

FOOTBALL - Final Top 10

DECEMBER 12, 2010

ASBURY PARK PRESS FINAL TOP 10

1. LACEY 12-0.

Last poll: No. 1. The Lions are ranked No. 1 in the final Asbury Park Press Top 10 for the first time. They won the NJSIAA South Group III championship with a resounding 56-7 win over Delsea. It was Lacey's fourth sectional championship and first since 2006. Lacey went unbeaten for the third time in its history. It went 11-0 in 1989 and 12-0 in 2006. Lacey also won the Shore Conference Class B South championship, its first divisional title since 2006. Graduation will hit the Lions heavy, but Lacey usually finds a way to reload on the run. First game 2011: Sept. 9 or 10 at Wall (7-4).

2. FREEHOLD 10-2.

Last poll: No. 5. The Colonials, who finish ranked No. 2 for the second time in the last three seasons, became the only team in New Jersey to begin the season 0-2 and win a sectional championship. Freehold won its final 10 games, including a 14-12 win over Middletown South in the NJSIAA Central Group III final. It was Freehold's second sectional championship in three years and second overall. Both sectional championships came with wins over Middletown South. The Colonials, who recorded three wins in overtime and two other wins by seven points or less, also shared the Class B North championship with Red Bank Catholic. It was their third divisional title in four years. Freehold will be hit hard by graduation, but linebacker/running back Jazzmar Clax will likely be one of the Shore's best players next season. First game 2011: Sept. 10 vs. No. 5 Matawan (11-1).

3. RED BANK CATHOLIC 8-2.

Last poll: No. 7. The Caseys had another solid season as they qualified for the NJSIAA Non-Public Group IV playoffs for the seventh straight season and also made it seven straight seasons where it won a Shore Conference non-public divisional championship. Red Bank Catholic shared the Class B North overall championship with Freehold and also defeated NJSIAA Central Group II champion Rumson-Fair Haven on Thanksgiving Day. It was the eighth straight season the Caseys have defeated the Bulldogs. Red Bank Catholic, whose only loss to a Shore Conference team was by a point in overtime to Freehold, appears to be loaded for next season with the likes of defensive lineman Joe Coscarelli, Josh Klecko, linebacker Doug Whitlock and quarterback Ryan Spahr returning. First game 2011: Sept 9 or 10 at Southern (5-5).

4. RUMSON-FAIR HAVEN 9-3.

Last poll: No. 10. The Bulldogs pulled one of the shockers in NJSIAA playoff history when they defeated defending sectional champion Matawan, 13-7, in the Central Group II championship game. Matawan, which had soundly defeated Rumson-Fair Haven, 48-21, on Oct. 2, entered the sectional final with a 19-game winning streak. One look at the stats indicate Rumson's win was no fluke. It outgained Matawan, 318-62, outrushed the Hukies, 193-28 and had 17 first downs to Matawan's 2. It was Rumson's first sectional championship. The Bulldogs won seven of their final eight games after beginning the season 2-2 and have nine returning starters on defense next season. First game 2011: Sept. 9 or 10 vs. Barnegat

(6-5).

5. MATAWAN 11-1.

Last poll: No. 2. The Huskies appeared headed for their second straight Central II championship and sixth overall until they were stunned by Rumson-Fair Haven in the sectional final. Until the sectional final, Matawan had outscored its first 11 opponents, 420-122. Matawan did win the Class A Central championship outright. It was the second straight season the Huskies won an outright divisional championship. Matawan also defeated Central III champion Freehold, 22-2, in the season opener. The Huskies will be hit hard by graduation, but junior Cassius Williams could be one of the Shore's best running backs next season and freshman quarterback Kashaun Barnes did receive significant playing time this season. First game 2011: Sept. 10 at No. 2 Freehold (10-2).

6. MIDDLETOWN SOUTH 9-3.

Last poll: No. 3. The Eagles advanced to the NJSIAA Central Jersey III championship game for the third straight year and to a sectional final for the ninth time in the last 10 seasons. The 14-12 defeat to Freehold in the sectional final marked the third straight season the Eagles have lost in a sectional final. Middletown South's three losses were to Lacey, Freehold and Manalapan. It did knock then No. 3 Brick Memorial from the unbeaten ranks with a 13-3 win on Oct. 15. The Eagles also handed, at the time, a red-hot Howell team, ranked No. 5 in the top 10, its first defeat of the season with a 38-14 win on Oct. 2. Junior quarterback Howie Brey, who started several games this fall, should be ready to become the full-time quarterback next season. First game 2011: Sept. 9 or 10 at Ocean (3-7).

7. BRICK MEMORIAL 9-3.

Last poll: No. 4. The Mustangs advanced to the NJSIAA Central IV championship game for the third straight season before it was defeated, 14-0, by Sayreville. One of the Shore's best defenses, led by nose tackle, Will Wowkanyn, the Defensive Player of the Year, Brick Memorial recorded four shutouts and did not allow more than 14 points in any game. It allowed just 78 points on the season. The Mustangs also won the Class A South championship for their first divisional title since 2005 and first outright divisional title since 1997 and second outright divisional championship in its history. Brick Memorial will be hit hard by graduation, but running back Anthony Miller could develop into a solid back. First game 2011: Sept. 9 or 10 at Brick (4-6).

8. MANALAPAN 8-3.

Last poll: No. 6. The Braves rejoined the Shore Conference's elite by winning the Class A North championship outright, thanks to wins over Middletown South in Week 2 and Howell in Week 7. It was Manalapan's first divisional title since 1999 and first outright divisional championship since 1996. Manalapan also qualified for the NJSIAA Central IV playoffs for the first time since 2005 and recorded its first playoff win since 2005 with a 49-14 victory over Howell. Senior running back Josh Firkser, the Offensive Player of the Year and Rutgers University-bound quarterback Mike Bimonte are among those who graduate, but sophomore receiver Anthony Firkser could become one of the Shore's big-play threats next season. First game 2011: Sept. 9 or 10 at Jackson Memorial (6-4).

9. MANASQUAN 9-2.

Last poll: No. 8. The Warriors, as usual, were able to reload on the run after suffering heavy graduation losses from last season. They won the Class C Central championship outright to make it two straight seasons with an outright divisional title and three straight seasons which they at least shared a divisional championship. Manasquan also advanced to the NJSIAA Central II semifinals, where it gave then unbeaten Matawan all it could handle before losing 26-14. Manasquan also handed NJSIAA Central I champion Shore its only loss with a 7-6 win on Oct. 8. Tailback Tariq Turner and lineman Shawn Miller are among those who graduate, but quarterback Tyler Saito will return for his second season as a starter next year. First game: Sept. 9 or 10 at Point Boro (5-5).

10. SHORE 11-1.

Last poll: No. 9. The Blue Devils had one of the best seasons they have ever had as they won the Central I championship in convincing fashion. They won their three playoff games by an average of 25.7 points. It was Shore's first sectional title since 1997 and fifth overall. The Blue Devils also won the Class B Central championship outright for their first divisional title since 1998 and first outright divisional championship since 1996. Shore tied a school record for wins set in 1981 when it went 11-0 and set a school record for points with 439. Shore loses many key players to graduation, but does return linebacker/running back Nick Grigos and defensive backs Brendan Dula and Stefanos Kousaris. First game 2011: Sept. 10 at Keansburg (0-10).

Plenty of surprises in the 2010 season

By STEVEN FALK - STAFF WRITER

The 2010 Shore Conference season began with Matawan and Lacey considered a cut above everyone else.

The season ended with Lacey all by itself as the only unbeaten team in the Shore after its 56-7 rout over Delsea in the NJSIAA South III championship game.

Sectional championship weekend also produced an all-time shocker as Rumson-Fair Haven upended Matawan, 13-7, in the Central Jersey II championship game to capture its first sectional championship. Lacey was the only sure thing in a season full of surprises.

The Lions finished the season ranked No. 1 in the Asbury Park Press Top 10 for the first time in their 30-year history.

They began the season ranked No. 2 and moved into the No. 1 spot after a 27-7 win over then-No. 3 Middletown South on Nov. 6. Lacey won every game by at least 20 points. It allowed more than seven points just once and outscored its opposition, 427-60.

Lacey became the Shore's first unbeaten team since Toms River North in 2007.

Matawan began the season ranked No. 1, defeated eventual Central III champion Freehold in its opener and pulled away in the second half in a 48-21 win over Rumson on Oct. 2.

The Huskies appeared destined for their second straight Central II championship.

However, nobody told Rumson.

The Bulldogs held Matawan to 62 yards of offense and two first downs and totally dominated the game.

The Shore's other sectional champions were Freehold, which won its final 10 games after an 0-2 start, and Shore, which won Central I for its first sectional title since 1997.

Division champions were Manalapan (Class A North); Matawan (Class A Central); Brick Memorial (Class A South); Freehold and Red Bank Catholic (Class B North); Shore (Class B Central); Lacey (Class B South) and Manasquan (Class C Central).

It was an interesting season on the coaching front.

Warren Wolf, who had a legendary 51-season career at Brick Township High School from 1958-2008, returned to the sideline after a year's absence by becoming the head coach at Lakewood.

The Piners broke what is believed to be a Shore Conference-record 33-game losing streak by defeating Central on Oct. 30 and finished the season 3-7 for their best season since they went 5-5 in 2002.

Wolf, who will turn 84 on Aug. 1, has said he will return as Lakewood's coach next season.

Calvin Thompson resigned as Point Boro's coach after 8-1/2 seasons on Oct. 25 for personal reasons. Thompson had coached the Panthers to a 65-28 record with a 12-0 South II championship season in 2005 during his tenure.

Sean Henry, a Point Boro assistant coach since 2003 and a former Point Boro player, served as interim coach the remainder of the season.

Thompson, who has recovered from a mini stroke he suffered in early November, has said he would like to be a head coach again. There are coaching vacancies currently at Point Beach, where Thompson was an assistant coach in 2001, and at St. John Vianney.

Manalapan also had interesting developments on the coaching front.

Tom Gallahue, the Braves' head coach since 2007, resigned during the summer to accept a position as assistant principal at the school.

But Gallahue resigned as assistant principal before the Braves' Week 2 game at Middletown South because he was told he could not even serve as a volunteer coach while he was an administrator.

Ed Gurrieri, a former Manalapan head coach and a long-time member of the Manalapan coaching staff, was named interim head coach two days after the Braves' season-opening loss to Jackson Memorial. Manalapan rallied around the situation and recorded a 35-28 win at Middletown South on Sept. 19 that sent it on its way to the school's first division championship since 1999 and first outright division title since 1996.

Eventually, Gallahue and the Freehold Regional Board of Education agreed he could serve as a volunteer coach during the season and then become assistant principal. He began his assistant principal duties Dec. 1.

Don Sofilkanich, who coached Asbury Park to three Central I championships from 2007-2009, made the interesting move to coach Asbury Park's rival Neptune.

The 2010 season was also a season where the Shore showcased more potential NCAA Division I recruits than any time in recent memory.

However, the most notable offensive individual accomplishments were turned in by players who began the season with little fanfare.

Pinelands senior tailback Matt McLain raced for a Shore Conference record 2,544 yards. Manalapan senior tailback Josh Firkser also broke the 2,000-yard mark. He finished with a school-record 2,053 yards.

It was the first time anyone in the Shore rushed for 2,000 yards since current Indianapolis Colts running back Donnie Brown and Denver Broncos running back Knownshon Moreno did it in 2004.

Howell junior quarterback Ryan Davies threw for a Shore Conference-record 2,798 yards and a record 36 TDs.

On defense, Brick Memorial senior Will Wowkany moved over from end to nose tackle shortly before the season began and became a player opposing offenses could not block. He became known around the Shore as "No. 53", his uniform number.

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