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Keith Pompey: Public League home to most hoops talent



By Keith Pompey

Inquirer Columnist

Which boys' basketball league in Southeastern Pennsylvania has the best talent?

The answer to that question depends on whom you ask.

Some basketball purists swear that Philadelphia's Public and Catholic Leagues are home to the area's most talented players. In Chester, folks will put the Del-Val League up against any league in the state. And more than a few AAU coaches preach that the Friends Schools League has by far the area's best young talent.

Perhaps.

But a lot of the Friends Schools League hype is based on projections. Many of its players are unproven underclassmen on the high-school level.

That said, the Public League still has the most talented players in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

Here's a look at my five most-talented leagues:

1 League: Public

Story: With more teams joining the league, the talent has become spread out. As a result, the teams aren't as good as they were in the 1980s and early 1990s. But this league still has plenty of skilled players. Imhotep Charter, Southern, Communications Tech, Bartram, Frankford, Prep Charter, Strawberry Mansion, Fels, Boys' Latin, Freire Charter, Bodine and Olney have Division I prospects on their rosters.

2 League: Catholic

Story: Like the Public league, the PCL is known for producing Division I-caliber athletes. This season is no different. The headliners are Roman Catholic senior point guard Maalik Wayns, Neumann-Goretti junior guard Tony Chennault, and North Catholic sophomore forward/center Rakeem Christmas.

3League: Friends Schools

Story: The FSL boasts some of the most talented freshmen and sophomores in Southeastern Pennsylvania. If these Division I prospects continue to improve, this will be the area's best league in two seasons.

4League: Del-Val

Story: As long as Chester remains in this league, it will continue to produce top-notch players. Add in Glen Mills senior center Aaric Murray and Penn Wood's stable of prospects, and this becomes one of the most talented six-team leagues around.

5League: Suburban One

Story: As it has in the Friends Schools, the talent level has gone up in the Suburban One. The league has produced two Big East Conference recruits in Pennsbury senior guard Dalton Pepper (West Virginia) and Quakertown senior forward Brett Roseboro (Marquette). While the league boasts several Division I senior signees, it also has talented freshmen and sophomores.



Three things about last week

1. A you're-my-idol salute goes out to Bodine girls' basketball player Chikilara Goodman. She finished with 37 points, 20 rebounds and 12 assists in Monday's 56-47 Public League Class AA quarterfinal win over Communications Tech.

2. Congrats to the Academy of New Church boys' basketball team. The youthful Lions pulled off a huge upset by beating area power Friends' Central in Friday's Friends Schools League championship game.

3. Thumbs up to the Central Bucks South boys' basketball team. The Titans defeated Avon Grove, 68-52, in Friday's PIAA District 1 Class AAAA first-round matchup. It was the first playoff victory in the four-year history of the program.



Three things about this week

1. A much-anticipated matchup. The Inquirer's No. 1 and No. 2 girls' basketball teams in Southeastern Pennsylvania meet in a can't-miss Philadelphia Catholic League semifinal. Top-ranked Cardinal O'Hara faces second-ranked Archbishop Carroll in tomorrow's 6 p.m. game at Gwynedd-Mercy College.

2. Time to crown a state champion. Methacton junior Carlton Lavong is favored to win the boys' long jump and triple jump in Saturday's Pennsylvania Track and Field Coaches Association Indoor Track and Field State Championships at Penn State's Multi-Sport Facility.

3. One to keep an eye on. The Germantown Academy girls' swimming team will be a featured attraction in Friday's and Saturday's Eastern Championships at La Salle University.



Pompey's Super Seven

Here are the rankings for the top-seven winter teams in Southeastern Pennsylvania, regardless of the sport:

1. Cardinal O'Hara girls' basketball. Since a Jan. 9 loss to Archbishop Wood, the Lions have won 11 consecutive games by an average margin of 24.4 points.

2. Archbishop Carroll girls' basketball. The Patriots want to prove that they're much better than the group that lost, 61-44, to O'Hara on Dec. 28.

3. La Salle boys' swimming. The Explorers are the overwhelming favorites to win this weekend's District 12 championships at Widener University.

4. Pennsbury boys' basketball. The Falcons have yet to lose to an in-state opponent.

5. Germantown Academy girls' swimming. The Patriots earned the team title in the Inter-Ac championships.

6. Swenson girls' indoor track and field. The Lions' Shanae Bailey has run the nation's third-fastest time in the 200 meters. Anthonia Ballard has the 15th-fastest time in the 55 hurdles. And Swenson has the sixth-best time in the 4x200.

7. Neumann-Goretti boys' basketball. The Saints take on North Catholic on Wednesday for the chance to play for the Philadelphia Catholic League title.

Under consideration: Boyertown wrestling, Germantown Academy girls' basketball, Imhotep Charter boys' basketball, Methacton boys' track, North Penn boys' swimming, Quakertown wrestling, Upper Dublin boys' track, Villa Maria Academy girls' swimming.

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