

TOP OF THE 2ND

PCC looks to end drought

From wire services

Pittsburgh-area teams won the first three Class AAAA titles and six of the first eight after the PIAA football playoffs begun in 1988. But since 1996, no WPIAL (District 7) team has won the big-school championship.

Nationally ranked Pittsburgh Central Catholic (15-0) looks to end that streak when it takes on Neshaminy (13-1) in the Class AAAA final at 5 p.m. Saturday in Hershey.

Central Catholic is in the championship game for the second consecutive year after losing to North Penn 37-10 last year. This season, the Vikings have rolled past their three PIAA playoff opponents, beating Gateway (28-0), Erie McDowell (44-3) and Harrisburg Bishop McDevitt (44-0) by a combined score of 116-3.

By contrast, Neshaminy rallied in the second half of three playoff games just to get to Hershey, including its 21-14 semifinal victory against Easton.

Still, Neshaminy has a history of knocking off a big favorite. It beat heavily favored Woodland Hills and star quarterback Steve Breaston 21-7 for the 2001 title behind running back Jamar

Brittingham.

"We don't have anyone who is really as good as that, plus we're young," Neshaminy coach Mark Schmidt said. "We have about 15 sophomores who start. But we have a lot of players who are solid and play hard."

Running back Georg Coleman has rushed for 2,004 yards and 28 touchdowns, with 152 yards and a game-winning touchdown pass against Easton. Neshaminy also gets offense from sophomore quarterback Andrew Fogel, who has rushed for 498 yards and seven scores, and kicker Kevin Kelly, a Penn State recruit.

Central Catholic not only has one of the nation's best defenses — the Vikings haven't allowed more than 14 points in a game since September — but a reliable offense. Senior running back Eugene Jarvis has rushed for 2,004 yards and 33 touchdowns, and senior Shane Murray has thrown for 1,386 yards and 18 scores and rushed for 410 yards.

Neshaminy has allowed an average of 25 points in its last four games, but has come up with big defensive plays when needed.

"Our guy (Fogel) is only a sophomore but he has done a super job," Schmidt said. "Their quarterback worries me because he's big and strong and does so many things well."

In the noon game Saturday, Grove City (11-2) meets Lansdale Catholic (13-1) in the

Class AA final. Grove City reached the title game despite losing its first two games of the season.

"There were three (District 10 teams) with 7-2 records and the district committee decided to give us the playoff spot," Grove City coach Jeff Bell said. "After we lost our first two games, getting in the playoffs was a second chance for us."

Grove City defeated Harborcreek for its first district title since 1961, then surprised Tyrone 21-17 in the semifinals. Tyrone was coming off a commanding victory over No. 1-ranked Seton-La Salle, one of the state's highest-scoring teams.

Lansdale Catholic reached a PIAA football final for the first time under coach Jim Algeo, who has 250 victories in 37 seasons. R.C. Lagomarsino has rushed for 2,148 yards in an offense that averages 35 points, with the help of a line that averages 230 pounds.

Grove City uses a variation of the Wing-T offense. Fullback Jack Valley is the leading rusher with 844 yards, while Jesse Alfredo has 580 and Dan Wise has 467. Jim Jaskowak has thrown for 1,644 yards and 12 scores.

"We can spread the field and go with five wideouts," Bell said. "We do a little bit of everything and that makes us a little tougher to defense."

U.S. FOOTBALL

PIAA Football Playoffs Championship Class AAAA Saturday

Neshaminy (13-1) vs. Pittsburgh Central Catholic (15-0), Hersheypark Stadium, Hershey, 5 p.m.

Class AAA Tonight

Manheim Central (13-1) vs. Thomas Jefferson (13-1), Hersheypark Stadium, Hershey, 7 p.m.

Class AA Saturday

Lansdale Catholic (13-1) vs. Grove City (11-2), Hersheypark Stadium, Hershey, Noon

Class A Today

Southern Columbia (14-0) vs. Rochester (13-3), Hersheypark Stadium, Hershey, 2 p.m.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Bowl Glance Tuesday, Dec. 14 New Orleans Bowl Payout: \$750,000

North Texas (7-4) vs. Southern Mississippi (6-5), 7:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Tuesday, Dec. 21 Champs Sports Bowl Payout: \$850,000

Georgia Tech (6-5) vs. Syracuse (6-5), 7:45 p.m. (ESPN)

Wednesday, Dec. 22 GMAC Bowl Payout: \$750,000

Memphis (8-3) vs. Bowling Green (8-3), 8 p.m. (ESPN)

Thursday, Dec. 23 Fort Worth (Texas) Bowl Payout: \$750,000

Cincinnati (6-5) vs. Marshall (6-5), 6:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Las Vegas Bowl Payout: \$750,000

Wyoming (6-5) vs. UCLA (6-5), 9:45 p.m. (ESPN)

Fri., Dec. 24 Hawaii Bowl Payout: \$750,000

UAB (7-4) vs. Hawaii (7-5), 7 p.m. (ESPN)

Saturday, Dec. 25 Blue-Gray Classic

Blue vs. Gray

Monday, Dec. 27 MPC Computers Bowl Payout: \$750,000

Fresno State (8-3) vs. Virginia (8-3), 2 p.m. (ESPN)

Motor City Bowl