

The Blitz Week 10

THE BEST OF HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL



**BUCKEYE 51,
LAKEWOOD 14**

Share? No way

**Bucks clinch
CWC outright**

Chad Grant
The Gazette

LAKEWOOD — The undisputed king of the Cleveland West Conference was crowned Friday night.

The Buckeye football team completed its rampage through the inaugural season of the new but very similar conference with yet another dominating performance, smashing Lakewood 51-14.

With the win, Buckeye (9-1, 7-0) locked up the No. 2 seed in the Division III, Region 10 playoffs. According to JoeFidel.com, the Bucks will host Norwalk (2-8) in the first round, but official pairings won't be announced until Sunday.

The win also ensured the Bucks will remain on the opposite side of the bracket from regional favorite and defending D-III state champion Toledo

Central Catholic (9-1) until the regional final.

"We're just looking to go on a deep playoff run," Buckeye running back Troy McCann said. "(We want to) get further than we did last year and make history."

The Bucks were challenged much in conference play, outscoring CWC members 318-54 for an average score of 45-7 while picking up a pair of shutouts.

Buckeye's 429 points now rank third in school history and the 42.9 average ranks is first with a minimum one game to play.

All but one of the conference games — the 28-7 CWC-opening win over North Olmsted — featured a running clock at some point. The matchup with the Rangers (4-6, 2-5) wasn't any different.

"We had to put the work in," Buckeye fullback/linebacker Ryan Wilhelm said. "We have to be ready to play all four quarters all throughout the playoffs and try to make it far."

Buckeye, which previously played in the very similar Great Lakes Conference, was the epitome of a balanced offense in the victory, rushing for 190 yards and passing for 190 while averaging exactly 10 yards per play.

In a battle of unbeaten and largely untested teams, the Hornets dominated in all phases Friday night while

rolling to a thoroughly impressive 34-0 win over Aurora in Suburban League American Conference action. The Hornets (10-0, 7-0) not only won the SL American and wrapped up an unbeaten regular season, they avenged a heartbreaking Week 10 loss to the Greenmen (9-1, 6-1) last year. On paper, it wasn't supposed to be this one-sided. Highland came in

See **BUCKS**, E3



**HIGHLAND 34,
AURORA 0**



NICK GAMMETT / GAZETTE

Highland running back Casey Myser celebrates after scoring a touchdown during the first half.

They're No. 1

Rick Noland
The Gazette

AURORA — The most anticipated game of the year in Medina County football circles turned out to be a snoozefest. That's a testament to just how good the 2024 Highland Hornets are.

In a battle of unbeaten and largely untested teams, the Hornets dominated in all phases Friday night while

**Hornets get their revenge,
grab SL American outright**

rolling to a thoroughly impressive 34-0 win over Aurora in Suburban League American Conference action.

The Hornets (10-0, 7-0) not only won the SL American and wrapped

up an unbeaten regular season, they avenged a heartbreaking Week 10 loss to the Greenmen (9-1, 6-1) last year.

On paper, it wasn't supposed to be this one-sided. Highland came in

averaging 45.9 points and allowing 7.2, while Aurora was at 48.1 and 7.3. Only the winning team's numbers held up.

"It feels amazing," two-way Highland lineman Ryan Zywiec said. "Last year we had a heartbreaking loss. To come back and get a running clock (for the final 10:41) on them was great."

See **HORNETS**, E2



NICK CAMMETT / GAZETTE

Highland safety Garrett Phillips (22) celebrates one of his interceptions. Below, Hornets end Carson Noonan tackles Aurora's Xavier Board.

Highland 34, Aurora 0

HIGHLAND 14 7 6 - 34
AURORA 0 0 0 - 0

First
H — Lucas Gerding 5 run (Jonah Kowza kick), 7:38.
H — Evan Foust 31 pass from Dylan Borla (Kowza kick), 1:23.

Second
H — Casey Myser 47 run (Kowza kick), 5:55.

Third
H — Myser 1 run (Kowza kick), 8:28.

Fourth
H — Garrett Phillips 5 run (kick blocked), 10:41.

	H	A
First downs	15	14
Rushing	41/307	16/14
Rushing average	7.5	0.9
Passing	3/3	19/32
Passing yards	98	184
Total offense	44/405	48/198
Punting	1/24.0	4/37.8
Penalties	8/100	5/45
Fumbles	0/0	1/0

RUSHING: Highland — Myser 24-215, Gerding 5-43, Dylan Lazar 3-19, Foust 1-14, Phillips 2-12, Borla 4-6, Team 2-(-2), Aurora — Ryan Dwyer 3-11, Xavier Board 9-11, Tommy Jackson 1-5, Cole Watson 1-3, Ben Lukask 1-(-1), Team 1-(-13).

PASSING: Highland — Borla 3-3-28-0, Aurora — Dwyer 18-31-178-2, Lukask 1-1-8-0.

RECEIVING: Highland — Foust 2-76, Gerding 1-22, Aurora — Lukask 5-45, Zach Pannetti 7-55, Alex Brooker 3-34, Luke McGovern 2-18, Dwyer 1-8, Board 1-4.

HORNETS

From E1

"We've been preparing for this for two weeks. We knew we had to compete and be ready because they're a great team, but we're on a different path. We're going for a (Division II) state title. They wanted a Suburban League (American) title."

The Greenmen, who were without 6-foot-3, 235-pound running back/linebacker Lucas Manderbach due to a leg injury, managed just 14 yards on 16 rushing attempts as Highland recorded its third straight shutout and fifth of the season.

Down 14-0 after one period, 21-0 at half and 28-0 after three quarters, Aurora had a chance to get on the board late in the third, but Hornets defensive back Garrett Phillips read a first-and-goal play from the 5 perfectly, came off his man and intercepted Ryan Dwyer (18-for-31, 176 yards) in the end zone.

"I knew the play, and I was waiting for them to call it," said Phillips, who also picked off a pass tipped by teammate Jameson Gordon and concluded the scoring with a 5-yard TD run. "The full-back released, and I knew the tight end was coming behind him. I knew I was going to pick it, so I came off my man."

A stellar Highland defense also got tackles for loss from Zywiec, Carson Noonan and Gordon, while the offense accumulated 405 yards behind exceptional line play from Noonan, Josh Messina, Zywiec, Brady Bendau and Ben Coyne, the unstoppable running legs of Casey Myser and intercepted Ryan Dwyer (18-for-31, 176 yards) in the end zone.

Myser rushed 24 times for 215 yards and his 32nd and 33rd touchdowns overall this season while having a 71-yard score called back when holding was called 25 yards behind the play.

"Those dudes did a great job," Myser



said of his O-linemen. "They did great. I fumbled on the 5-yard line last year (against Aurora) and let a lot of people down. Scoring a couple big ones this year felt great, but I'll have to look at the film on those holding calls. Our guys don't hold."

Myser, who now has 1,561 yards rushing despite sitting out large chunks of many games, got his latest scores on 47- and 1-yard runs, the first going down the left sideline after left tackle Noonan opened a gaping running alley.

Borla, meanwhile, averaged nearly 33 yards per pass attempt, as his three completions went for 98 yards, including two for 76 yards to wide-open tight end Evan Foust on Highland's second TD drive.

The Hornets caught an early break — and then set the tone for the rest of the game — when Dwyer's knee hit the ground at the Aurora 24-yard line as he fielded a low punt snap on the first possession of the night.

After three Myser runs netted 19 yards, Lucas Gerding went in motion from the left, took a handoff from Borla and scored from 5 yards just 4:22 into the game.

The bigger and stronger Hornets went 80 yards in five plays on their next possession. With Aurora loading the box in

an attempt to stop Myser, Borla found Foust for 45 yards on the second play and 31 off play action for a TD on the fifth.

"I saw the ball in the air and I went and got it," Foust said. "I did it for the boys from last year. I knew we had to get them back. They were both great balls by Dylan."

"Our whole game plan was to run the ball, but we can also pass the ball. We did this as a total team, and we can get it done against any team."

After Myser's 47-yard jaunt made it 21-0 with 5:55 to play in the second quarter, the Greenmen didn't have much chance. Aurora moved the ball decently with throws underneath, but its longest pass play went for 19 yards. Of the Greenmen's 16 rushing attempts, 13 went for 3 or fewer yards, including 10 of 1 yard or less.

It added up to an extremely impressive win for the Hornets, who finally got the bad taste of their 2023 game against Aurora out of their mouths.

"That loss was in our minds every time we lifted weights, every time we went out on the practice field and every time we watched film," Phillips said. "One of our goals all year was to get this one."

Contact Rick Noland at (330) 721-4046 or rlnoland@medina-gazette.com. Follow him @RickNoland on X.