

Wall, Rumson-Fair Haven return to top 10

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It has been a long road back for both Wall and Rumson-Fair Haven.

Wall, after being ranked No. 5 in the preseason Asbury Park Press Top 10, started the season with losses to Lacey, currently ranked No. 1, and to Jackson Liberty.

In their third game of the season, the Crimson Knights fell behind, 14-0, to Lakewood before scoring the game's final 42 points.

Since the second quarter of the Lakewood game, Wall has been rolling. It has outscored its opponents over the last 27 quarters, 306-76. It has averaged 43.7 points a game over its last seven games, has advanced to the NJSIAA Central III semifinals for the first time since 2005 and will have a chance to grab a share of the Class C Central championship with a win over No. 8 Manasquan on Thanksgiving Day.

Rumson, which began the season as one of the Press' five teams to watch, opened with a 34-27 loss to Barnegat and Tulane University-bound quarterback Nick SanGiacomo.

The Bulldogs fell to 2-2 with a 48-21 loss to then-No. 1 Matawan on Oct. 2.

However, Rumson acquitted itself well in the Matawan game. It trailed just 28-21 at halftime before the Huskies pulled away in the second half.

The 2-2 start put Rumson in a must-win situation entering a three-game stretch against Monmouth Regional, Holmdel and Raritan, all of which were competing with the Bulldogs for a spot in the Central II playoffs.

Rumson won all three of those games and eventually qualified for the Central II playoffs as a No. 3 seed.

The Bulldogs extended their winning streak to five with a resounding win over Ewing on Friday night in a Central II quarterfinal and now have a legitimate chance to advance to the Central II championship game for the second time in four years.

The hot streaks of both Wall and Rumson have also resulted in them moving into the Top 10 this week.

Wall moves in at No. 9 and Rumson is No. 10. They replace Howell, which was routed, 49-14, by Manalapan in a Central IV quarterfinal, and Toms River North, which did not qualify for the playoffs and was defeated, 48-17, by Howell earlier this season.

1. LACEY 10-0. Last week: No. 1. Do-it-all senior Jarrod Molzon ran for 57 yards and two TDs, caught a pass for 48 yards and kicked an extra point and two field goals as Lacey beat Timber Creek, 27-6, in an NJSIAA South Group III quarterfinal. The Lions scored 24 unanswered points after falling behind, 6-3, in the second quarter on a TD run by South Carolina-recruit Damiere Byrd. It was the first time Lacey had been behind all season. Craig Cicardo went 6-for-14 for 106 yards and threw a 14-yard TD pass to Cameron Blackwell. Lacey, which hasn't allowed more than seven points in a game all season, limited Timber Creek to 20 yards rushing on 33 attempts. The Lions will face another dynamic player in wide receiver and Pittsburgh-recruit Bill Belton next week. Next game: Saturday vs. Winslow Township (6-3) in an NJSIAA South Group III semifinal.

2. MATAWAN 9-0. Last week: No. 2. A 20-point third quarter enabled Matawan to pull away for a 34-6 win over Monmouth Regional in an NJSIAA Central Group II quarterfinal. Senior quarterback Jared Allison played a major role in the rally with TD passes of 28 yards to Keith Beaty and 27 yards to Terry Rodriguez and Allison scored on an 8-yard run. Cassius Williams and McArthur Underwood had first-half TD runs of 31 and 9 yards, respectively. Matawan has now won 17 straight. A rematch of last year's NJSIAA Central II championship game is up next. Next game: Saturday vs. No. 8 Manasquan (8-1) in an NJSIAA Central Group II semifinal.

3. MIDDLETOWN SOUTH 7-2. Last week: No.3. Quarterback Scott Meeker completed 8 of 11 passes for 143 yards and two TDs, and the Eagles beat Steinert, 35-8, in an NJSIAA Central Group III quarterfinal. Middletown South scored all of its points in the first half. Meeker threw TD passes to Matt LaMattina and Taylor Rogers, and Andrew Suarez and Tim McArdle each scored rushing TDs. McArdle also returned an interception 50 yards for a score. Middletown South appears headed to its fourth sectional final in five seasons with another Mercer County opponent on tap. Next game: Friday vs. Hamilton West (7-2) in an NJSIAA Central Group III semifinal.

4. BRICK MEMORIAL 8-2. Last week: No. 4. Five different players scored for the Mustangs, two of them on defense, in a 35-7 victory over East Brunswick in an NJSIAA Central IV quarterfinal that was a rematch of last season's final, won by East Brunswick. Jordan Loiodice and Anthony Miller ran for TDs, Mike Acquaviva caught a 27-yard TD pass from Mike DiGuilmi and Vincenzo Diodato and Logan Smith each scored defensive TDs. Diodato returned a fumble, caused by defensive tackle Will Wowkanyn, 50 yards for a score, and Smith took an interception back 55 yards for a TD. Brick Memorial, which trailed, 7-0, in the first quarter, broke the game open with 28 fourth-quarter points. Next game: Friday vs. North Brunswick (8-1) in an NJSIAA Central IV semifinal.

5. MANALAPAN 7-2. Last week: No. 5. In the latest episode of the Firkser Show, senior running back Josh Firkser ran for 215 yards and four TDs to lead the Braves past Howell, 49-14, in an NJSIAA Central IV quarterfinal. Firkser scored on runs of 42, 7 and 7 yards to put Manalapan ahead, 21-0, and added a 1-yard TD in the fourth quarter. His younger brother, Anthony Firkser, threw a 23-yard TD pass on a reverse and also caught a 46-yard TD from Rutgers-recruit Mike Bimonte. The Braves, who won their first playoff game since 2005, sacked Howell quarterback Ryan Davies seven times. Next game: Friday at Sayreville (9-1) in an NJSIAA Central IV semifinal.

6. FREEHOLD 7-2.Last week: No. 6. Jazzmar Clax ran for 144 yards, more than half his season total entering the game, and scored two TDs in Freehold's 21-10 victory over Neptune in an NJSIAA Central III quarterfinal. The Colonials were holding onto a 7-3 lead going into the fourth quarter, when Clax broke things open with TD runs of 8 and 56 yards. Quarterback Sterry Codrington carried 27 times for 120 yards and threw a 64-yard TD pass to Dayshawn Perry to open the scoring in the first quarter. Up next is a game against another team that salvaged its season following an 0-2 start. Next game: Saturday vs. No. 9 Wall (7-2) in an NJSIAA Central III semifinal.

7. RED BANK CATHOLIC 7-2. Last week: No. 7. Andrew Casten ran for 232 yards and three TDs on 21 carries for the Caseys, who were competitive through three quarters in a 65-34 loss to heavily favored Bergen Catholic in an NJSIAA Non-Public IV quarterfinal. Casten scored on runs of 3 and 71 yards in the third quarter, when Red Bank Catholic cut the Crusaders' lead to 35-26. Bergen Catholic, though, scored 30 fourth-quarter points to end the upset bid in resounding fashion. Caseys tight end Jack Tabb, one of New Jersey's top recruits, had three catches for 95 yards and a TD. Red Bank Catholic now turns its attention toward a rivalry game. Next game: Nov. 24 vs. No. 10 Rumson-Fair Haven (7-2).

8. MANASQUAN 8-1. Last week: No. 9. After scoring with 0.5 seconds remaining, Roselle went for a 2-point conversion and the win, but Satiir Stevenson's pass fell incomplete, allowing Manasquan to win, 33-32. Roselle had missed two extra points earlier in the game. Quarterback Tyler Saito ran for three TDs, including two in the fourth quarter as the Warriors fought back from a 26-20 deficit. Kodie McNamara added 57 yards and two TDs

for Manasquan, which lost star running back Tariq Turner to an ankle injury in the third quarter. The Warriors are trying for a third consecutive trip to the sectional final. Next game: Saturday at No. 2 Matawan (9-0) in an NJSIAA Central II semifinal.

9. WALL 7-2. Last week: Not ranked. Steve Cluley went 11-for-14 for 149 yards and threw three TD passes, two of them to big-play threat Kyle Janeczek, as the Crimson Knights beat Nottingham, 48-21, in a Central III quarterfinal for their first playoff victory since 2005. Janeczek hauled in a 33-yard TD pass to put Wall ahead, 14-0, and caught his second TD pass of the second quarter as time expired to give the Crimson Knights a 21-7 halftime lead. Raul Pola rushed for 92 yards, Will Avon ran for a pair of TDs and Jim Guiliano had two interceptions, both of which led to TDs. Next game: Saturday at No. 6 Freehold (7-2) in an NJSIAA Central III semifinal.

10. RUMSON-FAIR HAVEN 7-2. Last week: Not ranked. The Bulldogs, one of eight Shore Conference teams with more yards passing than rushing entering this weekend, beat up Ewing to the tune of 278 yards on the ground to win an NJSIAA Central II quarterfinal, 42-13. Rumson averaged 5.79 yards per rushing attempt and scored all six of its TDs on the ground. Michael Guzman led the way with 111 yards and two TDs on 13 carries, and quarterback Mike Villapiano added 89 yards and 2 TDs on 14 carries. A loss by No. 2 seed and previously unbeaten North Plainfield will allow Rumson to host a semifinal as it tries to reach the Central II final for the second time in four seasons. Next game: Friday vs. Carteret (6-3) in an NJSIAA Central II semifinal.

Dropped out: Howell, Toms River North.

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