



County Football Week 13



Albert Grindle

HIGHLAND HORNETS (12-0)

COLORS: Green and black
CONFERENCE: Suburban League American Conference (champion)
COACH: Mike Gibbons (10th season, 83-29 record)
PLAYOFF APPEARANCES (18-13 record): 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020, 2017, 2015, 2014, 2013 (D-II state semis), 2011, 2009, 2008, 2001, 2000

NOTEWORTHY: With 41 touchdowns and 246 points this season, Casey Myser needs one and three to break the Medina County season records set by Medina's Jimmy Daw in 2016. Daw had a four-year career as a linebacker at Ball State.

- With 1,940 rushing yards, Myser also needs 60 to join Wadsworth's Jack Snowball (2,595, 2011), Black River's Andrew Vaughn (2,342 2013) and Wadsworth's Dru Jones (2,281, 2007) as the only 2,000-yard rushers in county lore.

- Jonah Kowza moved into seventh in county season history with 63 extra points. The sophomore needs 10 to break the area standard set by teammate Carson Kwiatkowski and Medina's Finn Kelps last fall.

- While Myser gets most of the rushing attention, slot receiver Lucas Gerding (25 carries, 294 yards, 3 TDs), quarterback Dylan Borla (53, 243, 3), utility man Evan Foust (27, 242, 3) and backup Dylan Lazar (35, 249, 3) have combined for 140 carries, 1,028 yards (7.3 average) and 12 scores.

- Foust led the defense last week against Toledo St. Francis de Sales with a career-high 15 tackles (1 for loss). All-Ohio linemen Ryan Zywiec (11 tackles, 2½ for loss, sack) and Carson Noonan (11, 1½, 1) combined for 22 tackles, four TFLs and two sacks. Kallen Whitting broke up two passes and Caleb McKeen posted a sack.

- Highland has yet to lose a fumble on offense. The only lost fumbles overall came on a muffed punt return and a kickoff that bounced off an up-man's helmet.

- The Hornets' 45.7 scoring average ranks second in county history to 2017 Wadsworth (49.1).

- Highland is seeking to join its 2013 team (13-1), 2021 Medina (13-1), 2007 Brunswick (13-1) and 1995 Brunswick (13-1) as the only 13-win squads in county history.



Free safety Garrett Phillips

ANTHONY WAYNE GENERALS (12-0)

COLORS: Blue and gray
CONFERENCE: Northern Lakes League Buckeye Division (champion)
COACH: Andy Brungard (9th season, 87-20 record)
PLAYOFF APPEARANCES (12-14 record): 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016 (D-II state semifinals), 2011, 2003, 2000, 1999, 1990, 1987

NOTEWORTHY: As has been the case all season, almost everything the Generals try to accomplish revolves around Colgate recruit Grant Kinnee at quarterback. The slick-cutting 6-foot-4, 185-pounder has rushed 143 times for 1,226 yards and 25 touchdowns while also completing 88-of-143 passes for 1,252 yards, 17 TDs and four interceptions. Anthony Wayne will mix formations to get Kinnee involved in the running game, mostly using two tight ends but also going to three wide receivers to lighten the box. Running back Braden Gardner (5-11, 165) has 108 carries for 951 yards and 11 scores, while 6-1, 210-pound tight end Brode Sweet is an excellent blocker. The line is not overly big but plays with good pad level.

- The Generals' 4-3 defense relies heavily on aggressively attacking what the coaching staff feels are the keys to reading the offense. In Highland's case, that has meant pinching the ends inside to occupy blockers and allow the linebackers to clean up. Linebackers Casius Krueger (128 tackles, 10 for loss), Kyle Wymer (85, 4) and Roman Morrison (65, 8) are by far the leading tacklers, while left end Gunnar Hansen has 13 TFLs. The Generals will rotate linemen to keep them fresh and focus on speed more than plugging gaps, but their pass rush was lacking in a 35-14 win over Sandusky that was a 21-14 game with the Blue Streaks on the Anthony Wayne 15-yard line to begin the fourth quarter.

- Kinnee was the NLL Offensive Player of the year. Joining him on the first team were Gardner, Sweet, guard Max Grabarczyk, center Owen Palmer, defensive end Billy Cousino, linebackers Wymer, Krueger and Roman Morrison, safety Ben Nieckarz and punter Owen Graf (39.1 average), an Ohio State baseball recruit.

- Anthony Wayne has never had a losing season under Brungard and is 32-5 over the last three seasons. Brungard has a tradition of sleeping in a tent in the end zone of Schaller Memorial Stadium after beating rival Perrysburg, from where he is a graduate.

- The Generals own quality NLL victories over 9-3 Toledo Whitmer (27-3) and 10-2 Perrysburg (31-14). The other 10 wins have come against opponents with a combined 40-67 record, giving them a fantastic 50.net strength of schedule of 66th out of 104 D-II teams. Highland's is 54th.

SCOUTING REPORT

Anthony Wayne is the Highland of Northwest Ohio in many ways but hasn't found a way to crack the code, losing to the Hornets in 2017 (21-14), 2021 (38-14) and 2023 (31-10). This, however, may be the Generals' best team of those four with a dynamic dual-threat QB in Kinnee calling the shots and a defense full of experienced senior talent. Highland must contain Kinnee to have a chance — its pass defense showed vulnerabilities last week — but the Hornets again will have advantages in the trenches. Offensively, the Hornets countered the Generals' over-aggressiveness by using then-QB Peyton Janickas (19 carries, 140 yards) in the running game. Whether they'll use Borla that many times remains to be seen — his career high is 12 carries — but Wayne's linebackers cover a ton of ground and trust their reads. Highland hasn't faced a QB as good as Kinnee. Anthony Wayne hasn't seen lines nearly as good as the Hornets' combination. Whoever takes advantage of their strengths best will play for the regional title.

WADSWORTH GRIZZLIES (11-1)

COLORS: Red and white
CONFERENCE: Suburban League National Conference (champion)
COACH: Justin Todd (8th season, 69-32 record)

PLAYOFF APPEARANCES (15-15 record): 2024, 2023, 2022, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2014, 2013, 2011, 2009, 2007, 2003, 2002, 1999, 1996

NOTEWORTHY: Jacob Earnest's 83-yard fumble return for a touchdown last week at North Ridgeville is tied for the 10th longest in Medina County history. Only Jake Palidar (100, Sept. 6, 2007 at Medina) and Billy Mueller (89, Aug. 30, 2002 at Cuyahoga Falls) have done better in Wadsworth lore.

- Earnest led the defense against North Ridgeville with 16 tackles (1½ for loss, sack) and the fumble return for a touchdown. Tommy Hohn had the best game of his career with four pass breakups, including one in the end zone and another on fourth down, while Gavin Madigan matched Earnest with 16 tackles. Calix Lemp (11 tackles, pass breakup), Brady O'Connor (8), Shawn Kincaid (8), Jude Haller (7, 2 pass breakups), Zach Wise (7), Troy Myers (7) and Boden Ballinger (7) also had at least seven tackles apiece because the Rangers ran a whopping 88 plays.

- Wadsworth had only 151 yards total offense against North Ridgeville, its fewest in a victory since 96 in a 17-9 decision over Highland on Nov. 5, 1993.

- Madigan returned to the offense for the first time since spraining an ankle in Week 7 against Nordonia, rushing three times for 8 yards and catching two passes for 9 that included a juggling 4-yarder for a TD with 11 seconds left in the first half.

- Cooper Gray's 21 rushing touchdowns rank behind only Jack Snowball (31, 2011), Dru Jones (29, 2007) and Will Stack (23, 2023) in Wadsworth season history. Gray's 1,589 rushing yards are 10th, and the junior needs 270 to reach the top five.

- Wadsworth is only committing 44.4 penalty yards per game this season. That number was 66.6 a year ago.
- The Grizzlies have never played Avon. The Eagles have experienced massive growth, moving from D-IV to D-III in 2005 and to D-II in 2009.



End Zach Wise

AVON EAGLES (12-0)

COLORS: Purple and gold
CONFERENCE: Southwestern Conference (champion)
COACH: Mike Elder (19th season, 198-31 record)

PLAYOFF APPEARANCES (39-17 record): 2024, 2023 (D-II state semis), 2022, 2021 (D-II state semis), 2020 (D-II state semis), 2019 (D-II state semis), 2018 (D-II state semis), 2017 (D-II state semis), 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011 (D-II state runner-up), 2010, 2008, 2004, 1996 (D-IV state semis)

NOTEWORTHY: The Eagles' spread offense is very well-balanced, but everyone knows the conductor is Kent State recruit Nolan Good (6-foot-1, 200 pounds), who has 45 rushes for 424 yards and seven touchdowns while completing 161-of-249 passes for 2,727 yards, 27 touchdowns and six interceptions. Avon career receiving leader Matt Maxey has been a terror in the slot with 73 catches for 1,156 yards and 10 scores, while No. 2 Cole Kepner (26, 570 7) has good numbers as well. The running game is by committee, as Good, speedy Quante' Smith (49 carries, 383 yards, 8 TDs), Tyler Kaufmann (82, 537, 9) and Cam Wendell (66, 374, 5) all have at least 300 yards. Kicker Owen Warrick is another threat, having made 59-of-59 extra points and 5-of-7 field goals.

- The offensive line features Jeremiah Kelly, a 6-3, 295-pound Cincinnati recruit who is one ranking behind Wadsworth's Eli Kaufman in the Ohio Class of 2025 ranking (76th), according to 247sports.com. Guard Max Hauck (6-3, 270) and center Connor Bingham (6-1, 270) form a formidable left side, though the other side goes 6-2, 240 and 6-0, 235. Tight end Tyler Beerbohm is another matchup problem at 6-4, 245.

- The defense boasts free safety Jakob Weatherspoon, a hard-hitting 6-0, 176-pounder whose 17 offers include Ohio State, Michigan, Michigan State, Notre Dame, Pitt, Syracuse and Wisconsin. Linebacker Ryan Stolarski (6-2, 220) holds offers from Akron, Lehigh, Buffalo and Toledo. Impressively, the Eagles have 87 tackles for loss, but no player has more than 10.

- Good, Maxey, Kelly, Weatherspoon, Beerbohm, Bingham, Sam Toniolo (DE, sr.), Jason Gillespie (DT, sr.) and Owen Garcia (LB, sr.) were first-team D-II All-Northeast Lakes District.
- For being considered a state title contender, Avon interestingly is minus-1 in turnover margin.

SCOUTING REPORT

No one is skirting around the fact Wadsworth is largely considered a double-digit underdog tonight, as many believe this is the year Avon has its greatest opportunity to break through for a state championship due to recent D-II superpowers Archbishop Hoban and Massillon taking a small step backward. This Grizzlies team will always be remembered for its grit, however, and is fully embracing the challenge of needing a near-perfect game in all three phases to pull off an upset. The biggest mismatch Wadsworth will face is up front, as the Grizzlies simply don't have the beef on either side of the ball. Remember: Avon ma'nted North Ridgeville 38-7, and the Rangers were touted for having a big O-line. Kelly is a load and likely won't go against Kaufman much one-on-one, and Wadsworth may have to commit Lemp to shadowing Maxey, who lit up a good Highland defense a year ago in the regional finals. Offensively, Wadsworth is coming off one of its worst performances yardage-wise under Todd but got a huge 45-yard TD from Gray and a clutch 4-yard TD pass to Madigan in the closing seconds of the first against North Ridgeville. Avon boasts future D-II college players at all three levels of its defense, and the Grizzlies will likely need to get big plays from some one other than Gray, Madigan or Lemp to have a chance.