

NJ FOOTBALL: Monangai joins elite rushing group at Seton Hall Prep

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Mike Kinney/For The Star-Ledger



Seton Hall Prep star Kevin Monangai (25) erupted for 328 rushing yards and five TDs Saturday in 51-27 win over West Orange

Seton Hall Prep's Kevin Monangai high-stepped his way into an exclusive club Saturday when he became the third player in school history to eclipse 3,000 career rushing yards. The powerful senior halfback did it in supreme style, too, carrying 30 times for a career-high 328 yards and also five touchdowns (one below his personal best) to steer 5-0 the Pirates, No. 6 in The Star-Ledger Top 20, to a 51-27 win over previously unbeaten West Orange in the second annual Amos Alonzo Stagg Game at West Orange High.

Another Pirate who played a big role in that victory was senior lineman **Connor Wujciak**, who created pressure all day for West Orange QB Christian Smith with his domination in the middle. Wujciak, headed for Boston College, recorded six tackles, a sack, a fumble recovery and had four batted passes.

Monangai showed both an ability to adjust and a stubborn resolve by overcoming an unspectacular first half with a remarkable performance after the break. He ran 11 times for 51 yards and no touchdowns in the opening half, then left West Orange's defense in tatters with his explosive second half.

That raised Monangai's career numbers to 3,179 yards and 52 touchdowns on 399 carries. He is just three TDs shy of breaking the all-time mark of 54 set by **John Merklinger from 1977-79**. Merklinger is second all-time with 4,035 rushing yards on 637 attempts and **Andre Callender (2000-02)** tops the school list with 4,370 yards on 499 carries.

Merklinger's son Rory is a talented junior running back on the squad, though has been out with an injured knee the past two games. His absence certainly has created more rushing opportunities for Monangai and it has also illustrated the tremendous depth the Prep possesses in the backfield. Using **Kevin Ijoma and Charlie Kennedy** along with Monangai, the Pirates have scored 107 points in the last two games.

Monangai, a terrific kid with a strong work ethic, is now waiting for some Division 1 schools to take notice of his attributes and make firm scholarship offers. Thus far, Monmouth is the only school to have made that commitment.

“No, Rutgers hasn’t offered yet. It would be awesome to play in New Jersey,” he said. “Coach (Greg) Schiano and his guys are doing pretty well for themselves. Hopefully they’ll talk to me.”

1-Don Bosco Prep (5-0)

Last week: 1

The Ramsey club won its 28th consecutive game with a 58-6 victory over Paterson Kennedy.

Next: Oct. 22 vs. Passaic Tech.

2-Bergen Catholic (4-1)

Last week: 2

Quarterback Tanner McEvoy rushed for three TDs and passed for one each to Cameron Dickerson, Spencer Kulcsar and Karl Bostick in a victory over Fair Lawn. Next: Saturday at No. 10 St. Joseph (Mont.).

3-Cherokee (4-0)

Last week: 5

Kevin Byrne, Mike Zeuli and Erik Danser paced another strong defensive effort in a 27-7 victory over No. 20 Williamstown. Next: Friday at Cherry Hill West.

4-St. Peter's Prep (4-1)

Last week: 4

The Jersey City squad used the one-two punch of running backs Savon Huggins and Jared Crayton, who combined for 290 rushing yards and seven touchdowns, to top Union City. Next: Friday vs. Bayonne.

5-Seton Hall Prep (5-0)

Last week: 6

Linemen Dave Wightman, Frank Flores, Max Ruiz, Connor Brink and Andrew Pravata are responsible for triggering one of the state's most productive ground attacks. Next: Saturday vs. Irvington.

6-Holy Spirit (4-0)

Last week: 7

Linebackers Anthony Sarao, Ethan Gambale and Rocky Figuero anchor a defense that has posted two shutouts and allowed just 13 points. Next: Friday at Mainland.

7-Phillipsburg (5-0)

Last week: 8

Quarterback Justin Scuorzo completed six passes for 225 yards and four touchdowns, two of them to wideout Matt Deery, in a 75-0 victory over Montgomery. Next: Oct. 22 at Hunterdon Central.

8-Ramapo (5-0)

Last week: 13

Scott Kuenzle's second score of the game gave Ramapo a 35-28 victory over then-No. 3 St. Joseph. Quarterback Tyler Ward also tossed two touchdown passes for the Franklin Lakes contingent. Next: Friday vs. Wayne Valley.

9-Immaculata (5-0)

Last week: 9

The defense turned in another sterling performance, holding previously unbeaten Bridgewater-Raritan to 152 total yards and registering seven tackles for loss, in a 38-10 victory. Next: Friday vs. Linden.

10-St. Joseph (Mont.) (4-1)

Last week: 3

Running back John Sanford had two touchdowns and quarterback Christian Andrews a TD throwing and rushing, but they could not prevent a 35-28 loss to No. 8 Ramapo. Next: Saturday vs. No. 2 Bergen Catholic.

11-Sayreville (5-0)

Last week: 10

Delon Stephenson rushed for two touchdowns and returned a punt for a touchdown, while Davon Jackson added two scores in a 56-0 victory over Edison. Sayreville has outscored the opposition, 149-28, in its last three games. Next: Friday at Woodbridge.

12-Wayne Hills (5-0)

Last week: 11

Senior tailback Brian Dowling had a night to remember when he rushed for 248 yards and four scores and had a TD reception in a victory over Paramus. Next: Saturday at Ridgewood.

13-Matawan (5-0)

Last week: 12

Quarterback Jared Allison came through with 230 yards of offense and three touchdowns as Matawan held off Long Branch, 34-31. Keith Beaty's interception sealed the triumph. Next: Saturday vs. Barnegat.

14-Lacey (5-0)

Last week: 14

Jarrod Molzon keyed a 28-7 victory over previously unbeaten Barnegat with a 95-yard interception return for a TD in the third quarter. Next: Saturday vs. Toms River East.

15-Piscataway (5-0)

Last week: 15

Nadir Barnwell threw for a score and ran for one, while Tevin Shaw had 195 yards rushing and two touchdowns, all in the first half of a 49-14 victory over Old Bridge. Piscataway is averaging 40 points per game. Next: Friday vs. J.P. Stevens.

16-Pope John (4-0)

Last week: 16

Tailback Kyle McGrath rushed for 136 yards and three touchdowns, Sean Kenney threw two TD passes and Zach Johannes caught two TD passes in a 42-0 victory over Mount Olive. Next: Saturday at Sparta.

17-Shawnee (4-1)

Last week: 17

Running back Ed Royds, working behind the blocks of Rob Beachy and Bob Bradley, has helped his club outscore its last three opponents, 102-19. Next: Oct. 22 at No. 3 Cherokee.

18-Paul VI (4-0)

Last week: 18

Quarterback Khaaliq Burroughs and RB James Kenner power an offense that averages 34.5 points per game. Next: Friday at Eastern.

19-Brick Memorial (5-0)

Last week: NR

Running back Vincenzo Diodato had the first of five touchdowns by five different players as Brick Memorial churned out 282 yards on the ground in a 35-0 triumph over Toms River South. Next: Friday vs. Toms River North.

20-Williamstown (3-1)

Last week: 19

It looks to rebound after the offense struggled mightily in a 27-7 loss to No. 3 Cherokee. Next: Saturday at Cherry Hill East.

Out: 20-Winslow.

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