

Akron Beacon Journal

OHSAA playoffs breakdown, Highland-Avon prediction in Ohio high school football

Brad Bournival Akron Beacon Journal

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The venue changed but the main event remains the same.

The [Highland](#) and [Avon](#) football teams meet for the third season in a row in a [Division II, Region 6 final](#). This season the game will take place Brunswick High School.

Here's what to expect at 7 p.m. Friday, Nov. 21:

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No. 3 Avon (11-1) vs. No. 1 Highland (12-0)

What to know: The last time these two teams played in Brunswick, Highland beat Avon in a 2013 Division II, Region 4 final. ... The Hornets hold an 11-7 career record against the Eagles, who have won the last six meetings. According to Medina Gazette historian and sports editor Albert Grindle, Highland was undefeated against Avon when the two were in the Inland Conference from 1966-75. ... This is the 15th playoff appearance and sixth consecutive for the Hornets, who reached the state semifinals in 2013. Highland is 21-14 in those appearances. The Hornets beat fourth-seeded North Ridgeville 48-0 in Week 13 after a 38-7 win over No. 8 Brecksville in Week 12. ... This is the 18th consecutive playoff appearance and 15th consecutive for the Eagles, who are the reigning state champions, were runners-up in 2011 and have reached nine state semifinals. Avon is 43-17 in those appearances. The Eagles beat second-seeded Wadsworth 42-21 in Week 13 after a 46-13 win over sixth-seeded Olmsted Falls in Week 12. ... This is a rematch of the regional final the last two seasons. Avon won 28-20 last season and 28-14 in 2023. ... "These guys have been looking forward to this all year," Highland coach Mike Gibbons said. "It's been in the back of their minds since last year. They remember how it felt and wanted to get back there and hopefully get another crack at

them." ... All-Northeast Lakes Defensive Player of the Year Ryan Stolarski is a beast at linebacker. The senior and Miami (Ohio) commit has 72 tackles, eight for loss, four sacks, five QB pressures, a fumble recovery, a forced fumble and two interceptions. North Carolina commit Jakob Weatherspoon (43 tackles, interception, three pass breakups) has shut down everyone this season, but didn't play last week. Cincinnati commit Lance Dawson (20 tackles, nine for loss, three sacks, 27 quarterback pressures) is also a force on the defensive line. ... The Eagles are led by All-Northeast Lakes Offensive Player of the Year Blake Elder. The senior QB is 152-for-225 passing for 2,502 yards and 28 TDs against just three interceptions. ... First-team all-district wide WR Grant Barr (53 receptions, 854 yards, 10 TDs, two two-point conversions), Fin Jerdonek (40 receptions, 613 yards, seven TDs) and Caden Clapham (20 receptions, 349 yards, four TDs) are his primary receivers. The Eagles are a run-by-committee group. Michael Colburn (75 carries, 381, seven TDs), Quiante Smith (68 carries, 367 yards, eight TDs) and Cam Wendell (54 carries, 233 yards, nine TDs) are the stars. ... Avon's average score this season is 41-12. ... Two-time Suburban League American Conference Offensive Player of the Year Casey Myser (137 carries, 1,163 yards, 23 TDs) leads a Highland rushing attack that gains 247.4 yards per game. ... Grady Gibb (89-for-104 passing, 1,647 yards passing, 22 TDs, two interceptions) is a dual-threat quarterback. ... Lucas Gerding (26 catches, 465 yards, six TDs) and Nick Dobkowski (16 receptions, 405 yards, four TDs) are his primary receivers. ... SL American Conference Co-defensive Player of the Year Evan Foust (63 tackles, 14 for loss, 3.5 sacks, three forced fumbles, interception, four pass breakups), Dobkowski (seven interceptions) and Jameson Gordon (59 tackles, 9.5 for loss, three sacks, interception, fumble recovery, forced fumble, five pass breakups) lead a unit that allows just 47.4 yards rushing per game. ... Highland's first-string defense [hasn't given up a touchdown since a first-quarter score by Avon Lake in Week 3](#). Highland has beaten opponents by an average score of 47-5 this season

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Who will win: Highland 28-21

What's next for the winner: A state semifinal Nov. 28, location and opponent TBD

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