

Featured Player Articles:

Emeka Egbuka is at the top of the country

Emeka Egbuka is one of the most explosive players in the country. The 6-1, 190-pound phenom is coming off of an outstanding year winning all that there is to win in the state of Washington.

He was named the National Junior of the Year by several media outlets and he is currently the No. 1 wide receiver in the 2021 class. Egbuka is currently a 4.0 student at Steilacoom high school located in the greater-Tacoma area. Egbuka is one of few 5-star recruits and he is currently a Top 5 overall player in the 2021 national rankings.

Egbuka put up top numbers as a freshman, hauling in 13 touchdowns on 44 receptions and 808 yards. Over that summer he put on an extra 20 lbs and took his game to the next level.

His sophomore year dwarfed the freshman year stats as he caught 23 touchdowns, 1492 yards, on 72 receptions. Egbuka also had 3 special teams returns for a touchdown and added 1 more touchdown with an interception return. The 27 total touchdowns earned him League MVP, All-Area, All-State, and All-American honors.

These numbers resulted in high expectations for Egbuka's junior year but he rose to the challenge. His junior year stats include 25 receiving touchdowns, 1607 receiving yards, and 83 receptions.

On top of this, Egbuka stepped up the other parts of his game as he took back 4 special teams returns for a touchdown, 3 interceptions for a touchdown, and 5 rushing touchdowns. This totals a whopping 35 total touchdowns with 2257 all-purpose yards.

He was named Washington's Gatorade Player of the Year, AP Washington 2019 All-Classes All-State Player of the Year, and earned All-American honors for the second year in a row.

Egbuka has received offers from the top programs in the country and he has narrowed down his selection to 4 universities including Ohio State, Clemson, Oklahoma, and his home-state Washington Huskies. As of July 2020, Egbuka has not made a decision on where he will play football at the next level.

Egbuka states that he is the “Nations Number 1 Athlete” and as he looks to his final year of high school football, he has already put up a performance to back up this claim.

Egbuka's Steilacoom Sentinels are coming off a tough loss to Tumwater in the 2019 Washington 2A State Championship. The only thing missing in Egbuka's trophy case is a state championship and I know that he will be on a mission this year.

Emeka Egbuka is a player to hold headlines at the next level. I will not be surprised to see him shaking commissioner Goodell's hand on the NFL Draft stage in the next 4 years.

Jacob Schuster is peaking at the right time

Underestimated. Jacob Schuster has been overlooked throughout his recruiting process. He did not have any official offers throughout his outstanding junior year and up until April 2020, he only had a handful of Division 1 offers. Coming in at 6 foot 2, 300 lbs, Schuster is not one to pass over.

Schuster is currently heading into his senior season at Tumwater High School in Olympia, Washington. This area is filled with college-ready recruits in the 2021 class but Schuster seemed to be buried. He clocks in with a 4.0 GPA and a 3 star recruiting grade.

Schuster's sophomore season was noticeable to say the least. Schuster finished with an impressive 76 tackles, 18 of these being TFLs, and 8 sacks. His 2018 honors are capped with 2A EvCo Defensive Player of the Year and an AP Washington All-State Honorable Mention. Entering his junior year, Schuster continued to build his weight up to his current weight of 300 lbs.

The defense man was outstanding in the 2019 season. He had 60 total tackles with a ridiculous 26 tackles for a loss. This added to his 9.5 sacks resulted in a second consecutive 2A EvCo Defensive Player of the Year, 2A EvCo MVP, All-Area Player of the Year, and All-State Team spots at both the offensive (OL) and defensive (DL) sides.

All doubt of Schuster was dismissed after this mammoth season and the offers have started to flow in.

Schuster has received offers from top programs such as Duke, Stanford, Michigan, Cal, Arizona, and his home-state Washington and Washington State. Most of these scholarships have come in the last 2 months and I expect several more offers to be announced throughout the summer. Schuster is poised to make an impact on the 2021 recruiting class as he looks to follow up a state championship with another league-leading season. I look forward to seeing more jaw-dropping numbers from Jacob Schuster this 2020 season.

Sam Huard, the lefty slinging 5-star phenom

A lefty quarterback has been a rare breed over the past decades of high level football. When I watch Sam Huard, I see the potential of creating a whole new generation following in this quarterback's footsteps. He is the top quarterback in the state of Washington. Standing at 6-2, 175-pounds, Huard uses his arm and rarely his legs to make plays. Huard is the top PRO style quarterback in the 2021 class and one of the few 5-star recruits.

Born into a family of quarterbacks, Huard's position was decided for him long before he stepped out onto the Kennedy Catholic field in Burien, Washington. Once he did step onto that field though, that decision was obviously the right one.

Huard started his high school career being named Maxpreps Freshman of the Year as he threw for 3,432 yards and 34 touchdowns. His sophomore year built upon those unparalleled freshman numbers. He threw for 4,165 passing yards and 42 touchdowns, on 63% passing in 2018. These top-tier stats resulted in one of the 3 All-State Honorable Mentions that were given out to Class 3A sophomores.

Huard's junior year continued the trend of 3,000 yard plus seasons and footballs flying all over the field. Huard put up 4,168 yards with an outrageous 56 passing touchdowns, all while keeping his completion percentage of 63%.

These stat lines led his team to a league championship and a shot at a Washington 4A State Championship. Huard was named Class 4A All-State Player of the Year, a 2021 All-American, and countless All-Area team mentions.

Huard committed to his home-state University of Washington Huskies after his remarkable sophomore season in 2018. It is looking as though this early transaction will be where Huard continues his football career as he follows in his Uncle and Father's footsteps.

Heading into his senior season with Kennedy Catholic, look for Huard to finish the deep state championship run that the Lancers started in 2019. Huard is also currently on pace to shatter the all-time passing yards record for the state of Washington. He is only 1301 yards away from this historic feat and I'm sure that Sam Huard will not stop there.

Kamari Wilson is a terminator on the field

Receivers in Florida's 6A District 11 do not believe in the inevitability of death and taxes. They believe in only one thing. When playing Fort Pierce Westwood, they will get absolutely annihilated by Kamari Wilson. This hard hitting safety stands at 6 foot 1, 195 pounds. Wilson is the No. 1 safety in the 2022 class and the No. 5 2022 recruit in all of Florida.

Hailing from Fort Pierce, Florida, Kamari Wilson is making waves in the top high school football scene in the country. His mix of hit power, raw athleticism, instincts, and hands make him a tough player for any offense to work around. Wilson finds a way to be in every play from sideline to sideline. Similar to famous Fort Pierce alumni, Khalil Mack, Wilson seems to have a similar knack to put his shoulder pad into any of the players that get in his way.

Coach Jeff George Jr. speaks to Wilson's versatility being his strongest asset. In an interview, George says that Wilson can play anywhere on the field and the film shows it. Wilson had impressive stats in 2019 that include, 114 tackles, 5 interceptions, 2 forced fumbles, and 5 total touchdowns. He played in the box or back in coverage with even some snaps on the offensive side of the ball as a wide receiver. As Wilson puts it himself, "I'm everywhere."

Kamari Wilson has a total of 29 offers from Division 1 programs. These include the likes of top programs at Florida St., Miami, LSU, South Carolina, Alabama, Georgia, Michigan, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, and USC. Not to mention his first offer that came after his freshman season from the home state University of Florida.

Wilson still has 2 full seasons to evaluate his options at the next level but he will be a lucky addition to any program. I will be ready to watch him make jaw-dropping on Saturdays in the coming years. Going into the 2020 season, look for Wilson to continue his tear on anyone looking to touch the ball on the opposing team.

* Update 6/16/2020: Kamari Wilson announced that he will be continuing the next 2 years of high school at IMG Academy in Bradenton, FL.

Shemar Stewart is a once in a decade player

Out of this world. That is the potential that strong-side defensive end Shemar Stewart has. 5-star recruit. First-round draft pick. The list can go on and on.

The 6-5, 240 lbs prodigy at Monsignor Pace High School in Miami, Florida is currently the No. 1 ranked player in the Class of 2022. Shemar Stewart has been destroying offensive tackles since he stepped onto the football field. He has the arm span, strong base, and quickness of an elite pass rusher that can disrupt any play.

Whether he starts from a three point or standing, Stewart is a constant threat. His length contributes to his speed (4.7 40 yard dash) and his ability to separate any block from his chest. Stewart seems more like a college prospect trying to get into the pros than the position he is in currently.

The sophomore put up top tier numbers in 2019. He led the Spartans to the Florida state playoffs with 48 total tackles (29 of them coming solo) and 15 sacks. This comes off a rough 2018 season for Monsignor Pace where they did not come close to reaching any playoffs. That year Stewart put up freshman numbers that gave him the consensus #1 spot for the 2022 class before the 2019 season even started.

In terms of the next level of football, Stewart currently has 27 Division 1 offers from top programs: Florida, Florida St., Miami, Georgia, LSU, Michigan, Ohio St., Penn St., and Oregon. There are no clear favorites for the rising junior and there is plenty of time for him to work out his needs and evaluate the field.

By the end of the summer, every school trying to compete for a national championship will want Stewart on their side of the field. Going into the 2020 season, Shemar Stewart looks to continue to impress the crowds that will come to watch him. His combination of

length, quickness, and build is rare for any sport and it certainly shows on the football field.

Nicco Marchiol has dreams of great things

Colorado. Arizona. Florida?. Michigan?. This could be the path of Class of 2022 superstar Nicco Marchiol. The first 2 states listed have already come into Marchiol's life so far. The pro-style quarterback played his first 2 seasons of high school football for Regis Jesuit High School in a suburb outside of Denver, Colorado.

This culminated in an outstanding 2019 season from the sophomore as he threw for over 2500 yards, had 38 total touchdowns and completed 63% of his passes. He led the Raiders to an undefeated regular season and was awarded the Class of 2022 Player of the Year in Colorado and was a 1st Team All-Conference selection.

These accolades mean nothing in 2020 as Marchiol announced on March 1st, 2020 that he is moving to Arizona for the rest of his high school career. Nicco Marchiol will join Hamilton High School, a team already loaded with talent.

The Arizona high school football scene is somewhat more competitive than in Colorado and we will all be watching to see if Marchiol can perform at the same extreme level in 2020. The lefty passer grew up with his brother, Santino Marchiol, leading the way for the two boys. Santino was a 4-star linebacker recruit who now attends the University of Arizona.

Nicco has attained the 4-star rating from Top247 in just two seasons of high school football but I expect much higher ratings in the next year for Nicco as he grows into his new role at Hamilton.

Chandler, Arizona is home to the cross-town rival of Hamilton and defending (4th consecutive year) state champions, Chandler High School. The two powers have been battling back and forth every year with Chandler coming out on top too many times.

Nicco Marchiol is stepping into an underdog fight against the big, bad Chandler Wolves and I know that Marchiol is not backing down from any moment. Look for 2020 to be the year where things in Chandler shift toward the Hamilton Huskies.

Nicco Marchiol has caught the attention of many top Division 1 schools. Marchiol currently has 24 offers that include, but are not limited to; Florida, Florida St., Georgia, Michigan, USC, Colorado, LSU, Nebraska, Penn St., Utah, and home-state Arizona and Arizona St. No matter what Marchiol decides, he will be at the top of his game on Saturdays and I am excited to see what the next 2 years have in store.

Can Kyion Grayes make even more waves in 2020?

The city of Chandler, Arizona is known for its high school football team, the Chandler High School Wolves. Chandler High School has won the Arizona State Championship the last 4 consecutive seasons. Last season, sophomore Kyion Grayes came out of nowhere.

During his first year on the varsity team he led the Wolves in receptions and receiving yards putting up 883 yards on 48 catches and 6 touchdowns. The 6 foot 1, 170 pound wide receiver is just starting his reign of Chandler football.

Kyion Grayes has been an outstanding athlete since he was very young. Grayes started to turn heads even as a 14 year old playing for the nationally recognized youth team, the IE Ducks. Since then, Grayes has excelled and is looking to continue this trend during this final 2 years with Chandler.

Currently, Grayes has a 3-star Top247 grade but I expect that will be easily 4 or 5-star by the end of the 2020 season. Grayes also has 8 Division 1 college offers already. These include homestate Arizona and Arizona St. but go as far as Miami, Iowa St., Michigan St., Oregon St., and Kansas.

I am looking forward to seeing the development that Grayes promises each year. By the end of his final season at Chandler he will be one of the most sought after recruits in the county. 2020 is just another step on the quest for Arizona football history for Grayes.

James Williams is a 6-5 athlete with massive potential

If there's one thing that stands out on a football field, it's a 6 foot 5, 218 lbs safety. Hovering over every play on the field, James Williams stands out for more than just his size. Williams is the No. 1 athlete in the country for the 2021 class.

Hailing from Opa Locka, Florida, James Williams has been around the block for a while. The rising senior started his high school career at local Monsignor Pace High School. After 2 short seasons with the Spartans he transferred to Western Davie High School.

At Western, he started his reign over the South Florida football scene. After an outstanding season last year with 62 tackles, 6 interceptions, and 5 forced fumbles on the defensive side alone, Williams decided to take his talents to American Heritage High School in neighboring Plantation, Florida for the 2020 season. This move will culminate his high school career with the 2019 regional runner-up Patriots that are looking for big things this season.

James Williams is truly a special player. His 2019 defensive stats are just the tip of the iceberg. His film outlines much more than what the stat line shows. Williams is a constant threat on offense, as well. The 6 foot 5 wide receiver looks like a man playing against boys. Williams was not targeted that often in 2019 but when he was, it was for a touchdown. He converted his 5 receptions into 3 touchdowns

Williams currently has a total of 28 Division 1 scholarship offers. With this many choices Williams recently narrowed down his selection to 3 top tier programs, Georgia, Clemson, and Alabama. It is unknown which of the 3 powerhouses Williams will choose but it should come in the next few weeks.

American Heritage is in for a deep playoff run on the back of James Williams. Williams is a player that can impact the outcome of any game and I know that there will be several examples of this in 2020. Lookout for Williams and the American Heritage Patriots this year.

Corey Collier is dominating Miami

Playing football in the Miami area can be intimidating to say the least. Each year, the talent level is higher and higher as more players get left behind. At a school like Miami Palmetto, this talent is at a college level. Corey Collier is one of the few players that can handle the level of pressure and competition. Collier truly stands out.

The safety position is a difficult one to master. Every movement must be calculated. Every play must be disguised. Every down matters. Collier makes all of this look easy. He has a ton of top tier instincts that make plays all over the field. Collier backs up his rare mistakes with recovery speed.

When he is in the open field, Collier hits everyone at 100 miles per hour and makes sure that they remember him the next morning. This combination is even rare for safeties that are at a much higher level of football than Collier is currently at.

The 6-2, 170 lbs Miami native currently has a whopping 36 offers from Division 1 programs. Entering his senior season, Collier has cut down the 36 scholarships down to just 6 schools. Each of the schools in the mix for Collier will be pulling out all of the stops when he comes for official visits.

The mix includes home-state powerhouses, Florida, Florida St., and Miami but also has the SEC and ACC leaders, Clemson, LSU, and Georgia. I expect Collier to make his decision towards the fall of 2020 and I know that he will be making an immediate impact on any team. Collier and the Miami Palmetto Panthers are going to be a force in 2020. Look for the defense to put up even more impressive numbers as they are led by 4-star standout 2021 recruit Corey Collier.

TEAM PREVIEWS:

Chaminade-Madonna Lions (Hollywood, FL)

Head Coach: Dameon Jones

Mascot: Lions

Division: Class 3A, Region 4

2019 Record: 12-2

2019 Key Wins: Central (Miami, FL), Florida State University High School (Tallahassee, FL)*

2019 Recognitions: Florida State Champions Class 3A

*Florida 3A State Championship

Top Returning Players: (Class, Position, Height, Weight, Commitment)

Terrence Lewis (2021, OLB, 6'1, 200, Tennessee)

Thaddius Franklin (2021, RB, 6'0, 185, Miami)

Joshua Jenkins (2021, WR, 5'7, 155)

Brandon Chapman (2021, WR, 5'9, 160)

Brian Dilworth (2022, ATH, 6'0, 175, Auburn)

Jabez Anderson (2021, OL, 6'3, 320)

Brady Kelly (2022, QB, 6'1, 185)
Jaylon Tolbert (2021, QB, 6'2, 175, Howard)
Kheyland Martin-Brown (2022, OLB, 5'11, 195)
Dylan Reid (2022, ILB, 5'11, 195)
Allan Haye (2021, DT, 6'1, 295, Miami)
Kenyatta Jackson Jr. (2022, WDE, 6'5, 230)
Jamaal Johnson (2022, SDE, 6'2, 230)
Kalunj Matthew (2022, DT, 6'2, 270)
Torrie Cox Jr. (2021, DB, 5'8, 165)

2020 Schedule (So Far):

8/28 - Hallandale (Hallandale, FL)	<i>2019 Record: 4-6</i>
9/4 - @ Northwestern (Miami, FL)	<i>2019 Record: 13-2 FL 5A State</i>
Champions	
9/18 - Atlantic (Delray Beach, FL)	<i>2019 Record: 8-4</i>
9/25 - @ Cocoa (Cocoa, FL)	<i>2019 Record: 8-4</i>
10/2 - @ Doral Academy (Doral, FL)	<i>2019 Record: 5-5</i>
10/9 - Pahokee (Pahokee, FL)	<i>2019 Record: 6-6</i>
10/16 - @ Vero Beach (Vero Beach, FL)	<i>2019 Record: 11-1</i>
10/23 - @ Central (Miami, FL)	<i>2019 Record: 12-3 FL 6A State</i>
Champions	
10/30 - @ Boyd Anderson (Lauderdale Lakes, FL)	<i>2019 Record: 5-5</i>

Chaminade-Madonna is going to be better in 2020 (If that's possible)

Back-to-back-to-back (to back?). Chaminade-Madonna High School of Hollywood, Florida is coming off of their 3rd straight Florida Class 3A State Championship. Since Coach Dameon Jones took the head coaching position in 2016, he has led the Lions to incredible accomplishments and it does not look like 2020 will be any different.

Coach Jones comes into 2020 with a plethora of returning standouts from the state champion 2019 team. He only graduated 12 seniors in 2019 leaving few gaps in the lineup. Adding to this stacked roster is the #11 player in the nation, **Terrence Lewis** from Miami Northwestern. The newly committed Tennessee Volunteer is a 5-star outside linebacker that will lead the Lions' defense in 2020.

Chaminade-Madonna's 2020 schedule is similar to the 12-2 record from last season. This includes a Week 2 trip to Terrance Lewis' previous home, Miami Northwestern, on

September 4th. This is certainly a date to circle on your calendar as it will very well be the matchup of the week throughout the country. This early battle will test the Lions' heart heading into the district play of late September and October as they poise for another deep state run.

The rest of the schedule is filled with familiar faces for the Lions. This includes an annual rivalry matchup with Miami Central late in the year. These games will test the road capability of this roster as they must travel to many of their testing games.

Offense

Chaminade-Madonna's offense is anchored by the explosiveness of **Thaddius Franklin**. Franklin is a 4-star Running Back who will be attending the University of Miami in the fall of 2021. Franklin put up over 2200 yards rushing last season averaging 20.5 touches a game and 28 rushing touchdowns.

The Lions do not pass that often when Franklin is in the backfield. When they do they look to wide receiver **Joshua Jenkins**. Their other key receiver in 2019, Bralon Brown (2021), transferred to the cross-town powerhouse St. Thomas Aquinas. There is definite room for growth in the Lions' receiving core. Look for **Brandon Chapman** or the star athlete and Auburn commit, **Brian Dilworth** to get some major opportunities.

The offensive line lost 3 of its key 2019 members but returns with Class of 2021 standout, **Jabez Adderson**. Adderson was named to the Top 100 Underrated Players list published by MaxPreps and it is for good reason. Adderson is going to be a bully at 6-3, 320 lbs this season and I expect the offers to come flooding in for any offensive lineman on this run-heavy playbook.

The quarterback position is a mystery for the lions. The loss of Alexander Law (2021) to Miami Central does not bode well for the Lions' as they have few options. The only quarterback left, besides Thaddius Franklin when he does not want to be snapped the ball directly, is **Brady Kelly**. Kelly was the starting QB towards the end of the season and led Chaminade-Madonna to the 3A State Championship.

Coach Jones did bring in another quarterback in **Jaylon Tolbert**, a Howard University commit from Plantation High School. The new named Lion will be hungry for the starting quarterback position. Look for a healthy rivalry to push both of these quarterbacks to their limit this season. Whoever wins the position will be a more than suitable candidate for a potential breakout year as teams keep their focus on trying to stop Thaddius Franklin (even though no one has figured that out yet).

Defense

The Lions' defense was unstoppable in 2019. Only allowing 108 total points over 14 games (7.7 PPG), Chaminade-Madonna was extremely difficult to break down. These stats were due to the stacked front 7 the Lions built. Led by Class of 2022 linebackers, **Kheyland Martin-Brown** and **Dylan Reid**, Coach Jones' defense will be returning its' almost entire front 7 in 2020. The only key loss is 3A Defensive Player of the Year, Kijuan Reid-Jacques. This loss is replaced (or upgraded you might say) with **Terrence Lewis**. The other 6 starters will also be back and looking for more in 2020. Key defensive linemen are **Allan Haye**, **Kenyatta Jackson Jr.**, **Jamaal Johnson**, and **Kalunj Matthew**.

The defensive back core will also be returning in 2020. Led by **Torrie Cox Jr.** with 5 interceptions and **Brian Dilworth** with 3 interceptions in 2019, the defensive backs will be causing havoc for opposing receivers all season long.

One thing is for sure, Coach Jones will not be leading the Lions into any shootouts this season. The Lions have a team that is ready to take their place at the top of south Florida football with a defense that should win them their 4th straight state championship.

Overview

Chaminade-Madonna is ready for the 2020 season to kick off. Whoever their opponent, the Lions will remind you why defense wins championships. All they need now is a clean start to the season and you'll be watching Lion football once again in December.

St. Thomas Aquinas Raiders (Fort Lauderdale, FL)

Head Coach: Roger Harriott

Mascot: Raiders

Division: Class 7A, District 14

2019 Record: 15-0

2019 Key Wins: @ De La Salle (Concord, CA), Deerfield Beach (Deerfield Beach, FL), Edgewater (Orlando, FL)*, St. Louis (Honolulu, HI)**

2019 Recognitions: Florida State Champions Class 7A, Geico State Champions Bowl Winner

*Florida 7A State Championship

**Geico State Champions Bowl

Top Returning Players: (Class, Position, Height, Weight, Commitment)

Zion Turner (2022, QB, 6'1, 180)

Bralon Brown (2021, WR, 6'3, 190, Ole Miss)

Quincy Skinner (2021, WR, 6'1, 175)

Anthony Hankerson (2022, RB, 5'10, 175)

Julian Armella (2022, OT, 6'6, 300)

Tyreack Sapp (2021, SDE, 6'2, 255, Florida)

Jaydon Hood (2021, ILB, 6'1, 210, Michigan)

Isaiah Taylor (2021, S, 5'11, 195)

Ja'den McBurrows (2021, DB, 5'10, 165, Michigan)

Dallas Turner (2021, WDE, 6'4, 235)

2020 Schedule (So Far):

9/11 - South Plantation (Plantation, FL) *2019 Record: 5-5*

10/30 - Western (Davie, FL) *2019 Record: 9-3*

St. Thomas Aquinas is looking for a National Championship in 2020

National Champions. The highest goal for any sports team was so close to being achieved in 2019 for the St. Thomas Aquinas Raiders. Coach Roger Harriott led his team to the only undefeated season in Florida with wins all over the state and country. They conquered a tough season opener against De La Salle, rolled through district play, then found no challenge in the toughest division in Florida (7A).

They were recognized by GEICO as "National Champions" at the State Champions Bowl by beating St. Louis of Honolulu, Hawaii. The final Elite Football Network 2019 National Poll left the Raiders in the #2 spot behind the Southern California powerhouse, St. John Bosco. With all of the unparalleled accomplishments for St. Thomas Aquinas in 2019, Coach Harriott is looking to take the #1 spot in 2020.

The 2020 season is a fresh slate for the Raiders who are looking to achieve the impossible in a National Championship. This challenge will be with the new additions of players such as **Bralon Brown**, 4-star wide receiver from cross-town powerhouse Chaminade-Madonna who is committed to Ole Miss, and **Jaydon Hood**, 4-star inside linebacker from Cardinal Newman committed to Michigan.

Coach Harriott's Raiders schedule for 2020 will be announced soon. I expect many national opponents and the toughest district schedule around. St. Thomas Aquinas is looking to continue its dominance this season as their historic run continues.

Harriott and his staff graduated an astonishing 45 seniors in 2020 leaving what some might think as a bare bones team. The truth is far from this assumption. St Thomas Aquinas has had a decade long clench of the Miami area prep school scene and it will show in 2020.

Offense

St. Thomas Aquinas had an explosive offense last season (averaging 40.2 PPG). The 40 point bomb went off against almost every team and it was at the control of Class of 2022 superstar quarterback **Zion Turner**. Turner had a total of 37 touchdowns and grew significantly throughout the season. Turner will be looking for more in 2020 with the addition of **Bralon Brown**, return of wide receiver **Quincy Skinner** and running back **Anthony Hankerson**. Hankerson gives the Raiders' offense a strong run game that complements Turner's play style.

Hankerson's success is contingent on the offense line led by **Julian Armella**. The utility lineman stands at 6-6 and 305 lbs. Armella will step into a mentor role for many of the new members to the first team offensive line.

The Raiders have never had a problem with scoring points over the last couple of years. This shouldn't change in 2020 but may come with some growing pains as younger players fill into larger roles with the team.

Defense

Defense certainly wins championships in Florida high school football. The Raiders continue to have an incredible defense in 2020. Even though many of the standouts from 2019 have moved on to the next level, St. Thomas Aquinas has more in store.

This year's crop of seniors is heavily weighted to the defense and it will show on the field. Some of the top players include Florida commit, **Tyreek Sapp**, Michigan commit and former Cardinal Newman star, **Jaydon Hood**, **Isaiah Taylor**, Michigan commit, **Ja'den Mcburrows**, and newcomer **Dallas Turner** from American Heritage. Turner is a 4-star recruit and the #2 weakside defensive-end in the country. Paired with Tyreek Sapp, the defensive end group of St. Thomas Aquinas is going to be putting pressure on all QB drop backs and outside runs.

The linebacker core is led by 4-star recruit Jaydon Hood looking to excite more Michigan Wolverine faithful with their top recruit. The same goes for Ja'den McBurrows and his expectation to expand on the 6 interceptions he caught in 2019. This year's defense for St. Thomas Aquinas is going to be more important than ever and Coach Harriott will lean on these playmakers to put up more than just hits. He wants points.

Overview

The Raiders are going to be a tough team to stop in 2020. The defensive front can go toe-to-toe with any powerhouse in the country and it will be shown on a national level. Barring the unexpected nature of high school football, I expect to see St. Thomas Aquinas playing for a Florida state title for the third year in a row.

Edgewater Eagles (Orlando, FL)

Head Coach: Cameron Duke

Mascot: Eagles

Division: Class 7A, District 3

2019 Record: 13-2

2019 Key Wins: Niceville (Niceville, FL)*, Armwood (Seffner, FL)**

2019 Recognitions: None

*Florida 7A State Quarterfinals

**Florida 7A State Semi-Final

Top Returning Players: (Class, Position, Height, Weight, Commitment)

Jeremiah Connelly (2022, RB, 5'9, 180)

Canaan Mobley (2021, QB, 5'11, 185)

Tommi Hill (2021, ATH, 6'1, 185)

Christian Leary (2021, WR, 5'9, 190, Alabama)

Deshawn Troutman (2021, ILB, 6'1, 205, Miami)

Kenneth Brown (2021, DT, 6'2, 255)

Kevin Butler (2021, DB, 5'9, 170)

2020 Schedule (So Far):

8/21 - Bishop Moore (Orlando, FL)

2019 Record: 7-4

8/28 - @ Oak Ridge (Orlando, FL)

2019 Record: 2-8

9/4 - @ Jones (Orlando, FL)

2019 Record: 13-2 FL 5A State

Runner-Up

9/18 - Winter Park (Winter Park, FL)

2019 Record: 6-4

10/2 - Booker T. Washington (Miami, FL)

2019 Record: 13-2 FL 4A State

Champions

On the Edge of Glory

Losing the final game of the season to the self-proclaimed national champions is normally not that hard to take. Knowing that you played the best and only lost by 5 points might be a rewarding experience for some. For the 2019 Edgewater Eagles however, they would take a rematch anyday and anywhere. Their historic season came to an end during a tear-jerking Friday night in December.

Most of the Eagles left the field that night for the final time in red and white. For the juniors and sophomores, they are counting down the days till they can restart their path to face St. Thomas Aquinas in the Florida Class 7A State Championship once again.

Coach Cameron Duke's team returns with almost all of its offensive firepower and a significant portion of the lockdown defense in 2020. The Eagles will be on the redemption path all season long. I expect Edgewater to reach another matchup with top talent in Florida in December.

The full Edgewater schedule has yet to be released but some of the matchups will include a home cross-state game against defending Class 4A state champions Booker T. Washington (Miami, FL) and an away rival game against 2019 Class 5A state runner-up Jones (Orlando, FL). The road back to the state championship will not be easy for the Eagles but it will result in a great showing of high school football throughout the Orlando area.

Offense

The Edgewater Eagles' offense had an outstanding 30.3 points per game in 2019. With another season and off-season under their belt, most of the offense will be suiting up for Edgewater in the fall of 2020. The only key loss to the high powered offense is running back Isiah Connelly. Connelly's 2300 yard rushing role is going to be filled by his younger brother **Jeremiah Connelly**. Other than the experience lost at running back, the combination of 2021 stars is going to create some exciting plays in Orlando.

The leader of the offense, **Canaan Mobley**, is the quarterback needed for another deep playoff run. With weapons like **Tommi Hill** and **Christian Leary** Mobley's job gets pretty easy. This pair of 4-star wide receivers combined for 17 touchdowns last season, 91 receptions, and over 1900 yards.

The offensive line should be in for a tough year as most of the starters graduated in 2020. There will be some experience amongst the next wave of protectors but it comes with growing pains.

The Eagles' offense will still be one of the top in the state in 2020 and I expect many of the superstars to be playing at the next level after another exceptional season.

Defense

Defense is a common strength for many great teams and Edgewater is no different. Led by 2019 tackle leader and 2021 University of Miami recruit **Deshawn Troutman**, the Eagles' defense will be looking to fill gaps left by the graduates.

The 2020 defensive line will be led by **Kenneth Brown** as it lost the majority of starters. Moving to the defensive back group of Eagles, the main standout is **Kevin Butler** who commands the field with a strong presence and threat of hitting every ball carrier. **Tommi Hill** plays defensive back with the same intensity as his wide receiver skills as he finished 2019 with 4 interceptions.

This group of defensemen is not as strong as 2019 but do not count Edgewater out of any game because of lack of will. The defense will be at a high level throughout the year.

Overview

Coach Cameron Duke's Eagles are more than ready for the 2020 to roll around. With an early road test at Jones High School, we will see what this Edgewater team is made of. Leaders Chrisitan Leary and Deshawn Troutman will have to pull their weight and then some if they want to have a similar result in 2020. The challenge is there for the taking for the Edgewater Eagles, and I am hopeful to see them playing football in December once again.

Central (Miami, FL)

Head Coach: Roland Smith

Mascot: Rockets

Division: Class 6A, District 16

2019 Record: 12-3

2019 Key Wins: Booker T. Washington (Miami, FL), @ Palmetto (Miami, FL)*, Escambia (Pensacola, FL)**

2019 Recognitions: Florida State Champions Class 6A

*Florida 6A State Semi-Final

**Florida 6A State Championship

Top Returning Players: (Class, Position, Height, Weight, Commitment)

Amari Daniels (2021, RB, 5'8, 194)

Yulkeith Brown (2021, ATH, 5'10, 174)

Laurence Seymour (2021, OG, 6-1, 290, Miami)

Wesley Bissainthe (2022, OLB, 6-1, 195)

Reuben Bain (2023, WDE, 6'2, 230)

2020 Schedule (So Far):

8/28 - @ Booker T. Washington (Miami, FL) 2019 Record: 13-2 FL 4A State Champions

9/16 - Edison (Miami, FL) 2019 Record: 6-6

10/8 - Norland (Miami, FL) 2019 Record: 6-4

10/23 - Chaminade-Madonna (Hollywood, FL) 2019 Record: 12-2 FL 3A State Champions

The Center of Florida Football

Dominance comes over many different time intervals. For some it is a few months, a season, or even more impressive, multiple years. How about a full decade? This unbelievable feat was accomplished by Miami Central High School as MaxPreps named the Rockets the most dominant high school football team in all of Florida for the 2010 decade.

Out of the past 10 seasons, 6 have resulted in Class 6A State Championships and every year has finished with a spot on the Florida Top 25. Ex-Miami Hurricane defensive back and coach, Rolando Smith, hopes for another decade of success and 2020 is the first step to that overarching goal.

The Rockets won their final state championship of the decade in 2019 leaving 2020 ready and waiting for more greatness from the Dade-County powerhouse. Central finished 2019 with a 12-3 record and hopes to improve this year. Coach Smith graduated a modest 24 seniors in 2019 leaving a minimal amount of room for improvement or failure.

2020 brings another tough schedule to the Miami Central Rockets. Each season, there is an overcrowding of great teams in the greater Miami area and 2020 will be no different. Central plays top powerhouses like Booker T. Washington and Chaminade-Madonna and finishes with the annual cross-town rivalry game against Miami Northwestern.

This season will require a road trip to Chaminade-Madonna, Northwestern, and possible addition of a matchup with St. John Bosco (Bellflower, CA). If the Bosco game is still on, the Rockets will be in for a probable ESPN-televised game against the defending National Champions. The full 2020 Central schedule will be announced soon and hopefully that matchup with St. John Bosco is on it. It is a cross-COUNTRY high school game with state pride on the line.

Offense

Miami Central are called the Rockets for a reason. Each year they produce great talents and tend to play with a balanced offense. Last season the team put up outstanding numbers including blowing out every matchup in the Florida 6A state tournament. This culminated in an explosion of 62 points in the state championship game against Escambia (Pensacola, FL).

The 2020 offense is led by star running back, **Amari Daniels**. Daniels is a 3-star recruit with 16 total offers so far that is studded by Georgia, Penn St., and LSU. The Rockets are lacking an experienced quarterback as Katravis Marsh graduated in 2019. Any quarterback will be fitting the Rockets in 2020 as options like **Yulkeith Brown**, who is a 4-star athlete with over 28 Division 1 offers, lining up outside. Brown is the spark of this offense that will be needed for another deep run in 2020.

There will be plenty of protection for Daniels and the Central offense skill players with nationally recognized top offensive guard, **Laurence Seymore**. Seymore is a University of Miami commit with a high 4-star overall rating.

With an addition of leadership under center, the Rockets offense will be even more deadly in 2020. I expect very high numbers from this offense.

Defense

Coach Smith's defense is replacing some of its key components in 2020. Led by 4-star outside linebacker, **Wesley Bissainthe**, the defense will need this summer to prepare for the hot days of August and September. Bissainthe was a menace in 2019 with 4 interceptions and 3 fumble recoveries. He has offers from top programs like Alabama, Florida, Miami, and LSU. The rest of the linebacker core is solid and looking for more in 2020.

Another big name in the front 7 for the Rockets is defensive lineman **Reuben Bain**. During his freshman stint with Central, he put up 20 TFL and 5.5 sacks. These numbers are outstanding for any high school player, let alone a freshman.

The defensive back core is being turned over in 2020 but Coach Jones' will not let his history with the position go unnoticed. From his takeover in 2013, there has not been a year without great lockdown defense on opposing receivers and I do not see that changing in 2020.

The Rockets are hungry for a back-to-back state title run. This dream starts and ends with the defense. I expect a lot of new faces to come up and make their name known in the Rockets' locker room.

Overview

The Rockets are going to contend with anyone in the country this season. Their dominance over the last decade has created some fierce competition and it will show in 2020. Look for outstanding talent to emerge from this top level of play in Miami led by Coach Smith's Miami Central team.

Northwestern (Miami, FL)

Head Coach: Max Edwards

Mascot: Bulls

Division: Class 5A, District 16

2019 Record: 13-2

2019 Key Wins: Cardinal Gibbons (Fort Lauderdale, FL), @ Central (Miami, FL), Jesuit (Tampa, FL)*, Jones (Orlando, FL)**

2019 Recognitions: Florida State Champions Class 5A

*Florida 5A State Semi-Final

**** Florida 5A State Championship**

Top Returning Players: (Class, Position, Height, Weight, Commitment)

Taron Dickens (2023, QB, 5'11, 175)

Romello Brinson (2021, WR, 6'2, 180, Miami)

Kahlil Brantley (2021, TE, 6'2, 205, Miami)

Siddiq Jackson (2021, RB, 5'8, 170)

Okino King (2021, OG, 6'2, 300, Florida Atlantic)

Ja'Corey Hammett (2021, OLB, 6'3, 205, Miami)

Amahri McCray (2021, ILB, 6'0, 210, Florida International)

Kamren Kinchens (2021, S, 5'11, 200)

2020 Schedule (So Far):

8/14 - Palm Beach Central (Wellington, FL) *2019 Record: 9-3*

8/21 - Booker T. Washington (Miami, FL) *2019 Record: 13-2 FL 4A State Champions*

8/28 - @ IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL) *2019 Record: 9-1 #1 Preseason 2020 Rankings*

9/4 - Chaminade-Madonna (Hollywood, FL) *2019 Record: 12-2 FL 3A State Champions*

10/30 - Edison (Miami, FL) *2019 Record: 6-6*

Northwestern is THE top team in Miami

Miami is one of the top areas in the country for collegiate talent at the high school level. A top example of this is Northwestern High School. Competing with Central High School (Miami) and Booker T. Washington High School (Miami) for the top spot each year can push teams to their limit. Northwestern accepts that challenge and rises to the occasion.

Highly regarded as the best and most talented team out of this bunch, the Northwestern Bulls won the Class 5A Florida State Championship and finished 2019 with a record of 13-2. This placed them at #4 on the Florida Top 25 final rankings just behind Central (#3) and just in front of Booker T. Washington (#6). In 2020, I see the Bulls coming out on top of their rivals in and the entire state of Florida in 2020 for a 4th consecutive state title.

Northwestern's key to success in 2020 is the age of this team. Coach Max Edwards only graduated 20 seniors from his 2019 championship team. This leaves room for a

small amount of turnover on both sides of the ball. There are little questions on the players for 2020. The rest of the storylines follow Coach Edwards.

Currently, Miami Northwestern High School is investigating allegations of Coach Edwards holding unauthorized practice during the COVID-19 outbreak. This internal investigation is focused solely on Coach Edwards. In spite of these allegations, Edwards was dismissed indefinitely. This poses a huge question on the Bulls' 2020 leadership. If the dismissal is found equitable then the Bulls will lose their head coach (51-16 career record) that led them to the last 3 connective state titles.

The investigation will hopefully end in time to give Northwestern plenty of time to prepare for their nationally recognized matchup with IMG Academy (Bradenton, FL). IMG is ranked as the #1 team in the country heading into the 2020 season. This game could be the game to forever enshrine Northwestern at the top of football in Miami. Make sure to circle the calendar for this dogfight in Bradenton early on in the season.

Offense

The 2019 Northwestern team did not struggle for offense. Averaging 27.2 PPG last year, the Bulls return in 2020 with superstar Class of 2023 quarterback, **Taron Dickens**. Dickens threw for over 2,300 yards and 25 touchdowns as a freshman in 2019. Now Dickens has one season under his belt and 3 college offers (Rutgers, Coastal Carolina, and Nebraska) but I expect much more from Dickens the next 3 years at Northwestern. He is taking the Miami area by storm.

Dickens will have similar targets in 2020. Returning stars wide receiver **Romello Brinson** and tight end **Kahlil Brantley** are looking to cap off their huge careers with a bang. Brinson is a 4-star recruit that just announced his commitment to the hometown University of Miami. Brantley is another Miami commit that had a team leading 22.4 yards per catch in 2019.

The run game at Northwestern was led by 3 outstanding seniors in 2019. Now it is **Siddiq Jackson**'s turn. Jackson was a role player with 50 carries, 782 rushing yards, and 8 touchdowns. These are not typical role player numbers for any running back but now Jackson will not have a limit or pecking order to dictate his carries.

The protection for Jackson and Dickens will be even better in 2020 as all but 1 starter for the offensive line returns. 3-star and Florida Atlantic commit, **Okino King** is going to be the leader of this veteran line.

The Northwestern Bulls are going to be lighting opposing defenses up in 2020.

Defense

The Bulls' defense allowed just under 9.5 PPG in 2019 and held 5 of their 15 opponents to shutouts. These numbers are top in the country and they are truly eye opening when you look at the caliber of their opponents.

In 2020, Northwestern's front seven will be led by senior **Ja'Corey Hammett**. Hammett is another Bull to commit to the hometown Miami Hurricanes. Hammett had 63 total tackles and 11 sacks from the outside linebacker position in 2019.

With the loss of 5-star commit Terrance Lewis to cross-town powerhouse Chaminade Madonna, look for Hammett to make an even bigger impact in 2020. Alongside Hammett will be 2019 tackle leader (115 total tackles), **Amahri McCray**. McCray is going to keep setting the bar for linebackers across the country as he is a threat on every play.

Northwestern's defensive backs are no joke either. 2021 4-star recruit **Kamren Kinchens** led the defensive back group in 2019. Kinchens finished with a jaw-dropping 9 interceptions that got the attention of top Division 1 programs. He currently has 29 offers from Alabama, Clemson, Florida, Florida St., Georgia, LSU, Ohio St., Oregon, and hometown favorite Miami.

Overview

No matter who their coach is, Miami Northwestern will be searching for their 4th straight state title in 2020. Their packed schedule is going to shape this season early. The Bulls are changing the football expectations for the whole city of Miami and I am excited to see the surprises and dominance in store for this year.

Riverview Sarasota High School Rams (Sarasota, FL)

Head Coach: Josh Smithers (30-9)

Mascot: Rams

Division: Class 8A, District 8

2019 Record: 9-3

2019 Key Wins: @ Venice (Venice, FL),

2019 Recognitions: None

Top Returning Players: (Class, Position, Height, Weight, Commitment)

Michael “Poodah” Hayes Jr. (2021, RB, 5-11, 205)

Will Evans (2021, QB, 6-1, 178)

Michael Fraraccio (2021, TE, 6-4, 230)

Omari Hayes (2022, WR, 5-7, 150)

Duke Timmons (2022, WR, 6-3, 165)

Sincere Littles (2021, DL, 6-2, 260)

Jarius Brewer (2021, DL, 6-4, 285)

Daevon Lebron (2021, ILB, 5-10, ...)

Brandon Davenport (2021, OLB, 5-8, 180)

Sambo Ung Jr. (2021, DB, 5-10, 160)

2020 Schedule (So Far):

8/14 - @ East Lake (Tarpon Springs, FL)

2019 Record: 6-5

8/21 - @ Naples (Naples, FL)

2019 Record: 10-1

8/28 - Braden River (Bradenton, FL)

2019 Record: 4-7

9/4 - @ Palmetto (Palmetto, FL)

2019 Record: 12-2

9/11 - @ Ridge Community (Davenport, FL)

2019 Record: 3-7

9/18 - Venice (Venice, FL)

2019 Record: 8-5 Class 7A Region 3

Champions

9/25 - Lennard (Ruskin, FL)

2019 Record: 7-4

10/9 - @ Riverview (Riverview, FL)

2019 Record: 8-3

10/16 - Newsome (Lithia, FL)

2019 Record: 8-3

10/23 - Haines City (Haines City, FL)

2019 Record: 0-10

10/30 - @ Sarasota (Sarasota, FL)

2019 Record: 6-4

The Rams are ready and waiting for 2020

When most people think of Florida high school football, they immediately go to the fierce competition of the greater-Miami area. However, on the other side of the state in Sarasota county, the competition is just as tough. The program at Riverview High School is a prime example.

Classified under Class 8A, the Rams play against the toughest competition in Florida year in and year out. In this area, there are 4 powerhouses strung along on the southwest coast of the Sunshine State. The Rams rival with Naples, Palmetto, and Venice for pride in the region which yields a display of high school football that matches anywhere in the country.

Coach Joshua Smithers has been with the Riverview program since the 2017 season and has already surpassed any expectation of a new coach. Leading his program to a 30-9 record with 3 consecutive District 8 Championships and a Region 2 Championship in 2018, Smithers does not plan to stop his dominance in 2020. The Rams finished 2019 with a tough loss to Steinbrenner High School in the second round of the Class 8A Florida state playoffs. As Coach Smithers explains, "We've definitely got a little bit of a chip on our shoulder." Putting it bluntly, the Rams are going to be out for blood in 2020.

This year's schedule for the Riverview Rams is no joke. It is heavily front loaded, with an away game at Naples and Palmetto, then a homestand versus Venice, their schedule can be put against anyone in the country. Getting through these first 5 tough games is a goal for Coach Smithers. He hopes that the experienced players will help to keep everyone's head focused on one game at a time.

Coach Smithers has set the standard for his program to compete for a district title every year. He has successfully achieved this each year of his head coach position. When asked about his larger goals for this season he followed with symbolism that seems constant for many teams across the country, "We want to be practicing on Thanksgiving morning."

Offense

Many of the stars for the Rams' offense are returning in 2020. In 2019, the Rams averaged a strong 25.0 PPG which helped them to a 9-3 record. Coach Smithers prides his teams on the ability to run the football and 2020 will not be any different. He believes that the run game sets up everything else in the offense. He said, "If we can come out and run the football, then I will feel great about what we are going to be able to do."

To establish this run game, the Rams have had the same starting running back for the last 3 seasons in **Michael "Poodah" Hayes Jr.** Hayes is a part of the strong class of seniors on the team in 2020. He is looking to grab the attention of football programs at the next level. Coach Smithers speaks to Hayes' success, "He is one of the best backs around. He can do it all." Hayes has big goals for the 2020 season as he wants to rush for 1500 yards, 15 touchdowns, and 500 receiving yards. This goal is within reach for Hayes as he enters into his final year as a ram.

The only unexpected hurdle for Hayes to climb over is their young offensive line. This is the one "weakness" of the team in 2020 as many of the starters from last season have graduated. I think that there will be a quick learning curve for many of these underclassmen as they move through the beginning of the season. The 5 week gauntlet

will prove to be vital for a late playoff push for the Rams with the offensive line gaining more and more experience each game.

The man under center for the Rams in 2020 will be newcomer **Will Evans**.

Evans was a highly regarded underclassman for Riverview as he was promoted to varsity early on in his high school career. A tough quarterback battle led to a backup role for Evans in 2019 and a delayed entry into the starting lineup. Evans will need a few games to settle into his role in 2020 but I am sure that he will succeed. A highly motivated academic student, Evans is quick to learn and even quicker on his feet. Look for his ability to extend plays when the pocket collapses.

Will Evans will be helped along his acclimation to varsity football by the core of returning receivers. Senior tight end, **Michael Fraraccio**, has the physical nature to be effective on all facets of his game. The explosive wide receivers for the Rams are **Omari Hayes** and **Duke Timmons**.

These Class of 2022 playmakers complement each other well. Hayes is the younger brother of running back Michael Hayes Jr. and has learned from his older brother's role as an all around threat. Coach Smithers and many of the fellow Rams have regarded Omari as the most explosive player on offense. Look for the Rams to turn the way of the Hayes brothers if they are in a bind.

Defense

Defense is easily the strong suit of the 2020 Riverview Rams team. With almost all 11 starters returning from last season, I am expecting even more outstanding stats.

Riverview sets up in mostly 4-3 base which allows them to get their stars in the right positions to make plays. This way of coordinating is a new trend by adapting the defensive scheme to get the maximum amount of talent on the field at once.

The majority of the Rams standouts are in the front 7. Led by 3-Star recruit **Sincere Littles** and 6-4, 285 **Jarius Brewer**, the Riverview defense is centered in the defensive tackles. These two tackles accounted for the majority of any pressure put on the opposing offense in 2019. They will compete for sacks, TFLs, and offers in 2020 as they continue their 1-2 punch at the face of attack. Littles has high hopes for the 2020 season as "[he] wants [his] d-line to be the best D-Line in the county." This is looking like a very strong possibility with the experience in the group.

Moving backward in the Rams 4-3 setup, the linebackers lead by example. Inside linebacker, **Daevon Lebron** led the team in tackles last season and hopes to improve on that feat in 2020. His goal is to hit the elusive 100 tackle mark that will put him on the map for college recruiting.

Just to the outside of Lebron is **Brandon Davenport**. Davenport truly has a nose for the football and seems to be involved every play. Also contending for the title of “leading tackler,” look for Davenport to push Lebron (and himself) to even more greatness this year.

The defensive back core is led by **Sambo Ung Jr.** Ung had quite the season in 2019 as he started the year as the #2 cornerback and slowly worked his way to the #1 spot. Overlooked even before 2019, Ung was a scout team standout. He has worked his way to the starting team through classic hard work and dedication. All that work has started to pay off. With a team leading 9 interceptions last year, Ung made his impression on every team in the district. He has been working hard this offseason to improve on these already impressive numbers.

The defense for the Rams is going to be the anchor of the team in 2020 and I am excited to see the results.

Overview

Coach Smithers revealed the theme for the year to me during an interview. “Action over words.” This motto is going to carry his Riverview Sarasota Rams to success in 2020 if they can eliminate all the noise and just play football. Smithers’ team is looking strong and will be tested throughout. With games against Venice and Naples already circled on every players’ calendar, the Rams are ready for this season. I am hopeful to see the Rams practicing on Thanksgiving day and playing under the lights in December.

Clearwater High School (Clearwater, FL)

Head Coach: Don Mesick (41-17)

Mascot: Tornadoes

Division: Class 6A, Region 2, District 7

2019 Record: 9-3

2019 Key Wins: @ East Lake (Tarpon Springs, FL), Jesuit (Tampa, FL)

2019 Recognitions: None

Top Returning Players: (Class, Position, Height, Weight, Commitment)

Marquvion Jeter (2021, WR, 5-8, 160)
Kamrhen Simpkins (2021, QB, 5-8, 150)
Aidan McLean (2022, QB, 6-0, 160)
Aaron Sanes (2022, OG, 6-1, 270)
Tyrek Tripp (2023, OL, 6-1, 320)
Cardrece Mobley (2021, WR, 6-3, 190)
Jaden Griffin (2022, WR, 5-10, 170)
David James (2022, WR, 6-2, 160)
Tim Williams (2021, DT, 6-2, 254)
August Salvati (2021, DE, 6-4, 265)
Michael Hern (2021, ILB, 5-10, 160)
Demetrius Garlund Jr. (2021, SS, 6-0, 203)
Jhaylen Murray (2021, ATH, 5-9, 165)
Leon Williams (2021, DB, 5-11, 165)
Jaden Daniels (2021, DB, 5-9, 150)
Christian Thompson (2022, FS, 6-2, 160)

2020 Schedule (So Far):

8/14 - @ Cypress Creek (Wesley Chapel, FL) *2019 Record: 6-5*
8/21 - @ Heritage (Palm Bay, FL) *2019 Record: 5-4*
8/28 - East Lake (Tarpon Springs, FL) *2019 Record: 6-5*
9/4 - @ Jesuit (Tampa, FL) *2019 Record: 11-3 FL Class 5A Region 3 Champions*
9/11 - Largo (Largo, FL) *2019 Record: 8-4*
9/25 - @ Clearwater Central Catholic (Clearwater, FL) *2019 Record: 10-4 FL Class 3A Region 3 Champions*
10/2 - Pinellas Park (Largo, FL) *2019 Record: 6-5*
10/9 - Countryside (Clearwater, FL) *2019 Record: 6-5*
10/16 - @ Seminole (Seminole, FL) *2019 Record: 1-9*
10/23 - @ Osceola (Seminole, FL) *2019 Record: 2-8*
10/30 - Boca Ciega (Gulfport, FL) *2019 Record: 6-5*

Make it 6 Straight Playoff Appearances

Clearwater High School is home to an extremely underrated football program. The Tornados have been quietly winning games under everyone's radar. Led by Coach Don Mesick, Clearwater High School has made the Florida State Class 6A Playoffs for the past 5 consecutive seasons. Mesick's record over his stretch with Clearwater is

41-17. That record puts Clearwater among some of the most dominant programs in the Southwest Florida region.

Coach Mesick has built a program on the pillars of dedication, hard work, and winning. This does not change when looking ahead to 2020. The Tornadoes have a very similar schedule to last season with a few tough matchups early in the year. The stretch of games between Week 3-6 is one of the toughest month long gauntlets around. Highlighting some of the matchups includes a visit to Jesuit (Tampa, FL) and Clearwater Central Catholic (Clearwater, FL). In between these monster matchups is the Northern Pinellas County legendary rivalry between Clearwater High School and Largo High School. This year it will be hosted by Coach Mesick's team as they get a break on that front.

In 2019, the Clearwater coaching staff regarded the team as "the most talented team in the school's long history." The year after almost always comes with a price. In 2020, it is replacing 2 record breaking offensive superstars, quarterback Rent Montie and wide receiver Keedrick Murray.

Both of these players broke school records in their respective positions and leave big gaps to fill. However, with all of this being said, Coach Mesick stated that "in terms of depth and ability wise, I think we are a little better than last year." If this is the case, Clearwater High School is just testing the waters of the Florida high school football scene.

Both sides of the ball welcome several transfers that are looking to make an impact. With many of the positions up for grabs, Mesick is going to use this influx of players to his advantage. Look for constant battles for the number one spot on all sides of the football field.

Offense

Clearwater is coming off of an outstanding year on the offensive side of the ball. The Tornadoes averaged 28 PPG throughout the long 2019 season that included a playoff run. Coach Mesick is looking to keep up the momentum in 2020.

Every offense is built upon a few key leaders. Most of the time the main leader is the quarterback but in Clearwater's case it is senior wide receiver and running back, **Marquvion Jeter**. An already pre-season "captain," Jeter is easily the most talented player on offense. He is extremely quick and has unprecedented vision for a high school player.

Standing at only 5 foot 8 inches tall, the elusive kick returner led the Tornadoes in rushing yards, rushing touchdowns, and came second in all-purpose yards only to stand out Keedrick Murray. These stats all came with an injury last season that kept him out of several contests. With Murray gone and a healthy year, Jeter is going to be turning heads all season long.

In order for Jeter to succeed, he needs someone to hand and throw him the ball. Currently, there is a major quarterback battle taking place at Clearwater High School. Senior transfer from local Countryside High School, **Kamren Simpkins**, has brought a very competitive edge to the Clearwater backfield.

Rising junior **Aidan McLean**, was brought up through the program and has been waiting for the starting job for the last 2 seasons. As we all know, high school football does not give free chances to anyone. The 2 gunslingers are battling it out for the top spot on the Clearwater team. Coach Mesick speaks to each one of their athletic abilities and plans to use both of them no matter who is named QB1.

A rare sight in high school football is a strong offensive line. Clearwater is lucky to have 4 starting lineman return for 2020. This will be the deal breaker late in the year for the tornadoes as many teams struggle for strength in the blocking department. Led by junior, **Aaron Sanez**, the offensive line is pushing to be named the best in the county.

Sanez is backed by **Tyrek Tripp**, a rising sophomore leader, who has learned a lot from the leadership of Sanez. Both of the lineman have been working on their quickness to be ready for the top tests that they have on their schedule.

When the quarterback decision is made, the wide receiving core will be taking over. Senior receiver **Cadrece Mobley** is looking to add to his already impressive 14 Division 1 offers. Standing at 6 foot 3 inches tall, Mobley has the size, speed, and athleticism to be successful at every level of football.

On the other side of the field is **Jaden Griffin**. Griffin is a complement to Mobley's size and plays the larger slot role. Adding to this core is sophomore **David James**. Primarily filling the other sideline from Mobley, the 6-2 standout is hungry for targets. Lookout for some healthy competition between this group of pass catchers.

This Clearwater offense is ready for the 2020 season to improve on the success of last season. I expect the offense to put up even greater numbers and lead this team to another deep playoff run.

Defense

The Tornadoes defense was phenomenal in 2019. Holding teams to few big plays and attacking early was the mindset. This team is not losing much experience in 2020. Clearwater is even building to the group. They will have 2 or 3 strings deep at almost every position with starter level talent on the bench. This is a great problem to have for Coach Mesick as he can rotate players as he sees fit.

Clearwater's front 7 is where it all starts. Led by 3-star defensive lineman **Tim Williams**, the defensive line is competing for the top group in the county. Alongside Williams is another senior defensive end, **August Salvati**.

Salvati only played in a few games in 2019 due to injuries. Coming into 2020, Salvati still has a lot to learn about the game of football (given that it is his second year playing) but is already hot on many Division 1 program's radar. Measuring in at 6 foot 4 and 265 lbs, Salvati has the size to play on Saturdays next fall.

Behind the lineman is leader of the linebacker core **Michael Hern**. Hern is a senior that prides himself on his team first mentality. When asked about his goals for 2020, Hern responded with the moto of taking it one game at a time. I hope that this saying will help bring the Tornadoes defense into December football.

The defensive back core is led by senior safety **Demetrius Garlund Jr.** The hard hitting playmaker is looking for more turnovers as he aims to knock over anyone in the opposite colored uniform. Coach Mesick spoke to the depth at the defensive back position. Some of this depth comes from **Jhaylen Murray**, **Leon Williams**, **Jaden Daniels**, and **Christian Thompson** to name a few. The mix of safeties and cornerbacks are looking to shut down any passing opportunity thrown their way.

Defense is key to any successful team and Clearwater is no different. I see that defense is not the decider of fate for the Tornadoes, which is a rare sight in the Florida high school scene. This irregularity and lack of pressure put on the defense could yield itself to make the difference for the success of Clearwater in 2020.

Overview

With an arguably stronger team than the 2019 Tornadoes, Coach Mesick is leading his team to a season with high expectations. I will add to the hype around Clearwater this year by saying that I would put them as a shoe in into the top 8 left in Class 6A.

Mesick's team has the talent, depth, and experience to ruin many teams 2020 dreams. I

am looking forward to seeing this team hopefully making its 6th straight playoff appearance in the late fall.

Jesuit High School (Tampa, FL)

Head Coach: Matt Thompson (70-21)

Mascot: Tigers

Division: Class 5A, Region 3, District 12

2019 Record: 11-3

2019 Key Wins: @ Clearwater Central Catholic (Clearwater, FL), Tampa Catholic (Tampa, FL)

2019 Recognitions: Class 5A Region 3 Champions

Top Returning Players: (Class, Position, Height, Weight, Commitment)

Junior Vandeross (2022, ATH, 5-10, 182)

Jack Lennon (2022, QB)

Luke Knight (2024, QB, 5-9, 165)

Tre'quan Alexander (6-2, 290, 2022, OL)

Joquez Smith (2023, RB, 5-7, 180)

Jaydn Girard (2022, WR, 6-1, 165)

Carter French (2022, WR, 6'2, 170)

Jarriett Buie Jr. (2023, WR, 6'1)

Andre Morris Jr. (2023, DE, 6'2, 258)

AJ Cottrill (2022, MLB, 6-1, 198)

Todd Bowles Jr. (2021, S, 6-0, 190)

Troy Bowles (2023, OLB, 6-1, 195)

Myles Coates (2021, OLB, 5'8, 160)

Wade Woodaz (2022, FS, 6'3 170)

2020 Schedule (So Far):

8/21 - @ Plant City (Plant City, FL)

2019 Record: 5-5

8/28 - Cardinal Gibbons (Fort Lauderdale, FL) 2019 Record: 10-3 FL Class 4A

Region 4 Runner-Up

9/4 - Clearwater (Clearwater, FL)

2019 Record: 9-3

9/25 - Chamberlain (Tampa, FL)

2019 Record: 7-5

10/2 - Clearwater Central Catholic (Clearwater, FL) 2019 Record: 10-4 FL Class 3A

Region 3 Champions

10/9 - Robinson (Tampa, FL)

2019 Record: 3-7

10/23 - @ Bayshore (Bradenton, FL) *2019 Record: 3-7*

10/30 - @ Tampa Catholic (Tampa, FL) *2019 Record: 7-6 FL Class 4A Region 3 Runner-Up*

2020 is the year that Jesuit makes it past the final four

The success that Matt Thompson has achieved during his 7 years at Jesuit High School (Tampa, FL) is unmatched. Thompson has led the Tigers to 6 District 12 titles and 4 Region 3 championships. These 4 Region Championships have come all in the last 5 seasons with a gap in 2017.

Sadly, this success has stopped there. Given 4 opportunities to make it farther than the State Semi-Finals, the Jesuit Tigers have lost to a Greater-Miami area team every year. Obviously hungry for another opportunity, Thompson leads his Tigers into 2020 ready to break through this pattern.

Thompson graduated several top performers in 2019 but not enough to leave significant gaps in his team. Thompson sent tight end Jonathan Odom to the University of Florida, offensive lineman Connor McLaughlin to Stanford, and many others to Army and Navy. This program constantly has success with providing players opportunities to get to the next level and it is shown by the level of recruits that Coach Thompson has had in recent years.

This year's schedule is going to be a long stretch for the Tigers. Opening up against Plant City, a team that gave Jesuit one of their 3 losses in 2019, Jesuit hits the ground running. Then Thompson leads his team into a Week 2 matchup with the Fort Lauderdale powerhouse, Cardinal Gibbons. Gibbons is a part of the list of Miami-area teams to end one of Jesuit's magical seasons in the Florida state semifinals. This game is going to be huge in testing Jesuit's foundation necessary to reach their ultimate goal.

If they prevail, Jesuit keeps rolling to Clearwater High School and Clearwater Central Catholic over the following month. This stretch is going to be necessary for the Tigers to work out any chinks that they may have in the talented armor. Finishing the season off with their district play, Jesuit should have what it takes to get to the state playoffs once again. How far they will go is in the hands of Coach Thompson and the rest of the Jesuit program.

Offense

The Jesuit Tigers were explosive on offense in 2019. Averaging 31.6 PPG, every game was either a shootout or a blowout with the majority coming in at the latter. Looking forward to this year, Coach Thompson looks to replace his superstars and keep the ball rolling.

The most talented player on offense is power 5 recruit, **Junior Vandeross**. Vandeross is one of the top players in the 2022 recruiting class and is looking for big things in 2020. Vandeross was a role player in 2019 with his main help coming on special teams and defense. Now that he has more room on the depth chart, Vandeross is going to be playing running back, defensive back, and many more roles in 2020. Coach Thompson describes Vandeross as “such a versatile player with phenomenal ball skills.”

Jesuit has a hole to fill at quarterback this season. Currently, there are two options for Coach Thompson in **Jack Lennon** and **Luke Knight**. Lennon is a rising junior that has played his way through junior varsity and is now ready to make his impression on the varsity team.

On the other hand, Knight is only a true freshman in 2020 but his age does not limit the potential that he has. Coach Thompson spoke to the “tenacity to win” that Knight has which fits perfectly in with the goals of Jesuit. Whichever way Coach Thompson goes with the quarterback position this battle has been a great test for both players due to their lack of varsity experience.

The offensive line is the one weak point in the Tiger team this season. Graduating 3 seniors, with all 3 of them going on to play Division 1, there will be some young players starting in the trenches Week 1.

From what I have seen with this program, however, I do not think that the offensive line will be weak for very long as the staff pushes their talent to starter quality. Also helping this cause is one of the 2 returning players on the line, rising junior **Tre’quan Alexander**. Alexander will be a definite force on all aspects of the offense.

The Jesuit offense is moving to a slightly more spread version of the offense we saw in 2019. Still with a run heavy focus on the back of pure running back **Joquez Smith**, the Tigers are going to want to keep the ball in his hands.

Explosive players like Junior Alexander, wide receivers **Jadyn Girard**, **Carter French**, and **Jarriett Buie Jr.** are going to get lots of opportunities to put up big stat lines in 2020. Thompson speaks to the depth of the wide receivers being one of the main strengths of the 2020 team and it will show as soon as Week 1.

With all of these weapons as Coach Thompson's disposal, I expect the Tiger offense to be even more lethal than last year.

Defense

Jesuit High School's defense is extremely strong. Even more threatening than the offense, the Tiger defense is the reason for a lot of the team's success over this stretch. With the use of the 3-4 base front and some changes made week to week, defense is run at an extremely high level at the Jesuit football program.

Starting in the middle with the front of key defensive lineman, defensive end **Andre Morris Jr.** is going to be a constant problem for all offenses. Only a sophomore, Morris is just getting started in his high school career at Jesuit.

The leader of the 2020 defense is junior middle linebacker, **AJ Cottrill**. The two-sport athlete is as much a threat on the football field as he is on the baseball diamond. Cottrill had an outstanding 157 tackles last year with 3 blocked punts, 3 forced fumbles, and 1 sack. These stat lines are enough to say that Cottrill is all over the field.

From making plays on special teams to getting key stops on third down, AJ Cottrill is going to continue to build on this impressive season in 2020. Alongside Cottrill are the 2 Bowles brothers. The sons of current Defensive Coordinator for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Todd Bowles, the 2 brothers know a thing or two about defense.

Coming in from both sides of the line, **Todd Bowles Jr.** and younger brother **Troy Bowles** are involved with just about every play the offense makes. Troy is only a sophomore this season and already has a scholarship offer from Louisiana Tech. I expect that after this season, both he and his senior brother Todd are going to be flooded with offers to continue their football career at the next level.

Finishing out this group is another outside linebacker **Myles Coates**. Coates is one of the seniors on this team and he has the experience to lead many of the younger talents to a long run in the playoffs.

The defensive back depth is also a strength of the Jesuit team. With several starter level talent competing for just a few spots, the defensive backs are getting better with every practice. Free safety junior, **Wade Woodaz**, is one of few starters that may be safe from all of this competition. Woodaz stands at 6 foot 3 inches tall and is a standout on any defense.

Alongside him is the incredible athlete Junior Vandeross. Vandeross is at home on the defensive side of the ball. Constantly heat seeking to any play on the field, Vandeross is ready for more big hits in 2020. Any ball thrown his way or breakaway back running down the sideline will result in yet another highlight for the young and talented Vandeross.

The defensive group for Jesuit may be the difference maker this season. Late in the season, many teams turn to their defense to keep them in games and make the plays necessary to beat similar talented teams. Jesuit's defense is ready for this pressure and I am looking forward to seeing the numbers that this group of talent puts up this season.

Overview

The Jesuit High School football program has all of the facilities, talent, and coaching staff necessary for greatness. We have seen this greatness year after year but the Tigers are still looking for more. Coach Thompson speaks to the hunger of his team going into 2020. Look out for the Tigers this year and they are ready to pounce on that elusive state championship.

Tampa Catholic High School (Tampa, FL)

Head Coach: Jeris McIntyre (18-10)

Mascot: Crusaders

Division: Class 4A, Region 3

2019 Record: 7-6

2019 Key Wins: @ American Heritage (Delray Beach, FL) *

2019 Recognitions: Class 4A Region 3 Runner-Up

* Florida Class 4A Region 3 Semi-Final

Top Returning Players: (Class, Position, Height, Weight, Commitment)

Lewis Carter (2023, ATH, 6-0, 190)

Xavione Washington (2023, QB, 6'1, 175)

Jaime Smiley (2022, ATH, 6-1, 190)

Raphael Ekechi (2021, ATH, 5-10, 190)

Antoine Hill (2023, RB, 5'9, 190)

Jordan Sandlin (2021, OT, 6-6, 295, FAU)

Jaden Sandlin (2021, OT, 6-6, 260, FAU)

Cole Essek (2021, TE, 6-7, 240, Appalachian St.)

DD Snyder (2021, S, 6-0, 175, Illinois)

Kentrell Covington (2022, DE, 5-10, 225)

Edward Zanato (2021, MLB, 5-11, 218)

Adrian Ramsey (2022, DB, 5-11, 160)

2020 Schedule (So Far):

8/14 - West Oaks Academy (Orlando, FL)

2019 Record: 4-8

8/28 - @ Cardinal Mooney (Sarasota, FL)

2019 Record: 2-8

**9/4 - Clearwater Central Catholic (Clearwater, FL) 2019 Record: 10-4 FL Class 3A
Region 3 Champions**

9/11 - Land O' Lakes (Land O' Lakes, FL)

2019 Record: 2-8

9/17 - @ Immokalee (Immokalee, FL)

2019 Record: 3-7

9/25 - Berkeley Prep (Tampa, FL)

2019 Record: 8-2

10/9 - @ Winter Haven (Winter Haven, FL)

2019 Record: 7-4

10/16 - @ Astronaut (Titusville, FL)

2019 Record: 6-6

10/23 - @ George Jenkins (Lakeland, FL)

2019 Record: 6-4

**10/30 - Jesuit (Tampa, FL) 2019 Record: 11-3 FL Class 5A Region 3
Champions**

The Year After? Or the First Year?

Tampa Catholic High School is in an extremely unique football program. In 2019, the Crusaders went all the way to the Region 3 Final in the Class 4A Florida State Playoffs. This playoff run was off the back of a mediocre 5-5 season. Call it a fluke if you want but I think it goes much deeper than that.

For the last 20 seasons Tampa Catholic has been on the wrong-side of a ruthless cross-town rivalry with Jesuit High School. That is right. Tampa Catholic has lost the past 20 consecutive years when playing in their annual game against Jesuit. This rivalry has overshadowed the potential greatness at this program.

After the 2017 season, the Tampa Catholic administration looked within its program to promote a new head coach. This selection was ex-NFL drafted wide receiver Jeris McIntyre. Interestingly enough, McIntyre was a part of the last team to beat Jesuit in the rivalry. 18 years later (at that point) he was given the reins of the program to try and conquer that one game on the schedule each year.

Coach McIntyre's first 2 seasons were unsuccessful but I think that 2020 could be the year. McIntyre has a plethora of returning talent. As of July, the Crusaders have 4 seniors that will be playing Division 1 football next fall. This talent level is rare for any program and it does not stop there.

Several of the underclassmen, such as sophomore Lewis Carter, have already been recognized by Power 5 programs with many offers. This group is ready for the 2020 season and it will show that this is one of the most talented teams that Tampa Catholic has had in many years. Coach McIntyre stated that "in terms of talent we are there, if not more talented [than last year's team]."

Tampa Catholic's 2020 schedule yields itself to the potential of a record-breaking year. There are few tough matchups. Week 3 against powerhouse Clearwater Central Catholic will be a necessary early test for this team but besides the final game against Jesuit, the schedule is manageable. With the right preparation, health of the team, and mindset, I can envision great things for the group of young men at Tampa Catholic High School.

Offense

The 2019 season was outstanding for the offense at Tampa Catholic. With many young skill positions, the expectations were blown out of the water early on. They finished the year averaging 26.2 PPG and settled into their groove. The offense is not based out of any scheme as the Crusaders adjust to exploit any weaknesses that their opposition may have. This skill is hard to grasp for many programs but it is mastered by Tampa Catholic. Lookout for this group of the Crusaders in 2020 as they continue their dominance from all aspects on offense.

One of the most exciting and talented players on Tampa Catholic's team is Class of 2023 standout, **Lewis Carter**. Carter is classified as an athlete because of his ability to play on any side of the ball that he is needed. As a freshman, Carter had over 500 yards from scrimmage. Any film of his breakout plays can be broken down to one strength of many coaches' favorite attribute, speed. In addition to this speed, Carter is one of the strongest players on the team.

Coach McIntyre describes Carter as "one of the strongest and one of the fastest players on the team." McIntyre also adds with "[Carter is] one of the most talented guys in the 2023 class in the county." This is a big statement for McIntyre but it is backed by the Division 1 offers that Carter has already received. The list of 10 top programs has highlights from Penn St., UCF, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Arizona St. With only 1

year of high school football under his belt, I expect this number to grow exponentially and culminating in offers from the top tier programs in the country.

Carter and the rest of Tampa Catholic's 2020 offense is led by sophomore quarterback, **Xavione Washington**. Washington had a smaller role in 2019 and is looking to step into the spotlight this year. Coach McIntyre describes Washington as "he can run, he can throw, and a very smart kid." The Crusaders are going to need Washington if they want another shot at a lengthy playoff run. Now with one year of high school football under his belt, Washington is going to be that much better this year.

Out wide alongside Carter is another athlete **Jaime Smiley**. Smiley plays both wide receiver and defensive back for the Crusaders. Smiley's impact is going to be larger in 2020 as more seniors leave gaps to be filled by this younger group of talent.

Coach McIntyre has been given a good problem to have at the running back position. Too many talented ball carriers. This problem has morphed into a rotation led by senior **Raphael Ekechi** and sophomore **Antoine Hill**. Ekechi plays all over the place for the Crusaders and is another player with the talent level fitting many positions. His home is in the backfield where he rushed for over 500 yards last season and 2 touchdowns. Given the situation in the crowded running back group, these numbers are impressive.

Hill on the other hand is a born running back with the potential to become one of the premier players in Tampa Catholic history. Hill rushed for over 1000 yards from scrimmage as a freshman and scored 10 times for the Crusaders. These 10 touchdowns came in the form of both rushing and receiving over last year. Hill's explosion as a freshman certainly put him on the map of recruits for 2023. Going into 2020, Coach McIntyre plans to utilise Ekechi, Hill, and even Carter in the backfield. This three headed monster is going to be extremely hard to stop.

Adding to the talent in the backfield, the Crusaders offensive line is in safe hands in 2020. Led by the 6-6 Sandlin twins, both committed to Florida Atlantic, the protection is going to give Washington plenty of time to make plays in the pocket. Also yielding plenty of room for the three running backs to make game changing plays, the offensive line is going to be a great foundation for the offense to work upon.

Complementing **Jordan Sandlin** and **Jaden Sandlin** is another Division 1 bound senior, **Cole Essek**. Essek is committed to Appalachian St. and is another Crusader that plays on both sides of the ball. Listed as a tight end, the 6-7 athlete is more of a

second offensive tackle than anything else. Constantly sealing to edge on offense, Essek is going to be another key to this morphing offense throughout the season.

All aspects of any great offense is covered in depth for the Tampa Catholic Crusaders. I expect to see another record-breaking year from this talented group as they look for that regional title in 2020.

Defense

The Tampa Catholic defense was unbelievably strong in 2019. They were the anchor of the team and held quality offenses to limited outbursts of points. Coach McIntyre is an offensive based coach, as he played wide receiver professionally, but the Tampa Catholic defense is one of the strengths of the program. The Crusaders' defense takes a very similar approach to the offenses scheme. They do not have a strict 3-4 or 4-3 look but instead they shift to whatever will put their opponent at the largest disadvantage.

With several 2 way athletes on defense, the talent is there for the Crusaders. There are few holes left from the 2019 seniors and many talented young athletes that will be coming back. The most talented player on defense is a toss up between **DD Snyder** and the familiar Lewis Carter. Playing in his final year with Tampa Catholic, Snyder has been through the recruiting process for playing at the next level.

The 3-star hard hitting defensive back is committed to the University of Illinois and is the only Crusader to be going to a Power 5 program next fall. Snyder pairs extremely well with the very athletically talented defensive back Lewis Carter. Carter is a menace on defense as he has a natural knack for football (as seen when he gets the ball on offense as well).

Moving to the defensive line, there are going to be some familiar faces. With tight end and defensive end Cole Essek on the edge, the pressure is going to be on the opposing quarterback all game long. On the other side of the line is 2019 standout sophomore, **Kentrell Covington**. Covington had 45 total tackles and 4 sacks in his first year on the Tampa Catholic squad. Covington is looking to compete with Essek for top defensive lineman in 2020.

The linebacker core for the Crusaders is the heart of this defense. Led by senior middle linebacker **Edward Zanato**, the young linebackers have a great mentor. Zanato led the team in tackles last season with 123 total tackles, 1 interception, and 1 sack. Zanato

plans to improve on his ability to catch the football this season as he believes that he can compete with many of the defensive backs for team interception leader.

The defensive backs for the Crusaders are led by obvious stars, DD Snyder and Lewis Carter. Carter had an amazing year from safety as he racked in 79 total tackles. This feat is impressive for many senior linebackers let alone a freshman two way player. DD Snyder fell into a lot more coverage as he intercepted 2 passes and had 42 total tackles. Among these two is athlete Jamie Smiley and pure defensive back **Adrian Ramsey**. Ramsey is a rising junior that is one of few pure positioned players on this Crusaders team. This unobstructed focus on his craft will result in head turning stats this season.

The 2020 group of defensemen for the Crusaders will be very similar to the lockdown squad that anchored last year's regional runner-up team. Many of these players are maturing fast and in the process becoming outstanding athletes. I look forward to lots of important plays in 2020 from this defense.

Overview

Coach Jeris McIntyre has quite the talented group of players this season. Many of the returners were starting standouts last year and will continue their dominance. This experience is going to make a difference as the long gauntlet of the season wears weaker teams down. I am excited to see the Crusaders hopefully standing atop the Region 3 tournament and bringing their skills to that player favorite Class 4A Florida State Tournament.