

Unbeaten Teams Clash in Laurel Highlands; Altoona Battles State

By Brian Carson

The race for the early lead in the always tough Laurel Highlands Conference will take place Friday night when Richland (3-0, LH 3-0) hosts Johnstown (3-0, LH 3-0) in a battle of unbeaten teams tied for first in the standings.

The Rams, ranked second in District 6-AA; have defeated Cambria Heights 14-6, Central 49-18, and Bishop Carroll, 22-14. Richland averages 28.3 points per game and gives up 12.7.

Quarterback Marco Pecora leads the Ram offense. The junior is 46-of-68 for 668 yards with five touchdowns. On the ground he has collected 186 yards rushing with five scores.

Pecora's favorite targets are seniors Andy Rubal (14-266-2) and Dino Tessari (13-138-1), along with junior Dan Fenton (6-154-2). Fenton also has two interceptions on defense. Junior LB Ryan Krouse is the defensive leader with 41 stops.

The Trojans are the top-rated team in D6-AAA and have out-scored opponents by a 25-14 average. Johnstown has beaten Penn Cambria 14-6, Central Cambria 46-27, and Westmont-Hilltop, 14-8.

Junior RB Antwuan Reed has rushed for 423 yards and five touchdowns to lead the Trojan attack. Senior QB Brandon Hody has thrown for 286 yards and four touchdowns with senior wideouts Adonis Jackson (7-150-1) and Demetrius Young (7-82-2) his primary targets.

The Johnstown defense has limited two teams to fewer than 10 points this season and one of the main reasons is DE Aaron Brezovic. The senior has 36 tackles and eight sacks.

The winner will hold down first place in the conference with Bishop McCort, Bedford and Penn Cambria close behind.

Also on tap is the big school Mid-Penn Commonwealth battle between the undefeated State College Little Lions (3-0, MP 3-0) and the Altoona Mountain Lions (2-1, MP 2-1).

State High has out-scored opponents by a commanding 112-7 margin to start the season. The Little Lions, ranked 10th in the state by Pennsylvania Football News and the Patriot News, defeated Cedar Cliff and Chambersburg by 42-0 scores and 28-7 over Central Dauphin.

QB Brook Hart has thrown for 527 yards with seven touchdowns and no interceptions. Terna Ityokumbul and Matthew LeClair have combined for over 250 yards and three scores out of the backfield. Nathan Stupar, the leader of the defense from his linebacker spot, has nine interceptions for 82 yards and a touchdown, while Andrew Kerr (12-170-2) is Hart's favorite receiver.

Altoona defeated Hollidaysburg 49-0 and Cumberland Valley 35-30, but dropped a 51-7 decision to second-ranked Harrisburg.

The Mountain Lions are a run first, pass almost never out of the Veer offense. Altoona has rushed for 653 yards on the season, while passing for only 39.

Quarterback A.J. Alexander leads the visitors with 165 yards rushing and four touchdowns; one of those was a 98-yard kickoff return. Reggie Mencer has collected 153 yards with four scores and backup QB Chris Joubek has 118 yards rushing. D.J. Patterson leads the receivers with five catches for 32 yards. LB Wes Plummer is the leader of the Altoona defense.

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

Bellefonte @ Clearfield

The Red Raiders (1-2) hope to rebound from their loss to Huntingdon last week by taking on the Bison (2-1) in a MAC Seven Mountains showdown. Clearfield QB Andrew Janocko has thrown for 691 yards and four TDs. WR Adam Jury has 23 receptions on the season.

Bishop Carroll @ Bishop McCort

The Huskies will try to avoid an unpredictable 1-3 start against a tough Crusher (2-1) squad in a key Laurel Highlands matchup. QB Joey Shrift leads Bishop Carroll, but coach Craig Sponsky must get more production from his offense, which is scoring only 12.3 ppg. RB Brad Barben (238-6) leads the McCort offense.

Bedford @ Penn Cambria

Another big Laurel Highlands shootout finds the Bisons (2-1) squaring off against the Panthers (2-1). Bedford was blown out by Forest Hills last week and looks to regain its winning edge. Penn Cambria has won two straight after an opening week loss to Johnstown.

Chestnut Ridge @ Penns Valley

The Lions bring a 2-1 overall mark into their ICC-Nittany Division game with the Rams (1-2). The Penns Valley offense has scored only 11 points on the season, but RB Chris Korn (339 yards) is a bright spot. Kyle Hess and Mike Tomovich lead the solid rushing attack of Chestnut Ridge.

Philipsburg-Osceola @ Bishop Guilfoyle

The Mounties (2-1) rolled over Penns Valley last week with a defense that forced four interceptions and limited the Rams to just 78 yards of total offense. The Marauders fell to 1-2 on the season with a tough 28-21 loss to quad-A Central Mountain.

Central @ Forest Hills

The Rangers (2-1) got back on the winning track with an impressive 44-14 drubbing of Bedford last week. QB Travis Rearick has passed for 594 yards and six touchdowns. Chris Kurtz has rushed for 208 yards and thrown for 328 to lead the Scarlet Dragons (1-2) on the season.

Week Four Schedule:

Bedford (Dist 5 AA 2-1-0) @ Penn Cambria (Dist 6 AA 2-1-0)

Chestnut Ridge (Dist 5 AA 2-1-0) @ Penns Valley (Dist 6 AA 1-2-0)

Conemaugh Township (Dist 5 A 0-3-0) @ Portage (Dist 6 A 3-0-0)

Tussey Mountain (Dist 5 A 2-1-0) @ West Branch (Dist 6 A 2-1-0)

Altoona (Dist 6 AAAA 2-1-0) @ State College (Dist 6 AAAA 3-0-0)

Bald Eagle Area (Dist 6 AA 1-2-0) @ Tyrone (Dist 6 AA 3-0-0)

Bellefonte (Dist 6 AAA 1-2-0) @ Clearfield (Dist 9 AAA 2-1-0)

Bellwood-Antis (Dist 6 A 2-1-0) @ Mount Union (Dist 6 A 1-2-0)

Bishop Carroll (Dist 6 A 1-2-0) @ Bishop McCort (Dist 6 AA 2-1-0)

Blairsville (Dist 6 A 1-2-0) @ Purchase Line (Dist 6 A 2-1-0)

Central (Dist 6 AA 1-2-0) @ Forest Hills (Dist 6 AA 2-1-0)

Central Cambria (Dist 6 AA 1-2-0) @ Cambria Heights (Dist 6 AA 0-3-0)

Conemaugh Valley (Dist 6 A 2-1-0) @ Berlin Brothersvalley (Dist 5 A 1-2-0)

Hollidaysburg (Dist 6 AAA 1-2-0) @ DuBois (Dist 9 AAAA 0-3-0)

Johnstown (Dist 6 AAA 3-0-0) @ Richland (Dist 6 AA 3-0-0)

Juniata Valley (Dist 6 A 2-1-0) @ Claysburg-Kimmel (Dist 6 A 1-2-0)

Lewistown (Dist 6 AAA 0-3-0) @ Huntingdon (Dist 6 AAA 2-1-0)

Moshannon Valley (Dist 6 A 0-3-0) @ Glendale (Dist 6 A 2-1-0)

Northern Cambria (Dist 6 A 2-1-0) @ Homer Center (Dist 6 A 1-2-0)

Saltsburg (Dist 6 A 0-3-0) @ Marion Center (Dist 6 AA 3-0-0)

United (Dist 6 A 1-2-0) @ Ligonier Valley (Dist 6 A 2-1-0)

Williamsburg (Dist 6 A 0-3-0) @ Southern Huntingdon (Dist 6 A 3-0-0)

Punxsutawney (Dist 9 AAA 1-2-0) @ Indian Valley (Dist 6 AAA 1-2-0)

Saturday's Games:

Ferndale (Dist 6 A 2-1-0) @ Blacklick Valley (Dist 6 A 1-2-0)

Penns Manor (Dist 6 A 1-2-0) @ Laurel Valley (Dist 6 A 2-1-0)

Philipsburg-Osceola (Dist 6 AA 2-1-0) @ Bishop Guilfoyle (Dist 6 A 1-2-0)

Somerset (Dist 6 AAA 0-3-0) @ Westmont-Hilltop (Dist 6 AA 1-2-0)