

25 TO WATCH IN '05

With the dawn of a new year means a whole bunch of new storylines for everyone to follow. Here are just some of those that we think will take place in the upcoming year.

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Auld acquaintance? Been forgot and never brought to mind.

In Lower Bucks history, 2004 was certainly one year to remember. There was the entire Smarty Jones excitement that unified not just this community, but the entire country. Locally, there were the runs of Holy Ghost Prep basketball and Neshaminy football to the state championship games. Two girls soccer teams, Council Rock-South and Villa Joseph Marie, won state championships.

But that's now yesterday's news with the coming of the New Year. And the flip of the calendar page to 2005 gives a chance to gaze ahead at some great new moments that are sure to lie ahead.

We have compiled 25 such trends and storylines to watch for as we head into 2005. They aren't predictions or resolutions as much as they are things to watch and keep in mind for the New Year.

They are given in no particular order of importance. Instead, they are broken down into categories that make things easier to understand and look for in the next 364 days.

ADMINISTRATIVE/ OTHER TRENDS

1) The Philadelphia Catholic League's Days of Decision

This is the first major event of 2005, starting on Tuesday with the vote of the Board of Governors that likely will strike down a change in football alignments. Other issues that are certain to follow include possible membership in the PIAA and eventual school closings seeming to draw closer every day.

2) The Public/Private issue in the PIAA

Some public schools feel emboldened to try and push this issue in the wake of the recent football championships and the possibility of the PCL joining in the near future. However, it's probably an issue that won't go away quickly... i.e. within 12 months.

3) District 12's impact on the PIAA basketball playoffs

In the fall, the Public League's original journey into the PIAA playoffs went unrewarded. No teams won a game at any level and Washington's football squad was the only one that seemed to be competitive. This year, that could change as the Pub appears to be the favorite to win three of the boys basketball classes.

4) Suburban One League football reshuffling?

Last season, teams like Harry S Truman complained that the new SOL setup didn't take into account how many players were coming out for teams, instead lumping schools like Truman (high enrollment, low football turnout) and North Penn (huge enrollment, huge football turnout) together in the same group. There will be more complaints, but there doesn't seem to be any groundswell of change movement coming forward at the present time. But it's something to keep an eye on.

5) Coaching carousel in the SOL

Truman already needs a new football coach. So does Central Bucks West after Randy Cuthbert left for Pennridge.

WINTER ON THE FIELD

6) Council Rock-North girls basketball

The Indians appear to be back on track, starting the season 8-2 and beating Downingtown East last week in the game that may carry huge ramifications when the Class AAAA seeding meeting takes place in six weeks. Should the Indians stay this hot, expect CR-North to gain a top three or four seed and advance to the state tournament.

7) Holy Ghost Prep boys basketball

Sure, the Firebirds lost five starters and a key reserve from last year's team that advanced to the state title game. But they have come out strong so far in 2004-2005 with some strong outside shooting and pressure defense. A District One title in Class AAA is well within their grasp.

8) Wood in the PCL Boys hoops

The Vikings won a post-season game for the first time in 2004. Behind Matt Spadafora, there is no reason to believe that Wood will not win the Northern Division in 2005 and become a legitimate contender when it gets to the later rounds.

9) Getting a grappling

In the winter, wrestling has emerged as the area's strongest sport by far. Five teams (Neshaminy, CR-South, Pennsbury, Truman and CR-North) are solid from top to bottom. And there are a lot of individuals that could do great things as we head towards Hershey and states.

10) Making a splash

Jen Betz, (sophomore diver from CR-North), Laura Rosenberg (CR-N senior swimmer) and C.J. Marck (Pennsbury senior swimmer) all have a possibility to medal at PIAA championships. Tom Whelan from Archbishop Wood could be a real threat in the PCL breaststroke.

11) What's this sport called?

It's looking more and more like the only way to see ice hockey in these parts this year could be from either the Phantoms/Titans and the local high school teams. Neshaminy and Pennsbury currently lead the Lower Bucks County Scholastic Hockey League, but Holy Ghost Prep and Father Judge look to be right in the hunt.