

FOOTBALL

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game-winning touchdown passes against Paint Branch. We definitely did not know Terrance James and DeAndre Cooper would become, far and away, the most prolific receiving pair in the county.

The Barons went on a four-game winning streak last year, but we were skeptical they could carry over the momentum. An eight-win season is well within reach.

Best player

To be clear, this is not an MVP or Player of the Year award. This one answers the cut-and-dry question: Who is the best player in Montgomery County?

It's Stefan Diggs.

It is sort of unfair to compare positions; even on his own team, junior classmates Ryan Watson and Michael Madaras are big-time linemen with the Division I offers to prove it.

The skill positions stand out to the casual observer, but Diggs stands out no matter who does the grading. He is an exceptionally polished receiver, and put up big numbers in the passing game in the season's first two weeks. When first-team All-Gazette running

back Wes Dyer was not clogged up, Diggs showed what he can do with carries.

In those three games: 34 carries, 444 yards, seven touchdowns.

There is a real school like the University of Virginia that have already offered scholarships. He is special, even by Good Counsel standards.

Most valuable

Our two front-runners were our favorites before the season started. Neither has disappointed.

Deciding between Crusoe Gongbay and Connor Frazier is like hoarding either food or water. Both are essential for their teams to win.

Gongbay is doing just as he did a year ago, only better, as the Rams are on pace to host a playoff game for only the second time in their school's history, and the second consecutive year. Frazier has orchestrated two big fourth-quarter rallies against division rivals, and a state championship figures to hinge on his right arm and legs.

The Hornets have more potential, and would not be a contender without their third-year starting quarterback.

But Gongbay's numbers are astronomical. He has 1,100 yards already, and his consistency has been unreal: Only once has he put up less than 200 yards, a 192-yard effort against Northwood.

He has 17 touchdowns. Seventeen. If Frazier is raising a trophy at M&T Bank Stadium in December, he probably gets the nod. But right now, no player means more to a good team than No. 26 in black and orange.

Best game

Clarksburg vs. Quince Orchard was arguably the game of the season a year ago, with the Cougars coming from behind to win in overtime.

It has to settle for Game of the Week this time.

The playoff implications are huge, as the two-loss Coyotes jump right back into the 3A West Region sweepstakes with a win in Gaithersburg. Both teams have giants still left on their schedule, though the hosts have both Seneca Valley and Sherwood, while Clarksburg has one overt Goliath in Damascus.

As long as we are giving awards, Coyotes sophomore Niam Reed might be the newcomer of the year, while QO has some sophomore sensations as well, including linebacker Marcus Newby.

Last year's matchup was decided on the ground. QO has the experience edge with Drew Murphy at quarterback, but Clarksburg needs this more.

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