

The Blitz Week 4

THE BEST OF HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL



**MEDINA 46,
STOW 40 (OT)**

A home thriller

Sokolowski's five TDs give Bees first victory

John Urchek
The Gazette

MEDINA — Medina's Cooper Sokolowski turned out the lights on the Stow football team Friday night.

Sokolowski completed his do-it-all night when he scored a 2-yard, walk-off touchdown in overtime during a 46-40 Suburban League National Conference victory.

The win was the first of the season for the Bees (1-3, 1-0), as well as their first as a member of the SL National. Meanwhile, Stow's SL National losing streak stretched to eight, dating to a 45-28 win over Twinsburg on Oct. 25, 2024.

"I'm feeling great," Sokolowski said.

"We never gave up. We kept fighting. It's a great feeling."

"We were 0-3 going into this, so we knew we needed a win. First conference game, so we really needed this one, and that's what we did."

Moments before Sokolowski's touchdown, one of the light stanchions in Kenneth Dukes Stadium went out by the Bees' student section. The referees convened shortly before determining the game could continue because play was happening near the opposite end zone.

Sokolowski did everything but control the lights, as the wide receiver caught eight passes for 137 yards, ran nine times for 53 yards and scored five touchdowns. He even attempted a halfback pass in overtime that bounced off two defenders before falling harmlessly to the turf.

Sokolowski also filled in for Korde Carey (hip) at linebacker and made the defensive play of the game when he stuffed Stow quarterback Gideon Larham on fourth-and-goal from the 1-yard line for a 2-yard loss.

Sokolowski's play helped Medina overcome two interceptions, a safety, three botched snaps on extra point attempts and the defense surrendering a 40-30 lead in the fourth quarter. "Cooper's a dog," linebacker Evan Colon said. "I'll be shocked if that guy doesn't go D-I. That guy is one of the hearts and souls of this team. He's been with the program since he was a little kid — like a lot of us have — and for him to have a night like this is great for the team."

See BEES, C2



**HIGHLAND 23,
NORDONIA 21**



NICK GAMMETT / GAZETTE

Highland's Lukas Grillis celebrates a sack of Nordon's Steven Fakult.

National pastime

Chad Grant
The Gazette

GRANGER TWP. — Highland got its first taste of Suburban League National Conference football Friday.

The first half was steak and lobster, while the second was leftovers from the sketchy restaurant with all of the health code violations.

Fortunately, the aftertaste from the

Hornets send big statement by holding on against Knights

delicious first half was enough to carry the Hornets to a 23-21 win over Nordon.

Highland (3-1, 1-0) imposed its will on the Knights (3-1, 0-1) right out of the gate and looked poised to run Nordon off North Gateway Tire Field.

Big interceptions by Evan Foust and Jake Weber set the defensive tone, and touchdown tosses from Colton Wadle (7-for-14, 149 yards; 11 carries, 9 yards) to Foust (20 yards) and Weber (28) gave the Hor-

nets a 14-0 lead just seven seconds into the second quarter.

"Our defense just has to make stops and be the most physical team on the field," Foust said. "I think we live by that. The momentum we came out with in the first half, and shutting them down was huge for us in the second half."

See HORNETS, C2

Medina 46, Stow 40 (OT)

STOW 7 9 14 10 0 — 40
MEDINA 6 8 26 0 6 — 46

First

S — Jack Miller 23 pass from Gibson Latham (Ronan de St. Aubin kick), 6:32.

M — Kaden Patrick 6 run (kick failed), 1:10.

Second

S — Israel Purkiss 1 run (de St. Aubin kick), 10:52.

M — Cooper Sokolowski 1 run (Noah Brown pass from Patrick), 5:29.

S — Safety (snap into the end zone), 1:52.

Third

M — Sokolowski 60 pass from Patrick (run failed), 11:16.

M — Sokolowski 37 pass from Patrick (run failed), 8:05.

S — Purkiss 1 run (de St. Aubin kick), 4:42.

S — Laurence Stevenson 41 interception return (de St. Aubin kick), 3:55.

M — Sokolowski 14 pass from Patrick (Landon Cusick kick), 3:28.

M — Bishop Burch 24 pass from Patrick (Cusick kick), 1:34.

Fourth

S — Purkiss 14 pass from Latham (de St. Aubin kick), 11:16.

S — de St. Aubin 27 field goal, 2:56.

Overtime

M — Sokolowski 2 run (no conversion attempted).

S —

First downs

21

19

Rushing

51/204

24/74

Rushing average

4.0

3.1

Passing

17/29

19/34

Passing yards

171

246

Total offense

60/229

55/119

Punting

4/57.7

3/22.3

Punt return

13/128

6/80

Fumbles

4/0

RUSHING: Stow — Purkiss 27-173,

Latham 10-26, Cusick 7-43, Cusick 7-43,

Barker 1-11, Medina — Sokolowski 9-58,

Patrick 12-49, Brown 1-15, Team 2-23.

PASSING: Stow — Latham 17-29,

171-0, Medina — Patrick 19-33-345-0,

Sokolowski 9-1-0.

RECEIVING: Stow — Miller 6-61,

Purkiss 4-57, Barker 3-26, Carson

Falkner 2-15, Thomas 1-5.

STOW —

1-17, Logan Doyle 1-5, Medina —

Sokolowski 8-137, Burch 5-69, Ashton

Knowles 4-38, Brown 1-1, Tyler Wilson

1-0.

BEES

From C1

Colon was everywhere for a defensive unit that stepped up when needed despite the game being a shootout.

Along with Colon and Sokolowski, Medina got drive-ending plays from Jamari Powell and Max Hill-vert despite Stow running back/linebacker Israel Purkiss (27 carries, 173 yards; 4 catches, 67 yards) being all over the field. Purkiss caught a 14-yard screen early in the fourth quarter to cut the Bees' lead to 40-37.

Sokolowski's first touchdown came on a 1-yard toss to the right. The game then was tied at 14 after quarterback Kaden Patrick hit Noah Brown for a two-point conversion in the second quarter.

The Bees went into halftime down 16-14 after Patrick fell on a bad snap in the end zone for a safety with 1:52 remaining.

After halftime, the Patrick-to-Sokolowski connection was undeniable. Sokolowski had six catches for 132 yards and three touchdowns in the third quarter, as his first two catches went for touchdowns to give Medina a 26-16 lead.

"Coach (Larry) Laird had a great game plan in the locker room," Patrick said. "We executed on it, did great. Our receivers and linemen played outstanding in the second half."

Patrick went 19-for-33 for 245 yards and four touchdowns while running 12 times for 49 yards, the Bees' first score and two interceptions. The first interception was fumbled by Michael Emmons, but Laurence Stevenson picked it up and covered the final 5 yards to put Stow back ahead 30-26.

Patrick bounced back and hit Sokolowski and Bishop Burch (5 catches, 69 yards) for scores to take the 40-30 lead.

Behind Larham (17-for-29, 171 yards, TD), Stow completed its comeback to force overtime when Ronan de St. Aubin hit a 27-yard field goal with 2:56 left in regulation.

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NICK GAMMETT / GAZETTE

Highland's Evan Foust runs with the ball.

HORNETS

From C1

The duo contributed on both sides of the ball, with Foust amassing 103 yards from scrimmage on 15 touches and Weber hauling in a pair of passes for 76 yards.

The Highland offense was rolling with 130 yards and eight first downs on just 18 plays while building the two-touchdown lead. The Knights had just 37 yards, two first downs and zero completions on eight plays.

The Hornets continued to move the ball well but bogged down the closer they got to the end zone, leading to a trifecta of long field goals from Jonah Kowza. The senior had boots of 42, 41 and 34 yards to go with six touchbacks.

Foust and Weber's interceptions led to Kowza field goals.

"You look at the score, and it was just a two-point game," Weber said. "Every turnover matters, and it sets your offense up in good field position, especially at the end of the first half when there isn't much time and we can score and get the field goal. Points are points, and that is really valuable against a good team like Nardonia."

Despite the sudden struggles of the offense, Highland led 23-0 at the break and pitched a shutout against a Nardonia team that entered averaging 45.3 points.

Highland 23, Nardonia 21

NARDONIA 0 0 6 15 — 21
HIGHLAND 7 16 0 0 — 23

First

H — Evan Foust 20 pass from Cotton Wade (Jonah Kowza kick), 7:12.

Second

H — Jake Weber 28 pass from Wade (Kowza kick), 11:53.

H — Kowza 41 field goal, 4:34.

H — Kowza 34 field goal, 1:53.

H — Kowza 42 field goal, 0:00.

Third

N — Jamari Davis 51 pass from Steven Falkut (pass failed), 2:46.

Fourth

N — Davis 79 pass from Falkut (Brock Benvidi pass from Falkut), 11:46.

N — Grant Kaminski 18 pass from Falkut (Jackson Reed kick), 0:01.

First downs

14

16

Rushing

39/111

48/136

Rushing average

3.7

3.0

Passing

18/30

7/14

Passing yards

273

149

Total offense

60/284

60/285

Punting

2/52.0

4/59.0

Punt return

5/45

2/25

Fumbles

4/0

2/0

RUSHING: Nardonia — C.J. Mayes 9-49, Falkut 10-28, Brayden Myers 2-17, Davis 1-0, Brock Benvidi 0-6, Karsten Fisher 0-5, Shaan Zivokovich 3-2, Team 1-0, Highland — Foust 13-69, Anthony DePompe 12-40, Cotton Winston 9-22, Wade 11-9, Team 1-4.

PASSING: Nardonia — Falkut 18-30-273-2, Highland — Wade 7-14-149-0.

RECEIVING: Nardonia — Davis 3-130, Kaminski 1-18, Benvidi 4-30, Fisher 1-9, Jamison Benick 1-3, Myers 1-3, Highland — Weber 3-76, Foust 2-31, Winston 1-23, Ben Radigan 1-10, DePompe 1-6.

"(Nardonia) had all this heat coming in thinking they were going to beat us up," Grillis said. "(Being physical) was our plan coming into the game. All drive, torture chamber the whole time."

Demming's sack set up a fourth-and-7 that Falkut converted with an 8-yard scramble, while Grillis' set up a fourth-and-18 attempt that preceded the Falkut-to-Fisher incompleteness.

Hampered by a costly holding penalty, Highland went three-and-out on the following possession.

Falkut then got hot with a perfect 4-for-4 passing drive, totaling 70 yards and culminating with a 51-yard catch-and-run touchdown to Jamari Davis (3 catches, 130 yards, 2 TDs).

The snap on the extra point was bobbled, leading to an incomplete pass to leave the score 23-6 Highland.

Nardonia forced another punt, and Falkut responded immediately with another big play, this time a 79-yard score to Davis on the first play of the fourth quarter. The two-point conversion pass was good, but Highland still had a two-possession lead at 23-14.

The Hornets defense did not break after another punt, stopping Falkut on a fourth-and-2 scramble with 5:10 to play.

Highland appeared to have the dagger when Wade sprinted down the left sideline for a 23-yard touchdown on a fantastic third-and-13 run, but a holding penalty pushed the ball back to the 30.

The Hornets turned over the ball on downs with 1:35 on the clock after forcing Nardonia to use critical timeouts.

The Knights capped the scoring with just one second left on a Falkut-to-Kaminski 18-yard touchdown.

"That was huge for the defense to leave that little amount of clock," Foust said of the Hornets' final drive. "They scored with just one second left on the clock. If we wouldn't have had a drive like that, they would have had more time. That was huge for the offense and the defense."

The onside kick attempt was recovered by Anthony DePompe.

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