

High School Football Top 10: Unbeaten teams are hard to come by

By **STEVEN FALK** and **ROBERT ZIEGLER** • STAFF WRITERS • October 17, 2010

The ranks of the unbeaten are dwindling

Middletown South, which usually is among the final remaining unbeaten teams in the Shore Conference by the time the season hits the midway point, knocked Brick Memorial from the ranks of the unbeaten with a 13-3 win Friday night at "The Swamp."

Brick Memorial's loss, which came in the first of a string of four consecutive games against ranked opponents to conclude the regular season, left Matawan and Lacey, the top two teams in the Asbury Park Press Top 10, as the Shore's only remaining unbeaten teams.

Both Matawan and Lacey will be heavily favored this week to remain unbeaten.

However, Lacey will face stiff challenges the following two weeks. It plays at No. 10 Neptune on Oct. 30 and hosts No. 4 Middletown South on Nov. 6 in its final regular season game.

An odd twist to the Lacey-Middletown South game is that the game will not count toward Lacey's final power point total in NJSIAA South Group III because only a team's first eight games count toward qualification.

It will count toward Middletown South's final point total in Central Group III because that will be its eighth game.

The only movement in the Top 10 this week involved Brick Memorial and Howell.

Brick Memorial dropped two spots to No. 5, and Manalapan and Middletown South each moved up a spot to No. 3 and No. 4, respectively.

Howell, with its 21-13 loss at East Brunswick, its second loss in three games, dropped from two spots to No. 8, allowing Freehold and Red Bank Catholic to each move up a spot to No. 6 and No. 7, respectively.

There's a good chance for more movement next week when there are two games involving Top 10 teams that will have major implications on division championship races.

Manalapan, which is off to its best start since it began 2002 6-1, will host Howell on Friday night. The Braves would clinch a tie for the Class A North championship with a win. It would be their first division title since they shared the Class A North title with Middletown South in 1999.

Howell would clinch a tie for the division championship with a win and make a three-way tie for the division title, along with Middletown South, likely.

Also Friday night, Brick Memorial will host No. 9 Toms River North. A Mustangs win would give them the Class A South championship outright. It would be their first division title since 2005, when they shared the Constitution Division title with Lacey.

The Mustangs have four division championships in their 30-year history. Three of them have been co-championships, with their only outright title coming in 1997, when they won Class A South.

Toms River North would clinch a tie for the division title with a win, securing its third division title in the past four seasons. It would then be position to clinch the championship outright with a win over Toms River East on Thanksgiving Day.

The Mariners have defeated the Mustangs the last three seasons, holding their triple-option offense to just a combined 17 points.

1. Matawan 6-0

Last week: No. 1. Keith Beaty scored four touchdowns, two rushing and two receiving on passes from quarterback Jared Allison, in the first half as the Huskies made it 14 straight wins with a 49-14 win over Barnegat. Three of Beaty's TDs came in a span of 2:26 in the second quarter. Beaty, a linebacker, also had an interception as the Matawan defense hounded Tulane University-bound quarterback Nick SanGiacomo into a 7-for-25 night. The Huskies defense will face another team that runs the spread offense and loves to throw the ball this week.

Next game: Friday at Holmdel

2. Lacey 6-0

Last week: No. 2. One of the strangest plays of the season broke a scoreless tie just before halftime and propelled Lacey to a 27-0 victory against Toms River East. Jarrod Molzon's 42-yard field goal attempt was blocked, but he scooped up the loose ball and raced 34 yards for a TD to put the Lions ahead with 3.1 seconds left in the first half. They broke it open in the second half on an 18-yard TD pass from Craig Cicardo to Cameron Blackwell and two Cicardo TD runs. Lacey can clinch the Class B South title outright next week.

Next game: Friday at Central (0-5).

3. Manalapan 4-1

Last week: No. 4. Josh Firkser ran for 122 yards and three TDs to give him 11 TDs on the season, and quarterback Mike Bimonte threw for two TDs as the Braves scored all their points in the first half and rolled to a 40-8 win over Old Bridge. Manalapan will want to play ball control with its ground game this week because its defense will be sorely tested by the Shore's best passing attack.

Next game: Friday vs. No. 8 Howell (4-2).

4. Middletown South 5-1

Last week: No. 5. The Eagles rode their defense to a 13-3 victory over previously-unbeaten and then-No. 3 Brick Memorial, limiting the Mustangs to 40 yards rushing, well below their season average of 229 coming into the game. Middletown South capitalized on a Brick Memorial lost fumble on the game's first play from scrimmage as Kyle Bunge scored on a 6-yard run. Sophomore kicker Connor Ryan kicked two fourth-quarter field goals, including a 45-yarder. Middletown South is off next week before hosting Brick on Oct. 29. A game against No. 2 Lacey looms Nov. 6.

Next game: Oct. 29 vs. Brick (2-4).

5. Brick Memorial 5-1

Last week: No. 3. Brick Memorial's defense stood up to its toughest test to date, limiting Middletown South to 146 yards, but the Mustangs couldn't get their own offense going either in a 13-3 loss to the Eagles. Jordan Loiodice kicked a 41-yard field goal with 5:33 left in the third quarter to cut Middletown South's lead to 7-3, but after the Eagles were forced to punt, Brick Memorial committed one of its three turnovers. The Mustangs only ran 13 plays in Middletown South territory, but need to forget about the loss with an opportunity to clinch the Class A South title on the horizon.

Next game: Friday vs. No. 9 Toms River North (5-1).

6. Freehold 4-2

Last week: No. 7. The Colonials scored 33 unanswered points after Miles Shuler capped Long Branch's opening possession with a 7-yard TD run to beat the Green Wave, 33-7. Sterry Codrington carried 14 times for 77 yards and two TDs, and Derrick Bender rushed for 99 yards and a TD on 11 attempts. Freehold's defense held Long Branch to 127 yards of offense, just 50 after the game's first series. The Colonials also came up with three turnovers. After their bye, the Colonials, who started the season 0-2, would clinch at least a share of the Class B North title with a win against Colts Neck on Oct. 30. Colts Neck has given Freehold fits over the years. Next game: Oct. 30 vs. Colts Neck (1-5).

7. Red Bank Catholic 4-1

Last week: No. 8. Andrew Casten's 6-yard TD run with 4:15 remaining gave the Caseys a tough 14-7 win over Colts Neck. Ryan Spahr's 1-yard TD run on a quarterback sneak in the second quarter accounted for the Caseys' other TD. The tough Class B North grind continues this week against a team that has a win over Freehold, the team Red Bank Catholic lost to.

Next game: Friday vs. Monmouth (3-2).

8. Howell 4-2

Last week: No. 6. Ryan Davies completed only 10 of 20 passes for 91 yards, his lowest total of the season and the first time he's thrown for fewer than 200 in a game, as the Rebels lost to defending NJSIAA Central Group IV champion East Brunswick, 21-13. Davies threw his 26th TD pass of the season, a 3-yarder to Jack Gailing, to cut East Brunswick's lead to 14-7 going into halftime. The Rebels would put themselves in position to win a share of the Class A North title with a win next week.

Next game: Friday at No. 3 Manalapan (4-1).

9. Toms River North 5-1

Last week: No. 9. Quarterback Demetri Davis ran for 139 yards and scored TDs of 76 and three yards in the Mariners' 27-7 victory over Southern. Davis, who has rushed for 13 TDs this season, has surpassed the 100-yard mark in every game this season. Cody Groves added 105 yards and a TD, and Chris Hunter ran for 92 and a score for Toms River North, which scored 27 unanswered points after falling behind 7-0 in the first quarter.

Next game: Friday at No. 5 Brick Memorial (5-1).

10. Neptune 3-2.

Last week: No. 10. Charles Davis recovered from what appeared to be a serious leg injury late in the first half to score on a 59-yard run midway through the third quarter, and the Scarlet Fliers held on for a 21-19 win over Monmouth. Davis set up Ikie Calderon's 9-yard TD run with an 81-yard kickoff return and offensive right guard Josh Johnson scored Neptune's first TD when he picked up a Davis fumble and ran 40 yards for a TD. A rivalry game is up next.

Next game: Saturday at Ocean (1-5).