

THE MORNING JOURNAL

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PREVIEW DAY 2 OF 2



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Next man up



...and the new ones have arrived



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TOP OF THE CROP

Ranking the area's top teams heading into Week 1

By Jon Behm
jbehm@morningjournal.com
@mj_jbehm on Twitter

The top teams in the area heading into the 2016 season with 2015 record in parentheses:

1. MIDVIEW (11-1) » The Mid-dies lost a lot, but are you sure you want to count out

a team with Dustin Crum slinging the ball?

2. AVON (10-2) » Coach Mike Elder said he feels good about the development of his team, which is good enough for me.

3. ELYRIA (6-5) » The Pioneers return some key players that have improved greatly in the offseason.

4. NORTH RIDGEVILLE (7-4) »

One of the top area defenses got even better in the off-season.

5. ROCKY RIVER (8-3) » The Pirates have one of the most underrated running back tandems in the area in Darnion Crawford and Matt Popovich.

6. BAY (10-2) » The Rockets lost a lot, but Coach Ron Rutt feels he has the

right guys to make another run.

7. LORAIN (5-5) » The Titans return a lot of talent that should make them a force in the Lake Erie League.

8. FIRELANDS (8-3) » A new offensive attack has the Falcons looking more balanced than ever.

9. OLMSTED FALLS (6-5) »

Physical play is a trademark of this team. That is why a motivated Bulldogs team is even scarier.

10. BROOKSIDE (6-4) » The Cardinals are entering the season with confidence for the first time in a long time.

WATCH LIST » Clearview, Elyria Catholic, North Olmsted, Westlake

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ON THE COVER

In Sports Editor Jon Behm's photo illustration, graduated seniors Jake Sopko (top), Demario McCall (top left), Brad Thrasher (top center), Logan Bolin (top right) have left big holes in their rosters to fill, but newcomers Jamir Malone (bottom left), Larry Verhovec and Michael Bansek (middle top right), Keith Johnson and Alec Forrer (middle bottom right) and Matt Kelly (bottom) hope to be the ones to fill the gaps. Original photos by Jon Behm, Eric Bonzar, Amanda K. Rundle and Randy Meyers.

PHOTOGRAPHERS WANTED

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2016 player surveys

Area players weigh in on current events and pop culture. Players were surveyed during the preseason. Not all players answered every question.



JON BEHM — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Kyrie Irving's game-clinching shot, the parade and seeing Cleveland pride were all things that are players loved about the Cavs NBA title victory.

What's your favorite memory of the Cavaliers winning the NBA title?

Kyrie Irving's 3-pointer: 14
Seeing Cleveland pride on full display: 13

LeBron James' block: 8
The parade: 7

LeBron James yelling, "Cleveland! This is for you!": 4

Jamir Malone, North Ridgeville: "Bragging to my boys down South."

Brandon Vincenzo, Elyria Catholic: "My father jumping out of his chair. He's been waiting for this ever since he was a kid."

Bryce Jackson, Bay:

"Standing in line to get my championship gear at 2:30 in the morning."

DeAri Todd, Clearview: "LeBron falling to his knees after the final buzzer. Never going to forget that."

Matt Lee, Amherst: "I was at the Luke Bryan concert and the crowd went crazy when we won."

Dante Catanzarite, Westlake: "Kevin Love wearing a Stone Cold Steve Austin shirt and doing the celebration was awesome."

Kyle Rosenthal, Rocky River: "Going downtown

after and riding a firetruck."

Michael Kovacs, Brookside: "Being at work and my manager not caring about me staring at my phone the whole time."

Jeremy Sanchez, North Ridgeville: "Going crazy with my friends."

Terrence Rose, Westlake: "Sorry, I'm a Hawks fan!"

Tim Ackerman, Brookside: "When Mo Williams got put in."

Zachary Anderson, Vermilion: "A wonderful four hours of sleep before football conditioning the next morning. Worth it."

Kanye West or Taylor Swift?

Kanye West: 55

Taylor Swift: 20

Jamir Malone, North Ridgeville: "KANYE!!!! He made her famous!!!!"

Bryce Jackson, Bay: "Taylor is too soft."

Journey Toole, Oberlin: "Kanye West, even though his ego is crazy."

Chandler Johnson, North Olmsted: "I don't even know what this means."

Josh Hufstetler, North Olmsted: "She's just really pretty."

Have you played Pokémon Go?

Yes: 21

No: 52

Trevor Boyd, Vermilion: "I love it. My family and I went out and played it at 2 a.m."

Caleb Rimstidt, Open Door: "Not really, it seems dangerous."

Trey Psota, Bay: "I've played it a little, but I'm not crazy into it like some people are."

Shawn VanDeMar, Olmsted Falls: "NOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!"

Matt Kelly, Avon: "It's very stupid."

Dustin Crum, Midview: "It's a great game to play instead of just sitting

around at home."

Brandon Vincenzo, Elyria Catholic: "I downloaded the app, but it was a waste of time."

Tim Ackerman, Brookside: "I did, but I deleted it."

Matt Lee, Amherst: "It's corny."

Luke Coyne, Rocky River: "It's the most addicting game ever."

Josh Hufstetler, North Olmsted: "It's a waste of time."

Gabe Hirsch, Elyria Catholic: "It makes walking fun."

RJ Sunahara, Bay: "I did, but then I ran out of data so I can't play anymore."

What NFL player would you like to hang out with?

Cam Newton: 4

Odell Beckham, Jr.: 3

J.J. Watt: 3

Phil Dawson: 2

Adrian Peterson: 2

Ezekiel Elliot: 2

Luke Kuechly: 2

Tom Brady: 2

Others receiving one vote: Marshawn Lynch, LeSean McCoy, Colt McCoy, Scooby Wright, Le'Veon Bell, Danny Shelton, James Harrison, Antonio Brown, Chris Johnson, Joe Haden, Rob Gronkowski, Chad "Ocho Cinco" Johnson, Peyton Manning, Jerry Rice, Deion Sanders, Joey Bosa, AJ McCarron, Devin Hester

Jamir Malone, North Ridgeville: "Marshawn Lynch. We would chill, eat Skittles and play Madden."

Caleb Rimstidt, Open Door: "I'd love to chill with Phil Dawson and find out how he got so good and just see how he works out."

David Payne III, Oberlin: "I'd work out with Cam Newton and then hang out with other celebrities."

Shawn VanDeMar, Olmsted Falls: "I'd hang out

with Deion Sanders and we would do anything that PrimeTime wanted to do."

Jake Bauer, Avon: "I'd have a pool party with Tom Brady."

Zion Cross, Lorain: "I'd make a Hit Em folk video with Odell Beckham, Jr."

Chris Atkinson, Elyria: "I'd go to a college football game with Le'Veon Bell."

Jarod Bradac, Amherst: "Joe Haden and I would look at all of his shoes."

Terrence Rose, Westlake: "I'd like to have a race with Devin Hester."

Dustin Crum, Midview: "It would be great to hang with Colt McCoy and go hunting or fishing."

Chris Jehwan Choi, Westlake: "I'd talk with Joey Bosa about his Ohio State football experiences and any tips he could give me."

Josh Fillkill, Fairview: "Chad Ochocinco. We would play FIFA so I can show him who the real champion is."

Naz Bohannon, Lorain: "I'd talk with James Harrison about people he's given concussions to."

What is your go-to song for working out?

Michael Whitacre, Firelands: "I Am The Greatest" by Logic

Trevor Boyd, Vermilion: "Headstrong" by Trapt

Matt Popovich, Rocky River: "Everything Is Awesome" by Tegan and Sara ft. The Lonely Island

Dante Catanzarite, Westlake: "Lying From You" by Linkin Park

Michael Kovacs, Brookside: "Till I Collapse" by Eminem

Zach Evans, Elyria Catholic: "Trophies" by Drake

Alec Forrer, Midview: "I Will Not Bow" by Breaking Benjamin

Caleb Burr, Avon Lake: "Hype" by Drake

Zion Cross, Lorain: "Do What I Want" by Lil Uzi Vert

Kaleb Caskey, Vermilion: "Monster" by Skillet

Chris Jehwan Choi, Westlake: "Remember The Name" by Fort Minor

Josh Hufstetler, North Olmsted: "Someday" by Flipsyde

Matt Kelly, Avon: "March Madness" by Future

Chris Atkinson, Elyria: "Revenge" by Drake

Matt Lee, Amherst: "Enter Sandman" by Metallica

Bryce Jackson, Bay: "That Part" by Schoolboy Q ft. Kanye West

Larry Verhovec III, Firelands: "No Love" by August Alsina ft. Nicki Minaj

David Payne III, Oberlin: "Money Longer" by Lil Uzi Vert

Keith Johnson, Midview: "Forever" by Drake

Daesean Brooks, Lorain: "Holy Grail" by Jay Z ft. Justin Timberlake

Elijah Balek, Vermilion: "Let The Bodies Hit The Floor" by Drowning Pool

Terrence Rose, Westlake: "Vegeta's SS3 Theme Song"

Bobby Weber, Keystone: "Satellites" by Kevin Gates

RJ Sunahara, Bay: "X" by 21 Savage ft. Future

Logan Denn, Lutheran West: "March Madness" by Future

Zachary Anderson, Vermilion: "Whiskey Lullaby" by Brad Paisley



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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Who are the next players up?

The Morning Journal area lost a talented senior class to graduation. Meet the players who will be filling those gaps.

By Jon Behm

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It's not uncommon for roster turnover to occur in high school football. It's expected.

Coaches have players for four years, then they are gone — whether it be to the next level or into the professional world.

So, it is not unexpected that many teams find themselves in the midst of roster reconfigurations this year.

The talent the teams are trying to replace, though, is what turns some heads.

Perhaps Avon Coach Mike Elder put it best: "The amount of talent being replaced in the conference is incredible. Actually, not just the conference but Lorain and Cuyahoga counties in general. It has to have been one of the most talented classes to graduate in a long time. We're talking multiple Division I talents and first team All-Ohio players. It's really a testament to how great football is in Northeast Ohio."

As a result, there will be a lot of new faces on the field this year, replacing the faces of those that fans have come to know and rely on.

Who are these players?

They are the ones who got to learn from some great players and learn how to improve themselves so that they can be at the peak of their game now that it is their turn.

They are the next players up.

Avon

The Eagles had nine seniors move on to play college ball. While all of them leave gaps behind to be filled, the void will be felt most by the graduation of first team All-Ohio, 2015 SWC Offensive Player of the Year and now Cincinnati freshman quarterback Jake Sopko.

"Jake was a tremendous talent and a tremendous leader," Elder said. "We're going to miss him. But we've got some talented guys in line behind him that have had the benefit of learning from a D-I QB."

The guy at the front of that line? Meet Matt Kelly.

The Avon senior is finally the starter, and he's ready to take the reins.



PAUL LANGER - BAY ROCKETS FOOTBALL

Bay's Trey Psota will be stepping in for the graduated Nick Best at running back. Psota is one of many players who are replacing a talented senior class.

"Jake is one of the top quarterbacks that Avon has ever had," Kelly said. "I'm actually lucky to have sat behind him so long. Some people may think that (stinks). But I took that opportunity to have two years to just learn from him and soak up what made him great."

Kelly said that, while he has his own style for playing quarterback, fans shouldn't be surprised if they see a bit of Sopko in him.

"We're obviously two different guys," the 6-foot, 161-pound QB said. "But I've picked up from Jake a few things, things that I'm hoping will help me find my own success this season. Two of those things have to be how to win and how to play smart. Yes, Jake and I have different throwing mechanics and different ways of running and that kind of stuff. But from a motivation and leadership standpoint, I like to think we're very similar."

Bay

The question that Coach Ron Rutt has to answer constantly is, how do you replace Nick Best?

His answer is simple: "You have a Trey Psota."

That is not Rutt undermining the success that Best had at Bay. The first team All-Ohio and D-III

Northeast Lakes Offensive Player of the Year is arguably the best rusher in Bay history.

Rather, it's more of a statement on how good Psota is.

"He's obviously not the same guy," Rutt said. "He's a different personality — no one has the personality of Nick Best — and different runner, but he's got plenty of varsity experience. And he's explosive, which is a great thing. He's not Nick, and I wouldn't ask him to be, but he's going to do just fine."

And the scary thing for the rest of the Great Lakes Conference is that Psota said he has learned and adjusted his running style over the last season to try to insert some of Best's tricks.

"I got to learn from a great running back," the junior said. "He's taught me how to read the defense and hit holes hard. I definitely think I'm a better player just from learning from him."

"When you think about it, there were times that Nick carried the team on his back last year. You never heard him complain. He did the opposite and asked what else he could do. I really learned from watching him how to hold myself as a player and how to be the best player I can be."

Firelands

Another Northeast Lakes Offensive Player of the Year being replaced is Falcons QB Brad Thrasher.

He was a first team All-Ohio selection who did it all for his team.

A solid dual-threat QB, Thrasher accounted for 2,117 yards of offense and 30 touchdowns last year.

Thrasher is proving to be hard enough to replace that Coach Mike Passarello is debating between two players to start at quarterback: Larry Verhovec and Michael Bansek.

"Neither of us is trying to replace Brad," Verhovec said. "That's not possible. We're both completely different from him. Personally, I'm the kind of quarterback who's going to throw the ball a bit more."

"We both understand that Brad had a dynamic that we're not going to have. But we aren't looking at that as a negative. We're looking at it as an opportunity to reinvent the position and offense in a way that benefits our style."

Bansek agreed.

"We have to put our own spin on the position," Bansek said. "We're not Brad and we're not going to try and be him."

Midview

Another division in the Northeast Lakes District will be searching for a new offensive player of the year as Logan Bolin has moved on to Ashland.

The first team All-Ohioan and D-II Northeast Lakes Offensive Player of the Year was the be-all for the Middies last year.

If Midview needed him to catch a ball he did — and extremely well. If the Middies needed a quarterback, Bolin stepped in. How about someone to run the ball? You guessed it.

So, it should come as no surprise that Coach D.J. Shaw believes it will take two players to fill the gap.

"He did so much for us that one person can't fill that hole," Shaw said. "He was a once-in-a-lifetime player."

Say hello to a familiar face who will step into a featured role as well as a new one who expects big things.

Running back Alec Fopper was the starter for the Middies last year. He had good games, but is ready to take it to the next level.

"I want the pressure on my shoulders," the senior said. "We have a big hole to fill and I want to be that guy who fills it. I want my team to rely on me when the game is on the line."

The new face is wide receiver Keith Johnson.

The senior was five deep on the depth chart last year. He will be one of the top options for Dustin Crum to throw to this year.

Johnson said the biggest lesson he learned from Bolin was how to run his routes.

"Logan was a master at shaking defenders," Johnson said. "He could flip his hip and be gone. He knew how to make cuts at exactly the right time. I'm glad I got to learn from and watch him do that. I know I've learned a ton just from that."

North Ridgeville

Finally, there is the case of replacing Demario McCall.

"Everyone has heard of Demario," Coach Luke Durbin said. "Everyone knows he's at Ohio State. Everyone knows what he did. That's why it's going to take a bit of everyone to replace him."

Still, Durbin believes that he has the players to do just that. But he believes one of the players who stands above the rest when it comes to replacing the leadership of McCall is Jamir Malone.

"Jamir is that guy you love to have on your team, because you'll be feeling it the next day if you're going against him," Durbin said. "He's a leader on and off the field, so I think, even if he's not the guy running the ball every play, he'll be that guy who the team rallies around."

The 6-foot, 195-pound junior said he is ready to step into a bigger role.

Malone said one of the leadership concepts he learned from McCall was to constantly be in communication.

"When Demario was hurt last year, he was still in contact," Malone said. "He still offered advice and still talked to the guys about keeping their heads up and how to get better and stronger. He was a bit of a coach. That's what I want to do. I want to be a bit of a coach this year in how I approach the game. I want to make an impact on the field, but make sure that I'm making an impact off of it with my leadership."

PLAYER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Introducing the Matt Wilhelm Award

The legacy of the Morning Journal football player of the year award runs deep.

Personally, I have traced it back to 1995 — with a few scattered years missing — but from talking with longtime Lorain County sportswriters, the origin of the award can be placed in the 1970s or '80s.

The award, which was created with the intention of honoring the top offensive and defensive players in The Morning Journal's coverage area, has evolved over the years. Whether it was due to change in coverage area, the addition of the first, second and third teams, the ill-fated Erie/Huron and Lorain/Cuyahoga county co-players of the year, or simply changing it so that only one player received the top honor, the award has adjusted to the times and remains one of the top football honors in Northeast Ohio.

It's time for another evolution of the award.

The award has always been an award on paper only. Something players



JON BEHM — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Starting this season, the winner of The Morning Journal's player of the year award will receive the Matt Wilhelm Award.

could revel in, but, unless they framed a copy of the list, they would not have a physical reminder of it.

That will all change this year as a trophy will be presented to the 2016 Morning Journal Player of the Year and one will continue to be presented to future recipients of the honor.

The trophy will be presented to this year's winner during the final episode

of Varsity Chalk Talk at the Hooley House in Westlake on Nov. 22.

But one more change needed to be made to the award.

Think about all of the famous trophies in the sports world: the Lombardi Trophy, Heisman Award, Lord Stanley's Cup, Larry O'Brien Trophy, etc.

What do all of those have in common?

A name that represents excellence in the sport attached to it.

So, with that idea in mind, I asked a group of about 10 people — which included longtime Lorain County sportswriters, previous Morning Journal sports editors and even some sports editors from other papers who knew the Morning Journal's football scene — who's name was fitting for the trophy?

The first name out of everyone's mouth? Matt Wilhelm.

And, with extreme happiness, I am proud to announce that Matt Wilhelm has agreed to have the trophy named after him and the 2016 Morning Journal player of the year will be the first recipient of the Matt Wilhelm Award.

Now, for those of you who are not knowledgeable of who Wilhelm is, shame on you. But, here is a quick refresher on what Wilhelm has accomplished in his outstanding football career:

- Played for Elyria Catholic from 1994 to 1998, where his No. 34 jersey is retired.
- Winner of the 1998 Golden Helmet award, given annually to Lorain County's top player.

- Named the 1998 Morning Journal defensive player of the year.
- Named first team All-Ohio in his senior year at Elyria Catholic.

- A 2002 first team All-American in his senior year.
- Led the Buckeyes in tackles (11) in a 31-24 win at the Fiesta Bowl over Miami for the BCS National Championship.

- Drafted in the fourth round of the 2003 draft by San Diego, where he played until 2009.
- Was a member of the Super Bowl XLV champion Green Bay Packers.

We are happy that Wilhelm has lent his name to this award, and look forward to seeing who the first recipient of the Matt Wilhelm Award will be.

Matt Wilhelm watch list

Here is the preseason watch list for the Matt Wilhelm Award. Keep in mind, just because someone's name does not appear on the preseason watch list doesn't mean the winner can't emerge throughout the season. This is just a starting benchmark to the season. In alphabetical order:

- Chris Atkinson, Elyria, Sr.:** Rushed for 1,228 yards and 17 touchdowns on 202 carries.

- Naz Bohannon, Lorain, Sr.:** Strong player who may actually see lower numbers as opposing offenses avoid him.

- Carlos Chavis, Lorain, Sr.:** Strong junior season (1,040 yards, 14 TDs) should translate into big senior numbers.

- Dameon Crawford, Rocky River, Jr.:** Crawford's elusiveness will be something that causes headaches for opposing defenses all season.

- Dustin Crum, Midview, Sr.:** Threw for 2,296 yards and 29 touchdowns in an injury-plagued junior year.

- Nick Denney, Firelands, Jr.:** His 642 yards and seven touchdowns weren't overwhelming last year, but his 14.5 yards-per-carry were.

- Josh Fillkill, Fairview, Sr.:** The Warriors jack-of-all-trades found the end

zone 19 times last year while recording 114 tackles.

- Josh Klingshirm, Elyria Catholic, Sr.:** Led the area with five interceptions as a junior.

- Spencer Linville, Olmsted Falls, Sr.:** At 5-foot-8, 244 pounds, good luck stopping this guy. Teams tried unsuccessfully for 1,308 yards last year.

- David Payne III, Oberlin, Sr.:** Outside of Crum, Payne is the returning QB with the most passing yards from last year (1,306).

- Collin Sullinger, North Ridgeville, Sr.:** His 1,196 yards and 10 touchdowns should expend as more emphasis is on the passing game this year.

- Tyler Sycz, North Ridgeville, Jr.:** All-Ohio selection as a sophomore. Sycz had 10 sacks and 75 tackles (8.5 for a loss).

- DeAri Todd, Clearview, Sr.:** A motivated defensive lineman who simply wants to get to the guy with the ball and hit him hard.

- Carson Toy, Avon Lake, Sr.:** Toy has developed into one of the premier deep threats in the area.

- Caine Zannoni, Vermilion, Jr.:** A strong runner who will need to step up for the Sailors in the SBC.

— Jon Behm

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Lorain » Titans

Online: Coach Dave McFarland, Naz Bohannon, Aaron Huff, Zion Cross and Daesean Brooks discuss the season in an interview at MorningJournal.com.

Conference: Lake Erie League; **OHSAA:** Division I, Region 2
Head coach: Dave McFarland, 2nd year (12-9)
2015: 5-5; **Twitter:** @bkoury23
Home field: George Daniel Field

2016 schedule

| Opponent | 2015 result |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Aug. 26: at Midview, 7 | L, 28-0 |
| Sept. 3: at Elyria, 2 | L, 20-18 |
| Sept. 9: Toledo Scott, 7 | W, 31-0 |
| Sept. 16: Garfield Heights, 7 | W, 38-7 |
| Sept. 23: at Warrensville Heights, 7 | DNP |
| Sept. 30: Shaw, 7 | W, 40-12 |
| Oct. 7: at Sandusky, 7 | W, 22-7 |
| Oct. 14: at Maple Heights, 7 | W, 28-0 |
| Oct. 21: Bedford, 7 | L, 19-14 |
| Oct. 28: at Cleveland Heights, 7 | L, 22-16 |

Opponents' 2015 winning percentage: .466
Games against 2015 playoff qualifiers: 3
Game to watch: The Titans want both a playoff berth and a Lake Erie League title. A win in Week 9 against Bedford should go a long way to getting Lorain both.

Outlook: offense

Junior quarterback Davion Dower comes back for his second season as a starter. There's an insane amount of talent offensively for the Titans this year to go along with him, as junior Zion Cross is expected to line up in the slot and take the next step as a wide receiver, Carlos Chavis starting at running back and Daesean Brooks at wide receiver along with senior captain Naz Bohannon. Another strong suit offensively for the Titans could be their offensive line as two seniors will anchor the group in Solomon Villarreal and Sly Worthy.

Outlook: defense

The strength of the Titans defensively will be the line-backer corps of seniors Aaron Huff, Naz Bohannon and Brandon Sturgil that should help shut down the run game and create havoc to opposing quarterbacks. Dave McFarland said there's a team slogan that they go by and it's "Players make plays," and pointed out he needs to find guys who will make those plays. It's a safe bet these three guys will, but can they bring along the rest of the guys with them? McFarland and Co. are eager to find out.



Bohannon

Player to watch

Bohannon is Mr. Do-It-All for the Titans, posting 37 tackles with four going for a loss and six sacks last year. He also caused three fumbles and recovered two. Coach Dave McFarland said the Titans will be as good as Bohannon leads, and above the outstanding numbers, probably Bohannon's greatest strength is his non-stop motor, something that will rub off on his teammates.



Cross

Underclassman to watch

Everyone knows what Zion Cross did in track and field, winning a state title in the 100-meter dash last June. But the junior now hopes that state title can breed confidence on the gridiron. He plays about four different positions offensively, and said he's comfortable in all of them. Cross is also expected roam on defense as a safety and make plays.

— Fuad Shalhout

Projected lineup

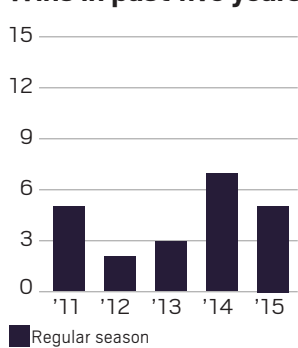
| OFFENSE | | | | DEFENSE | | | |
|---------|--------------------|-----|-----|------------------|------|-----|-----|
| Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. | Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. |
| QB | Davion Dower | Jr. | DE | Quentin Pardon | Jr. | | |
| RB | Carlos Chavis | Sr. | DE | Antonio Wyatt | Jr. | | |
| RB | Dakota Mincy | Jr. | DT | James Corbin | Sr. | | |
| WR | Daesean Brooks | Sr. | DT | Kelvin Torres | So. | | |
| WR | Naz Bohannon | Sr. | LB | Aaron Huff | Sr. | | |
| Slot | Zion Cross | Jr. | LB | Brandin Sturgill | Sr. | | |
| LT | David Larson | Jr. | LB | Naz Bohannon | Sr. | | |
| LG | Arron Myron | Jr. | CB | Zion Cross | Jr. | | |
| C | Rashaun Rogers | Jr. | CB | Carlos Chavis | Jr. | | |
| RG | Solomon Villarreal | Sr. | CB | Daesean Brooks | Jr. | | |
| RT | Sly Worthy | Sr. | S | Robert Mahaffey | Jr. | | |
| K | Justin Sturgill | Jr. | P | Aaron Huff | Sr. | | |

Returning letterwinners: 12
Key reserves: Manny Brown, Jr., WR; Cameron Nelson, Sr., TE; Daylin Dower, Fr., DB; Savon Chavis, Fr., LB; Gabe Larsosa, Jr., DE
Best in the classroom: Naz Bohannon
Man of the year: Sly Worthy
Best 100-yard dash time: Zion Cross, 10.5 seconds

Team history

Playoff record: 0-1 in one appearance
Best playoff finish: 2014, Regional 1st round
Most recent playoff appearance: 2014
School record for most wins in a season: 7 in 2014
Conference championships (including co- and tri-titles): none
Coach with most victories: Dave McFarland, 12 (ongoing)

Wins in past five years



Bottom line

IF: The defense feeds off the linebacker corps, and the offense utilizes its big weapons, **THEN:** the Titans will make a playoff push.

Elyria » Pioneers

Online: Coach Kevin Fell, Jaleen Glover, Chris Atkinson and Brendon Fenton discuss the season in an interview at MorningJournal.com.

Conference: Greater Cleveland; **OHSAA:** Division I, Region 2
Head coach: Kevin Fell, 6th year (34-19)
2015: 6-5; **Twitter:** @ElyriaAthletics
Home field: Ely Stadium

2016 schedule

| Opponent | 2015 result |
|---------------------------|---------------|
| Aug. 26: Avon Lake, 7 | W, 31-7 |
| Sept. 3: Lorain, 2 | W, 20-18 |
| Sept. 9: at Shaw, 7 | W, 33-0 |
| Sept. 16: at Medina, 7 | L, 31-14 |
| Sept. 23: Brunswick, 7 | L, 26-14 |
| Oct. 1: Shaker Heights, 1 | W, 30-0 |
| Oct. 7: Euclid, 7 (HC) | L, 21-10 |
| Oct. 14: at Solon, 7 | L, 28-20 |
| Oct. 21: Strongsville, 7 | W, 24-21 (OT) |
| Oct. 28: at Mentor, 7 | W, 27-24 |

Opponents' 2015 winning percentage: .505
Games against 2015 playoff qualifiers: 3
Game to watch: The battle for Division I supremacy in Lorain County is knotted at 1-1. Elyria would like to take the lead in Week 2 against Lorain.

Outlook: offense

Last year, an Achilles' heel of Elyria's offense was simply their youth. This year, the offensive line all will be seniors and are expected to open up holes for star running back Chris Atkinson. Elyria's offense started off slow last year and picked it up later, but Coach Kevin Fell wants to see a quick start this time around. Quarterback Dontae Beckett is expected to make a leap from a solid quarterback to exceptional in his junior season. Elyria lost a few receivers but Fell believes players like junior Brendon Fenton can take on a larger role and help fill the void. The strength of this football team will undoubtedly be on the offensive side.

Outlook: defense

Elyria will field a young group in 2016. It'll be an adjustment, particularly early on, but they do have two outstanding cornerbacks in junior Jordan Lucky-Baker and senior Jaiquan Turner. Along with them, returning starting safety Brendan Price provides stability in the secondary and Fell noted that having an experienced core in the secondary is key, and should help ease some of the growing pains. On the defensive line, senior defensive ends Cam King and Jaleen Glover excel.



Atkinson

Player to watch

Running back Chris Atkinson can potentially set the school record for career yards this season. Last year, Atkinson rushed for 1,228 yards and 17 touchdowns on 202 carries. He also added 10 receptions for 101 yards. Atkinson doesn't have any specific individual goals on his mind, except for being "the best he can."



Fenton

Underclassman to watch

Junior Brendon Fenton, coming off a state wrestling title, hopes to carry that confidence over into a strong year playing wide receiver. Fenton doesn't have outstanding size at 5-foot-7, but he does have the skill, and that can take him a long way.

— Fuad Shalhout

Projected lineup

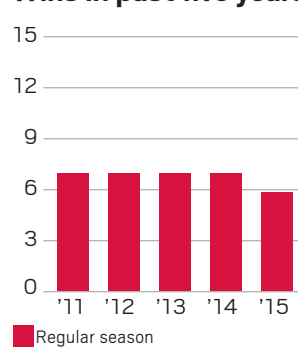
| OFFENSE | | | | DEFENSE | | | |
|---------|-----------------|-----|-----|---------|----------------------|-----|------|
| Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. | Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. |
| QB | Dontae Beckett | Jr. | 6-1 | DE | Jaleen Glover | Sr. | 5-11 |
| RB | Chris Atkinson | Sr. | 6-2 | DE | Johanthony Lowery | Jr. | 6-3 |
| RB | Marco Gonzalez | Jr. | 5-8 | DT | D'Aundre Roseboro | Jr. | 6-0 |
| WR | Brendon Fenton | Jr. | 5-7 | NT | Cam King | Sr. | 6-3 |
| WR | Jon Mack | Sr. | 5-8 | LB | Vaughan Sayers-McCoy | Sr. | 6-1 |
| TE | Unspecified | | | LB | Qwanda Woodson | So. | 6-0 |
| LT | Dylan Woodings | Sr. | 6-3 | LB | Unspecified | | |
| LG | Zach Opperman | Sr. | 6-0 | CB | Jordan Lucky-Baker | Jr. | 5-11 |
| C | Tyler Schneider | Jr. | 6-2 | CB | Jaiquan Turner | Sr. | 6-0 |
| RG | Luke Palos | Sr. | 6-0 | SS | Brendan Price | Sr. | 6-0 |
| RT | Jaydin White | Sr. | 6-1 | FS | Unspecified | | |
| K | Caleb Lewis | Jr. | 6-2 | P | Griffin Schmidt | Jr. | 5-11 |

Bold: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 24
Best in the classroom: Zach Opperman, 4.6 GPA

Team history

Playoff record: 1-4 in four appearances
Best playoff finish: 2005, Regional semifinals
Most recent playoff appearance: 2015

Wins in past five years



Bottom line

IF: Junior quarterback Dontae Beckett can take the next step and hone his talent **THEN:** Elyria will be back in the postseason.

Amherst » Comets

Online: Coach Bill Fishleigh, Johnny Matakovich, Jarod Bradac and Matt Lee discuss the season in an interview at MorningJournal.com.

Conference: Southwestern; **OHSAA:** Division II, Region 6
Head coach: Bill Fishleigh, 3rd year (2-18)
2015: 0-10; **Twitter:** @AmherstFootball
Home field: Amherst Steele Stadium

2016 schedule

| Opponent | 2015 result |
|---|-------------|
| Aug. 26: at Kenston (at Solon), 7 | L, 6-3 |
| Sept. 2: at North Ridgeville, 7 | L, 18-14 |
| Sept. 9: Midview, 7 | L, 49-10 |
| Sept. 16: Berea-Midpark, 7 | L, 34-12 |
| Sept. 23: at Olmsted Falls, 7 | L, 19-14 |
| Sept. 30: Avon Lake, 7 | L, 26-9 |
| Oct. 6: at North Olmsted (at North Ridgeville), 7 | L, 27-16 |
| Oct. 14: Avon, 7 | L, 45-3 |
| Oct. 21: at Westlake, 7 | L, 37-0 |
| Oct. 28: Lakewood, 7 | L, 13-10 |

Opponents' 2015 winning percentage: .523
Games against 2015 playoff qualifiers: 5
Game to watch: The Comets were on the wrong end of a lot of tight games last year, but none were as much of a heartbreak as the season finale against Lakewood. Amherst hasn't forgotten and will be ready to get some revenge.

Outlook: offense

Amherst will field a group of seven seniors in the offense — a major plus. Coach Bill Fishleigh and senior quarterback Johnny Matakovich talked about last season's 0-10 year as a humbling experience, and that prompted them to change some things. Junior center Matt Lee is expected to provide stability, protecting Matakovich while opening holes in the run game, and Matakovich hopes to utilize players like senior Jarod Bradac, Eric Platz and Mark Harris to keep defenses honest.

Outlook: defense

Fishleigh said there's a motto his team is going by, "Restore the Pride," after a rough 2015. Fishleigh wants to see his group's toughness on display and believes it can be a strength. Senior linebacker Jarod Bradac highlights a tough group of linebackers and said they are going to "hit hard" and never give up in 2016 as he looks to fill the void left by Todd Hastings and Cooper Cotterill.



Matakovich

Player to watch

Johnny Matakovich isn't the tallest, biggest, or most talented quarterback in the SWC. But speak to any of his teammates and they like his leadership and attitude. That alone can go a long way in steering a football team. Heading into his senior year, Matakovich is going to take full command of the offense. He said stats or personal goals won't be on the agenda, and just wants to focus on getting wins, something Amherst didn't do last year.



Lee

Underclassman to watch

Junior center Matt Lee was pretty blunt with his assessment of 2015: "Last season stunk" Lee said he is going to be a key cog for the Comets on both sides of the ball at center and nose tackle. Bill Fishleigh had high praise for his junior.

— Fuad Shalhout

Projected lineup

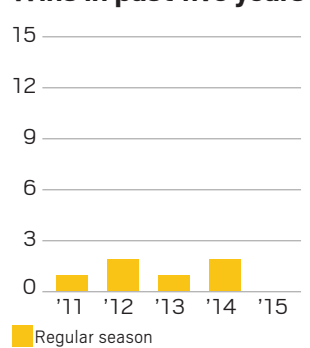
| OFFENSE | | | | DEFENSE | | | |
|---------|-------------------|-----|------|---------|------------------|-----|------|
| Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. | Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. |
| QB | Johnny Matakovich | Sr. | 5-10 | DE | Camden Haslage | Sr. | 5-9 |
| RB | Adam Haas | Sr. | 5-10 | NT | Matt Lee | Jr. | 6-1 |
| FB | Jarod Bradac | Sr. | 5-10 | DE | Cairo Smith | So. | 5-9 |
| WR | Alec Platz | Sr. | 5-10 | LB | Austin Stierhoff | Sr. | 5-9 |
| WR | Mark Harris | Sr. | 5-10 | LB | Jeremy Smith | Sr. | 5-11 |
| TE | Nathan Soto | So. | 5-11 | LB | Jarod Bradac | Sr. | 5-10 |
| LT | Jacob Brown | Sr. | 5-9 | LB | Jaret Mead | Sr. | 5-10 |
| LG | Dylan Timple | Sr. | 5-8 | CB | Nick Keron | Jr. | 6-0 |
| C | Matt Lee | Jr. | 6-1 | CB | Evan Shawver | Jr. | 5-11 |
| RG | Camden Haslage | Sr. | 5-9 | S | Mark Harris | Sr. | 5-10 |
| RT | Nick Malloy | Sr. | 6-2 | S | Alec Platz | Sr. | 5-10 |
| K | Ryan Sturgeon | Sr. | 6-1 | P | Mark Harris | Sr. | 5-10 |

Bold: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 13
Key reserves: Jeremy Smith, Sr., 5-11, 185; Khenedy Scagliozzo, So., 5-8, 160; Aaron Gonzalez, Jr., 5-7, 205; Hunter Parker, Jr., 5-8, 135
Best in the classroom: Dylan Timple, 4.14 GPA
Best bench press: Matt Lee, 335 pounds
Best squat: Matt Lee, 500 pounds
Best 40-yard dash time: Adam Haas, 4.69 seconds

Team history

Playoff record: 2-7 in seven appearances
Best playoff finish: 1995, Regional finals
Most recent playoff appearance: 2008
School record for most wins in a season: 11 in 1995
Conference championships (including co- and tri-titles): 1922, '36, '39, '60, '69, '73, '92, '99, 2000
Head coach with most victories: Jeff Riesen, 72 (1993-2003)

Wins in past five years



Bottom line

IF: The defense can get stops and create plays, **THEN:** the Comets will win some close games they lost last year.



Avon » Eagles

Online: Coach Mike Elder and players Matt Kelly, Kyle Kudla and Jake Bauer discuss the season in an interview at MorningJournal.com.

Conference: Southwestern; **OHSAA:** Division II, Region 6
Head coach: Mike Elder, 10th year (90-19)
2015: 10-2; **Twitter:** @avoneagles
Home field: Joe Firment Chevrolet Stadium

2016 schedule

| Opponent | 2015 result |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| Aug. 26: Strongsville, 7 | W, 41-24 |
| Sept. 2: at Avon Lake, 7 | W, 31-7 |
| Sept. 9: North Olmsted, 7 | W, 41-40 (30T) |
| Sept. 16: at Midview, 7 | L, 55-35 |
| Sept. 23: Westlake, 7 (HC) | W, 56-13 |
| Sept. 30: at Lakewood, 7 | W, 42-7 |
| Oct. 7: at North Ridgeville, 7 | W, 48-14 |
| Oct. 14: at Amherst, 7 | W, 45-3 |
| Oct. 21: Berea-Midpark, 7 | W, 63-15 |
| Oct. 28: Olmsted Falls, 7 | W, 49-28 |

HC: Homecoming
Opponents' 2015 winning percentage: .457
Games against 2015 playoff qualifiers: 4

Game to watch: After two years without it, the Eagles will want the conference title back. A Week 4 showdown with Midview will determine which one stays in the running.

Outlook: offense

It's not often that the Eagles have had to replace a quarterback, running back, and slew of wide receivers in one season. Still, that is exactly what Avon is doing this year, and Coach Mike Elder said it has been an adventure. However, he was quick to point out that with four offensive linemen returning, as well as a tight end, there is plenty of strength in the Avon line that will allow the other skill players to develop and hone into the varsity style and speed.

Outlook: defense

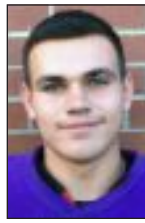
Elder said that he believes the Eagles are a much-improved defense entering 2016. While the Eagles were a top-notch run defense last year, at times teams would air it out and the Eagles suffered. Eliminating that was a focus for Elder and Co. during the offseason, and the fact that the Eagles have two returning safeties and a returning cornerback can only help. Regardless, expect the Eagles to once again be one of the most physical teams in the area.



Bauer

Player to watch

Jake Bauer is a player that Elder is extremely high on, and with good reason. His numbers from last year are not overwhelming: 14 rushes for 79 yards and two touchdowns. However, if you were one of the people lucky enough to see those carries, Bauer is the real deal. He's tough to bring down and excellent at wearing down an opponent.



Kudla

Underclassman to watch

Junior Kyle Kudla is excited for the season to get started, and has big plans to make it the most successful season of his three years at Avon. The 5-foot-11, 205-pound linebacker said that he has spent the offseason working on getting stronger and faster, something he hopes will translate to conference, county and district honors at the end of the year.

— Jon Behm

Projected lineup

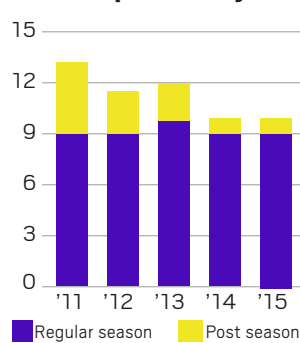
| OFFENSE | | | | DEFENSE | | | |
|---------|-----------------|-----|----------|---------|------------------|-----|----------|
| Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. | Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. |
| QB | Matt Kelly | Sr. | 6-0 161 | DE | Sam Gerak | Sr. | 6-3 291 |
| RB | Mason McLemore | Sr. | 5-9 162 | DE | Max Torbert | Jr. | 6-1 217 |
| WR | Mitch Cooper | Sr. | 5-11 152 | NT | Cameron Judge | Sr. | 6-0 271 |
| WR | Cole Morris | Sr. | 6-1 158 | OLB | Xavier Holmes | Sr. | 6-2 221 |
| TE | Vlasi Pappas | Jr. | 6-2 210 | OLB | Tony Eberhardt | Jr. | 5-10 195 |
| TE | Will Kocar | Sr. | 6-0 168 | ILB | Eric Steinmetz | Sr. | 5-11 204 |
| LT | Taylor Reynolds | Sr. | 5-11 220 | ILB | Kyle Kudla | Jr. | 5-10 201 |
| LG | Max Torbert | Jr. | 6-1 217 | CB | Alec Damasiewicz | Sr. | 5-7 158 |
| C | Sam Gerak | Sr. | 6-3 291 | CB | Cole Lindsay | Sr. | 5-9 140 |
| RG | Vito Sikora | Sr. | 5-11 248 | S | Tommy Kocar | Sr. | 6-0 175 |
| RT | Jimmy McKenna | Jr. | 6-4 239 | S | Adam Poling | Sr. | 5-11 164 |
| K | Mitch Cooper | Sr. | 5-11 152 | P | David Orlando | Jr. | 5-9 173 |

Key reserves: Ryan Maloy, So., QB, 5-11, 160; Jake Bauer, Sr., RB, 5-8, 174
Best in the classroom: Sam Gerak and Xavier Holmes
Best bench press: Sam Gerak
Best squat: Cameron Judge
Best 40-yard dash time: Alec Damasiewicz

Team history

Playoff record: 14-9 in nine appearances
Best playoff finish: 2011, State runner-up
Most recent playoff appearance: 2015
School record for most wins in a season: 13 in 2011
Conference championships (including co- and tri-titles): 1959, '77, '78, '80, '96, 2004, '08, '10, '11, '12, '13
Coach with most victories: Mike Elder, 90 (ongoing)

Wins in past five years



Bottom line

IF: The new additions to Avon's starting lineup quickly develop, **THEN:** The Eagles will be in the thick of the SWC and playoff races.



Avon Lake » Shoremen

Online: Coach Dave Dlugosz, Carson Toy and John Skaggs discuss the season in a video interview at MorningJournal.com.

Conference: Southwestern; **OHSAA:** Division II, Region 6
Head coach: Dave Dlugosz, 25th year (206-58)
2015: 4-6; **Twitter:** @AvonLakeSports
Home field: Avon Lake Memorial Stadium

2016 schedule

| Opponent | 2015 result |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| Aug. 26: at Elyria, 7 | L, 31-7 |
| Sept. 2: Avon, 7 | L, 31-7 |
| Sept. 9: at Westlake, 7 | W, 35-14 |
| Sept. 16: Lakewood, 7 | W, 34-23 |
| Sept. 23: North Ridgeville, 7 | L, 42-14 |
| Sept. 30: at Amherst, 7 | W, 26-9 |
| Oct. 7: Berea-Midpark, 7 (HC) | L, 49-0 |
| Oct. 14: at Olmsted Falls, 7 | L, 22-14 |
| Oct. 21: at Midview, 7 | L, 35-14 |
| Oct. 28: North Olmsted, 7 | W, 42-27 |

HC: Homecoming
Opponents' 2015 winning percentage: .509
Games against 2015 playoff qualifiers: 6

Game to watch: The Shoremen will want to impress straight out of the gate against Elyria, a playoff qualifier from 2015.

Outlook: offense

The good news for the Shoremen? They'll have tremendous motivation on their side after a rough couple of years, and should see plenty of production from senior standouts like wide receivers Carson Toy and Hunter Bateman. The not so good news? Quarterback Mark Pappas is a first-year starter. But Pappas is extremely talented, and being surrounded by players like senior offensive lineman John Skaggs should provide him some good protection. Coach Dave Dlugosz said he's a very demanding coach, but in a positive way, and it'll be interesting to see how he brings along Pappas.

Outlook: defense

The last two years, Avon Lake went 2-8 and 4-6, respectively. Dlugosz said he's looking for a bounce-back year, and that won't be possible without a strong showing from their defense. They've lost key players in Sam Klimkowski and Holden Ohm, and Dlugosz noted that the line might be a weakness. But if starters like Hunter Bateman, Cutter Briggs and Carson Toy step up, good things can be on the horizon.



Toy

Player to watch

Senior wideout Carson Toy presents a matchup problem with his size at 6-foot-1 and 185 pounds. And Toy made it pretty clear: he doesn't care about his personal stats for the 2016 season. After a 4-6 season last year, he wants to lead the Shoremen back into the playoffs before he graduates. A big emphasis he stressed is his leadership and wants to put that on display.



Burr

Underclassman to watch

Junior Caleb Burr said he's learned from Dlugosz the correct way to play football and the toughness it takes to do so. He said a goal of his to play on varsity and become a play maker, and he'll have opportunities to do so this year.

— Fuad Shalhout

Projected lineup

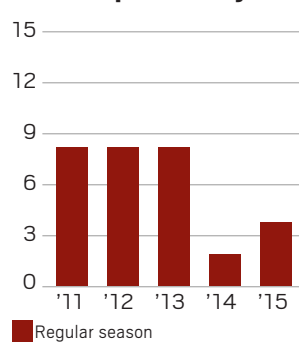
| OFFENSE | | | | DEFENSE | | | |
|---------|-----------------|-----|----------|---------|-----------------|-----|----------|
| Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. | Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. |
| QB | Mark Pappas | Sr. | 6-2 185 | NT | Cutter Briggs | Jr. | 6-2 220 |
| RB | Matt Stanfield | Sr. | 5-9 180 | DT | Ryan Sidloski | Sr. | 6-3 235 |
| WR | Hunter Bateman | Sr. | 6-3 180 | DE | David Marsh | Sr. | 6-2 200 |
| WR | Jason Sullivan | Sr. | 5-10 155 | LE | John Skaggs | Sr. | 6-2 230 |
| WR | Zach Sabol | Sr. | 5-10 170 | LB | Connor Buchanan | Sr. | 6-0 215 |
| WR | Carson Toy | Sr. | 6-1 185 | LB | Sandy Bishop | Sr. | 5-10 205 |
| LT | Tom Pierce | Sr. | 6-2 235 | LB | Matt Stanfield | Sr. | 5-9 180 |
| LG | John Skaggs | Sr. | 6-2 230 | CB | Hunter Bateman | Sr. | 6-3 180 |
| C | Connor Buchanan | Sr. | 6-0 215 | CB | Caleb Burr | Jr. | 6-2 185 |
| RG | Mason Gorman | Sr. | 5-11 250 | S | Carson Toy | Sr. | 6-1 185 |
| RT | Ryan Sidloski | Sr. | 6-3 235 | S | Andrew Butrey | Jr. | 6-0 170 |
| K | Noah Fowkes | Jr. | 5-7 160 | P | Jake Krukowski | Jr. | 5-10 180 |

Bold: returning starter
Key reserves: Max Wittman, Jr., 6-3, 295; Kyle Leitch, Jr. 6-0, 220; Jake Sommers, Jr., 5-10, 180; Jon Fitz, Sr., 6-1, 210
Best in the classroom: John Skaggs, 4.77
Best bench press: Sandy Bishop, 330 pounds
Best squat: Tyler Nelson, 520 pounds
Best 40-yard dash time: Caleb Burr and Hunter Bateman, 4.59 seconds

Team history

Playoff record: 21-17 in 18 appearances
Best playoff finish: 2003, State champion
Most recent playoff appearance: 2013
School record for most wins in a season: 15 in 2003
Conference championships (including co- and tri-titles): 1941, '48, '49, '50, '51, '54, '58, '59, '60, '61, '66, '67, '71, '74, '75, '76, '81, '82, '85, '90, '92, '93, '94, '97, '98, '99, 2000, '01, '02, '03, '04, '05, '07, '08, '09, '10, '11, '12
Coach with most victories: Dave Dlugosz, 206 (ongoing)

Wins in past five years



Bottom line

IF: Quarterback Mark Pappas can transition smoothly in his first year starting, **THEN:** Avon Lake can redeem itself after a rough couple of years.



Midview » Middies

Online: Coach DJ Shaw and players Dustin Crum, Jake Snider and Alec Forrer discuss the season in an interview at MorningJournal.com.

Conference: Southwestern; **OHSAA:** Division II, Region 6
Head coach: DJ Shaw, 3rd year (23-2)
2015: 11-1; **Twitter:** @midviewcoach
Home field: Ross Field at Ed Adelsburg Stadium

2016 schedule

| Opponent | 2015 result |
|---|--------------------|
| Aug. 26: Lorain, 7 | W, 28-0 |
| Sept. 2: at North Olmsted (at Avon), 7 | W, 43-12 |
| Sept. 9: at Amherst, 7 | W, 49-10 |
| Sept. 16: Avon, 7 | W, 55-35 |
| Sept. 23: Berea-Midpark, 7 (HC) | W, 24-14 |
| Sept. 30: at Westlake, 7 | W, 61-20 |
| Oct. 7: at Olmsted Falls, 7 | W, 35-10; W, 56-35 |
| Oct. 14: Lakewood, 7 | W, 41-14 |
| Oct. 21: Avon Lake, 7 | W, 35-14 |
| Oct. 28: at North Ridgeville, 7 | W, 35-28 |

HC: Homecoming
Opponents' 2015 winning percentage: .448
Games against 2015 playoff qualifiers: 4

Game to watch: Last year's game against Berea-Midpark was uncomfortably close for Midview. The Middies will look to make a statement when the Titans roll to Grafton in Week 5.

Outlook: offense

The Middies needed to do some retooling this offseason, with only two members of the line returning and all but one starter at wide receiver gone. Coach DJ Shaw is not worried, though, and believes he has plenty of players who are a bit unknown who will step up and impress this year. With that being said, one player who is the furthest thing from unknown on this offense is Dustin Crum, Lorain County's newest D-I quarterback after committing to Kent State during the summer. With Crum, expect the ball to fly, but also be aware of his legs.

Outlook: defense

Midview has only three returning starters on defense this year: seniors Ross Manning and Alec Forrer, along with junior Jake Snider. Shaw believes that a strength will be in the linebacking corps, where Snider and Forrer will hold down the fort. Plus, most of the non-starters in 2015 still logged plenty of varsity minutes last year, essentially making it so that on paper, the Middies' defense looks young and inexperienced when, in reality, they all have logged plenty of time.



Crum

Player to watch

If you have not seen Dustin Crum yet, you have one more year to see his magic. The senior quarterback was 184-241 for 2,642 yards and 32 touchdowns last year, adding 697 yards and six scores on the ground. Oh, and he was hurt. A healed Crum is an even more dangerous one. Expect a fun ride.



Snider

Underclassman to watch

Jacob Snider is anything but your typical junior. He is a second-year starter at linebacker for the Middies, and led the team in tackles last year with 143 (31 solo, 112 assist). This helped garner him first team All-SWC honors.

— Jon Behm

Projected lineup

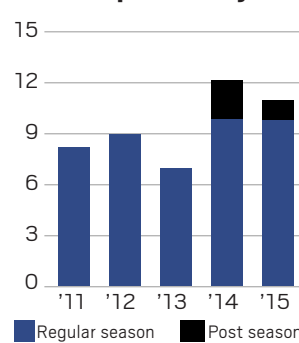
| OFFENSE | | | | DEFENSE | | | |
|---------|----------------|-----|----------|---------|-------------------|-----|----------|
| Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. | Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. |
| QB | Dustin Crum | Sr. | 6-3 205 | DL | Brandon Gilchrist | Jr. | 6-2 225 |
| RB | Alec Forrer | Sr. | 5-8 180 | DL | Seth Frambach | Jr. | 6-2 190 |
| RB | Conner Wolf | Jr. | 6-9 195 | DL | Ross Manning | Sr. | 6-0 230 |
| WR | Keith Johnson | Sr. | 6-1 180 | DL | Spencer Berthold | Sr. | 6-4 235 |
| WR | Dave Amsden | Sr. | 5-9 165 | LB | Jake Snider | Jr. | 6-2 215 |
| WR | Luke Hunt | Sr. | 6-2 195 | LB | Alec Forrer | Sr. | 5-8 180 |
| LT | Chase Johnson | Sr. | 5-10 200 | LB | Trevor Begin | Jr. | 5-10 185 |
| LG | Nathan Fanta | Jr. | 6-0 225 | DB | Keith Johnson | Sr. | 6-1 180 |
| C | Jake Snider | Jr. | 6-2 215 | DB | Ben Gendics | Jr. | 5-9 160 |
| RG | Aaron Botos | Sr. | 6-2 260 | DB | Nick Crum | Jr. | 6-1 170 |
| RT | Tom McDonald | Sr. | 6-3 310 | DB | Noah Markus | Jr. | 5-9 170 |
| K | Kellen McGuire | Sr. | 5-6 190 | P | Dustin Crum | Sr. | 6-3 205 |

Bold: returning starter
Key reserves: Sam Butler, Sr., WR, 5-8, 160; Danny Haight, Sr., OG, 6-0, 230; Jacob Reisuka, OT, 6-1, 250; Charles Grasse, Jr., 6-1, 230
Best in the classroom: Chase Johnson, 3.9; Dustin Crum, 3.8
Best 40-yard dash time: Dave Amsden, 4.42 seconds

Team history

Playoff record: 4-8 in eight appearances
Best playoff finish: 2014, Regional final
Most recent playoff appearance: 2015
School record for most wins in a season: 12 in 2014
Conference championships (including co- and tri-titles): 1976, '83, '98, '99, 2002, '14, '15
Coach with most victories: Bill Albright, 170 (1986-2013)

Wins in past five years



Bottom line

IF: New starters quickly get up to speed, **THEN:** Midview will be in the running for a third straight conference title and another playoff berth.

Break Through

"I think, 'I can't deal with my problems, that makes me a weak man.' But I stepped outside of myself to look at my problems, and got help. Now, I'm fine. I love my life. It can make you stronger by getting help."

— Salvador, a Lorain County resident

Break through any blocks that keep you from reaching your peak performance. Stay strong and mentally well by learning about men and depression. lcbmh.org

24/7 Crisis: 800.888.6161
 Non-emergency: 440.240.7025
lcbmh.org

North Olmsted » Eagles

Online: Coach Tim Brediger and Josh Hufstetler discuss the season in an interview at MorningJournal.com.

Conference: Southwestern; **OHSAA:** Division II, Region 6
Head coach: Tim Brediger, 4th year (19-11)
2015: 5-5; **Twitter:** @NOEaglesFB
Home field: Drive Morris Stadium (undergoing renovations)

2016 schedule

| Opponent | 2015 result |
|---|----------------|
| Aug. 25: Valley Forge (at Avon), 7:30 | W, 34-18 |
| Sept. 2: Midview (at Avon), 7 | L, 43-12 |
| Sept. 9: at Avon, 7 | L, 41-40 (30T) |
| Sept. 16: at Westlake | W, 32-29 |
| Sept. 23: Lakewood (at North Ridgeville), 7 | W, 28-12 |
| Sept. 30: at North Ridgeville, 7 | L, 44-21 |
| Oct. 6: Amherst (at North Ridgeville), 7 | W, 27-16 |
| Oct. 14: at Berea-Midpark, 7 | L, 56-28 |
| Oct. 21: Olmsted Falls (at North Ridgeville), 7 | W, 23-13 |
| Oct. 28: at Avon Lake, 7 | L, 42-27 |

Opponents' 2015 winning percentage: .467

Games against 2015 playoff qualifiers: 5

Game to watch: The Eagles have to feel they let one slip away from them last year in triple overtime against Avon. They will look to finish the game this year in Week 3.

Outlook: offense

Coach Tim Brediger has transitioned his team from a spread offense to a more run-oriented offense this season, creating a whole different look for the Eagles. Lutheran West transfer Chris Jones, sophomore Daren Anders and senior Josh Hufstetler will fight for spots in the backfield in this new-and-improved North Olmsted offense. Look for a lot of two- and three-back formations and a number of personnel groupings from the Eagles this season.

Outlook: defense

After failing to pressure the quarterback as much as the coaches wanted, Coach Tim Brediger has made that the focus of 2016. The Eagles entered camp with 17 linebackers, and Brediger said the competition among the team has pushed the players, and after having to play so many underclassmen last season, the defense is tougher and more experienced — ready to take on the SWC.

Player to watch



Hufstetler

Josh Hufstetler can do a little bit of everything for the Eagles, and with a team-best 4.46 40-yard dash, the 2015 All-SWC selection will be a focal point both on offense and defense this season. The 6-foot-1, 205-pound senior brings the size and speed that Coach Tim Brediger believes can elevate the Eagles this season and help the team contend for the always tough SWC.

Underclassman to watch

With a year of varsity experience under his belt, sophomore Daren Anders is back and likely to create a big impact in the new run-oriented North Olmsted offense. The 5-foot-10, 185-pound running back will bring speed and toughness to the Eagles' back field.

— Marissa McNees

Projected lineup

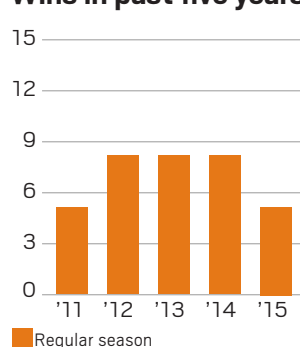
| OFFENSE | | | | DEFENSE | | | |
|---------|--------------------|-----|----------|---------|------------------|-----|----------|
| Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. | Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. |
| QB | Brandon Maximovich | Sr. | 5-10 175 | DL | Zach Dipirito | Sr. | 5-10 240 |
| RB | Chris Jones | Sr. | 5-7 165 | DL | Omar Radwan | Sr. | 5-10 225 |
| RB | Darren Anders | So. | 5-10 185 | DL | Unspecified | | |
| WR | Josh Hufstetler | Sr. | 6-1 205 | ILB | Tyler Jones | So. | 6-1 225 |
| WR | Unspecified | | | ILB | Chandler Johnson | Sr. | 5-10 185 |
| TE | Tyler Jones | So. | 6-1 225 | OLB | Unspecified | | |
| LT | Andrew Bussman | Sr. | 6-5 240 | DB | Josh Hufstetler | Sr. | 6-1 205 |
| LG | Zach Dispirito | Sr. | 5-10 240 | DB | Darren Anders | So. | 5-10 185 |
| C | Alex Rigda | Sr. | 5-9 230 | DB | Sean Conroy | Jr. | 5-10 180 |
| RG | Kenny France | Jr. | 6-3 295 | S | Unspecified | | |
| RT | Chris Kish | Sr. | 6-2 260 | S | Unspecified | | |
| K | Garret Fess | Jr. | 6-1 165 | P | Garret Fess | Sr. | 6-1 165 |

Bold: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 24
Key reserves: Tom Macnamara, Sr., OL, 6-5, 265; Jake Mlady, So., TE, 6-0, 215; Alahit Ahmad, Jr., ILB, 6-1, 195; Kenny France, Jr., DL, 6-3, 295; Sam Guercio, Jr., QB, 5-10, 170
Best in the classroom: Tyler Jones, 4.117
Best 40-yard dash time: Josh Hufstetler, 4.46

Team history

Playoff record: 0-1 in one appearance
Best playoff finish: 2005, Regional quarterfinals
Most recent playoff appearance: 2005

Wins in past five years



Bottom line

IF: The Eagles can fully adopt Brediger and company's new offense, **THEN:** North Olmsted could be a major player for the SWC come October.

North Ridgeville » Rangers

Online: Coach Luke Durbin and players Jaret Mullins, Jamir Malone and Jeremy Sanchez discuss the season in an interview at MorningJournal.com.

Conference: Southwestern; **OHSAA:** Division II, Region 6
Head coach: Luke Durbin, 3rd year (12-9)
2015: 7-4; **Twitter:** @rangersfootball
Home field: Ranger Stadium

2016 schedule

| Opponent | 2015 result |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Aug. 26: at North Royalton, 7 | W, 20-13 |
| Sept. 2: Amherst, 7 | W, 18-14 |
| Sept. 9: at Berea-Midpark, 7 | L, 41-21 |
| Sept. 16: Olmsted Falls, 7 | W, 23-13 |
| Sept. 23: at Avon Lake, 7 | W, 42-14 |
| Sept. 30: North Olmsted, 7 | W, 44-21 |
| Oct. 7: Avon, 7 | L, 48-14 |
| Oct. 14: at Westlake, 7 | W, 42-35 |
| Oct. 21: at Lakewood, 7 | W, 35-21 |
| Oct. 28: Midview, 7 | L, 35-28 |

Opponents' 2015 winning percentage: .462

Games against 2015 playoff qualifiers: 4

Game to watch: Be sure to make your way out to North Ridgeville for it's Week 2 matchup against Amherst to see the Rangers break in its new star, the renovated Ranger Stadium.

Outlook: offense

Demario McCall is gone. The Rangers aren't too worried, though. As Coach Luke Durbin put it, he's a "once in a lifetime talent, but life will go on and we'll still play football." The Rangers offense may go through some growing pains, but it will come together. The key will be the calming, veteran influence of QB Collin Sullinger and the strength of an experienced line that returns three starters. Sullinger, a three-year starter under center, knows the offense and is usually the most intelligent player on the field. He will not shy away from the challenge of reinventing the Rangers attack.

Outlook: defense

Durbin understands there will be some growing pains on offense, and it's because of his defense that he is not overly concerned. The Rangers will be highlighted by a number of players, but look to linebacker Jamir Malone and defensive ends Tyler Sycz and Jordan King to be the true leaders. Malone is one of the hardest hitting players in the Southwestern Conference and a great tackler. With second team All-Ohio junior Sycz on one end of the line and 6-foot, 230-pound senior King on the other, offensive lines are going to have fits trying to decide which one deserves more attention.

Player to watch



Mullins

Senior offensive lineman Jaret Mullins will have a lot of pressure on him from the beginning of the season. With a run game that will be a work in progress, Mullins needs to not only create big holes, but be quick enough off the block to help lead the backs up field. He is more than up to that task.

Underclassman to watch



Sanchez

Sophomore Jeremy Sanchez doesn't need two hands to count how many varsity snaps he's played. However, his two hands are great at catching a football. Expect Sanchez to develop into a deep threat for QB Collin Sullinger.

— Jon Behm

Projected lineup

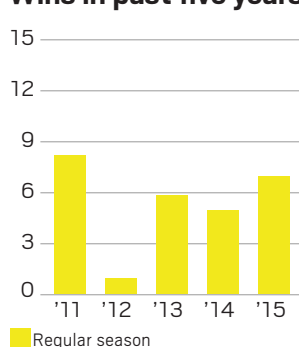
| OFFENSE | | | | DEFENSE | | | |
|---------|------------------|-----|----------|---------|----------------|-----|----------|
| Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. | Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. |
| QB | Collin Sullinger | Sr. | 6-1 175 | DE | Tyler Sycz | Jr. | 6-0 190 |
| RB | Shomari Williams | Jr. | 5-10 180 | DE | Jordan King | Sr. | 6-0 230 |
| FB | John Conklin | Sr. | 5-11 185 | DT | Devin Blagg | Sr. | 5-11 220 |
| WR | Bryon Shuey | Sr. | 6-2 175 | NT | Alex Carpenter | Sr. | 5-9 240 |
| WR | Jeremy Sanchez | So. | 6-1 165 | ILB | Jamir Malone | Jr. | 6-0 195 |
| TE | Forrest Crozton | Jr. | 6-0 200 | ILB | Ian McDonald | Sr. | 5-10 185 |
| LT | Devin Blagg | Sr. | 5-11 230 | OLB | James DeScott | Sr. | 6-2 210 |
| LG | Jaret Mullins | Sr. | 5-11 220 | CB | Bryon Shuey | Sr. | 6-2 175 |
| C | Chris Machovina | Sr. | 6-2 225 | CB | Brandon Cruz | Jr. | 5-8 155 |
| RG | Jordan King | Jr. | 6-0 230 | FS | Cannon Kerr | Jr. | 5-11 165 |
| RT | Mike Wiseman | Jr. | 5-10 240 | SS | Cade Riley | So. | 6-0 180 |
| K | Eri Davila | Jr. | 6-2 170 | P | Jaret Mullins | Sr. | 5-11 220 |

Bold: returning starter
Key reserves: Joey Schultz, So., 5-10, 290; Nji Tuma, Jr., 5-11, 210; Cody Reffert, Jr., 5-9, 150; Jacob Talley, Sr., 5-8, 170
Best in the classroom: Collin Sullinger and John Conklin, 4.7 GPA
Best bench press: Alex Carpenter, 275 pounds
Best squat: Jamir Malone, 475 pounds
Best 40-yard dash time: Cade Riley and Brandon Cruz, 4.6 seconds

Team history

Playoff record: 0-2 in two appearances
Best playoff finish: 2009, 2015, Regional quarterfinals
Most recent playoff appearance: 2015
School record for most wins in a season: 10 in 1978
Conference championships (including co- and tri-titles): 1977, '78, '83, '84, '96, 2005
Coach with most victories: Jeff Riesen, 103 (1980-87, 2006-2013)

Wins in past five years



Bottom line

IF: The skill positions jell quickly, **THEN:** The Rangers will contend for the SWC title and a playoff berth.

Olmsted Falls » Bulldogs

Online: Coach Tom DeLuca, Sam Vas, and John McCabe discuss the season in an interview at MorningJournal.com.

Conference: Southwestern; **OHSAA:** Division II, Region 6
Head coach: Tom DeLuca, 4th year (11-20)
2015: 6-5; **Twitter:** @OFFootball1
Home field: Charles A. Harding Memorial Stadium

2016 schedule

| Opponent | 2015 result |
|---|--------------------|
| Aug. 26: Parma, 7 | W, 31-28 (20T) |
| Sept. 2: Westlake, 7 | W, 35-14 |
| Sept. 9: at Lakewood, 7 | W, 35-10 |
| Sept. 16: at North Ridgeville, 7 | L, 23-13 |
| Sept. 23: Amherst, 7 | W, 19-14 |
| Sept. 30: at Berea-Midpark, 7 | W, 30-27 |
| Oct. 7: Midview, 7 (HC) | L, 35-10; L, 56-35 |
| Oct. 14: Avon Lake, 7 | W, 22-14 |
| Oct. 21: at North Olmsted (at N. Ridgeville), 7 | L, 23-13 |
| Oct. 28: at Avon, 7 | L, 49-28 |

HC: Homecoming

Opponents' 2015 winning percentage: .472

Games against 2015 playoff qualifiers: 4

Game to watch: It always seems to come down to North Olmsted. A loss to the Eagles last year nearly kept the Bulldogs out of the playoffs. The same will be said this year when the teams face off in Week 9.

Outlook: offense

There are a lot of question marks for Coach Tom DeLuca and the Olmsted Falls offense after have to replace nine starters including quarterback Aaron Zawadzki and most of the offensive line. Returning, though, is 6-foot-2, 300-pound right guard Sam Vas — a force up front and a leader for the otherwise inexperienced Bulldog offense. Additionally, RB Spencer Linville will be great for Olmsted Falls. He is a hard runner and at 5-foot-8 and 244 pounds, he is tough to bring down.

Outlook: defense

Similar to the offense, Coach Tom DeLuca had to replace six starters on defense. As troubling as that may be, DeLuca is confident in the physicality of the players he's found to fill those roles, and will look to his defense to be the most physical on the field on any given day. As with the offense, the strength should be in the line. Sam Vas anchors a large line that should be a handful for opposing lines.

Player to watch



Vas

Sam Vas is one of only three returners on both sides of the ball for Olmsted Falls. At 6-foot-2, 300 pounds, the senior will be a force for the Bulldogs and a team leader both on and off the field. Expect Vas to be a bit of a field general for Coach Tom DeLuca. He will help control the defense in-game and will be the main point-of-reference when the coaches want the view from the field.

Underclassman to watch



McCabe

Junior John McCabe joins the Bulldogs as a first-year starter in 2016. The 6-foot-4, 250-pound lineman is poised to have a big year and should easily fill one of the many holes Olmsted Falls is faced with this season.

— Marissa McNees

Projected lineup

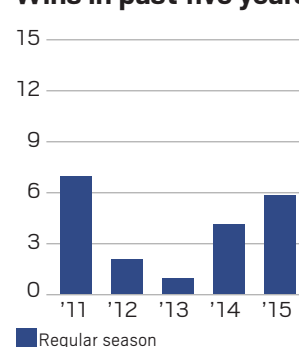
| OFFENSE | | | | DEFENSE | | | |
|---------|------------------|-----|----------|---------|------------------|-----|----------|
| Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. | Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. |
| QB | Brett Hutkay | Sr. | 6-1 180 | DE | John McCabe | Jr. | 6-4 250 |
| FB | Spencer Linville | Sr. | 5-8 244 | DE | Unspecified | | |
| WR | Tyler Neely | Sr. | 5-10 180 | DT | William Greller | Jr. | 6-3 280 |
| WR | Josh Goodwin | Sr. | 6-0 170 | DT | Sam Vas | Sr. | 6-2 300 |
| Slot | Andrew Turski | Sr. | 5-11 185 | LB | Jaden Mendeluk | Jr. | 6-2 190 |
| Slot | Luke Lombardo | Jr. | 6-0 175 | LB | Tyler Neely | Sr. | 5-10 180 |
| LT | William Greller | Jr. | 6-3 280 | LB | Unspecified | | |
| LG | Jake Dahlinger | Jr. | 6-3 270 | CB | Michael Howard | So. | 5-8 160 |
| C | Dominic Gentile | Jr. | 6-0 258 | CB | Davidson Gaggi | Sr. | 5-10 160 |
| RG | Sam Vas | Sr. | 6-2 300 | FS | Josh Goodwin | Sr. | 6-0 170 |
| RT | John McCabe | Jr. | 6-4 250 | SS | Andrew Turski | Sr. | 5-11 185 |
| K | Ricky Castrigano | Sr. | 5-9 160 | P | Ricky Castrigano | Sr. | 5-9 160 |

Bold: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 10
Key reserves: None listed

Team history

Playoff record: 12-11 in 12 appearances
Best playoff finish: 2000, State champion
Most recent playoff appearance: 2015
School record for most wins in a season: 14 in 2000
Conference championships (including co- and tri-titles): 1929, '31, '32, '41, '42, '43, '59, '77, '78, '88, '92, '96, '99, 2000, '02, '10
Coach with most victories: Jim Ryan, 180 (1988-2012)

Wins in past five years



Bottom line

IF: The Bulldogs can "out-physical" their opponents, **THEN:** the team can be a real player in the SWC and a contender come Week 11.

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Westlake » Demons

Online: Coach Jason Hall, Trey Bialowis, and Billy Blood discuss the season in an interview at MorningJournal.com.

Conference: Southwestern; **OHSAA:** Division II, Region 6
Head coach: Jason Hall, 2nd year (3-7)
2015: 3-7; **Twitter:** @DemonAthletics
Home field: Lou Duchez Field

2016 schedule

| Opponent | 2015 result |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Aug. 26: at North, 7 | L, 48-45 |
| Sept. 2: at Olmsted Falls, 7 | L, 35-14 |
| Sept. 9: Avon Lake, 7 | L, 35-14 |
| Sept. 16: North Olmsted, 7 | L, 32-29 |
| Sept. 23: at Avon, 7 | L, 56-13 |
| Sept. 30: Midview, 7 | L, 61-20 |
| Oct. 7: at Lakewood, 7 | W, 35-17 |
| Oct. 14: North Ridgeville, 7 | L, 42-35 |
| Oct. 21: Amherst, 7 | W, 37-0 |
| Oct. 28: at Berea-Midpark, 7 | W, 38-35(OT) |

Opponents' 2015 winning percentage: .495
Games against 2015 playoff qualifiers: 5
Game to watch: Westlake is one of the final stadiums in Northeast Ohio to get turf. The Demons will break that turf in during a Week 3 tilt with Avon Lake.

Outlook: offense

Coach Jason Hall said he wants his offense to make use of the whole field this season. The offense will be centered around quarterback Trey Bialowis and what he's able to do with his size and athleticism. He has an experienced line and a host of returning skill players at his disposal, and Hall will be looking for this senior class to step up and burn defenses the way they have burned them in the past.

Outlook: defense

Coach Jason Hall knows that giving up big plays really hurt his team's chances last season. The Demons weren't as affected by graduation as some of their SWC foes, particularly on defense, so now it's about creating a more disciplined defense that can keep the damage to a minimum. Hall believes his seniors have put forth the effort in the offseason, but can that effort translate into on-field success?



Bialowis

Player to watch

Trey Bialowis has been described as a natural leader, with Hall saying "one of his best qualities is that people follow him." The 6-foot-1, 180-pound quarterback has the advantage of a large senior class that has had time to mesh together, so this has all the makings of what could be a breakout year for Bialowis.



Blood

Underclassman to watch

Billy Blood is new to the varsity level, but Hall believes the wide receiver can have an immediate impact. At 6-foot-1, Blood is the tallest of the receivers at Bialowis' disposal and will get plenty of targets as the Demons look to air the ball out this season.

— Marissa McNees

Projected lineup

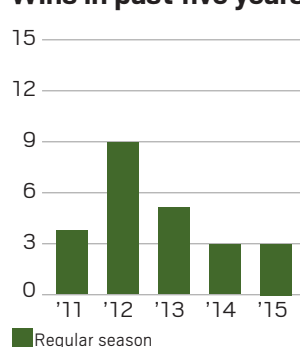
| OFFENSE | | | | DEFENSE | | | |
|---------|-------------------|-----|----------|---------|-------------------|-----|----------|
| Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. | Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. |
| QB | Trey Bialowis | Sr. | 6-1 180 | DE | Bobby Fogel | Sr. | 6-0 200 |
| FB | Terrance Rose | Sr. | 6-0 170 | DE | Nik Worchola | Sr. | 5-10 185 |
| RB | Q'Darr Robinson | Sr. | 6-0 190 | DT | Jordan Taylor | So. | 6-0 225 |
| WR | Billy Blood | Jr. | 6-1 170 | NT | Chris Choi | Sr. | 6-2 220 |
| WR | Conner Sternecker | Sr. | 6-0 165 | OLB | Dante Catanzarite | Sr. | 6-1 195 |
| TE | Trevor Bielezer | Sr. | 6-0 200 | ILB | Trevor Bielezer | Sr. | 6-0 200 |
| LT | Omar Abed | Sr. | 6-0 200 | OLB | Matt Ramach | Sr. | 6-1 195 |
| LG | CJ Nule | Sr. | 5-10 230 | DB | Tarek Khawam | Sr. | 5-10 170 |
| C | Jack Gregory | So. | 6-2 245 | DB | Terrance Rose | Sr. | 6-0 170 |
| RG | Nick Kronz | Sr. | 5-10 210 | FS | Dean Schneider | Sr. | 6-1 185 |
| RT | Matt Beaver | Jr. | 6-1 205 | SS | Tariq Beach | Sr. | 5-10 165 |
| K | Erik Brizes | Sr. | 6-1 200 | P | Q'Darr Robinson | Sr. | 6-0 190 |

Bold: returning starter; **Returning letterwinners:** 20
Key reserves: Tony Kettle, Sr., 5-11, 170; Kevin Wall, So., 6-5, 170; Jacob Jabonski, So., 6-1, 175; Jacob Harb, Sr., 6-2, 200

Team history

Playoff record: 1-4 in four appearances
Best playoff finish: 1984, State semifinal
Most recent playoff appearance: 2012

Wins in past five years



Bottom line

IF: The seniors can step up and lead the team, **THEN:** Westlake should have a more competitive 2016.

Open Door » Patriots

Online: Coach Ray Lowe, Jafet Hernandez, and Caleb Daniel discuss the season in an interview at MorningJournal.com.

Conference: Independent (8-man football)
Head coach: Ray Lowe, 4th year (5-14)
2015: no team; **Twitter:** @odcsfb212
Home field: Open Door Stadium

2016 schedule

| Opponent | 2015 result |
|---|-------------|
| Aug. 27: at Camden (Mich.), 3 | DNP |
| Sept. 5: Lincoln West, 4 | DNP |
| Sept. 10: at Mayville (Mich.), 3 | DNP |
| Sept. 17: Camden (Mich.), 3 | DNP |
| Sept. 24: at Lawrence (Mich.), 1 | DNP |
| Sept. 30: Michigan SD (Mich.), 7:30 (HC) | DNP |
| Oct. 8: at Covert (Mich.), 2 | DNP |
| Oct. 15: Horizon Science Toledo, 4 | DNP |
| Oct. 22: at North Huron (Mich.), 2 | DNP |
| Oct. 29: Horizon Science Toledo, 4 | DNP |

HC: Homecoming
Opponents' 2015 winning percentage: .310
Games against 2015 playoff qualifiers: 0
Game to watch: The Patriots have waited a long while to defend their home turf again. They finally get to do that in Week 2.

Outlook: offense

The only thing holding the Open Door offense back this season is inexperience. The transition from 11-man to 8-man isn't as drastic on offense, so the challenge will be honing the underclassmen's skills and implementing an offensive strategy with a roster filled with newcomers. Expect plenty of growing pains in the early going while the Patriots adjust.

Outlook: defense

Adjusting to the 8-man defense has been more of a challenge for this young Open Door team. Coach Ray Lowe has been focusing on tackling and team speed during practices and believes his defense can be successful if it can stay up to speed with opposing teams. While Lowe's defensive formations and lineup is still a bit fluid, expect positions and roles to be solidified soon.



Hernandez

Player to watch

After having to miss his junior season when the program folded, Jafet Hernandez is back as the only senior on the Open Door roster. The 6-foot-2, 290-pound lineman is a big presence for the Patriots up front and will no doubt be fired up to be back on the field for his final high school season.



Daniel

Underclassman to watch

Coach Ray Lowe described sophomore Caleb Daniel as "one of the most fiery and intense young athletes that we have on our team." The 5-foot-5, 140-pound running back makes up for what he lacks in size with determination and hard work, and will have plenty of opportunities to make an immediate impact on the field.

— Marissa McNees

Projected lineup

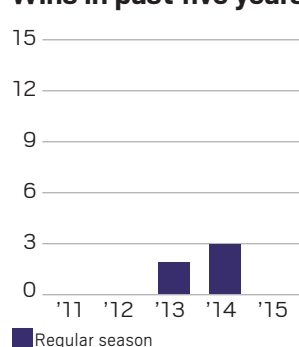
| OFFENSE | | | | DEFENSE | | | |
|---------|-----------------|-----|---------|---------|-----------|-----|---------|
| Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. | Pos. | Name | Yr. | Ht. Wt. |
| QB | Donovan Davis | Fr. | 5-8 160 | | Undecided | | |
| TB | Caleb Daniel | So. | 5-5 140 | | | | |
| WB | Tyler Neadham | So. | 5-9 165 | | | | |
| LE | Devon Pincombe | Fr. | 6-2 230 | | | | |
| LG | Ryan Liss | So. | 6-0 290 | | | | |
| C | Jace Tarpley | So. | 6-2 210 | | | | |
| RG | Jafet Hernandez | Sr. | 6-2 290 | | | | |
| RE | Maxx Wiley | Jr. | 6-4 190 | | | | |
| K | Unspecified | | | | | | |

Returning letterwinners: 2
Key reserves: Alex Schmidt, Sr., 5-11, 165; Niko Lopez, Fr.; Gabby Skalba, Fr.; Caleb Rimstidt, So.; CJ Peacock, Fr.; Josh Wilkes

Team history

Playoff record: 0-0 in zero appearances
Best playoff finish: n/a
Most recent playoff appearance: n/a
School record for most wins in a season: 3 in 2014
Conference championships (including co- and tri-titles): n/a
Coach with most victories: Ray Lowe, 5 (ongoing)

Wins in past five years



Bottom line

IF: The Open Door players can buy into the 8-man game, **THEN:** This season will be a great building block for the future of the program.

Conference outlooks

Great Lakes Conference

Favorite: Rocky River
Don't forget about: Bay, Holy Name
Darkhorse: Elyria Catholic
 Bay lost some great talent, but that does not count them out in this conference. Junior running back Trey Psota has some big shoes to fill, but will be helped by an offensive line that features four returning starters. Rocky River appeared to have the conference locked up last year until a shocking loss to Holy Name. Don't expect that kind of lapse again. The Pirates bring back the most talent from last season and it should show. Junior Cam Blue is a more than capable quarterback who will be throwing to a few outstanding targets in TE Jack Rodgers and WR Brendan Connors. The questions come from an untested secondary.

Elyria Catholic is the enigma of the conference: you know they will be good, but are they going to be great? That is the question Coach Dave Stupka has to figure out as the Panthers lost 15 starters from last year. They are athletic enough to overcome it, but will Elyria Catholic have grown enough to make a GLC run once conference play begins?

Greater Cleveland Conference

Favorite: Mentor
Don't forget about: Solon, Elyria
Darkhorse: Euclid
 So what puts Mentor ahead over defending co-champs Solon and Euclid? Quarterback Tadas Tatarunas. With him back, the offense is going to score, and if the defense can even keep teams to only 20 points per game, the Cardinals will be dangerous.

Elyria is a team to keep an eye on. The Pioneers were young last year and, even though they finished three games out of the top-spot, they knocked off Mentor and played in tight games against Euclid and Solon. Expect quarterback Dontae Beckett to be one of the surprises on the GCC and running back Chris Atkinson could be the top rusher.

Lake Erie League

Favorite: Cleveland Heights
Don't forget about: Maple Heights, Bedford, Lorain
Darkhorse: Warrensville Heights
 Lorain was a younger team last year. Now they have a year under their belts and it should show. Seniors Naz Bohannon, Carlos Chavis, Aaron Huff and Quentin Pardon should make the Titans one of the toughest defenses in the LEL. With QB Davion Dower back and RB Carlos Chavis, the Lorain offense should be respectable and could make for an interesting Week 10 where the LEL title might be on the line against Cleveland Heights.

Patriot Athletic Conference

Stars Division
Favorite: Buckeye
Don't forget about: Firelands, Brookside
Darkhorse: Keystone
 This has been Buckeye's division as of late, and even with the Bucks losing a lot of talent — particularly Trevor Thome, who ranks second on Buckeye's all-time scoring list — they are the standard bearers. Still, Firelands returns a lot of talent, particularly on defense, and should be right in the mix for the confer-

ence title once again. The quarterback position is still fluid, but RB Nick Denney is ready to take the brunt of the load for the Falcons. Brookside is more of an interesting sell. While they have great returning talent in the likes of Tim Ackerman, they are still a bit thin overall. The reason they remain a contender, though, is their new mindset. Coach Paul Ferguson has the team believing in itself, which is out of the norm for the Cardinals.

Patriot Athletic Conference

Stripes Division
Favorite: Columbia
Don't forget about: Clearview
Darkhorse: Fairview
 Clearview poses the biggest threat to the Columbia's dominance. The Clippers have 19 returning letterwinners, including 10 starters on offense and seven on defense. Playmakers Jacob Collier, Demetrius DeAlmeida and Drew Engle will be a force offensively, and DE DeAri Todd may be the most feared defensive player in the conference.

Fairview finished second in the conference a year ago, largely on the back of Josh Fillkill on both sides of the ball. With 15 returning lettermen, the Warriors should be more balanced this year, but to what extent is still up for debate.

Sandusky Bay Conference

Bay Division
Favorite: Clyde
Don't forget about: Edison, Perkins
Darkhorse: Huron

With all due respect to the other great teams in this conference — and make no mistake, there are a lot — Clyde has to be the team to beat. They are the defending co-champions with Edison, but they are the team that is returning the most talent. That is not to say that the other teams in the SBC Bay Division aren't returning talent, but Clyde is the defending champion returning its quarterback (Lucas Nicely), running back (Frank Sewell) and the majority of its receiving corps. That instantly puts them back on top.

No disrespect to the state semifinalist of the conference, Edison. They by all means should be in it at the end. However, losing QB Keegan Hall, RB Dan Stoll and receivers Tyler Scott and Owen Moyer to graduation cannot be understated. The likes of Sam Stoll and Bryce Ostheimer will need to step up for the Chargers if they are going to compete for an SBC title.

Southwestern Conference

Favorite: Midview
Don't forget about: Avon, Berea-Midpark, North Ridgeville
Darkhorse: Olmsted Falls

The Middies are still the favorite regardless. Anytime you have a quarterback the caliber of Dustin Crum, you are a favorite. Expect running back Alec Forrer to be a breakout star for Midview as the Middies have a more balanced attack this year. Avon, Berea-Midpark and North Ridgeville were all playoff qualifiers last year — along with Midview and Olmsted Falls, for that matter — and they should all be vying for the playoffs again, which goes hand-in-hand with a top SWC finish.

— Jon Behm

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