

[High School Notebook: Football teams look gain momentum going into league play](#)

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Entering Week Three of the high school football season and three of the five Recorder Area teams are 2-0.

Franklin Tech, Athol and Mahar followed up their dominant season-opening wins with victories on Friday, the Eagles defeating Frontier (36-7), the Bears knocking off Pathfinder (40-0) while the Sens beat McCann Tech (22-8).

It's hard to find any faults in any of the three teams' starts to the season.

Franklin Tech proved it's for real by running away from a tough Redhawk squad and through two games, have outscored its opponents 78-13. With Pathfinder on the docket on Friday in Thorndike, the Eagles have a great shot of heading into Intercounty League North action undefeated.

Athol, meanwhile, has outscored its two opponents 88-16 and has been thoroughly dominant through two games. The Bears will get a tough test on Friday, when Lee (2-0) heads to O'Brien Field. The Wildcats beat Monument Mountain in their opener (24-6) before rolling to a 56-8 win over Drury last week. Quarterback Omari Smith and running back Devin Schwab are two players Athol will need to key in on Friday night.

Mahar followed up its 44-0 shutout over Drury with a 22-8 triumph on the road against McCann on Friday, with Jayden Delgado running for a trio of touchdowns in the victory. The Senators close out their non-conference slate with a road trip to Northampton on Friday. Mahar beat the Blue Devils last year at the Woodward Complex, but Joe Kocot's squad is off to a 2-0 start this fall with wins over Belchertown (16-13) and Taconic (28-6).

Two stats that have caught my eye to start the year: Franklin Tech senior Josiah Little is looking for his fourth 1,000 yard rushing season for the Eagles and through two games is already at 367 yards.

Athol quarterback Aidan Melanson has thrown seven touchdowns in two games. Raydin Sousa has caught three of those while Ethan Goodwin, Logan Cormier, Hayden Barrieau and Aaron Ouellet have been on the receiving end of those, with Melanson having a number of different weapons to look to in the air.

A pair of Franklin County schools will be looking for their first win of the season at Vets Field Friday, as Frontier travels up to face Greenfield.

While the Redhawks are in the Intercounty League South and the Green Wave are in the Intercounty League North, it's nice to see the two local rivals continue to schedule each other on a yearly basis.

With rivalries diminishing in the area — Turners now playing on the same team as Greenfield while Mohawk Trail also competes in the co-op with the Wave, ending the Thanksgiving rivalry between the Redhawks and the Warriors — it's good to see the local teams finding a way to play against one another.

Greenfield has won two of the last three against Frontier, though the Redhawks were victorious last fall.

Competition in Northern League

Since the post-COVID realignment, the Northern League has been dominated by the Turners Falls volleyball team.

This year, the Thunder may face their first serious test to win back the league championship belt.

In 2021, Turners went 14-0 in the Northern League. In those 14 wins, the Thunder didn't lose a set. The 2022 campaign saw Turners share the league title with Wahconah, as both the Thunder and the Warriors went 13-1 in the league after splitting with each other. Outside of the games with Wahconah, Turners didn't drop a set.

The Warriors left for the Western League in 2023 and the Thunder reclaimed the sole title, going 12-0 in the league and dropping just one set, an early-season 3-1 win over Mohawk Trail.

All of that makes the Warriors' 3-2 win over Turners earlier this fall all the more impressive. Mohawk Trail fell behind 2-0 but rallied back to win the final three sets to become the first non-Frontier Franklin County squad in the new format.

It doesn't look like it was a fluke, either. The Warriors are 7-0 on the season and currently sit in first place in the league. Sherri Lannon has done a great job with her team, as Mohawk Trail earned the No. 13 seed in the MIAA Div. 5 state tournament last fall and has carried over that momentum into this campaign.

Couple that in with a much improved Mahar team — which has followed a 5-14 season with a 4-3 start to the season with the lone league loss being a 3-2 defeat to Turners — and it appears the Northern League title race will be competitive this fall, though the Thunder — the defending Western Mass. Class D champions and Div. 5 semifinalists — will have much to say about that.

Turners is still 6-3 on the season and 5-1 in the league, and with players like Madi Liimatainen, Maddie Dietz, Janelle Massey and Tatianna Carr-Williams to name a few, it'll take a big effort to keep the Thunder from winning another league title.

Turners and the Warriors play their second match of the season on October 3.

Remaining unbeaten

Less than one month into the fall season and four Recorder Area teams remain unbeaten.

The Pioneer boys soccer team is 4-0-2 on the season, including a big 4-1 win over Smith Academy. Michael Italia's squad has impressed to open the season and will be a threat to win the Schmid League.

The Frontier girls soccer team is yet to add a tally to the loss column. The Redhawks (8-0) are scoring at a torrid pace, already potting 50 goals in their eight wins.

The aforementioned Mohawk Trail volleyball team is yet to lose while Bob Smith has the Frontier girls cross country team off to an unbeaten start.

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