

TOP OF THE CROP:  
KIRTLAND IS NO. 1

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE ... PLAYOFF EXPANSION, REALIGNMENT

# FOOTBALL 20 PREVIEW 21

THE MORE THEY STAY THE SAME ... CHARDON, KIRTLAND, MENTOR RELOAD



Brenan Vernon  
Mentor



Ryan Baer  
North



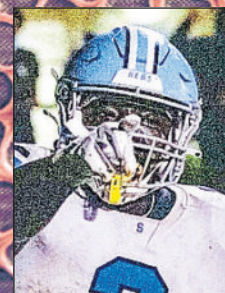
Nathanael Sulka  
Chardon



Mason Rus  
Kirtland



Ryan Miller  
Kenston



Ira Sampson  
South



Danny Stewart  
West Geauga

## OPINION

# A return to normalcy feels so good

A return to normalcy never felt so good.



**John Kampf**

After a 2020 high school football season that was re-capped as “a season unlike any other,” we welcome normalcy — or at least a

semblance of normalcy — back to the gridiron.

Thanks to COVID-19, the 2020 season featured delayed starts, a limited number of in-person fans, social distancing among those limited fans, masks and more.

When the season kicks off on Aug. 19, with Lake Catholic traveling to Dover for the 2020 lidlifter, all of that will be in the rearview mirror — forever, we hope, though the Delta variant seems to be rearing its ugly head across the nation.

But for now, it's normalcy.

And it never felt so good.

So what's new, besides protocols being lifted and schools trying to figure out how to scrub off the painted circles on their sidelines where players had to socially distance last season?



PAUL DICICCO — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Kirtland and North during an Aug. 7 scrimmage.

A lot. For instance:

## Conference adjustment

We have a new Catholic conference in our backyard, with the remnants of the old North Coast League creating a new and smaller “Crown Conference.”

The Crown Conference brings Lake Catholic, NDCL, VASJ, Walsh Jesuit and Padua together for a five-team league after spending years and/or decades together in the NCL.

Brush has left the Western Reserve Conference, giving the WRC seven teams as of now, although feelers have been put out to expand to eight or more teams.

A lot of rumors are circulating in that realm.

Kirtland and Harvey have swapped places in

the CVC, with the Hornets headed to the bigger-school CVC Chagrin and Harvey going to the smaller-school CVC Valley.

## Coaching carousel

Six schools in the News-Herald area will feature new head coaches this season — Jeff Rotsky at VASJ, Tim Glodowski at Fairport, Rick Lytle at Euclid, Van Monroe at Beachwood, John Scott at Chagrin Falls and Bob Gecewich at Perry

**Turf wars**  
Wickliffe has installed a brand new artificial turf, and Mayfield had its turf field refurbished this past offseason. Both will be ready to go for opening home games.

Unfortunately, the same can't be said at Chardon, where the new turf installation was botched, delayed and restarted. The new turf is being

stretched as we speak and will be ready in a handful of weeks, though Chardon will play one home game at Riverside and two at West Geauga until the project is done.

## Expanded playoffs

The OHSAA expanded the postseason so that 16 teams per region qualify. The extra round is why you're reading this introduction to the season a week earlier than you usually do.

## New leaders

The News-Herald area graduated a phenomenal senior class a year ago, including many of the area leaders.

Five of the top passers from last year graduated. The leading QB passing-wise back this year is West Geauga's Danny Stewart who threw for more than 1,300 yards last year as a junior.

The top 11 rushers and top 14 of 15 in The News-Herald area are all gone. The top returning rusher — Jalen Minter — is not only at a new school (he went from Beachwood to VASJ), but also a new full-time position (RB-QB to full-time QB).

Two of the top three receivers in The News-Herald area DO return — Ken-

ston's J.P. Germano and West Geauga's Torry Stazzone. Each had more than 30 catches last year.

With all the new stuff that's going on this year, the biggest new addition is the return of fans. Student sections will be back this year, which was a major void year ago.

To be fair, while 2020 was a headache in so many ways and gladly in the rearview mirror, it was a season like no other in one positive regard. Never before in The News-Herald area were two state champions (Division III Chardon and Division V Kirtland), a state runner-up (Lake Catholic) and state final four team (Mentor) all in the same season.

So in that respect, there was a bright silver lining in what was otherwise a season that was memorable for so many wrong reasons.

So as this weekend approaches, take time to be thankful that we got through last year and that this year has at least a semblance of normalcy again. Enjoy.

We all deserve it.

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## ON THE COVER

Photos of Mentor's Brennan Vernon by Tim Phillis, Chardon's Nathanael Sulka by Paul DiCicco, Kirtland's Mason Rus by David C. Turben, Kenston's Ryan Miller by John Kampf, South's Ira Sampson by Frank Gambatese, and West Geauga's Danny Stewart by Turben.

**This section was printed in advance.**

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## HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

# Chardon motivated again after '20 title

By John Kampf

*JKampf@news-herald.com*

Alex McDonald has to fight off the goosebumps every time he recalls the events of Nov. 21, 2020.

Blitzing off the ride side as Columbus DeSales was attempting a field goal in double overtime, the Chardon standout — then a junior — wheeled around and watched the Stallions' kick sail wide right to clinch the Hilltoppers' 31-28 victory.

There was the roar of the crowd, and a mob of celebrating Chardon players amid a turf littered with heartbroken DeSales players.

The Hilltoppers were state champs for the first time in more than two decades.

Those memories are as fresh as the morning dew to McDonald and his teammates who were underclassmen a year ago and are returning to the gridiron this fall. It's those memories and the feeling that comes with being a state champion that has the Hilltoppers hungry for more.

As Chardon goes through a unique fall camp that has them practicing on a grass field while their turf field is remodeled, the Hilltoppers do so fueled by not only the memory of state championship glory, but also well aware of the process that



PAUL DICICCO — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

The Chardon football team celebrates after winning the Division III state championship last season.

got them to that point in the first place.

"I don't watch the game much," said senior fullback Sean Carr. "I enjoyed it in the moment, but now I'm focused on the moment at hand because we want to get back there again."

The Hilltoppers graduated a slew of talent, likely the most decorated in Char-

don history based on last year's All-Ohio selections. Of the seven — yes seven — first-team Division III, All-Ohioans Chardon boasted a year ago, one is back.

But don't try telling the Chardon squad this is a rebuilding year. These guys don't want to hear that.

"Oh, I hear it. I hear we're not going to be as good,"

McDonald said. "I hear it in my own family."

Fellow senior Nathanael Sulka nodded.

"Even some who played with us last year," Sulka said.

Carr shrugged.

"That's OK. Just gives us a bigger chip on our shoulders this year."

Just what everyone

needs. A Chardon program steeped in tradition, aggression and physicality with a chip on its shoulders.

"A dozen or so years ago, we had to take attendance (at lifting sessions)," said Coach Mitch Hewitt. "Now every time I go to the local gym, we have these dudes I call 'graveyard players' who are always there work-

ing out. It's become a lifestyle.

"This team isn't tough enough yet. We need to be more organized, and we need to be more violent in practice. But we've got the bodies to do it. We just have to get there."

Despite heavy graduation losses, Chardon does return a lot of players who got varsity experience during last year's 11-0, state-championship run. It's just that most are either A) in an expanded/starting role, or B) at a different position than last year.

As usual, the Hilltoppers will rely on a physical running game. This is the 41st year of the Wing-T being brought to Chardon by legendary coach Bob Doyle, with new frills added along the way.

But pretty much the entire ensemble is gone from a year ago.

"All of it," said Hewitt when asked how much of last year's offensive productivity graduated.

He's excited about the quarterback competition between senior Zoran Vujaklija and junior Alex Henry. The running back stable is packed with guys itching to make a name for themselves — Daniel Pettyjohn, Ryan Petersen, Rocco Perico, Brody Dotson, Trey Liebhardt, A.J. Bruce.

CHARDON » PAGE 4

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# Chardon

FROM PAGE 3

“Our junior class is small, so we’re moving up some freshmen and sophomores for our lines,” Hewitt said. “Sean Carr at fullback and Alex McDonald at tight end are so important. Our tight end and fullback have become our critical blockers in everything we do.”

The defense is pretty green, too. But as practice concluded last week, Hewitt reminded the defense to play with an edge, play hard, play violent.

“We like what we have, but it’s thin,” Hewitt said. “We have a lot of teases, players who have good practice then fall off, have good practice then fall off. That’s natural with young kids. It’s a process we’ve seen before.

No one is worried. “We have less experience than last year,” McDonald said, “but everyone knows what they have to do.”

That’s because they’ve done it before.

Among the many facets on which Chardon hangs its hat is a system that is in place from the youth levels, through middle school, up through the high school. By and large, every level is running the same style that’s run on Hewitt’s varsity squad.

While the junior class might be a little light in numbers, the rest of the program from top to bottom isn’t.

That’s another by-product of winning a state



PAUL DICICCO — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Chardon coach Mitch Hewitt getting doused after his team won the D-III state title.

championship a year ago. The title run electrified the Chardon football program from youth on up like hooking up an electric guitar to an amplifier.

Again, not that Chardon football needed electrification any further than it already has.

“That’s where you’ve see the biggest uptick,” Hewitt said. “Our youth numbers have never been bigger. Our seventh, eighth and ninth (grade) classes are all 30-plus. We’ve got 315 kids right there wearing Chardon helmets.”

Hewitt credits the Chardon community.

“We say it all the time, tough parents create tough kids,” he said. “Especially tough moms. When you get

a bunch of tough moms in the community, they’ll raise tough kids. We benefit from that.”

The road to where Chardon wants to go is bumpy, and that’s putting it lightly. Even before the Hilltoppers get to a Western Reserve Conference schedule that is going to be a challenge week in and week out, Chardon has non-conference games with powerhouses Glenville, Akron Buchtel and Youngstown Ursuline to start the season.

“Yeah, we better grow up in a hurry,” Hewitt said.

This much is for sure. Anyone who is counting Chardon out this year does so at its own peril.

Graduation losses aside — every program goes

through those — it’s still a program that is rich in tradition, executes an offensive set to the point of precision, plays with a violent edge on defense and knows what it takes to win a state championship after doing so last year.

Now they have a chip on their shoulders from doubters who think they can’t do it again.

“The past and the future are dangerous places to live,” Hewitt said of the dangers of resting on last year’s laurels and dreaming of a return trip to state this year. “Winning creates a validation. It convinces kid this is the path they need to be on more so than us coaches telling them, ‘Trust me, trust me,

## TOP OF THE CROP

### Football

1: Kirtland

2: Chardon

3: Mentor

4: Benedictine

5: Kenston

6: Euclid

7: South

8: West Geauga

9: NDCL

10: Lake Catholic

**Watch List:** Perry, Riverside, VASJ, Mayfield, North

**Crop comments:** Kirtland deserves credit locally for what it has done in recent years — no matter what division the Hornets are in. Kirtland comes into this season with the fourth-longest winning streak in America (41 games) and has looked strong in scrimmages against Division I Strongsville, Division II North and Division III Poland. Kirtland gets the nod at No. 1 to start this year. ... Going on eye-test of the preseason, as well as returners from last

trust me.’ In that respect, the state championship was a blessing because it validated what we’ve been teaching. We have a lot of new kids. This is their opportunity to pick up where

year’s state teams, reigning Division III state champ Chardon gets the call at No. 2 over Division I state final four Mentor. The Hilltoppers graduated a lot, but they’ve looked big, physical and tough in the preseason. ... Mentor’s first three games — Canton McKinley, St. Ignatius, St. Edward — are tougher than anyone else’s in Ohio. ... Benedictine isn’t as big up front as it was last year, but the Bengals have big playmakers who will carry them. ... Kenston opens at No. 5 with a ton of experience and motivation after a subpar 2020. ... Euclid has a brutal schedule this year, but Claison Ivory & Co. have big goals as usual. The Panthers open at No. 6. ... South is ascending in the Western Reserve Conference. The Rebels have experience at QB (Colin Quinlan) and speed to burn with Tyrone Singleton and Ira Sampson. ... No. 8 West Geauga has a lot back, too, and is going to vie for a CVC Chagrin title behind QB Danny Stewart and a physical offensive line. ... No. 9 NDCL is impressive, especially on defense. It’s going to be difficult to throw on the defensive backfield the Lions return. ... Lake graduated a ton, but the Cougars take the No. 10 spot with the high upside of their young players.

the last team left off. I think we are a team that’s going to be a hard ‘out.’ We might not win every game, but the opponent is going to know we were there for four quarters.”

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## HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

# Rotsky brings building ways to VASJ

By John Kampf

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Aaron Berry raised his hand in the back of a meeting room at Euclid High School and had a question for his new coach.

Jeff Rotsky had just been named the head coach of the Euclid football team and was meeting with his prospective players for the first time.

Berry rose to his feet and put his new coach to task.

“Are you for real?” Berry asked his new coach point-blank.

“All you say, this sounds great. But are you what you say you are? Are you doing to do what you say you’re going to do?”

Rotsky, 55, has heard it before.

He’s been coaching for nearly three decades now — taking his family-oriented GFGF (God-Family-Grades-Football) blueprint to stops across the Greater Cleveland.

The latest stop is Villa Angela-St. Joseph where — as in his other stops — the football program has fallen on hard times with dwindling participation and/or iffy success.

But as he has done in stops prior to VASJ — at Chanel, Maple Heights, Cleveland Heights and then Euclid — he is excited about



JOHN KAMPF — THE NEWS-HERALD

Jeff Rotsky, first-year head coach at VASJ, talks to his team at a recent practice. Rotsky has built winning programs at Chanel, Maple Heights, Cleveland Heights and Euclid — and now hopes to do the same at VASJ.

the challenge of building something special.

Something that is bigger than what’s seen on the field on Friday nights.

Under Rotsky’s tutelage, programs at Chanel, Maple Heights, Cleveland Heights and Euclid were all elevated to greater heights than prior to his arrival. Now he’s at VASJ, where he hopes is the last stop in his illustrious program-building career.

“I’ve always loved climbing the mountain more than stay atop it,” Rotsky told The News-Herald. “I don’t think there’s any magic secret to how we’ve done it. It’s not the Rotsky Effect. It’s the staff plan, a staff that’s been with me for so many years. Guys who Joe Klir, Johnnie Lemons and Eric Stephenson.

“It comes down to trust. The players know if there is anything they need —

if something is wrong and they need anything from a bed to sleep to clothes on their back we’re going to be there for them. Once they see that, believe in it and trust it. They will do anything for each other as players and anything for us as coaches.

“That trust is where it all begins.”

The plan has worked everywhere, including

▪ Chanel, where the Fire-

birds had won 12 games in nine seasons prior to Rotsky’s arrival. Rotsky turned the program around, went 33-12 and took teams to the state finals in the 1990s.

▪ Maple Heights, where the Mustangs had lost 20 games in a row before Rotsky took over. In five seasons, he went 45-11 there, won three Lake Erie League Titles and went to the playoffs five times.

▪ Cleveland Heights, where prior to Rotsky’s arrival, they program had never reached the playoffs. Yet the team went 9-0, 8-2 and 9-1 from 2011-2013 and became regulars in the Division I, Region I playoff scene.

▪ Euclid, where the Panthers had gone six straight years without a playoff berth.

But under Rotsky (who went 49-19 in six years at Euclid), the Panthers went to the playoffs all six years.

Now he’s at VASJ, where he takes over for Elvis Grbac who stepped down after two seasons.

The Viking are coming off a 1-7 campaign in 2020 and haven’t one more than six games in seven years.

The master-builder that he is, Rotsky loves the challenge.

“We will get there,” Rotsky said. “When I first met with the team, I asked for a show of hands of who thought they’d play college football and not one hand went up. I was broken. ... A month ago at our team trip, I asked the same thing and 80 percent of the hands went up.

“These guys are starting to believe. They believe. That belief and their love for each other will carry us on Friday nights.”

ROTSKY » PAGE 6

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# Rotsky

FROM PAGE 5

The GFGF mantra which Rotsky embraces is not his own. He said he got it from former coach Dick Marabito, who first hired Rotsky for a coaching position. He promised Marabito the God-Family-Grades-Football would be the linchpin of his coaching, and it has been.

The “God” and “Family” part are givens, Rotsky said. Faith and family are the most important parts of life.

Grades supersede football.

At a recent practice, a VASJ assistant was laying out the upcoming week’s practice regimen, including what time film session after school begins and what time to be on the field.

Rotsky interrupted the assistant.

“IF your work is done at study table,” he barked.

Said Rotsky to The News-Herald, “Our kids will NEVER practice without first doing their work at the mandatory study table,” he said.

Rotsky said his wife, Gina, is the football program’s “academic dean,” one who will set up tutors and ensure classroom work is done before football work starts.

“It’s my job, it’s my DUTY, to get these kids to school,” Rotsky said, “whether or not they play

football in college.”

The football part is tough.

It’s rigid.

It’s grueling.

But it pays off. Rotsky’s stops at Chanel, Maple Heights, Cleveland Heights and Euclid show that.

He demands perfect preparation, and it results in — well — results.

“I remember when I was at Maple Heights and we had lost 21 in a row,” Rotsky said. “We lost to University in double-overtime and all the kids were celebrating in the locker room and patting each other on the back. I went NUTS. But they were so used to losing, they didn’t know how to win. They were happy with just being close.”

“We (the coaching staff) buried them that week in practice. We had Westlake the next week, Rock Lewis had four catches for 262 yards and three touchdowns and we broke the streak. Because they started to believe in what we were doing.”

Each school’s “reclamation project” under Rotsky comes with its own memories. Rotsky rattles them off like flipping through pages in a yearbook.

Rotsky knows his style — and success — can be and is polarizing.

“I say this,” Rotsky said bluntly. “I don’t care about people who don’t know me. I care about the kids. The plan for me is

to get these young men a chance at life. People can say what they want about me. A lot comes out of jealousy of our staff and how we just outwork people.

“Our formula is hard work and caring for each other. It’s not a secret. It’s not a Rotsky Effect. It’s hard work and caring for each other.”

Rotsky takes with him into the 2021 season a career record of 176-79. He’s been to the playoffs countless times. He’s been to the state championship game with Chanel.

He’s built programs. He has the highest of hopes and dreams for VASJ, whose roster has swelled to 105 under Rotsky, before a single game has been played or won.

“This is who the new VASJ is,” Rotsky said. “We’re going to play for 48 minutes like our lives depended on it, then we’ll leave it to God who wins or loses.”

But in the end, he said the wins, the program-building and what happens on the gridiron aren’t really what’s most important to him.

“How do I want to be remembered?” he said, pondering the question asked of him. “I hope kids say that, besides Mom and Dad, I was the most loyal person they could have asked for in their life and that I always had their back. It’s not about football. It’s about the relationships.”

## Preseason Tony Fisher Award watch list

By John Kampf

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The Tony Fisher Award goes to The News-Herald player of the year in football. It is named after the former Ohio Mr. Football recipient, a graduate of Euclid, who went on to star at Notre Dame and play in the NFL.

The Fisher Award watch list can and will change on a weekly basis. The preseason list, in alphabetical order:

**Ryan Baer, North, Sr.:** The 6-foot-7, 320-pound University of Pittsburgh commit is a road-grader of a blocker on offense, and will also play defense this year.

**Derell Bedingfield, Benedictine, Sr.:** The 6-foot-2, 190-pound linebacker has committed to Toledo. He’s a lightning-fast playmaker who can force turnovers and leave his mark with big hits.

**Rick Coleman Jr., Harvey, Sr.:** He threw for 479 yards and ran for 472 yards last year. Having the ball in his hands every play is a good place to start for the Red Raiders this year.

**Marvin Conkle, Benedictine, Sr.:** As a junior, he had 32 catches for 528 yards. It’s safe to say the Bengals are going to do everything they can to get the ball in the hands of this electric playmaker.

**Jaxon French, Lake Catholic, Sr.:** The first-year quarterback for the Cougars can whip it around the field, that’s for sure. But he also has running ability, and is the linchpin to Lake’s offense

this year.

**Nikko Georgiou, Kenston, Jr.:** He only got in a handful of games last year as a starting sophomore quarterback, but with the skill set around him in the Bombers’ lineup, he should put up big numbers in a high-scoring offense.

**Alex Henry, Chardon:** Whoever is the quarterback for the vaunted Chardon rushing attack always puts up highlight reel numbers — see Drew Fetchik (2020) and the Benenati brothers before him. Henry is going to have a big year whether he’s at quarterback or at running back.

**Claishon Ivory, Euclid, Sr.:** He had 25 catches for 395 yards last year and will be a major focal point for the Panthers this season.

**Ryan Miller, Kenston, Sr.:** A matchup nightmare as a 6-foot-7 tight end who can flex out at receiver, Miller should be one of the primary targets for Kenston QB Nikko Georgiou, who is also on this list.

**Jalen Minter, VASJ, Sr.:** He was a third-team All-Ohioan last year at Beachwood, with more than 1,500 yards of offense passing and rushing.

**Mason Rus, Kirtland, Sr.:** Rus was a wrecking ball as a linebacker last year, and will be again this year. But keep an eye on him as a running back this year, too. He’s primed to have an All-Ohio type of year as a two-way starter.

**Ira Sampson, South, Sr.:** College coaches are clamoring for this 5-foot-11,

205-pounder either/or at running back and linebacker. The marquee player for the Rebels should be a big playmaker on both sides of the ball this year.

**Tyrone Singleton, South, Jr.:** What a luxury South has, with Singleton, Ira Sampson and Jaydon Searcy. Singleton had a breakout year last year and has entrenched himself as a major threat this year.

**Jacob Snow, Mentor, Jr.:** He made his first varsity start last year in a Division I state semifinal. Now that he’s got his feet wet, look for a highly productive year both passing and rushing.

**Gage Sullivan, Kirtland, Sr.:** A very versatile player, the 6-foot-4, 200-pound Sullivan is a game-breaker as a receiver and one of the best defensive backs in the area. Oh, he’s also an All-Ohio punter.

**Danny Stewart, West Geauga, Sr.:** He had a breakout season last year for the Wolverines. He has most of his skill set returning this year, too, so don’t be surprised if he puts up eye-popping numbers.

**Curtis Thomas, North, Jr.:** This speedy back looks to be getting a lot of touches in the Rangers’ new offense this year, both running the ball and catching out of the backfield.

**Brenan Vernon, Mentor, Jr.:** The big, 6-foot-5, 250-pound defensive end is one of the premier defensive players in the nation in the class of 2023. Look for him to have a huge year.

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## Area high school football conference outlook

By John Kampf

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### Crown Conference

**Favorite:** Walsh Jesuit

**Don't forget about:** Lake Catholic

**Darkhorses:** NDCL, VASJ

**For the record:** This upstart conference is made up of the remnants of the former North Coast League and consists of Walsh Jesuit, Lake Catholic, NDCL, VASJ and Padua. It's going to be an extremely balanced league. ... Walsh went 5-2 last year and is really on the upswing under Coach Nick Alexander. QB Mike Natale, RBs Will Rumpel and Leshon Crenshaw and a deep, talented receiving corps give Walsh an impressive skill set that the league's teams will have to deal with. ... Lake Catholic is the reigning Division IV state runner-up, but took some heavy graduation losses. New QB Jaxon French is highly skilled and is a big addition with the graduation of All-Ohioan Joe Malchesky. Look for Aiden Fitzgerald to have a banner season as a playmaker on both sides of the ball. ... NDCL and VASJ — yes VASJ — are in the thick of things, too. That NDCL defense is spectacular, especially the veteran defensive backfield. And VASJ, under first-year coach Jeff Rotsky, is going to be better than it's been in years. Calling these two teams 'darkhorse' might be short-changing them a little bit.

### CVC Chagrin

**Favorite:** Kirtland

**Don't forget about:** Perry  
**Darkhorses:** West Geauga, Lakeside

**What to look for:** With all due respect to the rest of the big-school CVC Chagrin, it's kind of hard to go away from the division newbie that has won 41 games in a row, including three state championships. Division V Kirtland is in the CVC Chagrin this year, a big step up from playing the predominantly D-V and D-VI schools in the CVC Valley. It's a bigger test, yet Kirtland has played most of these schools in the past anyway without losing. ... Perry has a new coach in Bob Gecewich, but there's a lot of talent there, including playmakers in Javin Richards, Jadynn Anderson and others. If the new staff gets the new system going, Perry won't miss a beat from the Matt Rosati days. ... West Geauga is very much in the picture, with Danny Stewart back at quarterback and high-level returners on both sides of the ball. Also, keep an eye on the Lakeside program that has really blossomed under young coach Buzz Edwards. The Dragons will not be a pushover at all this year.

### CVC Metro

**Favorite:** Independence

**Don't forget about:** Cuyahoga Heights

**Darkhorse:** Wickliffe

**What to look for:** Wickliffe ran the table in league play last year and never gave up more than 14 points to any of the teams in the league. But the graduation of a huge and talented senior class

puts these Blue Devils in the "darkhorse" category, while a different Blue Devils team — Independence — takes over the role of league favorite. ... Independence has outstanding skill returning, including QB Michael Tommer and WR Kyle Zygmunt. Replacing All-Ohio LB Adam Miklovic won't be easy, but this should be a team that can pile up the points. ... To be sure, Cuyahoga Heights is going to be a tough 'out' for Independence, Wickliffe and everyone else in the league. First off, Coach Al Martin and his 25 years experience are major X-factors in the Redskins' favor. Additionally QB Luke Torgerson, RB Ryan Krajewski and two-way lineman Jacob Fovozzo anchor a team itching to prove that last year's 3-6 record was a blip on the radar screen and not a sign of things to come longterm.

### CVC Valley

**Favorite:** Harvey

**Don't forget about:** Berkshire

**Darkhorse:** Cardinal

**What to look for:** Division III Harvey drops down from the bigger-school CVC Chagrin to the smaller-school CVC Valley and instantly becomes the team to beat. Not only do the Red Raiders have — arguably — the division's best player in Rick Coleman Jr., but they also have the biggest and deepest offensive and defensive lines. Games are won in the trenches. The Red Raiders have that advantage, as well as very good athleticism at skill positions. ... Berkshire will

have something to say about that prognostication. The Badgers only lost to Harvey, 41-35, last year. Berkshire has a fine line itself, led by Lucas Stoddard, but might not have the overall depth Harvey has. ... Cardinal has a good line, too, with Mike Soltis and John Avalon. But again, depth and overall skill tilts the favor to the Red Raiders.

### Greater Cleveland Conference

**Favorite:** Medina

**Don't forget about:** Mentor

**Darkhorses:** Brunswick, Euclid

**What to look for:** Mentor has won four GCC titles in a row. The last time the Cardinals weren't league champs was 2016. While Coach Matt Gray's squad is still very much in the thick of things for the league title this year, the nod goes to Medina. Coach Larry Laird (Fairport alum) was 0-2 against Mentor last year, but his Bees have a high-powered offense returning that is led by Penn State recruit Drew Allar at quarterback. If neither team slips up along the way, Mentor and Medina will meet Oct. 1 at Jerome T. Osborne Stadium, where the Cardinals plastered the Bees, 49-14, in a playoff game a year ago. Expect a high-scoring game in that one. ... Picking a darkhorse to go along with top dogs Medina and Mentor isn't easy. Brunswick went 6-3 last year, including a 28-21 win over Medina, while Euclid went 5-3, with a 31-28 win over Medina. Both are capable of not only

being in play for a conference title, but also winning it. The GCC is a balanced league this year, but the nod goes to the team that has a top-10 nationally ranked quarterback leading it.

### Western Reserve Conference

**Favorite:** Chardon

**Don't forget about:** Kenston Darkhorse: South, Riverside

**What to look for:** The WRC is going to be extraordinarily competitive this year to the point that A) the conference champion might not run the table, and B) the league crown might be shared between multiple teams. ... But if you're going to start somewhere, it should go to defending Division III state champion Chardon. The Hilltoppers have a lot of holes to fill from graduation, but it has Division I recruits in Nathanael Sulka and Alex McDonald, big playmakers in Alex Henry and Trey Liebhart, a style of play that's hard to prepare for, and a gritty edge to boot. ... Kenston has most of its starters back on offense and defense. The Bombers should be able to pile up the points this year. If the defense gets stops, look out. ... South has skill and speed all over the field. The lines aren't especially big, so attrition in the trenches comes into play. Riverside took some hard graduation hits, but the Beavers are going to be a tough out this year, too. ... In short, the WRC should be a fun league from the get-go this year.

### WINT-AM 1330 SCHEDULE

**Aug. 20:** Harvey at Kirtland

**Aug. 27:** St. Ignatius at Mentor

**Sept. 3:** North at Lake Catholic

**Sept. 4:** Mentor at St. Edward

**Sept. 10:** Fairport at Wickliffe

**Sept. 17:** Clarkson at Mentor

**Sept. 18:** Cleveland Central Catholic at VASJ

**Sept. 24:** Brunswick at Mentor

**Oct. 1:** Medina at Mentor

**Oct. 2:** Lake Catholic at VASJ

**Oct. 8:** Mentor at Solon

**Oct. 9:** Walsh Jesuit at Lake Catholic

**Oct. 15:** St. Mary Prep at Lake Catholic

**Oct. 22:** Euclid at Mentor

**Oct. 23:** NDCL at Lake Catholic

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## High school football games to watch

By John Kampf

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### Lake Catholic at Dover,

**Aug. 19:** This one is the area's high school football lidlifter, as the reigning D-IV state runner-up Cougars travel a few hours to play the tradition-rich Tornados.

### Mentor at Canton McKinley, Aug. 20:

It doesn't get much better than this. The Cardinals vs. the tradition-steeped Bulldogs at Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium.

### Chagrin Falls at Kenston, Aug. 20:

These nextdoor neighbor rivals don't get together all that often, so it's good to see them duking it out in Week 1.

### Glenville vs. Chardon at Riverside, Aug. 20:

Coach Ted Ginn's Tarblooders open up against the defending Division III state champs in a game played at Riverside because of Chardon's field issues.

### CVCA at VASJ at Case

### Western Reserve, Aug. 20:

The Vikings unveil the Jeff Rotsky era with a game against CVCA. Many are interested to see how fast rebuild-expert Rotsky turns around the storied VASJ program.

### St. Ignatius at Mentor, Aug. 27:

The Wildcats come to the JTO in what might be the first of two meetings this year. Their paths always seem to cross in the playoffs.

### Toledo Central Catholic at Benedictine, Aug. 28:

These two teams have goals of deep playoff runs — maybe state titles — so this is a big litmus test early on.

### New Middletown Springfield at Geneva, Sept. 3:

The defending Division VI state runners-up visit SPIRE in this Week 3 bout. Two weeks later, the Eagles host reigning D-V state champ Kirtland. Gulp.

### Kirtland at Westinghouse Academy (Pa.), Sept. 3:

This one is worth the drive

to suburban Pittsburgh. The Hornets face a Westinghouse team (Division II size) that was undefeated last season.

### Madison at Perry, Sept. 3:

New Perry coach Bob Gecewich gets introduced to the Pirates' most bitter rival. It's always a physical hate-fest when these teams collide.

### Mentor at St. Edward, Sept. 4:

Just like Mentor's Week 2 game with St. Ignatius, this Mentor-Ed's game could be a precursor to a playoff rematch.

### St. Ignatius at Euclid, Sept. 10:

This is one of four straight home games for the Panthers and a big test of legitimacy against Coach Chuck Kyle's Wildcats.

### West Geauga at Kirtland, Sept. 10:

Welcome to the CVC Chagrin Division, Kirtland. The Hornets move up from the CVC Valley to face a West G team that is one of the league favorites.

### Riverside at Chardon at West Geauga, Sept. 10:

The Beavers and Hilltoppers open WRC play in a game played at West Geauga — where Riverside coach Dave Bors and Chardon coach Mitch Hewitt used to coach together.

### North at South, Sept. 17:

The Rebels host this annual showdown between the Willoughby-Eastlake High Schools.

### Kenston at Chardon, Sept. 24:

Many feel the Bombers and Hilltoppers are the teams to beat in the WRC. This week 6 battle will tell a lot if that feeling is true.

### University at Gilmour, Sept. 25:

The Preppers and Lancers meet up in a battle of prep schools. This is a more bitter rival than many know.

### Kirtland at Perry, Oct. 1:

The Hornets haven't lost a league game since Oct. 21, 2016. The Pirates haven't lost a league game since Oct. 23, 2015. Somebody's gonna suck up a loss in this one.

### Medina at Mentor, Oct. 1:

The Cardinals swatted the Bees twice last season, including a 49-14 whipping in the playoffs. Medina feels its the GCC favorite this year. Here's its chance to prove it.

### Mayfield at South, Oct. 1:

This game will have no sacks. The Wildcats and Rebels run such quick passing routes out of the shotgun that sacks are nearly impossible. However, high scoring is very much in play.

### Lake Catholic at VASJ at Case Western Reserve:

The Vikings and Cougars have not locked horns in a number of years. This one could get interesting.

### South at Kenston, Oct. 8:

This game might take all night, the way the Rebels and Bombers forecast at putting points on the board this season. Bet the over in this one.

### Wickliffe at Independence, Oct. 8:

The Blue Devils are gonna win this

one. The only question is which group of them. Wickliffe won the CVC Metro last year. Independence is the league favorite this year. Who blinks first?

### Benedictine at Akron Hoban, Oct. 15:

The Bengals and Knights were members of the old North Coast League. Now they're independents, but that doesn't change the high level of play in this one.

### VASJ at NDCL, Oct. 15:

The Vikings will likely be able to throw the ball very effectively this year. The Lions have one of the area's best defensive backfields. What a great Crown Conference matchup!

### Berkshire at Cardinal, Oct. 22:

There's just something about the Kinsman Cup being up for grabs in Week 10. This local rivalry always has a playoff feel.

### NDCL at Lake Catholic, Oct. 23:

Once again, these bitter rivals play in Week 10, the way it ought to be.

## Kenston

FROM PAGE 8

"He's a different kid than we've had," Grubich said, noting recent backs like three-time All-Ohioan Jack Porter and last year's bullish back Stanley Sell. "We haven't any anybody like Sean in previous years. We're excited about what he can do. He was a lockdown corner for us last year. He's

just a pup, man, but we're excited about him going forward."

The Doyle brothers and the rest of the offensive line were ahead of where Grubich honestly thought they'd be. The rebuild/reload was in better shape that Grubich admitted he thought it might be.

The good news for Kenston is they feel they have the tools and the talent to reach their goals.

The challenging news is the road they'll have to

travel.

The road presented by the rugged Western Reserve Conference.

Not only has the WRC crowned two state champions in the past three seasons, which Chardon winning a Division III state title in 2020 to go with the state crown Kenston won in 2018, but the conference has developed a penchant for sending teams to the playoffs with good success once they get there.

Half (four of the league's

eight teams) qualified for postseason play in both 2019 and 2018. Three of the eight were playoff-bound in 2017.

Over the past four years, WRC teams are 21-17 in playoff games, including the 2020 season when every team in Ohio was afforded the opportunity to participate in the postseason. Every team in the conference, including Brush, which left the league after the 2020 season, qualified for the playoffs since the

league was formed in 2015.

"It's a grind, man," Grubich said of the WRC. "It's a great football conference. That's a testament to all the coaching staffs.

"You can't have a bad day in our league. It doesn't matter how good you are or how good of athletes you have, if you come out flat on Friday night you're gonna get punched in the mouth and be on the wrong end of the scoreboard."

Like any coach, Grubich has concerns. Depth is al-

ways a key, as untimely injuries are a sure-fire way disrupt a team's trajectory. The non-conference slate of Chagrin Falls, Perry and NDCL presents tough challenges, too.

But after having a bumpy 2020 campaign, thanks to growing pains and a national pandemic, Kenston is ready to roll again.

"The emphasis daily is 'one rep at a time to get better' and 'get one percent better everyday,'" said Grubich.

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## HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

# Mentor eager for a crisp 2021 season

By John Kampf

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Everyone is welcoming a somewhat return to normalcy as the 2021 fall sports season arrives.

Maybe no one more so that Mentor coach Matt Gray.

Consider the following events that took place for Gray, who took over the Mentor program in the winter of 2019-20 after the winningest coach in Cardinals football history (Steve Trivisonno) stepped down after a decorated 23-year run:

1, Sports in Ohio, including Gray's first winter and spring lifting sessions, came to a halt because of the outbreak of the novel coronavirus.

2, Summer 7-on-7s on the first-year coach's schedule, were back-burnered and limited.

3, When workouts did resume in the summer, they did so with only small groups at a time getting together in an attempt to curtail COVID-19.

4, Gray sustained two deaths in the family during a one-week span during the season.

5, The Cardinals were forced to play a Division I state semifinal game without their two-time All-Ohio quarterback Ian Kipp, who was under COVID contact-



TIM PHILLIS — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Mentor's offensive line against Chardon in an Aug. 13 scrimmage. The Cardinals open Aug. 20 at Canton McKinley.

tracing protocol.

Gray didn't hold a parade when 2020 exited and 2021 arrived, but it would have been somewhat justified if he had.

"What last year taught us was you have to adapt and adjust," Gray said. "You can never assume anything. Each day is a new challenge. There is always some new

challenge or something new that can show up on your desk in the morning that makes you adapt and adjust."

Yeah, true.

But what happened last year took it to a new level, no?

"Not having the time to form chemistry in the off-season, coach having fam-

ily members pass away, Ian missing the state game," said senior running back Brenden Panhorst, "it's like obstacle, obstacle, adversity, adversity, obstacle. ... When you look back at it, that we made it to the final four and almost won it was pretty incredible."

Along with the rest of the state, Gray & Co. shut

down football operations on March 12 as the state mandated coronavirus measures. From then until June, there were no team workouts.

Just virtual meetings, texts and phone calls.

Not exactly what a first-year head coach needs to get a running start.

"Thankfully we have

such a great staff and everyone did a great job of adapting," Gray said. "We didn't get back until June 8."

Then, he said, the first month included no football activities, only lifting and running.

"We had to get in shape to make sure we could get through a two-hour practice," Gray said with a laugh.

When teams did get back together for workouts, it was interesting to say the least.

"Eight guys at a time, groups of 15 on the field. It was unbelievable," Panhorst said.

Then during the playoff season, his grandfather Jack Plas and his mother-in-law died within a nine-day span.

The one major ray of sunshine in there was the birth of Gray's daughter, Payton, on Oct. 29.

Besides that — whew — what a first season.

"I wouldn't say this year has been easier," Gray said with a laugh, "but just different challenges. When you think it's a cakewalk, that's when you lose it. But getting back to the weight room, back to the locker room — building that camaraderie ... just kids spending time together ... that's such a huge piece of building a team."

MENTOR » PAGE 11

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## Mentor

FROM PAGE 10

Now that Mentor has all that going for it again, the Cardinals are ready to soar again to great heights despite the graduation of a strong senior class.

"Everything that went on last year, all that we came through, that's for sure going to benefit us this year," said Chris Finucan, one of four captains along with Brandon Ryan, Benny LoDuca and Panhorst. "We have a ton of guys back who went through all of that together. We're stronger for that."

Perhaps the biggest shoes Mentor has to fill this fall is those left by the graduation of Kipp. That responsibility falls on the shoulders of junior Jacob Snow, who made his first-ever varsity start in the state semifinal loss to Pickerington Central.

A year older and a year wiser from that experience — one in which he threw for 193 yards and ran for 45 — Snow said he is eager to lead the Mentor offense this year.

"I have so much more in the tank than what I showed in that game," he said of the loss to Pickerington Central. "I want to show how much I have and how much more offense and team have than in that game."

"Every day I step out on that field, I'm thankful that I am 'that guy' this year. Hopefully I can make Mentor and all those who came



TIM PHILLIS — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Mentor coach Matt Gray during his team's scrimmage against Chardon on Aug. 13.

before me proud."

Said senior Chris Finucan, a starting safety this year, "He didn't know he was going to start until the Thursday before the game at 2:15 in the afternoon. The defense told him we had his back. He's a competitor and fighter. We'll need that from him this year, too."

Only Evan Harper returns as a starter at receiver. Panhorst split time with Riley Coughlin at running back last year, so he's back in the fold, too.

Three of the five offensive linemen from last year are back as well — tackles Ethan Bostelman and Brandon Ryan and center Danny

Call.

Defensively, a lot of attention will go to Notre Dame commit Brenan Vernon, a five-star national recruit. But his productivity is only a portion of his contribution to the team.

Additionally, since Vernon often commands double- or triple-team blocks,

that means other teammates will be single-blocked or not blocked at all. But there's more.

"The No. 1 thing Brenan brings — and it's contagious — is his motor," Gray said. "He plays so hard. And when others see Brenan Vernon, being the caliber of player that he is, playing

that hard every day, they bring it, too."

The rest of the defensive is relatively young from a starting point of view. Only linebacker Aiden Fellows and cornerback Michael Harrison return to claim the starting positions they held a year ago.

But Gray pointed out the overall experience of 38 returning letterwinners, as well as the leadership of the four team captains (Panhorst, Finucan, Ryan and LoDuca) as team positives.

"Our four captains are great, great leaders," Gray said. "They lead by example and bring great energy. They're a great testament to what we're doing here."

The road won't be easy this season. The Cardinals travel to tradition-rich Canton McKinley for the Aug. 20 season-opener, host St. Ignatius in Week 2, and then go to St. Edward in Week 3. But the Cardinals forge onward into the season strengthened by what they went through last year.

The players. The coaches. The community.

"No matter the circumstances, no matter what's going on, you've got to go out, work hard, compete and get better every day," Gray said. "There were a lot of times we could have made excuses and a lot of time we could have thrown in the towel. But we didn't let that happen. And as head coach, that make me very proud. No matter what happens, this group is focused on the Mentor Cardinals and what's best for our program."



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## HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

# Lake success comes with culture change

By Jay Kron

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When Marty Gibbons became a first-year head coach at Lake Catholic, his alma mater, in 2019, results weren't much different than what the Cougars had experienced in previous seasons.

Lake Catholic dropped three of its last four games to finish with a 4-6 mark. But as he explained, the seeds of success had been sown.

"We were 4-6 our first year, and last year we were 3-2 coming out of the regular season, so that could have gone the same way," Gibbons said. "Sometimes it's just the way the ball bounces.

"But I think if you asked our seniors that first season, they would say that good things were happening in the program."

It is often said that a coach's third season is when things begin to turn the corner. But the Cougars moved way ahead of that curve with a run to the Division IV state final in 2020, falling just short in a 31-28, last-minute loss to Van Wert.

For Gibbons, change comes as a result of trust and belief in the school and the program, strong relationships with the coaching staff and teammates, and a consistent message.



PAUL DICICCO — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Lake Catholic coach Marty Gibbons watches over practice Aug. 3.

"We practiced a little differently, prepared a little differently, we're always trying to be ahead of the curve," Gibbons said re-

garding processes his staff has implemented. "There's a strong level of clarity between the coaches and players about the tempo and

pace that we do things and the way we approach things mentally and physically."

Gibbons has incorporated lessons he's learned

from his own playing days at Lake Catholic and John Carroll, as well as his work as an assistant at Notre Dame College and VASJ.

But he doesn't need to look far to find his greatest source of inspiration and advice. His father, Lake Catholic coaching legend John Gibbons, and brother Tom, a former player for the Cougars himself, are on his coaching staff.

"We're all giving that same message, and we're all together as a coaching staff, and that's something you don't get everywhere," Gibbons said. "At a lot of high school programs you may struggle to connect adults so they can lead young men, and I don't think we have a problem with that here whatsoever."

The fact that all three, as well as the rest of the staff, is so associated with the Cougars' successful past helps to accentuate their message.

"It's hard to fake that relationship with each other and that trust and belief in the school and in the program," Gibbons said. "For us, a big piece of what we do is keeping that Lake Catholic tradition intact."

A major aspect of any team's culture change is attaining "buy-in" from the players. Gibbons and his fellow coaches have cultivated that desire in their players

to bring about an adjustment from mediocrity to achievement through building trust and teaching how to be a good teammate.

"Care about them a ton, and never give up on a kid, regardless of his ability level," Gibbons said of his staff's philosophy. "We don't wait for them to trust us — we do the work as coaches to build trust with our players."

Gibbons credited the Lake Catholic weight room program, run by Jimmy King, for not only helping the players become bigger, faster, and stronger, but also teaching them to be good teammates.

"They have to partner with each other and help each other, otherwise kids can get hurt in the weight room," Gibbons said. "Everything is so structured and organized. They HAVE to care about each other, or they can't make it here."

Last year's 8-3 finish and deep playoff run was reminiscent of Lake Catholic glory days of the past, but has the corner been turned for good?

Time will tell, but Gibbons and his team are ready for the challenge.

"We want to continue this now, and we're looking forward to that," he said. "It's really tough to sustain success, so that will be the next challenge."

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## High school football playoff region projections

By Chris Lillstrung

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**NOTE:** The 16-team playoff expansion for all regions in 2021 has necessitated a structure change in these annual projections. In years past, 12 projections were made when eight teams qualified per region. To increase the degree of difficulty and not, essentially, project who will lose less in the back half of regions, projections are being scaled back to eight.

### DIVISION I, REGION 1

(teams are listed in alphabetical order; area teams in CAPS; 2020 records are listed)

**Contenders:** Brunswick (6-3), Canton McKinley (5-3), EUCLID (5-3), Medina (6-4), MENTOR (9-2), St. Edward (6-2), St. Ignatius (3-4), Stow-Munroe Falls (5-2)

**What to look for:** Division I alignment presents an unfortunate reality in regard to disparity with this move to 16 playoff qualifiers. Region 1 has 17 teams total, so only one team will not make it. Basically with this structure, if a team goes 1-9 in this region, it will likely seal a playoff berth. Beyond that unusual facet, the top half of the region should be dominated by the usual suspects.

Area-wise, while Mentor did graduate quite a bit from its Division I state final four squad last fall, there is enough returning to be hopeful of the Cardinals contending for the top eight



NEWS-HERALD FILE

Chardon is among a group of perennially strong contenders in Division III, Region 9 this season.

in this region like usual. If the new faces on offense, especially at the skill positions, jell to complement Brenan Vernon and a potentially stout defense, Mentor should be fine. In order to assure top-four home-field viability going into Greater Cleveland Conference play,

4-1 against that meatgrinder of a nonconference slate would be a nice statement of intent. Whether the new-look Cardinals get there, though, is entirely up to them.

The interesting facet with Euclid always seems to be the Panthers graduate a ton

but find a way to transition smoothly nonetheless. The hope would be Euclid can adjust on the fly under new coach Rick Lytle and build some steam heading into a Week 4 clash with St. Ignatius. If the Panthers can get out of that 2-2 or better, the top eight here is doable.

Elsewhere in Region 1, Brunswick and Medina likely vying toward the top of the GCC standings should assure good placement when it's all said and done.

Penn State recruit Drew Allar at QB will, of course, keep the Bees in good stead. St. Edward and St. Ignatius

are, well, St. Edward and St. Ignatius.

They'll be fine. Both have a full 10-game schedule not overly reliant on Canadian opponents, so the margin for error won't be as thin as perhaps it's been in other recent years.

PROJECTIONS » PAGE 14

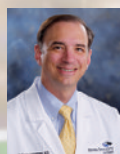


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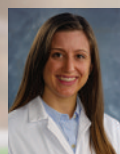
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# Projections

FROM PAGE 13

## DIVISION II, REGION 5

(teams are listed in alphabetical order; area teams in CAPS; 2020 records are listed)

**Contenders:** Akron Hoban (11-0), Austintown-Fitch (7-1), Hudson (9-1), Nardon (5-6), SOUTH (3-5), Twinsburg (3-5), Walsh Jesuit (5-2), Warren Harding (6-4)

**What to look for:** Generally speaking, for The News-Herald coverage area teams in this region, it's not so much that many aren't capable of making a top-eight run. The issue is graduation was not kind to many of these squads, with senior classes that helped shape the program in their respective tenures now gone.

The Western Reserve Conference runner-up and third-place team typically means they can vie for the top eight. It feels like this could be a progression year for South, with Ira Sampson and a predominantly young group from a year ago back in the fold. Some questions will need to be answered on the line and defensively, but there's enough there on paper to believe the Rebels can be in the mix for the upper half of the regional playoff qualifiers.

It will be interesting to keep an eye on 2020 senior-heavy area teams such as Benedictine, Mayfield, North and Riverside. The Beavers are intriguing, coming off a 6-2



NEWS-HERALD FILE

Benedictine features a senior-heavy squad, and the Bengals will need all of them in Division II, Region 5.

campaign, but need to show they haven't skipped a beat as they replace an arsenal of key personnel.

The easiest projection among all these region outlooks is probably giving the benefit of the doubt to Akron Hoban at this point. Whoever is in place for the Knights is almost immaterial — you just trust Hoban to be a region leader and state powerhouse.

Keep an eye on Warren Harding, with running back Brysen Powell returning,

who impressed in the second half of last season.

**DIVISION III, REGION 9**  
(teams are listed in alphabetical order; area teams in CAPS; 2020 records are listed)

**Contenders:** Aurora (6-3), Canfield (9-1), CHARDON (12-0), Hubbard (5-3), KENSTON (3-4), Steubenville (5-3), Tallmadge (4-5), WEST GEAUGA (6-2)

**What to look for:** The perennial heavy hitters abound, but there does

seem to be an opportunity for someone to take the proverbial bull by the horns and be the standard bearer for this region.

Chardon will need to get new players in key positions acclimated but should have enough to be a tone-setter once again, coming off its 2020 state title run. That will prove invaluable with the extra weeks of practice and tutelage that came with it for those returning. Whatever may be lacking on paper, Coach Mitch Hewitt

will assuredly mold and get the most out of the Hilltoppers like usual.

Kenston is interesting. Amid the pandemic last fall, there was such an extent of stop-and-start to the Bombers' campaign that it was challenging to get a read on them. But Coach Jeff Grubich will probably have one of this area's most exciting offenses, led by QB Nikko Georgiou and a bevy of receiving weapons, along with an active defense. It doesn't seem out of line to think

Kenston could be poised for a bounceback season.

West Geauga could be a top-eight candidate and wind up one of The News-Herald coverage area's more complete teams, with All-Ohioans Luca Gasbarrino and Danny Stewart, among others, returning.

It's hard to believe Steubenville will regress after an uncharacteristic 5-3 season a year ago. Two standout non-area players in this region will be Canfield quarterback Broc Lowry, a first-team All-Ohioan last fall as the Cardinals went 9-1, and Hubbard running back Timothy Caffey (1,170 rushing yards, 12 TDs).

If you want a deep sleeper, it might be Tallmadge with QB Ty Hurst (2,201 passing yards, 20 TDs), his top three receivers and leading tackler Nick Cuva back. The Blue Devils absolutely need to tighten up on defense but could be exciting enough to be better than their 4-5 season in 2020.

## DIVISION IV, REGION 13

(teams are listed in alphabetical order; area teams in CAPS; 2020 records are listed)

**Contenders:** Canal Fulton Northwest (8-1), CVCA (8-3), Girard (4-6), LAKE CATHOLIC (8-3), PERRY (5-2), Poland Seminary (7-2), Ursuline (7-3), West Branch (8-2)

**What to look for:** No way around it: Lake Catholic and Perry have some big shoes to fill after the senior classes that graduated.

PROJECTIONS » PAGE 15



# Projections

FROM PAGE 14

An argument could be made the Pirates are further along in that regard, with Brayden and Javin Richards along with Jadyann Anderson returning among more under first-year coach Bob Gecewich. Even with program great Jaylen Anderson off to West Virginia, it wouldn't be a surprise to see Perry among the class of the CVC Chagrin again and deep in the mix in turn for a top-eight berth.

Lake's state final run was inspiring in 2020, powered by a seasoned and determined group of seniors. Jaxon French takes over at QB for a Cougars squad not lacking in opportunity for younger players in a transition year. If last year's run proved anything, though, projecting against Lake is a mistake.

On paper, it appears the class of this region is going to be Ursuline, paced by quarterback Brady Shannon and a dangerous offense. The Fighting Irish will assuredly be on a mission after having what they hoped would be a deep playoff run a year ago derailed in the loss to the Cougars by missing several standout players due to COVID protocols.

The ultimate X-factor in this region will likely be Glenville. With the Senate League taking last year off due to the pandemic, there's no telling what the Tarblood-



NEWS-HERALD FILE

As always, Kirtland will be the team to beat in Division V, Region 17.

ers will bring to the table. Typically, Glenville is one of the most potent and deep teams in a given region — particularly so now that it's down in Division IV.

## DIVISION V, REGION 17

(teams are listed in alphabetical order; area teams in CAPS; 2020 records are listed)

**Contenders:** Bellaire (5-4), Cardinal Mooney (2-6), Columbiana Crestview (7-2), Garrettsville (9-1), Harrison Central (5-4), KIRTLAND (11-0), Sandy Valley (7-3), South Range (9-1)

**What to look for:** At this juncture and at this rate, there are only so many ways to describe the perch Kirtland enjoys in its playoff region, as a multiple-time state champion and Ohio small-school powerhouse. So we'll just leave it at this: The Hornets will be loaded up once again for a run deep into November toward

December and should be the prohibitive favorite in this region.

After a program-defining 2020 campaign in which it went 6-2 and won a pair of playoff games, another News-Herald coverage area squad in Beachwood is a bit of a mystery at the moment for this exercise. The Bison have a new coach in Van Monroe and had some outgoing transfers, so they can't really be gauged properly on paper vs. last fall as a result. If it wasn't for the roster turnover, Beachwood would factor in as a top-eight contender here.

In Year 2 under Carl Pelini, chances are good Cardinal Mooney will have an uptick in fortune. The Cardinals have several starters back on both sides of the ball, including the electric Zy'ere Rogers in the backfield. After a 2-6 season a year ago, tempering expectation a bit is fine. But Mooney should

contend for the top eight nonetheless.

It seems like a pair of 5-4 squads from 2020, Bellaire and Harrison Central, could have enough back to take a step forward — perhaps not all the way to the top four, but enough to get into that Nos. 5-8 level.

## DIVISION VI, REGION 21

(teams are listed in alphabetical order; area teams in CAPS; 2020 records are listed)

**Contenders:** Berlin Center Western Reserve (6-4), Brookfield (6-4), Columbia (7-3), LaBrae (6-4), Mogadore (6-2), New Middletown Springfield (11-1), Norwayne (9-1), Pymatuning Valley (8-1), St. Thomas Aquinas (5-3)

**What to look for:** The two News-Herald coverage area entries in this region are Cardinal and Wickliffe.

After the Blue Devils' historic 8-1 campaign in 2020,

there is some hesitancy here simply because they graduated so many key components to that squad. That, in turn, makes it an extremely young squad this fall. That doesn't mean there will be a major downturn, of course. But it does mean there are probably going to be some growing pains as Coach Marce Porcello nurtures a young group along.

Cardinal could very well be improved from its 2-8 record last season. Having some size back on the line helps. But as far as improving all the way into the top eight, the Huskies will need to prove they're capable of such an upswing.

Among the rest of the region are the usual calling cards. Berlin Center Western Reserve is always tough and physical. Mogadore is one of the most well-regarded programs on the gridiron year-to-year.

There's not much more room to build after the laudable 11-1 state final run last year by New Middletown Springfield. But they'll certainly try, led by prolific quarterback Beau Brungard, the Division VI co-offensive player of the year in Ohio last fall. He accounted for nearly 3,000 yards passing and rushing, along with 42 touchdowns. So hopes should be high there once again.

## DIVISION VII, REGION 25

(teams are listed in alphabetical order; area teams in CAPS; 2020 records are listed)

**Contenders:** Dalton (6-

3), Independence (6-2), Leetonia (7-2), Lucas (7-3), Malvern (7-1), Monroeville (5-2), Norwalk St. Paul (6-3), Warren JFK (9-3)

**What to look for:** The lone News-Herald coverage area squad in this region, with Richmond Heights on Year 2 of its hiatus, is Fairport.

Unfortunately, with the known roster numbers struggles and an unexpected coaching change, this goes beyond playoff aspirations for the Skippers. At this point, being able to field a full team and make it through this season as the program celebrates its 100th anniversary is the prize here. Here's to hoping Fairport can make that happen, because clearly under these circumstances, the road is uphill at best.

As far as contenders in this region, the pattern is likely to play out the same way it always does. Region 25 will be top-heavy in the top two or three, a cadre of teams hovering around .500 will comprise much of the rest and opportunity is wide open for a playoff berth. Because of how much the bottom half of this region usually struggles, it would not be a total shock to see a 2-8 team at least contend for Week 11.

Greater Cleveland-wise, Independence was young last year and should be poised for a nice campaign after going 6-2 in 2020. Warren JFK has some good size back in the trenches, especially for Division VII, and is optimistic after its 9-3 state final charge in 2020.

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## HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

# Kirtland continues to raise the bar

Hornets will go for four straight state titles this season; seniors can compile 57-0 career marks with another undefeated championship season

By John Kampf  
jkampf@news-herald.com

Just because you set an initial bar — an initial goal — doesn't mean you can't continue to raise it.

Such is life in the Kirtland football program.

When Coach Tiger LaVerde took over the program in 2006, he pondered the possibility of playing in a state championship game someday.

Maybe.

It's safe to say the bar at Kirtland has been reset over and over again over the past 15 years.

By 2011, the Hornets had not only played in a state championship game, they won one.

So the bar gets reset.

In 2013, Kirtland won another title, so again the bar was raised to win two in a row.

That goal came to fruition when the Hornets won back-to-back crowns in 2018 and 2019.

The bar was raised to a threepeat, which was achieved a year ago.

When the Hornets take to the field for their season opener on Aug. 20 against Harvey, they will do so not only with a 41-game winning streak and three straight state titles, they will do so with another bar of achievement in front of them.

Four state titles in a row, seven titles in the past 11 years and the goal of sending off this year's senior class without a single loss to their names.

It's Kirtland — so why not aim high?

"Our senior class has never lost a game. That's a big burden to carry, but we'd like to keep it that way," said senior Mason Rus. "57 and 0 would be pretty cool, but we know we have a lot of work to do if we want a chance to do that."

**"57 and 0 would be pretty cool, but we know we have a lot of work to do if we want a chance to do that."**

*Kirtland senior Mason Rus*

Kirtland is coming off a COVID-shortened 2020 season that saw it finish 11-0 and annihilate Ironton, 38-0, in the Division V state championship game.

Along the way they — for the first time in program history — beat a pair of Division I teams (Solon and Shaker Heights) in the regular season, as well as a convincing win over eventual Division IV state runner-up Lake Catholic.

The Hornets have not lost since the state championship game in 2017, when they fell to Maria Stein Marion Local, a loss they avenged a year later.

When the moment is the biggest, Kirtland has played its best, including:

- A 16-7 Division VI state championship game win over Marion Local in 2018 when the Hornets shut down the defending state champs.

- A 17-7 win over Ironton in the Division V championship game in 2019 over Ironton in a battle of the top-two ranked teams in the state, and;

- The 38-0 bludgeoning of Ironton in the rematch last year.

"You look at the last three state-title games, and I don't know if we could have played much better," LaVerde said.

"We gave up a total of 14 points in three games, committed a total of three penalties and didn't turn the ball over.

"When you play good teams and don't make mistakes, you give yourself a chance."

The challenges this year for Kirtland are multi-faceted, in-

cluding:

- The Hornets for the first time have moved from the smaller CVC Valley Division (where the teams they face are Division V or Division VI) to the larger CVC Chargin Division (made up of predominantly Division IV teams).

- Kirtland fielding its least-experienced team in recent years, with only three starters returning on each side of the ball.

- A target that gets bigger each and every year Kirtland comes home with a gold state championship trophy tucked underneath its arm.

"We know going in each week what we're going up against," said George Prusock, an All-Ohio lineman a year ago as a sophomore. "There are no easy run-throughs. Everybody wants to knock us off. We have to be ready for that if we want to keep this thing going."

"But at the same time, that doesn't bother us." Neither does the lack of experience.

Offensively, the only returning starters are linemen Jonathan Withrow and Prusock, along with 6-foot-4 receiver Gage Sullivan.

Defensively, the returning starters are Rus and Joseph Coleman, along with Sullivan at safety.

A lot of first-time starters will take the field Week 1 against Harvey, though many have gotten playing time in recent years.

Despite returning only a handful of starters, there are a total of 18 returning letter winners who have valuable minutes in recent years in backup roles.

Among that group of young-

sters itching to make their mark on varsity is a new backfield of quarterbacks Pierce Boyd and Ramon Lescano — who are in a starting quarterback derby — and new runners such as Macguire Boyd, Tommy Gogolin, Rus and Lescano (should Pierce Boyd start at quarterback).

"They're young and tough. They'll run hard," LaVerde said of his new backs. "And the line, those are tough kids too. We've got Withrow and Prusock back, (guard) Brennon Braud was a state-placer in wrestling and Jimmy Pekar and Mason Vermilye are big, strong kids. I really like this offensive line.

"We just can't turn the ball over. That's my biggest thing."

The defense is typical Kirtland defense — smallish yet ferocious. Sullivan (190 pounds) is the heaviest projected starter — and he's at safety.

The front three of Daven Patel, Robert Laney and Scott Haymer averages 175 pounds.

"Besides that year we had (300-pounder) Jack Bailey on the line, we haven't been that big on defense," LaVerde said. "We use stronger, faster guys. Do your job, get in your gap and control the line of scrimmage and we'll be just fine."

The "stronger" part is a badge of honor for the team, as always. The offseason weight-lifting program of strength and conditioning coach Ray Sullivan is the linchpin to Kirtland's success.

"It starts there," Gage Sullivan said.

"We have a great group of younger guys preparing. We're good at what we do and have great teamwork with the younger players. It shows with the hard work we do in the weight room."

No matter how big the winning streak gets, and no matter

how many state championship banners are hung, the Hornets remain hungry.

There's always something to improve upon, LaVerde said.

"We make mistakes every day in practice, or like our first scrimmage at North," said the Kirtland coach.

"There's no one on our team who thinks they are as good as they possibly can be. They all make mistakes every day. We just have to correct them, and if you do that, you'll give yourself a chance."

LaVerde isn't one to rest on laurels, nor one to look back at how far he and the program have come since he took over the squad starting with the 2006 season.

The Hornets enter this season 185-17 (.916) under LaVerde, with six state championships and three state runner-up finishes in the past decade.

A byproduct of that success means that each year the bar gets raised a little higher.

Can Kirtland reach the next bar of going undefeated again, pushing its winning streak to 57-0 over the past four years and hanging Banner No. 7 on the wall?

No one is predicting, only preaching the importance of remembering what it took to get to this point.

"There's a high ceiling of expectations," LaVerde said, "but it comes down to focusing on a daily basis. Every snap, every day counts.

"These guys are driven every single day. It's 365 (days). But our only focus right now is kickoff Week 1 against Harvey.

"If you look any further than that, that's when you get bit in the butt. If we take care of today, then take care of tomorrow, then the day after — and we're successful doing that — then hey, we'll see where it takes us."



Kirtland celebrates after beating Ironton last season to win the Division V state championship.

PAUL DICICCO — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

## Beachwood»Bison

### Just the facts

**Conference:** CVC Valley

**OHSAA:** Division V, Region 17

**Coach:** Van Monroe, first season

**2020:** 6-1

**Twitter:** @BisonAthletics

**Home field:** Beachwood Bison Stadium

### Outlook

The determining factor in Beachwood's success this season is going to come down to their conditioning. With a smaller roster than in years past, numerous players are playing both ways. First-year head coach Van Monroe has made sure his team is in the best shape possible. A large number of players will take to the field for the first time at the varsity level on Week 1. While inexperienced, the Bison players are showing great maturity and stepping up when called upon and following the example set by Nzekwe.

### Player to watch

Uzonna Nzekwe is the lone returning starter from last season. Playing on the offensive and defensive line, Nzekwe has not just become a leader for those groups of players, but the whole team.

**Underclassman to watch:** MarQuis Pinkney has stepped into the QB position, as well as a few other positions on offense when called upon. He will also play safety for the Bison. His versatility can be a major asset for Beachwood as the season progresses.

### Bottom line

**IF:** Beachwood's youth continues to develop during the season, **THEN:** The Bison can play spoiler in the CVC Valley title race.

— Benjamin Hercik

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Orange at Beachwood, 7  
**Aug. 27:** John Marshall at Beachwood, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Open  
**Sept. 10:** Beachwood at Trinity, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Beachwood at Crestwood, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Cardinal at Beachwood, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 1:** Open  
**Oct. 8:** Hawken at Beachwood, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Berkshire at Beachwood, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Beachwood at Grand Valley

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

**QB:** MarQuis Pinkney Jr.  
**RB:** Jaymon Caldwell Jr.  
**WR:** Shannon Richardson Sr.  
**WR:** Lavon Swaby Sr.  
**WR:** Trey Reese Sr.  
**TE:** Clay Tepper Sr.  
**OL:** Eliot Brown Sr.  
**OL:** D'Von Weary Sr.  
**OL:** Joahua Greenwood Jr.  
**OL:** Uzonna Nzekwe Sr.  
**OL:** Abdou Dieye So.  
**K:** Gili Avitan Jr.



Nzekwe

#### DEFENSE

**DL:** Eliot Brown Sr.  
**DL:** D'Von Weary Sr.  
**DL:** Uzonna Nzekwe Sr.  
**DL:** Joshua Greenwood Jr.  
**LB:** Eli Lev Sr.  
**LB:** Jamison Caldwell Jr.  
**LB:** Trenton Thorton Jr.  
**CB:** Shannon Richardson Sr.  
**CB:** Lavon Swaby Sr.  
**SS:** Jake Burkons So.  
**FS:** MarQuis Pinkney Jr.  
**P:** Gili Avitan Jr.



Pinkney

## Benedictine»Bengals

### Just the facts

**Conference:** Independent

**OHSAA:** Division II, Region 5

**Coach:** Jarritt Goode, Third year (14-7)

**2020:** 4-5

**Twitter:** @BeneBengalsFB

**Home field:** Euclid Community Stadium

### Outlook

There are plenty of new faces for the Bengals this season, as only Terrell Grier returns on offense, and Derrell Bedingfield and Michael Hatcher return on defense. With limited returners from a team that reached back-to-back regional semifinals, Benedictine will need some players to take on bigger roles. They do return running back Duane Jackson, who saw significant playing time last season, and will shoulder the load this season. However, he will be running behind an offensive line that has no varsity experience. With limited experience up front, the speed at the skill position is something that Goode is happy to have at their disposal.

### Player to watch

As one of the few returning starters, Derrell Bedingfield Jr. takes up a bigger role, as he returns at his outside linebacker position and will also see some time at tight end. Last season, Bedingfield recorded 4.5 sacks to lead the Bengals, and Benedictine is hoping to see even more out of him this season as the defensive leader.

### Underclassman to watch:

Anthony Iliano has stepped up to the challenge of the new starting right tackle for the Bengals. With no returning starters up front, the junior has taken over a leadership role and will be the anchor of the offensive line.



NEWS-HERALD FILE

Benedictine running back Duane Jackson, shown, in 2020.

### Bottom line

**IF:** The youth can find their rhythm on both sides of the ball, **THEN:** the Bengals can get back to a regional semifinal.

— Benjamin Hercik

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Benedictine at Walsh Jesuit, 7  
**Aug. 28:** Toledo Central Catholic at Benedictine, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Benedictine at Cleveland Central Catholic, 4:30  
**Sept. 10:** Benedictine at Bishop Hartley, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Open  
**Sept. 24:** Boardman at Benedictine, 7  
**Oct. 1:** Benedictine at Brecksville-Broadview Heights, 7  
**Oct. 8:** Erie Cathedral Prep at Benedictine, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Benedictine at Akron Hoban, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Benedictine at Nardon, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

**QB:** Carlton Yarboro Jr. Sr.  
**RB:** Duane Jackson Jr.  
**WR:** Marvin Conkle Sr.  
**WR:** Terrell Grier\* Sr.  
**WR:** Brandon Boyd Sr.  
**Z/TE:** Darrell Bedingfield Sr.  
**LT:** Dakari Reese Jr.  
**LG:** Patrick Morse Jr.  
**C:** Frank (Joe) McDonnell Sr.  
**RG:** Brian Underwood Jr.  
**RT:** Anthony Iliano Jr.  
**K:** TBA

#### DEFENSE

**DT:** Lewis Terry Jr.  
**DT:** Darius Siggers Sr.  
**DE:** Khareem Jennings So.  
**OLB:** Ryan Konecni Jr.  
**MLB:** James Phillips Sr.  
**OLB:** Derrell Bedingfield\* Sr.  
**CB:** Michael Hatcher\* Sr.  
**CB:** Erik Cloud So.  
**SS:** Marvin Conkle\* Sr.  
**FS:** Brandon Boyd Sr.  
**P:** Christian Cora\* Sr.

\* — returning starter; Returning letterwinners: 14



Bedingfield



Iliano



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## Berkshire » Badgers

### Just the facts

**Conference:** CVC Valley

**OHSAA:** Division V, Region 17

**Head Coach:** Josh Deweese, ninth year (32-48)

**2020:** 5-4

**Twitter:** @Badgersfbal

**Home field:** Dr. William A. Reed Field

### Outlook

The strength for Berkshire is going to be up front on both sides of the ball. The Badgers return three of their offensive linemen and five of their seven along the defensive front. Mentor transfer Ethan Bryndal fills one of those holes on both sides of the ball. Lucas Stoddard will also act as a sixth lineman for new QB Miles Miller, while also being his safety valve at TE. The 6-foot-4 senior has added roughly 15 pounds of muscle and should be a destructive force on both sides of the ball. The skill positions are young, with one player returning on each side.

### Player to watch

Josh Brown is the lone returning starter among the skill positions and has been a leader on both sides. He has been a factor from the slot and off the edge for the Badgers, and with a young group around him, Deweese is excited to see Brown lead the younger group.



Brown



Miller

### Underclassman to watch:

Despite being a new QB for Berkshire, Miles Miller knows the system well as he was brought up through the system. His experience mixed with new faces at the skill positions and a veteran offensive line gives Deweese a lot of optimism for what the offense is capable.

### Bottom line

**IF:** the young skill positions lean on the veteran fronts, **THEN:** the Badgers can be CVC Valley title contenders.

— Benjamin Hercik

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Berkshire at Cuyahoga Heights, 7

**Aug. 27:** Fairport at Berkshire, 7

**Sept. 3:** Trinity at Berkshire, 7

**Sept. 10:** Grand Valley at Berkshire, 7

**Sept. 17:** Berkshire at Independence, 7

**Sept. 24:** Berkshire at Crestwood, 7

**Oct. 1:** Hawken at Berkshire, 7

**Oct. 8:** Harvey at Berkshire, 7 (HC)

**Oct. 15:** Berkshire at Beachwood, 7

**Oct. 22:** Berkshire at Cardinal, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Miles Miller	So.	5-10	155
<b>RB:</b> Jack Kuehn	Sr.	6-0	180
<b>WR:</b> Mason Mendolera	So.	6-0	187
<b>WR:</b> J.R. Ricci	So.	6-0	170
<b>WR:</b> Josh Brown*	Jr.	5-11	170
<b>TE:</b> Lucas Stoddard*	Sr.	6-4	195
<b>LT:</b> Jeremy Boshier*	Sr.	6-4	273
<b>LG:</b> Kaige Martin*	Sr.	5-11	210
<b>C:</b> Lucas Luoma	Jr.	5-11	215
<b>RG:</b> Denton Yoder*	Sr.	6-0	230
<b>RT:</b> Ethan Bryndal	Sr.	6-4	256
<b>K:</b> Apollo Percic	Jr.	6-1	160



Stoddard

#### DEFENSE

<b>DE:</b> Lucas Stoddard*	Sr.	6-4	195
<b>DT:</b> Kaige Martin*	Sr.	5-11	210
<b>DT:</b> Jeremy Boshier*	Sr.	6-4	273
<b>DE:</b> Ethan Bryndal	Sr.	6-4	256
<b>LB:</b> Jack Kuehn*	Sr.	5-11	180
<b>LB:</b> Denton Yonder*	Sr.	6-0	230
<b>LB:</b> Ethan McCaskey	Sr.	5-9	180
<b>CB:</b> Mason Mendolera	So.	6-0	187
<b>CB:</b> Johnny Heiden	Jr.	5-10	142
<b>FS:</b> Josh Brown*	Jr.	5-11	170
<b>SS:</b> Jack Hastings	So.	6-0	165
<b>P:</b> Josh Brown*	Jr.	5-10	160

\* — returning starter; Returning letterwinners: 11; Key reserves: Jack Hastings, So., 5-11, 175, Alex Munn, So., 5-8, 150, Hunter Nicholson, Jr., 5-9, 258, Amadeus Kosova, Jr., 5-8, 137

**Best in the classroom:** Lucas Stoddard, 4.37 GPA, Amadeus Kosova, 4.0, Mason Mendolera, 3.96

**Best bench press:** Jeremy Boshier and Lucas Luoma, 260 pounds

**Best 40 time:** Miles Miller, 4.82 seconds

**Best squat:** Jeremy Boshier, 385 pounds

## Brush » Arcs

### Just the facts

**Conference:** Independent

**OHSAA:** Division II, Region 5

**Coach:** Eddie Hall, fourth year (6-21)

**2020:** 2-5

**Twitter:** @BrushAthletics

**Home field:** Korb Field

### Outlook

With AJ Shorts graduating, it's a new QB for the Arcs with Dimario Ballom under center now. He has plenty of athleticism and experience around him as all of the skill position starter returns. The Arcs also have a big line to protect Ballom, along with Woolfolk at TE. The 6-8 senior has drawn the attention of a number of colleges for football and basketball. He will also play on the defensive side of the ball with fellow multi-sports standout Maliek Williams and Alfred Murry Jr. to anchor a defense that only has three new starters.

### Player to watch

Maliek Williams has been a three-year starter for the Arcs on the line and will be counted on to help the new faces on the offensive line reach their potential. On the defensive side of the ball, Williams will be a key factor for the Arcs to disrupt the opponents' running game.



Williams

### Underclassman to watch:

Glen Larry is another name up front that has taken a step up. He is the lone new face on the defensive line and has worked to become a better player. Will also be responsible for protecting Ballom's blind side as the left guard.



Larry

### Bottom line

**IF:** Ballom can learn from his veteran skill players around him, **THEN:** the Arcs can sneak into the playoffs.

— Benjamin Hercik

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Lakeside at Brush, 7

**Aug. 27:** Brush at Toledo Bowsher, 7

**Sept. 3:** Sylvania Southview at Brush, 7

**Sept. 10:** Brush at Mogadore, 7

**Sept. 17:** Akron North at Brush, 7

**Sept. 24:** South at Brush, 7 (HC)

**Oct. 1:** Cardinal Mooney at Brush, 7

**Oct. 9:** Brush at Gilmour, 2

**Oct. 15:** Brush at North, 7

**Oct. 23:** Brush at Lutheran East, 1

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Dimario Ballom	Sr.	5-11	185
<b>RB:</b> Chris Tinsley*	Sr.	6-0	205
<b>RB:</b> Tanelle Rose*	So.	6-0	180
<b>WR:</b> Kweli Coleman*	Sr.	6-4	230
<b>WR:</b> Damario Williams*	Sr.	5-11	170
<b>TE:</b> Antwone Woolfolk*	Sr.	6-8	265
<b>LT:</b> Desmond Yanamyu	Sr.	5-10	250
<b>LG:</b> Glen Larry IV	Jr.	6-4	280
<b>C:</b> Kenneth Ray	Jr.	5-9	260
<b>RG:</b> Maliek Williams*	Sr.	6-3	292
<b>RT:</b> Ababacar Seck*	Sr.	6-3	225
<b>K:</b> Matthew Monah	Jr.	6-1	160



Woolfolk

#### DEFENSE

<b>DL:</b> Antwone Woolfolk*	Sr.	6-8	260
<b>DL:</b> Glen Larry IV	Jr.	6-4	280
<b>DL:</b> Maliek Williams*	Sr.	6-3	292
<b>DL:</b> Alfred Murry Jr.*	Sr.	6-3	275
<b>LB:</b> Christian Tinsley*	Sr.	6-0	205
<b>LB:</b> Lamout Barrett*	Jr.	5-8	200
<b>LB:</b> David Williams Jr.	Jr.	5-9	160
<b>CB:</b> Isiah Fox*	Sr.	5-11	170
<b>CB:</b> Tyrel Cloud	So.	5-7	150
<b>FS:</b> Marshawn Taylor*	Sr.	5-5	155
<b>SS:</b> Jahir Hairston*	Sr.	5-9	170
<b>P:</b> Isiah Fox*	Sr.	5-11	170

\* — returning starter; Returning letterwinners: 11; Key reserves: Michael Russell Jr., So., 5-8, 155

**Best in the classroom:** Ababacar Seck, 4.3 GPA

**Best bench press:** Maliek Williams, 350 pounds

**Best 40 time:** Tyrel Cloud, 4.5 seconds

**Best squat:** Maliek Williams, 450 pounds

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## Cardinal»Huskies

### Just the facts

**Conference:** CVC Valley  
**OHSAA:** Division VI, Region 21  
**Coach:** Chris Perrotti, first year  
**2020:** 2-8  
**Twitter:** @CHS\_HUSKIES\_FB  
**Home field:** Richard A. Moss Field

### Outlook

The Huskies' defense returns all but one starter. With a defensive-minded head coach in Chris Perrotti, Cardinal wants to set the tone and play physical upfront on that side of the ball. On the other side of the ball, the offensive line returns four of their five starters. The lone new face is freshman left guard Max Soltis, who was a standout in middle school and earned a starting spot on the line at left guard. He has two solid players on either side of him with his brother Mike Soltis (6-2, 275) at left tackle and John Avalon (6-1, 265) at center to lean on and learn from.

### Player to watch

Mike Soltis is a returning All-Ohio offensive lineman, and will protect quarterback Logan Strever's blind side as the left tackle. He also has the task of helping his younger brother who starts next to him as a freshman. With a veteran offensive line around him, he will be the anchor.



M. Soltis



J. Soltis

### Underclassman to watch:

Josh Soltis is going to be a key player coming off the bench for Cardinal. He has been working well with Strever in the offensive backfield and has improved his already great vision out of the backfield. He will be splitting time at the running back positions with Zach Czako and JR Kochy.

### Bottom line

**IF:** The Huskies defense lives up to expectations; **THEN:** Cardinal will be in contention for the CVC Valley title.

— Benjamin Hercik

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Garrettsville at Cardinal, 7  
**Aug. 27:** Cardinal at Pymatuning Valley, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Cardinal at Fairport, 7  
**Sept. 10:** Cardinal at Hawken, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Harvey at Cardinal, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Cardinal at Beachwood, 7  
**Oct. 1:** Grand Valley at Cardinal, 7  
**Oct. 8:** Cardinal at Crestwood, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Cuyahoga Heights at Cardinal, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Berkshire at Cardinal, 7 (HC)

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSIVE

<b>QB:</b> Logan Strever	So.	5-11	160
<b>RB:</b> Zach Czako*	Sr.	5-10	220
<b>RB:</b> JR Kochy*	Sr.	6-0	190
<b>WR:</b> Ethan Detweiler*	Jr.	5-9	160
<b>WR:</b> Aiden Gallagher	So.	5-9	145
<b>WR:</b> Tony Soltis*	Sr.	6-1	150
<b>LT:</b> Mike Soltis*	Sr.	6-2	275
<b>LG:</b> Max Soltis	Fr.	6-1	185
<b>C:</b> Josh Avalon*	Sr.	6-1	265
<b>RG:</b> Ty Simms*	Jr.	5-11	210
<b>RT:</b> Andrew Tucholski*	Jr.	5-11	190
<b>K:</b> Maclain Robinson*	Sr.	6-1	180

#### DEFENSE

<b>DT:</b> Josh Avalon*	Sr.	6-1	265
<b>DT:</b> Mike Soltis*	Sr.	6-2	275
<b>DE:</b> JR Kochy*	Sr.	6-0	190
<b>DE:</b> Chase Simak*	Sr.	6-0	185
<b>LB:</b> Zach Czako*	Sr.	6-0	190
<b>LB:</b> Neil Lucariello*	So.	6-0	215
<b>LB:</b> Austin Strever*	Sr.	5-10	165
<b>CB:</b> Tony Soltis*	Sr.	6-1	150
<b>CB:</b> Aiden Gallagher*	So.	5-9	145
<b>SS:</b> Josh Ripley	Jr.	5-11	155
<b>FS:</b> Ethan Detweiler*	Jr.	5-9	160
<b>P:</b> Cameron Carrow*	Sr.	5-11	180

\* — returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 16  
**Key reserves:** Josh Soltis, Sr., 5-11, 185, Blake Reinhardt, Sr., 5-11, 185, Christian Cowl, So., 5-8, 150, Kyle Sinclair, So., 5-10, 170

**Best in the classroom:** John Avalon, 4.25  
**Best bench press:** Zach Czako, 310  
**Best 40 time:** Ethan Detweiler, 4.52  
**Best squat:** Zach Czako/Mike Soltis, 425

## Chagrin Falls»Tigers

### Just the facts

**Conference:** CVC Chagrin  
**Coach:** John Scott, first year  
**OHSAA:** Division IV, Region 13  
**2020:** 5-4  
**Twitter:** @chagrinAD  
**Home field:** C.S. Harris Stadium

### Outlook

Chagrin begins a new era on the sidelines, with Scott taking over for Mark Iammarino, and on the field, with just six returning starters. The good news though, as that transition unfolds, is the group is senior-heavy and determined. The defensive line should be a strength, with Dalessandro's mass and the experienced Moore, Winkelman and Conway in place. Kirkpatrick, a three-sport standout in his Chagrin tenure, makes a strong argument for being The News-Herald's coverage area's best kicker-punter and will be a special teams weapon in turn, coming off a 2020 season with 22 extra points and three field goals.

### Player to watch

Nick Dalessandro, a 6-foot-4, 275-pound senior, is a two-time All-Ohioan, including first-team honors a year ago, and is one of the premier LTs in Ohio regardless of division. His size should also present problems as a disruptor off the edge at DE.



Dalessandro



Hardy

### Underclassman to watch:

Junior RB Donny Hardy (6-0, 190) impressed in his reps last fall as a sophomore with 548 rushing yards and seven TDs and could be poised to build on that in 2021.

### Bottom line

**IF:** ... the cadre of new starters slots into their roles effectively; **THEN:** ... at least 6-4 is there for the taking, perhaps better.

— Chris Lillstrung



COLEEN MOSKOWITZ — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Chagrin Falls' Nick Dalessandro, left, pursues Perry's Jaylen Anderson in 2020.

### Schedule (subject to change)

**Aug. 20:** Chagrin Falls at Kenston, 7  
**Aug. 27:** Trinity at Chagrin Falls, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Chagrin Falls at Brookside, 7  
**Sept. 10:** Perry at Chagrin Falls, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Orange at Chagrin Falls, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Chagrin Falls at Kirtland, 7  
**Oct. 1:** Chagrin Falls at Lakeside, 7  
**Oct. 8:** Edgewood at Chagrin Falls, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Chagrin Falls at West Geauga, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Geneva at Chagrin Falls, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Nicholas Vinci	Jr.	5-9	175
<b>RB:</b> Donny Hardy	Jr.	6-0	190
<b>FB:</b> Camden Amata	Sr.	5-10	175
<b>WR:</b> Cole Ettinger	Sr.	5-10	170
<b>WR:</b> Julian Hink	Jr.	5-8	160
<b>TE:</b> Max Moore	Sr.	6-3	200
<b>LT:</b> Nick Dalessandro*	Sr.	6-4	275
<b>LG:</b> Peter Winkelman	Sr.	5-10	210
<b>C:</b> Wes Kaas	Sr.	6-1	190
<b>RG:</b> Tommy Conway	Sr.	5-11	200
<b>RT:</b> Andrew Bazzone*	Sr.	5-10	220
<b>K:</b> Andrew Kirkpatrick*	Sr.	6-4	240

#### DEFENSE

<b>DE:</b> Nick Dalessandro	Sr.	6-4	275
<b>DT:</b> Peter Winkelman	Sr.	5-10	210
<b>DT:</b> Tommy Conway*	Sr.	5-11	200
<b>DE:</b> Max Moore*	Sr.	6-3	200
<b>OLB:</b> Camden Amata	Sr.	5-10	175
<b>MLB:</b> Andrew Bazzone	Sr.	5-10	220
<b>OLB:</b> Wes Kaas	Sr.	6-1	190
<b>CB:</b> Michael Moissis	Jr.	5-10	160
<b>CB:</b> Crawford Latkovic	Jr.	5-8	160
<b>S:</b> Cole Ettinger*	Sr.	5-10	170
<b>S:</b> Will Gottschalk	Sr.	6-0	185
<b>P:</b> Andrew Kirkpatrick*	Sr.	6-4	240

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 13; **Key reserves:** OL Fin Walker, So., 6-4, 210, LB Grant Sellars, Jr., 6-1, 190, DB Grant Alberts, So., 6-1, 170

**Best in the classroom:** Camden Amata, 4.209 GPA, Nick Dalessandro, 4.058, Andrew Kirkpatrick, 3.932

**Best bench press:** Andrew Bazzone, 315 pounds

**Best 40 time:** Cole Ettinger, 4.6 seconds

**Best squat:** Nick Dalessandro

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## Chardon»Hilltoppers

### Just the facts

**Conference:** WRC

**OHSAA:** Division III, Region 9

**Coach:** Mitch Hewitt, 11th year (82-31)

**2020:** 12-0

**Twitter:** @topperfb

**Home field:** Chardon Memorial Field

### Outlook

Anyone who thinks the Hilltoppers are going to fall off this year after winning the state title last season are going to be disappointed. This team has a slew of talent back, including 19 letterwinners. The line is big and physical, as always, and there's a deep stable of running backs for the run-oriented offense. Zoran Vujaklija and Alex Henry are in the mix at QB, though it was Henry who started in the scrimmage against Mentor. The defense has two returning starters — Nathanael Sulka and Trey Liebhardt — but the preseason has seen this unit playing with a ferocity that is the linchpin of Chardon defenses. Kicker Nathan Tager is one of the area's best weapons in special teams.



Sulka



Liebhardt

### Player to watch

TE-DE Alex McDonald and S-WR Nathanael Sulka are both committed to Youngstown State. They're big-time playmakers on both sides of the ball, big, physical players who always win the 1-on-1 battles with players on the other side.

### Underclassman to watch:

Trey Liebhardt was a lock-down corner as a sophomore. He'll fill that same role this year, and probably carry the ball some as well.

### Bottom line

**IF:** The Hilltoppers can continue to play with an edge and physically dominate; **THEN:** You can expect another conference championship race and deep playoff run.

— John Kampf

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Glenville vs. Chardon at Riverside, 7  
**Aug. 28:** Chardon at Akron Buchtel, 1  
**Sept. 3:** Youngstown Ursuline vs. Chardon at West Geauga, 7  
**Sept. 10:** Riverside vs. Chardon at West Geauga, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Chardon at Mayfield, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Kenston at Chardon, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 1:** Chardon at New Philadelphia, 7  
**Oct. 8:** Madison at Chardon, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Chardon at South, 7  
**Oct. 22:** North at Chardon

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Alex Henry	Jr.	6-3	195
<b>FB:</b> Sean Carr*	Sr.	5-11	190
<b>RB:</b> Daniel Petttyjohn	Jr.	5-11	185
<b>RB:</b> Rocco Perrico	Sr.	5-11	190
<b>SE:</b> Nathan Sulka*	Sr.	6-4	205
<b>TE:</b> Alex McDonald*	Sr.	6-3	230
<b>LT:</b> Adam Jackson	Sr.	5-11	230
<b>LG:</b> Simon Rodriguez	Sr.	6-0	240
<b>C:</b> Aiden Ischay	Sr.	6-1	250
<b>RG:</b> Logan Bryant	So.	5-11	245
<b>RT:</b> Matthew Organiscak	Sr.	5-10	220
<b>K:</b> Nathan Tager*	Sr.	6-1	175

#### DEFENSE

<b>NG:</b> Mike Washington	Sr.	6-1	215
<b>DT:</b> Cooper Felger	Jr.	6-0	230
<b>DE:</b> Alex McDonald	Sr.	6-3	230
<b>LB:</b> Brody Dotson	Sr.	5-11	180
<b>LB:</b> Heath Fetchik	Jr.	6-0	190
<b>LB:</b> Ryan Petersen	Sr.	6-4	190
<b>LB:</b> Rocco Perrico	Sr.	5-11	190
<b>CB:</b> Trey Liebhardt*	Jr.	6-0	175
<b>CB:</b> Andrew Bruce	So.	5-11	165
<b>S:</b> Nathanael Sulka	Sr.	6-4	205
<b>S:</b> Ethan Gaspar	Sr.	6-0	180

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 19; **Key reserves:** T.J. Altman, Sr., 5-11, 215, Robert Vunderink, Jr., 5-10, 195, Zoran Vujaklija, Sr., 6-0, 185, Alex Kisely, Jr., 6-2, 205, Caden Dawson, Sr., 6-1, 170.

**Best in the classroom:** Alex McDonald 3.948

**Best bench press:** Aiden Ischay 335 pounds

**Best squat:** Mike Washington 555 pounds

**Best 40 time:** Trey Liebhardt 4.6 seconds

## Euclid»Panthers

### Just the facts

**Conference:** GCC

**OHSAA:** Division I, Region 1

**Coach:** Rick Lytle, 1st season

**2020:** 5-3

**Twitter:** @EUCFOOTBALL

**Home field:** Euclid Community Stadium

### Outlook

Euclid comes into the season with a new look. First-year coach Rick Lytle has only three players who have seen time on the varsity level. The biggest questions for the Panthers will be up front on both sides of the ball. They have new offensive and defensive lines with no varsity experience. Both groups have shown promise during camp and at scrimmages. Junior quarterback Deonte' Rucker has looked good, and will rely on Claishon Ivory at receiver for leadership. A rigorous schedule will test the young Panthers.

### Player to watch

Claishon Ivory is the lone returning starter on offense. The receiver will be relied on heavily during the early portions of the schedule while his teammates adjust to the varsity level. He holds an offer from Kentucky, and will be the safety valve for Rucker.



Ivory



Merrill

### Underclassman to watch:

Ryan Merrill will be the voice of the defense. He comes off of a season in which he recorded nearly 100 tackles and was named a News-Herald second-team all-star on defense.

As the lone returner on defense, the junior will be relied on to guide the defense.

### Bottom Line

**IF:** The young Panthers mature quickly,

**THEN:** they can finish in the top half of the GCC.

— Benjamin Hercik



NEWS-HERALD FILE

Euclid's Claishon Ivory in 2020.

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Euclid at Aurora, 7  
**Aug. 27:** Hudson at Euclid, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Cleveland Heights at Euclid, 7  
**Sept. 10:** St. Ignatius at Euclid, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Brunswick at Euclid, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Euclid at Medina, 7  
**Oct. 1:** Euclid at Massillon Washington, 7:30  
**Oct. 8:** Euclid at Strongsville, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Solon at Euclid, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 22:** Euclid at Mentor, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Deonte' Rucker	Jr.	6-2	180
<b>RB:</b> Leroy Billups	Jr.	5-10	180
<b>WR:</b> Claishon Ivory*	Jr.	5-10	180
<b>WR:</b> Jakobi Laster	Jr.	6-1	185
<b>WR:</b> Brandon Minifee	Jr.	6-2	175
<b>WR:</b> Anton Rivers	Sr.	6-0	180
<b>LT:</b> Davon Morrison	Sr.	6-2	265
<b>LG:</b> Quynon Clark	Jr.	6-1	265
<b>C:</b> Jaden Linton	Sr.	5-11	230
<b>OL:</b> Deshawn Ligon	Jr.	5-11	240
<b>RG:</b> Jermelle Hammond	Sr.	5-11	290
<b>OL:</b> Jaylin Wilkins	Jr.	6-0	270
<b>RT:</b> Jaylin Turner	Jr.	6-0	300
<b>OL:</b> Kenneth Brandon	Sr.	6-2	315
<b>K:</b> Aidan Turos*	Sr.	5-9	150

#### DEFENSE

<b>DE:</b> Evin Harris	Jr.	6-1	255
<b>DE:</b> Jaylin Wilkins	Jr.	5-11	270
<b>DT:</b> Chase Smith	Jr.	6-0	240
<b>DL:</b> Shawn Porter	So.	5-9	210
<b>OLB:</b> Duron Ramsey	Sr.	6-2	215
<b>OLB:</b> Jordan Edwards	Jr.	5-11	220
<b>ILB:</b> Ryan Merrill*	Jr.	5-11	220
<b>ILB:</b> Brian White	Sr.	5-11	180
<b>CB:</b> Robert Cochran	Jr.	5-11	180
<b>CB:</b> Isiah Mock	Jr.	5-10	175
<b>SS:</b> Sincere Pope	Sr.	5-11	175
<b>FS:</b> Amaru Rand	Jr.	5-10	180
<b>P:</b> Aidon Turos*	Sr.	5-10	180

\* — returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 4

**Key reserves:** William Mason, Sr., 5-10, 180, Tyijer Riley, Sr., 6-0, 180

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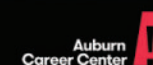
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## Fairport»Skippers

### Just the facts

**Conference:** NAC

**Coach:** Tim Glodowski, first year

**OHSAA:** Division VII, Region 25

**2020:** 4-3

**Twitter:** @SkippersFB

**Home field:** Greig Field

### Outlook

What a year the last two weeks have been for the Skippers. From doubt there would be a season at all due to unsustainable roster numbers to an unexpected coaching change in turn, Fairport has had to navigate its share of recent challenges. The positive aspect is numbers are seemingly sustainable now as the program embarks on its 100th anniversary season, with much of the returning talent back in the fold. There's eight two-way starters and promise in what returns. But overall, what matters most is the broader picture is not as murky as it appeared even a week ago.

### Player to watch

Josiah Cooper, a 5-foot-9, 215-pound senior, was a workhorse for the Skippers last fall, with 604 regular-season rushing yards and eight TDs. Cooper is also among eight two-way starters who will line up at DE.



Cooper

His production behind a young offensive line will be paramount to Fairport's aspirations.

**Underclassman to watch:** Junior Will Fazekas (6-2, 255) provides a unique combination, as the QB, with 852 passing yards and eight TDs and five rushing scores a year ago in the regular season, and at nose tackle.

### Bottom line

**IF:** ... the Skippers can navigate their August tumult and stay healthy; **THEN** ... around 5-5 and a top-12 playoff berth is doable, although that tumult makes that a big if.

— Chris Lillstrung



COLEEN MOSKOWITZ — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Dillon Knesebeck is shown during a 2020 game.

### Schedule (subject to change)

**Aug. 20:** Brooklyn at Fairport, 7  
**Aug. 27:** Fairport at Berkshire, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Cardinal at Fairport, 7  
**Sept. 10:** Fairport at Wickliffe, 7  
**Sept. 18:** Fairport at Warren JFK, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Pymatuning Valley at Fairport, 7  
**Oct. 1:** Fairport at Mathews, 7  
**Oct. 8:** Windham at Fairport, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 15:** Southington at Fairport, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Fairport at St. John (at SPIRE), 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Will Fazekas*	Jr.	6-2	255
<b>RB:</b> Josiah Cooper*	Sr.	5-9	215
<b>WR:</b> Maverick Piotrowski*	So.	6-0	180
<b>WR:</b> James Gadomski*	So.	6-1	175
<b>WR:</b> Sam Honkala*	Sr.	6-4	155
<b>TE:</b> Dillon Knesebeck*	Sr.	6-3	205
<b>LT:</b> Conner Williams*	Sr.	5-10	240
<b>LG:</b> Zak Hambor	Jr.	5-10	195
<b>C:</b> Collin Lafaye	Fr.	5-9	200
<b>RG:</b> Ryan Hejl*	Sr.	6-1	245
<b>RT:</b> Josh Parsons	So.	6-4	210
<b>K:</b> Zane Malkamaki	So.	6-0	160

#### DEFENSE

<b>DE:</b> Josiah Cooper*	Sr.	5-9	215
<b>DT:</b> Ryan Hejl*	Sr.	6-1	245
<b>NT:</b> Will Fazekas*	Jr.	6-2	255
<b>DE:</b> Conner Williams*	Sr.	5-10	245
<b>LB:</b> James Gadomski*	So.	6-1	175
<b>LB:</b> Dillon Knesebeck*	Sr.	6-3	205
<b>LB:</b> Christian Palmer	Sr.	5-11	215
<b>CB:</b> Maverick Piotrowski	So.	6-0	180
<b>CB:</b> Sam Honkala*	Sr.	6-4	155
<b>FS:</b> Zane Malkamaki	So.	6-0	160
<b>SS:</b> Joey Tanker	Sr.	6-0	195
<b>P:</b> Maverick Piotrowski*	So.	6-0	180

\*: returning starter; **Key reserves:** Gabe Lawson, Jr., 5-10, 195, Lenny Catri, So., 6-2, 190

**Best in the classroom:** Michael Hess, 4.0 GPA

**Best bench press:** Will Fazekas

**Best 40 time:** Maverick Piotrowski

**Best squat:** Josiah Cooper

## Geneva»Eagles

### Just the facts

**Conference:** CVC Chagrin

**OHSAA:** Division III, Region 9

**Head coach:** Chip Sorber, seventh year (28-31)

**2020:** 8-2

**Twitter:** @FBGeneva

**Home field:** SPIRE Institute

### Outlook

The Eagles are coming off back-to-back 8-2 seasons and a total league record of 10-2 over that span. There's good, solid skill positions returning, but there is also some inexperience in spots. The graduation of two-way standouts Charlie Taylor (RB-DL) and Ben Scibona (QB-LB) are biggies to replace. Senior Brady Peet has started two years at running back and linebacker. That experience helps a lot. First-year QB Wyatt Fuduric has a great arm to go with his running ability. Dylan Hamilton is another prime playmaker. As usual, the Eagles will want to establish the running game first, which sets up the pass. The key is going to be in the trenches, where there are two-way starters.

### Player to watch

Brady Peet has the tools and intangibles to be a marquee player for the Eagles, just like his brother Blake was before heading off to the college ranks. He's fast, physical and doesn't make mental mistakes. That's the kind of leader the Eagles can hang their hats on every Friday night. He and QB Wyatt Fuduric are big keys to the team.

**Underclassman to watch:** Jacob Wilson, a junior, is the strongest Eagle. He leads the team in bench-press (285) and squat (475). He is part of a fast and physical linebacking unit.

### Bottom line

**IF:** The Eagles stay healthy and don't turn the ball over, **THEN:** They will contend for the CVC Chagrin title again.

— John Kampf



NEWS-HERALD FILE

Brady Peet returns for Geneva at running back and linebacker this season.

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Geneva at Madison, 7  
**Aug. 27:** Collinwood at Geneva, 7  
**Sept. 3:** New Middletown Springfield at Geneva, 7  
**Sept. 10:** Geneva at Lakeside, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Kirtland at Geneva, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Orange at Geneva, 7  
**Oct. 1:** Geneva at Edgewood, 7  
**Oct. 8:** West Geauga at Geneva, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 15:** Geneva at Perry, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Geneva at Chagrin Falls, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

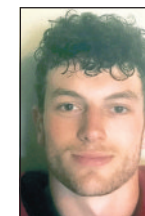
<b>QB:</b> Wyatt Fuduric	Sr.	6-2	210
<b>FB:</b> Jacob Wilson	Jr.	6-1	210
<b>HB:</b> Brady Peet*	Sr.	6-0	180
<b>HB:</b> Dylan Hamilton*	Sr.	5-10	185
<b>SE:</b> Dominic Quinn	Sr.	6-0	160
<b>TE:</b> Clayton Queen	Sr.	6-0	170
<b>LT:</b> Trent Calhoun	Sr.	6-2	220
<b>LG:</b> Johnny Haeseler*	Jr.	6-0	235
<b>C:</b> Gavin Juodenas*	Sr.	5-11	205
<b>RG:</b> Mike Amato	Sr.	6-0	170
<b>RT:</b> Jackson Furlan	So.	5-11	270
<b>K:</b> Ethan Yost*	Sr.	6-0	165



Fuduric

#### DEFENSE

<b>DL:</b> Jason Thrower	So.	5-11	230
<b>DL:</b> Mike Amato	Sr.	6-0	170
<b>DL:</b> Johnny Haeseler	Jr.	6-0	235
<b>LB:</b> Gavin Juodenas*	Sr.	5-11	205
<b>LB:</b> Dylan Hamilton*	Sr.	5-11	185
<b>LB:</b> Jacob Wilson	Jr.	6-1	210
<b>LB:</b> Brady Peet*	Sr.	6-0	180
<b>LB:</b> Clayton Queen*	Sr.	6-0	170
<b>DB:</b> Dominic Quinn	Sr.	6-0	160
<b>DB:</b> Wyatt Fuduric*	Sr.	6-2	210
<b>DB:</b> Luke Smith	So.	6-0	155
<b>P:</b> Giovanni Rice	So.	5-9	150



Peet

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 12: **Key reserves:** Luke Smith, So., 6-0, 155, Matt Wright, So., 5-9, 160

**Best in the classroom:** Gavin Juodenas 4.30

**Best bench press:** Jacob Wilson, 285 pounds

**Best squat:** Name, Jacob Wilson, 475 pounds

**Best 40 time:** Luke Smith, 4.6

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## Harvey»Red Raiders

### Just the facts

**Conference:** CVC Valley

**Coach:** Mick Mohner, second year (4-6)

**OHSAA:** Division III, Region 9

**2020:** 4-6 (1-5)

**Twitter:** @GooooooRaiders

**Home field:** Jack Britt Memorial Stadium

### Outlook

The optimism is palpable in Painesville, as the Red Raiders seek to advance a reclamation project and build off a three-game winning streak to close 2020. The offense, with Coleman Jr. at the helm, experience and good size on the line and some playmaking diversity, could impress. After yielding at least 35 points six times last fall, the defense can undoubtedly improve. But Harvey is massive along the defensive front, and Early could intrigue at LB with his size and athleticism. The Red Raiders have had four .500-plus seasons since 1995 and have not reached seven wins since 1994. Both seem doable here, which would do wonders for the program.

### Player to watch

Like his father before him, QB-CB Rick Coleman Jr., a 6-foot, 165-pound senior, is a Harvey signal-caller and leader. The third-team All-Ohioan was a jack-of-all-trades last fall, with 985



Coleman

total yards and 12 TDs. "He's our guy," Coach Mick Mohner said effusively of his two-way standout, who's getting Ivy League looks.

**Underclassman to watch:** Tyree Alston, a 5-11, 250-pound junior, could develop into one of the area's better defensive line-men and at times can be "unblockable" in Mohner's view.

### Bottom line

**IF:** ... a young defense jells and improves; **THEN:** ... a run at 7-3, which would be the Red Raiders' best season since 1994, doesn't seem unreasonable.

— Chris Lillstrung



DAVID TURBEN — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Harvey quarterback Rick Coleman Jr. carries during a game last season.

### Schedule (subject to change)

**Aug. 20:** Harvey at Kirtland, 7  
**Aug. 27:** Jefferson at Harvey, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Wickliffe at Harvey, 7  
**Sept. 10:** Crestwood at Harvey, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Harvey at Cardinal, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Grand Valley at Harvey, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 1:** Youngstown Chaney at Harvey, 7  
**Oct. 8:** Harvey at Berkshire, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Harvey at Hawken, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Harvey at Lutheran West, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Rick Coleman Jr.*	Sr.	6-0	165
<b>RB:</b> Kaleb Puckett*	Jr.	5-8	245
<b>RB:</b> Blaise Collins	Jr.	6-1	180
<b>RB-WR:</b> Davon Badley	So.	6-1	190
<b>WR:</b> Katory Shaw*	So.	6-0	170
<b>WR:</b> Tyshawn Vance	So.	5-10	155
<b>H-back:</b> Jaydyn Early	Sr.	6-2	230
<b>LT:</b> Anthony Albritton*	Jr.	5-10	245
<b>LG:</b> Alexis Rivas	So.	5-10	195
<b>C:</b> Connor Zadrozny*	Jr.	5-8	220
<b>RG:</b> Brandon Bildstein	So.	5-10	210
<b>RT:</b> Maurice Coffee II*	Sr.	6-2	235
<b>K:</b> Kaleb Puckett*	Jr.	5-8	245



Alston

#### DEFENSE

<b>DL:</b> Tyree Alston*	Jr.	5-11	250
<b>DL:</b> Forrest Smart	Jr.	5-10	270
<b>DL:</b> Zavi Nurse	So.	5-11	295
<b>DL:</b> Kaleb Puckett*	Jr.	5-8	245
<b>LB:</b> Jaydyn Early	Sr.	6-2	230
<b>LB:</b> Avion Gaines	So.	5-9	180
<b>LB:</b> Davon Badley	So.	6-1	190
<b>CB:</b> Rick Coleman Jr.*	Sr.	6-0	165
<b>CB:</b> Katory Shaw*	So.	6-0	170
<b>S:</b> Tyshawn Vance	So.	5-10	155
<b>S:</b> Dre Smith*	Sr.	5-8	150
<b>P:</b> Davon Badley	So.	6-1	190

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 15; **Key reserves:** Antonio Soto Rodriguez, Fr., 5-7, 150, Aviante Atterberry, Sr., 5-10, 300

**Best in the classroom:** Kaleb Puckett, 4.0 GPA  
**Best bench press:** Maurice Coffee II, 300 pounds  
**Best 40 time:** Rick Coleman Jr., 4.52 seconds  
**Best squat:** Kaleb Puckett, 605 pounds

## Hawken»Hawks

### Just the facts

**Conference:** CVC Valley

**Coach:** Brian Stephenson, fourth year (3-20)

**OHSAA:** Division IV, Region 13

**2020:** 0-4

**Twitter:** @HawkenFootball

**Home field:** Cliff Walton Stadium

### Outlook

Taking an especially cautious approach amid the pandemic in regard to a restart date, the Hawks logged four games last fall. Pieces are in place to have an exciting offense, masterminded by Robinson II, and skill-position weapons such as Harrison and Johnson. Where Hawken without question needs to tighten up is on defense. In those aforementioned four 2020 games, the Hawks yielded 2,137 yards. They're fully aware of that fact in Chester Township and are working diligently to improve upon it. With one winning season since 2014, Hawken is eager to take that next step and recapture at least some of its traditional glory.

### Player to watch

QB Terrence Robinson II, a 6-foot-2, 200-pound senior, has long been one of The News-Herald coverage area's better young signal-callers. Amid the challenges of a pandemic-altered campaign, Robinson still managed to throw for 793 yards in 2020. The hope, with the vertical promise in the offense and some dual-threat potential, is he can improve upon that in 2021.

**Underclassman to watch:** Sophomore C Louie Justice, at 6-4 and 281 pounds, provides a massive presence at the heart of protecting Robinson II.

### Bottom line

**IF:** ... the defense shows even marginal improvement; **THEN:** ... a potent Robinson-led offense could keep the Hawks in most games and possibly win a handful.

— Chris Lillstrung

### Schedule (subject to change)

**Aug. 21:** Hawken at Trinity (at Cuyahoga Heights), 7  
**Aug. 27:** Doylestown Chippewa at Hawken, 7  
**Sept. 4:** Hawken at Gilmour, 2  
**Sept. 10:** Cardinal at Hawken, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Hawken at Grand Valley, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Brooklyn at Hawken, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 1:** Hawken at Berkshire, 7  
**Oct. 8:** Hawken at Beachwood, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Harvey at Hawken, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Crestwood at Hawken, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Terrence Robinson II*	Sr.	6-2	200
<b>RB:</b> Dominic Johnson	Jr.	5-5	155
<b>WR:</b> Danny Grajzl*	Jr.	6-0	155
<b>WR:</b> Jordan Harrison*	Sr.	5-10	165
<b>WR:</b> Ben Elenin	Sr.	5-11	155
<b>TE:</b> A.J. Sands*	Sr.	6-1	187
<b>LT:</b> Jack Bellar*	So.	5-10	195
<b>LG:</b> Tyler Gipson*	Jr.	6-0	298
<b>C:</b> Louie Justice*	So.	6-4	281
<b>RG:</b> Chinedu Obi	Sr.	6-2	240
<b>RT:</b> Chris Shea*	Jr.	5-10	200
<b>K:</b> Josh Lombardo*	Sr.	5-9	160



Robinson II

#### DEFENSE

<b>DE:</b> A.J. Sands*	Sr.	6-1	187
<b>DT:</b> Tyler Gipson*	Jr.	6-0	298
<b>DT:</b> Chinedu Obi	Sr.	6-2	240
<b>DE:</b> Jack Bellar*	So.	5-10	195
<b>LB:</b> Chris Shea*	Jr.	5-10	200
<b>LB:</b> Paxton Laschinger	So.	5-9	170
<b>DB:</b> Ben Elenin*	Sr.	5-11	155
<b>DB:</b> Jordan Harrison*	Sr.	5-10	165
<b>DB:</b> Dominic Johnson	Jr.	5-5	155
<b>DB:</b> Danny Grajzl	Jr.	6-0	155
<b>DB:</b> Luke Mangini	So.	5-11	185
<b>P:</b> Nick Bollinger	Sr.	6-0	180

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 17; **Key reserves:** Julian Javoris, Fr., 5-10, 155, Jordan Johnson, Fr., 5-4, 130

**Best 40 time:** Jordan Harrison, 4.62 seconds

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## Gilmour»Lancers

### Just the facts

**Conference:** Independent

**Coach:** Chris Kosiorek, seventh year (32-28)

**OHSAA:** Division IV, Region 13

**2020:** 3-4

**Twitter:** @GALancerAD

**Home field:** Weber Stadium

### Outlook

The Lancers are experienced, particularly on the offensive line with four returning starters, as well as on defense. The Kavcic brothers, products of a respected Kirtland youth football pipeline, will take on a lot of responsibility as sophomores, Jake at QB, Andy at RB and both at DB. Gilmour has its largest roster numbers in Kosiorek's tenure, which is exciting, but it's not a squad with a great deal of physical size generally. The Lancers will inevitably have a new complexion, after QB Thomas Richardson and RB Santino Harper transferred to Akron SVSM, and a proverbial chip on their shoulder.

### Player to watch

RB-LB Mick Hopkins, a 6-foot, 190-pound senior, is a four-year starter who will be a key cog. Kosiorek lauds Hopkins' physical maturation, adding 25 pounds over time. Hopkins will be asked to be a leader, especially on defense, and a tone-setter for the Lancers as a whole.

**Underclassman to watch:** Junior WR-DB Tommy McCrone (5-10, 153) is a two-way starter who will be a field stretcher with his speed, as well as on special teams as a kick and punt returner.

### Bottom line

**IF:** ... a squad with eight projected two-way starters can flourish and withstand the rigors of a long season; **THEN** ... getting back over .500 after going 3-4 last year is in the cards.

— Chris Lillstrung



TIM PHILLIS — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Gilmour's Mick Hopkins (6) converges on a tackle last season against University.

### Schedule (subject to change)

**Aug. 21:** Rhodes at Gilmour, 2  
**Aug. 28:** Warrensville Heights at Gilmour, 2  
**Sept. 4:** Hawken at Gilmour, 2  
**Sept. 11:** NDCL at Gilmour, 2  
**Sept. 18:** Gilmour at Cardinal Stritch (at Northwood), 2  
**Sept. 25:** University at Gilmour, 2  
**Oct. 2:** Cleveland Central Catholic at Gilmour, 2 (HC)  
**Oct. 9:** Brush at Gilmour, 2  
**Oct. 16:** Lutheran East vs. Gilmour (at Euclid), 7  
**Oct. 23:** Gilmour at Trinity (at Cuyahoga Heights), 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Jake Kavcic	So.	5-8	145
<b>RB:</b> Andy Kavcic	So.	5-8	149
<b>RB:</b> Mick Hopkins*	Sr.	6-0	190
<b>WR:</b> Dan Jevnikar*	Sr.	6-3	194
<b>WR:</b> Tommy McCrone*	Jr.	5-10	153
<b>WR:</b> Anders Sorensen	Sr.	5-10	157
<b>LT:</b> Hunter Sebulsy*	Jr.	6-0	255
<b>LG:</b> C.J. Johnson*	Sr.	6-0	213
<b>C:</b> Will Chadwick	Jr.	5-10	184
<b>RG:</b> Louka Babic*	Jr.	5-8	176
<b>RT:</b> Sam Palumbo*	Sr.	5-8	231
<b>K:</b> Anders Sorensen*	Sr.	5-10	157



Hopkins

#### DEFENSE

<b>DL:</b> Louka Babic	Jr.	5-8	176
<b>DL:</b> Hunter Sebulsy	Jr.	6-0	255
<b>DL:</b> C.J. Johnson*	Sr.	6-0	213
<b>LB:</b> Dan Jevnikar*	Sr.	6-3	194
<b>LB:</b> Rocco Hice*	Jr.	5-9	175
<b>LB:</b> Andrew Knaak	Sr.	6-0	191
<b>DB:</b> Jake Kavcic*	So.	5-8	145
<b>DB:</b> Andy Kavcic*	So.	5-8	149
<b>DB:</b> Tommy McCrone*	Jr.	5-10	153
<b>DB:</b> Jesse Shepherd	Jr.	5-9	167
<b>DB:</b> Brayden Green	So.	5-11	134
<b>P:</b> C.J. Johnson	Sr.	6-0	213



McCrone

\*: returning starter; **Returning letter-winners:** 30; **Key reserves:** Alex Melaragno, So., 6-0, 182  
**Best in the classroom:** Ian Anderson, 4.25 GPA  
**Best bench press:** Louka Babic, 280 pounds  
**Best squat:** C.J. Johnson, 405 pounds

## Kenston»Bombers

### Just the facts

**Conference:** WRC

**OHSAA:** Division III, Region 9

**Coach:** Jeff Grubich, 10th year (60-37)

**2020:** 3-4

**Twitter:** @Bomber\_Football

**Home field:** Bomber Stadium

### Outlook

The Bombers might return more starters than anyone in the area — nine on offense and nine on defense. But because of the abbreviated season last year, they aren't as experienced as they might be in other years. The offense should be electric. QB Nikko Georgiou has an insane amount of skill around him, including 6-foot-6 Indiana commit Ryan Miller. Four of the five starters are back on the offensive line, too, and the scrimmage season has shown that line being very effective. Defensively, the back seven returns most of its starters. If the front line can get some pressure, this defense might be one of the program's best in a while.

### Player to watch

You can't help but notice four-year starter Ryan Miller on the field. The 6-6 tight end started on Kenston's state championship team in 2018. He's a big target with great hands — and a fine leader.



Miller

### Underclassman to watch:

Sean Patrick is lined up to do great things this year at defensive back and running back. The kid can fly. Once he gets to open space, it's bye-bye.



Patrick

### Bottom line

**IF:** The Bombers can stop the run on defense and force teams to pass; **THEN:** The offense is potentially so good that this team could make a deep playoff run again.

— John Kampf



TIM PHILLIS — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

The Kenston offense celebrates a touchdown during a scrimmage with Warren Harding and Mentor.

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Chagrin Falls at Kenston 7  
**Aug. 27:** Perry at Kenston, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Kenston at NDCL, 7  
**Sept. 10:** Kenston at North, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Lake Catholic at Kenston, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Kenston at Chardon, 7  
**Oct. 1:** Kenston at Madison, 7  
**Oct. 8:** South at Kenston, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 15:** Riverside at Kenston, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Kenston at Mayfield, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Nikko Georgiou*	Jr.	6-0	190
<b>WR:</b> Carson Rivera-Gebeau*	Sr.	6-0	185
<b>WR:</b> J.P. Germano*	Sr.	6-1	190
<b>WR:</b> Tymir Cardona	Fr.	5-7	155
<b>TE:</b> Ryan Miller*	Sr.	6-6	225
<b>RB:</b> Sean Patrick	5-10	160	So.
<b>LT:</b> Cale Doyle*	Sr.	6-3	290
<b>LG:</b> Connor Kluesner*	Sr.	6-2	295
<b>C:</b> Garrett Uhler*	Sr.	6-0	215
<b>RG:</b> Sean Doyle*	So.	6-1	270
<b>RT:</b> Luke Leygraaf	Jr.	6-4	235
<b>K:</b> Parker Munday*	Jr.	5-8	155

#### DEFENSE

<b>DL:</b> Aiden Vanderbilt*	Sr.	6-1	230
<b>DL:</b> Jack Novak	Sr.	5-10	170
<b>DL:</b> Daniel Jones	Sr.	5-11	190
<b>LB:</b> Charlie Kress	Jr.	6-0	185
<b>LB:</b> Carson Rivera-Gebeau*	Sr.	6-0	185
<b>LB:</b> Ben DiMarco	Jr.	5-10	185
<b>LB:</b> Braden Krupp*	Sr.	6-0	185
<b>DB:</b> Logan Toft*	Jr.	5-10	170
<b>DB:</b> J.P. Germano*	Sr.	6-1	190
<b>DB:</b> Lucas Simmons*	Jr.	6-0	170
<b>DB:</b> Jeremy Hadju	So.	5-10	160
<b>P:</b> Nikko Georgiou*	Jr.	6-0	190

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 17; **Key reserves:** David Clossin, Jr., 6-0, 210, Leo DeLuca, Jr., 5-10, 255, Thomas O'Brian, Sr., 6-2, 175  
**Best in the classroom:** Luke Leygraaf 4.0, Garrett Uhler 3.9  
**Best bench press:** Cale Doyle 415 pounds  
**Best squat:** Cale Doyle 500 pounds  
**Best 40 time:** Sean Patrick 4.6

# K

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## Kirtland » Hornets

### Just the facts

**School:** Kirtland  
**Conference:** CVC Valley  
**OHSAA:** Division V, Region 17  
**Coach:** Tiger LaVerde, 16th year (185-17)  
**2020:** 11-0  
**Twitter:** @kirtlandsports  
**Home field:** Rogers Field

### Outlook

The Hornets roll into this season after winning their past 41 games, including three straight state titles. But this is the most inexperienced team Coach Tiger LaVerde has had in some time, with only three returning starters on each side of the ball. The running game will again be the team's anchor. The experience of linemen Jonathan Withrow and George Prusock will be key for the team. Kirtland will run the ball well — it always does. But the big-play capability of Gage Sullivan in the passing game looms large. Defensively, no one in the lineup tops 200 pounds. But it's a fast and physical group, led by All-Ohio line-backers Mason Rus and Joseph Coleman.

### Player to watch

A pair of two-way starters will be worth the price of admission this year. Gage Sullivan at receiver/defensive back and Mason Rus at running back and linebacker. They're outstanding leaders and highly productive on both sides of the ball.



Sullivan

**Underclassman to watch:** George Prusock — or GP3 as he's known — was an All-Ohio lineman last year. He's a big, physical lineman who dominates every play.

### Bottom line

**IF:** The Hornets stay healthy amid a tough regular-season schedule; **THEN:** Does anyone want to bet against them winning their fourth state title in a row?

— John Kampf



NEWS-HERALD FILE

George Prusock (73) of Kirtland blocks during the Hornets' state title win over Ironton last year.

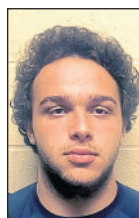
### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Harvey at Kirtland, 7  
**Aug. 27:** Kirtland at Lutheran West, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Kirtland at Westinghouse Academy, Pa., 7  
**Sept. 10:** West Geauga at Kirtland, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Kirtland at Geneva, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Chagrin Falls at Kirtland, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 1:** Kirtland at Perry, 7  
**Oct. 8:** Lakeside at Kirtland, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Edgewood at Kirtland, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Kirtland at Orange, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Pierce Boyd	Sr.	6-1	220
<b>RB:</b> Tommy Gogolin	Jr.	5-8	165
<b>RB:</b> Mason Rus	Sr.	6-0	180
<b>RB:</b> Ramon Lescano	Sr.	5-9	165
<b>TE:</b> Gage Sullivan*	Sr.	6-4	190
<b>TE:</b> Adam Knaak	Jr.	6-2	235
<b>LT:</b> Jonathan Withrow*	Sr.	6-0	215
<b>LG:</b> George Prusock*	Jr.	6-0	242
<b>C:</b> Mason Vermilye	Sr.	6-0	235
<b>RG:</b> Brennon Braud	Sr.	5-9	204
<b>RT:</b> Joe Pekar	Jr.	6-0	257
<b>K:</b> Johnny Raguz	Sr.	5-10	200



Prusock

#### DEFENSE

<b>DT:</b> Daven Patel	Jr.	5-10	185
<b>NT:</b> Robert Laney	Sr.	6-0	170
<b>DT:</b> Scott Haymer	Sr.	6-0	165
<b>LB:</b> Joseph Coleman*	Sr.	6-0	185
<b>LB:</b> Mason Rus*	Sr.	6-0	185
<b>LB:</b> Macquire Boyd	So.	5-11	186
<b>LB:</b> Will Sayle	So.	6-0	170
<b>LB:</b> Philip LaVerde	Jr.	5-10	175
<b>DB:</b> Gage Sullivan*	Sr.	6-4	190
<b>DB:</b> Ramon Lescano	Sr.	5-9	165
<b>S:</b> Gino Blasini	So.	6-1	180
<b>P:</b> Gage Sullivan*	Sr.	6-4	190

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 18; **Key reserves:** Vince Debeljak, Sr., 5-11, 207, Greg Ihnat, Jr., 6-0, 240  
**Best in the classroom:** Jonathan Withrow, Scott Haymer, Mason Rus  
**Best bench press:** Mason Vermilye, 370 pounds  
**Best squat:** George Prusock, 485 pounds  
**Best 40:** Tommy Gogolin, 4.6

## Lake Catholic » Cougars

### Just the facts

**Conference:** Crown  
**Coach:** Marty Gibbons, third year (12-9)  
**OHSAA:** Division IV, Region 13  
**2020:** 8-3  
**Twitter:** @LCCougarFB  
**Home field:** Jerome T. Osborne Sr. Stadium

### Outlook

High levels of excitement and motivation permeate the program after last season's somewhat surprise run to the Division IV state title game. Although quite a few outstanding seniors graduated, Lake Catholic is set to return five starters on offense and five on defense. Gibbons likes the way this year's squad works together. Senior Jaxon French, a transfer from St. Ignatius, will take over at QB, succeeding longtime stalwart Joe Malchesky, who is now at Akron. Gibbons describes French as a talented player with a nice arm who is picking things up quickly. The Cougars will compete in the revived Crown Conference this season after playing as an independent last year, along with familiar foes NDCL, Padua, VASJ and Walsh Jesuit. The run to the state final has already paid dividends: The Cougars welcomed 28 freshmen this year.



Seacrist

### Player to watch

Senior Tyler Seacrist (5-foot-8, 150 pounds) is a returning starter at RB and DB who played a lot on both sides of the ball last season and will be relied upon as a key player this season. Gibbons calls him "an explosive player" and "a great athlete."



Pisano

### Underclassman to watch:

Nick Pisano, a 5-11, 250-pound junior G-DT, is the epitome of a solid all-around player. Having demonstrated strong leader-

ship skills, Pisano is the type of hard-nosed player who never wants to come off the field.

### Bottom line

**IF:** The inexperienced Cougars grow up in a hurry and young players step in; **THEN:** the Cougars are going to progress rapidly and be a tough out come the postseason.

— Jay Kron

### Schedule

**Aug. 19:** Lake Catholic at Dover, 7  
**Aug. 27:** Lake Catholic at Erie McDowell, 7  
**Sept. 3:** North at Lake Catholic, 7  
**Sept. 11:** Lake Catholic at University, 2  
**Sept. 17:** Lake Catholic at Kenston, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Lake Catholic at Padua, 7  
**Oct. 2:** Lake Catholic at VASJ, 7  
**Oct. 9:** Walsh Jesuit at Lake Catholic, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 15:** St. Mary Prep (Mich.) at Lake Catholic, 7  
**Oct. 23:** NDCL at Lake Catholic, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Jaxon French	Sr.	6-2	210
<b>RB:</b> Tyler Seacrist	Sr.	5-8	155
<b>TE:</b> Chris Buzzanca	Sr.	6-1	210
<b>WR:</b> Andrew Thielman	Sr.	6-2	205
<b>WR:</b> Nick Brandt	Jr.	5-10	170
<b>WR:</b> Aidan Fitzgerald	Jr.	6-3	175
<b>LT:</b> Owen Kaufman*	Sr.	6-3	250
<b>LG:</b> Frank Bares	Jr.	6-2	230
<b>C:</b> Danny Morgan	Sr.	6-2	210
<b>RG:</b> Nick Pisano*	Jr.	6-0	250
<b>RT:</b> Alec Harb*	Sr.	6-1	195
<b>K:</b> Jacob Hite	Sr.	5-9	140

#### DEFENSE

<b>DE:</b> John O'Keeffe	Sr.	6-1	185
<b>DT:</b> Jordan Bates	Sr.	5-11	200
<b>NG:</b> Nick Pisano	Jr.	6-0	250
<b>DE:</b> Danny Morgan*	Sr.	6-2	210
<b>LB:</b> Nick Antonelli	Sr.	5-10	170
<b>LB:</b> Alexis Pacheco*	Sr.	5-11	190
<b>DB:</b> Tyler Seacrist*	Sr.	5-8	155
<b>CB:</b> Aidan Fitzgerald*	Jr.	6-3	175
<b>CB:</b> James O'Keeffe	Sr.	6-1	175
<b>S:</b> Damen Kelly	Jr.	5-10	165
<b>S:</b> T.J. Gibbons	Jr.	6-2	180
<b>P:</b> Jacob Hite	Sr.	5-9	140

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 10; **Key reserves:** Johnny Smeltzer, Jr., 5-10, 175, Josh Styles, Jr., 5-10, 170, Carter Cantrell, Jr., 5-10, 185  
**Best in the classroom:** Nick Brandt 4.46 GPA, Owen Kaufman 4.43, Frank Bares 4.27, Nick Antonelli 4.25, Danny Malchesky, 4.25  
**Best bench press:** Nick Pisano, 300 pounds  
**Best 40:** Tyler Seacrist and Jaxon French, 4.5 seconds  
**Best squat:** Nick Pisano, 460 pounds

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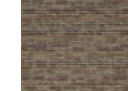
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## Madison»Blue Streaks

### Just the facts

**School:** Madison  
**Conference:** WRC  
**OHSAA:** Division II, Region 5  
**Coach:** Mike Gilligan, second year (0-8)  
**2020:** 0-8  
**Twitter:** @MadFootball212  
**Home field:** Dick Hamblin Field

### Outlook

The Blue Streaks went through some growing pains last season with a lot of youth. The good news is a lot of starters return — eight on offense and seven on defense. Can that experience pay off? There's a lot to like about this team, including Michael O'Brien back at QB for a second straight year and a veteran receiving and defensive back corps. The offensive line has good size and strength, though there are a few inexperienced spots up front. Madison must stay healthy, since there's not a lot of depth and numbers (mid-40s) are a little low. The Blue Streaks want to get back to the ground-and-pound style of running the ball to set up the pass.

### Player to watch

The return of Michael O'Brien at QB is huge for Madison. He's 6-2, athletic, has a strong arm and sports a team-best 4.83 GPA. Who wouldn't want that as the leader of their team?



### Underclassman to watch: O'Brien

Cole Sundquist (6-4, 255) had a breakout season as a starting sophomore. He's a potential Division I college player with his size, strength and agility. He's coming off a collarbone injury, but should be ready for Week 1.

### Bottom line

**IF:** Madison can run the ball effectively and not turn it over. **THEN:** The Blue Streaks will be hard to deal with in the WRC.

— John Kampf



NEWS-HERALD FILE

Michael O'Brien is back at starting quarterback this year for Madison.

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Geneva at Madison, 7  
**Aug. 27:** Madison at Lakeside, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Madison at Perry, 7  
**Sept. 10:** South at Madison, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Riverside at Madison, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Madison at North, 7  
**Oct. 1:** Kenston at Madison, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 8:** Madison at Chardon, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Mayfield at Madison, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Madison at Garfield Heights, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Michael O'Brien*	Sr.	6-2	185
<b>RB:</b> Kenyon Boncela*	Sr.	5-10	165
<b>FB:</b> Mitch Polovic*	Sr.	5-9	165
<b>WR:</b> Sam Cost*	Sr.	5-9	155
<b>WR:</b> Chase Martin	Jr.	5-11	170
<b>TE:</b> Landon Albert*	Sr.	6-0	215
<b>LT:</b> Drew Laurie*	Jr.	6-0	235
<b>LG:</b> Payton Schroeder*	Sr.	5-11	210
<b>C:</b> Nick Moretti	So.	5-11	200
<b>RG:</b> Ben Combs	Sr.	6-5	280
<b>RT:</b> Jordan Watt*	Sr.	6-3	270
<b>K:</b> Gavin Svergko	Jr.	5-10	155



Sundquist

#### DEFENSE

<b>DE:</b> Cole Sundquist*	Jr.	6-4	255
<b>NG:</b> Andrew Spitzer	Jr.	6-4	275
<b>DE:</b> Danny Alley*	Sr.	5-11	220
<b>LB:</b> Aidan Sample*	Sr.	5-10	175
<b>LB:</b> Randy Crim	Sr.	6-1	175
<b>LB:</b> Bryant Perkins*	So.	5-10	200
<b>LB:</b> Andrew Molnar	Jr.	5-10	185
<b>CB:</b> Charlie Wade*	Sr.	5-7	160
<b>CB:</b> Sam Cost*	Sr.	5-9	155
<b>S:</b> Chase Martin*	Jr.	5-11	170
<b>S:</b> Noah Howarth	Sr.	5-9	175
<b>P:</b> Joey Sanchez	So.	6-1	200

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 15; **Key reserves:** Kody Quiggle, So., 5-11, 235, Julian Zappitelli, Jr., 5-10, 165, Noah Barnes, So., 6-0, 170

**Best in the classroom:** Michael O'Brien 4.83, Sam Cost 4.62, Jordan Watt 4.5, Ryan Crim 4.30

**Best bench press:** Jordan Watt, 265 pounds

**Best squat:** Jordan Watt, 450 pounds

**Best 40:** Mitch Polovic, 4.7 seconds

## Mayfield»Wildcats

### Just the facts

**Conference:** WRC  
**OHSAA:** Division II, Region 5  
**Coach:** Ross Bandiera, sixth year (31-20)  
**2020:** 5-2  
**Twitter:** @MayfieldSports  
**Home field:** Wildcat Park

### Outlook

The Wildcats will field one of their youngest teams in years, with only eight returning letterwinners, three returning starters on defense and one (kicker Austin Ziance) on offense. But the upside of this team is huge. Senior QB Devin Sperling is an exceptional QB who was 'stuck' behind decorated starter Michael Huss. The offensive skill, highlighted by fleet-footed Nick Biega, can make plays in space. and the offensive line, featuring three up-and-coming sophomores, is big. The middle of the defense is Mayfield's strength. Nose tackle Matt Snider and LB Grant Woods are big-time playmakers. Mayfield has always prided itself on tough, hard-nosed defense.

This year will be no different. There are questions about depth and experience, but that comes with any young team. This team will grow fast as the season progresses.



Snider



Traczyk

### Player to watch

Matt Snider is an absolute bull in the middle. The latest of dominating defensive linemen — most recently being Marco Tramontano — Snider has the size and strength to dominate the trenches. It'll be tough for offensive lines to move Snider if they want to run up the middle.

### Underclassman to watch:

Mikey Traczyk is a 6-1, 200-pound

linebacker who is physical. He has great balance, thanks in part to his wrestling background, and he has a nasty demeanor that you want in a linebacker.

### Bottom line

**IF:** Mayfield's young offensive players grow up quickly and play like veterans. **THEN:** Mayfield will be in the thick of the WRC race again.

— John Kampf

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Akron Buchtel at Mayfield, 7  
**Aug. 27:** Mayfield at Massillon Jackson, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Nordonia at Mayfield, 7  
**Sept. 10:** Mayfield at Tiffin Columbian, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Chardon at Mayfield, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Mayfield at Riverside, 7  
**Oct. 1:** Mayfield at South, 7  
**Oct. 8:** North at Mayfield, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 15:** Mayfield at Madison, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Kenston at Mayfield, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Devin Sperling	Sr.	6-2	185
<b>RB:</b> Kaiden Kiser	Sr.	5-9	160
<b>WR:</b> Nick Biega	Jr.	5-10	175
<b>WR:</b> Nathan Moon	Sr.	5-9	165
<b>WR:</b> Mason Arth	Jr.	5-10	170
<b>WR:</b> Mikey Storey	Jr.	5-10	165
<b>LT:</b> Luke Duroscho	So.	6-0	265
<b>LG:</b> Kade Woods	So.	6-1	255
<b>C:</b> Nico Traczyk	So.	6-3	285
<b>RG:</b> Anthony Brack	Jr.	6-0	245
<b>RT:</b> Joe Dilella	Sr.	6-1	255
<b>K:</b> Austin Ziance*	Jr.	5-9	160

#### DEFENSE

<b>NT:</b> Matt Snider*	Sr.	6-1	275
<b>DE:</b> Isaiah Black	Sr.	6-2	220
<b>DE:</b> Daron Arnold	So.	6-1	270
<b>LB:</b> Mikey Traczyk	Jr.	6-1	200
<b>LB:</b> Grant Woods*	Sr.	6-3	215
<b>LB:</b> Anthony Migliorini	Sr.	6-0	200
<b>LB:</b> Angelo Vecchio	Jr.	5-9	175
<b>LB:</b> Aiden Arth	Sr.	5-10	175
<b>S:</b> Nathan Conrad	Sr.	6-2	170
<b>CB:</b> Steven Daugherty*	Sr.	5-9	165
<b>CB:</b> Vince Caspio	Jr.	5-9	160
<b>P:</b> Austi Ziance	Jr.	5-9	160

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 8; **Key reserves:** Dylan Colello, So., 5-9, 165, Dylan Parnell, So., 5-9, 155, Vince Aboundader, Sr., 5-9, 180, Joey Barch, So., 5-8, 185

**Best in the classroom:** Luis Vasquez 4.30

**Best bench press:** Vince Aboundader 315 pounds

**Best squat:** Mikey Traczyk 400 pounds

**Best 40:** Nick Biega 4.45 seconds



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## Mentor»Cardinals

### Just the facts

**Conference:** GCC

**OHSAA:** Division I, Region 1

**Coach:** Matt Gray, second year (9-2)

**2020:** 9-2

**Twitter:** @MentorRedline

**Home field:** Jerome T. Osborne Sr. Stadium

### Outlook

There are a ton of returning letterwinners (38), but not many returning starters — four on offense and three on defense. New QB Jacob Snow got valuable experience last season starting the D-I state semifinal game. RB Brenden Panhorst got a lot of reps last year, too. He's small (5-7) but is elusive and packs a punch behind a line that returns three of five starters. Defensively, five-star national recruit Brenan Vernon is the headliner for sure. The experience of LB Aiden Fellows and CB Michael Harrison is big, too. The line size and team speed are strengths, but — whew — that schedule offers zero breathers.

### Player to watch

Junior defensive lineman Brenan Vernon is one of the highest-rated juniors in the nation. He's going to get a lot of double-teams this year. Even if he isn't in on plays, he'll command so much attention someone else will likely be left unblocked.



Vernon

### Underclassman to watch:

Junior QB Jacob Snow showed flashes of brilliance in last year's D1 state semifinal. With maturity he'll get even better. Limiting turnovers will be the key for him.

### Bottom line

**IF:** the Cardinals can avoid peaks and valleys amidst a brutally tough schedule; **THEN:** They will be in line for another league title and deep playoff run.

— John Kampf



NEWS-HERALD FILE

Jacob Snow of Mentor got his first varsity start in a Division I state semifinal.

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Mentor at Canton McKinley, 7  
**Aug. 27:** St. Ignatius at Mentor, 7  
**Sept. 4:** Mentor at St. Edward, 7  
**Sept. 10:** Mentor at North Allegheny (Pa.), 7  
**Sept. 17:** Clarkson (Canada) at Mentor, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Brunswick at Mentor, 7  
**Oct. 1:** Medina at Mentor, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 8:** Mentor at Solon, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Mentor at Strongsville, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Euclid at Mentor, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Jacob Snow	Jr.	6-2	195
<b>RB:</b> Brenden Panhorst	Sr.	5-7	170
<b>WR:</b> Mikey Norwood	Sr.	5-9	170
<b>WR:</b> Evan Harper*	Sr.	6-2	190
<b>WR:</b> Nick Farley	Sr.	6-2	175
<b>WR:</b> Sam Kish	Sr.	6-0	190
<b>LT:</b> Ethan Bostelman*	Sr.	6-2	280
<b>LG:</b> Michael McClure	Jr.	6-4	275
<b>C:</b> Danny Call*	Sr.	6-1	285
<b>RG:</b> Blake Rice	Sr.	5-11	250
<b>RT:</b> Brandon Ryan*	Sr.	6-3	285
<b>K:</b> Joseph Evans	Jr.	5-10	150



Snow

#### DEFENSE

<b>DE:</b> Brenan Vernon*	Jr.	6-5	260
<b>DT:</b> Benny LoDuca	Sr.	6-1	290
<b>DE:</b> Matt Savor	Sr.	6-3	255
<b>LB:</b> Mike Wenzel	Sr.	6-1	210
<b>LB:</b> Kadyan Burkholder	Jr.	6-0	205
<b>LB:</b> Aiden Fellows*	Sr.	6-2	230
<b>LB:</b> Dean Dudas	Sr.	5-10	180
<b>CB:</b> Michael Harrison*	Sr.	5-10	170
<b>CB:</b> Jimmy Shonauer	Sr.	5-10	170
<b>S:</b> Chris Finucan	Sr.	5-11	170
<b>S:</b> Tyler Wilkinson	Sr.	5-9	160
<b>P:</b> Matt Moegling	Sr.	6-1	170

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 38; **Key reserves:** Mitchell Waite, Jr., 6-0, 180, Jack O'Neil, So., 6-0, 220, Collin Orosz, Jr., 5-11, 210, Jack Geduldig, Jr., 5-11, 205  
**Best in the classroom:** Brendan Baroni 4.1, Nick Schwalm 4.0, Ethan Smith 4.0, Mitchell Waite 4.0  
**Best bench press:** Danny Call, 325 pounds  
**Best squat:** Evan Harper, 510 pounds  
**Best 40:** Evan Harper 4.50 seconds

## NDCL»Lions

### Just the facts

**Conference:** Crown Conference

**OHSAA:** Division III, Region 9

**Coach:** Andrew Mooney, seventh year (39-25 record)

**2020:** 4-4

**Twitter:** @NDCL\_Football

**Home field:** Lozick Field at Lion Stadium

### Outlook

NDCL brings back its entire secondary, quarterback, and three of starting offensive linemen from last season. Even with a slew of returning players, there are a plethora of new names, as well. The offensive line has to protect dual-threat quarterback Jacob Koenig, and will look to third-year starter Bryan Taylor to anchor the line, but at left tackle rather than center where he was the last two seasons. With the secondary back from last season, a young front seven will rely on them not just in the passing game, but also in the run game.

### Player to watch

Jacob Koenig is the first returning quarterback for the Lions since Mooney took over the program. Koenig comes off a season in which he threw for 750 yards and seven touchdowns. The Lions won't be just relying on his throwing, but also his ability to run and avoid pressure when the pocket collapses.

**Underclassman to watch:** Matt Urda played a lot of snaps as a sophomore as one of the inside linebackers, and takes over one of the starting roles this season. Operating as a quarterback for the defense, his experience on the defensive side of the ball will be key for the front seven.

### Bottom line

**IF:** The offensive line can live up to expectations; **THEN:** The Lions can finish in the top half of the Crown conference.

— Benjamin Hercik



NEWS-HERALD FILE

NDCL's Jacob Koenig in 2020.

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** South at NDCL, 7  
**Aug. 27:** Lewis Center Olentangy at NDCL, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Kenston at NDCL, 7  
**Sept. 11:** NDCL at Gilmour, 2  
**Sept. 18:** NDCL at Lutheran East, 1  
**Sept. 24:** NDCL at East Liverpool, 7  
**Oct. 1:** NDCL at Walsh Jesuit, 7  
**Oct. 8:** Padua at NDCL, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 15:** VASJ at NDCL, 7  
**Oct. 22:** NDCL at Lake Catholic, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Jacob Koenig*	Sr.	5-11	165
<b>RB:</b> Mark Tomei	Sr.	5-10	155
<b>WR:</b> Will Eppich*	Sr.	5-9	160
<b>WR:</b> Tim Mamone	Sr.	6-2	160
<b>WR:</b> James Cipolla	Sr.	6-0	175
<b>TE:</b> Ryan Zucker	Sr.	6-2	175
<b>LT:</b> Brian Taylor*	Sr.	5-11	265
<b>LG:</b> Joey Valentino	Jr.	6-1	215
<b>C:</b> Cole Marut*	Sr.	5-8	185
<b>RG:</b> Ryan Pesho*	Jr.	6-3	230
<b>RT:</b> Brody Seibert	Jr.	6-2	250
<b>K:</b> Gianni Spedic*	Jr.	6-2	175



Urda

#### DEFENSE

<b>DE:</b> Luke Peroni	Jr.	6-0	220
<b>Nose:</b> Brian Taylor	Sr.	5-11	265
<b>DE:</b> Ryan Callahan	Jr.	5-10	185
<b>LB:</b> Ryan Zucker*	Sr.	6-2	175
<b>LB:</b> Declan Nosse	Jr.	5-11	175
<b>LB:</b> Matt Urba*	Jr.	5-11	190
<b>LB:</b> Josh Grambo	So.	6-3	190
<b>CB:</b> Ryan Niska*	Sr.	6-0	170
<b>CB:</b> James Cipolla*	Sr.	6-0	175
<b>SS:</b> Matt Ferrell*	Sr.	6-0	170
<b>FS:</b> Ryan Moskal*	Sr.	5-9	165
<b>P:</b> Gianni Spedic*	Jr.	6-2	175

\* — returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 35

**Key reserves:** Luke Peroni, Jr., 6-0, 220, Ryan Niska, Sr., 6-0, 170, Brandon Smul, Jr., 6-1, 155, Mark Tomei, Sr., 5-10, 155  
**Best bench press:** Ashton Gotham, 265  
**Best 40 time:** Mark Tomei — 4.48  
**Best squat:** Matt Urda — 387



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## North»Rangers

### Just the facts

**School:** North  
**Conference:** WRC  
**OHSAA:** Division II, Region 5  
**Coach:** Shawn Dodd, seventh year (21-37)  
**2020:** 3-4  
**Twitter:** @northrangers  
**Home field:** Nick Carter Stadium

### Outlook

The Rangers are changing things up with a different offensive scheme that will spread things out a little more and get playmakers in space behind a big offensive line. The skill is exceptional, with Reon-*tae* Lowery, Mo Morgan, Curtis Thomas and Dom Marciante all back at RB and receiver. The line is anchored by Pitt commit Ryan Baer (6-8, 330). There are a lot of two-way players, so depth is a little concern. But this team has better speed than some past teams, and also has a tremendous work ethic. They should be a factor in the WRC race this year.

### Player to watch

You can't help but to watch and notice 6-8, 330-pound Ryan Baer. The massive lineman is one of the best in Ohio, if not the nation. He'll start on both the offensive and defensive lines this year and command attention.



Baer

### Underclassman to watch:

There are a few very good options here. Reon-*tae* Lowery (a sophomore) and Curtis Thomas (a junior) can both fly. If they get in the open field, look out.



Thomas

### Bottom line

**IF:** the Rangers can get accustomed to the new offense quickly; **THEN:** they are going to scare teams with their speed and athleticism.

— John Kampf



NEWS-HERALD FILE

Curtis Thomas is back at North this year as a primary playmaker.

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Garfield Heights at North, 7  
**Aug. 27:** North at Richfield Revere, 7  
**Sept. 3:** North at Lake Catholic, 7  
**Sept. 10:** Kenston at North, 7  
**Sept. 17:** North at South, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Madison at North, 7  
**Oct. 1:** Riverside at North, 7  
**Oct. 8:** North at Mayfield, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Brush at North, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 22:** North at Chardon

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Zach Rummel	So.	6-3	175
<b>RB:</b> Reon- <i>tae</i> Lowery*	So.	5-10	180
<b>RB:</b> Mo Morgan*	Sr.	5-11	185
<b>WR:</b> Curtis Thomas*	Jr.	5-9	155
<b>WR:</b> Dom Marciante*	Sr.	5-9	150
<b>WR:</b> Lawrence Lawson	Sr.	6-2	205
<b>LT:</b> Brody Spock	Sr.	6-2	240
<b>LG:</b> Ryan Baer*	Sr.	6-8	330
<b>C:</b> R.J. Lauer	Sr.	6-3	200
<b>RG:</b> Antonio Golomovic	Jr.	6-2	270
<b>RT:</b> Nate Gangloff	So.	6-0	210
<b>K:</b> Dan Tadic	So.	6-1	180

#### DEFENSE

<b>DL:</b> Laith Asad	Jr.	6-2	230
<b>DL:</b> Dre Coleman	Jr.	6-0	230
<b>DL:</b> Ryan Baer*	Sr.	6-8	330
<b>LB:</b> Anthony Gallo	Sr.	5-10	200
<b>LB:</b> Chris Stinson	Jr.	5-10	185
<b>LB:</b> Mo Morgan*	Sr.	5-11	185
<b>LB:</b> Lawrence Lawson	Sr.	6-2	205
<b>CB:</b> Dom Marciante*	Sr.	5-9	150
<b>CB:</b> Robbie Kunsman	Sr.	6-1	175
<b>S:</b> Curtis Thomas*	Jr.	5-9	155
<b>S:</b> Lorenzo Casanova*	Sr.	5-11	175
<b>P:</b> Zach Rummell	So.	6-3	175

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 6; **Key reserves:** Cam Cantrell, Sr., 5-11, 175, Rahul Patel, Sr., 5-11, 165, Dylan Hargass, Jr., 5-11, 175, Nolan Sechler, So., 6-0, 200.

**Best in the classroom:** Rahul Patel, 4.4

**Best bench press:** Ryan Baer, 425 pounds

**Best squat:** Ryan Baer, 500 pounds

**Best 40:** Curtis Thomas, 4.50 seconds

## Perry»Pirates

### Just the facts

**School:** Perry  
**Conference:** CVC Chagrin  
**OHSAA:** Division IV, Region 13  
**Coach:** Bob Gecewich, first year  
**2020:** 5-2  
**Twitter:** @Perry\_Pirates  
**Home field:** Alumni Stadium

### Outlook

The Pirates welcome in the Bob Gecewich era after the retirement of former Coach Matt Rosati. The Pirates have had a good camp as far as adapting to the new system and the expectations set before them by their new coach. There's a lot of competition for positions and many will play early on as spots are up for grabs, especially at QB, where Brayden Richards and freshman Walter Moses will play. Javin Richards is a field-stretching receiver and a very good safety. Perry has good depth at running back, too. The question is up front where the Pirates have good size and strength, but they're low on numbers in the trenches. Defensively, the Pirates want to be fast and aggressive. Senior Jadyann Anderson, in the mix for carries on offense, is a disruptive force at defensive end. If the defensive line depth holds up, the back end is athletic and opportunistic. The Pirates have a very good kicker in Calvin Rowan, which can be a difference-maker in tight games this season.

### Player to watch

Javin Richards is a familiar name as a state champion in the pole vault and 300 hurdles. He is an impact player on both sides of the ball here as a home run-hitting receiver on offense and a safety who isn't afraid to stick his nose in the box on defense.

**Underclassman to watch:** Jaden Studio



J. Richards

is a 6-foot-1, 213-pound running back. He's only a sophomore, but he runs with power and authority, almost to the point that he is looking for someone to run over. He could be in for a big year for the Pirates.

### Bottom line

**IF:** the Pirates can stay healthy and productive on the offensive and defensive lines. **THEN:** there is plenty of skill and speed for Perry to drive the opposition crazy.

— John Kampf

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** Riverside at Perry, 7  
**Aug. 27:** Perry at Kenston, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Madison at Perry, 7  
**Sept. 10:** Perry at Chagrin Falls, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Lakeside at Perry, 7 (HC)  
**Sept. 24:** Perry at Edgewood, 7  
**Oct. 1:** Kirtland at Perry, 7  
**Oct. 8:** Perry at Orange, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Geneva at Perry, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Perry at West Geauga, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Brayden Richards*	So.	5-11	169
<b>QB:</b> Walter Moses	Fr.	6-2	158
<b>RB:</b> Aiden Lefelhoc*	Sr.	5-10	186
<b>WR:</b> Jaden Hacking	Jr.	5-10	163
<b>WR:</b> Javin Richards	Sr.	6-1	174
<b>SL:</b> Brock Sivon	Sr.	6-1	178
<b>LT:</b> A.J. Kifus	Jr.	6-3	245
<b>LG:</b> Joey Conroy*	Sr.	6-0	190
<b>C:</b> Evan Forro*	Sr.	6-1	255
<b>RG:</b> Jacob Marjak*	Sr.	6-3	266
<b>RT:</b> Tyler Croyle	Sr.	6-2	195
<b>K:</b> Calvin Rowan*	Sr.	5-7	155

#### DEFENSE

<b>DE:</b> Jadyann Anderson*	Sr.	6-2	210
<b>DT:</b> Jacob Marjak	Sr.	6-3	266
<b>DT:</b> Tyler Croyle	Sr.	6-2	195
<b>DE:</b> Logan Cosiano	Sr.	6-2	200
<b>LB:</b> Aiden Lefelhoc	Sr.	5-10	186
<b>LB:</b> Jared Allen	Sr.	5-11	184
<b>CB:</b> Jayvon Isaacs	Sr.	6-0	155
<b>CB:</b> Jacob Caldwell	Sr.	5-10	149
<b>S:</b> Brian Cox	Jr.	6-0	180
<b>S:</b> Javin Richards*	Sr.	6-1	174
<b>S:</b> Brock Sivon*	Sr.	6-1	178
<b>P:</b> Brian Cox*	Jr.	6-0	180

\*: returning starter; **Key reserves:** Ethan Crum, Zach Peteraitis, Sr., 506, 159, Jayden Studio, So., 6-1, 213, Owen McKoon, Connor Zgrebnak, Sr., 6-0, 166



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## Riverside»Beavers

### Just the facts

**Conference:** WRC  
**Coach:** Dave Bors, 12th year (57-54)  
**OHSAA:** Division II, Region 5  
**2020:** 6-2  
**Twitter:** @\_RHSFootball  
**Home field:** Riverside Stadium

### Outlook

The good news in Painesville Township is the building block off which the Beavers are diving into this campaign, a 6-2 season with a playoff win. The challenge is many of the familiar faces who helped spearhead that have graduated. An offensive line averaging 282 pounds and returning its interior intact will help the cause, and Dom Tromba and Abdussatar are a solid 1-2 backfield punch. Replacing seven starters on defense, including the entire DB corps, will naturally be a work in progress. There is an opportunity to compete in the top half of the WRC, but the new personnel will have to develop fast.

### Player to watch

Dom Tromba, a 6-foot, 200-pound senior, showed flashes as a junior with 361 regular-season rushing yards and six TDs, along with four sacks and seven TFLs on defense. In turn, he's likely to be the glue for this new-look squad on both sides of the ball.



Tromba



McKnight

**Underclassman to watch:** Sophomore WR-DB Brady McKnight (5-10, 170) saw reps as a freshman, an "excellent athlete" and "coachable" according to Bors who will be counted upon heavily as a two-way starter.

### Bottom line

**IF:** ... that new-look defense can come along and Tromba can have a big year;  
**THEN** ... .500 or even much better than that seems attainable.

— Chris Lillstrung



DAVID C. TURBEN — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

Riverside's Jalil Abdussatar carries against Chardon last season.

### Schedule (subject to change)

**Aug. 20:** Riverside at Perry, 7  
**Aug. 27:** Amherst at Riverside, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Holy Name at Riverside, 7  
**Sept. 10:** Riverside at Chardon, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Riverside at Madison, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Mayfield at Riverside, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 1:** Riverside at North, 7  
**Oct. 9:** Martinsburg at Riverside, 1  
**Oct. 15:** Riverside at Kenston, 7  
**Oct. 22:** South at Riverside, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>RB:</b> Dom Tromba*	Sr.	6-0	200
<b>RB:</b> Jalil Abdussatar*	Sr.	5-10	200
<b>WR:</b> Michael Tromba*	Sr.	6-2	185
<b>WR:</b> Erren Conwell	Jr.	6-0	170
<b>WR:</b> Brady McKnight	So.	5-10	170
<b>WR:</b> Jake Elly*	Jr.	6-0	170
<b>LT:</b> Ian Lyons	Sr.	6-2	315
<b>LG:</b> Dylan Simpson*	Sr.	6-2	320
<b>C:</b> Nico Jimenez*	Sr.	5-10	250
<b>RG:</b> Nick Messenger*	Sr.	6-0	275
<b>RT:</b> Raj Singh	Jr.	6-3	250
<b>K:</b> Sean Kerwood	Jr.	5-10	160

#### DEFENSE

<b>DL:</b> A.J. Adams	Jr.	6-0	200
<b>DL:</b> Collin Fairbanks	Jr.	5-10	200
<b>DL:</b> Nick Messenger*	Sr.	6-0	275
<b>LB:</b> Henry Busch*	Sr.	6-0	200
<b>LB:</b> Dom Tromba*	Sr.	6-0	200
<b>LB:</b> Wyatt Wunderle*	Sr.	6-3	235
<b>LB:</b> Jason Ryan	Jr.	6-2	200
<b>DB:</b> Lucas Nalepka	Sr.	5-10	180
<b>DB:</b> Jake Elly	Jr.	6-0	170
<b>DB:</b> Erren Conwell	Jr.	6-0	170
<b>DB:</b> Brady McKnight	Jr.	5-10	170
<b>P:</b> Sean Kerwood	Jr.	5-10	160

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 13; **Key reserves:** Cam Simpson, Jr., 5-11, 180, Mike Maloney, So., 5-10, 180, A.J. Moore, Sr., 5-8, 200, Alex Mlakar\*, Sr., 6-2, 225  
**Best in the classroom:** Cam Simpson, 4.34 GPA, Max Borris, 4.29, Brady McKnight, 4.20, Henry Busch, 4.15, Matt Modarelli, 4.15  
**Best bench press:** Collin Fairbanks, 335 pounds  
**Best 40 time:** Brady McKnight and Mike Maloney, 4.58 seconds  
**Best squat:** Ian Lyons, Dylan Simpson and Nick Messenger, 525 pounds

## South»Rebels

### Just the facts

**Conference:** WRC  
**OHSAA:** Division II, Region 5  
**Coach:** Matt Duffy, 18th year (114-68)  
**2020:** 3-5  
**Twitter:** @southathletics  
**Home field:** Harry E. Winters Stadium

### Outlook

South has a ton of guys back, including 10 on offense (and kicker Sam Patrizi) and eight on defense. The Rebels started 0-3 last year but won three of their last five. The experience is vast, and so is the offensive skill. QB Colin Quinlan has a slew of options when it comes to ball distribution. South has a lightning (Tyrone Singleton) and a thunder (Ira Sampson) combo in the backfield. If the offensive line gives Quinlan & Co. a smidgen of time, this offense could be scary. The defense is strong and experienced, especially in the back seven or eight. The key for the defense in the black-and-blue Western Reserve Conference is stopping/slowing down the opposing running game. There are some depth concerns, according to Coach Matt Duffy, but this team has a huge upside with its skill and experience.

### Player to watch

Ira Sampson has a number of Division I college offers, and could play on offense OR defense at the next level. He's a hammer at linebacker for the Rebels. And even though he will split time at RB with Tyrone Singleton, he is capable of putting up video game-like numbers on offense as well.

### Underclassman to watch:

There are some great options here, including game-breaking Singleton at running back. But keep an eye on junior QB Colin

Quinlan. With a year under his belt already, and with the wealth of skilled players around him, he could be primed for a record-setting type of season.

### Bottom line

**IF:** South can play good defense and slow down opposing running games; **THEN:** the Rebels can contend for the WRC title and make a deep playoff run.

— John Kampf

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** South at NDCL, 7  
**Aug. 27:** Twinsburg at South, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Maple Heights at South, 7  
**Sept. 10:** South at Madison, 7  
**Sept. 17:** North at South, 7  
**Sept. 24:** South at Brush, 7  
**Oct. 1:** Mayfield at South, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 8:** South at Kenston, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Chardon at South, 7  
**Oct. 22:** South at Riverside, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Colin Quinlan*	Jr.	6-0	180
<b>WR:</b> David McClain*	Sr.	5-10	165
<b>WR:</b> Josh Owens*	Sr.	5-11	165
<b>WR:</b> Ryan Dondrea*	Sr.	6-0	185
<b>WR:</b> Carson VonSeggern*	Sr.	6-0	170
<b>RB:</b> Tyrone Singleton*	Jr.	5-9	170
<b>LT:</b> Alec Vittori*	Sr.	6-0	205
<b>LG:</b> Michael Scanlon*	Sr.	5-10	205
<b>C:</b> Brody Sherman	Sr.	6-0	205
<b>RG:</b> Alex Azre*	Jr.	6-0	290
<b>RT:</b> Dom Vittori*	Sr.	6-0	215
<b>K:</b> Sam Patrizi*	Sr.	6-0	175

#### DEFENSE

<b>DL:</b> Trevion Barrow*	Sr.	6-0	215
<b>DL:</b> Joseph Matosoky	Jr.	6-0	245
<b>DL:</b> Nick Mastroianni	Sr.	6-1	220
<b>LB:</b> Ira Sampson*	Sr.	6-0	205
<b>LB:</b> Jayden Searcy*	Sr.	5-11	180
<b>LB:</b> Tyler Berman*	Sr.	6-0	180
<b>LB:</b> Andrew Osagle_Erese*	Sr.	5-11	195
<b>DB:</b> Bryce Figler*	Jr.	5-10	170
<b>DB:</b> A.J. Hanslik*	Sr.	5-10	165
<b>DB:</b> Mamadou Sy	Sr.	5-10	165
<b>DB:</b> JeCory Upshaw*	Sr.	5-9	170
<b>P:</b> Tommy Funk	Jr.	6-1	170

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 18; **Key reserves:** Delonde Moss, So., 6-1, 170, Julian Mitchell, Sr., 6-3, 320, Laszlo Johnson, Sr., 6-0, 240, Jason Panich, Jr., 5-9, 190  
**Best in the classroom:** Dom Vittori 4.56, Ryan Dondrea 4.41, Sam Patrizi 4.27  
**Best bench press:** Dom Vittori 305 pounds  
**Best squat:** Alex Azre 475 pounds  
**Best 40:** Tyrone Singleton 4.49 seconds



Sampson



Quinlan

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## University»Preppers

### Just the facts

**Conference:** Independent  
**Coach:** Ben Malbasa, seventh year (33-27)  
**OHSAA:** Division II, Region 5  
**2020:** 1-6  
**Twitter:** @USFootball1890  
**Home field:** Scovil Field

### Outlook

After a 1-6 campaign last fall, the Preppers are eager to turn the page to improved fortune. The personnel is in place to get there. Boland saw plenty of reps guiding the US offense as a freshman and will look to build on that with a solid receiving corps paced by Hodge. The size on the line is good, with returning guards Ippolito and Calabrese, and Malbasa is hopeful to see a progression from Hanna after an "outstanding" offseason. Malbasa had high praise for his defensive line amid a veteran 'D,' stating, "This is the most disruptive front we have had during my time at US."

### Player to watch

Alex Weinberg, a 5-foot-10, 178-pound senior, will be an invaluable influence from his ILB spot. Weinberg, who will also see some RB time, is the kind of read-and-react, physical LB with burst that Malbasa wants leading his defense.



Weinberg

### Underclassman to watch:

Junior LT-DE Christopher Jackson (6-1, 240), is a promising young performer to keep an eye on for whom Malbasa has high hopes with his work ethic and strength.



Jackson

### Bottom line

**IF:** ... US can return to its prolific offensive roots to complement a veteran defense;  
**THEN** ... a big bounceback from 1-6 is in play.

— Chris Lillstrung



TIM PHILLIS — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

University quarterback Jackson Boland looks to hit the edge vs. Gilmour in 2020.

### Schedule (subject to change)

**Aug. 21:** Columbus Academy at University, 5  
**Aug. 27:** University at South Range, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Bay at University, 7  
**Sept. 11:** Lake Catholic at University, 2  
**Sept. 18:** Kiski Prep at University, 2 (HC)  
**Sept. 25:** University at Gilmour, 2  
**Oct. 2:** Mogadore at University, 7  
**Oct. 8:** University at Bedford, 7  
**Oct. 16:** Warrensville Heights at University, 2  
**Oct. 22:** University at Steubenville, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Jackson Boland	So.	6-1	196
<b>RB-WR:</b> Quint Hanna*	Sr.	5-6	156
<b>WR:</b> Bryce Hodge*	Sr.	6-1	198
<b>WR:</b> Brian Kellon*	Jr.	6-2	167
<b>WR:</b> Cooper Mlakar*	Jr.	5-8	150
<b>TE:</b> Joey Valerio*	Sr.	6-5	191
<b>LT:</b> Christopher Jackson	Jr.	6-1	240
<b>LG:</b> Gavin Ippolito*	Jr.	6-3	285
<b>C:</b> Sean Fioritto	So.	5-11	206
<b>RG:</b> Gianfranco Calabrese*	Sr.	6-1	236
<b>RT:</b> Cam Beiswinger	So.	6-3	226
<b>K:</b> Evan Weybrecht	Sr.	5-7	140

#### DEFENSE

<b>DE:</b> Sammy Martin	Jr.	6-2	194
<b>DT:</b> Lex Kekic*	So.	6-1	220
<b>DT:</b> Mitchell Ramage*	Sr.	6-1	178
<b>DE:</b> Christopher Jackson*	Jr.	6-1	240
<b>ILB:</b> Jack Cocco*	Jr.	5-7	144
<b>ILB:</b> Alex Weinberg*	Sr.	5-10	178
<b>OLB:</b> Ryan Pattison	Jr.	6-0	176
<b>CB:</b> Javan Cobb*	Sr.	5-6	127
<b>CB:</b> Riggs Gorman	Sr.	5-10	144
<b>S:</b> Sam Henry	Sr.	6-1	149
<b>S:</b> George Minello	So.	5-7	155
<b>S:</b> Cooper Mlakar	Jr.	5-8	150
<b>P:</b> Brian Kellon	Jr.	6-2	167

\*: returning starter; **Key reserves:** OL Brian Billups, Jr., 5-9, 277, WR Duke Brennan, So., 6-1, 141, WR-S Johan Guy, Jr., 5-8, 136, FB-LB Daniel Kadlic, Jr., 5-9, 146, FB-DE-LB Noah Tidmore, So., 5-8, 199, S J.P. Brennan, Sr., 6-0, 140, DL Tyler Ryan, Sr., 5-10, 199, LB Ajay Krishnaney, Sr., 5-8, 160, DL Ethan Jackson, Sr., 6-1, 183, LB Jordan Heiser, Jr., 5-11, 160  
**Best in the classroom:** Julian Berger, 4.11 GPA  
**Best bench press:** Christopher Jackson, 300 pounds  
**Best 40 time:** Javan Cobb, 4.43 seconds  
**Best squat:** Alex Weinberg, 485 pounds

## VASJ»Vikings

### Just the facts

**Conference:** Crown Conference  
**OHSAA:** Division IV, Region 13  
**Coach:** Jeff Rotsky, first year  
**2020:** 1-7  
**Twitter:** @Vikings\_AD  
**Home field:** Case Western Reserve University

### Outlook

A new era of football has started at VASJ, with program-builder Jeff Rotsky now at the helm. Numbers are at a high, with 105 kids in the program — 45 of whom are freshmen. Having good numbers and depth is huge. There's exceptional team speed, including returning starter Andre Terry (4.4 in the 40). The offensive line is big and strong, thanks to the offseason weight program. Former Beachwood QB Jalen Minter takes the reins at quarterback this year. Tailback LaVonte Thornton (6-1, 190) could be up for a big year running the ball behind a big and physical offensive line. Euclid transfer Ty Howard will be a key on defense, where seven starters return from a year ago. The back end, with Matthew Okocha and Noah Clark back, is very talented. Run-stoppers Johnathan Pitts (6-4, 300) and Brandon Johnson (6-3, 280) are going to be hard for the opposition to block. The coaching staff hopes that confidence comes as the season progresses, but the pieces certainly look like they're in place.

### Player to watch

Noah Clark is a returning two-way starter. He is big, strong and fast. On top of that, he's a leader on and off the field. He sports a 4.1 GPA to go with everything he is on the football field.

**Underclassman to watch:** Mac Mulhan is a 5-9, 200-pound junior. He's a hardnosed



Clark

kind of kid who can play fullback and line-backer. Pound for pound he's the strongest player on the roster.

### Bottom line

**IF:** VASJ gets some confidence with early season wins; **THEN:** the Vikings are going to be a team no one wants to face come playoff time.

— John Kampf

### Schedule

**Aug. 20:** CVCA at VASJ at CWRU, 7  
**Aug. 28:** VASJ at Holy Name, 7  
**Sept. 3:** VASJ at Lakeside, 7  
**Sept. 10:** VASJ at Wheeling Park (W.Va.), 7  
**Sept. 18:** Cleveland Central Catholic vs. VASJ at CWRU, 7 (HC)  
**Sept. 24:** VASJ at Walsh Jesuit, 7  
**Oct. 2:** Lake Catholic at VASJ at CWRU, 7  
**Oct. 9:** VASJ at Conneaut Area (Pa.), 7  
**Oct. 15:** VASJ at NDCL, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Padua at VASJ at Wickliffe, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Jalen Minter	Sr.	5-90	165
<b>FB:</b> Falippo Pavlicka	Sr.	5-9	170
<b>TB:</b> Lavonte Thornton	Sr.	6-1	190
<b>WR:</b> Andre Terry*	Sr.	5-10	165
<b>WR:</b> Alonte Pryor	Sr.	5-7	155
<b>SL:</b> Linere Sumlin	Sr.	6-0	180
<b>LT:</b> Tyler Draft	Sr.	6-3	315
<b>LG:</b> Rashawn Black	Sr.	5-11	245
<b>C:</b> Zach Banasik	Sr.	5-11	275
<b>RG:</b> Bobby Malinowski*	Sr.	6-2	295
<b>RT:</b> Leon Wiley*	Sr.	6-0	275
<b>K:</b> Aiden Stauton	Jr.	5-9	140

#### DEFENSE

<b>DE:</b> Dominic Kirks	So.	6-4	250
<b>DE:</b> Isaac Bonner*	Sr.	5-8	215
<b>DT:</b> Johnathan Pitts	Jr.	6-4	350
<b>DT:</b> Brandon Johnson	So.	6-3	280
<b>LB:</b> Ty Howard	Sr.	5-11	195
<b>LB:</b> Mike Williams*	Sr.	5-11	190
<b>LB:</b> Joey Webb*	Sr.	6-0	180
<b>DB:</b> Des Kirks	So.	6-2	185
<b>DB:</b> Matthew Okocha*	Sr.	6-0	160
<b>DB:</b> Noah Clark*	Sr.	5-11	180
<b>DB:</b> Titus Bates*	Sr.	5-9	175
<b>P:</b> Mac Flynn*	Sr.	5-9	150

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 13; **Key reserves:** Chris Williams, Sr., 6-3, 205, Leon Wiley, Sr., 6-0, 275, Kayin Cooper, Jr., 5-11, 175, Mac Mulhan, Jr., 5-9, 200  
**Best in the classroom:** Paul Paciorek 4.6, Noah Clark 4.1, Matthew Okocha 4.1  
**Best bench press:** Ty Howard  
**Best squat:** Mac Mulhan  
**Best 40:** Andre Terry 4.4

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## West Geauga » Wolverines

### Just the facts

**Conference:** CVC Chagrin

**Coach:** Adam Sopkovich, fourth year (15-13)

**OHSAA:** Division III, Region 9

**2020:** 6-2

**Twitter:** @WestGFootball

**Home field:** Howell Field

### Outlook

Aspiration is high in Chester Township, as it should be with the quality back in the fold after a 6-2 campaign. The running game has to step up with the graduation of Trae Zimmerman, but the offense should be exciting with Stewart at the controls and Stazzone (31 receptions, 490 yards, nine TDs in 2020 regular season) leading the receiving charge. The Wolverines should also boast one of this area's best offensive lines, anchored by skilled bookend tackles in Gasbarrino and Sadler. The disruptive duo of Myers (seven sacks, 10 TFLs) and Sadler (10 TFLs) pace a defense that could be solid, and DiLalla is a special teams difference-maker.

### Player to watch

Danny Stewart, a 5-foot-7, 175-pound senior, was an All-Ohio QB last fall, throwing for 1,208 regular-season yards and 13 TDs and also running for 320 yards and four scores. Stewart is a heady leader and winner whose understanding of the offense and his personnel should help his squad thrive further.

**Underclassman to watch:** Stewart, Stazzone and Sadler were effusive in what junior ATH-SS Travis Velba (5-10, 180) could bring to the table, with a Taysom Hill style of Swiss army knife appeal.

### Bottom line

**IF:** ... the running game finds its way and new defensive starters excel; **THEN** ... this could be one of this area's more complete teams, a CVC and playoff contender potentially 8-2 or better.

— Chris Lillstrung



DAVID C. TURBEN — FOR THE NEWS-HERALD

West Geauga quarterback Danny Stewart drops back to pass during a 2020 game.

### Schedule (subject to change)

**Aug. 20:** Bay at West Geauga, 7  
**Aug. 27:** West Geauga at Streetsboro, 7  
**Sept. 3:** West Geauga at Parma, 7  
**Sept. 10:** West Geauga at Kirtland, 7  
**Sept. 17:** West Geauga at Edgewood, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Lakeside at West Geauga, 7  
**Oct. 1:** Orange at West Geauga, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 8:** West Geauga at Geneva, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Chagrin Falls at West Geauga, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Perry at West Geauga, 7

### Projected lineup

#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Danny Stewart*	Sr.	5-7	175
<b>RB-WR:</b> Michael Cavisinni	Sr.	5-5	160
<b>ATH:</b> Travis Velba	Jr.	5-10	180
<b>WR:</b> Torry Stazzone*	Sr.	6-1	165
<b>WR:</b> Chris Ranallo*	Sr.	5-9	165
<b>TE:</b> Kaden Ryan	Sr.	6-1	195
<b>LT:</b> Luca Gasbarrino*	Sr.	6-2	245
<b>LG:</b> Scotty Purchase*	Jr.	6-3	255
<b>C:</b> Nate Myers*	Sr.	6-1	210
<b>RG:</b> Austin Pascoe	Jr.	5-11	205
<b>RT:</b> Lucas Sadler*	Sr.	6-4	255
<b>K:</b> Joey DiLalla*	Sr.	5-10	175



Stewart

#### DEFENSE

<b>DE:</b> Nate Myers*	Sr.	6-1	210
<b>DT:</b> Austin Pascoe	Jr.	5-11	205
<b>DT:</b> Mario Denigris	Sr.	5-11	270
<b>DE:</b> Luca Gasbarrino	Sr.	6-2	245
<b>WLB:</b> Ryan Garvey	Sr.	6-0	180
<b>MLB:</b> Lucas Sadler*	Sr.	6-4	255
<b>SLB:</b> Dan Faber	Sr.	5-11	175
<b>CB:</b> Torry Stazzone*	Sr.	6-1	165
<b>CB:</b> Chris Ranallo*	Sr.	5-9	165
<b>FS:</b> Joey Hornyack	Jr.	5-10	170
<b>SS:</b> Travis Velba	Jr.	5-10	180
<b>P:</b> Joey DiLalla*	Sr.	5-10	175

\*: returning starter; **Key reserves:** RB Justin Artino, Jr., 5-7, 165, RB Jack Zimmerman, So., 6-0, 175, DE Ryan Deines, Sr., 5-11, 185, DL Shawn Leonard, Fr., 6-0, 215

**Best in the classroom:** Joey DiLalla, 4.49 GPA, Danny Stewart, 4.28, Thomas Randau, 4.14, Eric Posante, 4.0

**Best bench press:** Lucas Sadler, 325 pounds

**Best 40 time:** Torry Stazzone, 4.5 seconds

**Best squat:** Mario Denigris, 505 pounds

## Wickliffe » Blue Devils

### Just the facts

**Conference:** CVC Valley

**OHSAA:** Division VI, Region 21

**Coach:** Marce Porcello, 11th year (54-49)

**2020:** 8-2

**Twitter:** @wicklifefb

**Home field:** Memorial Stadium

### Outlook

After a five-year run in which Wickliffe went 38-15 and made four playoff appearances, the Blue Devils will basically be starting over in 2021. Just one starter returns, senior G/LB Thomas Wenz. But along with all the new faces in the starting lineup, Wickliffe will have a brand new field turf playing surface for the first time in program history, which will be ready to go when East Tech visits on Aug. 27. Coach Marce Porcello, in his 11th season leading his alma mater, is excited both about the new field and the potential of his backfield, which is talented and deep, although inexperienced. Due to the youth of the sophomore-heavy team, the Wickliffe coaching staff is stressing patience and keeping the playbook simple. The Blue Devils are hoping to rely on speed in the Wing-T offense (and a quicker home playing surface), and may look to open up the passing game a little more with a newcomer at QB in 6'1, 175-lb. junior Shawn Derganc, a standout pitcher on the baseball team.

### Player to watch

Junior Vince Gargiulo, a 5-foot-9, 170-pound running back and linebacker, is a key returnee for Wickliffe who missed most of his sophomore season with a back injury. Porcello said Gargiulo would have gotten plenty of playing time last season if not for the injury, even among a talented senior class that led the way to an 8-1 season and made a run to a Division VI regional semifinal. Gargiulo is expected to be a leader for the Blue Devils this season on both sides of the ball.

**Underclassman to watch:** Sophomore Bobby Plumb (5-foot-9, 155) is a hard-

nosed player that caught the attention of Wickliffe coaches last season, enough that he was a regular on special teams as a freshman on a senior-laden playoff squad. Described by Porcello as a "very competitive young man who plays very hard," Plumb will be part of a talented Wickliffe offensive backfield, as well as a key member of the secondary on defense.

### Bottom line

**IF:** The Blue Devils gain confidence with a few early season wins; **THEN:** They will grow into a team that can continue the success of its playoff-bound predecessors.

— Jay Kron

### Schedule (subject to change)

**Aug. 20:** Wickliffe at Brookside, 7  
**Aug. 27:** East Tech at Wickliffe, 7  
**Sept. 3:** Wickliffe at Harvey, 7  
**Sept. 10:** Fairport at Wickliffe, 7  
**Sept. 17:** Wickliffe at Brooklyn, 7  
**Sept. 24:** Lutheran West at Wickliffe, 7 (HC)  
**Oct. 1:** Crestwood at Wickliffe, 7  
**Oct. 8:** Wickliffe at Independence, 7  
**Oct. 15:** Trinity at Wickliffe, 7  
**Oct. 22:** Wickliffe at Cuyahoga Heights, 7

### Projected lineup

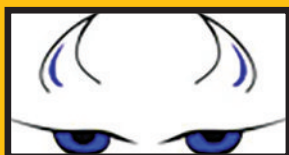
#### OFFENSE

<b>QB:</b> Shaun Derganc	Jr.	6-1	175
<b>RB:</b> Bobby Plumb	So.	5-8	155
<b>RB:</b> Vincent Gargiulo	Jr.	5-9	170
<b>RB:</b> Chase Bonadio	So.	5-10	145
<b>WR:</b> Jude Deveney	Jr.	6-0	155
<b>WR:</b> E.J. Jester	So.	5-8	140
<b>LT:</b> Noah Garrison	Jr.	6-5	315
<b>LG:</b> Blake Primozic	So.	5-10	155
<b>C:</b> Chris Sather	Fr.	5-11	187
<b>RG:</b> Patrick Quinn	Jr.	6-0	170
<b>RT:</b> Thomas Wenz	Sr.	6-2	215
<b>K:</b> Bobby Plumb	So.	5-8	155

#### DEFENSE

<b>DL:</b> Blake Primozic	So.	5-10	155
<b>DL:</b> Patrick Quinn	Jr.	6-0	170
<b>DL:</b> Shane Causey	Sr.	5-8	176
<b>LB:</b> Thomas Wenz*	Sr.	6-2	215
<b>LB:</b> Gavin Szczbaty	So.	5-6	145
<b>LB:</b> Dayvionn Ervin	Sr.	5-10	175
<b>LB:</b> Bobby Plumb	So.	5-8	155
<b>LB:</b> Vincent Gargiulo	Jr.	5-9	170
<b>DB:</b> E.J. Mester	So.	5-8	140
<b>DB:</b> Chase Bonadio	So.	5-10	145
<b>P:</b> Bobby Plumb	So.	5-8	155

\*: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 2; **Key reserves:** Mitchell Lindsey, So., 6-6, 32-, Shaun Derganc, Jr., 6-1, 175, Kevin McCabe, Sr., 6-0, 266



## GOOD LUCK IN THE 2021-2022 SEASON, BLUE DEVILS!

From, the Wickliffe Football Parents Club

Thank you to the booster patrons and members, for all of your support on behalf of our team, the schools and the community.

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