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Posted on Mon, Feb. 23, 2009

Keith Pompey: Jefferson, Pepper, Wayns stand above the rest



By Keith Pompey
Inquirer Columnist

There's no shortage of candidates for The Inquirer's Southeastern Pennsylvania boys' basketball player of the year award.

But three players stand out. One is listed among the nation's premier players. Another surpassed a major career milestone. And the third is the backbone of arguably the PIAA's most renowned program.

Here is a look at the three players (in alphabetical order). The winner will be announced after the season.

Rahlir Jefferson

School: Chester

Position: Forward/center

Height: 6-foot-6

Class: Senior

Skinny: Despite playing out of position, the Temple signee has posted 21 double-doubles in 25 games. Jefferson is averaging 17.8 points, 11.6 rebounds, 4.1 steals, 3.4 blocks and 3.1 assists per game. As one of two returners from last season's Class AAAA state champions, he is a major reason the young Clippers are 21-4. Jefferson does everything from diving for loose balls to instructing teammates on where to line up. The lockdown defender is the major reason Chester advanced to this season's state tourney. Once Jefferson gets in the open court, the former swingman is a highlight in waiting.

Dalton Pepper

School: Pennsbury

Position: Guard

Height: 6-5

Class: Senior

Skinny: The West Virginia signee has surpassed 2,000 career points, with 2,108 and counting. The four-year starter is averaging 24 points, 10.8 rebounds, and 2.9 steals this season despite sitting out a lot of fourth quarters. A big-time performer, he has averaged 26 points and around 10 rebounds in head-to-head matchups with McDonald's all-Americans Dexter Strickland (St. Patrick, N.J.), Wally Judge (Arlington Country Day, Fla.) and Xavier Henry (Putnam City, Okla.). Pepper is regarded as the nation's 50th-ranked recruit in the Class of 2009, according to the Bob Gibbons All Star Report.

Maalik Wayns

School: Roman Catholic

Position: Point guard



RON CORTES / Staff Photographer
Roman Catholic's Maalik Wayns (front) is the nation's 19th ranked senior.

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Height: 6-1

Class: Senior

Skinny: The Villanova recruit was named Roman's sixth McDonald's all-American Wednesday. The old-school Philly point guard is averaging 17.7 points, 7 assists, 5 rebounds and 3.5 steals. He has missed the Cahillites' last seven games after suffering a cartilage tear in his right knee Jan. 26. Even at 80 percent, the playmaker is better than most of the top players in Southeastern Pennsylvania. His impact on a young team showed during two games against Archbishop Ryan. With Wayns, Roman won, 63-36. Without him, the Raiders took a 61-56 overtime victory. It's easy to see why he's the nation's 19th-ranked senior, according to Bob Gibbons.

Three things about last week

1. Thanks-for-representing-the-area salutes go out to Central Bucks South's Tom Mallon and Chester's Rayiana Johnson. Mallon posted the nation's fastest high school time (1 minute, 51.79 seconds) to win the boys' 800 meters at Saturday's Pennsylvania Track Coaches Association's State Indoor Championships at Penn State. At the same meet, Johnson won the girls' 60 meters with the nation's fastest prep time (7.45 seconds).

2. Sayonara to the Clippers' streak. The Chester boys' basketball team's streak of consecutive District 1 Class AAAA tournament victories ended Friday night at 38. The Norristown Eagles defeated the Clippers, 61-59, in the district quarterfinals. Chester had won the previous seven district titles.

3. Thumbs up to Sam "Speed Racer" Prescott. The Imhotep Charter senior guard finished with 24 points, 13 rebounds, 4 blocked shots and 3 steals in Friday's 49-43 Public League Championship victory over Franklin Learning Center. Eleven of his points came in the fourth quarter. That's when he made 9 of 14 free throws.

Three things about this week

1. Much-anticipated matchup: Archbishop Carroll faces Archbishop Wood in today's 6:30 p.m. Philadelphia Catholic League girls' basketball championship game at the Palestra. The Patriots of Carroll are ranked first in Southeastern Pennsylvania by The Inquirer, while the Vikings are sixth. Carroll is going for its sixth title in 10 seasons.

2. One to keep an eye on: Roman Catholic faces Neumann-Goretti in today's 8:15 p.m. PCL boys' final at the Palestra. The archrivals met in the championship games in 2006 and 2007. The Saints, ranked second in the area, won the 2006 title. The Cahillites won the following season.

3. Historic moment: The Norristown and Pennsbury boys' basketball teams will meet in the District 1 Class AAAA semifinals for the second consecutive season at 7:30 p.m. tomorrow at Temple's Liacouras Center. The Eagles won last season's game en route to their first district final since 1993. The teams also met in the district semifinals 10 seasons ago. Back then, Pennsbury upset the state's top-ranked Norristown to reach the district final.

Pompey's Super Seven

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

1. Archbishop Carroll girls' basketball. The nation's 16th-ranked team in the ESPN Rise Fab 50 rankings faces Archbishop Wood in tonight's PCL championship game at the Palestra.

2. La Salle boys' swimming. The Explorers nabbed their 21st consecutive PCL championship title and claimed the District 12 title on Saturday.

3. Cardinal O'Hara girls' basketball. The Lions dropped two spots following Tuesday's 50-42 setback to Carroll in PCL semifinals.

4. Pennsbury boys' basketball. Pepper will look to erase memories of last season's 5 of 15 shooting (15 points) in the district semis.

5. Germantown Academy girls' swimming. The Patriots finished third behind Baylor School (Tenn.) and Peddie School (N.J.) at this weekend's 109th Eastern Interscholastic Swimming and Diving Championships.

6. Swenson girls' indoor track and field. The Lions won the team title at the Pennsylvania Track Coaches Association State Indoor Championships.

7. Neumann-Goretti boys' basketball. One Pennsbury slipup and the Saints will take over the Falcons' status as the area's top boys' basketball team.

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

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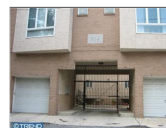
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Posted by **aldro17** 08:52 AM, 02/23/2009 [Sign in to report abuse](#)
 Keith, What is Rhalir Jefferson's "position"? You say he is playing out of position but I'm not sure he has a true position yet.

Posted by **Pat c** 10:55 AM, 02/23/2009 [Sign in to report abuse](#)
 I think Jefferson from Chester has to be taken out of the running now that Chester is no longer in the District playoffs and the other 2 are. A big part of the award is carrying your team to victory. And he didnt do it this year. My vote would be for Pepper. He can do so much on the court.

Posted by **jpeters** 08:51 PM, 02/23/2009 [Sign in to report abuse](#)
 It wasnt Jefferson's fault that Chester is out. Blame the wacko that went crazy and got a double technical with a tie game and 2 minutes left.

3 comments

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