

FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE

It starts — and often ends — with Avon's front seven

From left, Sam Toniolo, Jason Gillespie, Jack Hricovec, Jeremiah Kelly, Nick Colburn, Ryan Stolarski and Owen Garcia.



High school football » Area schedule

AUG. 23

Amherst at Copley, 7 p.m.
Avon vs. St. Ignatius at Cleveland Browns Stadium, 7 p.m.
Avon Lake at Strongsville, 7 p.m.
Bishop Hartley at Elyria Catholic, 7 p.m.
Brookside at Brooklyn, 7 p.m.
Brush at Lorain, 7 p.m.
Cleveland Central Catholic at Bay, 7 p.m.
Independence at Columbia, 7 p.m.
Edison at Firelands, 7 p.m.
Elyria at Mayfield, 7 p.m.
Fairview at Clearview, 7 p.m.
North Ridgeville at North Olmsted, 7 p.m.
Northwestern at Keystone, 7 p.m.
Olmsted Falls at Solon, 7 p.m.
Oberlin at Plymouth, 7 p.m.
Rocky River at Harvey, 7 p.m.
Vermilion at Margaretta, 7 p.m.
Wellington at Collins Western Reserve, 7 p.m.
Westlake at Midview, 7 p.m.

AUG. 30

Amherst at Buckeye, 7 p.m.
Bay at Field, 7 p.m.
Benedictine at Avon Lake, 7 p.m.
Brooklyn at Oberlin, 7 p.m.
Canton McKinley at Avon, 7 p.m.
Fairview at Columbia, 7 p.m.
Huron at Brookside, 7 p.m.
Keystone at Cloverleaf, 7 p.m.
Lakewood at Clearview, 7 p.m.
Mayfield at Elyria Catholic, 7 p.m.
North Olmsted at Midview, 7 p.m.
Valley Forge at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Olmsted Falls at Brunswick, 7 p.m.
Rhodes at Westlake, 7 p.m.
Vermilion at Firelands, 7 p.m.
Wellington at Mapleton, 7 p.m.

AUG. 31

Lorain at Elyria, 1 p.m.
Rocky River at John Marshall, 12 p.m.

SEPT. 6

Akron East at Elyria, 7 p.m.
Brookside at Fairview, 7 p.m.
Canfield at Olmsted Falls, 7 p.m.
Chardon at Avon Lake, 7 p.m.
Clearview at McDonald, 7 p.m.
Columbia at Northwestern, 7 p.m.
Crestview at Keystone, 7 p.m.
Glenville at Avon, 7 p.m.
Lutheran East at Oberlin, 7 p.m.
Midview at Elyria Catholic, 7 p.m.
North Olmsted at Amherst, 7 p.m.
North Royalton at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Perkins at Rocky River, 7 p.m.
Plymouth at Wellington, 7 p.m.
Poland Seminary at Firelands, 7 p.m.
Sandusky at Lorain, 7 p.m.
University at Bay, 7 p.m.
Warrensville Heights at Westlake, 7 p.m.
Willard at Vermilion, 7 p.m.

SEPT. 13

Brooklyn at Fairview, 7 p.m.
Buckeye at North Olmsted, 7 p.m.
Normandy at Bay, 7 p.m.
Rocky River at Valley Forge, 7 p.m.



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Elyria practices for the season on Aug. 7.

Westlake at Lakewood, 7 p.m.
Black River at Wellington, 7 p.m.
Firelands at Columbia, 7 p.m.
Keystone at Clearview, 7 p.m.
Oberlin at Brookside, 7 p.m.
Amherst at Midview, 7 p.m.
Avon Lake at Berea-Midpark, 7 p.m.
Elyria at Avon, 7 p.m.
Olmsted Falls at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Elyria Catholic at Vermilion, 7 p.m.
Firestone at Lorain, 7 p.m.

SEPT. 20

Fairview at Beachwood, 7 p.m.
Bay at Buckeye, 7 p.m.
Lakewood at Rocky River, 7 p.m.
North Olmsted at Normandy, 7 p.m.
Valley Forge at Westlake, 7 p.m.
Clearview at Oberlin, 7 p.m.
Firelands at Black River, 7 p.m.
Keystone at Columbia, 7 p.m.
Wellington at Brookside, 7 p.m.
Padua at Elyria Catholic, 7 p.m.
Vermilion at Sandusky, 7 p.m.
Amherst at Berea-Midpark, 7 p.m.
Midview at Avon Lake, 7 p.m.
North Ridgeville at Avon, 7 p.m.
Olmsted Falls at Elyria, 7 p.m.
Lorain at Willoughby South, 7 p.m.

SEPT. 27

Fairview at Kirtland, 7 p.m.
Lakewood at North Olmsted, 7 p.m.
Rocky River at Normandy, 7 p.m.
Westlake at Bay, 7 p.m.
Black River at Keystone, 7 p.m.



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Amherst and Lorain players vie for the ball during a scrimmage Aug. 15.

Brookside at Firelands, 7 p.m.
Clearview at Wellington, 7 p.m.
Columbia at Oberlin, 7 p.m.
Norwalk at Vermilion, 7 p.m.
Avon at Olmsted Falls, 7 p.m.
Avon Lake at Amherst, 7 p.m.
Berea-Midpark at Midview, 7 p.m.

Elyria at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Elyria Catholic at Akron SVSM, 7 p.m.
Lorain vs. Garfield Heights at Bedford, 7 p.m.

OCT. 4

Chagrin Falls at Fairview, 7 p.m.
Bay at Valley Forge, 7 p.m.
Buckeye at Westlake, 7 p.m.
North Olmsted at Rocky River, 7 p.m.
Brookside at Keystone, 7 p.m.
Firelands at Clearview, 7 p.m.
Oberlin at Black River, 7 p.m.
Wellington at Columbia, 7 p.m.
Warrensville Heights at Lorain, 7 p.m.
Vermilion at Port Clinton, 7 p.m.
Amherst at Olmsted Falls, 7 p.m.
Avon Lake at Elyria, 7 p.m.
Berea-Midpark at Avon, 7 p.m.
Midview at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Benedictine at Elyria Catholic, 7 p.m.

OCT. 10

Bay at North Olmsted, 7 p.m.
Westlake at Rocky River, 7 p.m.

OCT. 11

Fairview at Cardinal, 7 p.m.
Brookside at Black River, 7 p.m.
Columbia at Clearview, 7 p.m.
Firelands at Keystone, 7 p.m.
Oberlin at Wellington, 7 p.m.
Elyria Catholic at Lake Catholic, 7 p.m.
Lorain at Shaw, 7 p.m.
Huron at Vermilion, 7 p.m.
Avon at Midview, 7 p.m.
Elyria at Amherst, 7 p.m.
North Ridgeville at Berea-Midpark, 7 p.m.
Olmsted Falls at Avon Lake, 7 p.m.

OCT. 18

Berkshire at Fairview, 7 p.m.
Lakewood at Bay, 7 p.m.
Rocky River at Buckeye, 7 p.m.
Valley Forge at North Olmsted, 7 p.m.
Westlake at Normandy, 7 p.m.
Clearview at Black River, 7 p.m.
Columbia at Brookside, 7 p.m.
Keystone at Wellington, 7 p.m.
Oberlin at Firelands, 7 p.m.
Bedford at Lorain, 7 p.m.
Elyria Catholic at Holy Name, 7 p.m.
Vermilion at Edison, 7 p.m.
Amherst at Avon, 7 p.m.
Avon Lake at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Berea-Midpark at Olmsted Falls, 7 p.m.
Midview at Elyria, 7 p.m.

OCT. 25

Fairview at Crestwood, 7 p.m.
Bay at Rocky River, 7 p.m.
North Olmsted at Westlake, 7 p.m.
Black River at Columbia, 7 p.m.
Clearview at Brookside, 7 p.m.
Keystone at Oberlin, 7 p.m.
Wellington at Firelands, 7 p.m.
Lorain at Maple Heights, 7 p.m.
Bellevue at Vermilion, 7 p.m.
Avon at Avon Lake, 7 p.m.
Berea-Midpark at Elyria, 7 p.m.
Midview at Olmsted Falls, 7 p.m.
North Ridgeville at Amherst, 7 p.m.
Brush at Elyria Catholic, 7 p.m.

TOP OF THE CROP

Football

1: Avon (14-1 in 2023)

2: North Ridgeville (8-4)

3: Olmsted Falls (9-4)

4: Avon Lake (7-5)

5: Amherst (3-7)

6: Lorain (7-3)

7: Bay (8-3)

8: Westlake (7-4)

9: Firelands (6-5)

10: Keystone (4-6)

Watch list: Vermilion (3-8), Midview (4-7), Elyria Catholic (3-7), Rocky River (10-2), Clearview (10-3)

Crop comments: Among the elite teams in Lorain County and west Cuyahoga County, the defending Division II, Region 6 champion Avon Eagles once again lead the Top of the Crop. They are led by Division I-caliber athletes in a lethal passing game and a dominant front seven on defense. Avon is the runaway favorite to win the Southwestern Conference, and North Ridgeville appears to be the biggest contender. The Rangers have a fast defense, a physical offensive line, returning starting quarterback Cole Miller and playmakers in the backfield/end spot (Charlie Steinmetz, Zack Barnhart and Ta'Vion Swain). ... Olmsted Falls will be physical as usual, but will also have

talent at the skill positions. The Bulldogs are fresh off a Division II, Region 6 semifinal run. Avon Lake has Division I recruits on offense and will return an experienced secondary. The defense performed well against Medina Highland (Division II, Region 6 finalist) in the Shoremen's first scrimmage. ... Amherst has the pieces for an exciting offense, led by quarterback Cole Norris, tight end Eli Solak and running back J.R. Bires. The defense also has All-Ohio defensive back Brady Engle (Elyria Catholic transfer). ... Lorain is projected to be one of the best teams in the Lake Erie League. First-year coach James Boyeas has talent, including All-Ohioans Ocir Kimble and Jairo Williams and returning quarterback Chase Davis to get them the ball in space. ... Bay is a run-heavy team, and it will have running backs Charlie Rogers and Rocco Ereditario to run behind a solid offensive line. ... Westlake enters its first season under Coach Logan Yantek. As the former offensive coordinator, he will have returning quarterback Sam Brucchieri and talent on the outside. ... The Falcons at Firelands always branded themselves as the physical running team and they will have a chance to make the similar magic (3,189 team rushing yards) it made in 2022. They should have the biggest offensive line in the Lorain County League and 2023 starting running back Collin Scott. ... Keystone will have the best shot to knock Firelands off its pedestal, as the favorite, so long as quarterback Zach Shackelford is healthy.

High school football » broadcast schedules

SPECTRUM NEWS 1

Aug. 23: Glenville at Upper Arlington
Aug. 30: Medina at Lewis Center Orlentangy
Sept. 6: Kirtland at Perry
Sept. 13: St. Ignatius at Walsh Jesuit
Sept. 20: North Ridgeville at Avon
Sept. 27: GlenOak at Hoover
Oct. 4: Mentor at Shaker Heights
Oct. 11: Canton McKinley at Uniontown Lake
Oct. 18: Solon at Wadsworth

Oct. 25: Chardon at Riverside

WOBL-FM 107.7, AM 1320

Aug. 23: Wellington at Western Reserve
Aug. 30: Firelands at Vermilion
Sept. 6: Columbia at Northwestern
Sept. 13: Oberlin at Brookside
Sept. 20: Firelands at Black River
Sept. 27: Clearview at Wellington
Oct. 4: Brookside at Keystone
Oct. 11: Columbia at Clearview
Oct. 18: Keystone at Wellington
Oct. 25: Black River at Columbia

WDLW-FM 98.9, AM 1380

Aug. 23: Avon at St. Ignatius
Aug. 30: Mayfield at Elyria Catholic
Sept. 6: Sandusky at Lorain
Sept. 13: Elyria Catholic vs. Vermilion
Sept. 20: North Ridgeville at Avon
Sept. 27: Berea-Midpark at Midview
Oct. 4: Midview at North Ridgeville
Oct. 11: Olmsted Falls at Avon lake
Oct. 18: Bedford at Lorain
Oct. 25: Avon at Lake Catholic
WEOL-AM 930/STREAM 1

Aug. 23: Avon vs. St. Ignatius
Aug. 30: Canton McKinley at Avon
Aug. 31: Lorain at Elyria
Sept. 6: Glenville at Avon
Sept. 13: Firelands at Columbia
Sept. 20: Keystone at Columbia
Sept. 27: Avon Lake at Amherst
Oct. 4: Midview at North Ridgeville
Oct. 11: Firelands at Keystone
Oct. 18: Avon Lake at North Ridgeville
Oct. 25: Avon at Avon Lake
WEOL STREAM 2

Aug. 23: Fairview at Clearview
Aug. 30: Vermilion at Firelands
Sept. 6: Midview at Elyria Catholic
Sept. 13: Keystone at Clearview
Sept. 20: Wellington at Brookside
Sept. 27: Clearview at Wellington
Oct. 4: Benedictine at Elyria Catholic
Oct. 11: Elyria at Amherst
Oct. 18: Bedford at Lorain
Oct. 25: Black River at Columbia
WHK-AM 1420, FM 102.5
Aug. 23: Avon vs. St. Ignatius

Aug. 30: St. Ignatius vs. Mentor
Sept. 6: Glenville at Avon
Week 4: Olmsted Falls at North Ridgeville
Sept. 20: Cleveland Heights at Mentor
Sept. 27: Chardon at Kenston
Oct. 4: St. Ignatius vs. St. Edward
Oct. 11: Cleveland Heights at Medina
Oct. 18: NDCL at Padua
Oct. 25: Hudson at Solon

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Avon front seven ready to leave its mark

That mark is likely a bruise on opposing ballcarriers this year

By Mark Perez-Krywany
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Just as an eagle hunts its prey with precision and power, Avon's defense is prepared to do the same.

Returning eight defensive starters, including all seven from the front lines, it is ready to become the apex predator once again.

Following a season filled with all-time highs and another deep playoff run, they are back — on the hunt to take down ball carriers and impose their will again.

"I think the amount of nastiness and how physical everyone is, is really the best part of our defense," Avon lineman Jeremiah Kelly said. "Our linebackers blitz hard. The (defensive) line can hustle. We are solid off the ball, strong and fast. The front seven is really the heart of our defense. We have dogs everywhere."

According to Avon coach Mike Elder, the defense in 2023, anchored by All-Ohio safeties Connor Rowlinson and Carson Canning, was the best during his Avon coaching tenure.

It held the opposition to less than 10 points per game, as the Eagles' 14-1 season broke the school's single-season win record. With another run to the Division II state semifinal cut short by Akron Hoban, the goal remains the same.

"Ultimately, we want to win the last one and we want to go 16-0, as always. We want to have fun doing what we are doing and be better men," Avon linebacker Nick Colburn said.

With a tenure at Avon



AIMEE BIELOZER — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Avon defensive players, from left, Jack Hricovec, Jason Gillespie, Jeremiah Kelly and Sam Toniolo.

that is nearing two decades and seven regional championships to show for it, Elder's word holds credence. He believes this year's defense has the potential to be just as productive, even though the strengths have shifted toward the front seven.

"They are big and are physical," Elder said. "They run to the ball, love the game of football, have fun and take a great deal of pride in getting off the field, giving the ball back to the offense."

The defensive line has three players voted team as captain: Jason Gillespie, Kelly and Hricovec.

Up front, it starts with several Division I prospects, including defensive end Sam Toniolo (Youngstown State offer), Kelly (Cincinnati commit for offensive line), Jason Gillespie (Division II offers) at the 3-technique and Jack Hricovec at the jack linebacker and defensive end spot.

"I think that we are one

of the toughest and most physical units in the entire state of Ohio," Hricovec said. "We have our front four, we are going to try and hit you in the mouth week in and week out. With the linebackers, they are trying to do the same thing."

The linebacking corps is headlined by Ryan Stolariski (Toledo offer), Colburn (Robert Morris offer), and Owen Garcia. Garcia was Avon's third-leading tackler at 88.5.

"With our front seven, we have some size," Colburn said. "It gives many obstacles for (opposing teams). We are big, and it's intimidating. We know our assignments. We are going to lay the lumber across the field on every play."

Though Avon's secondary took a hit, it will still have Jakob Weatherspoon, who switched from cornerback to safety. His stardom on the gridiron and track has resulted in numerous Power Four offers.

Defense might not be

as attractive to play compared to offense. Avon's defense is coached by defensive coordinator Jared Cecchetti. As Elder focuses on the offense, he has full faith in Cecchetti to call the shots on defense.

"I think our defensive coaches have really sold defense around here and made it exciting to play defense. They have more fun than anybody," Elder said. "They have the black (practice) jerseys. They call themselves NWO (New World Order). ... When we get a three-and-out or a turnover, they play 'Tapout' (by Rich Gang) and the sideline gets hyped. They found a way to make every turnover, three-and-out and (scoreless drive) a party in a sense with a celebration. That is fun, and I love it."

With that high energy, it is infectious and they are more than willing to celebrate their accomplishments with their teammates.

"(Defense) is definitely one of the funnest parts of



AIMEE BIELOZER — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Avon defensive players, from left, Owen Garcia, Ryan Stolariski and Nick Colburn.

the team. Every time someone makes a play, we all go nuts," Hricovec said. "The chemistry is all there, everyone plays to their strengths. Our strengths play together. I think we play together, as a whole."

Elder and the Eagles' high-caliber offense went through multiple tapouts in practice as sparring partners. With All-Ohio talents, such as quarterback Nolan Good and wide receiver Matt Maxey on offense, practices are bound to be more competitive than most games on their schedule.

"We thought we stunk on offense for a while, because our defense was so good. Then, we played Massillon and we played really well against the defending state champs, offensively," Elder said. "We recognized that if we can have success against our defense, we have a chance against anybody's defense."

As talented the starting lineup is, Elder has plans to keep them as fresh as possible by adding depth. He said the defensive line can go as far as 10-deep and the linebackers are six.

"We are trying to build more depth, because there

is no level of football that plays 16 straight weeks," Elder said. "The NFL does not even play 16 straight weeks. College football does not play 16 straight weeks, but the OHSAA thought it was a good idea to play 16 straight weeks, potentially, if you want to win a state championship. We only had to go 15 and we want to go to 16. If our goal is 16, we have to have depth and have to play a lot of people, or you are never getting there. I feel bad for schools that are trying to win state championships with a roster of 40-to-45 guys. That is not logical."

This is a strategy Elder plans to use to preserve players and for player safety. He is an active advocate for 12-team regional tournaments, which would give the top four teams a first-round bye.

"They are putting kids in harm's way. One (seed) vs. 16 games are no good. You have a 10-0 Division I team playing a 1-9 team. Nobody wants to play that game and that is not a reward," Elder said. "It would have been great to expand it to 12 (teams) and give those a little bit more experience, but one, two, three and four get a bye week."

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Elyria's mission is to play for Todd

Locker is dedicated to teammate who passed away in May

By Travis Nelson
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BJ Todd meant a lot to his peers, and he always will.

Everyone who knew him always had something great to say about him, which still makes his passing in May so difficult for the Elyria community.

Todd was a role model to his Pioneers teammates for his work ethic and leadership. The football team's mission is to play their hardest this season for their fallen brother. To play in his memory, laying it all on the line is the only option.

"I feel like you have to give your all because he gave it his all in every sport," Elyria senior Zavier Stephens said. "He worked for everything. You would either see him at the gym or he would be at his crib working out. BJ worked for everything he wanted, and he got the best results."

To play for him, it takes the approach to play like him. Todd's combination of strength and speed made him a force to be reckoned with. His aggression and his work ethic will be missed on the field, but his teammates want to come together and play like he did.

"When we say that we're going to play for BJ, it has to be a certain play style," Elyria senior Kevin Jordan said. "When BJ played, he played hard, he played fast and he played physical. When we say we're going to play for BJ, we have to give it everything we got."

There is a lot of motivation for this year's Elyria



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Elyria coach Matt Wilson directs practice Aug. 7.

team. The Pioneers are trying to get their program back on track and do it while honoring their teammate and friend. Last year was difficult, finishing 1-10, but Todd's positive mindset throughout made it much easier for the rest of the team.

He envisioned that they were capable of more. He was a locker room leader the team rallied around to put in the work needed to make a change. Despite

not having him on the field, Todd's enthusiasm for football made this year's squad that much better in the off-season.

"He made a lot of people better, I would see him working out a lot," Elyria senior Steven Gilbert said. "Even off the field, he did a lot of good stuff that really showed you what kind of person he was. Having BJ was definitely a plus for us. He really just did everything right. He just had us

looking at how we can better ourselves."

Todd's legacy is going to live on. His locker is left exactly like it was with helmet, jerseys and all. Jordan added that they have his equipment there to keep him with them. The Pioneers will also wear stickers on their helmets and Todd will be an honorary captain each week with his jersey getting carried to midfield.

"I think when we come out and start to play, there's



TRAVIS NELSON — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Elyria looks to continue BJ Todd's legacy as it hits the field for the 2024 season.

going to be a lot of emotion that first time we take the field without him," Elyria coach Matt Wilson said.

That first time will be on Aug. 23 as the Pioneers travel to Mayfield for the season opener. The first game of the season always has some extra juice, but even more so in 2024 inside Elyria's locker room. Everything is about playing for No. 8.

Todd's presence off the field made a huge impact on Elyria football, but his presence on it gave his teammates comfort. There is a lot of pent-up excitement and energy inside that the Pioneers are looking forward to letting out when they take the field Week 1.

"What I'm going to continue to do is I'm going to continue screaming. That's

the only thing I can do," Stephens said. "Last year, he told me that when we go out there, he better hear me screaming. That's what he did when he made a play. I have to go harder on defense and just keep making plays."

The Pioneers are focused on football, but the players also see the big picture. They want to go all out for Todd for themselves, but they also want to do it for his family, too.

The legacy for this larger-than-life teenager is going to be carried on by the Pioneers. So is the love for their big brother.

"I hope they still come to some of the games to see us playing our hardest football for their son," Jordan said. "Night and day, he's always going to be one of us."



MJ VARSITY

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THE MORNING JOURNAL

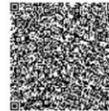
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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Clearview's Longo ready for two-way role

Defensive end bulked up over the offseason

By Sean Fitzgerald
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It's not an understatement to say Clearview's Josiah Longo will be a critical piece to the Clippers' success this year on the gridiron. Clearview won two playoff games in 2023, including an upset in their regional quarterfinal before bowing out in a Division V regional semifinal, with Longo serving as a central figure.

"After last year, those seniors left a big impact for us on the field, in the weight room, everywhere," Longo said. "It's the whole culture."

Serving as a captain and only one of four seniors for 2024, he stepped up into a leadership role for this season and as one of his coaches put it, this would be his team.

"I feel like I've always been a leader, at least on the defensive side. I just try to tell everyone to follow me, get in the weight room and get extra hours in."

Longo added a lot of muscle to his frame — more than he had last winter when he went down in the LC8 wrestling tournament 157-pound title match against 2023 state champion Tristin Greene from Keystone.

"The only reason I was at 157 pounds was so I didn't cut down that much," Longo scratched at his cheek with his right pointer finger, resembling Greene's stature six months after the tournament. "It was a hard match for me and he's a great wrestler. Tristin and



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Clearview's Josiah Longo looks to lead the Clippers on defense this season.

I have wrestled before and he's been beating me for a while."

Longo paused, a wry smile forming on his lips.

"Yeah, that was a little bit of motivation. I was in the weight room lifting, partly because of that."

A defensive weapon in

2023, Longo has been in the weight room all offseason and will also play a role in the offense.

"Josiah's been a special



SHANE PABON — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Clearview's Josiah Longo (12) tries to tackle a Keystone ballcarrier in 2023.

young man," Clearview coach Mike Collier stated. "He's had success here over the last few years, and it's because of his work ethic, his attitude and his eagerness to just be great. This offseason wasn't any different. He put a ton of time into the weight room and it shows. He's one of the most physical guys on our team and we're expecting a lot from him on both side's of the ball."

"Playing offense this year, I'm very excited. I've always trained on the offensive side of the ball," the senior noted. "The only reason I started playing defensive end is because (Head) coach Mike (Collier) wanted me on the varsity field. I used to be a safety and wide receiver.

"For my size it's crazy to be a defensive end, but I've always trained on offense. I'm hoping to be able to punish some guys out there."

For third-year junior quarterback Cy Christensen, having Longo around makes the job he has easier — especially from a leadership perspective.

"He's our hype man,"

Christensen said. "He's our hype man and he's always the first one to the line. He's always making sure people are getting lined up in the huddle. He's great in the weight room and he's always picking up weights and working hard.

"He hasn't been able to play offensive for a while, but now that he is I think he'll be able to show what he's got. He's going to do great."

The deep postseason run not only helped the team as a whole, Longo sees middle school players looking up to him as well as incoming freshmen.

"I just try to come out here and be a role model for my teammates and the middle schoolers. I can actually show them even if you're from Clearview, you can make a name for yourself," said Longo. "You can be one of the best in the county and the conference. But first we need to win the conference, get to the playoffs and all of that is up for grabs.

"We've got the pieces. We have to make sure we continue to stay healthy and work hard."

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Ridgeville has All-Ohioans, big goals

Senior core looks to leave stamp on Rangers program

By Sean Fitzgerald
SFitzgerald@MorningJournal.com

Under Coach Bryan Morgan, the North Ridgeville Rangers have quickly climbed up the area and Southwestern Conference ranks. They went 8-4 and won their first ever playoff game — at home, no less — against Valley Forge in program history.

While they bowed out against a tough Highland team on the road in a regional quarterfinal, the Rangers played tough and return a highly experienced senior core highlighted by four All-Ohioans; Tight end and do-it-all weapon Charlie Steinmetz, offensive tackle JD Radway, Austin DeShazo and defensive wrecker Carson Madis.

“Charlie and Carson are our captains, and they were captains as juniors,” Morgan said, wearing a sun hat in the late-morning heat on the Rangers’ turf field. “They’re guys that do the right thing and if others aren’t, they’ll tell them to make sure they are. It’s really great to have them. I was really excited to see their postseason accolades last year because they’re really deserving for helping us win eight games last year.

“They helped out quite a bit and all four guys are a big reason why.”

Radway impressed the staff and himself coming into camp this year — dropping 50 pounds and moving quicker than ever. His motor and drive help set the tone for the Rangers as they continue to build on their



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

North Ridgeville football looks to build on last year’s banner year and strive for more in 2024. From left to right; Charlie Steinmetz, Austin DeShazo, JD Radway and Carson Madis.

previous success.

“We want to do a lot this year,” Radway said. “We want to win the conference and make it really far in the playoffs, too. Us four All-Ohioans, we’ve been playing together here at North Ridgeville since our freshman year. We’re coming for it this year. We really, really want to win the conference.”

“I’ve been playing with these guys probably since around fourth grade,” Steinmetz noted, tracing the roots back to their prevarsity days. “Just seeing us build on each year — getting better, getting faster, getting stronger — it’s just really exciting to see. We’ve all put the work in and are working so hard. It’ll be exciting to see what we can do this year.”

On defense, Madis and

the group have all seen adversity and have gotten a taste of success. Not only that, but having the amount of talent returning on the entire team and the core four of All-Ohioans is something the senior can’t really remember while growing up and watching the varsity play as a kid.

“We’ve obviously had some talent in the past, but I don’t think there’s been as many returning starters and talent, like ever,” Madis added with emphasis. “I think this is the most stacked we’ve ever been.”

The one member of the four-man group — Austin DeShazo — moved from the Seattle area around his fifth or sixth-grade year. He quickly formed a bond with his fellow teammates. To have stuck together through thick and thin and

have the potential payoff of their hard work cash in big time, there’s a certain pride to see the transformation under Morgan.

“It’s a big deal for us four and something the younger guys can look up to,” DeShazo took a breath after finishing a drill just beforehand. “They can see that they can set their own goals. A lot of the younger guys on this team have a great chance to be All-Ohioans next year and follow us.”

The impact of DeShazo, Steinmetz, Radway and Madis extends to more than just this year. Their experience and collective leadership has helped set a standard in the North Ridgeville program that looked a lot different not too long ago.

“Coach Morgan said it

“We want to do a lot this year. We want to win the conference and make it really far in the playoffs, too. Us four All-Ohioans, we’ve been playing together here at North Ridgeville since our freshman year. We’re coming for it this year. We really, really want to win the conference.”

— North Ridgeville’s JD Radway



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

North Ridgeville head coach Bryan Morgan speaks to his team during a practice Aug. 7

the first time he got here my freshman year that we’re going to build a new culture,” Radway recalled. “We had a losing culture before he came in. When he came in, it really started to change. Even losing a guy like Xavier (Compton) from last year or Jackson Risner, they were good players and our mentors.

“They helped build up this program. For them to do that and help us with their experience, it’s really nice.”

The Rangers weren’t known for a strong athletics program before the last handful of years — especially in the loaded Southwestern Conference.

Nowadays, the baseball program has won 18-or-

more games three straight years; the boys and girls hoops teams have played deep into district rounds or further; the boys soccer program had its best season ever in 2023 and timed up with the emergence of the football program, this group can leave their stamp on the growing Division II school with a winning culture.

“Our class is one of the biggest to ever come through North Ridgeville,” said Steinmetz. “For us to be able to set that example for the younger kids and see a winning program. Not only that, but to see how we stay positive through the ups and downs, it’s great to set that example moving forward.”

High school football » Wilhelm Award watch list

By Mark Perez-Krywany
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The Matt Wilhelm Award is given to The Morning Journal's football player of the year. It is named after the former star of the Elyria Catholic Panthers and Ohio State Buckeyes. Wilhelm won a BCS national championship in college and the Super Bowl with the Green Bay Packers during his seven-year NFL career.

The Wilhelm Award watch list will be published each week leading up to the presentation of the award. This list is fluid and can change from week to week. The opening list is a guideline for some of the area's top returners and a benchmark to start the season.

In alphabetical order:

QB Sam Brucchieri, Sr., Westlake: Brucchieri was featured in several Matt Wilhelm watch lists throughout the 2023 season. He had 1,621 passing yards and threw for 15 touchdowns. He will be without offensive threats Matthew Porcelli (third-team Division II All-Ohio running back), and wide receiver Cooper Rummel.

However, first-year Demons coach and former offensive coordinator Logan Yantek plans to have him run the ball more. Brucchieri was also second-team GLC and all-district honorable mention.

QB Cy Christensen, Jr., Clearview: Christensen helped guide Clearview to a Division V, Region 17 semifinal in 2023. This year, he will not have the numerous dynamic weapons he had last year. If Christensen has time to throw, he's shown in multiple scrimmages that he can get the ball to multiple receivers. Christensen was a Division V third-team All-Ohioan and threw for 2,372 yards and 23 touchdowns.

QB Nolan Good, Sr., Avon: The Eagles have all the



JOE COLON — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Elyria's Kevin Jordan carries against Amherst on Oct. 6, 2023.

pieces to form one of the best air-raid offenses in Ohio and Good, a first-team Division II All-Ohioan is set to lead this offense. He threw for 2,100 yards, 21 touchdowns and had a 62% completion rate. Good also rushed for 518 yards and scored double-digit touchdowns on the ground. Though Avon will not have Jakorion Caffey or Luke Hamilton, the skill positions are loaded, especially at wide receiver, with first-team All-Ohioan Matt Maxey and state qualifying track sprinters Cole Kepner and Joe Weatherspoon.

RB Kevin Jordan, Sr., Elyria: Jordan had a breakout season in 2023. In

seven games, Jordan totaled 1,100 rushing yards and 12 touchdowns. Jordan's best game was a 334-yard, five-touchdown performance against Amherst in a 46-41 shootout victory. The Pioneers will have a first-year quarterback. If they can balance the offense through the air, it could be enough to let him run rampant.

QB Burke Lowry, Jr., Fairview: Lowry earned a Division III All-Ohioan selection on the basketball court, and he was also an honorable mention all-district quarterback on the gridiron. He threw 1,601 passing yards with 12 touchdowns. He has a new set of wide receivers with All-Ohio basketball

teammates J.R. Beato (honorable mention) and Will Allen (third team) joining the team. This should increase the effectiveness of Fairview's vertical passing game.

QB Cole Norris, Sr., Amherst: Norris was All-Ohio at punter, and he also thrived behind center, throwing 17 passing touchdowns and scoring six on the ground. Norris also had nearly 2,000 passing yards. Given that the Comets will have a more experienced offensive line and targets such as running back J.R. Bires, wide receivers Tristyn Young, David Duziak and Division II All-Ohio tight end Eli Solak, their season is

looking bright in 2024.

QB Zach Shackelford, Sr., Keystone: After coming back from a season-ending injury, Shackelford's health could be the difference in the balance of power in the Lorain County League. In his only full game, he scored five touchdowns in four ways and on three sides of the ball in the season opener. Expect him to run Keystone's run-pass option at a high level. It's been a system he has been a part of since he played for his father in middle school.

ATH Charlie Steinmetz, Sr., North Ridgeville: Steinmetz can do it all on offense, and the second-team Division II All-Ohioan

WILHELM AWARD HISTORY

2016: Dustin Crum, Midview, QB
2017: Ryan Maloy, Avon, QB
2018: Brandon Coleman, Columbia, RB
2019: Jacob Shackelford, Keystone, QB
2020: Gideon Lampron, Keystone, RB/LB
2021: Tommy Bebie, Rocky River, RB/LB
2022: Levi Ellis, Elyria Catholic, RB/S
2023: Jakorion Caffey, Avon, RB



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Avon quarterback Nolan Good throws downfield during the second quarter against Avon Lake on Oct. 20, 2023.

racked up 1,600 all-purpose yards. He became the team's first 1,000-yard rusher since 2017, at H-back. He was selected first-team SWC, Lorain County and Northeast Lakes District.

WR/S Luke Stuewe, Sr., Avon Lake: Stuewe committed to play Division I college football at Virginia Tech. Despite playing in just over five games, he was named Division II All-Ohio honorable mention. Stuewe was a turnover machine on defense, forcing two fumbles and intercepting four passes.



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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Shackelford, Stuewe healthy, determined

Keystone, Avon Lake standouts had seasons cut short by injury in 2023

By Mark Perez-Krywany
mperezkrywany@morning-journal.com

Their seasons were short-lived due to injury, but Avon Lake's Luke Stuewe and Keystone's Zach Shackelford were on pace to set the Lorain County football scene on fire in 2023.



Stuewe

“(Coming back) feels great. It gives me more to work for, after not playing for a while. After going down last year, I have a lot to play for this year,” Stuewe said.

Collectively, Keystone (4-6, 3-4 in Lorain County League) and Avon Lake (7-5, 4-3 in Southwestern Conference) suffered setbacks after their star players went down.

After Shackelford scored five touchdowns through the air, on the ground, with a pick-6 and a punt return in the season opener against West Salem Northwestern (41-0 win), he went down the next week against Lodi Cloverleaf to end his season.

“Before the first play, I am always going to have jitters,” Shackelford said. “It was a scary thing happening when I broke my ankle and had to get surgery. I couldn't walk on it for a good six months. It was gruesome. Getting my mindset all comes from practice.”

According to Shackelford, he completely broke his fibula along with another broken bone in his ankle.

As a result, Keystone's offense averaged 11.7 points per game. The defense kept the Wildcats in games, but the lack of offensive production caught up with them.

“Our All-Ohio caliber quarterback got injured. We did not have a natural quarterback, but our guys kept fighting,” Keystone coach Don Griswold said. “We played great defense. ... That team never gave up and a lot of that (2023) team is on this team, with some new players. There is no reason to believe that those lessons, which were tough pills to swallow, are going to pay off this year.”

With Shackelford back in the lineup, he anticipates great things happening for the offense.

“We lost minimal people on defense. With our offense, all it needs is that quarterback just to make it tick,” he said. “Last year, it was so heavy, it was easy to focus on one thing. I feel like putting me on the offense stresses the defense out in so many ways.”

According to Shackelford, he has experienced a mental battle of knowing that it could happen again. This came after he suffered an ankle injury during basketball in June. However, it does not change his approach to the game.

“I don't think (it changes my approach),” he said. “I can practice and I can still do the same things from last year. ... The first (official) snap is the first thing on my mind. Once that first snap is done (I am good to



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Zach Shackelford of Keystone looks to lead the Wildcats at quarterback this season.

go.)”

With Shackelford to lead the Wildcats, the team is ready to rally behind him to compete for the Lorain County League title. Griswold referred to Shackelford as Keystone's Aaron Rodgers, the Jets QB who also is coming back from a season-ending injury.

“(Shackelford) is positive, but he is not going to B.S. with you,” teammate Grady Whitacre said. “He is going to give (the feedback) to you straight. If you did bad, he is going to tell you that and you need to step up. He is straightforward.”

Stuewe played less than six games, but it was enough for him to be a Division II All-Ohioan honorable mention.

The three-star recruit on 247Sports recorded four in-

terceptions and forced two fumbles in his first season at safety. Offensively, he recorded 556 receiving yards and scored four touchdowns, which fueled a 4-1 start to the season. He broke his collarbone before halftime in Avon Lake's 48-7 victory against Midview.

“Luke Stuewe adds points for us and subtracts points for the other team,” Avon Lake coach Matt Kostelnik said. “It kind of sounds like a weird cliché, but he is a difference-maker on the field and we are excited to get him back and rolling. We are hoping for a great senior year.”

Avon Lake scraped by Amherst (32-27) and Elyria (38-30), but it also lost running back Wade Nelson.

The injury-riddled Shore-

men lost the final three games of the regular season to Olmsted Falls (49-24), North Ridgeville (23-17) and Avon (45-0).

They won their first-round Division II, Region 6 playoff game against Fremont Ross, 40-14, but lost to Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 59-14. Stuewe was close to being cleared to play but it was not enough as he watched his team's end to the season.

“It was difficult to be on the sideline every game knowing that I want to be out there for my team,” he said.

Right before Week 1 of the football season, Stuewe committed to play Division I college football at Virginia Tech, where his father Michael Stuewe played. He also considered Miami

“Luke Stuewe adds points for us and subtracts points for the other team. It kind of sounds like a weird cliché, but he is a difference-maker on the field and we are excited to get him back and rolling. We are hoping for a great senior year.”

— Avon Lake coach Matt Kostelnik

(Ohio).

“I have gotten bigger, faster and stronger, but I feel like my overall safety knowledge as a whole has skyrocketed. I am not going into Week 1 never playing safety before,” Stuewe said.

With the recruiting process over, Stuewe is thankful he can focus on his senior season.

“(Recruiting) is a lot of pressure,” he said. “If you are going to go into your senior year not making a decision you are going to go into each game thinking I need to (perform). Now, I can go into the season and do whatever I can to help the team.”

Avon Lake returns Stuewe, wide receiver Aidan Stewart, quarterback Alex Affolter and four offensive linemen, including Power Four recruit Maxwell Riley at offensive tackle.

“This is senior year. This is it. It is the last time that I will be playing with all of these guys. It gives me all of the motivation,” Stuewe said.

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Coaching changes highlight busy offseason

Five area teams boast new bosses on the side sideline

By Travis Nelson

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The winds of change have blown through Lorain County again.

For the second straight year, there are five new head football coaches in The Morning Journal coverage area. Columbia, Elyria, Lorain, Oberlin and Westlake found their guys to lead their respective programs into the future.

This is the third straight season Elyria and Oberlin are in this category, and Kenny Washington is the fourth Phoenix coach in the past four seasons. Washington and Matt Wilson for the Pioneers are hoping to become long-term solutions.

Columbia and Westlake hired within as assistants Mike Rice and Logan Yantek took over those posts. James Boyeas also made the jump from an assistant at North Olmsted to becoming the new coach at Lorain.

Head coaches for the first time, these former assistants are looking to leave their mark.

"It's exciting and the kids have been receptive," Boyeas said. "They're buying in and willing to do things our way. It's different than what they've been used to, so even though we have guys with reps under their belt, they've got to get these reps with (a new scheme). They're taking it in stride and the effort has been there."

Boyeas was set to coach Lorain in 2020 before its season was canceled during the coronavirus pandemic. He made his return to the Titans in January. As he

comes in, Washington left Lorain to take on the head coaching job at Oberlin.

Washington was hired as the Phoenix's new coach in February. He is hungry to turn around the program and be a head coach for the first time in his young career. Still figuring it out on the fly, he's excited for the upcoming season.

"It means a lot," Washington said. "I'm still probably getting the meaning because I'm so fresh into it, but everything is so much fun. It's so exciting getting the chance to be the play caller. It's definitely a great experience, I'm still going through the grind of it, but I'm looking forward to Week 1."

The coaching carousel produced another mixed bag this season. While Boyeas and Washington become head coaches at different schools, Rice and Yantek are staying home with promotions.

Rice was Columbia's defensive coordinator for nine seasons under Jason Ward. The Raiders had a coaching change for the first time in nearly 20 years, but Rice brings familiarity to an otherwise chaotic situation for some programs.

"It's definitely a tough act to follow Jason Ward, and I don't take that lightly," Rice said. "I've been around the program for 10 years, I saw the kind of man he was and the kind of program he ran. I'm just trying to continue that right now. We're going to honor our past and we're going to honor the legacy set before us, but we're also looking to, as we do every year, build on that and climb that mountain."

Yantek hasn't been at Westlake as long as Rice has at Columbia, but he has put in his dues. He started coaching at his alma mater Strongsville as a volunteer



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Lorain head coach James Boyeas gives instructions during practice Aug. 1.

assistant and has worked up the ranks. He served as the Demons' offensive coordinator for two seasons and now has the chance to lead his own program for the first time.

"I'm really excited for this job. It's something that I've been working for since I was 18 years old," Yantek

said. "I'm excited to be here in Westlake and it's been great overall. Coach (Jason) Hall was great for me in ways that he helped me put in my blueprint here knowing that I was going to be the next head coach. A lot of the culture things — practices, format, those kinds of things — were already

my ideas. We've already set the groundwork of what we want to accomplish."

Some coaches are getting their start, but Wilson is making his return. Elyria will be his third head coaching stop, as he previously spent 10 years total at Clearview and Berea. After calling Berea-Midpark's de-

fense, he is back to his calling of being a head coach.

"Getting back into being a head coach, obviously there's a lot more on my plate now," Wilson said. "I think that's something that I've wanted to do for a while now, so I'm glad that I was able to get the opportunity again."

High school football » Conference outlooks

By Mark Perez-Krywany
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SOUTHWESTERN CONFERENCE

Favorite: Avon

Contender: North Ridgeville, Avon Lake

Darkhorses: Olmsted Falls, Amherst, Berea-Midpark

Avon has dominated with eight straight conference championships. The Eagles look poised to repeat the act with returning first-team All-Ohioans Nolan Good (quarterback) and Matt Maxey (wide receiver) on offense. Avon does not have Luke Hamilton, but Jeremiah Kelley committed to Cincinnati in the offseason to be an offensive lineman. Joe Weatherspoon is also being recruited by several Power Four programs. He will headline a defense that was historic in Avon's 2023 run to the state final four.

Avon Lake and North Ridgeville appear to be the top contenders to dethrone the Eagles. The Shoremen have the makings for an exciting offense, and they brought back a lot of talent on the defense. North Ridgeville played a tight first quarter against the Eagles, but a lack of offensive production led to a 38-7 loss. Cole Miller will be the starting quarterback. He was injured in the Avon game. The strides that he has made could be the difference in the Rangers ability to compete with Avon. They also have returning All-Ohioans Charlie Steinmetz, J.D. Radway, Austin DeShazo and Carson Madis.

Olmsted Falls will not be discounted from the running. There was a narrative of lack of varsity experience in 2023, but the Bulldogs still made it back to a Division II, Region 6 semifinal. They will have three returning starters on offense. It would be fair to say that the deck is stacked against



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Avon's Tyler Kaufmann is brought down by the North Ridgeville defense after a short gain during the first quarter on Sept. 15, 2023.

them.

LORAIN COUNTY LEAGUE

Favorite: Firelands

Contender: Keystone

Darkhorses: Black River, Clearview, Columbia

Expect the LC8 to be as physical as ever. Numerous teams are returning more than half of their starting fronts in the trenches. It starts with Firelands. As the biggest program in the conference, the Falcons bring back their entire offensive line, along with running back Collin Scott. However, they will have a first-year starting quarterback behind center. Having the right player to lead the offense will be vital for success.

The quarterback position is even more important for Keystone. After quarterback Zach Shackelford scored five touchdowns in

the season opener, he was injured the following week for the rest of the year. He's recovered, but Keystone's 2023 offensive production took a hit and averaged 11.7 points per game.

Clearview will have All-Ohio quarterback Cy Christensen to lead the offense. He will have the help of All-Ohio defensive end Josiah Longo to assist on offense. Despite graduating a large senior class from 2023, Clearview still has athletes on the outside. The key is to give Christensen enough time in the pocket to get the ball out of his hands.

CLEVELAND WEST CONFERENCE (FIRST SEASON)

Favorite: Bay

Contender: Medina Buckeye, North Olmsted

Darkhorses: Rocky River,

Westlake

In the first year of the newly founded CWC, former members of the Great Lakes Conference are in for a season without east and west divisions. Rocky River (GLC West) and Buckeye (GLC East) won their divisions last year.

Bay was a 28-21 overtime loss away from stealing the GLC West from Rocky River. The Rockets have two sets of wheels in the backfield, Rocco Ereditario and Charlie Rogers.

Buckeye went 10-3 (3-1 in GLC West) and won two close playoff games to advance to a Division III Region 10 semifinal. Though its defensive line will not have first-team All-Ohio offensive lineman Ben Midea, it will have third-team All-Ohio running back Troy McCann.

High school football » 2023 standings

SOUTHWESTERN CONFERENCE

| | | |
|------------------|-----|------|
| Avon | 7-0 | 14-1 |
| Berea-Midpark | 5-2 | 7-5 |
| North Ridgeville | 4-3 | 8-4 |
| Olmsted Falls | 4-3 | 9-4 |
| Avon Lake | 4-3 | 7-5 |
| Midview | 2-5 | 4-7 |
| Elyria | 1-6 | 1-10 |
| Amherst | 1-6 | 3-7 |

LORAIN COUNTY LEAGUE

| | | |
|-------------|-----|------|
| Columbia | 6-1 | 10-2 |
| Clearview | 6-1 | 10-3 |
| Black River | 5-2 | 8-5 |
| Firelands | 5-2 | 8-4 |
| Keystone | 3-4 | 4-6 |
| Wellington | 1-5 | 1-8 |

Anticipate offensive threats to rise, as Lakewood has Avery Holt, along with quarterbacks Sam Brucchieri (Westlake) and Tommy Horsfall (North Olmsted).

LAKE ERIE LEAGUE

Lorain's running game took a hit by graduating two Division I All-Ohio offensive linemen (Shane Ramey-Rowland and Evan Hricovic) and first-team selection John Salaman. All-Ohioans Ocir Kimble and Jairo Williams look set to carry the torch. They will be crucial in first-year coach James Boyeas' offense, along with third-year starting quarterback Chase Davis.

This will be the Titans' last season in the LEL, as they will join the Greater Cleveland Conference for the 2025-26 school year. They shared the crown with Maple Heights and Bedford last year and are determined to leave on a high note.

SANDUSKY BAY CONFERENCE BAY DIVISION

Vermilion did not win a game in the SBC Bay in 2023. However, the Sailors come into the 2024 season much improved and with a senior-laden team. They returned eight starters on offense and 11 on defense. With a senior class of 14, Vermilion should have better chances to put themselves in positions to win games.

| | | |
|-----------|-----|-----|
| Brookside | 1-6 | 3-7 |
| Oberlin | 0-6 | 0-9 |

LAKE ERIE LEAGUE

| | | |
|----------------------|-----|-----|
| Lorain | 4-1 | 8-3 |
| Maple Heights | 4-1 | 5-6 |
| Bedford | 4-1 | 5-5 |
| Warrensville Heights | 2-3 | 3-7 |
| Garfield Heights | 1-4 | 4-6 |
| Shaw | 0-5 | 0-9 |

SANDUSKY CONFERENCE BAY

| | | |
|--------------|-----|------|
| Edison | 4-0 | 11-2 |
| Huron | 3-1 | 8-4 |
| Bellevue | 2-2 | 5-6 |
| Port Clinton | 1-3 | 3-7 |
| Vermilion | 0-4 | 3-8 |

The downside is that Vermilion will compete with Edison (11-2 in 2023), Huron (8-4) and Bellevue (5-6). All of them are solid teams that have gained postseason experience. Vermilion did as well, even if it was a No. 16 seed.

NORTH COAST CONFERENCE (FIRST SEASON)

The 2024 season will be the inaugural season of the NCC. However, the first conference champion for football will not be crowned until next season. This will only apply to the football season, as Elyria Catholic will not face Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy (CVCA) and Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin (NDCL). The Panthers have the makings for an exciting passing offense, led by the combination of quarterback Darrell Shumpert and wide receiver Xavier Castillo. Combine that with the speed of Connor Petrus and they should be able to stretch the field.

Lake Catholic (10-3) is fresh off a Division IV Region 13 semifinal run. The Cougars' offense averages 34.8 points per game and 405 yards per game. They are led by quarterback Frankie Trinnetti (3,294 passing yards, 38 touchdowns). He will have his top targets back, including Minnesota recruit Cross Nimmo (6-6, 215 pounds).

High school football » Games to watch

By Mark Perez-Krywany
mperezkrywany@morning-journal.com

Avon vs. St. Ignatius (at Cleveland Browns Stadium), Aug. 23: FirstEnergy Stadium will be the place to be in Week 1. Many players have seen their favorite professional athletes play there. This time, it will be their chance to play under the same lights. St. Ignatius (3-9) is one of seven Ohio schools with over 1,000 enrolled male students. As a football program, its 11 state championships are second all-time to Maria Stein Marion Local (14). The Wildcats won only two games in the 2023 regular season, but that did not stop them from defeating No. 5 seed Mentor, 10-7, in the Division I Region 1 first round as a No. 12 seed. St. Ignatius lost to (4) Canton McKinley, 28-24 in the following round.

Fairview at Clearview, Aug. 23: The Warriors and Clippers have shootout potential in the season opener. Though Clearview lost its mighty class of 2024, it still has All-Ohio quarterback Cy Christensen to lead its offense. Meanwhile, Fairview quarterback Burke Lowry has the tools to convert it into an exciting offense.

Lorain at Elyria, Aug. 31: The rivalry between the Pioneers and Titans showed in Week 2 in 2023, and the Titans pulled away late in the fourth quarter for a 31-12 victory. This year, each team will have first-year coaches. Pioneers standout running back Kevin Jordan amassed over 1,100 rushing yards and not one came against Lorain. Elyria will also return several offensive linemen who have considerable size. Lorain will be coached by James Boyeas, who has a college background as an offensive coordinator. This will be a classic matchup between a dominant run game vs. the spread offense that likes to get its playmakers in space.

Chardon at Avon Lake, Sept. 6: Chardon is a great test to see how far Avon

Lake has progressed this offseason. The Shoremen lost to the Hilltoppers, 28-10, last year. It spoiled their 2-0 start. Chardon advanced to the final four for the third time in four years, and Avon Lake lost to Anthony Wayne, 59-14, in the second round of the Division II, Region 6 tournament. Avon Lake will bring back its stars at the skills position, such as wide receiver Luke Stuewe and Power Four offensive lineman recruit Maxwell Riley. Under Coach Mitch Hewitt, Chardon will have All-Ohio linebacker Alexander Ash, Logan Bryant and Andrew Baggott.

Olmsted Falls at North Ridgeville, Sept. 13: The Rangers made a statement to the entire SWC with a 10-3 win against the Bulldogs. This year, they will bring back four All-Ohioans, after they won their first playoff game in program history in 2023. Olmsted Falls' has an iron-clad program that produces quality impact players for its triple-option offense. The Bulldogs had their surprises last year and reached their third straight Division II, Region 6 appearance. As they return three total starters, they will aim to do the same.

Elyria Catholic at Vermilion, Sept. 13: Vermilion will be one of two Lorain County opponents the Panthers face this year. The Sailors' class of 2025 will have 14 seniors. Their large senior class should be pivotal, as they return eight offensive starters and 10 on defense. Panthers Coach Chase Farris said he is all-in with first-year quarterback Darrell Shumpert, and who will throw to wide receiver Xavior Castillo. They developed solid chemistry over the summer.

Avon Lake at Amherst, Sept. 27: After going winless in 2021 and 2022, Amherst made big progress in 2023 and is on the cusp of ascending to a higher tier of the SWC. The Comets barely lost to Avon Lake, 23-17, and they will bring back an exciting offense. Their X-factor will be the offensive and defensive lines. If they can compete



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Ocir Kimble and Lorain, shown during a scrimmage against Amherst on Aug. 15, faces county rival Elyria on Aug. 31.

in the trenches, this has the makings to be another close game.

Firelands at Keystone, Oct. 11: Barring health, Firelands vs. Keystone will most likely be the biggest factor in deciding the Lorain County League championship. The Falcons and Wildcats return most of, if not all of their offensive linemen and will make their mark in the trenches. As Coach Ryan O'Rourke prefers to dominate the game on the ground, Coach Don Griswold at Keystone opts for a pick-your-poison approach, and it will be led by quarterback Zach Shackelford. The downside is that Keystone without Shackelford averaged 11.7 points per game. Given the circumstances of his comeback from a gruesome season-ending injury, Shackelford could be the most influential player in the outcome of the Lorain County League.

Elyria at Amherst, Oct. 11: The pass-heavy Comets and

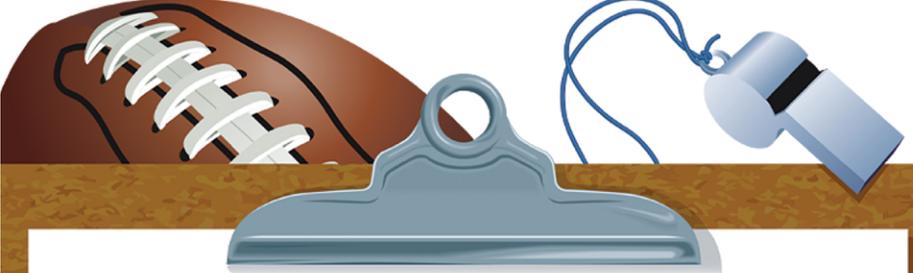
run-heavy Pioneers engaged in a shootout in 2023, which resulted in Elyria winning 46-41. Heroes, such as Amherst quarterback Cole Norris (410 passing yards), All-Ohio wide receiver Eli Solak (seven catches, 152 receiving yards) and Elyria's Jordan (334 rushing yards) will have one more opportunity for an encore performance under the lights.

Clearview at Columbia, Oct. 11: Styles make fights in combat sports and the same can be said in football. Columbia's run-heavy offense paved the way for a 20-13 victory against Clearview to win the Lorain County League. Though these teams graduated a total of nine All-Ohioans, both will return two all-state athletes, which still fit their identities from last year. Clearview will be led by quarterback Cy Christensen and defensive stud Josiah Longo. Columbia has Chase Voge and Justin Smith at the line of scrimmage.



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Clearview quarterback Cy Christensen scrambles against the Columbia defense for a first-quarter gain on Oct. 6.



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RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL
Amherst's Cole Norris look to pass during a scrimmage against Lorain on Aug. 15.

Amherst » Comets

Schedule

(Subject to change)

Aug. 23: Amherst at Copley, 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: Amherst at Buckeye, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: North Olmsted at Amherst, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Amherst at Midview, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Amherst at Berea-Midpark, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Avon Lake at Amherst, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Amherst at Olmsted falls, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: Elyria at Amherst, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Amherst at Avon, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: North Ridgeville at Amherst, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Cole Norris*, Sr., 6-1, 205
RB: J.R. Bires*, Sr., 5-9, 200
WR: Tristyn Young*, Sr., 6-3, 180
WR/TE: Eli Solak*, Sr., 6-3, 230
WR: Spencer Leibolt, Sr., 6-0, 150
Slot: David Dudziak, Jr., 5-10, 160
LT: Cole Mayer, Sr., 6-3, 245
LG: Javiaun Bush, Jr., 6-1, 240
C: Hunter Thornsberry, Jr., 5-11, 250
RG: Jacob Boden, Sr., 5-10, 205
RT: Hunter Farlow, Jr., 6-3, 215
K: Maddie Gates*, Sr., 5-4, 120

DEFENSE

DE: Shaddai Cooper, Sr., 6-4, 195
DT: Henry Cislo*, Sr., 6-3, 205
NT: Andy Malloy, So., 6-0, 205
DE: Patrick Fellenstien*, Jr., 6-0, 205
Sam: Oliver Fekete*, Sr., 5-10, 180
Mike: Maeson Morales*,
Will: Jeff Reichert*, Sr., 5-9, 175
CB: Ashton Draga*, Sr., 5-10, 175
CB: David Dudziak*, Jr., 5-10, 160
FS: Brady Engle, Sr., 6-1, 180
SS: Tyler Denn*, Jr., 5-10, 180
P: Cole Norris*, 6-1, 205
*****, returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 22
Best in the classroom: Ashton Draga, 4.2 GPA
Best bench press: Jordan Hatfield, 315 pounds
Best squat: J.R. Bires, 475 pounds
Best 40 time: Austin Lugar, 4.5 seconds

Just the facts

Conference: Southwestern Conference
OHSAA: Division II, Region 6
Coach: Tom Thome, second year (3-7)
2023: 3-7 (2-5)
X: @AmherstFootball
Home field: Mercy Health Stadium

Outlook

Heading into Thome's second season, the Comets continue to trend upward. They have returning impact starters on both sides of the ball and Elyria Catholic transfer Brady Engle to upgrade the secondary, which already featured standouts including Ashton Draga. Amherst's run defense struggled last year, and running back J.R. Bires suffered an injury in 2023. With so many impact players returning at the skills position, the presence at the line of scrimmage will be the X-factor that can determine their success.

Player to watch

Senior Eli Solak was a Division II second-team All-Ohioan. At 6-3, 230 pounds, he can pose a devastating matchup problem for opposing teams, along with teammate Tristyn Young. The wide receiver corps coupled with quarterback Cole Norris and running back Cole Norris should make for an exciting offense.

Underclassman to watch: Jonathan Williams was the Comets' shifty, speedy and reliable slot receiver in 2023. Dudziak will be his replacement who possesses similar skills as his former teammate. His father, Jeff Dudziak is a member of the Lorain Sports Hall of Fame as a Lorain High grad (class of 1994).

Bottom Line

IF: Amherst can improve at the line of scrimmage, **THEN:** it could be a dark horse in the SWC and compete for a Division II, Region 6 playoff spot.

— Mark Perez-Krywany



Solak



Duziak



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Avon quarterback Nolan Good prepares to pass during an Aug. 1 practice.

Avon » Eagles

Schedule

(Subject to change)

Aug. 23: Avon vs. St. Ignatius at Browns Stadium, 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: Canton McKinley at Avon, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: Glenview at Avon, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Elyria at Avon, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: North Ridgeville at Avon, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Avon at Olmsted Falls, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Berea-Midpark at Avon, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: Avon at Midview, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Amherst at Avon, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Avon at Avon Lake, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Nolan Good, Sr., 6-1, 200
RB: Tyler Kaufmann, Jr., 5-10, 200
WR: Grant Barr, Jr., 6-0, 190
WR: Cole Kepner, Sr., 5-11, 164
WR: Matt Maxey, Sr., 5-10, 175
TE: Ty Beerbohm, Sr., 6-4, 246
LT: Jeremiah Kelly, Sr., 6-3, 295
LG: Addison Hanna, Sr., 6-0, 235
C: Connor Bingham, Sr., 6-1, 270
RG: Max Hauck, Jr., 6-3, 280
RT: Eian Englehart, Jr., 6-2, 240
K: Owen Warrick, Sr., 5-11, 160

DEFENSE

NT: Luke Rittenhouse, Sr., 5-8, 238
DT: Jason Gillespie, Sr., 6-2, 250
DE: Sam Toniolo, Sr., 6-5, 240
LB: Ryan Stolarski, Jr., 6-2, 220
LB: Owen Garcia, Sr., 5-9, 195
Star: Nick Colburn, Sr., 6-0, 205
Jack: Jack Hricovec, Sr., 5-10, 242
CB: Aiden Atkins, Sr., 6-0, 172
CB: Jake Graham, Sr., 5-10, 160
S: Jakob Weatherspoon, Jr., 6-0, 176
S: Andrew Falasco, Sr., 6-2, 202
Key reserves: Cam Wendell, Jr., Alex Huguley, Jr., Caden Clapham, Jr., Sean Burke, Sr., Killian Haessig, Jr., Lance Dawson, Jr., Matt Garrett, Sr., Vinny DeTillio, Sr., Jackson Stark, Sr., Jerry Clements, Sr., Quilante Smith, Jr.
Best bench press: Nick Colburn, 365 pounds
Best squat: Jeremiah Kelly, 505 pounds
Best 40 time: 4.48 seconds

Just the facts

Conference: Southwestern Conference
OHSAA: Division II, Region 6
Coach: Mike Elder, 18th year (186-31)
2023: 14-1 (7-0)
X: @avoneagles
Home field: Mark Wahlberg Chevrolet Stadium

Outlook

They say that offense sells tickets and defense wins championships. Avon has the tools to do both. The question for the Eagles is whether it is enough to win its first state championship. The defense allowed less than 10 points per game and will return eight starters. Many of whom are in the front seven. The offense will adjust from a powerful running game to an air-raid offense with first-team All-Ohioans Nolan Good (quarterback) and Matt Maxey (wide receiver).

Player to watch

Like a boxer's reach advantage, Jeremiah Kelly can dominate in the trenches by making first contact. Despite playing defensive line in 2023, he committed to play at the University of Cincinnati on offense. Avon graduated a big offensive line class last year, and he will play a key part in protecting its quarterback. He will also play snaps on defense.

Underclassman to watch: Jakob Weatherspoon's track speed paved the way for him to earn numerous Power Four offers. Most notably to Ohio State and Penn State. He was a part of Avon's 4x200-meter relay (third in Division I) and fourth in the 400 meters. He will shift from cornerback to safety. Avon's last line of defense will be tough to beat.



Weatherspoon

Bottom line

IF: Avon's offensive line can make strides, **THEN:** it will have a shot to win the Division II state championship.

— Mark Perez-Krywany



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Avon Lake quarterback Alex Affolter looks to scramble against North Ridgeville on Oct. 13, 2023.

Avon Lake » Shoremen

Schedule

(Subject to change)

Aug. 23: Avon Lake at Strongsville, 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: Benedictine at Avon Lake, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: Chardon at Avon Lake, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Avon Lake at Berea-Midpark, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Midview at Avon Lake, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Avon Lake at Amherst, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Avon Lake at Elyria, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: Olmsted Falls at Avon Lake, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Avon Lake at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Avon at Avon Lake, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Alex Affolter*, Sr., 5-11, 185
RB: Anthony Benedict*, Sr., 5-8, 172
RB: Alex Kowalski, Sr., 5-9, 172
WR: Luke Stuewe*, Sr., 6-2, 190
WR: Aidan Stewart*, Jr., 6-1, 176
LT: Maxwell Riley*, Jr., 6-5, 277
LG: Jack O'Toole*, Sr., 6-2, 256
C: Timmy Kemer*, Sr., 6-0, 245
RG: Korgan Lencoski, Sr., 6-0, 262
RT: Joe McNulty*, Sr., 6-4, 280
K: Reece Polomsky*, Sr., 6-2, 180

DEFENSE

DL: Jack O'Toole*, Sr., 6-2, 256
DL: Caleb Smith, Sr., 5-10, 257
DL: Mitchell McMahan, Sr.
DL: Erik Van Euwen, 6-1, 204
LB: Isaac Durbin, 5-9, 180
LB: Landon Lidyard, 5-9, 207
LB: Owen Fach*, Sr., 6-0, 186
DB: Nathan Haven*, Sr., 5-9, 160
DB: Sam Ferrone*, Sr., 5-11, 192
DB: Luke Stuewe, Sr., 6-2, 190
DB: Joseph Heron, Sr., 6-0, 175
P: Reece Polomsky*, Sr., 6-2, 180
 *: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 22
Key reserves: Charles Kuck, Jonah Kamai, Omar Al-Muhtaseb, John Chester, Jacob Packer, Anthony Pipa
Best bench press: Joe McNulty, Maxwell Riley, 315 pounds
Best squat: Joe McNulty & Landon Lidyard, 455 pounds
Best 40 time: Aidan Stewart, 4.5 seconds

Just the facts

Conference: Southwestern Conference
OHSAA: Division II, Region 6
Coach: Matt Kostelnik, eighth year (58-21)
2023: 7-5 (4-3)
X: @AvonLakeSports
Home field: Avon Lake Memorial Stadium

Outlook

Avon Lake has returning talent in numerous places. It is dedicated to sticking to the ground game that is the Shoremen's hallmark. The defense can fly around to the ball and showed it against Medina Highland in its scrimmage. Returning quarterback Alex Affolter has talented targets on the outside and in the backfield, and the trenches help guide the offense. Anthony Benedict will be the featured running back, along with Alex Kowalski. Impact players at wide receiver will be Aidan Stewart and Luke Stuewe.

Player to watch

Wide receiver Luke Stuewe (Virginia Tech commit) suffered a shoulder injury to shorten his 2023 season. What a season it was, as a first-year safety as well. He was named Division II All-Ohioan. Stuewe played in six games, and he was instrumental in Avon Lake winning four of their first five.

Underclassman to watch: Offensive lineman Maxwell Riley is anticipated to be the best offensive lineman in the area. His 247Sports rating is the highest of any player in Ohio for the class of 2026.

Bottom line

IF: Find success in its running game and maintain good health, **THEN:** Avon Lake should contend with the best in the SWC and Division II Region 6.

— Mark Perez-Krywany



Riley



SEAN FITZGERALD — THE MORNING JOURNAL

A Bay pass catcher crosses the 50-yard line before being brought down by a Brookside defender on Aug. 9.

Bay » Rockets

Schedule

Aug. 23: Cleveland Central Catholic at Bay, 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: Bay at Field, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: University at Bay, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Normandy at Bay, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Bay at Buckeye, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Westlake at Bay, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Bay at Valley Forge, 7 p.m.
Oct. 10: Bay at North Olmsted, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Lakewood at Bay, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Bay at Rocky River, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Michael Farrell*, Sr., 6-0, 175
RB: Charlie Rodgers*, Jr., 6-0, 200
RB: Rocco Ereditario*, Jr., 6-0, 185
TE: Colin Brelo, Sr., 6-1, 225
FB: Johnny Veverka, Jr., 5-10, 220
WR: Ethan Sedivec, So., 6-4, 195
LT: Liam Albright*, Sr., 6-4, 260
LG: Braeden Capretto*, Sr., 5-10, 235
C: Evan Manderine*, Sr., 5-10, 235
RG: Danny Zipfel, Jr., 6-1, 245
RT: Derek Gura*, Sr., 6-4, 255
K: Ali Saad, Sr., 6-0, 160

DEFENSE

DE: Michael Foreman*, Jr., 6-1, 230
DE: Colin Brelo*, Sr., 6-1, 225
DT: Braeden Capretto*, Sr., 5-10, 235
OLB: Wondu Evans*, Sr., 6-0, 180
OLB: Jackson Kloepfer*, Sr., 5-10, 175
MLB: Rocco Ereditario*, Jr., 6-0, 185
MLB: Billy Wilmitch*, Sr., 6-2, 200
CB: Evan Taulbee*, Jr., 5-9, 175
CB: Ish Cal, Sr., 5-11, 170
FS: Colin McAlea, Sr., 5-10, 170
SS: Charlie Rodgers*, Jr., 6-0, 200
P: Wondu Evans*, Sr., 6-0, 180
 *: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 20; **Key reserves:** Cooper Baruxes, Jr., 6-0, 180, Michael Foreman, Jr., 6-1, 230, Danny Zipfel, Jr., 6-1, 245, Danny Barker, Sr., 5-11, 180

Just the facts

Conference: Cleveland West Conference
OHSAA: Division IV, Region 14
Coach: Ron Rutt, 11th year (73-38)
2023: 8-3 (6-1)
X: @BayAthletics
Home field: Bay Memorial Stadium

Outlook

The Rockets are looking to build momentum off last season's 8-3 record that resulted in a playoff berth, where they lost by one touchdown. There are several returning players at key positions, with a new offense for the third straight season. With smaller numbers compared to prior years, Bay still looks physical up front to give the playmakers time to create room and operate.

Player to watch

Michael Farrell returns as the signal caller for the offense. It'll be a new system for the third straight year, though the senior has acclimated well during scrimmages.

Underclassman to watch: Charlie Rodgers is a playmaker who has a chip on his shoulder after an early end to last year with an injury.

Bottom line

IF: the Rockets have their senior leadership and stay healthy, **THEN:** Bay will return to the playoffs.

— Sean Fitzgerald



Farrell



Rodgers



MARK PEREZ-KRYWANY — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Brookside coach Scott O'Donnell talks to his team after the Cardinals' Midnight Madness on July 27.

Brookside » Cardinals

Schedule

(Subject to change)

Aug. 23: Brookside at Brooklyn 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: Huron at Brookside, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: Brookside at Fairview, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Oberlin at Brookside, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Wellington at Brookside, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Brookside at Firelands, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Brookside at Keystone, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: Brookside at Black River, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Columbia at Brookside, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Clearview at Brookside, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Nick Arra*, Sr., 5-11, 180
RB: Tyler Kitzberger* Sr., 6-0, 205
RB: Trevor Kitzberger, So., 5-8, 170
TE: Brody Hamilton, Sr., 5-10, 190
WR: Colton Casey, So., 5-8, 150
WR: Andy Bilczo, Jr., 5-11, 160
LT: Carter Schuster*, Jr., 6-2, 260
LG: Jaxon Llado, So., 5-8, 190
C: Elliot Dore*, So., 5-11, 250
RG: Zy'Aire Marn*, Jr., 5-9, 220
RT: Michael Borgmann*, Jr., 6-4, 245
K: Noah Adkins*, Sr., 5-10, 145

DEFENSE

DL: Michael Borgmann*, Jr., 6-4, 245
DL: Carter Schuster*, Jr., 6-2, 260
DL: Zy'Aire Marn*, Jr., 5-9, 220
DL: Brody Hamilton, Sr., 5-10, 190
LB: Tyler Kitzberger* Sr., 6-0, 205
LB: Jaxon Llado, So., 5-8, 190
LB: Trevor Kitzberger, So., 5-8, 170
DB: Andy Bilczo*, 5-11, 160
DB: Jordan Colegrove, So., 5-10, 150
DB: Alex Arra, So., 5-8, 150
DB: Colton Casey, So., 5-8, 150
P: Tyler Kitzberger*, Sr., 6-0, 205
 *: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 15
Key reserves: Brayden Jackson, So., 6-0, 210, Elijah Gomez, So., 6-0, 230, Mason Waechter, So., 6-2, 165
Best bench press: Tyler Kitzberger, 255 pounds
Best squat: Tyler Kitzberger, 475 pounds
Best 40 time: Colton Casey, 4.61 seconds

Just the facts

Conference: LC8

OHSAA: Division IV, Region 14

Coach: Scott O'Donnell, sixth year (12-37)

2023: 3-7 (1-6)

X: @Brooksidefb

Home field: Dick Sevit Stadium

Outlook

Brookside's season went off the rails in 2023, as it finished on a six-game losing streak after starting 2-1. Though the Cardinals do not have 2023 Division V All-Ohians Aidan McLaughlin and Ben Montgomery, they kept four of the five offensive linemen and will have a solid foundation to build around up front and in the front seven. This will be critical, as the LC8 should be a physical conference this year.

Player to watch

Senior Tyler Kitzberger is the only returning team captain. As the Cardinals linebacker and running back, he will be responsible for carrying the torch and be their next star. He averaged 4.8 yards per carry and scored three touchdowns his junior year as the No. 2 option.

Underclassman to watch: In order for Kitzberger to be successful, other players must also succeed so teams cannot game plan against him. That is what Brookside hopes to achieve with sophomore wide receiver Colton Casey. His elusivity is enough to get him open. His production in the passing game will be crucial to balance out the offense.

Bottom line

IF: Brookside can surround Kitzberger with weapons, **THEN:** it should improve in the LC8.

— Mark Perez-Krywany



Kitzberger



AIMEE BIELOZER — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Clearview prepares for the season during an Aug. 1 practice.

Clearview » Clippers

Schedule

Aug. 23: Fairview at Clearview, 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: Lakewood at Clearview, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: Clearview at McDonald, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Keystone at Clearview, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Clearview at Oberlin, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Clearview at Wellington, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Firelands at Clearview, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: Columbia at Clearview, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Clearview at Black River, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Clearview at Brookside, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Cy Christensen*, Jr., 6-2, 170
RB: Tristin Ientile, Jr., 5-10, 180
RB: Josiah Longo, Sr., 5-9, 175
WR: Isaiah Garcia, Sr., 5-10, 140
WR: J.G. Hill, Sr., 5-9, 160
WR: Tyler Chapman, So., 5-11, 133
LT: Anthony Lachman*, Jr., 6-4, 285
LG: Manny Moore, Jr., 6-1, 275
C: Trentan Lowder, Jr., 6-0, 200
RG: Zach Young, So., 6-0, 210
RT: Brody Wacker, So., 6-0, 222
K: J.G. Hill, Sr., 5-9, 160

DEFENSE

DL: Josiah Longo,* Sr., 5-9, 175
DL: Anthony Lachman, Jr., 6-4, 285
DL: Manny Moore, Jr., 6-1, 275
DL: Montez Sanchez-Miller, Jr., 6-0, 180
LB: Tristin Ientile*, Jr., 5-10, 180
LB: Christian Stevenson, So., 5-7, 203
LB: Kameron Williams, Jr., 5-8, 165
DB: Isaiah Garcia*, Sr., 5-10, 140
DB: Tyler Chapman, So., 5-11, 133
DB: J.G. Hill, Sr., 5-9, 160
DB: Cory Armelin, Jr., 5-10, 150
P: Cy Christensen*, Jr., 6-2, 170
 *: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 8;
Key reserves: Trentan Lowder, Jr., 6-0, 200, Devin Jackson, So., 5-8, 150, Troy Jones, Jr., 5-8, 133, Adrian Sams, Jr., 5-9, 157
Best in the classroom: Josiah Longo, 3.859, Cy Christensen, 3.417, Adrian Sams, 3.289, Manny Moore, 3.192
Best bench press: Josiah Longo, 300 pounds
Best squat: Josiah Agosto, 425 pounds
Best 40 time: Cory Armelin, 4.6 seconds

Just the facts

Conference: LC8

OHSAA: Division IV, Region 14

Coach: Mike Collier, 18th year (101-74)

2023: 10-3 (7-1)

X: @clipperfb

Home field: Tom Hoch Field

Outlook

Clearview posted a 10-3 record in 2023, winning two playoff games — including a massive upset of Norwayne on the road in a regional quarterfinal. With a third-year starting quarterback and a junior-heavy class supplementing a four-man senior class, this group is aiming high in 2024.

Player to watch

Josiah Longo bulked up in the weight room this offseason and is one of four seniors for the Clippers. A defensive game-wrecker, the team captain is also taking on a rushing role on the offensive side in 2024.

Underclassman to watch: Third-year signal caller Cy Christensen took a step up in 2023 with a playoff win. The junior is one of the more experienced quarterbacks in the area.

Bottom line

IF: the underclassmen fill the void of the graduated seniors, **THEN:** Clearview will compete for the LC8 and a playoff berth.

— Sean Fitzgerald



Longo



Christensen



SEAN FITZGERALD — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Columbia players go at it in a tackling drill Aug. 3

Columbia » Raiders

Schedule

Aug. 23: Columbia at Independence, 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: Fairview at Columbia, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: Columbia at Northwestern, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Firelands at Columbia, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Keystone at Columbia, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Columbia at Oberlin, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Wellington at Columbia, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: Clearview at Columbia, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Columbia at Brookside, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Black River at Columbia, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Gage Maruna, Sr., 6-1, 190
QB/RB: Logan Menge, So., 5-7, 155
RB: Jimmy Stofey, Jr., 5-10, 160
RB: Jose Rivera, Jr., 5-8, 175
WR: Grant Johnson, Sr., 5-11, 145
TE: Justin Smith, Sr., 6-6, 230
LT: Dan Maiorino*, Sr., 5-11, 190
LG: Mason Goodman*, Sr., 5-10, 175
C: Alex Andrews, So., 5-11, 230
RG: Nate Chapman*, Sr., 5-11, 260
RT: Chase Voge*, Sr., 6-3, 270
K: Jack Washburn*, So., 5-10, 160

DEFENSE

DL: Justin Smith*, Sr., 6-6, 230
DL: Chase Voge, Sr., 6-3, 270
DL: Nate Chapman, Sr., 5-11, 260
DL/OLB: Dan Maiorino, Sr., 5-11, 190
OLB: Ethan Plants, Sr., 6-1, 195
ILB: Gage Maruna*, Sr., 6-1, 190
ILB: Jose Rivera, Jr., 5-8, 175
DB: Grant Johnson*, Sr., 5-11, 145
DB: Jimmy Stofey, Jr., 5-10, 160
DB: Logan Menge*, So., 5-7, 155
DB: Andrew Sorensen, Jr., 5-8, 150
P: Ambrose Beach*, So., 5-9, 165
***:** returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 12;
Key reserves: AJ Lamb, So., 6-1, 260, Jacob Reust, Jr., 5-11, 185, Ram Patel, Sr., 5-9, 145, Carter Duley, Jr., 5-9, 150
Best in the classroom: Ram Patel, Justin Smith, Grant Johnson, Ethan Plants

Just the facts

Conference: LC8
OHSAA: Division VI, Region 21
Coach: Mike Rice, first year
2023: 10-3 (7-1)
X: @_CHSFootball
Home field: Columbia Raiders Stadium

Outlook

Columbia lost All-Ohio tailback Marco Cirigliano, among others, in a talented 2024 graduation class. Along with replacing core members from the 2022 playoff run, this will be the first time in nearly 20 years that Athletic Director Jason Ward isn't the Raiders' head football coach. Former defensive coordinator Mike Rice took the head job and has the team looking focused with a new perspective, yet familiar presence.

Player to watch

Chase Voge is the anchor of the offensive line. The senior swaps from the blind side to right tackle for 2024, and could be a disruptor on the defensive line.

Underclassman to watch: Jimmy Stofey will take on a bigger role on both sides of the ball going into his second varsity season.

Bottom line

IF: the senior leadership continues developing team chemistry, **THEN:** the Raiders can win the LC8 and make a playoff push.

— Sean Fitzgerald



Voge



Stofey



RANDY MEYERS —
FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Elyria's Kevin Jordan looks to lead the Pioneers at running back this season.

Elyria » Pioneers

Schedule

(subject to change)
Aug. 23: Elyria at Mayfield, 7 p.m.
Aug. 31: Lorain at Elyria, 1 p.m.
Sept. 6: Akron East at Elyria, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Elyria at Avon, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Olmsted Falls at Elyria, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Elyria at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Avon Lake at Elyria, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: Elyria at Amherst, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Midview at Elyria, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Berea-Midpark at Elyria, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Steven Gilbert, Sr., 5-10, 155
RB: Kevin Jordan, Sr., 6-0, 205
RB: Terrell Calhoun, Sr., 5-7, 175
WR: Steve Maiher, Sr., 6-0, 170
WR: Jacory Bradley, Jr., 5-5, 150
WR: Steven Johnson, Jr., 6-2, 155
OL: Christian Satterfield, Sr., 6-3, 270
OL: Grady Costello, Sr., 6-2, 260
OL: Mike Alvarez, Sr., 5-11, 305
OL: Parker Osborne, So., 6-1, 275
OL: Jackson Goodspeed, Jr., 6-4, 280

DEFENSE

DL: Teo Perez, Sr., 6-2, 215
DL: Kemarion Wimberly, Sr., 5-7, 195
DL: Xavier Cross, Jr., 6-2, 240
LB: Zavier Stephens, Sr., 5-7, 170
LB: Levi Springer, Jr., 5-9, 160
LB: Terrell Calhoun, Sr., 5-7, 175
CB: Tyger McCullum, Jr., 5-7, 140
CB: Mikey Andrews, Sr., 6-0, 180
S: D'Andre Woolbright, Sr., 5-9, 160
FS: Antonio Pride, Jr., 5-8, 160
S: Dolan Melendez, Jr., 5-5, 130
Best in the classroom: Teo Perez, 4.4 GPA
Best bench press: Terrell Calhoun, 315 pounds
Best squat: Terrell Calhoun, 405 pounds

Just the facts

Conference: Southwestern Conference
Coach: Matt Wilson, first year
2023: 1-10 (1-6)
OHSAA: Division I, Region 1
X: @ElyriaAthletics
Home field: Elyria Charities Field at Ely Stadium

Outlook

Going on their third coach in three seasons, the Pioneers look for stability with new head coach Matt Wilson. Coming from Berea-Midpark, he knows the Southwestern Conference well. Elyria has the athletes to succeed, and Wilson will try and bring the best out of them. This will be a crucial year for culture building.

Player to watch

Kevin Jordan will be one of the area's best running backs this season. The senior is tough to bring down in between the tackles and he has the versatility to be catch passes out of the backfield when called upon. He has grown as a leader and player from last season, and that's an exciting prospect.

Underclassman to watch: Alongside Jordan, Elyria's running game as a while is going to be strong with a seasoned offensive line. Jackson Goodspeed started at tackle last year as a sophomore and is poised for a big junior year. His 6-foot-4 frame will continue creating difficulty for opposing defenses.



Goodspeed

Bottom line

IF: Elyria develops a passing game to complement Kevin Jordan, **THEN:** Year 1 of the Matt Wilson era will be a good one.

— Travis Nelson



JOE COLON — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Elyria Catholic's Connor Petrus carries against North Olmsted on Sept. 29, 2023.

Elyria Catholic » Panthers

Schedule

(Subject to change)

Aug. 23: Bishop Hartley at Elyria Catholic, 7 p.m.

Aug. 30: Mayfield at Elyria Catholic, 7 p.m.

Sept. 6: Midview at Elyria Catholic, 7 p.m.

Sept. 13: Elyria Catholic at Vermillion, 7 p.m.

Sept. 20: Padua at Elyria Catholic, 7 p.m.

Sept. 27: Elyria Catholic at Akron SVSM, 7 p.m.

Oct. 4: Benedictine at Elyria Catholic, 7 p.m.

Oct. 11: Elyria Catholic at Lake Catholic, 7 p.m.

Oct. 18: Elyria Catholic at Holy Name, 7 p.m.

Oct. 25: Brush at Elyria Catholic, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Darrell Shumpert Jr., Sr., 6-1, 180

RB: Zion Castillo, Jr., 5-7, 180

WR: Zavior Castillo, Sr., 6-0, 180

WR: Connor Petrus, Sr., 5-11, 180

WR: Jayden Ramos, Sr., 5-11, 170

TE: Joey Schill, Jr., 5-9, 190

LT: Amari Lind, Jr., 6-3, 240

LG: Canaan Regis, Jr., 230

C: Luis-Angel Hernandez, Jr., 5-9, 220

RG: Omuary Ortiz, Jr., 6-1, 240

RT: Bryan Kelley, Sr., 6-3, 250

DEFENSE

DE: Trent Merrell, Jr., 6-3, 230

DL: Canaan Regis, Jr., 230

DL: Jacob Gillispie, Jr., 260

DE: Kylan Connors, Jr., 5-11, 190

LB: Yadi Perez, Sr., 6-0, 200

LB: Joey Schill, Jr., 5-9, 190

DB: Ryan Brown, Sr., 5-11, 170

DB: Christian Soltis, Sr., 5-9, 170

DB: Malachi Johnson, Sr., 5-8, 175

DB: Mikey Bates, So., 5-8, 170

DB: Donovan Shumpert, So., 5-10, 170

Just the facts

Conference: North Coast Conference

OHSAA: Division III, Region 10

Coach: Chase Farris, second year (3-7)

2023: 3-7 (3-4)

X: @ECHSathletics

Home field: Dan Reaser Stadium

Outlook

Year 1 of the Chase Farris at Elyria Catholic was a season of building. The Panthers finished 3-7 and were on the outside looking in by .0091 points for the final Division IV, Region 14 playoff spot.

Player to watch

It's finally time to shine for Darrell Shumpert. The Elyria Catholic signal caller started last year's opener, and nothing will get in his way to finish it this time around. If the Panthers have a bounce-back season, he will play a big part in it.

Underclassman to watch: While most sophomores were playing JV football last year, Trent Merrell was earning All-Ohioan honors on the varsity. The defensive end put the area on notice last year with his terrific play and is a bona fide star that the program will rely on for two more years.

Bottom line

IF: The Panthers can get off to a better start, **THEN:** They will return to the postseason after a one-year absence.



Shumpert



Merrell

— Travis Nelson



SEAN FITZGERALD — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Fairview quarterback Burke Lowry winds up for a pass during an Aug. 6 practice.

Fairview » Warriors

Schedule

Aug. 23: Fairview at Clearview, 7 p.m.

Aug. 30: Fairview at Columbia, 7 p.m.

Sept. 6: Brookside at Fairview, 7 p.m.

Sept. 13: Brooklyn at Fairview, 7 p.m.

Sept. 20: Fairview at Beachwood, 7 p.m.

Sept. 27: Fairview at Kirtland, 7 p.m.

Oct. 4: Chagrin Falls at Fairview, 7 p.m.

Oct. 11: Fairview at Cardinal, 7 p.m.

Oct. 18: Berkshire at Fairview, 7 p.m.

Oct. 25: Fairview at Crestwood, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Burke Lowry*, Jr., 6-3, 190

SLOT: Pat Canfield*, Sr., 5-9, 160

SLOT: Brandon "Juju" Clark*, Sr., 5-9, 155

WR: Savijan Harris*, Jr., 6-1, 175

WR: JR Beato, Sr., 6-1, 185

RB: Brady Weir, Sr., 5-9, 170

LT: Danny O'Neil*, So., 6-1, 250

LG: Danny Larkin*, Sr., 5-10, 230

C: Jackson Habbyslaw, So., 5-11, 205

RG: Ernie Alcaro*, Sr., 5-10, 235

RT: Quinton Harris*, Jr., 6-4, 300

K: Kyle Farkas, So., 6-1, 145

DEFENSE

DE: Danny O'Neil, So., 6-1, 250

NT: Ernie Alcaro*, Sr., 5-10, 235

DE: Danny Larkin*, Sr., 5-10, 230

OLB: Brandon "Juju" Clark*, Sr., 5-9, 155

OLB: Mason Woodworth, Jr., 6-0, 165

LB: Brady Weir*, Sr., 5-9, 170

LB: Vinny Rizzo*, Jr., 6-0, 175

CB: Will Allen, Jr., 6-0, 150

CB: Cal Reis, So., 6-1, 160

S: Pat Canfield*, Sr., 5-9, 160

S: Savijan Harris*, Jr., 6-1, 175

P: Burke Lowry*, Jr., 6-3, 190

***:** returning starter; **Returning let-**

terwinners: 17;

Key reserves: Will Allen, WR, Jr., 6-0,

150, Mason Woodworth, SLOT, Jr., 6-0,

165, LaMarcus Clark*, OLB, So., 5-8,

165, Jack Faile, DL, So., 5-8, 175

Best in the classroom: Brady Weir,

4,318

Best bench press: Danny O'Neil, 285

pounds

Best squat: JR Beato, 465 pounds

Best 40 time: Mason Woodworth, 4.6

seconds

Just the facts

Conference: CVC Valley

OHSAA: Division V, Region 18

Coach: Sean Ranc, fourth year (5-23)

2023: 1-9

X: @FairviewFB

Home field: James B. Daley Stadium

Outlook

Even with a 1-9 record a year ago, the Warriors managed to keep some opponents on their toes and fell just short against quality opponents. Sean Ranc is in his fifth season on the Fairview sidelines and the team will be kicking off its first full fall season in the Chagrin Valley Conference. Continuity at quarterback and the return of defensive leaders will be a boon for a squad that is looking to climb upward.



Clark



Lowry

Player to watch

Senior captain Brandon "Juju" Clark will return to helm the defense and contribute from the slot on the offensive side of the ball. His physicality and willingness to make plays set the tone for his teammates.

Underclassman to watch: Burke Lowry is in his third season as the starting quarterback. His comfort in the offense will go a long way for the Warriors.

Bottom line

IF: the core group stays healthy and closes out tight games, **THEN:** Fairview should win more games than last year.

— Sean Fitzgerald



MARK PEREZ-KRYWANY — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Firelands coach Ryan O'Rourke talks to his team after its 7-on-7 at Collins Western Reserves on July 15.

Firelands » Falcons

Schedule

(Subject to change)

Aug. 23: Edison at Firelands, 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: Vermilion at Firelands, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: Poland Seminary at Firelands, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Firelands at Columbia, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Firelands at Black River, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Brookside at Firelands, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Firelands at Clearview, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: Firelands at Keystone, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Oberlin at Firelands, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Wellington at Firelands, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Liam Tobicash, So., 6-1, 173
TB: Collin Scott*, Sr., 6-0, 205
Slotback: Jimmy Berry*, Jr., 5-10, 185
WR: Michael Lewis, Sr., 6-4, 191
WR: Lucas Green, So., 6-0, 160
TE: Ayden Fortner, Jr., 6-1, 206
LT: Noah Angle*, Sr., 6-3, 238
LG: C.J. Gilles, Sr., 6-2, 300
C: Clifford Stull*, Jr., 5-11, 206
RG: Roberto Flores, 6-2, 301
RT: Brandon Adkins*, Sr., 6-0, 255
K: Evan Lowe, Jr., 6-0, 164

DEFENSE

DE: Noah Angle*, Sr., 6-3, 238
NT: Patrick Geist*, Sr., 6-2, 291
DE: Brady Smith, Jr., 6-1, 255
OLB: Ayden Fortner*, Jr., 6-1, 206
MLB: Carter Lehman*, Sr., 6-0, 205
MLB: Collin Scott*, 6-0, 205
OLB: Michael Lewis, Sr., 6-4, 191
CB: Asher Widener, Sr., 6-9, 156
CB: Sam Charley, Sr., 5-11, 160
S: Max Stinson, Sr., 6-0, 165
S: Lucas Green, So., 6-0, 160
P: Collin Scott, Sr., 6-0, 205
 *: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 15
Key reserves: Andrew Pawlak, So., WR/DB, 5-10, 160, Logan Parker, Jr., OL, 5-11, 230, Luke Gibson Sr., DL, 5-7, 218
Best in the classroom: Noah Angle, 4.0 GPA

Just the facts

Conference: LC8

OHSAA: Division IV, Region 14

Coach: Ryan O'Rourke, eighth year (42-30)

2023: 6-5 (5-2)

X: @Coach_Rorourke

Home field: Fireland Stadium

Outlook

Firelands' identity is to dominate the line of scrimmage, to run the ball on offense and stop it on defense. The fact that the Falcons are returning so many starters in the backfield, offensive line and front seven is a good sign to have the personnel fit the system. The question mark is the inexperience in the secondary, wide receiver and quarterback. However, Firelands has been hard at work to get those players as many reps as possible in 7-on-7s. With the personnel matching the scheme, it is hard not to think they should be one of the top contenders for the LC8 championship.

Player to watch

Offensive tackle Noah Angle is the anchor of the offensive line. He was named Division IV third-team All-Ohioan. Angle is also the younger brother of three-time All-Ohioan Alex Angle. Expect him to be the lead blocker in the tightest of moments for the crucial yards.

Underclassman to watch: Ayden Fortner is the outside linebacker on the opposite side of the 3-4 defense. He was thrown into the fire as the starting tight end. He caught five passes for 71 yards in four games, and he was a key blocker in the running game. Expect to see him set a hard edge on defense.

Bottom line

IF: Firelands can find its answer at quarterback, **THEN:** it is possible to go undefeated in the LC8.

— Mark Perez-Krywany



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Keystone's Shane Ohl will split time at running back and linebacker this season.

Keystone » Wildcats

Schedule

(Subject to change)

Aug. 23: Northwestern at Keystone, 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: Keystone at Cloverleaf, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: Crestview at Keystone, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Keystone at Clearview, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Keystone at Columbia, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Black River at Keystone, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Brookside at Keystone, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: Firelands at Keystone, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Keystone at Wellington, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Keystone at Oberlin, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Zach Shackelford*, Sr., 5-11, 180
RB Wyatt McKee*, So., 5-11, 195
RB: Lucas Hurley*, Sr., 5-10, 190
TE: Grady Whitacre*, Sr., 6-1, 180
WR: Tyler Ohl*, Sr., 6-0, 175
WR: Wyatt Rose, Sr., 5-10, 175
LT: Macin Padin*, Sr., 5-10, 175
LG: Justin Rounds, Jr., 6-3, 235
C: Jordan Folmer*, Jr., 5-11, 225
RG: Kyle Naylor*, Jr., 5-10, 230
RT: Ronan Bracken, Sr., 6-2, 195
K: Grady Whitacre*, Sr., 6-1, 180

DEFENSE

DE: John Faltay, So., 6-2, 225
DT: Kyle Naylor*, Sr., 5-10, 230
DT: Brandon Bachman, Sr., 6-1, 255
DE: Jordan Folmer*, Sr., 5-11, 225
LB: Landon Whitacre*, Sr., 5-11, 185
LB: Lucas Hurley*, Jr., 5-10, 190
QS Shane Ohl*, Jr., 6-0, 185
SS: Wyatt McKee*, So., 5-10, 195
FS: Grady Whitacre*, Sr., 6-1, 195
CB: Wyatt Rose, Jr., 5-9, 170
CB: Tyler Ohl, Jr., 6-0, 165
P: Grady Whitacre*, Sr., 6-1, 195
 *: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 16
Key reserves: Kaleb Scott, Jr., 5-9, 170, Trevor Blackburn, Sr., 6-1, 190
Best in the classroom: Zach Shackelford, 4.3 GPA

Just the facts

Conference: LC8

OHSAA: Division V, Region 18

Coach: Don Griswold, eighth year (33-26)

2023: 4-6 (3-4)

X: @KeystoneSchools

Home field: Wildcat Stadium

Outlook

The Wildcats are back and they have the tools in the right spots to compete for the LC8 championship. Keystone did not have a true quarterback in 2023, which resulted in an average 11.7 points per game. Key players on offense and defense return from the scoring woes. The fighting spirit Keystone displayed last year will bold well for them this season.

Player to watch

Keystone will go as far as quarterback Zach Shackelford can take it. He was a 2022 All-Ohioan at wide receiver who burst onto the scene at quarterback, scoring five touchdowns on offense, defense and special teams in Week 1 of 2023. However, he suffered a season-ending injury the following week. His athleticism allows the Wildcats to run an effective RPO (run pass option) offense.

Underclassman to watch: As a sophomore, Ohl had 52 tackles at linebacker. Its defense was on the field a lot last year, and held its own. Expect him to have an increased role on both sides of the ball as a running back and linebacker.

Bottom line

IF: Keystone can remain healthy, **THEN:** the Wildcats will be legitimate contenders in the LC8 and can win a playoff game.

— Mark Perez-Krywany



Fortner



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RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Lorain's Jairo Williams carries during practice Aug. 1.

Lorain » Titans

Schedule

(Subject to change)

Aug. 23: Brush at Lorain, 7 p.m.
Aug. 31: Lorain at Elyria, 1 p.m.
Sept. 6: Sandusky at Lorain, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Firestone at Lorain, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Lorain at Willoughby South, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Lorain vs. Garfield Heights at Bedford, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Warrensville Heights at Lorain, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: Lorain at Shaw, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Bedford at Lorain, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Lorain at Maple Heights, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Chase Davis, Sr., 5-10, 200
RB: Ocir Kimble, Sr., 6-2, 190
TE: Avery Martin, Jr., 6-0, 200
WR: Jojo Gaines, Sr., 6-0, 170
WR: Johnny Gieger, Sr., 6-0, 165
WR: Jairo Williams, Sr., 5-8, 175
LT: Amare Malone, Jr., 6-1, 240
LG: Luke Wilson, Sr., 6-0, 317
C: Lamar Miller, Jr., 5-10, 210
RG: Isaiah Ray, Sr., 5-10, 275
RT: Braidon Buchanan, Jr., 6-7, 255
K: Jacob Rivera, Jr., 5-9, 170

DEFENSE

DL: Ezra Williams, Jr., 5-10, 270
DL: Isaiah Ray, Sr., 5-10, 275
DL: Luke Wilson, Sr., 6-0, 317
LB: Jamiyus Gaines, Jr., 5-9, 200
LB: Jay'I Diaz, Jr., 5-10, 200
LB: TJ Allen, Jr., 5-9, 195
LB: Avery Martin, Jr., 6-0, 200
DB: Ocir Kimble, Sr., 6-2, 190
DB: Jojo Gaines, Sr., 6-0, 170
DB: Ray Smith, Sr., 5-8, 150
DB: Johnny Gieger, Sr., 6-0, 165
Best in the classroom: Joey Hall
Best bench press: Ezra Williams, 325 pounds
Best squat: Ezra Williams, 515 pounds
Best 40 time: Jairo Williams, 4.44 seconds

Just the facts

Conference: Lake Erie League
OHSAA: Division I, Region 1
Coach: James Boyeas, first year
2023: 8-3 (4-1)
X: @lorainathletics
Home field: George Daniel Field

Outlook

Lorain put its best foot forward a year ago winning seven games and a share of the Lake Erie League. James Boyeas arrives from North Olmsted to take over as head coach, and the Titans have an abundance of offensive weapons at his disposal. High expectations have been set for the program.

Player to watch

Ocir Kimble helped the Titans form a dynamic rushing duo last year with John Salaman, but now it's his backfield. The senior running back has the versatility to play anywhere on the field and has breakaway speed.

Underclassman to watch: With Kimble's ability to play elsewhere, junior TJ Allen is going to be able to show what we can do at running back. He will also play linebacker this year, so a big role on both sides of the ball awaits.

Bottom line

IF: the players can adjust to a different offense scheme, **THEN:** Lorain is in store for another big year.



Kimble



Allen

— Travis Nelson



RANDY MEYERS — THE MORNING JOURNAL
 Midview held an intrasquad scrimmage on Aug. 3.

Midview » Middies

Schedule

(Subject to change)

Aug. 23: Westlake at Midview, 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: North Olmsted at Midview, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: Midview at Elyria Catholic, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Amherst at Midview, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Midview at Avon Lake, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Berea-Midpark at Midview, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Midview at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: Avon at Midview, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Midview at Elyria, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Midview at Olmsted Falls, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Shay Williams, Jr., 5-11, 185
RB: Michael Passerello Jr., Jr., 6-1, 180
RB: Marcus McMahon, Jr., 5-7, 165
WR: Dior Jones*, Sr., 6-1, 190
WR: Zachary Wallace, Jr., 5-9, 155
WR: Camden Scott, Sr., 6-1, 155
LT: Leo Swirynsky, Jr., 5-10, 260
LG: Ashton Johnson, Sr., 6-1, 210 OR Joey Brown, Jr.
C: Brayden Widenmeyer, Jr., 6-0, 210
RG: Max Scott*, Sr., 5-10, 210
RT: Xavier Young, Jr., 6-3, 220 OR Jerry Stewart, Jr., 6-0, 230
K: Ethan Morris*, Sr.

DEFENSE

DL: Nathaniel Shenberger*, Sr., 6-0, 200
DL: Makai Massey*, Sr., 6-0, 310
DL: Jerry Stewart, Jr., 6-0, 230 OR Sawyer McMillan, Sr., 6-0, 200
LB: Wyatt Lehman*, Sr., 5-9, 185
LB: Brayden Homoki, Jr., 6-0, 205
LB: Thomas Kmitt*, Sr., 5-11, 195
LB: Max Kucera, Sr., 5-10, 165
DB: Cross Wervey*, Sr., 5-9, 180
DB: Zachary Wallace, Jr., 5-9, 155
DB: Cameron West*, Sr., 5-11, 195
 *: returning starter
Best bench press: Makai Massey, 315 pounds
Best squat: Makai Massey, 500 pounds

Just the facts

Conference: Southwestern Conference
OHSAA: Division III, Region 10
Coach: Jack Armstrong, second year (4-7)
2023: 4-7 (2-5)
X: @MiddleUpdates
Home field: Ross Field at Edward T. Adelsburg Stadium

Outlook

The Jack Armstrong era at Midview started well in 2023. The Middies finished 4-7 with a playoff appearance a year ago, but they want more. The foundation has been built and the players have been working to bring Midview football to a higher level. In the midst of a quarterback competition this summer, the skill players around them are ready to help out.

Player to watch

Cameron West has been a key part of Midview's program for a few years now. He will play a few spots this season and will look good doing it. Not just his play stands out, but his senior leadership is something that the Middies will continuously rely on this season.

Underclassman to watch: Michael Passerello Jr. got his feet wet last season and now he's ready for more. He had the third-most carries and yards on the team in 2023, but with both players ahead of him graduating, you will see him in the backfield a lot more this year. Only a junior, it seems he's just getting started.

Bottom line

IF: the senior leaders set the tone, **THEN:** Midview's program can make another leap.



West



Passerello

— Travis Nelson



SEAN FITZGERALD — THE MORNING JOURNAL

North Olmsted players smash up against each other during a practice drill.

North Olmsted » Eagles

Schedule

Aug. 23: North Ridgeville at North Olmsted, 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: North Olmsted at Midview, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: North Olmsted at Amherst, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Buckeye at North Olmsted, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: North Olmsted at Normandy, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Lakewood at North Olmsted, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: North Olmsted at Rocky River, 7 p.m.
Oct. 10: Bay at North Olmsted, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Valley Forge at North Olmsted, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: North Olmsted at Westlake, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Tommy Horsfall*, Sr., 6-2, 188
RB: Michael Passafiume*, Sr., 6-0, 212
RB: Matthew Chalkwater*, Sr., 5-10, 185
TE: Dean Cullup*, Sr., 6-3, 242
WR: Lawrence Stanley*, Jr., 6-2, 168
TE: Ardean Roman*, Sr., 6-1, 214
LT: Andrew Saliba, Sr., 6-2, 192
LG: Javion Pierce, Jr., 5-10, 232
C: Brandon Bonham*, Sr., 6-2, 305
RG: Carmello Fuentes, So., 5-9, 182
RT: Mitchell Jones, Jr., 6-1, 224
K: Brennan Graf*, Sr., 5-10, 245

DEFENSE

DT: Tanner Perry, Jr., 5-10, 222
NT: Brendan Bonham*, Sr., 6-2, 305
DT: Tanner Thorne, Jr., 6-2, 210
DT: Javion Pierce, Jr., 5-10, 232
LB: Michael Passafiume*, Sr., 6-0, 212
LB: Matthew Chalkwater*, Sr., 5-10, 185
LB: Fouad Mohammed, Jr., 5-11, 187
DB: Matt Krzemain, Sr., 6-2, 170
DB: Brayden Pavlus*, Sr., 5-10, 179
DB: Lawrence Stanley*, Sr., 6-2, 168
DB: DJ Jefferies, Jr., 5-10, 176
P: Brennan Graf*, Sr., 5-10, 245
***:** returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 18; **Key reserves:** Mitchell Kurtz*, WR/QB, Sr., 5-10, 178
Best in the classroom: Matthew Chalkwater, 4.08; **Michael Passafiume, 3.78**
Best bench press: Michael Passafiume, 225 pounds; **Matthew Chalkwater, 225 pounds**
Best squat: Michael Passafiume, 154 pounds
Best 40 time: Tommy Horsfall, 4.65 seconds

Just facts

Conference: Cleveland West Conference
OHSAA: Division II, Region 6
Coach: Tim Brediger, 12th year (51-57)
2023: 2-8 (2-5)
X: @NOEaglesFB
Home field: North Olmsted Stadium

Outlook

North Olmsted's season didn't go according to plan in 2023 after advancing to the 2022 Division II, Region 6 quarterfinals. Injuries and some tough luck led the squad from 8-4 to 2-8. There's a new offensive system in place, but senior Tommy Horsfall returns for his second year as the starter in Brediger's new-look attack.

Player to watch

Tommy Horsfall returns as a senior with a year's worth of starting experience. His ability to command the offense has grown over the offseason, as well as his comfort in a new system.

Underclassman to watch: Connor Verbickey will be a jack of all trades as he earns more playing time as a junior.

Bottom line

IF: the team can stay accountable in their roles, **THEN:** the play on the field will bounce back after a down 2023 season.

— Sean Fitzgerald



Horsfall



Verbickey



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

North Ridgeville practices Aug. 7.

North Ridgeville » Rangers

Schedule

Aug. 23: North Ridgeville at North Olmsted, 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: North Ridgeville at Valley Forge, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: North Royalton at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Olmsted Falls at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: North Ridgeville at Avon, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Elyria at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Midview at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: North Ridgeville at Berea-Midpark, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Avon Lake at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: North Ridgeville at Amherst, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Cole Miller*, Jr., 6-4, 201
H: Charlie Steinmetz*, Sr., 6-2, 200
SLOT: Ryan Anderson*, Jr., 6-0, 183
WR: Landen Kneppshield, Sr., 6-4, 170
WR: Duke Baker, Jr., 6-1, 160
RB: Zack Barnhart*, Jr., 5-10, 200
RB: Ta'vion Swain*, Sr., 5-10, 180
LT: JD Radway*, Sr., 6-4, 300
LG: Cooper Riley*, Sr., 6-0, 270
C: Mitch Waugaman*, Sr., 6-0, 250
RG: Andrew Flesher*, Sr., 5-9, 260
RT: Tim O'Rick*, Sr., 6-4, 300
K: Austin DeShazo*, Sr., 6-1, 220

DEFENSE

LB: Carson Madis*, Sr., 6-1, 210
LB: Austin DeShazo*, Sr., 6-1, 220
LB: Tyler Peregord*, Sr., 6-2, 220
LB: Nolan Gill, Jr., 5-10, 193
FS: Carter Clark*, Jr., 5-6, 160
SS: Brett Lienerth*, Sr., 5-10, 180
CB: Brian Strippy, Jr., 5-10, 168
CB: Luke Mroz, Jr., 5-9, 155
DE: Ashton Cassetto*, Jr., 6-0, 240
DE: Braydn Laszlo, Jr., 5-10, 195
NT: Hemzah Fahmawi, Jr., 6-2, 230
P: Finley Keller*, Jr., 6-2, 220
***:** returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 23; **Key reserves:** Brendan Watchorn*, Sr., QB, 6-1, 180, Cole Allison, So., 5-11, 170, Zack Barnhart, Jr., 5-10, 200, Christian Ensley, Jr., 6-1, 235

Just facts

Conference: Southwestern Conference
OHSAA: Division II, Region 6
Coach: Bryan Morgan, third year (16-17)
2023: 8-4 (4-3)
X: @RangerPrideFB
Home field: Ranger Stadium

Outlook

Bryan Morgan's program returns a core of four senior All-Ohioans who will challenge last year's program best campaign — winning the school's first-ever home playoff game and sticking tough with Highland in the quarterfinals. The depth is there for this team, with leadership experience aplenty to guide the program forward and challenge for the Southwestern Conference crown.

Player to watch

Charlie Steinmetz is a machine of a tight end. He's sure-handed and more than capable of breaking off back-breaking touchdown runs in the backfield. He's a jack of all trades.

Underclassman to watch: Junior quarterback Cole Miller returns to the lineup after suffering an injury vs. Avon. His dual-threat ability opens up the offense.

Bottom line

IF: the Ranger senior leaders continue elevating their teammates, **THEN:** they will compete for the SWC and push deep into the playoffs.



Steinmetz



Miller

— Sean Fitzgerald



TRAVIS NELSON — THE MORNING JOURNAL

The Oberlin Phoenix break the huddle following practice on July 30.

Oberlin » Phoenix

Schedule

(Subject to change)

Aug. 23: Oberlin at Plymouth, 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: Brooklyn at Oberlin, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: Lutheran East at Oberlin, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Oberlin at Brookside, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Clearview at Oberlin, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Columbia at Oberlin, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Oberlin at Black River, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: Oberlin at Wellington, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Oberlin at Firelands, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Keystone at Oberlin, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Julian Anderson, Sr., 6-2, 210
RB: Mason Rosenthal*, Jr., 5-11, 220
WR: Jak'Shawn Wyndham*, Sr., 6-2, 185
WR: Carmello Williams*, Jr., 6-3, 187
WR: Joe Holt, Sr., 5-11, 170
WR/TE: Drew Walter, Jr., 6-1, 185
OL: Nick Webb*, Sr., 5-10, 190
OL: Bodhi Durmot, So., 5-10, 300
OL: Jaden Brown, So., 5-9, 265
OL: Nicholas Freas*, So., 6-4, 350
OL: Julean Page, Jr., 5-9, 205

DEFENSE

DL: Nick Webb*, Jr., 5-10, 190
DL: Nicholas Freas, So., 6-4, 350
DL: Mason Rosenthal*, Jr., 5-11, 220
LB: Drew Walter, Jr., 6-1, 185
LB: Julian Anderson*, Sr., 6-2, 210
LB: Julean Page*, Jr., 5-9, 205
LB: Carmello Williams, Jr., 6-3, 187
DB: Jak'Shawn Wyndham*, Sr., 6-2, 185
DB: Jackson Cikalo, Jr., 5-10, 180
DB: Joe Holt, Sr., 5-11, 170
DB: Kory Freeman, Jr., 5-9, 160

*: returning starter
Key reserves: Tommy Boyer, Sr., 5-8, 170
Best in the classroom: Drew Walter, 4.0 GPA

Just the facts

Conference: LC8

OHSAA: Division VII, Region 25

Coach: Kenny Washington, first year

2023: 0-9 (0-6)

X: @OBPhoenix

Home field: Dick Bailey Field at Knowlton Athletic Complex

Outlook

Kenny Washington looks to bring change to Oberlin. The former Lorain assistant attempts to buck the trend as he is now the fourth head coach for the Phoenix in four seasons. The players have bought in to his message early on and want to change how the program is perceived. Led by key returners, there's belief.



Anderson

Player to watch

A mainstay of the program over the years, senior Julian Anderson wants to go out with a bang. His versatility and leadership are going to be on full display this year. Oberlin's path to success is putting the ball in his hands.

Underclassman to watch: Like Anderson, Drew Walter will continue playing a big role for the Phoenix. The junior was the starting quarterback a year ago and he's been putting in the work to be a solid two-way player again in 2024.



Walter

Bottom line

IF: first-year coach Kenny Washington can set the foundation for success, **THEN:** the Phoenix program could have a bright future.

— Travis Nelson



SEAN FITZGERALD — THE MORNING JOURNAL

An Olmsted Falls player motions across the formation during an Aug. 7 practice.

Olmsted Falls » Bulldogs

Schedule

Aug. 23: Olmsted Falls at Solon, 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: Olmsted Falls at Brunswick, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: Canfield at Olmsted Falls, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Olmsted Falls at North Ridgeville, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Olmsted Falls at Elyria, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Avon at Olmsted Falls, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Amherst at Olmsted Falls, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: Olmsted Falls at Avon Lake, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Berea-Midpark at Olmsted Falls, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Midview at Olmsted Falls, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Jimmy Rosol*, Sr., 6-0, 185
FB: Owen Singleton*, Jr., 6-0, 185
TB: Logan Connelly*, Jr., 6-0, 165
TB: Brendan Hearn, Sr., 6-0, 170
WR: Jaiden Beyer, Sr., 6-0, 160
TE: Ayden Rivera, Jr., 6-1, 215
LT: Matthew Iannicca, Jr., 6-2, 225
LG: Charlie Martineau, Jr., 5-10, 240
C: Scott Draves, Jr., 6-1, 245
RG: Nathan Scheffler, Jr., 6-4, 285
RT: Joey Monyak, Sr., 5-10, 235
K: Callen Kaufman, Sr., 5-11, 155

DEFENSE

DE: Don Johnson, Sr., 5-11, 190
NT: Nathan Scheffler, Jr., 6-4, 285
DE: Cameron Simons, Sr., 6-2, 195
OLB: Brendan Hearn*, Sr., 6-0, 170
ILB: Nate Hrabnicky*, Sr., 6-0, 195
ILB: Mason Cerovac, So., 6-3, 220
OLB: Andrew Minor, Jr., 5-11, 175
CB: Tre Greer, Sr., 6-2, 180
SS: Charlie Krupka, Jr., 5-10, 175
FS: Logan Connelly*, Jr., 6-0, 165
CB: TBD
P: Logan Connelly*, Jr., 6-0, 165
***:** returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 14

Just the facts

Conference: Southwestern Conference

OHSAA: Division II, Region 6

Coach: Tom DeLuca, 12th year (79-46)

2023: 9-4 (4-3)

X: @OFFootball1

Home field: Charles A. Harding Memorial Stadium

Outlook

The Bulldogs had another successful campaign — albeit falling short against Avon in the regional semifinals by 10 points after a 42-point drubbing in Week 6. It's another young core for Tom DeLuca's group, but with several promising juniors and sophomores complementing the senior class.

Player to watch

Jimmy Rosol is a senior quarterback with multiple seasons worth of starts under his belt. In a typically run-heavy Bulldogs scheme, he'll be a calming presence with his veteran savvy.

Underclassman to watch: Owen Singleton broke out for a 1,000-yard sophomore campaign. Look for his role in the offense to increase this fall.

Bottom line

IF: the young starters can step into their roles, **THEN:** the Bulldogs can make a big push this year.



Rosol



Singleton

— Sean Fitzgerald



TRAVIS NELSON — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Rocky River coach Josh Wells addresses his team after practice July 30.

Rocky River » Pirates

Schedule

(Subject to change)

Aug. 23: Rocky River at Harvey, 7 p.m.
Aug. 31: Rocky River at John Marshall, 12 p.m.
Sept. 6: Perkins at Rocky River, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Rocky River at Valley Forge, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Lakewood at Rocky River, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Rocky River at Normandy, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: North Olmsted at Rocky River, 7 p.m.
Oct. 10: Westlake at Rocky River, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Rocky River at Buckeye, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Bay at Rocky River, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Ryan Taylor, Jr., 5-10, 175
RB: Josh Mommers, Sr., 5-10, 192
TE: Ben Bogre, Sr., 6-2, 200
WR: Oran Grieve*, Sr., 5-10, 170
WR: Danny Berg, So., 5-7, 160
WR: Cam Bulkowski, Sr., 5-8, 175
LT: Will Sweeney*, Sr., 6-3, 305
LG: Brady McCarthy, Sr., 6-1, 215
C: Charlie Uhler, Jr., 5-11, 200
RG: Alex Van Meter, Jr., 6-2, 220
RT: Steven McHenry, So., 6-0, 215
K: Stephen Cain, Sr., 6-0, 175

DEFENSE

DE: Steven McHenry*, So., 6-0, 215
NT: Alex Van Meter*, Jr., 6-2, 220
DE: Brady McCarthy, Sr., 6-1, 215
MIKE: Ben Kuhnen, Sr., 5-10, 195
WILL: London Hover, Jr., 5-9, 180
SAM: Ben Bogre*, Sr., 6-2, 200
BUCK: Josh Mommers*, Sr., 5-10, 192
WHIP: Danny Berg, So., 5-7, 160
FS: Michael Worgull, Jr., 5-7, 165
CB: Cam Bulkowski*, Sr., 5-8, 175
CB: Michael Bebie, So., 5-10, 160
P: Josh Mommers*, Sr., 5-10, 192
 *: returning starter
Key reserves: Joey DiSalvo, Jr., 5-8, 170; **Aidan LaPorte, Jr., 5-9, 160; Lucas Konopka, Jr., 5-9, 172**
Best in the classroom: Ben Bogre, 4.1 GPA
Best bench press: Blake Goertz, 250 pounds
Best squat: Ryan Taylor, Will Sweeney, Charlie Uhler, 405 pounds
Best 40 time: Cam Bulkowski, 4.6 seconds

Just the facts

Conference: Cleveland West Conference
OHSAA: Division III, Region 10
Coach: Josh Wells, 10th year (63-35)
2023: 10-2 (7-0)
X: @CoachWells1
Home field: Rocky River Stadium

Outlook

After a rough 2022, the Pirates bounced back with a huge 2023 season that resulted in a conference title and a playoff win. Now that the standard is back to where they want it to be, it will be up to this senior class to fill important spots and keep it going.

Player to watch

The Pirates' only returning All-Ohioan, Mommers is poised for a huge senior season. The safety has been putting people on notice for a few years now, and he will play a bigger role on offense too. Wherever Rocky River needs him, he will be a plug and play this year.

Underclassman to watch: With the graduation of a star-studded senior class, there are skill spots left to fill. Sophomore Danny Berg is going to be right in the mix to do so. His athleticism stands out and he will be a welcomed addition to this offense.

Bottom line

IF: the seniors can play both ways and fill in offensive spots, **THEN:** Rocky River will continue its winning ways.

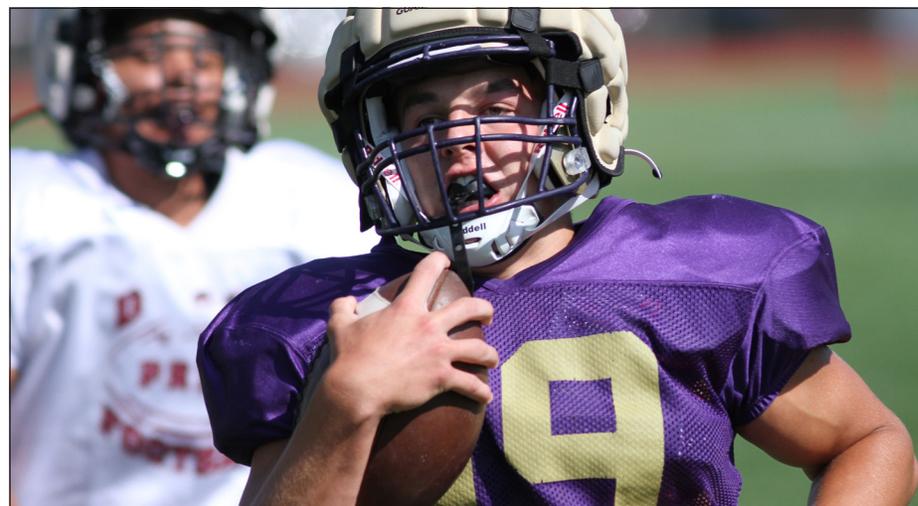


Mommers



Berg

— Travis Nelson



RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Vermilion takes on Wellington in a scrimmage Aug. 10.

Vermilion » Sailors

Schedule

(Subject to change)

Aug. 23: Vermilion at Margareta, 7 p.m.
Aug. 30: Vermilion at Firelands, 7 p.m.
Sept. 6: Willard at Vermilion, 7 p.m.
Sept. 13: Elyria Catholic at Vermilion, 7 p.m.
Sept. 20: Vermilion at Sandusky, 7 p.m.
Sept. 27: Norwalk at Vermilion, 7 p.m.
Oct. 4: Vermilion at Port Clinton, 7 p.m.
Oct. 11: Huron at Vermilion, 7 p.m.
Oct. 18: Vermilion at Edison, 7 p.m.
Oct. 25: Bellevue at Vermilion, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Aaron Mathis*, Sr., 6-2, 195
RB: Cohen Mooney*, Sr., 6-2, 200
RB: Logan Peterson*, Sr., 6-0, 165
WR: Dominic DiFucci*, Sr., 5-9, 160
WR: Brock Meyers*, Jr., 6-2, 185
TE: Beau Benesh*, Sr., 6-2, 200
LT: Evan Wagner, Jr., 6-0, 280
LG: Tim Bucher*, Sr., 5-10, 200
C: Mason Plas*, Sr., 6-0, 265
RG: Chad Ellis*, Jr., 5-7, 185
RT: Colin Angney*, Sr., 6-2, 180
K: Zeke Dunn*, Sr., 6-0, 170

DEFENSE

DL: Beau Benesh*, Sr., 6-2, 200
DL: Mason Plas*, Sr., 6-0, 265
DL: Colin Angney*, Sr., 6-2, 180
LB: Cohen Mooney, Sr., 6-0, 200
LB: Aaron Mathis, Sr., 6-2, 195
LB: Evan Kuhns*, Jr., 5-10, 185
LB: Myles Schloesser, Sr., 6-0, 160
DB: Logan Peterson*, Sr., 6-0, 165
DB: Dominic DiFucci*, Sr., 5-9, 160
DB: Brock Meyers*, Sr., 6-2, 185
DB: Oliver Roy*, Sr., 6-0, 180
P: Aaron Mathis*, Sr., 6-2, 195
 *: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 21
Key reserves: Sean Brownell, Jr., LB, 5-7, 200, Aiden Saunders, Jr., DL, 5-11, 170, Evan Kuhns, Jr., RB, 5-10, 185, Terrance Anders, Sr., QB, 6-3, 215
Best in the classroom: Evan Kuhns, 4.519 GPA
Best bench press: Cohen Mooney & Mason Plas, 325 pounds
Best squat: Cohen Mooney, 530 pounds
Best 40 time: Aaron Mathis, 4.5 seconds

Just the facts

Conference: Sandusky Bay Conference Bay Division
OHSAA: Division IV, Region 14
Coach: Bill DiFucci, third year (3-18)
2023: 3-8 (0-4)
X: @TheSailorNation
Home field: Sailor Stadium

Outlook

Optimism is swirling as the Sailors return eight starters on offense and 10 on defense. Since DiFucci has taken over, the upcoming senior class has five players in the 1,000-pound club in the weight room. Former wide receiver Keegan Frey was a key leader and producer on both ends of the field, which is a big void to replace. However, the senior class plans to take action to have leaders all over the field. Vermilion started 3-1, but finished the season 3-8 (0-4 in SBC Bay) and a first-round exit in the Division IV, Region 14 tournament. The Sailors aim to have a better finish in the SBC this year.

Player to watch

For a run-heavy team, it is crucial for Vermilion to show an ability to stretch the field. DuFucci, son of Coach DiFucci, is one of 14 seniors on the team who impact both sides of the ball as a safety and slot wide receiver. He has shifty athleticism and recorded 34 tackles and an interception in 2023. Expect him to receive jet sweeps to add another threat to the run game.

Underclassman to watch: When it is time to throw, Meyers is the target to go deep. He has a 6-2 frame with solid hands to come down with a jump ball. He also can provide a lengthy presence on the defensive side of the ball.

Bottom line

IF: Vermilion can set the tone with the run game, **THEN:** it should have a better year in the SBC for a higher seed in the Division IV Region 14 tournament.

— Mark Perez-Krywany



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RANDY MEYERS — FOR THE MORNING JOURNAL

Wellington kicks off during a scrimmage against Vermilion on Aug. 10.

Wellington » Dukes

Schedule

(Subject to change)

Aug. 23: Wellington at Collins WR, 7 p.m.

Aug. 30: Wellington at Mapleton, 7 p.m.

Sept. 6: Plymouth at Wellington, 7 p.m.

Sept. 13: Black River at Wellington, 7 p.m.

Sept. 20: Wellington at Brookside, 7 p.m.

Sept. 27: Clearview at Wellington, 7 p.m.

Oct. 4: Wellington at Columbia, 7 p.m.

Oct. 11: Oberlin at Wellington, 7 p.m.

Oct. 18: Keystone at Wellington, 7 p.m.

Oct. 25: Wellington at Firelands, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Landon Wright*, Sr., 6-1, 160

RB: Baron Turner Jr.*, Sr., 6-1, 175

FB: Trey Moore, Jr., 5-10, 180

WR: Johnnie Kinter, Sr., 6-3, 200

WR: Connor Sheppard, Sr., 5-9, 160

TE: Wilson Schmucker, Jr., 6-2, 190

LT: Kane Davison, Jr., 6-3, 260

LG: Nathan Krosse*, Sr., 5-11, 200

C: Alex Sparks*, Sr., 6-0, 230

RG: Austin Sutherland, Sr., 5-9, 190

RT: Ashton Roessler*, Jr., 6-0, 235

K: Alex Frenk*, Jr., 6-1, 165

DEFENSE

DE: Nathan Krosse*, Sr., 5-11, 200

DT: Ashton Roessler*, Jr., 6-0, 235

DT: Owen Persinger, Jr., 5-9, 205

DE: Cade Spangenberg*, So., 5-9, 230

LB: Connor Sheppard*, Sr., 5-9, 160

LB: Trey Moore, Jr., 5-10, 180

LB: Will Sipos-Sutton*, Sr., 5-7, 170

CB: Baron Turner Jr.*, Sr., 6-1, 175

SS: Grant Kehl*, Sr., 6-0, 150

FS: Alex Frenk, Jr., 6-1, 165

CB: Johnnie Kinter*, 6-3, 200

P: Bryce Lehmkuhl*, So., 6-2, 185

*: returning starter; **Returning letter-winners:** 18

Key reserves: Connor Stevens, Sr., 6-0, 150, Tyler Burns, So., 6-2, 200, David Roldan, Jr., 5-9, 130

Best in the classroom: Wilson Schmucker, 4.6 GPA

Best bench press: Cade Spangenberg, 315 pounds

Best squat: Ashton Roessler, 425 pounds

Best 40 time: Connor Stevens, 4.6 seconds

Just the facts

Conference: LC8

OHSAA: Division V, Region 18

Coach: Rob Howells, seventh year (19-36)

2023: 2-8 (1-5)

X: @WEVSD_sports

Home field: Wellington

Outlook

Wellington passed the ball more than usual last year. This year, the Dukes return to their bread-and-butter ground attack. Wellington returns seven starters on both offense and defense. The defense will be led by All-Ohioan linebacker Connor Sheppard. The offense will still have quarterback Landon Wright and running back (state qualifying track sprinter) Baron Turner Jr.

Player to watch

Wide receiver Johnnie Kinter was a weapon on both sides of the ball, but thrived the most at wideout to be named Division VI third-team All-Ohioan. He caught 35 passes for 483 yards. Expect him to be a threat in the passing game and have a bigger role as a ball-carrier on the ground.

Underclassman to watch: Trey Moore was injured in the 2023 season, which propelled Sheppard to step up at linebacker. Now that Moore is back in the lineup, Wellington will have a hard-nosed linebacker to stuff running backs.

Bottom line

IF: Wellington can win the battle upfront, **THEN:** the Dukes should improve in the LC8.

— Mark Perez-Krywany



TRAVIS NELSON — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Westlake kicks off its season on Aug. 23 at Midview.

Westlake » Demons

Schedule

(Subject to change)

Aug. 23: Westlake at Midview, 7 p.m.

Aug. 30: Rhodes at Westlake, 7 p.m.

Sept. 6: Warrensville Heights at Westlake, 7 p.m.

Sept. 13: Westlake at Lakewood, 7 p.m.

Sept. 20: Valley Forge at Westlake, 7 p.m.

Sept. 27: Westlake at Bay, 7 p.m.

Oct. 4: Buckeye at Westlake, 7 p.m.

Oct. 10: Westlake at Rocky River, 7 p.m.

Oct. 18: Westlake at Normandy, 7 p.m.

Oct. 25: North Olmsted at Westlake, 7 p.m.

Projected lineup

OFFENSE

QB: Sam Brucchieri*, Sr., 6-4, 220

RB: Jake Ostrowski, Jr., 5-9, 175

TE: Chris Campbell*, Sr., 6-3, 220

SLOT: Chace Kelly*, Sr., 5-9, 150

WR: Dom Napoli, Sr., 5-10, 160

WR: Charbel Rida, Sr., 5-10, 160

LT: Sean Pavich, Jr., 6-1, 235

LG: Calum Kendall, Sr., 6-0, 230

C: Grant Stephens, Jr., 5-10, 200

RG: Sammy Salem, Sr., 5-10, 230

RT: Ahmad Nahib, Sr., 6-2, 220

K: Sean Evilsizer*, Sr., 6-1, 185

DEFENSE

DE: Ben Miller, Sr., 5-10, 200

DT: Sammy Salem, Sr., 5-10, 230

DT: Tamer Abedrabo, Sr., 5-10, 230

DE: Sean Pavich, Jr., 6-1, 235

LB: Chris Campbell*, Sr., 6-3, 220

LB: Jake Ostrowski, Jr., 5-9, 175

LB: Owen Wilburn, Sr., 5-9, 175

CB: Chace Kelly*, Sr., 5-9, 150

S: Loutfi Hasan, Sr., 5-8, 165

S: Stephen Trowbridge, Jr., 5-10, 165

CB: Charbel Rida, Sr., 5-10, 160

*: returning starter; **Returning letter-winners:** 15

Best 40 time: Chace Kelly, 4.54 seconds

Just the facts

Conference: Cleveland West Conference

OHSAA: Division II, Region 6

Coach: Logan Yantek, first year

2023: 7-4 (4-3)

X: @DemonAthletics

Home field: Lou Duchez Field at University Hospitals St. John Medical Center Stadium

Outlook

Despite a coaching change, Westlake has continuity. Logan Yantek was elevated from offensive coordinator to the Demons' new coach, allowing for an easier transition. They have a mixed bag with key returners and an almost entirely new offensive line. They're anticipating to build off of last year's promising campaign.

Player to watch

Quarterback Sam Brucchieri will be the straw that stirs the Demons' drink this season. The 6-4 senior already has multiple years of experience under his belt and looks to make it count in his final year. His ability has interested Division I coaches.

Underclassman to watch: A breakout year could be in store for Jake Ostrowski. After getting some playing time last year, the junior is in line to have a bigger role and have the ball in his hands plenty.

Bottom line

IF: The new offensive line can mesh together, **THEN:** Westlake will be one of the highest scoring teams in the CWC.

— Travis Nelson

Best Wishes for a great season to all the Teams!



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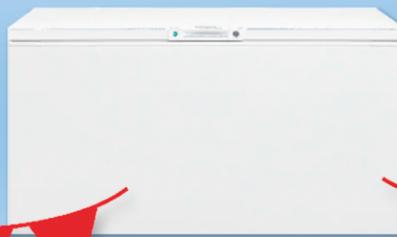


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