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HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

Highland stuns Wadsworth with touchdown on final play

Updated: Oct. 17, 2026, 2:25 a.m. | Published: Oct. 16, 2026, 11:08 p.m.

'It was a blur:' How Highland came back from 18 down in the fourth quarter to beat Wadsworth

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GRANGER TWP., Ohio — Down to one final play, Colton Wadle looked for Jake Weber.

They connected early Friday night for a touchdown pass and again on the final play to lift Highland closer to the Suburban League National Conference championship with a 29-28 comeback win against Wadsworth.

“I saw him get open, and it was just like, ‘Make the throw,’” said Wadle, who rolled out to his right on fourth-and-goal at the 6-yard line.

Highland (8-1), ranked No. 10 in this week’s cleveland.com [Northeast Ohio high school football Top 25](#), rallied from an 18-point deficit to start the fourth quarter and is now in position to take the outright Suburban League crown next Friday with a trip to Hudson (7-2, 4-2). The Hornets, who are 6-0 in the National Conference, won the last two American Conference titles before moving up this season to the Suburban League’s bigger division.

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‘It was a blur:’ How Highland came back from 18 points down in the fourth quarter to beat Wadsworth

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They are on the verge of a three-peat in dramatic fashion.

“The kids kept fighting,” Highland coach Mike Gibbons said. “Ton of resiliency. They never gave up. I’m so proud of them.”

Gibbons looked back to halftime, when his team trailed No. 3 Wadsworth (8-1, 5-1) after Brysen Hall’s touchdown pass to fellow junior Jay’len King and Braydan Todd’s TD run in the final minute before halftime.

“This looked like a 7-on-7 for them,” Gibbons said he told his players. “It’s pouring down rain right now. We’ve got to re-route receivers. We’ve got to go after the ball. They just kept fighting.”

The downpour at North Gateway Tire Stadium on Highland’s campus didn’t keep either team from throwing the ball.

Hall, the Grizzlies’ prized junior with several Division I college scholarship offers, completed 20 of 37 passes for 248 yards and two touchdowns. But he also threw three interceptions.

Hall had just two picks in the first eight games, but Highland’s Ben Radigan pulled in one of his deep passes in the third quarter to thwart a Wadsworth drive. Then senior linebacker Evan Foust had another pick late in the fourth quarter before sophomore defensive end Isaac Demming came up with the

quarter before sophomore defensive end Isaac Demming came up with the biggest takeaway to set up Highland's final drive from the Wadsworth 40-yard line with 2:58 left in the game.

Highland trailed by five points and needed a touchdown after Todd broke up a two-point conversion pass on the Hornets' previous score.

They methodically worked their way to the 16-yard line before Gibbons took his last timeout with a minute left.

Highland reached the 6-yard line when Wadsworth coach Justin Todd called timeout. The yard makers signaled fourth-and-1, but when his defense returned to the field, the Hornets had been given a first down.

The Grizzlies stopped Foust at the line of scrimmage. With no timeouts, Wadle spiked the football with six seconds left on the clock. Wadsworth took another timeout before Wadle's pass to the left corner of the end zone fell incomplete.

That's when he looked the other way and hit Weber.

"We work on that in practice every day," Weber said. "Just being able to get to the ball quickly, it's just all that matters."

Weber finished with 106 yards on eight receptions, including the winning grab from Wadle, who threw for 176 yards on 15-of-24 passing. The sophomore quarterback also rushed for two TDs, both in the fourth quarter of the comeback.

"I'm looking for him every time," Wadle said of his leading receiver. "That's the man to get it done."

Weber fumbled early in the third quarter, but Wadle quickly went back to him on Highland's next possession. In fact, he threw to Weber three times on Highland's next four plays.



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