**Catholic Athletes for Christ Top 25 High School Football Rankings; Sept. 22, 2021, #4**

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CATHOLIC ATHLETES FOR CHRIST

ALEXANDRIA, Va. — It’s officially fall today.

The transition from summer to autumn took place at 3:20 p.m. EDT. That’s the autumnal equinox. To heap more on the plate, it’s less than 100 days to Christmas. It’s busy times for everyone with the holidays closing in but we digress.

So, enough of trivial facts and let’s focus on the Catholic Athletes for Christ Top 25 High School football rankings presented by Global Football. We’re just over a month into the season and as the calendar flips forward to October, last weekend brought us this: Change.

The most obvious time for change in the CAC Top 25 is late August or immediately following Labor Day Weekend. However, this week the CAC 25 featured a reshuffling within in the fold. Only two teams were dropped but 21 teams moved up or plummeted. No. 1 St. John Bosco (Bellflower, Calif.) and No. 2 Mater Dei (Santa Ana, Calif.) maintained their positions atop the CAC 25 and that will shake out on Oct. 1 when the Trinity League rivals meets for the first time. We’re also planning on a postseason date.

The debutants this week are No. 15 St. Francis (Mountain View, Calif.) and No. 20 Chaminade-Madonna College Prep (Hollywood, Fla.), a pair of teams that recorded significant wins over nationally-ranked teams. St. Francis enters off the strength of an improbable 31-28 win over No. 16 De La Salle (Concord, Calif.) on Sept. 10. The Lancers (2-0) handed DLS its first loss to a Northern California team in nearly 30 years. In that stretch, DLS accrued an astounding 306-0-2 mark. This is the first time St. Francis entered the CAC 25.

Chaminade-Madonna (3-1) is no stranger to the CAC 25 but needed a signature win to propel them after an early season loss. Well, that arrived last Friday at Buford (Ga.) in a 7-0 win. Buford is Georgia’s top-ranked Class AAAAAA team and some feel they are the best from the Peach State. CM scored a touchdown in the first quarter on a long run and it stood up. That’s a monstrous win for the Lions, who should close out the regular season without a blemish and look to secure another Florida Class 3A championship.

No. 9 Catholic (Baton Rouge, La.) and No. 11 Loyola Academy (Wilmette, Ill.) were the big movers moving up six spots after huge road wins against unbeaten opponents. In all, 16 teams shifted upwards with No. 19 DePaul Catholic (Wayne, N.J.) gaining three positions.

Taking the biggest hits within the CAC 25 were No. 21 Bishop Gorman (Las Vegas, Nev.) and No. 22 Gonzaga (Washington, D.C.). Gorman coughed up a big lead in the final 70 seconds and dips 16 positions. Gonzaga is down 14 after a lopsided loss in Philadelphia. No. 25 O’Dea (Seattle, Wash.) clings to the rankings by a fingernail following a loss.

That gives you an idea of last week’s results and the action is just warming up.

We now present the weekly Triple Option and some final words before revealing the latest CAC Top 25 rankings.

**Triple Option**

The Triple Option identifies a student-athlete, coach and the upcoming weekend’s must-see games. First, there’s a senior from the Chicago area that carried his team to victory with a record-setting performance against a league rival. In New Jersey, a rookie head coach and his staff displayed the faith to spring a trick play that produced a wonderful result on a hot afternoon in Jersey City. Additionally, there are five games of interest from the CAC 25.

**Player of the Week:** Running back Marco Maldonado of No. 11 Loyola Academy (Wilmette, Ill.). In the rough-and-tumble of the Chicago Catholic League/East Suburban Catholic Conference Blue, you better bring an “A-game” each week or perish. It was Maldonado, a senior running back, that brought his best, call it “A-plus,” and no one would argue following Loyola’s thrilling 46-43 win last Friday at rivals Brother Rice (Chicago).

Maldonado rushed for a school-record 335 yards and four touchdowns on 38 carries. He beat the previous mark set in 2001 by 5 yards and the Ramblers (4-0) needed every one of those yards. In a seesaw affair, the Ramblers finally earned some breathing room with 4:24 left when Maldonado dashed 17 yards for his fourth score of the night. Rice responded with a late score but the night belonged to Maldonado and the Ramblers.

At 5 feet, 11 inches and 183 pounds, Maldonado entered the game without any college offers. No doubt colleges will be viewing his film. In the three previous games, he carried 37 times for 263 yards and scored eight TDs The career performance spiked those numbers.

For such a heroic effort, Maldonado was dealt lousy blow late in the game suffering a broken collarbone. It is not known how long the injury will sideline him. The CAC wishes Marco a speedy recovery.

**Coach of the Week:** Rich Hansen III of No. 6 St. Peter’s Prep (Jersey City, N.J.). In what many New Jersey fans and scribes are hailing as one of the greatest games they’ve seen live, St. Peter’s gutted out a 22-21 double-overtime win over upstart Seton Hall Prep (West Orange).

Hansen, a first-year head coach who took over for his father, reached deep into his trick-play bag to pull out the victory. First, let’s set up it. The game was tied at 14 following regulation and in the first overtime, Seton Hall Prep lined up for the game-winning, 31-yard field goal by an all-state place kicker, but it was blocked. Phew!

Seton Hall Prep took a 21-14 lead in the second extra session, leaving St. Peter’s one last chance. The Marauders had stitched together a 14-0 lead in the second half only to see it slip away. So, with more lives than a calico cat, the Marauders scored on RB Sam Slade’s 1-yard run to pull within one (21-20).

Here’s where the rookie coach made the call of the week. Hansen summoned his version of the Philly Special (think the play when the Eagles won the Super Bowl in 2018) or at Prep it’s known as the “Ryan O’Flaherty Special,” scripted by their offensive coordinator of the same name. Simply, Slade took a direct snap, pitched it to WR Hassan Moore, who fired a pass to QB Champ Long for the two-point conversion and the pulse-thickening victory.

Hansen, O’Flaherty and the players bought in and the Marauders moved to 4-0.

**Games of the Week (All times are local and subject to change):** This weekend three of the five selected games feature CAC Top 25 teams meeting formidable opponents, including from New Jersey where both teams are ranked. In New Orleans, things are getting closer to normal after a natural disaster earlier this month while in Kentucky a prominent rivalry is renewed. There are also games from Oregon and Pennsylvania that will keep the CAC 25 on notice. Gazing at the future schedules the first weekend in October has several key fixtures on tap.

**No. 19 DePaul Catholic (Wayne, N.J.) at No. 6 St. Peter’s Prep (Jersey City), Friday, 7 p.m.:** The Caven Point Athletic Complex overlooking New York Harbor and the Statue of Liberty serves a scenic backdrop for such a meaningful game in the Super Football Conference. Prep (4-0) is New Jersey’s No. 2 team and the Spartans (3-0) are right behind. DePaul’s Nick Campanile and Prep’s Richie Hansen III are first-year head coaches with rich football bloodlines. Both teams are chock full of high-level college talent.

**No. 17 Brother Martin (New Orleans, La.) at Jesuit (New Orleans), Friday, 7 p.m.:** The New Orleans Catholic League or District 9-5A opens this weekend with a pair of 1-0 teams squaring off at Tad Gormley Stadium. Both missed out on two games because of Hurricane Ida. Jesuit hammered Riverdale (Jefferson), 52-0, but Brother Martin eked out a one-point win last weekend.

**Sandy (Ore.) at Central Catholic (Portland, Ore.), Friday, 7 p.m.:** The Mount Hood Conference matchup pits a pair of 3-0 squads for a game at Hillsboro Stadium in suburban Portland. The Central Catholic Rams are No. 1 in Class 6A, according to a statewide news service and Sandy is No. 4. The Rams are fresh off an impressive 42-35 win over Tumwater (Wash.).

**Trinity (Louisville, Ky.) vs. St. Xavier (Louisville), Friday, 8 p.m.:** This one has been referred to as “The Vatican Bowl” a rivalry between all-male high schools from Louisville. Uncharacteristically, Trinity (0-4), the defending Class 6A state champion, is winless. St. X is 3-1 after beating Elder (Cincinnati, Ohio), 31-21. The game will be played at University of Louisville’s Cardinal Stadium with a large crowd anticipated regardless of the records.

**No. 18 St. John’s College (Washington, D.C.) at Archbishop Wood (Warminster, Pa.), Saturday, 1 p.m.:** The Philadelphia and Washington Catholic leagues matchup for another interesting game. SJC is 4-0 while Wood (3-1) dropped a 21-0 decision last weekend to Malvern (Pa.) Prep. The game will be played at William Tennent High School in Warminster.

Although this is a sampling what’s scheduled this weekend there’s probably a game in your hometown or area that is far more appetizing. Make sure you support the local Catholic, private and publics because it’s good for the community and the future pros are there.

Well, time to wrap up another week in the Catholic Athletes for Christ Top 25 rankings but here’s our weekly reminder from Global Football for an international football event in 2022.

Ever been to Ireland? Here’s your chance next summer.

In the showcase 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 Big Ten Conference opening game is the fifth ***High School Football Showcase*** is organized by Global Football.

Listen up. 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. It’ll be here quicker than before.

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.

The CAC Top 25 rankings will return on Sept. 29.

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

**Catholic Athletes for Christ Top 25 High School Football Rankings, Sept. 22, 2021**

**1. St. John Bosco, Bellflower, Calif. (5-0)**

**Previous rank:** 1.

**In the Huddle:** The Braves flew more than 2,700 miles expecting a tussle with Virginia’s top-ranked team and reigning state champion. Instead, it was another easy 49-0 victory over nationally-ranked Oscar Smith (Chesapeake, Va.). The Braves are off this weekend and will rest and prepare for the showdown with Trinity League rivals, No. 2 Mater Dei (Santa Ana).

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

**Previous rank:** 2.

**In the Huddle:** Idle. The Monarchs play La Mirada Friday a week before the big one at No. 1 St. John Bosco (Bellflower).

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

**Previous rank:** 4.

**In the Huddle:** Held off Delbarton (Morristown), 28-19. Princeton-bound RB Ryan Butler rushed for four TDs. The Crusaders travel to archrivals Don Bosco Prep (Ramsey) on Friday.

**4. St. Xavier, Cincinnati, Ohio (5-0)**

**Previous rank:** 5.

**In the Huddle:** RB Charles Kellom ran 37 times for 210 yards with three TDs runs from 2 and 6 yards and hauled in a 56-yard scoring catch as the Bombers easily beat the league rivals Moeller (Cincinnati), 49-16. QB Brogan McCaughey completed 14 of 21 passes for 210 yards and four TDs, including two to Terrell McFarlin, who had five receptions for 104 yards. Four of St. X’s five remaining regular games will be at home, RDI Stadium at Ballaban Field, including Friday’s GCL South matchup with Elder (Cincinnati).

**5. Servite, Anaheim, Calif. (4-0)**

**Previous rank:** 6.

**In the Huddle:** The Friars stopped area power Sierra Canyon School (Chatsworth), 44-22. Arizona-bound QB Noah Fifita completed 17 of 27 passes for 238 yards and two TDs and rushed for 53 yards and two scores on 13 carries. WR Tetairoa McMillan caught 11 passes for 163 yards and a TD. Coach Troy Thomas’s team entertains Helix (La Mesa) this weekend.

**6. St. Peter’s Prep, Jersey City, N.J. (4-0)**

**Previous rank:** 7.

**In the Huddle:** The Marauders defeated Seton Hall Prep (West Orange), 22-21, two overtimes. Trailing by a point in the second OT, the Marauders executed a trick play with RB Sam Slade taking a direct snap, pitching to WR Hassan Moore, who tossed the winning two-pointer to QB Champ Long. The game would have been over in the first extra session but St. Peter’s blocked a potential game-winning field goal attempt. Up next is No. 19 DePaul Catholic (Wayne) Friday.

**7. St. Joseph’s Prep, Philadelphia (2-1)**

**Previous rank:** 9.

**In the Huddle:** Wiped out then-No. 8 Gonzaga (Washington, D.C), 35-3. RB Josh Barlow rushed for three TDs. Just over a minute into the game, sophomore RB Samaj Jones busted off a 59-yard scoring run for a 7-0 edge. The Hawks then built a 28-3 lead at halftime and now have a bye week before facing a league rival La Salle College High (Wyndmoor, Pa.) on Oct. 2 back at historic Franklin Field on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania.

**8. St. Edward, Lakewood, Ohio (4-0)**

Previous rank: 10.

**In the Huddle:** RB Daniel Enovitch produced 146 rushing yards and three scores on 25 carries when the Eagles flew by Massillon, 35-18. QB Christian Ramos threw for 233 yards and two TDs. the Eagles are off this weekend and host archrivals St. Ignatius (Cleveland) on Oct. 2.

**9. Catholic, Baton Rouge, La. (3-0)**

**Previous rank:** 15.

**In the Huddle:** In one of the most impressive wins this season, the bears traveled north to beat West Monroe, 30-19, in a contest that was delayed two hours by lightning. RB Taelon Nicholas paced the ground game with 92 yards and two score on 16 carries. It was Catholic’s first win over the northeast Louisiana power in six tries. The Bears entertain Warren Easton (New Orleans) Friday.

**10. Cathedral, Indianapolis, Ind. (5-0)**

**Previous rank:** 11.

**In the Huddle:** QB Danny O’Neill threw for 161 yards and two scores of 26 and 28 yards to WR Michel Page in a 37-13 win over Columbus North. RB Seth Mencer carried 16 times for 38 yards and an 80-yard TD and Ben Gomez kicked three field goals. The Irish, Indiana’s consensus No. 1 Class 5A team, plays Morton (Hammond) Friday.

**11. Loyola Academy, Wilmette, Ill. (4-0)**

**Previous rank:** 17.

In the Huddle: RB Marco Maldonado had a performance for the ages in Loyola lore, rushing for a program-record 335 yards and four TDs on 38 carries during a thrilling 46-43 win over previously-unbeaten Brother Rice (Chicago) in a key league showdown. QB Jake Stearney hit on 14-of-26 passes for 196 yards and a TD and sped 49 yards for another score. Next is Fenwick (Oak Park) Friday.

**12. Jesuit, Tampa, Fla. (4-0)**

Previous rank: 13.

In the Huddle: The Tigers stopped Hillsborough (Tampa), 28-7, in District 10-6A play. Wake Forest-bound WR Jaydn Girard scored two TDs and racked up 136 all-purpose yards. RB Joquez Smith carried 18 times for 172 yards and QB Luke Knight tossed two scoring passes.

Next is Plant City on Friday night.

**13. St. Thomas Aquinas, Fort Lauderdale, Fla. (3-1)**

**Previous rank:** 14.

**In the Huddle:** Beat Monsignor Pace (Miami Gardens), 56-6. This one was never in doubt as the Raiders scored 28 points in the first quarter and 14 more in the second for a 42-0 lead at the intermission. The Raiders host Western (Davie) Friday.

**14. St Frances Academy, Baltimore, Md. (2-1)**

Previous rank: 16.

In the Huddle: The Panthers overwhelmed Good Counsel (Olney, Md.), 50-7. The Panthers took an early 28-7 lead and rolled. Up next is cross-country trip to No. 16 De La Salle (Concord, Calif.) on Oct. 1.

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

**15. St. Francis, Mountain View, Calif. (2-0)**

**Previous rank:** Not ranked.

In the Huddle: The Lancers enter the Elite 25 after two impressive wins, including No. 16 De La Salle (Concord). This weekend it’s a West Catholic Athletic League game with St. Ignatius College Prep (San Francisco).

**16. De La Salle, Concord, Calif. (3-1)**

**Previous rank:** 12.

**In the Huddle:** The Spartans returned to their winning ways after thumping then-No. 23 Cathedral Catholic (San Diego), 49-21. Coach Justin Alumbaugh’s squad dug themselves out of an early 14-0 hole. The action pauses this weekend and the Spartans back at it on Oct. 1 vs. No. 14 St. Frances Academy (Baltimore, Md.).

**17. Brother Martin, New Orleans, La. (1-0)**

**Previous rank:** 19.

**In the Huddle:** The Crusaders finally played after Hurricane Ida knocked out two games. The rust showed on offense but the defense stood tall in an 8-7 victory over East Ascension (Gonzales). Up next is Jesuit (New Orleans) scheduled for Friday in a District 9-5A contest.

**18. St. John’s College, Washington, D.C. (4-0)**

**Previous rank:** 20.

**In the Huddle:** The Cadets have beaten four teams from four different states and can make it five this weekend. Last week, they defeated Life Christian Academy (Chesterfield, Va.), 38-0, for the team’s second shutout of the term. All the scoring occurred in the first half. This weekend it’s a trip to Archbishop Wood (Warminster, Pa.) in a Philadelphia vs. Washington matchup.

**19. DePaul Catholic, Wayne, N.J. (3-0)**

**Previous rank:** 22.

**In the Huddle:** QB A.J. Rodriguez rushed for three TDs as the Spartans crushed Pope John XXIII (Sparta), 35-3. Jadin Johnson returned a pair of punts for scores to bolster special teams. The Spartans led 14-3 after one quarter and 28-3 at halftime. This weekend it’s a trip to No. 6 St. Peter’s Prep (Jersey City) for SFC crossover game on Caven Point.

**20. Chaminade-Madonna College Prep, Hollywood, Fla. (3-1)**

**Previous rank:** Not ranked.

**In the Huddle:** The Lions, No. 1 in Florida’s Class 3A rankings, return to the CAC 25 after upending nationally-ranked Buford (Ga.), 7-0, on the road. RB Davion Gause’s 63-yard TD run accounted for the lone score in the first quarter. He finished with 191 yards on 30 carries. Sophomore Denzel Johnson paced the defense with 10 tackles and two sacks. Buford entered the game as Georgia’s top-ranked Class AAAAAA team and had its win streak halted at 16 games. The Lions entertain Champagnat Catholic (Hialeah, Fla.) this weekend.

**21. Bishop Gorman, Las Vegas (3-1)**

**Previous rank:** 5.

**In the Huddle:** Lost to Hamilton (Chandler, Ariz.), 25-24. The Gaels fell apart in the final 70 seconds, surrendering 18 points after leading 24-7. William Stallings Jr. carried the ball 24 times for 160 yards and a score and sophomore QB Micah Alejado ran for a TD and threw another one to Zachariah Branch. The Gaels return to Nevada for the remainder of their slate, facing Arbor View (Las Vegas) Friday.

**22. Gonzaga, Washington, D.C. (3-1)**

**Previous rank:** 8.

**In the Huddle:** The Eagles lost to then-No. 9 St. Joseph’s Prep (Philadelphia, Pa.), 35-3.

**23. DeMatha Catholic, Hyattsville, Md. (3-1)**

**Previous rank:** 24.

**In the Huddle:** The defense has allowed only 27 points in four games and last weekend coach Bill McGregor’s squad posted a 38-0 win over Friendship Collegiate Academy (Washington, D.C.). After a scoreless first quarter, the Stags scored 24 points in the second. The bye week will give the Stags a chance to prepare for Life Christian Academy (Chester, Va.) on Oct. 1 and then No. 22 Gonzaga (Washington) on Oct. 8. The latter game is the first of four WCAC contests to close the regular season.

**24. Central Catholic, Pittsburgh, Pa. (3-1)**

**Previous rank:** 25.

**In the Huddle:** The Vikings were in dominant fashion on both sides of the ball after a 50-0 blanking of Norwin (Irwin). RB Gannon Carothers rushed for 64 yards and three TDs and sophomore LB Anthony Speca recorded nine tackles and a sack. It’s back to work this week with a key WPIAL Class AAAAAA showdown at North Allegheny (Wexford).

**25. O’Dea, Seattle, Wash. (2-1)**

Pr**evious rank:** 18.

**In the Huddle:** Lost to Lake Stevens, 20-3. The Irish look to bounce back Friday hosting Rainier Beach (Seattle).

**Dropped out:** No. 21 Archbishop Hoban (Akron, Ohio) and No. 23 Cathedral Catholic (San Diego, Calif.).

**Special Consideration:** La Salle (Cincinnati, Ohio); Central Catholic (Portland, Ore.); Cathedral Prep (Erie, Pa.); Gonzaga Prep (Spokane, Wash.); Archbishop Wood (Warminster, Pa.); Marist (Atlanta, Ga.); Brother Rice (Chicago, Ill.); Central Catholic (Grand Rapids, Mich.); Joliet (Ill.) Catholic; Iona Prep (New Rochelle, N.Y.).; Canisius (Buffalo, N.Y.); Archbishop Hoban (Akron, Ohio); Cathedral Catholic (San Diego, Calif.); 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); Catholic Memorial (Waukesha, Wis.); Holy Spirit (Absecon, N.J.).; St. Augustine Prep (Richland, N.J.); Seton Hall Prep (West Orange, N.J.); St. Joseph (Trumbull, Conn.) and Catholic Memorial (West Roxbury, 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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