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Suburban League football preview: Matt Goul's preseason picks and power rankings

Updated: Aug. 18, 2026, 8:06 a.m. | Published: Aug. 18, 2026, 8:05 a.m.

[Wadsworth looks to maintain its standard with Brysen Hall back at quarterback](#)



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By Matt Goul, cleveland.com

CLEVELAND, Ohio — Defending Suburban League champions Wadsworth and Highland are now in the same conference after a realignment and expansion that welcomes Kenston, Mayfield and Medina.

It's a new era in the Suburban League. Here is a look at it with this cleveland.com preview, which includes games to watch, preseason MVPs and predictions:

Games of the Year

Kenston at Twinsburg, Sept. 25: With their move to the Suburban League, consider the Bombers among the preseason favorites in the American Conference. Their debut begins with a home game vs. Copley, followed by trips to Brecksville-Broadview Heights and Twinsburg. They have Aurora a week after visiting Twinsburg in Week 6, but the Tigers bring a potentially potent offense with returning quarterback Dylan Fantone. Their meeting could light up the scoreboard.

Wadsworth at Highland, Oct. 16: With Highland moving over from the American Conference, it's defending champion vs. champion during Week 9 in Granger Twp.



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Preseason Offensive Players of the Year

Dylan Fantone, Twinsburg, sr. — An All-Northeast Inland District second-team pick last year at quarterback in Division II, Fantone threw for 2,324 yards and 23 touchdowns.

Brysen Hall, Wadsworth, jr. — He is Northeast Ohio's top quarterback prospect in the Class of 2028. Hall is on pace to be a four-year starter. As a sophomore last season, he threw for 2,490 yards and 29 TDs to four interceptions.

Preseason Defensive Players of the year

Evan Foust, Highland, sr. — One of the returning standouts from a Highland team that made it to the Division II regional finals, Foust made the All-Ohio second team at linebacker. He had 73 tackles with 3.5 sacks.

Luciano Traczyk, Mayfield, jr. — Also the Wildcats' starting left tackle, Traczyk was a menace as a sophomore defensive end with 87 tackles, 21 tackles for loss and nine sacks.



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American Conference power rankings

1. Kenston (7-5 last year): The Bombers endured several injuries in their quest for a third straight Western Reserve Conference title. Coach Jeff Grubich (15th season) had to make changes at quarterback and running back, but junior Ethan Burge returns to the backfield after his breakout freshman year. Northeast Lakes District second-team lineman Brody Sell is back, as is Will Hamm, who emerged in the backfield with Burge out.

2. Twinsburg (6-5): The Tigers are on the move like many teams in the Suburban League, but are moving from the National Conference to the American. With it, coach Charles Saulter returns one of the league's top quarterbacks in Dylan Fantone. Three returning linemen anchor the line in front of Fantone, who also has two tight ends, including two-way starter Jeremiah Chapman (one of four returning starters on defense).



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3. Aurora (6-4): Luke McGovern is coming off an electric junior season for the Greenmen, who just missed the playoffs as the 13th seed in Division III, Region 9. Coach Bob Mihalik (26th season) thinks his team has rediscovered its physical demeanor that pushed previous teams deep into the playoffs. The Greenmen lost three of their games last season by no more than a touchdown. They also won four straight games to close the season.

4. Mayfield (5-5): Ross Bandiera's Wildcats were one of the WRC's youngest teams last season, starting underclassmen at quarterback and on the line. Now a sophomore, Dario D'Agostino is back behind center with senior Jayden Haynes as his top target and one of the league's top two-way linemen in Luciano Tracyzk.

5. Revere (8-3): A senior-laden squad last year could mean rebuilding for coach Bobby Nickol and the Minutemen, who earned the fourth seed and a first-round bye last year in Division III, Region 10. They have nine returning starters total, but the line remains a source of strength with two-way Michael Mark (3 sacks, 5.5 TFL) at tight end and defensive end. Joel Caipen (7 sacks, 7 TFL) also is back at defensive end, where Revere had one of Northeast Ohio's toughest fronts to earn that high standing in its region.

6. Copley (7-4): Four-year starting lineman Lucas Tielsch (now at Minnesota) and electric receiver Andrew McKnight have graduated for Copley, which will have a new-look squad around coach John Kromalic (fourth season). Junior quarterback Dane Wininger (1,800 yards passing, 600 yards rushing, 25 total TDs) will lead the way with senior running back Jalen Owens (500 yards), receiver Jacob Kuczkowski (500 yards) and junior Carsen Manson.

7. Brecksville-Broadview Heights (7-5): Junior linebacker Chris Soeder is at the center of the Bees' defense for new coach Dan Schreiber. Brecksville graduated leading rusher Jacob Eterovich and top lineman E.J. German. Both made the All-Northeast Lakes District second team in Division II.

8. Barberton (1-9): Pyrce Taylor is the new coach at Barberton after previously serving as Youngstown Chaney's offensive coordinator. He is an Akron native and a three-year starting quarterback at Buchtel through 2016. Taylor replaces Tony Gotto, who led the program for 12 years. The Magics return three junior receivers, including senior Vernon Reynolds, Noah Wright and Cleophus Thompson. They played multiple quarterbacks, and Jackson Hanlin returns as a 6-2 junior. Tackle Jason Modi and center Jacob Osbourne are back on the line. Defensively, five junior starters are back: Ricco Varner up front with linebackers Michael Ellis, Jacob Anders and two in the secondary with Noah Wright and Reginald Wyatt.

1. Wadsworth (11-1): The Grizzlies are favored to win their fourth straight National Conference crown, despite graduating one of their most decorated senior classes. That's because they bring back Brysen Hall at quarterback, fellow junior Jude Haller at safety and plenty of depth around them. Only Division II state champion Avon could put a dent in Wadsworth's 2025 season. The same goes for Highland, which looms in Week 9 as the Grizzlies' top challenger.

2. Highland (12-1): The Hornets will have a new look after graduating record-setting rusher Casey Myser and Co. Coach Mike Gibbons (12th season) can lean on Foust on both sides of the ball, while Jonah Kowza returns as one of Northeast Ohio's top kickers. The defense should remain one of the best, but how quickly can a new-look offense adjust?

3. Nordonia (8-4): Scott Barwidi takes over for Jeff Fox, who is now the athletic director of his alma mater at Willoughby South. Barwidi had been on his staff for 18 years, most recently serving as assistant head coach. He has senior quarterback Steven Fakult (3,072 yards, 27 TDs) and top receiver Dominick Jackson (933 yards, 12 TDs, 49 receptions) back with linebacker Karsen Fisher (103 tackles, 17 TFL, three sacks) for an experienced squad. Their Suburban League opener Sept. 11 will be a big one with a trip to Highland.

4. Hudson (10-3): Leading rusher Reno Ferri (874 yards, six TDs) and top lineman Otto Grill are back for Jeff Gough (11th season), who graduated two-way standouts Nathan Judy and Brennan Funvak. Senior quarterback Havden Lipinski (1,653 yards, 19 TDs) took over at the

position with Judy concentrating more on linebacker and tight end last season, which helped the Explorers reach the Division II regional semifinals.

5. Medina (4-8): Senior quarterback River Blomquist and the Bees built some momentum for the offseason with their Division I playoff upset of Strongsville, a parting gift for a Greater Cleveland Conference rival before their move to the Suburban League. Coach Larry Laird (10th season) must replace defensive standouts Cliff Nicholson on the line and linebacker Jack Fletcher. Medina has leaned heavily on the pass game under Laird, and now he has two quarterbacks to choose from with the addition of senior Adam Barr joining Blomquist after transferring from Kenston.

6. Solon (2-8): The Comets begin their third year in the Suburban League since leaving the GCC, but they have a new coach and athletic director in Antonio Hall. He previously coached at Canton McKinley and inherits a team that brings back Miami (Ohio) commit Brady Bush on the defensive line. Electric senior back Bryer Pickana and quarterback Brody Cowan also are among the returning starters at Solon.

7. North Royalton (4-6): Judd Lutz is the new coach at North Royalton, replacing Nick Ciulli, who is now at Valley Forge after 21 years leading the Bears. Lutz led Tiffin Columbian for the last 10 years, including a state final four run in 2020. At North Royalton, he has 6-7 senior quarterback Nolan Klingbeil and a strong left side of the line with Kent State commit Ethan

Garnes and junior guard Brandon Bostick among the Bears' players to watch.

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8. Stow-Munroe Falls (2-8): Dan Larlham takes over for Martin Poder in Stow after serving as defensive coordinator last season and offensive coordinator in 2024. He previously led Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy. Larlham will have a new quarterback under center following the graduation of Jake Harrington, but a defensive leader returns in two-way starter Caden Boyd at running back and linebacker. Boyd is joined by returning starters Jack Miller and Colten Baker in the secondary. Two are back up front on the offensive line in Jayden McKay and Nick Contini.



Matt Goul

Matt Goul has covered high school sports with some college and pros sprinkled in since 2005 with a bachelor's degree from Kent State University. He has covered high school basketball and football in Northeast...more

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