

REMEMBER THE JETS JETMANS



TheMorningJournal

ERIC BONZAR — THE MORNING JOURNAL

OPINION



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The Lorain Titans embraced the role of being the villains, and used it to catapult them to the best season in Lorain City Schools history.

Lorain writes book on successful villains

By Sports Editor Jon Behm » jbehm@morningjournal.com

Villains.

That is what the 2016 Lorain Titans wanted to be.

I'll never forget when running back Carlos Chavis explained to me why the Titans wanted to be villains at a recording of Varsity Chalk Talk.

"Even the villains get wins," Chavis said. "After losing the first two, we were tired of seeing the other team happy. We decided to become the villains. Spoil the party, ruin their good time."

"We wanted to make sure that they weren't happy after playing us. That's what villains do." Make no mistake — the Titans were great at being the villains.

Just ask Warrensville Heights. The Tigers were 3-1 heading into a Week 5 tilt with the Titans, dreaming of the playoffs.

Lorain put those thoughts to bed quickly, eviscerating the hopeful team, 39-12.

Or, maybe ask Sandusky. The Blue Streaks were 6-0 and one of the top-ranked teams in Division III.

Sandusky thought they were going to roll through the Titans. Instead, the villains of Lake Erie ripped a win away when Sandusky was just starting to feel comfortable.

Still not convinced? Ask Cleveland Heights. The Tigers rolled into Lorain in Week 10 looking to secure the Lake Erie

League title and a playoff berth.

Instead, the Tigers became the Titans' final regular season victim and vaulted Lorain into its first-ever home playoff game.

And we all know what happened after that.

The Titans advanced to the Division I, Region 2 final — yet another first for Lorain.

But, something was different about Lorain's play-off run.

It's one of the side-effects of being a successful villain.

People began to get behind the Titans.

Fans who used to vote against Lorain began picking it to win.

Lorain faithful began to stretch beyond the borders of the Steel City.

In short, the Titans became the heroes.

Now, they weren't your typical goodie-two-shoes hero like Superman.

No, they were more like Deadpool.

They had swagger. They had intimidation. And they still had the drive to prove themselves.

It's the most dangerous type of hero. It's also the most successful type of villain.

It's the best kind of Titan.



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While the Titans considered themselves villains, they found a spot in the hearts of area football fans across Northeast Ohio.



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The Lorain Titans celebrate after knocking off the Dublin Jerome Celtics, 30-14, Nov. 11.

"After losing the first two, we were tired of seeing the other team happy. We decided to become the villains. Spoil the party, ruin their good time."

Lorain Titans running back Carlos Chavis

OPINION



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Lorain Coach Dave McFarland said that it was impossible to describe what it was like watching the Titans prepare week in and week out during their historical season.

Character mattered in 2016

By Dave McFarland » Lorain football coach

The success of Lorain Titan Football at all levels in 2016 began with emphasis on character development.

A man's true character is revealed in times of adversity.

It is a true testament to the character of our young men that they were able to academically and athletically excel this fall. Our varsity team grade-point average was 3.2 for the fall quarter.

Our success on the gridiron didn't happen without a strong team foundation.

Saturday morning after starting 0-2 was tough, but life is tough. Going forward we had two choices: give up or go to work.

It's impossible to express how awesome it was to witness student athletes practice and excel week after week after that challenging start when they

might have chosen a different path and given up. Character is exposed when things are tough, and our seniors led us day after day, week after week to 10 straight victories.

It is easy to talk about the wins. We came from behind to defeat a top-ranked Sandusky team. The team performance against Maple Heights was impressive. Bedford was a dominant performance. The Lake Erie League championship game against Cleveland Heights sent us to another level.

Entering the OHSAA playoffs, there was an air of confidence.

We prepared hard for our first-ever home playoff game. At halftime, we were losing, but our seniors led with passion. The second half was all about resolve, character and toughness. We dominated the second half, beating Lewis Center Olentangy, 34-14.

In Week 2 of the playoffs, we faced second-ranked Dublin. Some thought we had no chance. The men in our locker room focused on preparation and blocked out the noise. Again down at half, our young men believed in each other and came out to dominate the second half, winning 30-14.

Week 3 of the playoffs took us to the regional

It is a true testament to the character of our young men that they were able to academically and athletically excel this fall.

championship game. They gave everything they had, every drop of sweat and every ounce of effort. They played with great passion and pride, taking Olentangy Liberty to the last second.

Our seniors stood tall that night.

While losing hurts, our seniors were heard to make the following statements: *It's not over!*

We are passing the mission on to the juniors (next years seniors). This is not just a team. It's a family, and we are not done writing the book on Lorain football.

I want to thank our community, civic leaders, faculty and students for all the support. Special thanks to our Lorain safety forces. Words cannot express how proud I am of our team.



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Lorain Coach Dave McFarland hugs Brandin Sturgill after beating the Cleveland Heights Tigers, 14-13, and clinching their first Lake Erie League Conference championship in school history, Oct. 28.

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Lorain's Aaron Huff (28) cradles the handoff from quarterback Davion Dower (2), Sept. 3.

LORAIN TITANS, 2016 SEASON RECAP

- Aug. 26:** Midview High School, 29 - Lorain High School, 26
- Sept. 3:** Elyria High School, 32 - Lorain High School, 18
- Sept. 9:** Lorain High School, 48 - Scott High School, 0
- Sept. 16:** Lorain High School, 42 - Garfield Heights High School, 38
- Sept. 23:** Lorain High School, 39 - Warrensville Heights High School, 12
- Sept. 30:** Lorain High School, 34 - Shaw High School, 7
- Oct. 7:** Lorain High School, 24 - Sandusky High School, 23
- Oct. 14:** Lorain High School, 44 - Maple Heights High School, 22
- Oct. 21:** Lorain High School, 42 - Bedford High School, 7
- Oct. 28:** Lorain High School, 14 - Cleveland Heights High School, 13
- Nov. 4:** Lorain High School, 34 - Olentangy High School, 14
- Nov. 11:** Lorain High School, 30 - Jerome High School, 14
- Nov. 18:** Olentangy Liberty High School, 24 - Lorain High School, 20



RANDY MEYERS - THE MORNING JOURNAL

Lorain's Davion Dower and Daesean Brooks celebrate a touchdown in front of the Titans crowd on Aug. 26.

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Looking back at the 2016 season

OCT. 28: LORAIN 14, CLEVELAND HEIGHTS 13



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Lorain Titans running back Carlos Chavis (33) stiff-arms his way past Cleveland Heights' Rahmon Davis-Smith, on Oct. 28.

Lorain claims 1st LEL title

By Fuad Shalhout

FShalhout@MorningJournal.com
@Shalhoutf on Twitter

The Steel City can officially celebrate.

On Oct. 28, the Lorain Titans entered Cleveland Heights and gutted out a 14-13 win to capture its first outright league title since the 1987 Admiral King team was sole champion of the Erie Shore Conference. It's the first Lake Erie League title since 2006 when Admiral King was tri-champions, and the first ever for Lorain High.

The win also means the Titans host a playoff game next week in their own backyard.

Lorain was up, 14-13, with over two minutes in the fourth and it was now or never for the Titans' defense. Cleveland Heights was driving, and on a third-and-4 pass, the Titans got a stop, but a critical roughing the passer call was made, giving the Tigers new life. But later, on a fourth-and-1 from Lorain's 45-yard line, the Tigers ran a QB draw with Cam Searight that was snuffed out by senior linebacker Aaron Huff to clinch the victory.

That capped a series of huge defensive plays the Titans made, and now Lorain (8-2) can call itself a champion.

"At first I was thinking they were going to pass because they were in a trips (set)," Huff said, who also had 80 rushing yards. "I just made a play. We haven't won the LEL in a while,

and it's a great feeling. It's breath-taking and we're going to enjoy the win. Holding them to 13 points is great, I don't know how many teams have done that."

"We started yelling to Aaron 'Draw! Draw! Draw!'," senior linebacker Naz Bohannon added about the stop.

"He just went in and blitzed and made a play. This feels unreal right now. After starting the season 0-2, nobody except us believed we could do it. Last year, we had a chance to make the playoffs and they took it from us. This year, we took it from them. I'm looking forward to a big crowd next week. We never lose at home and we can't lose in front of our home fans and continue to make history."

Lorain enters the post-season on an eight-game winning streak, the longest winning streak in Lorain City Schools to end a regular season since 1943.

Senior running back Carlos Chavis, like he's done all season, helped carry the team, setting the tone in Lorain's opening drive for a 4-yard rushing touchdown. Quarterback Justin Sturgill ran in the two-point conversion for a 8-0 lead.

After a series of stops from the Titans defense in the second quarter, linebacker Kelvin Torres blocked the Tigers' punt from their own 48-yard line and Bohannon returned it to the house for a 14-0 lead with just over four minutes remaining in the half.



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Lorain running back Aaron Huff powers ahead with Cleveland Heights' Zaire Webb holding on Oct. 28.

"When I picked it up, I said I have to score," Bohannon added. "Our offense wasn't moving too much, but I took upon myself."

Cleveland Heights (6-4) responded on the ensuing possession, with 2:39 remaining, when Searight connected on an 18-yard touchdown pass to wide receiver Sir Summers and cut the lead, 14-6, which remained the halftime score.

With 4:50 in the third, Lorain fumbled in its own territory, giving the Tigers the ball at the 17-yardline. Three plays later, Searight connected on a 14-yard touchdown pass to Reggie Harris. But Cleveland Heights opted to kick an extra point, rather than going for two, which came back to bite them — allowing Lorain to hold on to a 14-13 lead.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the Titans' defense was holding Ohio State recruit and 6-foot-5 wideout Jaylen Harris to one catch, matching up corner Daesean Brooks one-on-one throughout.

Chavis led the offense with 90 rushing yards on 24

carries and one touchdown. "Playmakers make plays," Chavis said.

"We just thought this was a big game and we had to make plays. At the beginning of the season, we weren't a team and after that loss to Elyria, everyone came together as one family. Making history for Lorain High is going to be memorable. It's going to be a memory we're never going to forget as a team."

A thrilled coach Dave McFarland has seen his group of men mature over his three seasons at the helm.

"I wasn't here, but I know four years ago the last game of the season was canceled because of violence," McFarland said. "These kids have overcome a lot. I got an academic report today for the first nine weeks and nobody is ineligible and our team GPA is a 3.2. We've got men of great character to overcome an 0-2 start and keep fighting. I'm proud of our school and kids."

Originally published Oct. 29, 2016

NOV. 4: LORAIN 34, LEWIS CENTER OLENTANGY 14 (REGIONAL QUARTERFINAL)



RANDY MEYERS — THE MORNING JOURNAL

Lorain quarterback Justin Sturgill looks for a receiver downfield against Lewis Center Olentangy on Nov. 4.

Lorain marks its first playoff win, beats Olentangy

By Scott Sommers

Sports@MorningJournal.com
@MJJournalSports on Twitter

After watching the basketball team record success over the last couple of years, Lorain's football team decided to get in on it.

In its first-ever home football playoff game, the third-seed and host Titans used big plays and a stingy defense to secure a 34-14 Division I, Region 2 quarterfinal win over Lewis Center Olentangy on Nov. 4. Lorain will play Dublin Jerome on Nov. 11 at a site to be determined.

"I feel like our football team is feeding off the basketball team just like the Indians fed off the Cavaliers," Lorain senior wide receiver Daesean Brooks said. "We started 0-2 and not too many people believed in us to finish at 8-2, have a home playoff game and win a playoff game. We're not done yet."

Olentangy tied the game at 14 late in the third quarter, holding Lorain to just four offensive plays in the quarter. But the Titans (9-2) got things going offensively.

Junior quarterback Justin Sturgill (12-24, 256 yards) hit Brooks (7-136) for two big plays, taking the Titans to the Braves' five-yard line. Two plays later, Brooks caught a slant to put Lorain up 20-14.

"I probably told my quarterback about 40 times to just get me the ball," Brooks said. "Usually I never run slants because the middle is kind of dangerous for me ... I'd sacrifice my life going across the middle to win this playoff game."

The Titans' defense, which made big hit after big hit, forced the Braves to turn the ball over on downs on their own 35-yard line.

The running game, which struggled in the first half (three yards), got going. First Aaron Huff ripped off a big run. On

the next play, Carlos Chavis scored from 16 yards out to make it 26-14.

With the home crowd cheering wildly, Naz Bohannon put an exclamation point on the win. Picking off a pass three yards deep in the end zone, Bohannon returned it 103 yards for the final score.

Though things were tense at times, Coach Dave McFarland knew his team was in a good spot.

"Our seniors were fighting ... playing with great passion and heart which is what football is all about," McFarland said. "We made some plays and once we got that thing rolling.

"It's fun for me and the community, but more importantly it's fun for kids."

Lorain had two good chances in the first quarter. They took the game's opening drive down to the Braves' 18-yard line, but turned the ball over on downs. After a great punt return to set them up, Lorain failed to get a first down and suffered the same fate as its first drive.

After dodging Lorain's scoring opportunities, Lewis Center Olentangy was able to get on the board first with Zach Slade going in from eight yards out. The extra point gave the Braves a 7-0 lead early in the second quarter.

Brooks had catches of 13 and 30 yards to put Lorain deep in Braves' territory. Unlike the first two times, the Titans capitalized with Aaron Huff bulling his way in from a yard out. But Lorain missed on the conversion to trail 7-6.

The playmaking ability showed again with Zion Cross taking a bubble screen and racing 88 yards for a score to put Lorain up, 14-7. Brooks threw a key block on the play to spring Cross.

Olentangy tied the game at 14 before Lorain pulled away in the fourth quarter.

Originally published Nov. 5, 2016

NOV. 11: LORAIN 30, DUBLIN JEROME 14 (REGIONAL SEMIFINAL)

Titans top Dublin Jerome

Lorain advances to regional final

By Marissa McNees

MMcNees@MorningJournal.com
@MarissaNM on Twitter

The history-making season continues for Lorain.

The Titans came back from a 14-6 halftime deficit to score 24 unanswered points and defeat Dublin Jerome, 30-14, in a Division I regional semifinal on Nov. 11.

The win is No. 10 on the

season for Lorain, making it the winningest football team in Lorain history.

"It's about these kids. It's got nothing to do with the adults," Coach Dave McFarland said. "These young men, all our seniors, it's just their leadership. I'm hoping I can teach these kids about perseverance and character, and all our kids will go a long way in life because they're tough kids...but I'm proud of our perseverance

and how tough they are."

Even after walking off the field and into the locker room, the moment still hadn't sunk in for a team that has waited a long time for a chance at a regional championship. In fact, it will be the school's first-ever appearance in a regional championship game.

"Who would've ever thought, elite eight?" senior Naz Bohannon said. "I'm so glad to get here.

"After last year we went 5-5, nobody would've ever

thought we could win an LEL championship. Everybody just said we're the same old Lorain. After being 0-2, we were the only ones that said we can win every game here on out, and one of our coaches said 'Stop being the hero and let's be the villain. The hero doesn't always win, how about we go ruin everybody else's season. So that's what we set out to do and it's worked for 10 straight weeks."

SEMIFINAL » PAGE 6



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Lorain running back Aaron Huff picks up a blocking from offensive lineman Sly Worthy on his way to a big gain against Lewis Center Olentangy on Nov. 4.

HISTORY-MAKING SEASON



RANDY MEYERS - THE MORNING JOURNAL

The Lorain Titans take the field for the first ever home game of the playoffs at George Daniel Field against Lewis Center Olentangy on Nov. 4.

Semifinal

FROM PAGE 5

At the start of the game, McFarland told his team they were 48 minutes from history, and never taking the easy way out, the Ti-

tans used a 24-point third quarter to ensure the history continues.

"That's what we set out to do," Bohannon said. "We went out (down) at halftime but we didn't feel too shook because we've been there before."

Senior Carlos Chavis led the Lorain offense with 211 yards and a touchdown on 25 carries, while Zion Cross added 56 yards and a touchdown on the ground — using that super speed that earned him a state championship in track and field

just a few months ago.

Cross' teammates referred to him as a secret weapon, a title the junior is happy to hold.

"I like being that secret weapon...because people don't really expect it and then it just happens," Cross said. "(But) we've got weapons all around."

It's true the Titans roster is full of weapons — none so secret anymore — including a pair of freshman who came up with game-changing turnovers in the second half to ensure a Lorain win.

"We have two freshman on defense...Daylin Dower and Savon Chavis," Bohannon said. "They both stepped up today. They made big plays, they had the two key interceptions at the end, so everybody's just buying in."

Lorain will face No. 1 seed Olentangy Liberty (12-0) on Nov. 18, and the Titans sure aren't ready to close this chapter of the history books just yet.

"We just said (win an LEL (championship), make the playoffs, and then once

we got here everything else we just said, 'Keep writing the book.' We're gonna keep writing it and keep writing it," Bohannon said.

"It's relentlessness, perseverance. It's heart. That's all it is at the end of the day. Everybody believed we were going to win."

"We just never give up," Cross added. "We just keep going."

Jerome finishes (9-2).

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