

Shorthanded N. Penn has an uphill climb

The Knights, minus eight regulars, take on Neshaminy.

By Rob Parent

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So many people at this week's hearing on rioting and assault charges for several North Penn athletes who stated that this wasn't a football issue were correct.

Nonetheless, it seems a shame that a showcase game such as North Penn at Neshaminy for the Class AAAA District 1 title will be played without eight Knights regulars.

That was finalized when North Penn suspended Eric Halberstadt and Zach Raffle, two students who accepted plea agreements Monday in a Bucks County court hearing. Without them and quarterback Adam Hearn, it wouldn't seem the Knights have much of a chance to defend their Class AAAA state championship. Then again, that's why they play the games rather than predict them.

Speaking of which ... last week's score was 5-1. To date it is 32-9.

In this weekend's playoff games:

■ **No. 3 Neshaminy (11-1, Suburban One National tri-champion) at No. 4 North Penn (10-2 Suburban One National tri-champion), tomorrow, 7:30 p.m.**

No matter who won't be

■ **Last night's high school football games** ended too late for this edition. Look for the results in tomorrow's paper.

there for the Knights, they still have running backs Peter Stoll and Shane Gallagher. Losing top quarterback and defensive back Hearn, however, is one heck of a handicap.

Pick: Neshaminy, 28-21.

■ **No. 5 George Washington (11-0) vs. Easton (11-0) at Northeast High, Saturday, 7.**

This is the first Class AAAA state quarterfinal foray for a District 12 team in PIAA history. It comes against one of the strongest teams in the Eastern field, quite a surprise to even Red Rovers fans. They saw a team that lost to North Penn in the state semis last year get decimated by graduation ... yet Easton is perfect through 11 games and rolling as the state's fourth-ranked big-school team.

Trying to stop the Easton rush will be perhaps a slightly undermanned GW, which nonetheless boasts of The Pub's most-balanced teams in years. Any and every team

will have trouble stopping Jerry Butler.

Pick: How's this for an upset? George Washington, 24-23.

■ **Lansdale Catholic (11-1, Pioneer Athletic Conference champ) vs. Lakeland (12-0) at Wissahickon, tomorrow, 7:30.**

Coming off a huge rout of Saucon Valley for a subregionals title, this Class AA state quarterfinal game should offer Crusaders fans a good first look at the state field. It should also be one of Lansdale Catholic's toughest games of the year. Lakeland, winner out of District 2, has gone clean in a dozen. A win here and Lansdale Catholic can really start to dream of a state title.

Pick: Lansdale Catholic, 21-17.

■ **No. 10 Upper Merion (10-2, Suburban One American runner-up) vs. Berwick (11-1) at Wilkes-Barre Meyer, Saturday, 1.**

Four straight District 1 losses to Strath Haven went away this year for the Vikings, who beat a good Great Valley team by a point for a Class AAA district title last week.

Wouldn't you know that their first foray into states is against one of the state's most historically successful programs?

Berwick, which got here with a 19-12 district regional win

over Pottsville a week ago, is always awfully tough. Upper Merion has to hope running back Sean Donovan can come back off an ankle injury from last week's game, because the Vikings need all their offensive weapons to advance.

Pick: Berwick, 21-17.

■ **No. 8 Conestoga (10-1) vs. Great Valley (11-1), today, 10 a.m.**

This is kind of a holiday consolation bowl between the champions of the neighboring Southern Chester County and Central Leagues, and two of the best teams that don't have any playoff games left.

Above all, this is a match between two terrific quarterbacks, Josh Cohen and Anthony Parker-Boyd, in what should be a shoot-out.

Pick: Conestoga, 27-24.

■ **Freire Charter (0-5) vs. Imhotep Charter (1-8), today, 10.**

Come on, doesn't this game capture your fancy? Two first-year charter school football teams start their own Thanksgiving tradition. Sorry Freire, but we have to go with the team that's won once.

Pick: Imhotep, 20-14.

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