

## Warriors jump to top in 4A football

Written by Jim Ecker

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The people who vote in the high school football polls have been keeping a keen eye on the Washington Warriors all season.

The Warriors began the year in the No.3 spot in the Class 4A poll in the Des Moines Register rankings. Then they climbed to No. 2 and now they're sitting all alone at the top of the poll after demolishing then-No. 9 Linn-Mar, 43-3, Friday night.

Washington got some help in the rankings Friday night from the Lombardi family. Rocky Lombardi, the son of former Washington coach Tony Lombardi, passed for 206 yards and two touchdowns as West Des Moines Valley upset Dowling Catholic, 24-21, an outcome that knocked Dowling out of the No. 1 spot in the poll and opened the door for the Warriors.

Here are the Register's new 4A rankings:

1. Washington (4-0), 2. Bettendorf (4-0), 3. West Des Moines Valley (3-1), 4. Dowling (3-1), 5. Waukee (3-1), 6. Sioux City East (4-0), 7. Ames (3-1), 8. Johnston (3-1), 9. Dubuque Hempstead (3-1), 10. North Scott (3-1).

The Register might want to take another look at North Scott. The Lancers lost to Prairie, 13-7, Friday night and committed seven turnovers, a performance unworthy of a top-10 team.

It's still early in the season, but Washington and Bettendorf could be headed for a collision in the semifinals of the Class 4A state tournament, with the winner to face one of the Des Moines-area clubs in the finals. There's a long, long, long way to go, but it could be fun if Washington faces Rocky Lombardi and West Des Moines Valley for the state title in Cedar Falls.

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Paul James has been doing a fabulous job in his twin duties as the football coach and athletic director at Washington. Both jobs are demanding, yet James handles the assignments with modesty and quiet confidence.

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Some people predicted the Xavier Saints would roll through the competition in Class 3A this season and have a fairly clear path to the state finals.

They may be right.

The Saints, who reached the Class 4A finals as an undersized school in 2012 and 2013, dropped down to their proper class this year with the advent of district football and have been rolling through the 3A competition.

Xavier was supposed to be tested by Davenport Assumption and Solon, but it did not turn out that way. The Saints belted then-No. 5 Assumption (30-6) and blanked then-No. 3 Solon (28-0), then flattened DeWitt Central (59-3) Friday night.

The Saints have outscored those Class 3A clubs, 117-9, with an impressive string of performances. There's still plenty of work to do, including an intriguing home game with Class 1A power Iowa City Regina Oct. 17. Third-ranked West Delaware and fifth-ranked Waverly-Shell Rock lurk as possible playoff opponents from our slice of the state, in addition to possible rematches with Assumption and Solon.

Xavier Coach Duane Schulte faced heavy graduation losses this year, but he's fashioned another strong club that has one of the stingiest defenses in the state. The Saints lost their season opener at Class 4A Dowling, 24-2, but have been rolling ever since.

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Xavier has an outstanding coaching staff, a strong feeder system, supportive parents and disciplined student-athletes. It's been a recipe for success for a long time now.

Here is the new Class 3A poll by the Register:

1. Xavier (3-1), 2. Pella (4-0), 3. West Delaware (4-0), 4. Solon (3-1), 5. Waverly-Shell Rock (3-1), 6. Sioux City Heelan (3-1), 7. Carroll (4-0), 8. Ballard (4-0), 9. Newton (4-0), 10. Gilbert (3-1).

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Jefferson's 62-0 victory over Davenport West this past Friday night was still warm on the scoreboard when the J-Hawks turned their attention to this Thursday night's game with Kennedy at Kingston Stadium.

The J-Hawks are yearning for a victory over a Metro opponent after a long dry spell. Coach Brian Webb, in his third year at Jefferson, has done a remarkable rebuilding job and nearly beat Prairie earlier this season.

Kennedy has stumbled out of the blocks and will take an 0-4 record into Thursday's game. Jefferson has a 2-2 mark and tons of momentum after belting Davenport North and Davenport West the last two weeks.

New Jefferson quarterback Jesse Furrow is the real deal, but the J-Hawks are not a one-man gang. They have made great strides under Webb in terms of size, strength, depth and discipline.