

PLAYOFF PREVIEW

- Mentor offensive line leads way
- Chardon defense nasty good
- Brothers buoy Kirtland program
- Wickliffe rushing attack powerful
- Area coaches weigh in on bye week
- First-round playoff capsules



MARK PODOLSKI — THE NEWS-HERALD

Mentor's offensive line (from left to right) consists of right tackle Ethan Bostelman, right guard Tommy Shea, center Stan Zalewski, left guard Danny Call and left tackle Hunter Caolo.



DAVID TURBEN — THE NEWS-HERALD

The Chardon defense has been dominant all season.



SUBMITTED

From left, Matt and Joey Grazia show off the state championship rings they won as members of the Kirtland football team.



JAY KRON — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Wickliffe QB Mason Bala, left, and running backs Chase Fortkamp, right, and Isaiah Bolon have been a force running the ball this season.

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Brotherly inspiration big part of Kirtland's decade of dominance

By John Kampf

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Joey Grazia couldn't figure out what was the big deal.

Yeah, the Kirtland football team had just beaten Columbus Bishop Ready, 10-7, in a 2013 state semi-final game, but 10-year-old Joey was at a loss as to why his big brother Matt was being lauded as a hero as he emerged from the home team's locker room at Arlin Field in Mansfield.

Matt Grazia didn't catch a pass that day, nor did he have any yards rushing.

But what Matt Grazia did do is one of the most iconic plays during this illustrious run of Kirtland's decade of domination. He flagged down an errant snap so Brad Hauptman could kick the game-winning field goal to send Kirtland to the state-championship game.

By doing that, Matt Grazia inspired his younger brother.

That type of brotherly inspiration is a big reason why the Hornets are embarking on what they hope will be

their sixth state championship in the last 11 years when they play their Division V tournament opener on Oct. 17.

When the Hornets, who have a bye week in the first round, take to the field next, they will do so with 11 players on their roster who have older brothers who won state championships before they did.

They are the road-pavers. The trend-setters. The guys who provided inspiration to be great.

Those who think that's a small thing are wrong.

"He's meant so much," said Joey Grazia of big-brother Matt, who is now a college graduate who comes to watch little brother do his thing on Friday nights. "The battles we've had in the driveway or in the yard playing football and basketball ... He likes to take credit for my success, saying I wouldn't be as good as I am if it wasn't for him and battling throughout. We have a close bond, and we love it."

The Grazias are one of the many brotherly combos who have won state titles in recent years at Kirtland.

Prior to Joey Grazia getting to high school, his brother Matt was on the 2011 and 2013 state championship teams.

Consider also:

- Quarterback Liam Powers' brother Tommy won state titles in 2015 and 2018.

- Two-way starter Anthony DeMarco's brother Andrew won titles in 2015 and 2018.

- Star linebacker Carson Andonian's brother, Blake, was a defensive lineman on the 2013 and 2015 championship teams.

- Will Bates' brother Joey got rings in 2013 and 2015, and had the game-clinching touchdown run in the championship game win over Marion Local in 2015.

- Pierce and MacGuire Boyd's brother, Jacob, was a two-way starter in 2013 and 2015.

- Angelo Blasini's brothers Gino and Anthony were on the 2015, 2018 and 2019 teams.

- Joe Pekar's brother Jimmy won a ring in 2015.

- Gage and Mason Sullivan's brother Cameron was on the 2013 team.

- Kory Dages' brother Kevin was a starting defen-

sive lineman on the 2015 title team.

- Linebacker Mason Rus got to win a ring last year with his brother Mike starting on the defensive front.

On top of all those brotherly combos involving the past and present, the Hornets have four sets of brothers playing together this year — Gage and Mason Sullivan, Alex and Nate Fellingner, Luke and Tommy Gogolin and T.J. and Jack Green.

Kirtland football is apparently a family tradition.

"We've had numerous kids whose older brothers came through our program and had a good time," said Coach Tiger LaVerde, who is 179-17 in his 15th year at the helm of the Hornets' program. "I think that motivates them, seeing the success their older brothers have had. I think that's helped us, absolutely."

LaVerde quickly pointed out the just the success on Friday nights isn't the sole inspiration. Neither is the ring-bling the Hornets have gathered in the past decade.

It's the process to get to that point.

BROTHERLY » PAGE 6



SUBMITTED

Matt, left, and Joey Grazia show off the state-championship rings they won as members of the Kirtland football team. There are multiple players on the Hornets' roster who had big brothers win state championships before them, such as Matt Grazia (2011, 2013) and current Hornet Joey Grazia.



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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Mentor's offensive line leading the way

By Mark Podolski

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Matt Gray played offensive line at Avon High School, then at the University of Dayton, and has spent his coaching career concentrating on that position.

He knows the offensive line, having played left tackle and left guard.

He knows the group he has this season — his first as head coach at Mentor — is special, even if there's not an FBS prospect among them. That's perfectly fine with Gray.

"They're all in that 5-foot-11, 6-foot-1 range, and they're all tough, really smart kids that have gotten better and better throughout this season," he said.

As the Cardinals begin the start of the Division I playoffs Oct. 9 at home against Shaker Heights in what they hope is a six-game run to the state championship game, Gray isn't shy about the expectations he will put upon his O-line unit.

"That's the challenge we always put out to that group," said Gray. "This football team will go as far as your take it."

The unit starts with three seniors — Hunter Caolo, Stan Zalewski and Tommy Shea. Together,



Mentor's offensive line (from left to right) consists of right tackle Ethan Bostelman, right guard Tommy Shea, center Stan Zalewski, left guard Danny Call and left tackle Hunter Caolo.

MARK PODOLSKI — THE NEWS-HERALD

they bring leadership and skill in front of senior quarterback Ian Kipp.

"Every time I coach an offensive line, I put a lot on those seniors because

it's their unit," said Gray. "They've done a tremendous job developing into leaders."

A look at the trio:

CAOLO » He's a three-year

starter at left tackle who replaced standout Ryan Jacoby, who's playing at Ohio State. He's not as tall as the 6-foot-5 Jacoby but as 6-foot, 280 pounds he's

more than held his own. Last season, he was a D-I second-team All-Ohio pick. Last winter, he broke his ankle as a wrestler for the Cardinals and needed three

months to recover. The onset of the novel coronavirus pandemic only made his comeback more of a challenge, but Caolo hasn't missed a beat in 2020.

"He's a kid who has a work ethic that's second to none," said Gray.

ZALEWSKI » At 5-foot-11, he's the shortest of the group but checks in at 265 pounds and definitely holds his own up front. Zalewski squatted 575 pounds in the offseason.

Said Gray: He's an incredibly strong kid who's like a bowling ball."

SHEA » He carries the most bulk at 285 pounds, and made a big switch in the offseason. In 2019, he started 14 games at right tackle but moved inside to right guard so junior Ethan Bostelman could step in at right tackle.

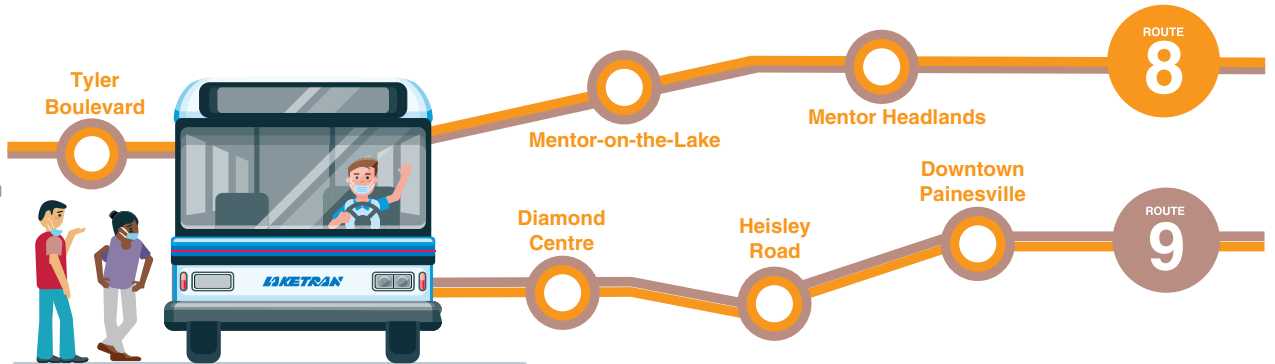
"He's our emergency swing tackle, and just a tremendous football mind," said Gray.

The emergence of the three seniors didn't begin in Week 1 — it started long before that. Even with Caolo still recovering from his broken ankle, and Shea adjusting to a new position, the work they did in the weight room while helping groom junior starters Bostelman and left guard Danny Call and doing so during a pandemic definitely gets a check in the "Things fans don't see" box.

LINE » PAGE 6

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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Chardon defense is hard-hitting, violent

By John Kampf

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Vince Ferrante thought about the question long and hard.

A senior on the Chardon football team, Ferrante loves the opportunity to run the ball as part of the Hilltoppers' vaunted run-based offensive attack.

But would he like to be an opposing running back going up against his team's defense?

"Me? Naw, I'll pass," Ferrante said with a chuckle. "I'd rather not."

Mention the words "Chardon football" to those in the circles of area high school football — heck, on a statewide scope for that matter — and the first thought that comes to mind would likely be the tradition of the Hilltoppers' Wing-T offense.

Nowadays though, maybe moreso than any year in recent history, there's another word that comes to mind, and it stems from the defensive side of the ball.

Violent.

As Chardon prepares for what it hopes is a long run in the Division III playoffs, it does so with the same methodical running offense it has boasted for four straight decades and counting.

Now they've added to it a defense that is fast, aggres-



DAVID C. TURBEN — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Chardon defenders Cade McDevitt (7) and Blake Barker (36) make a stop during the Hilltoppers' win over Riverside earlier this season.

sive nasty, and — well — let defensive coordinator Brian Landies spell it out.

"I think they'd be upset with me if I didn't use the word violent," Landies said of how the Hilltoppers' defense likes to be known.

Landies quickly pointed out "violent" should not be confused with "dirty." He

said everything between the whistles means that the Hilltoppers play with extra effort and polish off plays with a hard-hitting exclamation point.

"There's no penalty for hitting too hard," Landies said.

The results so far are staggering. Through six

games, Chardon has outscored the opposition, 254-41 — an average of about one touchdown per game against a rather strong Western Reserve Conference schedule.

The Hilltoppers have given up 774 yards of offense — roughly 110 yards per game.

A good hunk of those yards have come late in games when the outcome of the game is well in hand.

"Yeah, I do think they take it personally when someone scores on us," Landies said. "They know that teams might get some yards. They can hit an 18-yard pass or something. But

it's all about the next play."

And delivering bone-jarring hits.

Kind of like a reminder of what's in store for future plays.

"The biggest thing we preach on defense is just coming out and playing violent," said Ferrante, and All-Ohio linebacker last year who already has 14 tackles for loss this year. "If you're the most violent team on defense, you can't be stopped. Effort and violent are the biggest things. You can have a guy across from you who is double your size, and if you're aggressive and play violent, you'll break them down over four quarters."

Ferrante expounded on his team's definition of playing violent.

"You make sure collisions are hard — every play," he said. "You can help them up afterward, but those 8 to 10 seconds you play as violent as you can. No trash-talking. Just play hard."

Landies granted that a majority of his starting defense returned this year after a baptism-by-fire season in 2019 when the Hilltoppers finished 10-3, losing to Aurora, 22-19, in the Division III, Region 9 championship game.

But the signs of what to come happened well before that.

DEFENSE » PAGE 7

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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Rushing attack has Wickliffe rolling

By Jay Kron

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Heading into its 11th postseason appearance in program history, hopes are high at Wickliffe, and for good reason.

A dominant, big-play rushing attack combined with a stout defense has propelled the Blue Devils to a 6-0 regular season mark and second seed in Division VI, Region 21.

Wickliffe, in the playoffs for the fourth time in the last five seasons, has a bye this week while it awaits to host the winner between East Canton and Smithville on Oct. 16.

The Blue Devils have been paced by the triple-threat senior backfield of QB Mason Bala, FB Chase Fortkamp, and HB Isaiah Bolon, who have combined to put up some eye-popping numbers out of a spread wing-T offense behind a veteran offensive line.

Averaging 46.2 points per game, Wickliffe has accumulated 2,321 yards on the ground, at 386.8 yards per game and a whopping 11.2 per carry. Conversely, the Blue Devils' defense has limited its opponents to 539 rushing yards, 89.8 per game, and 2.7 per carry.

The Blue Devils have sizable advantages in rushing



JAY KRON — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Wickliffe QB Mason Bala, left, and running backs Chase Fortkamp, right, and Isaiah Bolon have been a force running the ball this season.

TDs (37-4), total offense per game (407.7-205.8), and plays of 20 or more yards (48-21).

All this despite having run 109 fewer plays than their opponents.

"Our offense has changed a lot over the years," Wickliffe 10th year Coach Marce Porcello said. "We kind of thrive on the big play now. We used to grind the ball down the field."

Each of Wickliffe's 14-member senior class has started for the last two or

three seasons — save Fortkamp, who is a four-year starter.

"We have some really explosive running backs, and our five guys up front have been starting for two or three years," Porcello said. "Our split ends, Danny Byrne and Duke Stanczak, are very unselfish. They don't get to catch the ball a lot, but they are excited to block and take a lot of pride in it"

Bala (6-foot, 180), who was a quarterback his freshman year before play-

ing halfback the last two seasons, is back as signal-caller for the Blue Devils this season.

Porcello describes Bala, who has rushed for 718 yards and nine TDs and passed for 125 and a TD, as a "fierce competitor with a high football IQ."

"I've known the offense for a couple years," Bala said in regards to having played two different positions. "When something happens, I can see where a running back may have



PAUL DICICCO — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Chase Fortkamp of Wickliffe has run for 1,070 yards through six weeks, part of a punishing running game that has the Blue Devils at 6-0 heading into the playoffs.

missed a hole even while running a fake the other way. I can just kind of understand it."

Bolon (6-foot, 195) may not have the gaudy statistics of his backfield mates through six games (135 yards rushing, 83 receiving, and 4 TDs), but he is an explosive player and an X-factor that defenses can't sleep on.

"Our tempo is really good," said Bolon, who Porcello describes as "very unselfish and explosive with

great hands." "We can get on the ball and really push it."

Fortkamp (6-3, 220) has offers from Army and Kent State to play linebacker. He has dominated on that side of the ball, but has been equally dominant on offense, rushing for 1,070 yards (14.9 per carry) and 19 TDs.

"Some people can key on any of us, but it's hard to stop all three," said Fortkamp, who Porcello called

RUSHING » PAGE 7

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Brotherly

FROM PAGE 2

"They've also seen the work their older siblings put in and that is what helps establish the routine we go through," LaVerde said. "They see the older kids — their brothers — going to the weight room and putting in the work, so it becomes a norm for our program."

Perhaps the most decorated player — and that's saying something in the lineage of current football greatness at Kirtland — is Andonian. Not only does he have state championship rings from the past two years to go with the two championship rings brother Blake has, but another brother — Bryce — won two individual state wrestling championships at St. Edward and a handful of team championships with the Eagles.

"They set real high bars," Andonian said of the exploits by his older brothers. "They worked hard. They go to practice. They did everything they could to get better. It was awesome. I



SUBMITTED

Carson Andonian (left), a starting linebacker at Kirtland, says he received inspiration and motivation from older brothers Bryce (center, a state championship wrestler at St. Edward) and Blake (right, a state championship defensive lineman at Kirtland).

look up to my big brothers. It made me want to go out and do the same thing."

Powers got to see both the agony and the joy from watching his brother Tommy. The elder Powers won a ring as a freshman in 2015, a game in which he obviously didn't play, but then Tommy had to go through the anguish of a torn labrum that took away

his 2017 season.

Through hard work and rehab, Tommy returned to lead Kirtland to the 2018 championship win over Marion Local.

"After seeing him tear his labrum and the come back from that was awesome to watch," Liam Powers said. "That had to be hard for him. I have a better understanding of it now."

Powers said the brother combos in Kirtland's history is a big part of the program's success.

"It helps a lot," he said. "All the younger brothers look up to their older brothers. You see how humble and hard-working they are, just like Tommy and how humble he was leading the team. I learned by example."

As did Anthony DeMarco learning from the example set by his brother Andrew. He also has the connection and inspiration of his cousins Owen, Louie and Ryan Loncar, who have six state championship rings between the three of them.

"Ever since I started playing football," DeMarco said of his inspiration. "I looked up to (Andrew) and my cousins, too. They made me want to do the same thing."

"I saw my brother working hard every day. I saw him get his two state championships. That motivated me to want to be like him."

The family atmosphere is a tangible linch-pin to the Kirtland football program. Many of the aforementioned players served as ball-boys for the varsity team when they were younger. And all of them came through a Kirtland school system that is — Grades K-through-12 — in the same building.

"I've always said K-through-12 in one building helps us," LaVerde said. "I see the kids all the time, elementary school, middle school ... I think that helps build the relationships. When they get to

high school, they're interested in playing and that helps our numbers."

The seeds for future years of greatness — that's kind of redundant in the current run of Kirtland football — are already being sewn. Young Jakey LaVerde — the coach's son, whose brother Phillip won a title last year and is going for two this year — often texts his seventh-grade buddies to see who is available to head up to the weight room to get in a lift.

The fact are what they are.

The Kirtland football team wins — a lot.

And there's a long list of brothers (and cousins) who have helped make it happen.

In a small community and school district, one that does not have open enrollment and thus plays the proverbial hand that is dealt them, those bonds cannot be understated.

"Yeah, we work. But you can't make it work all the time," LaVerde said. "It should be fun, too."

"Winning a state title is not guaranteed. But we can make sure they have a good time, that's for sure."

Line

FROM PAGE 3

"Getting them ready, that was a big unknown going into this year," said Gray. "(The O-line) is a tough position to play. We met every single week and they

held themselves accountable during workouts, face timing.

"They were getting after each other, and that's when you knew you had a good group coming back."

The success on offense has been there with a steady running game featuring several running

backs, and Kipp throwing for 1,101 yards and 14 touchdowns in six games. Mentor is averaging 35 points per game.

The keys to the success of the O-line through minds of the players:

SHEA » "The Communication has to be there. We focus on building friend-

ships. We have to play five as one, not just a single person. Friendship and communication are the biggest parts."

CAOLO » "It's holding ourselves to the highest standard."

ZALEWSKI » "It comes down to preparation."

BOSTLEMAN » "Trust factor

is huge. Knowing the guy next to you knows what to do is huge."

CALL » "(The seniors) make me constantly want to improve."

Gray has seen that improvement from one week to the next, but now it's a new challenge — the playoff season. The Cardinals hope

they have six more games to play, and for that happen the O-line will need to deliver. That's been happening every week.

"A lot of reps and they have to be friends," said Gray, summing up the unit's keys to success. "They have to have that cohesion. It's incredibly important."



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Defense

FROM PAGE 4

Four of Chardon's final six games saw the Hilltoppers allow single-digit points.

Even earlier than that, Chardon held Alliance, a Division II playoff qualifier to negative-7 yards of total offense in a 35-0 shellacking.

"They started to come of age," Landies said.

Now they can add experience to that group.

What a scary recipe for success it's been.

Up front there's Gavin Slife (6-1, 230) in the middle, flanked by Evan Gardner (6-0, 200) and Iowa State commit Myles Mendeszoon (6-4, 210).

"Gavin Slife puts the fear of God in people at nose-tackle," said Coach Mitch Hewitt.

The linebackers are fast and aggressive, with Blake Barker (6-2, 205) and Christian Hall (6-0, 205) on the outside, with Ferrante (5-11, 195) in the middle with



DAVID TURBEN — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Chardon's Brady Toth steps in front of Riverside's Jamir Francis for an interception Sept 18.

Cade McDevitt (6-0, 195).

The corners are Tre Leibhardt and Kevin Doyle, with a pair of 6-foot-5 safeties — Nathanael Sulka and Brady Toth — as an impressive last line of defense.

"We've never had so many kids 6-3 or taller on defense — and they're ath-

letic," Hewitt said. "Our backers are as good as anyone in the state of Ohio. We've got great corners in Tre and Kevin, and with so many dudes up front, quarterback backs don't have much time to sit back there, patting the ball going through their progressions."

Many feel the Chardon football team mentality is a direct reflection of their coaches — or specifically their head coach, Hewitt, who played with a chip on his shoulder in the mid-1990s as a standout linebacker/running back for the Hilltoppers.

Hewitt shrugs off that notion.

"That gives me too much credit," he said. "I'd like to think our team embodies our staff. Our kids love the process."

Hewitt praised the work of defensive coordinator Landies, who has a talented staff on the defensive side of the ball that includes Bob Francis and Rick Mysyk coaching the defensive line, former Mentor standout J.J. Laseak coaching outside linebackers, Rob Vujaklija coaching the inside backers, former West G star QB Connor Krouse coaching the corners, Landies working with safeties and Nick lacampo working with linebackers, as well.

"They're very thorough and very detailed," Hewitt said of the defensive staff. "We are blessed to have them."

Because it is 6-0 and is the top-ranked Division III team in Ohio, Chardon was voted as the top seed in Region 9 — a loaded field that also includes defending regional champion Aurora, undefeated Streetsboro and

Canfield, up-and-coming New Philadelphia and tradition-rich Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary and Steubenville.

"They didn't do is any favors," Hewitt said of the loaded Division III, Region 9 field.

But with a bye week to work with, Chardon will face the winner of Akron Buchtel and Howland in the second round of regional play on Oct. 9.

Between now and then — and throughout the playoffs ' the Hilltoppers are going to continue being who they are and what they've been so far.

Violent, with a purpose.

"Violent, obviously, and playing fast and physical," McDevitt said. "We want teams to remember us. Every play hit as hard as you can. You have to win every collision."

"I think we've been playing at a very high level. You can always get better, but we think the way we play can take is all the way to a ring. We've got the dudes to do it. we just have to go out and do it."

Rushing

FROM PAGE 5

"a top-notch football player, and the leader of our team on both sides of the ball."

When asked what makes the offense tick, Porcello didn't hesitate.

It's his offensive line consisting of Steven Kulchock,

Mikey Moon, Donovan Luzzo, Zak Esteves, and Tyler Fisher.

"Each one of them has really improved every year," Porcello said. "Their footwork, their attention to detail. They've really learned the game of football over the years. Teams throw a lot of defenses at us, and because they're so experienced, they're able to ad-

just on the fly."

Porcello is confident that when games start to tighten up, and the Blue Devils are facing a well-prepared opponent or find themselves involved in a high-scoring shootout, that their wealth of experience and business-like approach to preparation will allow them to overcome adversity.

"They're so mentally

tough," he said. "Even (Oct. 2) against Lutheran East, they stuffed us the first three possessions. They don't hang their heads. They get back up, line up, and try to get a turnover on defense and flip it around."

Considering that the Blue Devils went on to post a 54-14 victory over the Falcons, that early adversity certainly didn't damage their

collective psyche. Fortkamp echoed his coach.

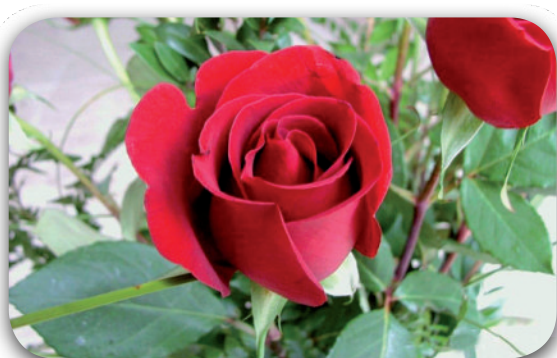
"I just think sticking together as a team," Fortkamp said. "When adversity comes, adjust to it, play through it, and get past it."

Wickliffe is a newcomer to Division VI, Region 21 after having been a Division V school the past five seasons.

Nearly all of the current seniors were starters on the

2018 playoff team that fell to Leavittsburg LaBrae in a Division V Regional Quarterfinal.

"We have to stay fundamentally sound," Bala said, describing the Blue Devils' approach to the postseason. "The little things will matter now, and we can't let little mistakes happen. We have to pay attention to details."



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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Bye week adds new element to teams with high seeds

By John Kampf
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@NHPreps on Twitter

What to do with all the time? While most of The News-Herald area was busy game-planning and practicing for a first-round playoff game this weekend, six area teams are idle with first-round byes.

Because of the high seeds they received in voting done by coaches in their region, as well as their performance in the six-week regular season, Benedictine (Division II), Riverside (Division II), Chardon (Division III), Perry (Division IV), Kirtland (Division V) and Wickliffe (Division VI) are all off this week, waiting to see who they will play in their playoff opener next weekend.

So what do teams do with all the practice time while not knowing who they will play next?

Do coaches like this system, where everyone makes the playoffs and bye-weeks come into play?

Five of six area coaches whose teams have a bye week took time to chat with The News-Herald about this unique situation facing their team.

Riverside

The Beavers are 5-1 and are the sixth seed in Division II, Region 5. They will play the winner of 22nd-seeded Cuyahoga Falls and 11th-seeded Boardman.

Dave Bors discussed the bye week.

Q » Do you like the first-round bye? **BORS** » It's too early to tell if we like it yet, but it definitely gives us some time to clean things up as well as heal up. What I don't like is that you would always love to play instead of being off and the worry of a little rust setting in.

Q » How do you plan on spending the week?

BORS » We plan on keeping as much of a routine as possible. We as a staff, put a lot of thought into each day this week and what needs to be accomplished and why. Getting better at what we do, routine,



TIM PHILLIS - FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Chardon head coach Mitch Hewitt said he and his team will be working hard despite having a first-round bye in the Division III playoffs.

minimizing rust, keeping momentum, mindset, health, recovery, strength and speed, and so on, were all things we took into consideration.

"I think we have to prepare for both teams while knowing that one team is definitely considered more of the favorite and more likely to be our opponent. With that said, there is enough to focus on with our own team and what we can do to be a better team that we won't spend a boatload of time worrying about our opponent just yet. If we take care of and focus

on Riverside, the rest should fall into place."

Q » Was picking up a bye-week, fill-in game an option?

BORS » All things considered, I'm not sure we ever felt a full-blown game was the best option even though we were in talks with an opponent for this Friday for a little bit. We did reach out to a few teams about a controlled scrimmage as we felt that was a good middle ground. However, that ultimately didn't work out, so we will do what needs to be done on our end in place of it.

Q » How do you feel about the way your team is performing thus far? **BORS** » I thought we had a decent regular season with a lot to be proud of. The kids are fantastic and have done a tremendous job of responding to multiple obstacles. I am also very fortunate to have a really great group of coaches and support network in and around this program. I think we are in a good spot heading into the playoffs. We are definitely excited about our opportunity and can't wait to get it started.

Chardon

The Hilltoppers (6-0) are the top seed in Division III, Region 9. They will play the winner of 16th-seeded Akron Buchtel and 17th-seeded Howland.

Coach Mitch Hewitt discussed the bye week.

Q » Do you like the first-round bye? **HEWITT** » I think it gives us time to get kids healthy and allows us to work on the basics but it also allows kids more time to be distracted and less focused on things that might not help them achieve their goals. I won't know if I liked



COLEEN MOSKOWITZ - FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Riverside's Cayman Locher carries Sept. 11 at Perry during the Beavers' 44-14 win.

the bye or not till around 9:30 p.m. on October 16th.

Q » How do you plan on spending the week?

HEWITT » We spent Monday doing some program-building with varsity players coaching up seventh and eighth graders with the rest of the week being fairly normal in regards to a game week. We are dedicating team sessions to both opponents that we might potentially play. Friday we will do a torture session at 7 p.m. so we stay consistent with that time being the "go time" for our players.

Q » Was picking up a bye-week, fill-in game an option? **HEWITT** » With COVID, we thought it was best to limit our exposure to getting canceled before we even have a chance to play. Earning a bye means you are more than likely happy with the way your team has competed up to this point and risking injury or learning to tackle will not be taught if

it has not been seen at this point.

Q » How do you feel about your team's performance thus far?

HEWITT » Very pleased. We need to win on and off the field making sure we are living right with academics, weekend behavior, and are completely focused on the task at hand. Our region is so loaded it could be won by five or six different teams.

Perry

The Pirates are 5-1 and the fourth seed in Division IV, Region 13. They will play the winner of 13th-seeded CVCA and 20th-seeded Edgewood.

Coach Matt Rosati discussed the bye week.

Q » Do you like the first-round bye? **ROSATI** » I am really not a big fan of a bye week but in our current state it will benefit us from a health standpoint.

Q » How do you plan on spending the week?

ROSATI » We now have to change our schedule because we will be playing on Saturdays now, so having a bye week and Saturday games will change things from a practice perspective. We will practice the same but now on different days.

Q » Was picking up a bye-week game an option?

ROSATI » At first we thought it would be an option but as it turns out there are very few teams that would like to play. I understand that thinking because the teams that are getting a bye are most likely very good and its usually not a great idea to take a big challenge with nothing at stake when in a week you will have everything on the line. So we basically are being forced to take a bye.

Q » How do you feel about the way your team has played so far?

ROSATI » We have had a very difficult regular season with COVID issues and injuries but we seem to



DAVID TURBEN - FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Anthony DeMarco of Kirtland runs the ball against Solon on Sept. 25.

be headed in the right direction after this past weekend. We played our best game of the season on Friday and we will be getting healthier in next couple of weeks.

Kirtland

The Hornets are 6-0 and the top seed in Division V, Region 17. Kirtland, which has won 35 games in a row, will face the winner of 16th-seed Richmond Edison and 17th-seed Akron Manchester.

Coach Tiger LaVerde discussed the bye week.

Q » Do you like the bye week? (This is Kirtland's second bye week in a row, after having a Week 6 game with Hawken canceled).

LAVERDE » It doesn't matter to us. The kids are so excited to have a chance to play in the tournament. Back in July, it didn't look like we would even play any games.

Q » How do you plan on spending the week?

LAVERDE » Lots of lifting, running, stretching, practicing our fundamentals, and working on small details.

Q » How do you feel about your team's performance to this point?

LAVERDE » I feel our team has excelled well and played very well on both sides of the ball.

Wickliffe

The Blue Devils are 6-0 and the second seed in Division VI, Region 23. They will play the winner of 15th-seeded Smithville and 18th-seeded East Canton.

Coach Marce Porcello discussed the bye week.

Q » Do you like the bye week?

PORCELLO » The bye is different, but it is nice to be able to get healthy and work on some of the details that we can improve on.

Q » How do you plan on spending the week?

PORCELLO » We will practice every day, but it will be a bit different. We will focus on some of the details, and we will do a lot of film work. We will be watching film of both teams, but will get more in-depth once we know who we are playing.

Q » Was picking up a bye-week game an option?

PORCELLO » No, we will not pick up a game during the bye week. We do not feel as though it is worth the risk of injury.

Q » How do you feel about your team's performance thus far?

PORCELLO » I am pleased with the way we have performed during the regular season. I feel as though we are peaking at the right time. Our kids have prepared in a business-like fashion each week and will continue to do so.

High school football playoff capsules

By John Kampf

jkampf@news-herald.com
@NHPreps on Twitter

(15) Shaker Heights at (2) Mentor

What: Division I, Region 1 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 9

Where: Jerome T. Osborne Stadium

Records: Mentor 5-1, Shaker Heights 1-4

Last week: Mentor def. Strongsville, 41-7, Cleveland Heights def. Shaker Heights, 17-14

On deck: Winner will play the winner of (7) Stow-Munroe Falls and (10) Cleveland Heights

For the record: The Cardinals will see a familiar foe in this one, as Mentor and Shaker were long-time GCC foes prior to this year. ... The Cardinals hammered Strongsville, 41-7, in the regular-season finale, with Ian Kipp throwing for 349 yards and six touchdowns. Riley Coughlin and Brenden Panhorst have been a very good combo at running back, and Mentor throws to so many receivers on offense, it's tough to get a gauge who to lock on to. Mentor's run defense gave up only 84 yards to Strongsville. ... Shaker lost to Cleveland Heights. The Red Raiders have an experienced QB in Adam Diaz, as well as some tall playmakers on the perimeter in Jahdae Walker (6-4, 190) and Alex Benson (6-5, 185), but can Shaker come close to slowing down



NEWS-HERALD FILE

Mo Morgan of North runs the ball against South. The Rangers host Garfield Heights in playoff action this weekend.

Mentor's offensive machine?

(13) Elyria at (4) Euclid

What: Division I, Region 1 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 9

Where: Euclid Community Stadium

Records: Euclid 4-2, Elyria 1-5

Last week: Euclid def. Elyria 42-20

On deck: Winner will play the winner of (5) St. Ignatius and (12) Solon

For the record: The Panthers beat the Pioneers last week in regular-season action. This week's playoff version is at Euclid Community Stadium. ... Coach Jeff Rotsky's team lost to Strongsville and Mentor this season, but is electric when it's clicking on all cylinders. Second-half touchdowns by Jaylen Morris and Cam Smith opened what was a close halftime score last week. Getting the ball on offense to play-makers

such as Atiba Fitz, Claishon Ivory and Armond Scott is a recipe for success for the Panthers. The physicality in the trenches benefits the Panthers. Euclid has made deep playoff runs under Rotsky before, and this is shaping up to be the first step in another one.

(21) Garfield Heights at (12) North

What: Division II, Region 5 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 9

Where: Nick Carter Stadium
Records: North 3-3, Garfield Heights 0-5

Last week: Riverside def. North, 34-0, Brunswick def. Garfield Heights, 49-14

On deck: Winner will play at (5) Walsh Jesuit

For the record: The Rangers are stinging a little bit after an overtime loss to South and then a shutout loss to Riverside, but they should be the favorite in this one. Garfield Heights played a pretty tough

schedule. Its losses are to 4-2 Shaw, 4-1 Cleveland Heights, 4-2 Maple Heights and 4-2 Brunswick. ... North features a powerful running attack, thanks to a gargantuan offensive line that features two big-time college recruits in guard Ethan Spoth and tackle Ryan Baer. Because of that offensive line, North runs the ball very effectively, with quarterback Chris Molica (717 yards) and Mo Morgan (331 yards) doing most of the damage. Offensive lineman Ryan Volk doubles as the kicker, and he's very reliable in both capacities. ... North's offense can grind out the yards and eat up the clock. If the defense creates a few turnovers, look for the Rangers to advance.

(26) Kenmore-Garfield at (8) Mayfield

What: Division II, Region 5 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 9

Where: Wildcat Stadium

Records: Mayfield 3-1, Kenmore-Garfield 0-2

Last week: Mayfield def. Madison, 40-7, Akron East def. Kenmore-Garfield, 30-12

On deck: Winner will play the winner of (9) Nordonia and (24) Lakeside

For the record: After going 11-1 last season with a good playoff run, the Wildcats are 4-1 this after a late start. Mayfield averages 31.75 points per game and can do a little bit of everything on

CAPSULES » PAGE 11



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that side of the ball. Michael Huss, a four-year starter at quarterback has thrown for 438 yards and four touchdowns. He has an impressive group of receivers, including Josh Cope (7-for-83), John Moon (7-for-71) and Billy Guzzo (4-for-109). The offensive line, anchored by Antonio Mangelluzzi, is very solid, and the running of Joey Dostal (390 yards, 5 TDs) is an added weapon in a strong offense. ... Kenmore-Garfield has only played a few games, so it might be tough to get a read on them this season. All of their touchdowns this season have come on the ground, though, with Damean Martin, Keshawn Mordan, and Tyijonn Gary all finding the end zone. That being said, if Mayfield's run defense is up to par, forcing the Rams to the air might benefit the home-team Wildcats.

(20) Madison at (13) South

What: Division II, Region 5 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 9

Where: Harry E. Winters Stadium

Records: Madison 0-6, South 2-4

Last week: Mayfield def. Madison, 40-7, Kenston def. South, 33-30

On deck: Winner plays at (4) Benedictine

For the record: This is a



FRANK GAMBATESE — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

South running back Ira Sampson runs for yards against the North defense on Sept. 25.

rematch of a Sept. 18 game in which the Rebels took a 34-8 victory. ... The Rebels are coming off a tough 33-30 loss to Kenston, in which the Bombers scored a late touchdown to pull out the win. South has turned into a scary run-oriented offense. The Rebels piled 383 yards of running game on Kenston last week and did not complete a pass. Tyrone Singleton ran for 197 yards and Ira Sampson ran for 113. QB Colin Quinlan can still throw the ball when needed, but the Rebels

haven't needed to in recent weeks. ... Youthful Madison is experiencing some injury problems. At full strength, RB Austin McCourt and WR Noah Tweedy are among the area leaders, and young QB Michal O'Brien is a good one. How healthy the Blue Streaks are heading into this one is a question mark, though. Madison's run defense is going to get a stern test in this one.

(18) Twinsburg at (15) Brush

What: Division II, Region 5

playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 9

Where: Korb Field

Records: Brush 2-4, Twinsburg 0-4

Last week: Chardon def. Brush, 55-7, Aurora def. Twinsburg, 38-0

On deck: Winner will play at (2) Austintown-Fitch

For the record: This is a big weekend for the Arcs, who are hosting a playoff game for the first time in program history. The Arcs got off to a 2-0 start, but have since lost four straight, but

the competition has been tough — 3-3 Warrensville Heights, 3-1 Mayfield, 4-1 Green and 6-0 Chardon. QB A.J. Shorts missed a good portion of those games with a dislocated kneecap, but he should be good to go this week, which helps the Arcs' offense immensely. The Arcs will need to get it all going to advance, including the running of Chris Tinsley and Tanelle Rose, and the receiving of 6-foot-7 tight end Antwone Woolfolk. ... Twinsburg should not be taken lightly. Coached by

former Lake Catholic head coach Mike Bell, the Tigers are 0-4, but their losses are to 5-0 Copley, 5-1 Aurora, 3-2 Revere and 2-3 Tallmadge.

(17) University at (16) Kent Roosevelt

What: Division II, Region 5 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 9

Where: Roosevelt Stadium, 1400 N. Mantua St, Kent

Records: University 1-5, Kent Roosevelt 0-2

Last week: Gilmour def. University, 26-21, Tallmadge def. Kent Roosevelt, 26-16

On deck: Winner will play at (1) Akron Hoban

For the record: The Preppers have lost three in a row, including a toughie last week when Gilmour came back from a halftime deficit to get the win. Kent Roosevelt had a delayed start and thus played only two games, losing to undefeated Copley and 2-3 Tallmadge by a combined 13 points. The Rough Riders haven't played much, but have played two close games. ... Roosevelt QB Kristian Datewyler will be a focal point of the University defense. He threw for a touchdown last week to Ty Bates, and also had a touchdown run called back. Kicker Blake Green is reliable. ... University QB Solomon Perez has thrown for 383 yards and four touchdowns. The Preppers also get good production from RB Nick Flowers, who has run for 387 yards. Bryce Hodge and Joey Valerio both

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Capsules

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have double-digit catches for the Peppers this season. ... The key in this one is University's defense and whether they can slow down Daetwyler.

(25) Harvey at (8) Geneva

What: Division III, Region 9 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 9

Where: SPIRE Institute

Records: Geneva 5-1, Harvey 1-5

Last week: Perry def. Geneva, 49-14, Edgewood def. Harvey, 37-14

On deck: Winner plays the winner of (9) Hubbard and (24) Alliance

For the record: This is a rematch of a Sept. 25 game won by Geneva, 48-12. Something to watch in this one is how the Eagles respond after losing to Perry last week, 49-14. ... Geneva has one of the best run games in the area behind Charlie Taylor (110 yards vs Perry), Ben Scibona and Brady Peet. But aside from the first drive last week against Perry, that running game was bottled up. Being physical in the trenches and running the ball effectively is the key to Geneva's success. ... Harvey got gouged for 258 passing yards last week against Edgewood, but that shouldn't come into play this week, as Geneva doesn't throw the ball much. The Harvey offense got 263 yards last

week against Edgewood. QB Jaden Debevec can air it out and has some nice receivers in Roderick Coffee III and Willie Grimes. Harvey's run defense will need to step up in this one if the Red Raiders are to pull the upset.

(21) NDCL at (12) Louisville

What: Division III, Region 9 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 9

Where: Leopard Stadium, 606 South St., Louisville

Records: NDCL 2-3, Louisville 2-4

Last week: NDCL def. VASJ, 41-14, Wooster def. Louisville, 12-7

On deck: Winner plays at (5) Aurora

For the record: Looks can be deceiving. Louisville sports an iffy-looking 2-4 record. But among the Leopards' losses are to 6-0 Wooster, 4-2 North Canton Hoover and 3-2 Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary. NDCL has won two of its last three after losses to 6-0 Canfield, 4-1 Padua and 3-2 Lake Catholic. ... NDCL has scored 21 or more points in each of the last four games, including 78 in the last two games alone. First-year starter Jacob Koenig has thrown for 750 yards and seven touchdowns. Noah Coyne, Will Eppich and Nathan Slattery all have double-digit catches. If the Lions can mount a rushing attack with that passing efficiency, they'll be difficult to defend. ... Louisville was limited last week by a tough Wooster defense. The

Leopards' only score was on a Tyler Jackson-to-Zack Seaman throw in the second quarter. Jackson threw for 184 yards. Seaman and A.J. Lingenhoel are the primary receivers.

(19) Kenston at (14) Marlinton

What: Division III, Region 9 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 9

Where: Marlinton Duke Stadium, 10320 Moulin Ave. NE, Alliance

Records: Kenston 2-2, Marlinton 3-2

Last week: Kenston def. South, 33-30, Marlinton def. Minerva, 31-3

On deck: Winner will play at (3) Canfield

For the record: The Bombers came into this season green with inexperience, but last week's come-from-behind win over South was a big one in regard to the growth of the team. QB Nikko Georgiou threw for more than 200 yards, running back Stanley Sell ran for 135 and the Bombers got just enough defensive stops to get the win. South ran for more than 300 yards against the Bombers, so they'll want to shore that up this week. If Sell runs the ball effectively, that could open up the passing lanes for guys like J.P. Germano and tight end Ryan Miller. ... Marlinton is a very solid team and is coming off a lopsided win last week over Minerva. QB Conner Evanich can air it out to guys like Cooper Scarlott, and the Bombers are going to have to keep running

back Nolan Hooker in check. Evanich threw for 186 yards last week while Hooker ran for 150. ... This one could be an offensive shootout.

(22) Akron East at (11) West Geauga

What: Division III, Region 9 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 9

Where: Stewart Field

Records: West Geauga 5-1, Akron East 1-1

Last week: West Geauga def. Chagrin Falls, 30-22, Akron East def. Akron Kenmore-Garfield, 30-12

On deck: Winner plays the winner of Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary and Akron Springfield

For the record: The Wolverines have won three in a row since a Week 3 loss to Geneva, averaging 42 points over that span. Danny Stewart has had a very strong breakout season at quarterback passing for 976 yards and 11 touchdowns. Add in the running of Trae Zimmerman (540 yards, 5 TDs) and the Wolverines have the makings of a versatile offense. Keep an eye on Torry Stazzone (23 catches, 388 yards) in the passing game. Defensively, Julian Cichella (12 TFLs) and Luke Musser (5 interceptions) are among the leaders of a squad that has been very stingy this year. Akron East has played only two games this season, so they are a work in progress. Tristan Thomas had a big week last week in a win over Kenmore-Garfield, with a kickoff return for a touchdown and a touch-



DAVID TURBEN — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

NDCL's Dominick Roberts (2) outruns Lake Catholic's kickoff squad for a 90 yard return for a TD to open their rivalry game earlier this season.

down run. ... West G's only loss this season came when it couldn't slow down Geneva's rushing offense, so if the Wolverines clamp down on Akron East's running game and play physical defense, they have a good chance to advance.

(21) Orange at (12) Lake Catholic

What: Division IV, Region 13 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 13

Where: Jerome T. Osborne Stadium

Records: Lake Catholic 3-2, Orange 0-4

Last week: Lakeside def. Orange, 43-40, Lake Catholic was idle

On deck: Winner plays at (5) Canton South

For the record: The Cougars should be hungry in this one after having to sit out Week 6 because of a positive coronavirus test on the team. Lake's only losses this year are to undefeated

Kirtland and one-loss Walsh Jesuit, so this is a formidable team that could be dangerous in the Division IV playoffs. ... Lake QB Joe Malchesky is a fine dual-threat quarterback. He has run for 721 yards and 456 yards. He'll be the primary focus of Orange's defensive game plan, but Malchesky is always focused upon and still produces. Ryan Joy is the top running back and is also a hammer at linebacker along with Simon Taraska. ... Orange nearly beat Lakeside last week, but the Dragons scored a late touchdown to pull out the win. Orange's defense gave up 43 to Lakeside, so shoring up that side of the ball is important if the Lions hope to pull the upset in this one.

(23) Hawken at (10) Chagrin Falls

What: Division IV, Region 13 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 10



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Where: C.S. Harris Stadium
Records: Chagrin Falls 4-2, Hawken 0-2

Last week: West Geauga def. Chagrin Falls, 30-22, Hawken was idle

On deck: Winner plays at (7) Mogadore Field

For the record: Chagrin lost an emotional toughie to rival West Geauga in Week 6, while Hawken was idle because of injuries. ... Chagrin is pretty balanced on offense. Dawson Pierce has thrown for more than 300 yards in the passing game, and the 1-2 punch of Cam O'Connor and Donny Hardy is moving in on 1,000 yards between the two of them. Chagrin's two losses are to West G and Perry, and the Tigers were very much in the game in both of them, so this is a tough matchup for Hawken. ... The Hawks are low on numbers, but have good talent. QB Terrence Robinson II has thrown for 493 and four touchdowns. Stone Zashin and AJ Sands are his top targets. The big question in this one, though is whether Hawken can stick with the Tigers in the trenches and slow down Chagrin's running game.

(19) Gilmour at (14) East Liverpool

What: Division IV, Region 13 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 10

Where: Patterson Field, 810 W. 8th St., East Liverpool



BARRY BOOHER — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Tyler Seacrist of Lake Catholic fights for yards against University this season. The Cougars will host Orange on Oct. 13.

Records: Gilmour 3-3, East Liverpool 3-3

Last week: Gilmour def. University, 26-21, East Liverpool def. Edison, 46-10

On deck: Winner plays at (3) West Branch

For the record: The Lancers got an important win, for momentum purposes, last

week against University. The Preppers led much of the game, but Gilmour rallied and got the victory. Santino Harper ran for 232 yards and two touchdowns, while multi-faceted quarterback Thomas Richardson ran for 51 yards and a score and threw for 66 yards, with a touchdown pass going to

Harper. Gilmour has a home run-hitting type of offense that can spring big plays at any moment. Without a doubt, East Liverpool's defense will be geared toward slowing down Harper and Richardson. ... The Potters can pile up the points in a hurry, too. Quarterback Howie Williams threw for

four touchdowns and ran for another last week's win, as he accounted for 335 yard of offense on his own. Eric Williams caught six passes for 152 yards and two scores. ... Defense is the key in this game. With two offenses that can light up the scoreboard, whoever forces a turnover or two or gets key

stops will win.

(22) VASJ at (11) Fairless

What: Division IV, Region 13 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 10

Where: Fred Bridewester Stadium, 11885 Navarre

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Capsules

FROM PAGE 13

Road SW, Navarre

Records: VASJ 0-6, Fairless 4-2

Last week: NDCL def. VASJ, 41-14, Fairless def. Massillon Tuslaw, 41-12

On deck: Winner plays at (6) Youngstown Ursuline

For the record: VASJ has struggled this year for a few reasons. Injuries have been a season-long bugaboo, and additionally, the schedule has been rough. The combined record of VASJ's foes this year is 23-9, including 6-0 Garrettsville, 4-1 Padua and 4-1 Walsh Jesuit. ... The Vikings scored two late touchdowns last week against NDCL, with Kevin Eiseman throwing touchdowns to Jordan Dean and Andre Terry. Terry had five catches for 110 yards. Lavelle Smith carried only once, but it went for 79 yards. Eiseman is a veteran play-maker for the Vikings... Fairless is led by its multi-dimensional quarterback, Ethan Brindley, who is nearing the 1,000-mark passing this season. He is also the team's leading rusher. Brindley threw for 118 yards and two scores in last week's win over Tuslaw. Conner Durant and Reise Lanier are his favorite targets. The Falcons also have a very good runner in Hunter Campbell.

(21) Lutheran East at (12) Berkshire

What: Division V, Region 17



TIM PHILLIS — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Gilmour celebrates a late touchdown last week against University. The Lancers play at East Liverpool this weekend in playoff action.

playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 10

Where: Dr. William A. Reid Field

Records: Berkshire 4-2, Lutheran East 1-5

Last week: Beachwood def. Berkshire, 28-27, Wickliffe def. Lutheran East, 54-14

On deck: Winner plays at (5) Bellaire

For the record: There's a lot of excitement in Burton over this game, as it's the Badgers first home playoff game in program history. The Badgers got stung last week by a late drive by undefeated Beachwood, falling by a 28-27 score. Berkshire has no trouble scoring, as it averages 33 points per game. On the flipside, the

Badgers have given up 28 or more points the past three weeks. ... Berkshire QB Jacob Brown does it all. He has run for 716 yards and 10 touchdowns, while also throwing for 680 yards and 11 scores. Blake Jenkins and Josh Brown have double-digit catches for the Badgers. ... Lutheran East got hammered by Wickliffe's

running game a week ago, so it stands to reason Berkshire will try to establish the running game against the Falcons. Keep an eye on Lutheran East running back RayShon Kennedy. At 6-foot-3, 236 pounds, he's a load to bring down. The Berkshire run defense will have to account for Kennedy, a junior who already

has an offer from Akron.

(26) Grand Valley at (7) Beachwood

What: Division V, Region 17 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 10

Where: Bison Stadium

Records: Grand Valley 0-6, Beachwood 4-0

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Last week: Crestwood def. Grand Valley, 21-14, Beachwood def. Berkshire, 28-27

On deck: Winner plays the winner of (10) Warrensville Heights and (3) Youngstown Liberty

For the record: These teams didn't play this season, but Beachwood beat Grand Valley, 48-0, a year ago in Orwell. This rematch is at Beachwood. The Bison are coming off a comeback win over Berkshire that gave Coach Damion Creel's team it's first undefeated regular season in program history. GV nearly got into the win column last week, but Crestwood prevailed, 21-14. ... Beachwood's offense presents a lot of problems for defenders. QB Jalen Minter can both run and pass. RB Kendynn Wiggins is a physical and fast runner, and receivers Kyler Wiggins and Ben Desatnik are big playmakers. Can GV's defense rise to that challenge? ... The Mustangs have had some injury problems late in the season. Nate Boliarski is a fast and athletic player either at receiver or running back, and Joe Sieracki is a physical runner and linebacker, but both were dinged up in recent weeks. ... Beachwood is in search of the program's first playoff win and will be favored in this one.

(23) Cardinal at (10) LaBrae



COLEEN MOSKOWITZ — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

The Fairport defense makes a stop vs. Pymatuning Valley. The Skippers play Greenwich South Central on Oct. 9.

What: Division VI, Region 21 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct 10

Where: Viking Stadium, 1001N. Leavitt Rd. NW, Leavittsburg

Records: Cardinal 2-4, LaBrae 4-2

Last week: LaBrae def. Conneaut, 38-6, Cardinal def. Brooklyn, 33-14

On deck: Winner plays the

winner of (7) Brookfield and (26) Oberlin

For the record: The Huskies are riding the momentum of a Week 6 win over Brooklyn. That gives Coach George Gresko's team two wins in a row, a streak that has seen them average 45 points per game. The combined record of their first four foes (all losses) is 18-3. For Cardinal, it all starts with quarter-

back Joey Soltis. He has run for more than 500 yards this season, and can also hit the passes if need be. Getting that rushing game going against the Vikings is important. ... Speaking of quarterback play, LaBrae QB Aidan Stephens ran for 83 yards and two touchdowns last week in a win over Conneaut, and he also completed an efficient 14

of 17 passes for 245 yards and a score. Cardinal must also keep tabs on running back Trevon Drake. ... The key in this game is who can defend the opposing team's quarterback the best.

(21) Greenwich S. Central at (12) Fairport

What: Division VII, Region 25 playoff game

When: 7 p.m., Oct. 9

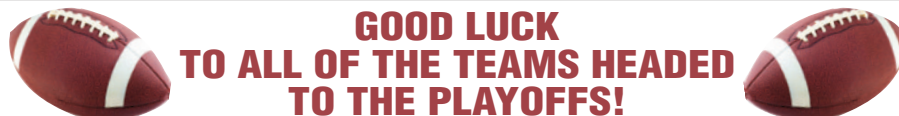
Where: Greig Field

Records: Fairport 4-2, South Central 0-6

Last week: Pymatuning Valley def. Fairport, 38-7, Collins Western Reserve def. South Central, 30-0

On deck: Winner plays at (5) Malvern

For the record: The Skippers are hosting their first playoff game in program history, and the Trojans are playing their first playoff game — period — so this is an interesting matchup from that historical point of view. ... Fairport's only two losses this season were to Pymatuning Valley, which used a big and physical line and punishing running game to fend off the Skippers twice — once in the regular season and once in the Northeast Athletic Conference championship game. When it's at its best, Fairport's offense is balanced. QB Will Fazekas has thrown for 799 yards, with Dillon Knesebeck (25 catches) and Sam Honkala (14 catches) his favorite targets. Josiah Cooper has run for 472 yards. Defensively, Quentin Piotrowski and Dominic Knesebeck have double-digit TFLs. ... South Central is winless, but five of its six foes have a .500-or-better record, including St. Paul, Monroeville and Crestview (all 5-1). David Lamoreaux and Jackson McCormack are top receivers. Brandon Mitchell is a solid quarterback, and RB Trey Beverly is the top runner. Fairport's defense will get it's best test this side of PV in this game.



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