**Catholic Athletes for Christ Top 25 High School Preseason Football Rankings; Sept. 15, 2021, #3**

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ALEXANDRIA, Va. — Once every state has played at least one week of football, it feels like the season has officially arrived.

For some teams in the Catholic Athletes for Christ Top 25 High School football rankings presented by Global Football, the season is four games old and this weekend will mark the midway point of the regular season in states such as Indiana and Utah.

No. 20 St. John’s College (Washington, D.C.) enters the CAC Top 25 as the lone newcomer. The Cadets (3-0) are the third team from the Washington Catholic Athletic Conference joining No. 8 Gonzaga (Washington) and No. 24 DeMatha Catholic (Hyattsville, Md.).

This week nine teams remained ranked the same as the previous week, including No. 1 St. John Bosco (Bellflower, Calif.) and No. 2 Mater Dei (Santa Ana, Calif.). Two teams dipped six slots after losses, No. 9 St. Joseph’s Prep (Philadelphia, Pa.) and No. 12 De La Salle (Concord, Calif.) while four teams moved two spots and four more were bumped up one. Meanwhile, five teams dropped one slot apiece.

Okay, so that’s a quick wrap-up of the latest CAC Top 25 rankings for the second weekend in September.

Now for the weekly Triple Option and final words before presenting the CAC Top 25.

**Triple Option**

The Triple Option identifies a student-athlete, coach and the upcoming weekend’s must-see games. First, there’s a senior Pittsburgh that demonstrated helped rally his team from a huge deficit to record a big nonconference win. In Northern California, a coach and his staff pulled off a shocker against one of the nation’s most storied programs. Additionally, there are four games of interest that will impact the CAC Top 25 rankings.

**Player of the Week:** Running back Gannon Carothers of No. 25 Central Catholic (Pittsburgh, Pa.). The Central Catholic Vikings (2-1) needed a big performance, Carothers was there to rescue a victory. Trailing by 21 points (28-7), Central Catholic rallied in the second half for an improbable 49-35 victory over Pine-Richland (Gibsonia).

The senior found the end zone four times as all of his scores covered more than 50 yards. Carothers’ 58-yard touchdown run midway through the third quarter tied the game at 35. Carothers tallied two TDs on the ground, one on a pass reception and another one on kickoff return. He also accounted for nearly 300 total yards.

On the Vikings’ next drive, QB Payton Wehner found Carothers on a 58-yard TD catch, giving his team a 42-35 lead with 3:27 left in the third.

Carothers’s 75-yard kick return made it 28-21 and two more long scores gave the WPIAL Class AAAAAA top-ranked team to comeback win.

**Coach of the Week:** Greg Calcagno of St. Francis (Mountain View, Calif.). Something truly special occurred in Northern California last weekend and St. Francis pulled it off. Calcagno’s team ended 30-year, 318-game win streak by No. 12 De La Salle (Concord, Calif.) against Northern California schools. QB Matthew Dougherty Jr. fired a 16-yard TD pass to Nicolas Andrighetto with 16.7 seconds left in a 31-28 win over the Spartans.

St. Francis, which lost to De La Salle 48-0 two years ago, took a 21-7 lead at the break. De La Salle rallied late and took a 28-4 lead with less than two minutes remaining.

De La Salle last lost to a Northern California on Dec. 7, 1991. During that stretch, they went 316-0-2.

# “Our guys believe in themselves,” Calcagno said told *The Mercury News.* “We had every reason to fold tents. They came back. We know De La Salle’s a great team. They’re never going to stop the fight. But we responded. That response at the end … unbelievable.”

**Games of the Week (All times are local and subject to change):** This weekend there are four games with CAC Top 25 teams meeting formidable opponents. There are two games from the Midwestern cities of Chicago and Cincinnati. And then it’s a contest to be played in a famous stadium and the CAC 25’s top-ranked team has a road trip to the East Coast.

**No. 8 Gonzaga (Washington, D.C.) at No. 9 St. Joseph’s Prep (Philadelphia, Pa.), Friday, 7 p.m.:** Two Jesuit powerhouses will meet at the University of Pennsylvania’s historic Franklin Field. Last week St. Joseph’s (1-1) lost for the first time since the 2019 season.

**No. 1 St. John Bosco (Bellflower, Calif.) at Oscar Smith (Chesapeake, Va.), Friday, 7 p.m.:** The Braves (4-0) make the cross-county trip to place Virginia’s top-ranked program. Smith (2-0) is the defending Class 6 state champions.

**No. 17 Loyola Academy (Wilmette, Ill.) at Brother Rice (Chicago, Ill.), Friday, 7 p.m.:** It’s Chicago Catholic League/East Suburban Catholic Conference matchup between two unbeatens. The winner will sit atop the Blue Division standing.

**No. 13 St. Xavier (Cincinnati, Ohio) at Moeller (Cincinnati, Ohio), Friday, 7 p.m.:** The Greater Catholic League South Division features two unbeatens at the University of Cincinnati’s Nippert Stadium.

Hope you are able to attend one of these games but if you can’t get out and support your local high schools.

That’s it for another eventful week in the Catholic Athletes for Christ Top 25 rankings but here’s a subtle reminder from Global Football for an international football event in 2022.

In the feature game, Northwestern plays Nebraska as part of the Aer Lingus College Football Series on Aug. 27, 2022, at Aviva Stadium in Dublin, Ireland. In conjunction with the 2022 Northwestern-Nebraska college football game, the fifth ***High School Football Showcase*** is organized by Global Football.

Here’s the rub: High school football athletic directors and coaches are invited to travel overseas with their teams for a competitive game against an American opponent. Schools are encouraged to bring their high school bands, cheerleaders and teams from other sports such as field hockey, rugby and lacrosse. It will be memorable trip and cultural experience.

For more information contact Patrick Steenberge (817) 219-7274 or email him Patrick@globalfootball.com. Also visit this site for additional details, [2022 Kildare High School Showcase PPT](http://www.globalfootball.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/2022-Kildare-High-School-Showcase-PPT.pdf).

It’s never too early to plan for the future.

We encourage fans, players, parents and coaches to follow the CAC Top 25 through social media at [www.Facebook.com/CACTop25](http://www.Facebook.com/CACTop25) and on Twitter @CACTop25. If there is a team, coach, player or story idea that we may have overlooked, we need to hear from you. Our readers are our greatest resource. Thank you.

It’s never too early to plan for the future.

Until next week, God bless. — *Christopher Lawlor*

**Catholic Athletes for Christ Top 25 High School Football Rankings, Sept. 15, 2021**

**1. St. John Bosco, Bellflower, Calif. (4-0)**

**Previous rank:** 1.

**In the Huddle:** The Braves outlasted East St. Louis (Ill.), 42-26. Junior QB Pierce Clarkson can beat you with arm but last weekend he had a pair of TDs of 51 and 10 yards in the first half and Chedon James sped 17 yards for another. The Braves a huge task this week heading Virginia for a national matchup with Oscar Smith (Chesapeake, Va.).

**2. Mater Dei, Santa Ana, Calif. (2-0)**

**Previous rank:** 2.

**In the Huddle:** The Monarchs stopped Liberty (Henderson, Nev.), 49-7, at the Polynesian Football Classic in Las Vegas. Sophomore quarterback Elijah Brown hit on 15-of-16 passes for 213 yards and two touchdowns. The schedule resumes on Sept. 24 with La Mirada following the bye week.

**3. Bergen Catholic, Oradell, N.J. (2-0)**

**Previous rank:** 4.

**In the Huddle:** Idle. The Crusaders host Delbarton (Morristown) Saturday.

**4. St. Xavier, Cincinnati, Ohio (4-0)**

**Previous rank:** 5.

**In the Huddle:** The Bombers left the state and rolled over Penn (Mishawaka, Ind.), 41-10. QB Brogan McCaughey threw for three first-half TDs and ran for another and RB Charles Kellom added two more in the team’s 12 straight win. The Bombers enter GCL South play against one of their rivals Moeller (Cincinnati) on Friday to be played at University of Cincinnati’s Nippert Stadium.

**5. Bishop Gorman, Las Vegas (3-0)**

**Previous rank:** 7.

**In the Huddle:** Stopped Lone Peak (Highland, Utah), 35-7, in the Polynesian Football Classic. Sophomore QB Micah Alejado hit on 10-of-12 passes for 369 yards and three TDs and his favorite target was Zachariah Branch had 131 receiving yards and two scores. The Gaels are off to Arizona to face Hamilton (Chandler).

**6. Servite, Anaheim, Calif. (3-0)**

**Previous rank:** 8.

**In the Huddle:** Coach Troy Thomas’s team defeated Bishop Amat (La Puente), 58-7. Arizona-bound QB Noah Fifita passed for 261 yards and three TDs, including a pair to WR Tetairoa McMillan. The Friars have outscored three foes, 156-38. The Friars’ first true test is Friday against Sierra Canyon School (Chatsworth).

**7. St. Peter’s Prep, Jersey City, N.J. (3-0)**

**Previous rank:** 9.

**In the Huddle:** Shut out Northeast (Philadelphia), 34-0. QB Robert Long tossed three TDs in the first half and finished 19-of-31 for 153 yards. RB Paul Lefkowitz added a TD run and Ryan Adams had a pick-six for the Marauders. Next is Seton Hall Prep (West Orange) on Saturday afternoon.

**8. Gonzaga, Washington, D.C. (3-0)**

Previous rank: 10.

**In the Huddle:** The Eagles recorded their second shutout of the season in a 19-0 triumph over Mary’s Ryken (Leonardtown, Md.). The defense has allowed only seven points in three contests. This weekend is a stern test at No. 9 St. Joseph’s Prep (Philadelphia) in a game that will be played in Franklin Field.

**9. St. Joseph’s Prep, Philadelphia (1-1)**

**Previous rank:** 3.

**In the Huddle:** Lost to Milton (Alpharetta, Ga.), 28-21. The Hawks trailed 21-7 in the second half and scored with just over a minute left when Samaj Jones tossed a 22-yard TD to sophomore RB Kahseim Phillips. The Hawks face No. 8 Gonzaga (Washington, D.C.) Friday at the University of Pennsylvania’s Franklin Field.

**10. St. Edward, Lakewood, Ohio (3-0)**

Previous rank: 11.

**In the Huddle:** QB Christian Ramos, a Bowling Green baseball recruit, accounted for five TDs in a 48-14 rout of Elder (Cincinnati). Ramos ran for four scores and 133 yards on 12 carries and clicked on 6-of-12 passes for 152 yards and a TD. The Eagles are back at it Friday at Massillon.

**11. Cathedral, Indianapolis, Ind. (4-0)**

**Previous rank:** 12.

**In the Huddle:** Sophomore QB Danny O’Neill completed 18-of-30 passes for three TDs from 4, 27 and 57 yards and rushed 10 yards for another when the Fighting Irish topped their longtime rivals Bishop Chatard (Indianapolis), 38-14. The Irish led 28-0 at halftime. Jaron Tibbs caught six balls for 132 yards. Next is a road game at Columbus North on Friday.

**13. Jesuit, Tampa, Fla. (3-0)**

Previous rank: 13.

In the Huddle: The Tigers beat Bloomingdale (Valrico), 32-14. Jaydn Girard caught a 67-yard TD and Jo Smith scampered 31 yards for an early 7-0 lead. Smith’s second TD of the night made it 22-0 in the third and added his third score later in the quarter. The Tigers visit Hillsborough (Tampa) Friday.

**14. St. Thomas Aquinas, Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (2-1)**

**Previous rank:** 14.

**In the Huddle:** Picked up a quality win, defeatingAmerican Heritage (Plantation), 24-16. The Raiders rebounded after a rare loss. WR Camden Brown caught a 15-yard TD pass from QB Zion Turner in the third quarter for a 21-14 lead. Isaiah Hedge also grabbed a scoring pass in the first quarter. Next is Monsignor Pace (Miami Gardens) on Friday.

**15. Catholic, Baton Rouge, La. (2-0)**

**Previous rank:** 15.

**In the Huddle:** It was an impressive 20-0 victory over Acadiana (Lafayette), the state top-ranked Class 5A team. This weekend the Bears travel north to face West Monroe) Friday.

**16. St Frances Academy, Baltimore, Md. (1-1)**

**Previous rank:** 16.

**In the Huddle:** The Panthers bounced back after COVID-19 scare to defeat Franklin (Reisterstown, Md.), 57-6. Next is a road game at Good Counsel (Olney) on Friday.

**17. Loyola Academy, Wilmette, Ill. (3-0)**

Previous rank: 17.

In the Huddle: QB Jake Stearney connected on 20-of-27 passes for 301 yards and two TDs as the Ramblers pasted league rivals St. Rita (Chicago), 37-7. WR Danny Collins caught eight passes for 137 yards, including an 80-yarder in the third quarter. The Ramblers travel to Brother Rice (Chicago) Friday in another Chicago Catholic League showdown.

**18. O’Dea, Seattle, Wash. (2-0)**

Previous rank: 18.

In the Huddle: The Irish carried a 22-point lead into halftime en route to a 49-0 blanking of Kennedy Catholic (Burien). The defense forced six turnovers, including five in the second half. Backup FB Georgios Kotsakis rushed for 142 yards and Jason Brown ran for 70 yards and two scores. Next is Lake Stevens on Friday.

**19. Brother Martin, New Orleans, La. (0-0)**

Previous rank: 19.

**In the Huddle:** The Crusaders have had two games cancelled by Hurricane Ida.

**20. St. John’s College, Washington, D.C. (3-0)**

Previous rank: Not ranked.

In the Huddle: The Cadets earn a spot in the CAC 25 after defeating Cardinal Hayes (Bronx, N.Y.), 38-6. This weekend they host Life Christian Academy (Chesterfield, Va.).

**21. Archbishop Hoban, Akron, Ohio (3-1)**

Previous rank: 20.

**In the Huddle:** RBs Lamar Sperling’s 42-yards TD run, his second of the night, sealed the Knights’ 27-14 victory over Archbishop Alter (Kettering). Charlie Durkin kicked a pair of field goals. This weekend the Knights travel to St. Ignatius (Cleveland) Saturday.

**22. DePaul Catholic, Wayne, N.J. (2-0)**

**Previous rank:** 21.

**In the Huddle:** QB A.J. Rodriguez completed 14 of 23 passes for 212 yards and tossed a 2-yard TD pass to MarShawn Ferguson in the fourth quarter. Tyler Brown opened the scoring in the first on a 14-yard run and added a 17-yard field goal in the third. This weekend the Spartans host Pope John XXIII (Sparta).

**23. Cathedral Catholic, San Diego, Calif. (2-1)**

**Previous rank:** 22.

**In the Huddle:** The Dons fired on all cylinders in a 52-0 victory over Helix (La Mesa). This weekend’s a trip to Northern California for No. 12 De La Salle (Concord).

**24. DeMatha Catholic, Hyattsville, Md. (2-1)**

**Previous rank:** 23.

**In the Huddle:** The Stags crushed Episcopal (Alexandria, Va.), 42-6. Freshman Denzel Gardner passed for 101 yards and a TD and the running game of Jaden Bacon and Brendon Wyatt combined 216 yards and three TDs. This weekend they face Friendship Collegiate Academy (Washington, D.C.).

**25. Central Catholic, Pittsburgh, Pa. (2-1)**

**Previous rank:** 24.

**In the Huddle:** RB Gannon Carothers scored four TDs, two on the ground, one through the air and one on a kickoff return as the Vikings rallied from a 21-point deficit to beat Pine-Richland (Gibsonia), 49-35. All of his scores were more than 50 yards. CC tied the game at 35 in the third quarter when Carothers rumbled 59 yards. He then caught a 58-yard TD pass from QB Payton Wehner later in the third. The Vikings closed the game with four unanswered scores. This Friday’s a home game with Norwin (Irwin).

**Dropped out:** No. 2*5.* Nolan Catholic (Fort Worth, Texas).

**Special Consideration:** St. Francis (Mountain View, Calif.); Archbishop Wood (Warminster, Pa.); Marist (Atlanta, Ga.); Brother Rice (Chicago, Ill.);Central Catholic (Grand Rapids, Mich.);Central Catholic (Portland, Ore.); Chaminade-Madonna College Prep (Hollywood, Fla.); Eastside Catholic (Sammamish, Wash.);Good Counsel (Olney, Md.);De La Salle Collegiate (Warren, Mich.); Roncalli (Indianapolis, Ind.); Saint Louis School (Honolulu, Hawaii); Santa Margarita (Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.); St. Thomas (Houston, Texas);Serra (San Mateo, Calif.); La Salle College (Wyndmoor, Pa);Holy Spirit (Absecon, N.J.).; St. Augustine Prep (Richland, N.J.); St. Joseph (Trumbull, Conn.) and Central Catholic (Lawrence, Mass.).

**About:** The Catholic Athletes for Christ Top 25 High School Football Rankings, presented by Global Football are released on Wednesdays from late August until the conclusion of the high school season in January. Criteria include the quality of the team and its players, strength of schedule, tradition, and quality of the team’s league, conference, region or district. The rankings are compiled by Christopher Lawlor, who consults with Patrick Steenberge of Global Football in Granbury, Texas to coordinate the CAC Top 25. All Catholic high schools from the United States that feature only four-year players on 11-man teams are eligible for consideration. Fans are encouraged to follow the CAC Top 25 at [www.Facebook.com/CACTop25](http://www.Facebook.com/CACTop25) and on Twitter @CACTop25.

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