

ARE YOU READY FOR SOME FOOTBALL?

By BRIAN CARSON

The stage is set and the Friday night lights are about to be turned back on as another exciting season of Pennsylvania high school football is about to kick off.

For fans of District 6 football, opening week features plenty of rivalry games and quality match-ups to whet any football connoisseur's appetite.

The Pennsylvania Football News Preseason Rankings finds a slew of D6 teams ranked or slotted as teams to watch. Leading the way are Tyrone and Bishop Carroll, both ranked eighth in Class AA and A respectively.

The Golden Eagles, coached by John Franco, return plenty of talent from last seasons 10-1 squad, including PFN All-state DL Tyler Hoover. In addition, Tyler Gillmen (492-4) and Johnny Franco (418-6) return at running back, while Doug Morrow is back at tight end. Tyler Golden takes over for the departed Leonard Wilson at QB.

Head coach Craig Sponsky and his Huskies return several key players to a defense that gave up only 12.8 points per game in 2005. Defensive backs Adam Crookshank and Matt Stoltz, along with LB Scott Bradley will look to give Bishop Carroll back-to-back championships. Offensively, the Huskies must replace RB Paul Forcellini and QB Brock Lauer, but the talent is in place for a smooth transition.

Earning honorable mention honors in the preseason were State College, led by All-State selection Nathan Stupar at TE/LB, and Altoona in Class AAAA; Huntingdon in AAA; Bishop McCort and Forest Hills in Class AA; and Bellwood-Antis and Portage in Class A.

Here's a look at some of the key week one games on tap in District 6:

Bedford @ Bishop McCort

The Crushers return with the power running attack of Scott Lewis (638-5) and Brad Barbin (624-8). The Bison, who lost twice to McCort last season, return RB Jesse Feaster (462-4).

Bellwood-Antis @ Tyrone

The backyard battle between the Blue Devils and the Golden Eagles is always an exciting one and features two of the best coaches in the state in Franco and John Hayes. Tyrone won last years battle 31-19. The Blue Devils return all-state RB Josh Kleinfelter (2,023-28), as well as Devon Clapper (251 yards rushing, 20 receptions) and LB Evan Hughes (86 tackles, four sacks).

Hollidaysburg @ Altoona

The Golden Tigers drop to AAA this season and will have to face a strong Mountain Lion squad led by QB AJ Alexander, RB Alphonso Lewis, OL Brant Clouser and LB Wes Plummer in this rivalry game.

Huntingdon @ Mount Union

The Bearcats begin defense of their district title by taking on county rival Mount Union. Huntingdon coach Jim Zauzig welcomes back All-State selected Zack Reed (22-275-6, 131 tackles) at TE/LB and Joey Riley (353-6) at RB. Top receivers Shawn Shoemaker and Kevin Cressman return as well.

Forest Hills @ Westmont-Hilltop

Head coach Don Bailey (267-71-8) is back for year number 33 with the defending D6 Class AA champions. The Rangers return All-State QB Travis Yearick (2,240 yards, 25 TDs) and talented DB Ross Carpenter (52 tackles, four interceptions). The Hilltoppers counter with a strong defense, led by linebackers Andrew Chessa, Quinten Cameron and Zack Trotz.

Penn Cambria @ Johnstown

An opening night battle between two playoff teams from a year ago. The Panthers are paced by RB/LB Matt Holsberger (577-5). The senior also scored 141 tackles and seven sacks from his linebacker spot. The Trojans feature RB Antwan Reed (854-8); QB Brandon Hody (1,030 yards, 10 TDs) and linebacker Aaron Brezovic (61 tackles, 17 sacks).

Week One Schedule:

Bald Eagle Area (Dist 6 AA 0-0-0) @ Penns Valley (Dist 6 AA 0-0-0)
Bedford (Dist 5 AA 0-0-0) @ Bishop McCort (Dist 6 AA 0-0-0)
Bellwood-Antis (Dist 6 A 0-0-0) @ Tyrone (Dist 6 AA 0-0-0)
Blacklick Valley (Dist 6 A 0-0-0) @ Windber (Dist 5 A 0-0-0)
Cambria Heights (Dist 6 AA 0-0-0) @ Richland (Dist 6 AA 0-0-0)
Cedar Cliff (Dist 3 AAAA 0-0-0) @ State College (Dist 6 AAAA 0-0-0)
Central Cambria (Dist 6 AA 0-0-0) @ Somerset (Dist 6 AAA 0-0-0)
Central Mountain (Dist 6 AAAA 0-0-0) @ DuBois (Dist 9 AAAA 0-0-0)
Everett (Dist 5 AA 0-0-0) @ Glendale (Dist 6 A 0-0-0)
Ferndale (Dist 6 A 0-0-0) @ Portage (Dist 6 A 0-0-0)
Hollidaysburg (Dist 6 AAA 0-0-0) @ Altoona (Dist 6 AAAA 0-0-0)
Homer Center (Dist 6 A 0-0-0) @ Blairsville (Dist 6 A 0-0-0)
Huntingdon (Dist 6 AAA 0-0-0) @ Mount Union (Dist 6 A 0-0-0)
Laurel Valley (Dist 6 A 0-0-0) @ Ligonier Valley (Dist 6 A 0-0-0)
Lewistown (Dist 6 AAA 0-0-0) @ Juniata (Dist 3 AA 0-0-0)
Moshannon Valley (Dist 6 A 0-0-0) @ Southern Huntingdon (Dist 6 A 0-0-0)
Penn Cambria (Dist 6 AA 0-0-0) @ Johnstown (Dist 6 AAA 0-0-0)
Penns Manor (Dist 6 A 0-0-0) @ Marion Center (Dist 6 AA 0-0-0)
Philipsburg-Osceola (Dist 6 AA 0-0-0) @ Brookville (Dist 9 AA 0-0-0)
Punxsutawney (Dist 9 AAA 0-0-0) @ Bellefonte (Dist 6 AAA 0-0-0)
Purchase Line (Dist 6 A 0-0-0) @ Northern Cambria (Dist 6 A 0-0-0)
Tussey Mountain (Dist 5 A 0-0-0) @ Claysburg-Kimmel (Dist 6 A 0-0-0)
United (Dist 6 A 0-0-0) @ Saltsburg (Dist 6 A 0-0-0)
West Branch (Dist 6 A 0-0-0) @ Juniata Valley (Dist 6 A 0-0-0)
West Perry (Dist 3 AAA 0-0-0) @ Indian Valley (Dist 6 AAA 0-0-0)
Williamsburg (Dist 6 A 0-0-0) @ Northern Bedford (Dist 5 A 0-0-0)

Saturday's Games:

Central (Dist 6 AA 0-0-0) @ Bishop Carroll (Dist 6 A 0-0-0)
Chestnut Ridge (Dist 5 AA 0-0-0) @ Bishop Guilfoyle (Dist 6 A 0-0-0)
Forest Hills (Dist 6 AA 0-0-0) @ Westmont-Hilltop (Dist 6 AA 0-0-0)
Shade (Dist 5 A 0-0-0) @ Conemaugh Valley (Dist 6 A 0-0-0)