



By the numbers... ALL AREA STRENGTHS

Neshaminy wide receiver Antoine Lovelace follows the lead of assistant coach Bryan McGarity. Lovelace has already made an oral commitment to attend Northwestern next fall. "Now the only thing I have to worry about is keeping my grades up," he says.

# Early commitment is the trend

**RECRUITING** from 111 order, he'll have a college scholarship in his hand along with his high school diploma.

The early commitment puts all the pressure on the college coaches who gamble on a player staying healthy during his senior season and progressing as a player from what he showed as a junior.

"From State was the school that started this," North Penn coach Mike Pettine said. "If one school breaks the ice, another school has to make a decision now or offering a scholarship."

"It's something that all the Eastern schools are doing," said Pettine's father, C.R. West coach Mike Pettine said. "Southern schools come up here and don't know how to deal with this."

The recruiting process officially begins on May 1 when the NCAA permits college coaches to begin to contact high school juniors. Both Pettine said that Penn State assistant coach Fran Gantzer was in his schools early in the morning last May 1.

Gantzer and the other college coaches know what players they want to learn more about, but they can only look and not talk to them. "So the high school coaches arrange for the visitors to be strategically placed in the school hallways where they can see the prize pupils being class, checking out their records, how many books they can carry in one hand, probably checking them between classrooms—all those things coaches need to know."

"I talked to Alan Wade and three boys," Lovelace said. "We talked about taking a lot of pressure off us. Now we can just go out and play. Now the only thing I have to worry about is keeping my grades up."

"I'm still surprised. Last year I never even went to play football. I thought I was going to play basketball."

## Area Preseason Top 10

Rk.	Team	Rec.	Comment
1.	Central Bucks West	15-0	Defending state PIAA Class AAAA champs are still the team to beat.
2.	Plymouth-Whitman	17-2	The Colonials have played for the district's AAAA title three straight years.
3.	Norristown	5-7	Every game will be a test track for what could be an explosive offense.
4.	Council Rock	6-8	If the offensive line b leads, the Indians are another team with big offensive potential.
5.	Hatboro-Horsham	9-4	Junior QB Ryan Haggerty could be a big-time passer.
6.	North Penn	9-3	Junior speedster Mike Johnson has a veteran line to follow.
7.	Neshaminy	7-3	The Redskins have to return to the backfield.
8.	Souderton	8-2	A new coach has a veteran team to challenge PIAA.
9.	Upper Dublin	8-4	After two consecutive division titles, the Cardinals are ready to challenge again.
10.	Morrisville	6-6	Bullfrogs have to build on last season's success.

—Frank Bertucci

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"I'm one of the lucky ones to get a small school to get a Division I offer," he said. "I visited about 13 colleges in the summer, and most of them said they'd talk to me after the season."

"I thought I'd be one of those guys picked up late. You know, somebody is going somewhere else, and I'd be most in line. I decided if a school really liked offered me a scholarship, I'd take it. But if a school I didn't like offered one, I'd say, 'No.'"

In Jaycock said the school he liked most in his visits was Connecticut, but his dream school is New Haven. He signed a scholarship, it was too good to be true.

While several players said they followed Lovelace's lead, some said he thought about tripping over Ed Johnson's path.

A senior lineman for Council Rock last year, Johnson did not take any of the early IA offers he had, and when he was slow in making a decision on offers in the winter, he had to settle for attending Division IAA New Haven. Conn.

"I hadn't visited anywhere, seen anything," Johnson said by phone from his dorm room in New Haven. "Looking back, I would have done things differently. I would have done more making visits."

## Central Bucks East

**In charge:** Larry Gorman is in the third year of coaching and has the head coaching job in the 2001-02 season. Gorman is a 2001-02 season. Gorman is a 2001-02 season. Gorman is a 2001-02 season.

**Personnel file:** The Patriots have a good defense of players returning with senior Scott, a returning line offensive line, who led most of last season's success. The defense is led by senior defensive end and offensive tackle. The defense is led by senior defensive end and offensive tackle. The defense is led by senior defensive end and offensive tackle.

**Star quality:** Scott is the head 40-year-old player in the team. He has a college diploma. At 6-2 and 200 pounds, he is a tough competitor. He has a lot of experience. He has a lot of experience. He has a lot of experience.

**Outlook:** The Patriots are particularly strong in the defensive backfield. Some type of offensive line will be a key to the development of Scott, who is a good player. He is a good player. He is a good player.

## Central Bucks West

**In charge:** For a 23rd straight year, Mike Gorman is the head coach. He has a lot of experience. He has a lot of experience. He has a lot of experience.

**Personnel file:** The Bucks lost some big pieces in the offseason. The offense is led by senior quarterback. The offense is led by senior quarterback. The offense is led by senior quarterback.

**Star quality:** The team is led by senior quarterback. The team is led by senior quarterback. The team is led by senior quarterback.

**Outlook:** The Bucks are a tough team. They are a tough team. They are a tough team.

## Suburban One National

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## Bensalem

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# Season will include some exciting matchups

## Changing Places

Six football teams changed PIAA classifications for this season. Springfield (D) moved from Class AAAA to AAA, Oxford and Pottstown moved from AA to AAA, Bristol and Springfield (M) moved from A to AA, and Lower Merion moved from AA to A.

Here is a list of classifications.

### Class AAAA

North Penn, Council Rock, Upper Darby, Perkasie, Neshaminy, Truman, Bensalem, Downingtown, Coatesville, Abington, Chester, West Chester Henderson, Harford, Pottstown, Upper Perkasie, Plymouth-Whitman, Quakertown, Penn Wood, Conestoga, Interiors, Washington, Hatboro-Horsham, Central Bucks East, Perkasie, William Tennent, Norristown, Ridley, West Chester East, Glen Mills, Central Bucks West, Upper Dublin, Lower Merion, Penncrest, Springfield, Methuan, Marple Newtown, Chichester.

### Class AAA

Academy Park, Sun Valley, Upper Haddon, Strath Haven, Phoenixville, Unionville, Owen J. Roberts, Colton, Pottstown, Upper Perkasie, Upper Merion, Parkersburg, Pottersville, Lansdale Catholic, Great Valley, Radnor, Springfield (D).

### Class AA

Garnet Valley, Bristol, Harrison, St. Plus X, Springfield (M).

### Class A

Lower Merion, Morrisville, Jenkintown.

## GAMES

**At LaSalle at Plymouth-Whitman, Sept. 18, 7:30 p.m.** It's a year too late for these teams to be playing, but the new-book Explorers, without their new head coaching staff, will know where they stand before beginning Catholic League play the following week.

**At Lansdale Catholic at Upper Perkasie, Sept. 18, 7:30 p.m.** When they last met, in a PIAA District I Class AAA semifinal playoff game last November, Upper Perks was the game, but the Crusaders won an SDNY award for their rambling, five-play-at-a-time touchdown play.

**At Academy of the Holy Church at Morrisville, Sept. 25, 7:30 p.m.** Last season's independence League champion, ANC, plays against the best opponent, Morrisville. If the Bulldogs' rebuilding effort is for real, they'll have to win this game.

**Central Bucks East at Council Rock, Oct. 3, 1:30 p.m.** Early Byrnes' team will be there for players on the field, but the showdown will be between two factors: could Division I running backs.

**Central Rock at Perkasie, Oct. 10,**

**1:30 p.m.** This is always a tough neighborhood battle. Lower Merion will be the favorites.

**At LaSalle at Father Judge, Oct. 17, 1 p.m.** The Explorers will be set to average last season's 47-14 playoff record.

**Central Bucks East at Central Bucks West and North Penn at Neshaminy, Oct. 20, 7:30 p.m.** Neshaminy is a National Conference and the District 1 playoff picture.

**Central Bucks East at Central Bucks West, Sept. 27, 7:30 p.m.** Running back Bryan Scott said he wants to play in West. Before he's through at East, and he'd be man in backfield, either.

**Conestoga at Haverly V, Oct. 13, 7:30 p.m.** This is the renewal of a neighborhood rivalry that had been a Thanksgiving tradition.

**Norristown at Plymouth-Whitman, Nov. 26, 10 a.m.** It's only a football, but it could become a battle twice this winter in basketball. Now that Norristown has moved to the Suburban One American Conference Liberty Division with the Colonials.

PHOTO BY FRANK BERTUCCI FOR THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER