

Akron Beacon Journal

FOOTBALL

OHSAA football playoff standings shift after forfeit decision changes records

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Norton High School football coaches and players held practice Oct. 21 with an 8-0 overall record and the knowledge they were the No. 1 team in the OHSAA Division IV, Region 13 playoff computer rankings.

By mid-afternoon Oct. 22, Norton's undefeated record was gone and the Panthers had fallen to No. 5 in the rankings.

That was the result when the Ohio High School Athletic Association overturned several canceled football games across the state and gave teams wins and losses by forfeit.

That decision, just two days before Week 10 games, was made in Columbus by OHSAA's staff, including Commissioner Doug Ute and Beau Rugg, the OHSAA's administrator for football. It altered the win-loss records and positioning of several schools in Summit, Portage and Stark counties, and changed the playoff standings in Division II, Region 5, Division III, Region 9 and 10 and Division IV, Region 13.

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The changes were first posted at JoeEitel.com, a website with unofficial rankings that generally are the same as the OHSAA's official computer rankings.

The OHSAA's decision came after multiple games were canceled because of health and safety concerns of student-athletes, coaches, referees and family members and friends of student-athletes, coaches and referees.

On Oct. 23 Norton [asked the OHSAA to reverse its decision](#).

"We are disappointed by a last-minute reversal to have our kids punished because our school followed state and county guidelines, as well as NFHS guidelines," Panthers coach Glen Kruger said by text the morning of Oct. 23.

"Furthermore, the decision to cancel our game was made in conjunction with our school nurse, county health department, training staff, and ironically the OHSAA themselves when they told our administration that the cancellation would be a no contest.

"Never have I witnessed a rule change made so arbitrarily, and done so 9 weeks after being told something else. Clearly, Norton is being punished and lumped in with teams who decided to cancel games because they did not want to play specific opponents. This decision is even more disappointing as it was released as a 2:39 p.m. email dump to the affected schools, three days before the regular season ended.

"Our kids were failed yesterday by the OHSAA for doing the right thing to protect the health and safety of both Norton and Northwest student-athletes. Nonetheless, our team will continue to follow our 1-0 mindset and ignore these outside distractions. We will continue to prepare to face a league rival Coventry in an attempt to try and continue our undefeated regular season."

Norton defeated Springfield at home last week and is set to visit Coventry.

"There have been a number of games here in the last day that had previously been listed as no contest that we have now changed to a forfeiture and have awarded a win to the other team," OHSAA Director of Media Relations Tim Stried told the Beacon Journal the morning of Oct. 23. "The current ratings on Joe Eitel are

correct. Certainly, when we make a significant change like this in Week 10 it is unfortunate and confusing. That is not our goal, obviously, but there have been a number of teams that have canceled games in the last couple of weeks that made our staff look back at our policy for this season and we determined that certainly many of those games could have been played.

"We have decided to have the same policy for all of those games that the team that had to cancel a game is going to receive a loss. They may not be asked to pay the damages clause in the contract, but they will still take a loss. Never great timing to do that, especially in Week 10, but the ratings on Joe Eitel are correct. Certainly, we know that affects a lot of games and a lot of teams."

Stried acknowledged that the OHSAA was aware of the circumstances of why the Norton and Northwest game was not played in Week 1.

"Certainly, at the time we agreed with that and we did allow that to be a no contest at the time, but the fact of the matter is Norton canceled the game," Stried said. "That is one example of many where when one school had to cancel the game we are now going to award a loss to that team. Unfortunate circumstances for sure. Never a great time to do that. That was Week 1. I think in Week 1 we didn't realize there would be more of those situations this year than we expected."

"It was almost in some cases back to the pandemic season [in 2020]. Prior to the pandemic season, this was our policy. Prior to the pandemic, if a team had to cancel a game, they got a loss. We relaxed that policy during the pandemic [in 2020 in 2021] and had kept it the last few years, but now we just need to revert back to our traditional policy where if you cancel a game, you are going to take a loss. Even though both schools agreed not to play, that is separate from our policy."

Which high school football games were affected by OHSAA decision?

Week 1: Dayton Northridge-Stivers; Northwest-Norton

Week 2: Revere-Garfield

Week 4: Fairport Harding-Cardinal; New Middleton Springfield-Waterloo

Week 5: Fayetteville-Lockland; Reidsville Eastern-Sciotoville

Week 7: Highland-Barberton; Columbiana-Valley Christian; Glenville-East Tech; Cleveland Rhodes-Lincoln West

Week 8: John Adams-Lincoln West; Harvest Prep-Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary

Week 10: Northland-Beechcroft

"There were some cancellations in the last couple of weeks that were concerning and this week, some of those cancellations, we awarded a loss to the team that had to cancel," Stried said. "That prompted us to look back at other similar situations where we felt like, we know it is late, but to keep this consistent for the whole season, we need to go back and change those."

"The timing is very unfortunate with this certainly in Week 10. We totally understand throwing a curve ball in Week 10 is never appreciated. That is not our goal. ... Doing something like this in Week 10 is difficult. We realize that people are not going to be happy that we have changed things mid-week, but we are playing this Friday and some schools will get in the playoffs and we will go from there."

Norton, Streetsboro fall in OHSAA football rankings; Northwest rises up standings

Norton and Northwest agreed to cancel a Week 1 game when Norton reported it had cases of hand, foot and mouth disease. The scheduled game remained canceled for nine weeks, and Northwest now receives a win by forfeit and Norton takes a loss by forfeit.

Norton was 8-0 and the No. 1 seed in the Division IV, Region 13 standings with a 21.2222 computer point average on Oct. 21. Lake County Perry (7-2, 20.8167), Beloit West Branch (8-1, 19.8232), Cleveland Glenville (5-3, 19.3295), Mentor Lake Catholic (7-2, 19.2778), Chardon Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin (7-2, 17.8030), Streetsboro (7-2, 16.6768) and Northwest (5-3, 15.2778) were ranked second through eighth.

The Norton-Northwest forfeit decision moved Lake County Perry (7-2, 20.8167) into the No. 1 spot in Division IV, Region 13. Glenville (6-3, 20.1270) received a forfeit win over Cleveland East Technical and moved to No. 2, West Branch (8-1, 19.8232) remained No. 3, Mentor Lake Catholic (7-2, 19.4308) moved to No. 4 and Norton (8-1, 19.044) dropped to No. 5.

Northwest (6-3, 18.2722) jumped up to No. 6, ND-CL (7-2, 17.8030) dropped to No. 7 and Streetsboro (7-2, 16.5500) fell to No. 8.

"We acknowledge how rare this is and unfortunate this is in Week 10," Stried said. "We know that schools and fans are affected by this, and they are to have to understand that we did make changes and we will have to certainly continue to talk about this moving forward."

Copley, Garfield fall in OHSAA football rankings, Revere rises up standings

Revere reported having cases of hand, foot and mouth disease before a Week 2 game against Garfield. Revere wanted to play, but Garfield consulted with Akron Public Schools administrators and decided to not play because of healthy and safety concerns.

The scheduled game was initially considered canceled for eight weeks, but now Revere receives a win by forfeit and Garfield takes a loss by forfeit.

"It means a lot for our kids to get the opportunity to play past Week 10," Revere coach Bobby Nickol said in a text. "We have never hosted a playoff game in a non-

Covid year before. Our kids and community are excited for the challenge. We are looking forward to playing our rival (Copley) on Friday night with so much on the line."

Revere was 6-2 and the No. 6 seed in the Division III, Region 10 standings with a 15.3611 computer point average on Oct. 21. Buckeye (9-0, 27.9222) was No. 1, Wapakoneta (9-0, 22.7333) was No. 2, Lexington (8-1, 18.0889) was No. 3, Lima Shawnee (6-3, 15.6944) was No. 4 and Copley (7-2, 15.4091) was No. 5. Rocky River (7-2, 15.2778) was seventh and Toledo Central Catholic (5-4, 14.5278) was eighth.

The winner of Revere-Copley will likely earn a first-round bye next week.

The Garfield-Revere forfeit decision did not change the position of Buckeye, Wapakoneta or Lexington as the top three teams in Division III, Region 10. It did move Revere (7-2, 16.6444) up to No. 4, dropped Lima Shawnee (6-3, 15.6944) to No. 5 and dropped Copley (7-2, 15.3000) to No. 6. Rocky River and Toledo Central Catholic remained the 7 and 8 seeds.

Copley defeated Garfield in Week 3, but that win means slightly less points now after Garfield was dealt a forfeit loss to Revere. Copley visits Revere on Oct. 24.

"The timing of this is not great," Copley coach John Kromalic said. "You have been running numbers for a few weeks and you think you have an idea of where you are at [in the playoff rankings], and now you are in different spots."

Garfield (4-5, 6.4343) dropped to 18th in the Division II, Region 5 computer rankings.

CVCA maintains OHSA football playoff ranking, but loses computer points

The top two teams in Division III, Region 9 remain Canfield (9-0) and Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy (8-0), but the computer point totals are different for

each school.

Canfield was 30.6919 and is now 30.9501. The Cardinals defeated Louisville, which also beat Northwest, which gained a forfeit win.

CVCA was 27.6784 and is now 27.4306. The Royals defeated Garfield in Week 4, but that win means slightly less points because the Golden Rams were dealt a forfeit loss.

OHSAA gives winless St. Vincent-St. Mary another loss with a forfeit

The OHSAA also gave winless St. Vincent-St. Mary (0-8) a forfeit loss to Canal Winchester Harvest Preparatory for a scheduled game that did not happen in Week 8.

STVM was dealing with several injured players and additional players were sidelined with a bacterial skin infection two weeks ago. STVM consulted with Akron Children's Hospital athletic training staff and decided to cancel.

Two weeks later, the OHSAA gives STVM a forfeit loss after the Irish followed the advice of Akron Children's Hospital athletic training staff.

Hoban, Lake gain computer points; Hudson, Walsh, Nordonio lose computer points in OHSAA football rankings

The top 12 teams in Division II, Region 5 rankings remain the same, but the point totals from Oct. 21 to Oct. 22 are different for some teams because of the forfeits.

No. 1 Archbishop Hoban (7-1) was 32.2824 and is now 32.9890. Hoban beat Harvest Prep and Glenville, which were awarded forfeit victories.

No. 2 Lake (7-2) was 23.6818 and is now 23.9889. Lake beat Northwest, which was given a forfeit victory.

No.. 3 Austintown Fitch (7-1) remained the same at 22.4236.

No. 4 Hudson (7-2) was 21.9903 and is now 21.8141.

No. 5 Walsh Jesuit (7-1) was 21.7917 and is now 21.5956.

No. 6 Nordonía (6-3) was 18.8469 and is now 18.6970.

The ranking and point totals for the next six teams remained the same: No. 7 Garfield Heights (8-1) at 18.0332, No. 8 Painesville Riverside (6-3) at 16.3379, No. 9 Twinsburg (6-3) at 15.3944, No. 10 Willoughby South (5-4) at 12.7222., No. 11 Mayfield (5-4) at 11.4278 and No. 12 Hunting Valley University School (5-4) at 10.5758.

OHSAA does not give forfeit wins to Youngstown Ursuline opponents

The OHSAA did not give wins to the final seven opponents on Youngstown Ursuline's schedule after the Irish played two games and then canceled its season [in the aftermath of the school being sued for a hazing incident involving football players](#).

According to the Warren Tribune, [another latest lawsuit alleges Ursuline failed to protect a female student from a football player's "alleged sexual harassment, stalking and violent assault."](#)

Ursuline opened its season with wins over Steubenville and Columbus Bishop Hartley. The final seven scheduled games against Farrell (Pennsylvania), Warren Harding, Austintown Fitch, STVM, Walsh, Youngstown Chaney and Youngstown Cardinal Mooney were canceled.

"I think Ursuline is a situation in where since they canceled their season and didn't have a team, we look at that a little different," Stried said. "I am sure people are going to ask about that, but we look at the season cancellation different than a school needing to cancel because several players were sick that week."

Stried was asked if the OHSAA is concerned if teams are going to play moving forward, even if they have illnesses, diseases or infections within their teams, to

avoid a forfeit loss.

"At all times, we expect our teams and our schools to keep kids out if they are not able to play and not healthy to play," Stried said. "That doesn't change. If a student-athlete is sick or injured, that is a school decision, that is a medical decision with the school, and if the student-athlete shouldn't play, he or she shouldn't play. We don't want kids to play who shouldn't, but in a lot of cases you keep a kid out who can't play and then the backup goes in and plays."

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