

 The Blade

Anthony Wayne football falls to Medina Highland in regional semifinal

By By MARK HAZELWOOD / SPECIAL TO THE BLADE, 11 hours ago

BELLEVUE, Ohio — Andy Brungard's worst fears were confirmed early.

"The first time you turn on the film, I think there has only been one team that has avoided a running clock against them because they dominate the line of scrimmage," the Anthony Wayne head football coach said of Medina Highland's offensive line.

After trading scores with the Hornets early, it was Highland overwhelming the Generals with 320 yards of offense in the first half and 405 yards total in a 38-14 win in a Division II regional semifinal Friday night at Bellevue Athletic Field.

It marked the third time in four years the Hornets eliminated the Generals in the playoffs. Both teams finished tied for No. 4 in the final Associated Press poll.

Highland (13-0) moves on to face top-ranked Avon (13-0) for the regional title. The Generals finished with a 12-1 record.

"When you have a running back with 42 touchdowns, it's pretty eye-opening to see how difficult it is to stop their running game," Brungard said of Highland running back Casey Miezer, who upped that total to 44 TDs after Friday's game.

Highland quarterback Dylan Borga was 12 of 12 passing for 215 yards with two TDs through the air.

“Even the things we put in to stop the pass, we couldn’t get pressure on the quarterback,” Brungard said. “Their line is just tremendous, and they do a really good job coaching those guys up.”

Highland opened the game with an efficient seven-play, 75-yard drive that took just 2:34 off the clock with Miezer bulling in from 3 yards out. The first of five extra points by Jonah Cowza gave the Hornets the early 7-0 lead.

Anthony Wayne countered quickly. On the Generals’ first play from scrimmage, stand-out quarterback Grant Kinnee found an opening for a 69-yard run to the Highland 7. It took the Generals four plays to score, but Kinnee got in from a yard out on fourth-and-goal.

Will Horn’s extra point tied the game at 7 at the 6:58 mark of the first. Highland answered with a 12-play drive that resulted in a 26-yard field goal by Cowza for a 10-7 lead with 1:06 left in the first quarter.

Faced with a third-and-1 from the Highland 42, the Generals were then thrown for a 4-yard loss and punted. That led to a 10-play, 80-yard scoring march that took 4:28 off the clock. Miezer scored from the 5 with 5:54 left in the half for a 17-7 lead.

After the Generals punted, Highland then went 72 yards in just six plays, as Borla dropped back to pass but then found an opening and scored on a 20-yard run with 2:03 left in the half for a 24-7 lead.

Things then went from bad to worse for the Generals.

A fumble three plays later on the ensuing drive was recovered by the Hornets at the Anthony Wayne 23. Miezer appeared to score on the very next snap, but a holding penalty nullified the score.

Highland, however, wasn’t denied. Five plays later, Borla found an opening Nick Dobkowski for a 1-yard TD pass on a third-and-goal with just seven seconds left in the

half.

“We had the third-and-1 and got hit in the backfield, then we blew a coverage on a third-and-long — and then a turnover,” Brungard said of the first half. “That was 14 points, and that’s hard to come back from against a team like that.”

With the game in hand, Highland added a 20-yard TD strike from Borla to Luke Berkmeier on its first possession of the second half to extend the lead to 38-7 at the 6:37 mark of the third.

After Anthony Wayne had a ball intercepted in the end zone, it responded on its next drive when Kinnee scored the game’s final TD on a 9-yard run with 3:12 remaining.

“Whether it was Highland or another team, we thought all year it was one of the toughest regions in the state,” Brungard said. “And on top of that, Division II is one of the toughest divisions in the state. Highland is an outstanding team.

“We’re just going to embrace each other, say goodbye, and celebrate our season. That’s not how anybody wants to go home, but that’s how it happens in the playoffs.”

For Highland, Miezer ran 22 times for 83 yards and two TDs and also caught a pair of passes for 50 yards.

Kinnee ran 15 times for 131 yards and both TDs for Anthony Wayne. Braden Gardner added 69 yards on 11 attempts.

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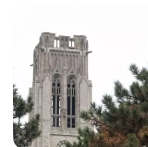
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