 under then-coach Mike Zmijanac.



# BELLE VERNON FITTING NEW PIECES IN PLACE

BY CHARLES CURTI

Belle Vernon coach Matt Humbert always has been loath to schedule Week Zero games. To his way of thinking, it is more beneficial to play a second scrimmage, where he and his staff can evaluate players further without the pressure of winning a game.

Having that second scrimmage will take on larger significance this season.

The Leopards, coming off back-to-back PIAA Class 3A titles behind a large, accomplished senior class, will be relying on a bevy of new players in 2024. Further, the Leopards are making the jump to Class 4A, where they will play in the Big Six Conference with Chartiers Valley, Laurel Highlands, Ringgold, Thomas Jefferson and Trinity.

To be fair, none of the players who will be mainstays of the lineup are coming in cold. All gained at least some experience the past two seasons.

But Humbert said he and his staff will be doing a lot of mixing and matching during the pre-season and, likely, into the regular season as well.

“Even two years ago, it took us until Week 4 or 5 to figure out the personnel aspect of things,” said Humbert, heading into his 11th season at BVA. “As much as you feel like you have a lot of



ALONZO WADE

the offseason to prep for who goes where and who does what, sometimes you just need to see those kids in live action situations on a Friday night.

“It’s all about the puzzle pieces, and one of our keys is, can the puzzle pieces be figured out sooner than later?”

Among the most important “puzzle pieces” will be a trio of seniors: RB/LB Kole Doppelheuer, WR/DB Alonzo Wade and WR/DB Anthony Crews. Their listed positions might end up being only a hint of

where they line up. Crews, Humbert said, could be in line for the Quinton Martin role: slotting in at various places on offense to maximize his matchups/touches.

Junior running back Deaubre Lightfoot, who started at fullback in the PIAA final, also returns to give the Leopards plenty of skill options.

“We try to just be as multiple as possible,” Humbert said. “I think the neat thing about those kids are they are a little versatile.”

The quarterback spot is a

competition between three players: junior Curtis Wade, who saw some time under center last season, including one start, senior Chase Mertz and sophomore Jace Gedekoh.

Regardless of who plays quarterback or fills the other skill positions, their success will be reliant on a revamped offensive line. Juniors Ryan Kent and Jude Minniti are favorites to land two of the starting jobs. The remaining three spots, Humbert said, likely will come down to four players: sophomores Ethan Baron and Dalton Daumit, junior Tim Schwerha and senior Tyler Zelenski.

Despite so many unknowns with new starters and a new classification, Humbert remains confident the Leopards still will be contenders.

“For us, the pawns are all in place,” he said. “Very optimistic about everything. I just think it’s one of those things where, like always, you have to stay healthy. If we can stay healthy, I think that will put us as a legitimate contender.”

Added Doppelheuer: “We have a lot of skill kids coming back, and I think a lot of them, like myself, are going to step up and be leaders this year. I believe we’re still going to be a very good team based on who we still have and who didn’t graduate.”



KOLE DOPPELHEUER

**Coach:**

Matt Humbert  
**2023 record:**  
 13-1, 5-0 in Class 3A Interstate Conference

**All-time record:**  
 366-241-7



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**SCHEDULE**

Date	Opponent	Time
8.30	at Aliquippa	7
9.6	Central Valley	7
9.13	at McKeesport	7
9.20	South Fayette	7
9.27	at Thomas Jefferson*	7
10.4	Chartiers Valley*	7
10.11	Laurel Highlands*	7
10.18	at Ringgold*	7
10.25	at Trinity*	7

\*CONFERENCE GAME

**STATISTICAL LEADERS**

**Passing:** Braden Laux\*  
 113-175, 1,641 yards, 19 TDs  
**Rushing:** Quinton Martin\*  
 114-1,161 yards, 16 TDs  
**Receiving:** Martin\*  
 53-753 yards, 7 TDs

\*GRADUATED

**FAST FACT**

• Coach Matt Humbert needs eight wins to reach 100 in his tenure at Belle Vernon.

**ROSTER**

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht/Wt.	Cl.	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1	Kole Doppelheuer	RB/LB	5-11/150	sr.	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100

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**THE FAVORITES****1. Central Valley (8-4)**

Before last year, the Warriors made the WPIAL championship game in four consecutive seasons, winning three consecutive Class 3A titles (2019, 2020, 2021) and finishing second in Class 4A in 2022. But now, with the Warriors returning to Class 3A with a veteran squad, they are the team to beat. Coach Mark Lyons will lean on senior lineman Brendan Alexander and sophomore running back Jance Henry.

**2. Imani Christian (8-3)****3. Avonworth (12-1)****4. Elizabeth Forward (10-2)****5. North Catholic (5-6)**

\* RECORDS FROM 2023

**THE STARS****BRENDAN ALEXANDER****Central Valley, jr., OL/DL**

This growing star has numerous Division I offers, including from Pitt, Penn State, West Virginia, Arkansas, Michigan, Stanford and Wisconsin. The 6-foot-4, 277-pound junior is showing leadership skills.

**DAYSHAUN BURNETT****Imani Christian, sr., WR/LB**

The 6-2 senior is a Penn State commit. He picked the Nittany Lions over offers from Pitt, West Virginia, Michigan, Michigan State, Wisconsin, Duke and Kentucky. He also plays receiver and is ranked as the ninth-best recruit in the state by 247sports.

**BRADY O'HARA****North Catholic, sr., TE/DE**

The 6-6, 250-pounder committed to Penn State, where he'll play offensive tackle. But O'Hara is a tight end for the Trojans. He said he worked hard on his receiving techniques and hopes to become a red-zone target. He's a four-year starter on defense.

**ELLIOT PREMUS****Southmoreland, sr., TE/DE**

The 6-3, 220-pound Premus was a first-team Interstate Conference player. He had 11 catches for 236 yards and 69 tackles, including 31 solo, on defense. He had eight sacks, five tackles for losses, caused four fumbles and recovered two.

**CHRISTOPHER CLIMES****Elizabeth Forward, sr., OL/DL**

The 6-2, 305-pound Climes has committed to the University at Buffalo. He was an Interstate Conference first-team player of both sides of the ball. He recorded 18 sacks in 2023.

**DON'T MISS****9.20: Highlands at Imani Christian**

Two new faces in the Allegheny 7 Conference square off, and the winner could be the favorite to claim the conference title. The Saints move up from Class 2A, and Highlands moves down from Class 4A.

**9.27: Central Valley at Avonworth**

The Antelopes have reached the WPIAL Class 3A finals in consecutive seasons. The Warriors drop from Class 4A to 3A, where they won three consecutive titles (2019-21).

**10.18: Southmoreland at Elizabeth Forward**

The Scotties return a strong defense and have some talented skill players. The Warriors return two running backs and seven starters on both sides of the ball.



Central Valley's Jance Henry takes a handoff from Steven Rutherford last season.

# CENTRAL VALLEY HAS ACRISURE ASPIRATIONS

BY PAUL SCHOFIELD

Avonworth had to play second fiddle to Belle Vernon the past two seasons in the WPIAL Class 3A championship game.

And with seven starters on offense and defense returning, all-conference quarterback Carson Bellinger among them, the Antelopes (12-1) look to take another trip to Acrisure Stadium.

But it's not that simple. Central Valley (8-4) returns after playing two years in Class 4A, and a talented Imani Christian Academy (8-3) squad, with at least four NCAA Division I recruits, comes up from Class 2A.

Central Valley, which won three consecutive Class 3A titles (2019-21) and played in the Class 4A title game in 2022, also knows the way to Acrisure Stadium.

With numerous starters returning, including two D-I recruits in junior lineman Brendan

Alexander and sophomore running back Jance Henry, the path to the Class 3A championship might run through Center Township and Monaca.

Central Valley is loaded again and earned the preseason top spot. Imani Christian is second, followed by Avonworth, Elizabeth Forward (10-2) and North Catholic (5-6).

"It's a struggle to get to the top, but it's an even bigger struggle to stay there," Central Valley coach Mark Lyons said. "You have to be at your best every day. Not just every game day. Every day."

With three teams from the Western Hills Conference in the top five, don't look past Beaver (9-3) or McGuffey (8-4) under new coach Nate Parry. Hopewell (1-9) and Quaker Valley (1-9) hope to rise from tough seasons.

Avonworth coach Duke John-

cour said: "We're excited about the opportunity that lies ahead. We're hoping to get back to (Acrisure Stadium) again, and we're working toward that."

Elizabeth Forward heads the Interstate Conference, which looks a lot like the old Keystone Conference with Derry (5-6), Greensburg Salem (2-8), Mt. Pleasant (6-5), Southmoreland (6-5) and Yough (2-8).

The Warriors' opponents all return numerous starters and look to secure playoff berths.

Southmoreland, which co-ops with Geibel, is looking for a new quarterback and running back but should be strong defensively.

Mt. Pleasant and Greensburg Salem return veteran quarterbacks, Derry brings back 10 starters on defense, and Yough is on the rise. Southmoreland is looking for its first WPIAL playoff victory.

"We hope this is the group to do it," Scotties coach Tim Bukowski said. "This is the deepest team we've had in terms of pure football guys."

Imani Christian is the favorite in the Allegheny 7 Conference, but Highlands (6-5), which dropped from Class 4A, Deer Lakes (8-4), East Allegheny (9-3) and Freeport (3-7) will challenge for playoff berths. Valley (2-8) and Burrell (3-4) also will be improved.

Deer Lakes hopes to build off its first WPIAL playoff victory.

Imani Christian coach LaRoi Johnson said his team will be ready to play when the season begins.

"We have not stopped working since last season after the tough loss we had in the playoffs," Johnson said. "Our expectation is to win a championship this season."



# DERRY LOOKS FOR MORE SUCCESS IN CLASS 3A

BY PAUL SCHOFIELD

It was a huge leap for the Derry football team in 2023.

The Trojans ended a 20-game losing streak, won five games and qualified for the WPIAL Class 2A playoffs.

Even though the Trojans (5-6 overall, 4-3 Allegheny Conference) fell to McGuffey, 25-13, in the post-season, the program made major strides.

Third-year coach Mike Arone is hoping for similar improvement this season in a new classification.

After spending the past two seasons in Class 2A, the Trojans return to Class 3A in the Interstate Conference with familiar foes: Greensburg Salem, Elizabeth Forward, Southmoreland, Mt. Pleasant and Yough.

"It was an improvement, that's for sure," Arone said of the 2023 season. "We got a couple guys back out from injuries, and the players bought into what we wanted. We need to continue to show improvement."

One area Derry should be good this season is on defense: The Trojans return nine starters and one part-time starter.

Arone hopes experience helps the defense, which allowed 28.6 points per game.

Heading the list is sophomore middle linebacker Brady Brown, a first-team all-conference selection.

Others back are defensive ends Collin Barkley and Aiden Piper, nose guard Jake Handel, outside



BRADY BROWN

linebackers Max Doherty and Vinnie Dudzinsky, cornerbacks Damauri Robinson and Max Doperak and safeties Mason Horwat and Brett Klim.

The Trojans must replace inside linebacker Nathan Barkley and safety Ahmad Ward, who led the team with six interceptions.

"I felt we improved during the season and played the run better," Arone said. "We need to improve our pass defense."

Arone has some holes to fill on

the offensive side of the ball.

He has two sophomores — Anthony Sacco and Horwat — battling for the quarterback spot to replace Mason Beeman, who graduated. Beeman completed 51 of 138 passes for 589 yards and three touchdowns.

"We may do the quarterback position by committee," Arone said. "Both bring similar games. Both are also good receivers. I'm looking for a quarterback who can run the offense efficiently."

The larger hole to fill is replacing Ward, the team's leading rusher with 1,279 yards and 16 touchdowns. He also had 13 catches for 136 yards and a touchdown.

Filling Ward's shoes could be Robinson, who played the slot position. He led the team with 17 catches for 273 yards and a touchdown. He also rushed for 236 yards and three scores.

"We have to find ways to get the ball in Damauri's hands," Arone said. "We have a lot of guys who are capable of running the ball. That spot is up for grabs."

Also in the mix at running back are Brown, Preston Donovan, Justin Papuga and Doherty.

The strength on the offensive side is the line. Back are center Ethan Bendel, left guard Barkley, guard/tackle Owen Monnich, right tackle Piper and left tackle Handel.

Arone also is searching for players at wide receiver. He expects contributions from Anthony Frank, Braden Robinson and Doperak.

"One thing the wide receivers must do in our offense is block," Arone said.

Derry's nonconference schedule will be a test, starting at Ligonier Valley, which returns numerous starters, followed by Freeport, Deer Lakes, Burrell and Indiana before opening conference play Sept. 27 at Southmoreland.

"I like our conference," Arone said. "It's going to be very competitive, that's for sure."



DAMAURI ROBINSON

**Coach:**

Mike Arone

**2023 record:**

5-6, 4-3 in Class 2A Allegheny Conference

**All-time record:**

272-372-14



## SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Time
8.23	at Ligonier Valley	7
8.30	Freeport	7
9.6	Deer Lakes	7
9.13	at Burrell	7
9.20	Indiana	7
9.27	at Southmoreland*	7
10.4	Elizabeth Forward*	7
10.11	Greensburg Salem*	7
10.18	at Mt. Pleasant*	7
10.25	at Yough*	7

\*CONFERENCE GAME

## STATISTICAL LEADERS

**Passing:** Mason Beeman\*

51-138, 589 yards, 3 TDs

**Rushing:** Ahmad Ward\*

232-1,279 yards, 16 TDs

**Receiving:** Damauri Robinson

17-273 yards, 1 TD

\*GRADUATED

## FAST FACTS

- The Trojans were 5-0 when they scored 22 points or more in 2023.

- Kicker Gabe Gess made 22 of 24 extra-point attempts

## ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht/Wt.	Cl.	16	Jason Ruckel	WR/DB	5-6/140	sr.	33	Brett Klim	RB/WR/DB	5-6/124	sr.	75	Aiden Piper	OL/DL	6-1/290	so.	Jacob Mellinger	OL/DL	5-10/210	fr.	
1	Brady Brown	RB/LB	5-8/195	so.	17	Jacob Jewel	RB/LB	5-9/180	sr.	44	Preston Donovan	RB/LB	5-8/175	sr.	76	Jake Handel	OL/DL	6-0/250	jr.	Evan Monnich	OL/DL	5-9/190	fr.	
2	Anthony Frank	WR/DB	5-9/145	so.	18	Matthew Gunter	WR/DB	5-6/130	so.	45	Vincent Dudzinsky	OL/OLB	6-3/160	sr.		Cameron Beeman	WR/LB	5-9/150	fr.	Brayden Robinson	WR/DB	6-1/175	jr.	
3	Noah Stough	WR/DB	5-5/134	so.	20	Anthony Sacco	WR/QB/DB	5-6/130	so.	50	Franklin Palmer	OL/DL	5-4/170	jr.		Hunter Hanning	OL/DL	5-10/250	fr.	Tanner Shurina	WR/LB	6-3/160	so.	
5	Aiden Frank	RB/LB	5-5/140	so.	21	Max Doperak	WR/DB	5-4/130	jr.	52	Devin Ohler	OL/DL	5-4/185	so.		Jacob Harris	RB/LB	5-9/160	sr.	William Stockett-Harter	WR/OLB	6-1/183	jr.	
8	Chris Kubistek	RB/LB/DB	5-5/126	so.	25	Andrew Snyder	WR/DB	5-10/155	jr.	54	Chris Shannon	OL/LB	5-5/160	so.		Skyler Hill	WR/DB	5-8/120	fr.	Tim Wedow	WR/DB	5-10/130	fr.	
9	Max Doherty	RB/WR/LB/DB	5-9/180	so.	26	Hunter Smith	WR/DB	5-8/120	jr.	60	Colin Barkley	OL/DL	5-9/180	sr.		John Itchue	OL/DL	6-0/260	fr.	Kaden Weiers	WR/LB/DB	5-10/170	fr.	
10	Justin Papuga	RB/TE/LB	5-10/185	jr.	29	Gabbriel Gess	K	5-8/155	sr.	65	Owen Monnich	OL/DL	6-0/220	sr.		Gage Johns	WR/DB	5-9/135	fr.	Karsen Weiers	WR/DB	5-8/130	fr.	
11	Damauri Robinson	WR/DB	6-0/155	sr.	30	Aspen Blystone	WR/DB	5-9/150	so.	70	Alexander Basay	OL/DL	5-9/220	so.		Chase Lukon	OL/DL	6-0/220	so.					
13	Ricky Daniels	WR/DB	5-10/160	jr.	32	Jaiden Beeman	WR/LB	6-0/160	so.	72	Ethan Bendel	OL/DL	5-7/210	sr.		Terrance Martin	WR/DB	5-8/125	fr.					

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**DERRY AREA TROJANS**





PEYTON CHISMAR

**Coach:**

Ty George

**2023 record:**

2-8, 1-4 in Class 3A Interstate Conference

**All-time record:** 711-414-39



**SCHEDULE**

Date	Opponent	Time
8.23	Albert Gallatin	7
8.30	Ligonier Valley	7
9.6	Valley	7
9.13	at Ringgold	7
9.20	Ambridge	7
9.27	at Elizabeth Forward*	7
10.4	Mt. Pleasant*	7
10.11	at Derry*	7
10.18	at Yough*	7
10.25	Southmoreland*	7

\*CONFERENCE GAME

**STATISTICAL LEADERS**

**Passing:** Brody Chismar

61-108, 643 yards, 5 TDs

**Rushing:** Brady Smith

113-503 yards, 6 TDs

**Receiving:** Dom Rosensteel

39-551 yards, 4 TDs

**FAST FACTS**

• Greensburg Salem has 711 wins, 18th-most in state history, seventh-most in the WPIAL and second-most in Westmoreland County behind Jeannette (777).

# GREENSBURG SALEM SEEKS BETTER BALANCE ON OFFENSE

BY BILL BECKNER JR.

Balance gives Greensburg Salem the best chance to win, second-year coach Ty George said.

“You don’t want to force yourself into a situation where you rely too much (on the run or pass),” George said. “The more options you have, the harder it is to stop.”

A couple of injuries to key players last year prevented the Golden Lions from being proportional in their spread offense. But both are healthy now and are looking to reassert themselves as key contributors.

Senior Peyton Chismar returns to play quarterback after missing time last year, and senior Kai Brunot is back as a key ball carrier.

Chismar is competing for the starting job against a familiar name — his brother, sophomore Brody Chismar. Both played in seven games last year, with Brody passing for 643 yards and five touchdowns. Peyton had 335 yards and one score.

“They are used to the dynamic of (brothers playing quarterback),” George said.

“Both are ready to play, and we’re going to need both of them to play. It’s a brotherly competition. It makes it entertaining.”

George said both Chismars will need to be play for the team to have success, although that doesn’t mean a rotation at QB.

Peyton can line up at tight end, Brody at receiver. Peyton also is a key defensive cog at linebacker.

“They both will be on the field,” the coach said.

Brunot, a quick and shifty runner, was limited to four games



ANTHONY MATTHEWS

after suffering a lacerated kidney early in the year.

“He looks good, so we’re encouraged,” George said. “He ran track in the spring.”

The team returns seven starters on both sides of the ball — nine overall.

Another is junior Brady Smith, the team’s top returning rusher (503 yards) who took over in the backfield when Brunot was injured in Week 3.

George said he has a number of players who can provide leadership, making the practice of picking captains a challenge.

“We have 13 or 14 seniors. This group (of seniors) played togeth-

er for a long time,” George said. “(Leadership) is more by committee.”

Other starters back include senior Azreal Franklin (OL/DL), senior Jack McGough (OL/DL), senior Cole Savage (OL/LB), senior Dom Rosensteel (WR/DB), senior Keegan Young (WR/DB) and junior Max Topper (TE/LB).

Rosensteel led the Golden Lions with 39 receptions and 82 tackles. He also had two interceptions.

Young was second with 20 catches. Junior Anthony Matthews (WR/DB) had 49 tackles and a pick.

The Golden Lions, who went 2-8 last season (1-4 conference), will

continue to play in Class 3A, but in a revamped Interstate Conference.

The lineup now includes Derry, Elizabeth Forward, Mt. Pleasant, Southmoreland and Yough.

“It’s nice to get those local matchups,” George said. “It creates a nice atmosphere. People would rather travel 20 minutes to watch us play than (hour-plus trips in the past).”

George said he is more settled heading into his second season as coach.

“Last year was a transition year,” he said. “The kids are more settled and confident now. I am more settled. We have a lot of kids returning, and that should pay dividends.”

**ROSTER**

No. 2	Brady Smith	Cl. sr.	9	Tanner Schmidt	jr.	19	Connor Wilson	so.	35	Max Topper	so.	58	Ender Cosgrove	sr.	83	Xayvion McKinley	fr.
3	Solomon Cain	fr.	10	Brandt Sandstrom	fr.	20	Jackson Stevey	fr.	40	Austin Brown	jr.	62	Orion Leone	fr.	84	Aden Krug	sr.
4	Anthony Matthews	jr.	11	Braydon Miller	fr.	21	Keegan Young	sr.	50	Jack McGough	jr.	68	Ayden Mars	so.	85	Wesley Heverly	jr.
5	Jackson Hostetler	jr.	12	Peyton Chismar	jr.	25	Akheim McCreary	jr.	51	Eddie Johnson	fr.	69	Isaiah Stillwagon	jr.	86	Brandon Ginder	sr.
6	Brody Chismar	so.	14	Christian Cole	so.	27	Terron Colson	fr.	52	Azreal Franklin	so.	70	Tucker Guerrieri	fr.			
7	Cooper Dann	sr.	15	Dorian Burt	jr.	29	Grady Rizzo	so.	53	Elijah McKinley	fr.	72	Jaleel Woody	jr.			
8	Noah Dudek	sr.	16	Tyrese Lewis	jr.	30	Caiden Orr	jr.	54	Brayden Armstrong	sr.	75	Colin Carloni	so.			
		jr.	18	Dominic Rosensteel	sr.	32	Kai Brunot	sr.	56	Cole Savage	sr.	77	Nico Hardaway	fr.			

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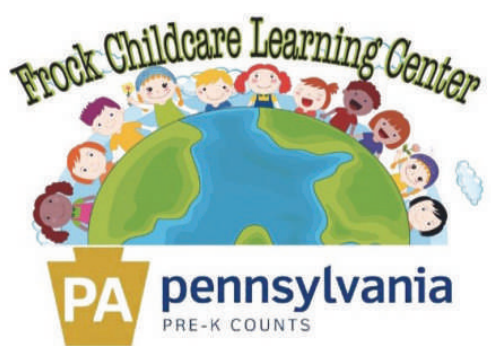
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**BRODY HUTTER**

**Coach:** Jason Fazekas  
**2023 record:** 6-5, 2-3 in Class 3A Interstate Conference  
**All-time record:** 352-287-9



**SCHEDULE**

Date	Opponent	Time
8.23	at Jeannette	7
8.30	at Greensburg Central Catholic	7
9.6	Burrell	7
9.13	at Ambridge	7
9.20	Laurel Highlands	7
9.27	at Yough*	7
10.4	at Greensburg Salem*	7
10.11	Southmoreland*	7
10.18	Derry*	7
10.25	Elizabeth Forward*	7

\*CONFERENCE GAME

**STATISTICAL LEADERS**

**Passing:** Cole Chatfield 66-123, 1,280 yards, 14 TDs  
**Rushing:** Dante Giallonardo\* 75-557 yards, 6 TDs  
**Receiving:** Giallonardo 19-430 yards, 6 TDs

\*GRADUATED

**FAST FACTS**

• Mt. Pleasant has won two WPIAL titles (1983, 1986), beating Aliquippa and Kiski Area. The Vikings lost in the 1984 finals to Aliquippa on a controversial call.

# MT. PLEASANT WORKING TO FINISH SEASON STRONG

BY PAUL SCHOFIELD

Mt. Pleasant got off to a great start in 2023.

The Vikings were 5-1 heading into first-place battles with Elizabeth Forward and eventual Class 3A WPIAL and PIAA champion Belle Vernon.

Things didn't go well, and the Vikings finished losing four of their final five games to end up 6-5.

"We were playing good football teams," Mt. Pleasant coach Jason Fazekas said. "We just didn't play well enough. We have to get stronger and finish better."

Fazekas said he's excited about this season.

The Vikings return numerous key players, and the conference is full of familiar teams. Other than Elizabeth Forward, the rest of the teams — Derry, Greensburg Salem, Southmoreland and Yough — won Keystone Conference titles.

This, however, is called the Interstate Conference.

Cole Chatfield returns for his fourth season as Mt. Pleasant's quarterback. Fazekas said Chatfield is among the toughest kids he's coached.

He threw for 1,280 yards and 14 touchdowns in an offense that primarily runs the ball.

But Fazekas said Chatfield's job was running the offense.

"He did a great job running the RPO (run-pass option) offense, and I expect more for him this season," Fazekas said. "He brings a lot to the table. I expect we'll utilize his running ability this season."



**COLE CHATFIELD**

Even though the Vikings graduated talented backs in Dante Giallonardo, Jackson Hutter and Brady Poole, Fazekas likes who's back.

Returning are Brody Hutter and Garrett Eicher. Sophomore Ste-

phen Predajna played some last season, and senior Jarett Garn is moving from wide receiver to the backfield.

"Jarett had a great track season and showed off his speed," Fazekas said. "I'm eager to see how he

develops as he learns the position. Jarett is a smart kid, and all he needs is reps.

"The entire backfield as a whole needs to work on their timing. I think we'll be OK."

Chatfield's main targets in the passing game will be the running backs, wide receiver Robert Hixson and tight end Logan Parson.

Bu what really excites Fazekas is his young and huge offensive line.

Tackle Carter Strayer (6-foot-5, 245 pounds) is the lone starter back, but Fazekas feels the line could be better.

Others fighting for spots include junior tackle Dylan Pitzer, junior guard Charles Strader, junior tackle Alex Ferencz, junior tackle Payton Schaum, junior center Michael Reese, junior center Caleb Pease and sophomore guard Christian Brodak.

Pitzer stands 6-7, 250. "There should be good competition there," Fazekas said. "I know we're big, but we have to be able to move people off the ball."

On defense, Fazekas said the Vikings need to stop the run.

"That's the key, stopping the run," Fazekas said. "If we do that, we can adjust our coverages."

Returning on the defense are Chatfield at safety, Dane Firmstone at linebacker, Eicher at linebacker, Hutter at linebacker, Pitzer at tackle, Rage Suchar at linebacker, Parson at linebacker, Predajna at cornerback, Strayer at tackle and Garn at cornerback.

**ROSTER**

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht/Wt.	Cl.	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100
1	Cole Chatfield	QB/DB	6-1/175	sr.	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	

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**MOUNT PLEASANT VIKINGS**



# PLAYMAKERS ABOUND FOR SOUTHMORELAND

BY BILL BECKNER JR.

At the confluence of talent and potential could be the elusive, breakthrough season for which Southmoreland has been waiting.

As in, a season that reaches a little deeper into November.

Though the Scotties have solved the getting-to-the-playoffs part of the puzzle — they have qualified in four of the last six seasons, including three in a row — the program has yet to win a playoff game in 60 years of football.

“We hope this is the group to do it,” coach Tim Bukowski said. “This is the deepest team we’ve had in terms of pure football guys.”

Southmoreland lost to another team that lacked playoff history, Deer Lakes, which beat the Scotties, 48-18, for its first postseason victory.

Southmoreland finished 6-5.

A few exceptional playmakers are gone, but Bukowski believes there is plenty of ability in line to replace them — including a crop of freshmen.

Tailback Da’sjon Craggette (Cal, Pa.), wideout Ty Keffer and quarterback Kadin Keefer have graduated, leaving a trail of big plays behind them.

“That’s a lot of touchdowns and yardage,” Bukowski said. “Da’sjon and Keffer were two of the top players at their position in the county and WPIAL. Keefer gave us two good years.”

Keefer threw for 1,360 yards and 14 TDs last season, with Keffer pulling in 50 receptions and 10 TDs, and Craggette rambling for 1,462 yards and 18 scores in his one and only season with the Scotties. He transferred from Greensburg Central Catholic to Geibel, which copes with Southmoreland because it does not have a football program.

Bukowski is excited about the prospects of his offense, but it’s the other side of the ball that piques his interest.

The Scotties’ defensive unit has size and speed to complement its throwback grit.



ELLIOT PREMUS

“I have a lot of confidence in our returning guys on defense,” he said.

Versatile senior Elliot Premus (6-foot-4, 210 pounds) is a returning first-team all-conference player on offense and defense, the latter as a run-stopping linebacker or defensive end.

“He has really blossomed into a football player,” Bukowski said.

Freshman Jackson Mickens (6-1, 215), who attends Geibel, is expected to make an immediate impact.

“He’s a tremendous athlete,” Bukowski said. “With Premus at one end and Mickens at the other, pick your poison.”

Another force on defense is se-

nior linebacker Ethan Shawley (5-11, 200), who had 134 tackles last season.

“He’s an old-school football player,” Bukowski said.

More toughness is wired into Stanley Chapman (6-3, 215), another linebacker and two-year letterman who will keep company in the pass rush with Dawson Wolfe (6-1, 180), a sophomore whom Bukowski calls a “vicious hitter,” and freshman Luke Stinnett, who should get reps at end and linebacker.

Senior Cam Phillips is another linebacker, and junior Gabe Kubasky will lead the secondary at safety behind a crop of untested cornerbacks.

Also watch junior Makel Darnell, another Geibel pick-up, at defensive back, along with junior Cam Lee, sophomore Zion Mitchell and senior Roman Riccelli.

Quarterback is a question mark that could become an exclamation point. That is because promising freshman Anthony Smith and skilled junior Caden Matthews were competing for the starting job.

Smith, the top-ranked freshman QB in the state by QB Hit List who already is drawing Division I college interest, was the MVP of the 2Tenths Top 150 camp.

Matthews, who also has attracted college attention, threw 21 passes last season, one for a touchdown, as Keefer’s backup.

“We know Anthony is a highly acclaimed quarterback and has a bright future,” Bukowski said. “Caden has worked hard and been a leader for our guys.”

Phillips, Shawley and Chapman are part of a sound running backs room of hard-yards guys, with Mickens looking like a solid pass-catching tight end who can block.

Kubasky and Darnell have big-play ability in the slot.

“Kubasky could have a breakout season,” Bukowski said. “Darnell is electric.”

The Scotties’ “X” receiver spot has belonged to some notable playmakers like Keffer and Riley Comforti, but Premus will take it over this season.

“He’s 6-3,” Bukowski said. “He can win those one-on-one matchups. The X is our go-to receiver.”

Senior center Jarrell Braxton (6-1, 270) leads a front line that also includes senior right guard Jimmy Carson (6-2, 280), senior right tackle Lewis Mains and junior left tackle Jake Govern.

While size and skill will drive the Scotties, don’t undersell senior kicker Jake Kaylor, an all-conference leg who made 6 of 7 field goals last season with a long of 39 yards. He was 28 of 32 on extra points.



JACKSON MICKENS

**Coach:**

Tim Bukowski

**2023 record:**  
6-5, 3-2 in Class 3A Interstate Conference

**All-time record:**  
195-370-12



## SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Time
8.23	Valley	7
8.30	East Allegheny	7
9.6	at Laurel Highlands	7
9.13	Blackhawk	7
9.20	at Ringgold	7
9.27	Derry*	7
10.4	Yough*	7
10.11	at Mt. Pleasant*	7
10.18	at Elizabeth Forward*	7
10.25	at Greensburg Salem*	7

\*CONFERENCE GAME

## STATISTICAL LEADERS

**Passing:** Kadin Keefer\*

91-178, 1,360 yards, 14 TDs

**Rushing:** Da’sjon Craggette\*

182-1,462 yards, 18 TDs

**Receiving:** Ty Keffer\*

50-821 yards, 10 TDs

\*GRADUATED

## FAST FACTS

- Southmoreland has made the WPIAL playoffs four times in the last six years after failing to qualify from 1980-2018.
- The Scotties scored 40 or more points four times last season.

- Four potential starters attend Geibel Catholic. Southmoreland and Geibel have a co-op in football.

- Valley will visit Southmoreland in the Week Zero opener.
- The new-look Interstate Conference has Southmoreland, Derry, Elizabeth Forward, Greensburg Salem, Mt. Pleasant and Yough.

## ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht./Wt.	Cl.																
8	Ty Whoric	WR/LB	6-0/180	jr.	18	Reese Jordan	WR/CB	5-6/145	fr.	51	Bryan Williams	OT/DE	6-2/220	so.	71	Wyatt Corvin	OL/DL	5-10/170	so.	
9	Adam Ferrell	TE/LB	5-10/155	fr.	19	Jake Hull	TE/LB	5-9/170	so.	52	Jake Govern	OT/DT	5-10/250	jr.	75	Justin Hribal	OL/DT	6-2/255	so.	
10	Stanley Chapman	HB/LB	6-3/215	jr.	20	Sincere BOWENS	RB/LB	5-10/225	sr.	53	Jimmy Carson	OG/DT	6-2/280	sr.	77	Kohen Neiderhiser	OG/DT	5-9/240	so.	
11	Gabe Kubasky	WR/S	6-1/195	jr.	22	Ethan Shawley	RB/LB	5-11/200	sr.	54	Cole Teets	OL/DL	5-9/235	sr.	78	David Sager	OG/DL	5-11/230	so.	
13	Caden Matthews	QB/LB	6-0/180	jr.	24	Makel Darnell	WR/SS	5-10/170	jr.	56	Lewis Mains	OT/DT	5-10/220	sr.	79	Jarrell Braxton	C/DT	6-1/270	sr.	
14	Roman Riccelli	WR/CB	5-11/160	sr.	40	Nick Snyder	RB/LB	5-10/170	fr.	58	Randy Keffer	OL/DL	5-8/240	fr.	85	Isaac Bryner	WR/LB	5-9/150	so.	
15	Zion Mitchell	WR/CB	5-10/160	so.	41	Walter Higgins	RB/LB	5-6/140	fr.	59	Austin Jones	C/DT	5-10/260	jr.	88	Daniel Busato	WR/LB	5-7/165	fr.	
16	Averyon Darnell	WR/CB	5-9/160	fr.	43	Tyler Daley	TE/LB	5-10/160	fr.	66	Harrison Bechtold	OT/DT	5-10/220	fr.	89	Luke Stinnett	TE/DE	6-1/195	fr.	
17	Jackson Mickens	TE/DE	6-1/215	fr.	50	Jaden Lilley	OL/LB	5-8/170	fr.	70	Peyton Bann	OT/DT	5-11/180	fr.						

SOUTHMORELAND • INTERSTATE





JOEY WEINHOFER

**Coach:**  
Ben Hoffer  
**2023 record:**  
2-8, 1-6 in Class  
2A Allegheny  
Conference  
**All-time record:** 164-348-11



**SCHEDULE**

Date	Opponent	Time
8.23	Brentwood	7
8.30	at Charleroi	7
9.6	Ringgold	7
9.13	New Castle	7
9.20	at Blackhawk	7
9.27	Mt. Pleasant*	7
10.4	at Southmoreland*	7
10.11	at Elizabeth Forward*	7
10.18	Greensburg Salem*	7
10.25	Derry*	7

\*CONFERENCE GAME

**STATISTICAL LEADERS**

**Passing:** Raidon Kuroda  
56-139, 688 yards, 2 TDs  
**Rushing:** Kuroda  
134-689 yards, 9 TDs  
**Receiving:** Antonio Marra\*  
19-262 yards

\*GRADUATED

**FAST FACTS**

- Yough last made the playoffs in 2013. The Cougars beat Kittanning, 57-42, in the first round before losing to Beaver Falls.
- 2013 was also the last time Yough finished with a winning record (6-5).
- Yough last won a conference title in 2008, coach Ben Hoffer's senior season.
- Yough is a merger of Sewickley, South Huntingdon and West Newton in 1969.

# YOUGH MOVES TO CLASS 3A WHERE OLD RIVALS AWAIT

BY TED SARNESO

When the WPIAL released the new conference alignments for the 2024 football season in February, there were a lot of changes with teams switching conferences or moving up or down in classification.

The Yough Cougars are one of the teams moving up this year from Class 2A to 3A, and that is just fine with coach Ben Hoffer.

"I definitely like the move," Hoffer said. "The Interstate Conference is more suitable to us."

What Hoffer truly likes the most is the return of rivalries the school hasn't played regularly in a long time and is something the Yough community will look forward to having back.

"Being from Yough and having played here, I remember those games against Elizabeth Forward, Mt. Pleasant and Southmoreland," Hoffer said. "Bringing back those rivalries is great for the community, and I know the stands will be packed."

Higher enrollment was the main reason Yough is up in Class 3A. Hoffer has seen the number of players on the team grow from 33 two years ago to a total in the mid-40s.

The increase in roster size provides Hoffer with plenty of depth. He's played a lot of younger guys the last few years and knows their experience only can help this season.

The group with the most playing experience is the offensive line, and Hoffer expects it to be the reason the Cougars will have success this season.

"This will be the best unit we have on the field," Hoffer said. "We have four returning starters, and all five guys have varsity experience. They'll be key for us moving forward."

Seniors Bryce Harvey, Colin Casper, Aidan Humenik and Angelo Dippolito as well as junior Corbin Reinstadtler are the group Hoffer expects to impose its will up front.

"Reinstadtler and Humenik have both played varsity since



RAIDON KURODA

they were freshmen," Hoffer said. "Great teams have great offensive lines, and we'll go as far as ours takes us."

The veteran quintet is tasked with providing protection for senior quarterback Raidon Kuroda, who led Yough with 688 passing and 689 rushing yards.

This season, Hoffer expects great things from his signal caller.

"This is his third year in my system, and he's worked a ton this offseason with me and offensive coordinator Casey Teagarden," Hoffer said. "Raidon is very observant and is like a sponge when it comes to information."

Kuroda will benefit from more options at the receiving position even though Antonio Marra, last year's leading receiver, graduated.

Leading the way will be senior Joey Weinhofer, who has built a strong connection with Kuroda. Junior Ryan Sarver performed well in the 7-on-7 circuit at Latrobe and Belle Vernon, and sophomore Aidan Shaffer grew into a receiving role and is blessed with great speed.

If he gets in trouble, Kuroda once again will rely on senior Beau Yuhus at the tight end position. At 6-foot-3, 220 pounds, Yuhus provides a huge target as the quarterback's safety valve.

Kuroda will see his share of

carries in the run game because of the nature of the offense the Cougars run, but Hoffer won't need Kuroda to be a bell cow.

Yough has five players who possess the skills necessary to be a starter at the running back position.

"Senior Jordan Mandich is very elusive and has good vision, and senior Aidan Thornton is moving over from receiver and will see some carries," Hoffer said.

Seniors Sam Smalich and Colin Magill also will see time in the backfield, and Sarver will get some carries out of the backfield.

"Our offensive guys know what I'm looking for and what we want to do," Hoffer said. "We're going to establish the run, and everything else will flow from that."

"With that said, we need to be more consistent on that side of the ball and score more points and not put so much pressure on our defense."

The Cougars defense will be run by new coordinator, Devin Owens, who spent the last three years at Monessen.

"He's very excited to get after it, loves the game," Hoffer said. "We bring a solid group back for him to work with."

Offensive linemen Humenik, Casper and Dippolito will start along the defensive line and are

joined by senior Lukas Waltonbaugh, providing Yough with a sound front four.

Junior Jose Ramirez and freshmen Aidan Converso and Landon Franks provide depth and will sub in when the two-way players get tired.

Kuroda, Smalich and Reinstadtler will be the Cougar linebackers, and junior Brayden Mackanic, who will play strictly one way, provides depth.

"Raidon watches film religiously," Hoffer said. "He can read plays before they develop. It's one of the reasons he had over 100 tackles last year and was named a second-team all-conference linebacker."

In the defensive backfield, Sarver and Thornton will start at the corner positions and Mandich will occupy one safety position. Jaiden Dixon Bretzel, whom everyone calls JDB, will start opposite Mandich.

"JDB's a very athletic kid," Hoffer said. "He came out for the team this year and made quite an impression, winning the Gold Bowl MVP for defense in 7-on-7. We can't wait to see how he and Mandich work together."

Last year, Yough finished 2-8 overall and 1-6 in the Class 2A Allegheny Conference. This year, the team will look for more consistency on both sides of the ball and seek to be better at finishing games.

"Even though our record doesn't show it, we were in a lot of close games last year," Hoffer said. "The kids competed and knew they were really close to a few victories. We just have to close them out strong."

Yough, a team filled with veterans and talent, could be the surprise team in a conference filled with familiar foes. Along with old rivals Elizabeth Forward, Mt. Pleasant and Southmoreland, Derry and Greensburg Salem round out the Interstate Conference.

Hoffer can't wait for the games to begin.

"I'm really excited to get into our conference schedule," he said. "I love it."

**ROSTER**

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht/Wt.	Cl.	...	No.	Name	Pos.	Ht/Wt.	Cl.	...	No.	Name	Pos.	Ht/Wt.	Cl.	...								
1	Aidan Shaffer	WR/DB	5-9/170	so.	11	Joey Weinhofer	WR/DB	6-1/175	sr.	22	Jordan Mandich	RB/DB	6-0/195	jr.	44	Dom Kuszaj	RB/LB	5-9/180	so.	64	Bryce Harvey	OL/DL	6-0/185	sr.	
2	Aidan Shaffer	WR/DB	5-9/170	so.	11	Brayden Mackanic	RB/LB	5-8/180	jr.	23	Ethan Kasper	WR/DB	5-5/125	fr.	51	Andrew Smalich	OL/DL	5-10/185	so.	65	Landan Franks	OL/DL	5-8/160	fr.	
3	Joey Bibby	WR/DB	5-6/135	so.	13	Colin Magill	RB/LB	6-0/210	sr.	24	Samuel Smalich	RB/LB	5-7/180	sr.	53	Collin Kasper	OL/DL	5-9/250	sr.	68	Kiddrix Mursch	RB/LB	6-0/140	so.	
4	Ryan Sarver	WR/DB/K	5-10/175	jr.	15	Troy Priest	WR/DB	5-9/135	so.	25	Johnny Gergely	RB/LB	5-11/175	fr.	55	Jose Ramirez	OL/DL	5-10/200	jr.	71	Jackson Nightman	OL/DL	6-0/265	fr.	
5	Raidon Kuroda	QB/LB	6-0/210	sr.	17	Aidan Thornton	WR/RB/DB	5-10/185	sr.	29	Atticus Kimmell	WR/DB	5-9/150	fr.	57	Corbin Reinstadtler	OL/LB	6-1/230	jr.	73	Aiden Humenik	OL/DL	5-10/195	sr.	
6	Beau Yuhus	WR/LB	6-4/200	sr.	18	Dakota Lubovinsky	WR/DB	5-9/140	so.	33	Adam Stangroom	WR/DB	5-11/160	fr.	58	Cosmo Young	OL/LB	5-10/145	fr.	75	Aiden Converso	OL/DL	6-1/225	fr.	
7	Jaiden Dixon-Bretzel	WR/DB	6-4/200	sr.	19	Noah Cameron	WR/DB	5-4/100	fr.	34	Darius Stephenson	WR/DB	5-8/150	fr.	59	Mikey Albright	OL/DL	5-7/145	so.	78	Angelo Dippolito	OL/DL	5-10/265	sr.	
9	Manny Stangroom	OL/LB	5-11/165	so.	20	Chad Brown	WR/DB	5-3/140	so.	35	Matt Remington	WR/LB	5-10/130	fr.	60	Rocco Zugai	TE/LB	5-6/140	so.	79	Ethan Pawlik	WR/DB	6-0/145	fr.	
10	Mikey Bobnar	QB/DB	6-1/165	so.	21	Dom Liscotti	WR/LB	5-7/135	so.	40	Cooper Beers	RB/LB	5-9/180	so.	61	Lukas Waltonbaugh	OL/DL	6-1/340	sr.	88					



# STEEL VALLEY TOPS LIST OF 2A CONTENDERS

BY JONATHAN BOMBULIE

Steel Valley's Ray Braszo is one of those old-school high school football coaches who generally has about as much use for preseason predictions as he does for a TikTok account.

But tell him the Ironmen look like the favorites in WPIAL Class 2A football this season, and he'll begrudgingly admit — with an important caveat about the hard work that will be required — that his team should at least be in the conversation.

"I think we're a playoff team, for sure," Braszo said. "There are a few question marks on our O-line, with some of our guys who just have to keep working, but if we keep Donald (Barksdale) healthy and our quarterback plays good football this year, I think we're going to have a pretty good defense. We'll be hard to beat, I think."

It all starts with Barksdale, one of the WPIAL's most dynamic playmakers who scored 37 touchdowns last season. His brother Da'Ron Barksdale, a fellow Division I target who does his best work in the defensive backfield, should be back from a knee injury by the conference opener.

RaSaun Hough, who had a 77-yard fumble return for a touchdown in last year's WPIAL finals, is a difference maker in the trenches. Jaden Cabbagestalk has experience at quarterback. Del Shields was the team's top receiver last year and an all-conference pick as a defensive back. Cay'son Simpkins is an undersized linebacker who does nothing but make plays.

There's an abundance of talent, for sure, but by no means should anyone start planning the parade through the streets of Munhall just yet.

There is a deep crop of contenders for whom an Acrisure Stadium celebration in November is a realistic goal.

The top challengers to Steel Valley in the Allegheny Conference have changed. Imani Christian moved up to Class 3A, and Serra Catholic dropped into Class A.

They've been replaced by South Park and Shady Side Academy, playoff teams in Class 3A last season, as well as a dangerous Our Lady of the Sacred Heart squad up from Class A.



Steel Valley's Donald Barksdale runs against Mohawk in the WPIAL Class 2A semifinals last year.

South Park, with a ground attack led by running back Eric Doerue and twin linemen Parker and Troy Cunningham, looks particularly formidable.

There could be a changing of the guard in the smashmouth Midwestern Athletic Conference. Beaver Falls lost a ton of talent from its WPIAL championship team a year ago, including coach Nick Nardone, who stepped down in January. New coach Jim Mooney will have to retool in a hurry.

The MAC favorite just might be resurgent Ellwood City under coach Dan Bradley. The Wolverines ended a 27-game losing streak in 2022, but that's a distant memory now. With running back Elijah Palmer-McCane, quarter-

back Chris Smiley and lineman Evan Tweddell, Ellwood City's offense will be a handful for any opponent.

Western Beaver is a contender with sophomore Jaivin Peel at the helm. Peel, who set a WPIAL freshman passing record with 2,898 yards last year, announced in July he'd be transferring to Central Catholic but reversed course and was ruled fully eligible to play for the Golden Beavers at an Aug. 12 WPIAL hearing. Western Beaver has won seven games in each of the last three seasons.

Led by star receiver Bobby Fadden, Mohawk will have something to say about how the MAC plays out before it's all said and done as well.

The conference also saw a high-profile change, with last year's champ, Neshannock, dropping down to Class A and perennial Class A power Union bumping up to take its place.

Washington's bid to repeat as Century Conference champs will be aided by an offensive line returning four of five starters.

The new threat in the Century is Seton LaSalle. The Rebels bring back 10 starters from a team that went 5-5 in Class 3A last season, including an all-star defensive backfield with Logan King, Nelson Coleman and Khalil Taylor.

Waynesburg, with top quarterback Jake Stephenson returning, is also a team to watch.

## THE FAVORITES

### 1. Steel Valley (10-2)

The Ironmen easily could be going for a WPIAL three-peat this season. After rolling past Beaver Falls, 34-14, in the 2022 final, they lost the rematch with the Tigers, 14-12, last fall. It was the kind of game determined by a small handful of plays, including a pair of fourth-down conversions by Beaver Falls on a fourth-quarter scoring drive. If the Ironmen are seeking revenge for that gut-wrenching loss, they'll have the talent to exact it.

### 2. Washington (11-2)

### 3. South Park (7-5)

### 4. Ellwood City (5-6)

### 5. Seton LaSalle (5-5)

## THE STARS

### DONALD BARKSDALE

#### Steel Valley, sr., RB/DB

An instinctive runner with impressive cutback ability and 4.5 speed, Barksdale ran for 2,061 yards last season. He's also a threat to pick off a pass or run back a punt for a score.

### PARKER AND TROY CUNNINGHAM

#### South Park, sr., OL/DL

With the Cunningham twins blocking for star running back Erie Doerue, South Park's ground game will be the envy of Class 2A. The 6-foot-4, 290-pound Parker, headed to James Madison, delights in driving would-be tacklers miles away from the ball carrier. The 6-3, 265-pound Troy, with multiple Division I offers, is disruptive as a pass rusher.

### KHALIL TAYLOR

#### Seton LaSalle, so., WR/DB

A 6-foot, 182-pound speedster who has been clocked at 4.43 in the 40, Taylor filled up an amazing highlight reel as a freshman. Taylor already has scholarship offers from numerous big-time programs, including Pitt, Penn State and West Virginia.

### VANN KAVALS

#### Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, sr., QB/DE

The 6-5, 240-pound Kavals has been limited by injuries the last two seasons, but he can fire off deep balls or make passes underneath with touch. Perhaps he's at his best, though, as a defensive end, which is where he likely will play at Akron.

### CAMDEN LEWIS

#### South Allegheny, sr., TE/RB/LB

The 6-3, 235-pound Lewis looks good as a bruising fullback alongside the speedy Cameron Epps, and he can make opposing pass defenses pay as a tight end, but make no mistake, he's a linebacker at heart.

## DON'T MISS

### 8.30: Washington at Steel Valley

It won't take long for a Class 2A favorite to emerge after these powerhouses meet in a nonconference showdown in Week 1.

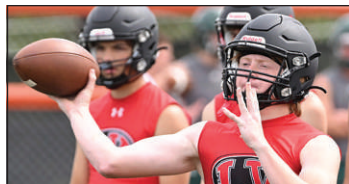
### 9.13: Mohawk at Ellwood City

The upstart Wolverines have some of the top offensive weapons in Class 2A. They'll find out just how far their rebuild has come in their Midwestern Athletic Conference opener.

### 10.5: South Park at OLSH

This October matchup could determine which team has the best shot at knocking off Steel Valley in the Allegheny Conference.





**BODEN SCHREYER**

**Coach:**  
Roger Beitel  
**2023 record:**  
2-8, 1-6 in Class  
2A Allegheny  
Conference  
**All-time record:** 272-372-14



**SCHEDULE**

Date	Opponent	Time
8.23	Derry	7
8.30	at Greensburg Salem	7
9.6	Jeannette	7
9.13	Shady Side Academy*	7
9.20	at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart*	7
9.27	South Allegheny*	7
10.4	at Charleroi	7
10.11	at South Park*	7
10.18	Steel Valley*	7
10.25	Apollo-Ridge*	7

\*CONFERENCE GAME

**STATISTICAL LEADERS**

**Passing:** Boden Schreyer  
21-43, 207 yards, 1 TD  
**Rushing:** John Jablunovsky  
135-892 yards, 8 TDs  
**Receiving:** Jablunovsky  
8-96 yards

**FAST FACTS**

- Ligonier Valley has won three consecutive openers and eight of its past nine openers.
- Since re-joining the WPIAL in 2020, the Rams are 22-18 and have qualified for the WPIAL playoffs twice.

# LIGONIER VALLEY LOOKS TO REBOUND FROM DOWN YEAR

BY PAUL SCHOFIELD

A 2-8 season didn't sit well with the Ligonier Valley football team and coach Roger Beitel in 2023.

Injuries and a youthful squad that lacked experience were big reasons for the rare losing season. The Rams had only one senior on the team (Noah Gluck), and he got injured in the season opener and missed the rest of the season.

Instead of moping about the season, Beitel and his troops went to work the Monday following the loss to Derry in the season finale.

The team was in the weight room getting bigger, faster and stronger. Beitel also held school for some important positions like quarterback and other skill positions.

"We worked extra on our skills," Beitel said. "Because of the injuries, we had players playing out of position."

Inexperience will not be a problem this season for the Rams as almost everyone who played returned. Beitel said there were a few players who didn't return.

Heading the list of returnees is senior running back John Jablunovsky, who rushed for 892 yards and scored eight touchdowns. Also back is Aaron Dennison, who missed the 2023 season with an injury. Freshman Niko Brown may also see playing time in the backfield.

"We're going to run the ball with who we have returning in the backfield and up front," Beitel said. "The offensive line will be a lot bigger and stronger."

Jablunovsky was a first-team



**JOHN JABLUNOVSKY**

all-conference running back.

Seniors Sam Caldwell (tackle), Wade Lamont (guard) and Noah Dunn (tackle) are the most experienced up front. They are joined by junior Tony Lonas (guard) and sophomore Dakota McDonald (center). Senior Hunter Carr returns at tight end.

Junior Boden Schreyer returns at quarterback, but he's getting pushed by junior Jacob Petalino. Schreyer threw for only 207 yards

in 2023. Jablunovsky was the leading receiver with eight catches for 96 yards.

Seniors Mark Jablunovsky and Duncan Foust, junior Cameron Kunkle and freshman Greyson Daugherty will be at wide receiver.

"Because we played so many inexperienced players last year, the game went at a fast pace for them," Beitel said. "The game should slow down for them as they gain more experience."

While the offense looks to be more explosive, the defense looks to be dominant.

Beitel especially likes his team's defensive depth.

Leading the way are senior defensive back Maxx Oberley, who returns as the leading tackler with 86, and Kunkle, a defensive end who had 61 tackles. Linebacker Bryce Vida had 7½ sacks, and defensive end Carr had five tackles.

Others back include linemen Lonas, Lamont, junior Connor Faas, Caldwell and junior Lucas Krieger; outside linebackers senior Aiden Mulheren and Dennison; inside backers Oberley, Faust and junior Brody Stitt; cornerbacks Mark Jablunovsky, senior Demetrious Owens and senior Alex Marquis; and safeties John Jablunovsky and Kunkle.

"We have a lot of kids fighting for jobs," Beitel said. "Most of them are in the upper two classes. The younger players will be given a chance to grow and compete against kids their age."

Ligonier Valley will have some new faces on its conference schedule. Gone are Imani Christian (Class 3A), Yough (3A), Burrell (3A), Derry (3A) and Serra Catholic (A).

The new faces in the conference are Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, South Allegheny, South Park and Shady Side Academy. They join holdovers Steel Valley and Apollo-Ridge. Charleroi is a new nonconference opponent. Other nonconference opponents are Derry, Greensburg Salem and Jeannette.

**ROSTER**

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht./Wt.	Cl.	No.	Name	Pos.	Ht./Wt.	Cl.	No.	Name	Pos.	Ht./Wt.	Cl.
11	Brody Stitt	WR/LB	5-8/190	jr.	29	Mark Jablunovsky	WR/DB	5-9/152	sr.	52	Connor Faas	OL/LB	5-10/208	jr.
12	Elijah Robinson	WR/LB	5-5/153	so.	34	Bryce Vida	RB/LB	5-8/190	jr.	54	Sam Caldwell	OL/DL	6-1/324	sr.
15	Aidan Mulheren	WR/DB	5-8/162	sr.	35	Niko Brown	RB/DB	5-7/148	fr.	55	Tony Lonas	OL/DL	5-8/226	jr.
17	Andrew Fuller	QB/LB	5-4/126	fr.	40	Connor Saxton	WR/DB	5-5/122	fr.	57	Nolan Huba	OL/DL	6-0/284	jr.
21	Cooper Hegan	WR/DB	5-4/132	fr.	42	Noah Mack	OL/LB	5-8/203	so.	58	Noah Dunn	OL/DL	5-11/280	sr.
24	Demetrious Owens	RB/DB	5-7/150	sr.	43	Ryan Mohney	RB/LB	5-4/160	fr.	63	Ethan Friscarella	OL/DL	5-10/231	so.
25	Aaron Dennison	RB/LB	5-9/170	jr.	44	Maxx Oberley	WR/DB	5-9/181	sr.	65	Jacob Robertson	OL/DL	6-0/243	so.
26	Jonathon Constable	WR/DB	5-9/166	jr.	46	Knourth Drury	RB/DB	5-4/113	fr.	66	Lucas Krieger	OL/DL	5-11/223	jr.
28	Jacob Petalino	RB/DB	5-7/150	jr.	51	Karson White	OL/DE	5-8/158	fr.	67	Michael Hillen	OL/LB	5-9/203	so.
71	Wyatt Queer	OL/DL	5-11/285	so.	72	Wade Lamont	OL/DL	5-8/234	sr.	76	Kaleb Schmidt	OL/DL	5-10/303	fr.
77	Dakota McDonald	OL/DL	5-11/296	so.	77	Alex Marquis	WR/DB	5-8/150	sr.	80	Cameron Kunkle	TE/DE	6-0/182	jr.
82	Nathan Beech	WR/DB	5-5/149	so.	83	John White	WR/DB	5-11/144	sr.	88				

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# FORT CHERRY HAS TARGET ON ITS BACK

BY BILL HARTLEP

Fort Cherry got a taste of a PIAA championship game atmosphere last fall. Now the Rangers want to return to Cumberland Valley and raise a state championship trophy.

A year after winning their first WPIAL football championship and finishing as PIAA runners-up, the Rangers again have the look of a title contender behind junior quarterback Matt Sieg and a slew of returning starters on both sides of the ball.

“We’re just excited to see what we’re about,” Fort Cherry coach Tanner Garry said. “We’re going into the season knowing that there are going to be targets on our backs and we’re just going to see where the season takes us.”

In his two-year career, Sieg has thrown for 2,891 yards and 31 touchdowns and run for 4,371 yards and 72 scores. He earned all-state recognition last season and was the Black Hills Conference’s Offensive MVP. Also back is all-conference wide receiver Shane Cornali, who caught 35 passes for 676 yards and 10 scores. The Rangers did graduate all-state linebacker Lou Ryan, who had 130 tackles.

Bishop Canevin should again provide competition in the Black Hills. The Crusaders went 10-2 and reached the semifinals but lost twice to Fort Cherry. They have five starters back on both sides of the ball, including quarterback Kole Olszewski, lineman Braiden Sudor and defensive end Henry Barbisch, an Air Force commit. Brothers Jayden and Jermell Lindsey will be key factors at receiver and linebacker, respectively.

Serra Catholic joins the Black Hills after dropping down from Class 2A, where it reached the playoffs. Quarterback Quadir Stribling, who threw for nearly 2,500 yards and 27 TDs last season, and wide receiver De’reon Washington, who caught 41 passes for 965 yards, each return, but the Eagles will miss fellow pass catcher Jesere Young (615 yards).

“We have a pretty tough conference,” Garry said. “That can be a good thing or a bad thing. If you take a look at the conference, most of the teams were in the playoffs last year. ... Obviously, (it’s) a pretty tough conference,



Fort Cherry coach Tanner Garry talks with quarterback Matt Sieg during last year’s WPIAL final.

but it can make diamonds as well.”

Several members of the Big Seven Conference could also challenge for Class A supremacy this season. South Side was the WPIAL runner-up last season, falling to Fort Cherry, 42-28, in the final. While Union moved up in class, Neshannock has dropped down from 2A, where it won the Midwestern Athletic Conference. Rochester and Laurel tied for third in the conference standings, and the Rams won a playoff game last fall.

“(The Big Seven is) usually where the WPIAL champion comes from or at least plays in the game,” Laurel coach Brian Cooper said. “No disrespect to any other (conferences), but we know we’re in for a grind.”

South Side returns three all-conference players on offense — running back A.C. Corfield, tight end Slayton Williams and offensive lineman Mateja Pavlovich. Corfield ran for 1,286 yards and had 17 touchdowns. The Rams will miss graduated RB Ryan Navarra, who ran for more than 1,400 yards, as well as QB Brody Almashy, who scored 20 TDs.

Neshannock has seven returning starters on offense and five on defense, including senior offensive lineman Tony Perrotta,

who was an all-conference pick last fall. QB Jino Mozzoccio threw for nearly 1,000 yards last season, and junior RB Anthony Eakin ran for 800-plus yards and nine scores.

Clairton will vie for another Eastern Conference title behind a slew of all-conference performers — RB/S Drahcir Jones, WR Zaemere Correll, OG Chad Carpenter, OT/LB Avaughn Pompey, DT Khalil Williams, DE Tahvaz Armstrong, DBs Donte Wright and Taris Wooding and athlete Michael Ruffin.

The Bears finished 10-2 last year and 6-0 in the Eastern Conference, edging Greensburg Central Catholic (8-4, 5-1) and Jeannette (7-4, 4-2). The Centurions will rely on Samir Crosby, who is moving to quarterback after earning all-conference honors at wide receiver and kick returner.

Jeannette will highlight the talents of all-conference WR Kymon’e Brown, and Leechburg will eye a fourth straight trip to the playoffs behind two all-conference players — tight end/linebacker Jake Cummings and defensive end Lucas Gamble — as well as QB Jayden Floyd, who threw for nearly 1,500 yards.

California captured the Tri-County South Conference title at 7-0 last season and went 10-2 overall after a first-round

playoff victory over Jeannette and quarterfinal loss to Bishop Canevin. The Trojans were led by a defense that allowed just 11.5 points per game. They will have to replace Spencer Petrucci, who ran for more than 1,500 yards, and Jake Layhue, who was an all-state safety and accounted for 24 touchdowns on offense.

Lee Qualk, Malachi Peak, Landon Abercrombie, Caden Monticelli and Niko Georgagis all were all-conference and return for the Trojans.

West Greene (8-3, 6-1 last season) has six starters back on offense and defense, including all-conference QB Lane Allison, who threw for nearly 1,000 yards and 16 TDs, and linemen Colin Whyte and Levi Smith. Whyte made 98 tackles and four sacks at linebacker last season. Smith made 46 tackles along the defensive line.

“As long as we stay relatively healthy, we expect to be in the top half of the Tri-County South fighting for a playoff spot,” West Greene coach Brian Jackson said.

Jefferson-Morgan (6-5, 5-2) could also challenge for the conference title behind all-conference quarterback Houston Guesman, who threw for more than 900 yards and 11 TDs and ran for nearly 750 yards and nine scores.

## THE FAVORITES

### 1. Fort Cherry (15-1)

It will be tough to top last season for the Rangers, when they won their first WPIAL title and were PIAA runners-up. Though they face a tough test in the Black Hills Conference, they start the season as the favorite behind all-state quarterback Matt Sieg.

### 2. Clairton (10-3)

### 3. South Side (13-1)

### 4. Neshannock (9-2)

### 5. Bishop Canevin (10-2)

\* RECORDS FROM 2023

## THE STARS

### HENRY BARBISCH

#### Bishop Canevin, sr., TE/DE

An Air Force commit, Barbisch (6-foot-4, 235) earned all-conference honors last season at defensive end after he made 47 tackles, including 16 for a loss, and nine sacks.

### SAMIR CROSBY

#### Greensburg Central Catholic, jr., QB/DB

Crosby will move to QB after playing mostly receiver and running back.

Last year, he caught 35 passes for 690 yards and seven TDs and ran for 634 yards and nine scores and led the Centurions with 107 tackles. He tied a team high with six interceptions. Harvard, Buffalo, Fordham, Kent State, Miami (Ohio) and UNLV have offered.

### DRAHCIR JONES

#### Clairton, sr., RB/FS

Jones ran for nearly 1,500 yards and had a team-leading 15 TDs last season in helping Clairton reach the WPIAL semifinals. He ran for 271 yards and four TDs in a 40-28 win over Greensburg Central Catholic. On defense, he had 44 tackles and two interceptions.

### KOLE OLSZEWSKI

#### Bishop Canevin, sr., QB

Olszewski was a top-10 passer in the WPIAL last year after throwing for 2,180 yards with 36 touchdowns to become the school’s record holder for passing yardage.

### MATT SIEG

#### Fort Cherry, jr., QB/DB

Sieg led the WPIAL in rushing last season with 2,389 yards and threw for 1,670 yards. He had a hand in 63 touchdowns to lead the WPIAL. The No. 5-ranked player in Pa.’s class of 2026 is a four-start recruit and has 14 scholarship offers, including Pitt, Penn State and West Virginia.

## DON'T MISS

### 10.11: Fort Cherry vs. Bishop Canevin at Dormont Stadium

These teams combined for nearly 90 points a year ago before Fort Cherry won 48-41. The Black Hills champion Rangers also won the rematch 33-21 in the WPIAL semifinals.

### 10.11: California at West Greene

Senior night at Kennedy Field could go a long way in West Greene’s quest to dethrone California atop the Tri-County South. The Trojans won this matchup 44-12 last season.

### 10.25: Laurel at Neshannock

The battle for Lawrence County supremacy takes on extra meaning this season now that Laurel and Neshannock are Big 7 foes. This regular-season finale matchup could determine playoff positioning.





TUCKER LLOYD

**Coach:**

JT Thompson  
**2023 record:**  
 8-4, 5-1 in Class  
 A Eastern Con-  
 ference  
**All-time record:** 377-251-18



**SCHEDULE**

Date	Opponent	Time
8.23	at Shady Side Academy	7
8.30	Mt. Pleasant	7
9.6	at Apollo-Ridge	7
9.13	at Clairton*	7
9.20	Brentwood*	7
9.28	at Riverview*	noon
10.4	Jeannette*	7
10.11	at Springdale*	7
10.18	at Frazier*	7
10.25	at Leechburg*	7

\*CONFERENCE GAME

**STATISTICAL LEADERS**

**Passing:** Tyree Turner\*  
 88-156, 1,584 yards, 18 TDs  
**Rushing:** Turner\*  
 112-684 yards, 12 TDs  
**Receiving:** Samir Crosby  
 35-690 yards, 7 TDs

\*GRADUATED

**FAST FACTS**

- Junior Samir Crosby has a half-dozen Division I scholarship offers, including Harvard, Kent State, Fordham, Miami (Ohio), Buffalo and UNLV.
- GCC averaged 32 points and allowed 23.8 and finished second in the Eastern Conference behind Clairton.

# GREENSBURG CC PRIMED TO FOLLOW CROSBY'S LEAD

BY BILL BECKNER JR.

Reaching the quarterfinals of the WPIAL Class A playoffs was a highlight for Greensburg Central Catholic coach JT Thompson in his first season.

The experience his team gained from a first-round win over West Greene and a loss to South Side could yield benefits this fall.

GCC has not made the quarters since 2011.

"It's very valuable," said Thompson, whose Centurions finished 8-4. "The kids can see what they can do in a year. It gives them confidence and trust in each other."

GCC returns nine starters — four on offense and five on defense — including Division I prospect and big-play junior Samir Crosby, the Centurions' centerpiece.

He has heavy interest from Mid-American Conference schools, but his recruiting could be just beginning to blossom.

Versatile, fast, and shifty, Crosby (5-foot-9, 165 pounds) is expected to play quarterback with the graduation of talented leader Tyree Turner, now a basketball player at John Carroll.

Turner threw for 1,584 yards and ran for 684 while figuring in on 30 touchdowns.

Crosby accounted for 1,874 yards last season, catching a team-best 35 receptions for 690 yards and rushing for 634 yards.

He produced 22 touchdowns: nine rushing, seven receiving, two on kick returns, two passing and two on defense.

"We're similar to last year in some ways," Thompson said. "We have that talent at quarterback



SAMIR CROSBY

with Samir like we did with Tyree. We want to get the ball to Samir, but we also want to be balanced. He can't take 75 snaps and 75 hits. There are 11 players out there. We want to try to spread it around."

The ability for GCC to be balanced will depend on the development of the backfield, which had not settled on a starter or starters at running back heading into camp.

"Right now, it's by committee," Thompson said. "Last year, it was Nick Dlugos, but when he got hurt, it was a big loss. I am a big defensive guy, so I want to establish the run. Right now, it's wide open."

Junior Jerry Davis, who transferred from Serra Catholic, is a speedster who could be a big-play target for Crosby.

"Jerry has one speed, and it's

1,000 mph," Thompson said.

Another junior is Landon Honick, who showed flashes as a break-away runner last year.

Senior Tucker Lloyd (6-2, 195) should make an impact as a running back and linebacker. He played at The Kiski School last year and had 71 tackles and five sacks in eight games.

Also keep an eye on freshman Blaze Bugosh in the backfield.

Other receiving options are juniors Jackson McMullen and Jackson Lowden and sophomores Colin Smively and Luke Semelka.

A would-be contributor was incoming senior Aidan Allison, but he transferred to Hempfield.

McMullen and junior James Botti are possibilities at tight end.

Up front, Thompson brings back Botti, sophomore Aiden Lent, junior Henry Detweiler and junior Matt Mazowiecki.

Crosby and Turner each had six interceptions last season. Crosby also was active on defense. He led the team with 107 tackles.

Allison was the fifth-leading tackler with 56 stops.

"We have a lot of young kids," Thompson said. "We have a lot of smart kids. It's a whole new team with a new personality."

Senior Ty Rozier, who had 65 tackles and three sacks, did not play football this season.

A freshman also could see time at quarterback in Bobby Smithnosky, the brother of former Mt. Pleasant softball standouts Mary and Sophia Smithnosky.

GCC has nine freshmen on the roster. Thompson said the group shows promise.

**ROSTER**

No.	Name	Pos.	Cl.	6	Chase Ferrier	LB	fr.	23	Jackson Lowden	WR/DB	jr.	54	Nathan Kuhn	OL/LB	so.	72	Nicolas Degre	OL/DL	so.
0	Luke Semelka	H/LB	so.	10	Jerry Davis	WR/DB	jr.	30	John-Michael Landa	RB/LB	jr.	56	Aiden Lent	OL/DL	so.	73	Jonah Schneider	OL	sr.
2	Landon Honick	WR/DB	jr.	12	Samir Crosby	QB/DB	jr.	32	Tucker Lloyd	H/LB	sr.	57	Matthew Mazowiecki	OL/DL	jr.	75	Sam Dlugos	OL/DL	fr.
3	Colin Smively	WR/DB	so.	13	Alex Snively	WR/DB	fr.	45	Brock McMullen	WR/LB	so.	58	Rhys Weber	OL/DL	fr.	78	Nicholas Sherrin	OL/DL	fr.
4	Blase Bugosh	RB/DB	fr.	16	Jackson McMullen	QB/LB	sr.	48	Tommy Ames	TE/LB	so.	60	Sam Kifer	OL/DL	so.	88	James Botti	TE/DE	jr.
5	Bobby Smithnosky	QB/DB	fr.	21	Logan Polomoscianik	WR	fr.	53	Enzo Bard	OL/DL	fr.	63	Henry Detweiler	OL/DL	jr.				

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# 'WORK IS FAR FROM DONE' FOR JEANNETTE

by PAUL SCHOFIELD

There is an old saying that suggests "it's tough to keep a good man down."

In the case of Jeannette, that applies to the football program.

After a shocking 2021 season, a year after winning a WPIAL Class A title and losing a heartbreaker to Steelton-Highspire in the PIAA championship game, the Jeannette program saw numerous underclassmen leave the program.

Those departures left loyal Jeannette fans stunned and probably cost the school more championships. The program was left with a depleted roster, and the result was a 1-9 season and the departure of a great coach in Roy Hall.

In came Jeannette alumnus Tommy Paulone Jr. to revive the program, which he is doing steadily.

The Jayhawks finished 3-8 in his first season and 7-4 during his second season last year as the program spirals upward.

Jeannette looks to continue its rise heading into Paulone's third season.

"We played together as a team that first year," Paulone said. "There were a couple games that we felt we left things on the table. We reversed that last year. We scored more than 300 points, and we want to continue to be more efficient."

"We hand out awards for a 100-yard game. We had more than 10 last year, and we want to build on that."



KYMON'E BROWN

Despite the loss to graduation of quarterback Peyton Molter and running back Noah Sanders, Paulone feels the offense will be OK. Molter threw for 1,573 yards and 20 touchdowns, and Sanders rushed for 1,047 yards and 10 scores.

Sophomore Markus McGowan will get the first shot at quarterback. Paulone said others may get an opportunity.

Junior Kymon'e Brown will be someone McGowan will look for in the passing game. Brown was the leading receiver with 29 catches for 477 yards and 10 touchdowns. Sophomore Jayce Powell and junior Noah Sunder are other targets.

Powell had 15 catches for 270 yards and Sunder six catches for 62 yards.

Numerous players will get a

chance to fill Sanders' shoes. That group includes juniors Eli Jones, Nick Mendoza and Austin Cataldo and sophomore Majhi Sanders.

The Jayhawks return three starting linemen in senior tackle Nick Stuchell, junior center Wyatt Schaeffer and junior guard Carmine DeAnuntis.

On defense, Paulone wants the group to play fast and physical.

"We have to create havoc for our opponents," Paulone said. "We can't make it easy on them. I feel our schemes can do that."

Returning on defense are senior end Lonnie Greene, Stuchell and Schaeffer at tackle, Sunder at outside linebacker, Jones and Majhi Sanders at inside linebacker and Brown and Powell in the secondary.

Brown and Powell each had three interceptions. Powell had 33 tackles. Jones had 25 tackles and Sunder 13.

"The team has been working really hard to uphold the Jeannette tradition," Paulone said. "They are working their butts off. Our work is far from done."

Jeannette is in the Eastern Conference with Clairton, Greensburg Central Catholic, Frazier, Leechburg, Springdale, Riverview and newcomer Brentwood.

Paulone said he knows a lot about every team on the schedule except Brentwood, but he expects it to be strong. Brentwood played in the Class 2A Century Conference last year and finished 2-8.

Jeannette kicks off the season with a nonconference game against Class 3A Mt. Pleasant.



JAYCE POWELL

**Coach:** Tommy Paulone Jr.

**2023 record:** 7-4, 4-2 in Class A Eastern Conference

**All-time record:** 777-341-48



## SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Time
8.23	Mt. Pleasant	7
8.30	Apollo-Ridge	7
9.6	at Ligonier Valley	7
9.13	Frazier*	7
9.20	Leechburg*	7
9.27	at Clairton*	7
10.4	at Greensburg Central Catholic*	7
10.11	at Brentwood*	7
10.18	Springdale*	7
10.26	at Riverview*	noon

\*CONFERENCE GAME

## STATISTICAL LEADERS

**Passing:** Peyton Molter\*

95-165, 1,573 yards, 20 TDs

**Rushing:** Noah Sanders\*

125-1,047 yards, 10 TDs

**Receiving:** Kymon'e Brown

29-477 yards, 10 TDs

\*GRADUATED

## FAST FACTS

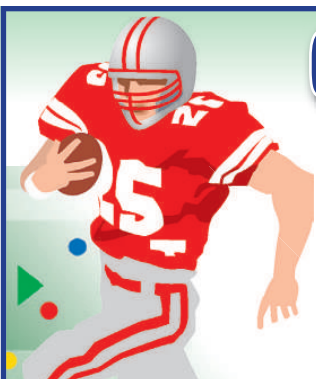
- Jeannette has won 10 WPIAL titles (1932, 1939, 1956, 1971, 1981, 1983, 2006, 2007, 2017, 2020).

- Jeannette has finished undefeated during the regular season 21 times.

- The Jayhawks have won or shared 26 conference titles.

## ROSTER

No.	Name	Pos.	Ht./Wt.	Cl.																				
0	Noah Sunder	OL/OLB	6-1/180	jr.	5	Markus McGowan	QB/DB/ILB	6-1/185	so.	12	Xavier Odooriso-Farrow	TE/OLB	6-0/180	jr.	52	Lonnie Greene	OL/DL	6-2/200	sr.	77	Chey Wright	OL/DL	5-8/275	fr.
1	Jayce Powell	WR/FS	5-8/165	so.	6	Nick Mendoza	ILB	5-10/170	jr.	13	Hunter Schaeffer	WR/DB	5-6/135	fr.	59	Wyatt Schaeffer	OL/DL	5-10/238	jr.	88	Terrell Lovelace	WR/DB	6-1/170	jr.
2	Eli Jones	RB/ILB	5-8/176	jr.	7	Issac Smartnick	WR/DB	6-1/180	jr.	19	Landon Carney	TE/OLB	5-7/150	fr.	62	Dane Simmons	OL/DL	5-10/190	fr.	99	Isaiah Jones	OL/DL/ILB	5-8/230	so.
3	Kymon'e Brown	QB/WR/DB	6-0/145	jr.	8	Jayden Smartnick	WR/DB	5-10/135	jr.	20	Austin Cataldo	RB/SS	5-4/140	jr.	63	Jayden Kennedy	OL/DL	5-10/230	jr.					
4	Majhi Sanders	FB/ILB	5-10/205	so.	9	Trevor Tillman	WR/DB	5-7/140	so.	45	Logan Bauer	FB/ILB	5-6/150	so.	67	Nick Stuchell	OL/DL	6-0/220	sr.					
					10	McAlister Steele	WR/DB/K	6-0/170	so.	50	Carmine Deanuntis	OL/DL	5-11/240	jr.	74	Jason Fletcher	OL/DL	5-6/185	fr.					



# Good Luck Jeannette Jayhawks!

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**2023 PIAA PLAYOFFS**

**CLASS 6A**  
**QUARTERFINALS**  
 Central Bucks South 27, Downingtown West 7  
 St. Joseph's Prep 59, Nazareth Area 21  
 Harrisburg 34, Manheim Township 28 (OT)  
 North Allegheny 41, McDowell 7  
**SEMIFINALS**  
 St. Joseph's Prep 49, Central Bucks South 0  
 North Allegheny 24, Harrisburg 12  
**FINAL**  
 St. Joseph's Prep 45, North Allegheny 23

**CLASS 5A**  
**QUARTERFINALS**  
 Imhotep Charter 31, Delaware Valley 7  
 Strath Haven 28, Chester 20  
 Peters Township 33, Cathedral Prep 14  
 Cocalico 23, Ephrata 9  
**SEMIFINALS**  
 Imhotep Charter 42, Strath Haven 14  
 Peters Township 14, Cocalico 9  
**FINAL**  
 Imhotep Charter 38, Peters Township 13  
**CLASS 4A**

**QUARTERFINALS**  
 Dallas 28, Msgr. Bonner 27 (OT)  
 Bishop McDevitt 23, Manheim Central 17  
 Selinsgrove 44, Juniata 14  
**SEMIFINALS**  
 Dallas 26, Bishop McDevitt 23 (2OT)  
 Aliquippa 52, Selinsgrove 32  
**FINAL**  
 Aliquippa 60, Dallas 14  
**CLASS 3A**  
**QUARTERFINALS**  
 Wyomissing 48, Danville 27  
 Northwestern Lehigh 27, Scranton Prep 6

Hickory 26, Central 13  
**SEMIFINALS**  
 Northwestern Lehigh 33, Wyomissing 24  
 Belle Vernon 42, Hickory 16  
**FINAL**  
 Belle Vernon 38, Northwestern Lehigh 7  
**CLASS 2A**  
**QUARTERFINALS**  
 Dunmore 41, Camp Hill 25  
 Southern Columbia 18, Bald Eagle Area 8  
 Westinghouse 36, Farrell 20  
**SEMIFINALS**  
 Southern Columbia 39, Dunmore 7

Westinghouse 28, Beaver Falls 8  
**FINAL**  
 Southern Columbia 21, Westinghouse 20  
**CLASS A**  
**QUARTERFINALS**  
 South Williamsport 33, Cambria Heights 0  
 Steelton Highspire 43, Lackawanna Trail 25  
 Redbank Valley 44, Cambridge Springs 0  
**SEMIFINALS**  
 Steelton Highspire 48, South Williamsport 21  
 Fort Cherry 33, Redbank Valley 23  
**FINAL**  
 Steelton Highspire 42, Fort Cherry 8

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# BIGGER ROSTER BENEFITS MONESSEN'S PLAYOFF HOPES

BY CHARLES CURTI

The refrain has become a familiar one: Monessen enters football season with a small roster, comes dangerously close to not having enough players some weeks then, somehow, manages to qualify for the WPIAL Class A playoffs.

It has happened in each of coach Wade Brown's three seasons at the helm, and 2024 likely will shape up in similar fashion. Or will it?

The Greyhounds regularly had between 20 and 25 players for summer workouts. Maintaining a roster count somewhere near 25 would be a coup for Brown, especially considering there were a couple of games last season when Monessen dressed 15 players.

But Monessen (4-7, 3-4 in the Tri-County South last season) is preparing for what seems to be the inevitable.

"That's just how it's been all our life," said junior running back Tyvaughn Kershaw, an all-conference honoree last season. "Even in younger leagues, we would go into games with like 11 players, so we knew it would come back eventually.

"Eventually, people quit, and we're still going to have to figure out something to do because I know we're going to be low."

The good news is many of the players likely to stick around saw plenty of playing time last season. Four of them, all juniors this season, were all-conference performers: running back Kershaw, fellow running back Tavian Taylor and offensive/defensive linemen Rodney Johnson and Torrence Taylor.

Kershaw rushed for 741 yards and 10 touchdowns and also was a threat as a receiver.

"He's a special, talented kid," Brown said. "He has a lot of abilities. ... We're really going to try to lean on him going into his junior year."

With Taylor, the Greyhounds figure to have a strong 1-2 punch in the running game. But teams might be forced to respect Monessen's passing game, too.

Dennis Hawkins played quarterback for most of the 2023 season, and the freshman produced six



**DENNIS HAWKINS**

scoring passes and only three interceptions.

Five of those TD passes came in one game, a win over Mapletown in the penultimate game of the season that helped get Monessen into the playoffs.

At 6-foot-3, Hawkins still is growing into his body, but Brown expects his sophomore signal-caller to take steps forward.

"He's a 4.0 student," Brown said, adding that Hawkins' height will help him see over defenses. "We're depending on him to run the of-

fense. It's always great to have a kid who is a 4.0 kid running your offense. He's an athletic kid, and he's growing seemingly by the day."

One player who might surprise is senior two-way lineman Jacob Savage (6-2, 230 pounds). He played his first season of football last year but showed tremendous upside, even getting some college looks, Brown said.

Brown also is counting on — as usual — a group of incoming freshmen to bolster the lineup.

In that regard, Brown hopes there is a silver lining in his team's traditionally small roster. He hopes young players will realize the opportunity they have to contribute right away.

He also hopes all the players learned valuable lessons from last season's late rally.

"It would have been easy for these kids to just lay down and quit and say, 'We're 1-5. The season is over,'" Brown said. "But for the kids to stick with it and fight through it ... that's big."



**JAY'VEON JEFFRIES**

**Coach:**  
Wade Brown  
**2023 record:**  
4-7, 3-4 in Class A Tri-County South



**All-time record:** 682-401-47

## SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Time
8.23	Charleroi	7
8.30	West Greene	7
9.6	at Beth-Center	7
9.13	Serra Catholic*	7
9.20	Fort Cherry*	7
9.27	at South Side	7
10.4	at Chartiers-Houston*	7
10.11	Burgettstown*	7
10.19	at Bishop Canevin*	7
10.25	at Cornell*	7

\*CONFERENCE GAME

## STATISTICAL LEADERS

**Passing:** Dennis Hawkins  
41-98, 690 yards, 6 TDs  
**Rushing:** Tyvaughn Kershaw  
111-741 yards, 10 TDs  
**Receiving:** Lorenzo Gardner\*  
17-394 yards, 2 TDs

\*GRADUATED

## FAST FACTS

- Last season's victory over Mapletown was the Greyhounds' first under Wade Brown.
- In each of its four wins in 2023, Monessen gave up 20 points or fewer.
- Sophomore quarterback Dennis Hawkins was class president last year.
- Three of the Greyhounds' four wins last season were at home.

## ROSTER

Name	Pos.	Ht./Wt.	Cl.
Kam Anderson	HB/LB	5-7/170	sr.
Azariah Austin	OL/DL	5-3/250	fr.
Xavier Bell	OL/DL	5-9/265	fr.
Ke'zere Butler	WR/DB	5-7/130	fr.
Jaekwon Craggette	HB/LB	6-0/160	so.
Brayden Crews	OL/LB	5-6/175	jr.
Roodly Destyl	OL/LB	5-10/225	fr.
Daniel Dozier	OL/DL/LB	5-10/235	fr.
Adaye Fields	QB/LB	5-7/135	fr.
Dennis Hawkins III	QB/S	6-3/170	so.
Tommy Hewitt	OL/DL	6-4/260	jr.
Micheal Hines	RB/DB	5-10/150	so.
Amari Jackson	WR/DB	5-8/140	fr.
Ashton Jackson	WR/DB	5-5/170	fr.
Jay'Veon Jeffries	WR/LB	6-2/165	so.
Rodney Johnson	TE/FB/DE	6-0/230	jr.
Tyvaughn Kershaw	RB/DB	5-9/185	jr.
Tim Kershaw III	WR/DB	5-10/160	so.
Kayden Kolbeck	WR/DB	6-2/170	so.
Jace Mackey	WR/DB	5-5/135	fr.
Nick Marinos	OL/DL	5-8/227	so.
Damaje Martin	WR/LB	5-9/150	so.
Kaier Payne	TE/DE	6-2/180	so.
Darivon Prince	OL/DL	5-7/190	jr.
Davontae Robinson	WR/DB	5-9/160	sr.
Jacob Savage	OL/DL	6-2/240	so.
King Shabazz	TE/LB	6-0/155	fr.
Tavian Taylor	RB/DB	5-7/160	jr.
Torrence Taylor	OL/DL	6-0/225	jr.
Daniel Towler	RB/DE/LB	5-5/155	fr.
Terrodric Williams	WR/DB	5-7/150	fr.

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