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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL MIDSEASON AWARDS

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We've reached the halfway point of the high school football season and there have been some surprises to go with the success many thought some teams and individuals would have.

With Week 6 just around the corner, here's a look at the midseason MVP on offense and defense as well as the coach and team of the first half. We also highlight the surprise team and superlative performances.

Here's where we are heading into the second half of the regular season: **Greater Akron high school football offensive MVP**

- Casey Myser, Highland running back: There are a number of viable candidates here, but Myser is our pick. The Hornets junior has rushed 87 times for 707 yards and scored 13 touchdowns. Myser also has seven catches for 239 yards and four scores.

- Also considered: Keller Moten, Walsh Jesuit quarterback; Phil Partin, Manchester running back; Ben Chesser, Nordonia quarterback; Brayton Feister, Hoban running back; Gavin Madigan,

Wadsworth running back; Ziaire Stevens, East running back

Greater Akron high school football defensive MVP

- Nick Crawford, Hoban defensive tackle: If you pay attention to the Knights, you know there are a slew of defensive standouts, but Crawford has been a cut above this season. He's made 30 tackles, nine for loss, has three forced fumbles and has a touchdown.

- Also considered: Elbert Hill, Hoban cornerback; Declan Norton, Walsh Jesuit linebacker; Eli Lee, Hoban linebacker; Carson Noonan, Highland defensive end; Craig Aiken, Nordonia defensive end; Gavin Madigan, Wadsworth free safety; Caden Carter, Walsh Jesuit linebacker

Greater Akron high school football team of the first half

- Walsh Jesuit Warriors: The Warriors lost first-team All-Ohio safety John Keough to Buffalo, second-team allstate defensive end David Hawersaat and honorable mention all-state linebacker Noah Brock to Walsh University, and second-team All-Ohio linebacker Brock Sherman to William and Jefferson. Yet, they're 5-0 with wins over Youngstown Ursuline, McDowell (Pa.), St. Vincent-St. Mary, St. Ignatius and Firestone and are scoring 45.4 points per game.

- Also considered: Highland, Nordonia, Wadsworth, Green, Hoban

Greater Akron high school football coach of the first half

- Kevin Stacy, Manchester: When Stacy took over for the playoff-rich Panthers in January 2023, they were coming off an 0-10 season. Last season's 1-9 record wasn't much better. Fast forward to this season and Manchester is 5-0 with impressive wins over Northwest and Orrville.

- Also considered: Nick Alexander, Walsh Jesuit; Jeff Fox, Nordonia; Justin Todd, Wadsworth; Tim Tyrrell, Hoban; Mike Gibbons, Highland **Greater Akron high school football surprise team of the first half**

- Manchester Panthers: This goes to the team out of New Franklin as well. We've just chronicled why the Panthers deserve it, but did you know they're doing it with the same players from last season? Phil Partin has been incredible for his squad as a sophomore, but so have two-way starters Yadin Sharp, Trevor Kusmits and Evan Kusmits. The defense gives up 6.1 points per game on top of that. Last week, the unit forced six turnovers in a win over Orrville.

- Also considered: Revere **Performance of the first half**

- Brysen Hall, Wadsworth vs. Twinsburg: It's not often that a freshman quarterback gets to play the most important position, but Hall is doing it for the Grizzlies. He took over as starter in Week 3. In Week 4, he was 22-of-30 passing for 329 yards and five TDs in a 55-10 win over Twinsburg.

- Also considered: Highland running back Casey Myser's 280 yards rushing and four TDs in 50-20 win over North Royalton; Manchester running back Phil Partin's 148-yard rushing yards against Northwest that also included a 2-point conversion and interception in overtime during a 29-22 win; Copley running back Tony Cox's 203 yards rushing, three TDs in 33-14 win over Firestone; Walsh Jesuit QB Keller Moten's 189 total yards performance in a 37-35 win over Youngstown Ursuline that also included four TDs and 166 yards rushing.

Game of the first half

- Manchester 29, Northwest 22

(OT): Northwest took a 22-6 halftime lead and didn't score another point. Yadin Sharp scored a TD with 10:18 left in the third quarter and Phil Partin added a 2-point conversion to make it 22-14. Sharp called his own number with 10:02 left in the fourth quarter and converted a 2-point conversion to tie it. The Panthers had a field goal attempt blocked with three seconds left in regulation but took the lead on a 1-yard run by Sharp in overtime. It ended with Partin making an interception in the end zone to secure the win.

- Also considered: Green 21, Jackson 17; Green 21, Hoover 19; Highland 24, Hudson 21; Green 14, Tallmadge 6; Tallmadge 13, Brecksville 7 (OT); Buchtel 22, Hoover 13 *Contact Brad Bournival at bbournival@gannett.com and follow him on Twitter at [@bbournival](https://twitter.com/bbournival)*

