



HIGHLAND 32,
HUDSON 0



AARON JOSEFCZYK / GAZETTE

Highland's Lukas Grillis pressures Hudson quarterback Hayden Lipinski.

Turning heads

Defense takes center stage as Hornets impress

Rick Noland
The Gazette

GRANGER TWP. — The Highland football team finished the game with a running clock against what many thought was the strongest opponent on its schedule, but the Hornets aren't getting ahead of themselves and thinking about an undefeated regular season.

All the Hornets cared about Friday night after dominating Hudson 32-0 in non-league play was getting ready for a Week 3 game at Avon Lake.

"We'll just look to next week," linebacker Evan Foust said after recording three tackles for loss and forcing a fumble. "We've still got a lot of good teams coming up. Every week is going to be a dogfight."

The game against the Explorers (1-1), who are expected to battle Wadsworth for the Suburban League National Conference title, was supposed to be a slob-



Foust



Myser

berknocker, but the St. American Conference Hornets (2-0) dominated in every aspect while forcing a running clock after a 34-yard Jonah Kowza field goal with 2:34 to go in the game.

Highland running back Casey Myser led the offense with 103 yards rushing and a pair of short touchdowns on 17 carries as the Hornets held a 336-196 edge in total offense. Slot receiver Lucas Gerding had a 17-yard score among six carries for 42 yards and added four catches for 49 yards, while Nick Dobkowski had two receptions for 45 yards and added

an interception on defense.

Outside of a bad read that led to an interception at the Hudson 5-yard line on first-and-10 from the 22 on Highland's first possession, quarterback Grady Gibb did everything right while completing 6-of-8 passes for 94 yards and rushing 10 times for 44 yards as the Hornets racked up 22 first downs to Hudson's 13.

The real story, though, was Highland's defense, which forced four turnovers and recorded eight tackles behind the line of scrimmage.

"We were practicing all week expecting this one to come down to the end," the 6-foot, 200-pound Foust said. "Our defense played lights out, our offense did good and our O-line was great. Overall, it was a good game in every aspect."

Foust's three tackles for loss, one of which caused a fumble recovered by Dan Miller, who also had a sack, came in the first 16:35 of the

game. Two were chase-downs of built-like-a-truck Hudson running back Reno Ferri, who was limited to 39 yards on 11 carries as the Hornets held the normally run-heavy Explorers to 56 yards rushing on 22 attempts (2.2 average).

"I've been waiting for this day," Foust said. "I just wanted it."

Also getting in on the fun defensively were Jameson Gordon (INT, 2 sacks), Cooper Zielinski (fumble recovery), Sean Sender (tackle for loss) and Lukas Grillis (sack).

"I'm extremely pleased with our defense," Gibb said. "They played out of their mind."

Offensively, Highland's longest rush was Gerding's 17-yard score on a jet sweep and only two pass completions went for more than 14 yards, but the Hornets lost yardage on just three of their 52 plays, with two of those coming late with backups in the game.

See **HORNETS, C2**

Highland 32, Hudson 0

HUDSON 0 0 0 0 — 0
HIGHLAND 0 14 7 11 — 32

Second

Hi — Casey Myser 1 run (Jonah Kovza kick), 5:05.
Hi — Myser 5 run (Kovza kick), 0:52.

Third

Hi — Lucas Gerding 17 run (Kovza kick), 10:22.

Fourth

Hi — Dylan Lazar 1 run (Jameson Gordon pass from Grady Gibb), 11:57.
Hi — Kovza 34 field goal, 2:34.

	Hud	High
First downs	13	22
Rushing	26/56	44/242
Rushing average	2.2	5.5
Passing	12/23	6/8
Passing yards	140	84
Total offense	40/79	50/336
Punting	2/39.0	2/33.0
Penalties	1/10	3/37
Fumbles	2/2	1/0

RUSHING: Hudson — Ryan Ferri 11-39, Christopher Horner 2-20, Brennan Fumak 4-5, Hayden Lipinski 9-46, Highland — Myser 17-108, Gibb 10-44, Gerding 6-42, Evan Foust 2-23, Lazar 4-15, Arden Pulice 3-8, Colton Winston 2-7.

PASSING: Hudson — Lipinski 12-23-140-2, Highland — Gibb 6-8-84-1.

RECEIVING: Hudson — Ferri 2-33, Nathan Judy 3-28, Luke Casillari 2-25, Gavin Hitchcock 2-25, Mark Salem 1-16, Anthony Paolucci 2-13, Highland — Gerding 4-49, Nick Dobkowski 2-45.

HORNETS

From C1

Credit for that goes to the offensive line of Josh Messina, Wyatt Sitz, Spencer Marquis, Cody Bendau and Thomas Fearn.

"I was confident coming into the game, but I didn't think we were going to get a running clock," Gibb said. "We just did a good job of executing."

Highland's first touchdown was set up when Foust forced Ferri to fumble and Miller ran it back 10 yards to the Hudson 38. Five plays later, Myser scored from 1 yard while running behind Messina and Sitz.

Zielinski's fumble recovery gave Highland the ball at its own 48, and a beautiful 35-yard completion from Gibb to Dobkowski set up Myser's 5-yard TD run with 52 seconds left in the first half.

Gordon's pick on the first series of the third quarter gave Highland the ball at the Hudson 30, and four plays later Gerding raced around right end to make it 21-0.

A fourth-down stop by Gordon set up the Hornets' longest scoring drive of the night, a 10-play, 69-yard march capped by Dylan Lazar's 1-yard run.

Next up: Avon Lake. After that, there are seven SL American opponents, none of which gave the Hornets any



AARON JOSEFCZYK / GAZETTE

Highland's Dan Miller is taken down by Hudson's Hayden Lipinski after recovering fumble.

trouble last season, but this is a new year and it's early, so Highland will take nothing for granted after throttling the

talented Explorers.

"I was super nervous before the game," Myser said. "Hudson's a very well-

coached team, so I'm very happy with our performance. They're a very good team, but we're capable of

getting better."

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