



Shop smart and save more
Microsoft Shopping extension helps you fi...

[Close](#)

[Get it now](#)

Lafayette 22°F



[Sign in](#)

Search the web



Discover Following

Sports

American Football

Ni

Personalize



The Plain Dealer
Cleveland

Follow

19.6K Followers



Cleveland.com Football All-Stars 2024: Meet the best defensive players from Northeast Ohio

Story by Matt Goul, cleveland.com • 4d • 8 min read





⌵ Eagles QB Nolan Good (5) unloads a pass during first half action in the OHSAA Division II football championship game between the Avon Eagles and Cincinnati Anderson Raptors at Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium in Canton on Thursday, December 5, 2024.
© David Petkiewicz/cleveland.com/TNS

CLEVELAND, Ohio — Cincere Johnson shot into backfields all season like a missile, wrecking opponents' offensive plans and helping a new-look Glenville football team get back to the OHSAA Division IV state semifinals.

Johnson's play highlighted a strong year for linebackers in Northeast Ohio, which included Archbishop Hoban senior Eli Lee, St. Edward's Nate Gregory and Strongsville's Storm Miller leading their defenses.

Three of those players, including Johnson, have scholarship offers from Ohio State. Although Johnson's play earns him the distinction of being the [cleveland.com](#) Defensive Player of the Year for the 2024 high school football season.

Learn about him and the [cleveland.com](#) all-area team on defense below:

Ends

Braylon Jessie, Villa Angela-St. Joseph

Height, weight: 6-foot-2, 230 pounds


About Jessie: His 16 sacks were among the best for Northeast Ohio pass rushers, leading VASJ to eight wins and the second round of the Division III playoffs. Fourteen of his sacks came in the regular season with 38 tackles and 17 quarterback hits/pressures.

Carson Noonan, Highland

Height, weight: 6-3, 270

Year: Senior

About Noonan: A two-way starter for three years at Highland, Noonan not only helped the Hornets to a Suburban League championship in the American Conference but a return to the Division II regional finals. They won their first 13 games with a swarming defense led by Noonan and tackle Ryan Zywiec. Noonan had 9 ½ sacks and 18 tackles for loss through those first 13 wins. A Miami (Ohio) recruit, he made the [All-Ohio first team in Division II](#) and earned All-Northeast Inland District co-Defensive Player of the Year honors.

 **Related video:** What are the expectations for Ohio State in the CFP? | The Herd (FOX News)



**What are the expectations for Ohio State in the CFP? |
The Herd**

Second team: Jonnell George Jr., Glenville, sr.; Jameil Hamm,

Honorable mention: Austin Atkins, Strongsville, jr.; Ace Brown, Archbishop Hoban, jr.; Cayden Calogar, Riverside, sr.; Collin Crocker, St. Edward, jr.; Jayson Cummings, Lake Catholic, sr.; MarQuan Davis, Akron East, sr.; Yon German, St. Edward, sr.; Di'marion Gill, Glenville, sr.; Chrystian Grice, Lutheran East, sr.; Braelin Dally, Strongsville, jr.; Jack Hricovec, Avon, sr.; Luka Jeras, Walsh Jesuit, sr.; Don Johnson, Olmsted Falls, sr.; Jamir McCombs, Walsh Jesuit, sr.; Kyan McGhee, Rhodes, jr.; Trent Merrell, Elyria Catholic, jr.; Troy Myers, Wadsworth, sr.; Eli Nichols, Brunswick, jr.; Tyrell O'Neal, Benedictine, jr.; Trent Taylor, Perry, jr.; Jack O'Toole, Avon Lake, sr.; Kingston Seals, Gilmour Academy, jr.; Justin Smith, Columbia, sr.; Julian Solis, Mentor, sr.; Sam Toniolo, Avon, sr.; Ivan Trent, Garrettsville Garfield, jr.

Tackles

Sam Meeks, Kenston

Height, weight: 6-1, 240

Year: Senior

About Meeks: He broke Kenston's career record for sacks, passing the old record of 16 set by Tim Matty through 2018, and finished his senior season with eight of them. The Bombers repeated as Western Reserve Conference champions, reaching the second round of the Division III playoffs. Meeks also had 66 tackles with nearly half coming behind the line of scrimmage — 32 tackles for loss — and earning [Northeast Lakes All-District Defensive Player of the Year](#). Meeks lined up at both nose tackle and end.

Ryan Zywiec, Highland

Height, weight: 6-3, 260

Year: Senior

About Zywiec: While Noonan attacked from the edge, Zywiec came

defensive linemen in Northeast Ohio during their run of 13 straight wins before a regional final showdown with Avon. Zywiec, who has since picked up his first Division I college scholarship offer from Robert Morris, had 70 tackles with 9 ½ sacks and 21 TFL, entering that last game. He made the All-Ohio second team in Division II.

Second team: Nick Crawford, Archbishop Hoban, sr.; Jaden Woods, St. Edward, sr.

Honorable mention: Conrad Bartley, Shaw, sr.; Ty Bledsoe, Kirtland, jr.; Jason Gillespie, Avon, sr.; Jackson Hedin, Hawken, sr.; Jordan Jackson, Nordonia, sr.; Sean McCall, Villa Angela-St. Joseph, jr.; Dreylin Price, Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy, sr.; Keyon Sample-Moses, Lutheran East, sr.; Arthur Scott III, Streetsboro, jr.; Andrew Smith, Perry, sr.; Luke Wilson, Lorain, sr.

Linebackers

Nate Gregory, St. Edward

Height, weight: 6-0, 225

Year: Senior

About Gregory: He started on two of St. Edward's last three Division I state championship teams and is headed to Coastal Carolina. Gregory again led St. Edward's defense in a nine-win season that got the Eagles back to the state semifinals. Gregory finished his senior season with 69 solo tackles and 177 assists, plus eight quarterback hits. Those led the team. Along with Archbishop Hoban's Elbert "Rock" Hill IV, he is one of two [returning all-area first-team defenders](#).

Cincere Johnson, Glenville

Height, weight: 6-3, 225

Year: Junior

About Johnson: While Glenville (11-4) just missed returning for a chance at its third straight state championship in Division IV, Johnson led the defense with 205 tackles. He had 41 TFL and 8 ½ sacks with three forced fumbles. Johnson also scored two touchdowns and holds scholarship offers from Ohio State, Penn State and Notre Dame. Louisville, where older brother Fred Johnson Jr. is playing offensive tackle, also is among his growing list as a four-star prospect.

Eli Lee, Archbishop Hoban

Height, weight: 6-3, 230

Year: Senior

About Lee: Bound for Ohio State, Lee finished his third year as a starting linebacker for Hoban (12-3) with 119 tackles and 19 TFL. He also had 7 ½ sacks and four pass breakups. The Knights returned to the state semifinals for a ninth time in the last 10 years.

Storm Miller, Strongsville

Height, weight: 6-2, 225

Year: Junior

About Miller: Another four-star prospect in the Class of 2026, Miller can come from all edges of a defense. He also plays some tight end for Strongsville (7-5), which not only hosted by won its first playoff game since 2008. Miller compiled 84 tackles through the regular season with 27 TFL and five sacks. He holds an extensive offer list and, like Johnson at Glenville, has an older brother playing tackle at the next level. Clemson, with older brother Blake Miller, is among his college suitors. So are Ohio State and Notre Dame.

Second team: Spencer Barninger, Mentor, sr.; Jacob Earnest, Wadsworth, jr.; Cooper Josefczyk, Medina, sr.; Carson Madis, North Ridgeville, sr.

Honorable mention: Alexander Ash, Chardon, sr.; Frank Aquila,

Brown, Norton, jr.; Caden Carter, Walsh Jesuit, jr.; Mason Cerovac, Olmsted Falls, so.; Jamere Church, Benedictine, sr.; Caden Clair, Mentor, sr.; Austin DeShazo, North Ridgeville, sr.; Jay'I Diaz, Lorain, jr.; A.J. Fortunato, Green, sr.; Brennan Funyak, Hudson, jr.; Owen Garcia, Avon, sr.; Jimmy Gibbons, Lake Catholic, sr.; Brendan Hearn, Olmsted Falls, sr.; Brayden Homoki, Midview, jr.; Ayden Knuebel, Streetsboro, jr.; Joey Kopec, Cuyahoga Valley Christian Academy, jr.; Marty Loncar, Lake Catholic, jr.; Josiah Longo, Clearview, sr.; Owen McKoon, Perry, sr.; Tanner Mintz, Archbishop Hoban, sr.; Maeson Morales, Amherst, jr.; Declan Norton, Walsh Jesuit, sr.; Shane Ohl, Keystone, jr.; Deshawne Phillips, Cleveland Heights, sr.; Matt Priest, Riverside, sr.; Jeff Reichert, Amherst, sr.; Nick Rivera, St. Ignatius, jr.; James Robinson, Tallmadge, so.; Devin Shaw-Mason, Padua, sr.; Ryan Stolarski, Avon, jr.; Tommy Tartabini, Aurora, sr.; Tyler Turk, Kirtland, sr.; Owen Turner, Archbishop Hoban, sr.; Dionte Younger, Firestone, sr.

Cornerbacks

Elbert "Rock" Hill IV, Archbishop Hoban

Height, weight: 5-11, 175

Year: Junior

About Hill: One of two returning players to make last year's [cleveland.com](#) all-area defensive first team, Hill had his own island in Akron. When teams passed his way during the regular season, he came up with three interceptions and three pass breakups. Hill also scored seven times. He is a five-star prospect and considered the top cornerback in the country and No. 1 player coming back in Ohio, according to recruiting services [including ESPN](#).

Antonio Martin, Green

Height, weight: 5-11, 180

Year: Senior

About Martin: One of Northeast Ohio's best comeback stories, Martin returned from a knee injury that derailed his junior season in basketball. He not only paced Green's defense from the secondary with six interceptions, but also made the All-Ohio second team in Division II with 12 pass breakups. Martin also allowed only five receptions on 34 targets for 59 yards.

Second team: James Brewer III, Walsh Jesuit, jr.; Caleb Hewitt, Chardon, sr.; Kei'shjuan Telfair, Euclid, so.

Honorable mention: Blake Allen, Nardonía, sr.; Tylan "Juice" Boykin, Archbishop Hoban, sr.; Tymir Cardona, Kenston, sr.; Payton Cook, Archbishop Hoban, jr.; Xayvion Dunn, Mentor, jr.; Anthony Fortunato, Green, sr.; Daurean Johnson, Buchtel, sr.; Jack Lessick, Kirtland, sr.; Savion Lewis, Villa Angela-St. Joseph, jr.; Vince Natali, Nardonía, sr.; Joseph Pomnean, Benedictine, sr.; Robbie Reid, Tallmadge, jr.; Vince Tomasic, Perry, sr.; Terrell Wharton Jr., Akron East, jr.

Safeties

Bradley Eaton, St. Edward

Height, weight: 5-9, 170

Year: Senior

About Eaton: Along with Gregory, Eaton is a third-year starter and had the most starts in school history with 47. He began as a safety and transitioned to slot cornerback and played safety again down the stretch, breaking up 11 passes with two interceptions as a senior. Eaton blocked a punt and also added running back duties after junior standout Brandon White was lost to the season because of injury. Eaton gained 1,219 all-purpose yards and scored 16 TDs. Defensively, he totaled 81 tackles with 47 solo shots.

Braeden Springer, Solon

Height, weight: 5-8, 155

Year: Senior

About Springer: With a whopping nine interceptions, Springer earned the Northeast Lakes District Defensive Player of the Year in Division II. He also paced Solon (3-8) with 35 solo tackles. Springer's top sport could be baseball, where he plays the middle infield, but he made the All-Ohio first team in Division II on the gridiron.

Jakob Weatherspoon, Avon

Height, weight: 6-0, 177

Year: Junior

About Weatherspoon: While colleges are after Weatherspoon as a cornerback, he lined up at safety this year for the Eagles (16-0) during their Division II state championship run. Through the regional finals, he had 42 tackles with two interceptions and four PBU. In the state championship, Weatherspoon blocked an extra point that kept Cincinnati Anderson from tying the score in Avon's [20-13 win](#). Weatherspoon made the All-Ohio first team. His offer list includes Ohio State, Michigan and Penn State.

Second team: Kindall Brown, Maple Heights, jr.; Aaron Scales, Glenville, sr.

Honorable mention: Grady Baugh, North Royalton, sr.; Grant Blascak, Walsh Jesuit, jr.; Victor Brown, Field, jr.; Aydin Buchanan, St. Edward, sr.; Armani Chiappone, Perry, sr.; Christian Chase, Villa Angela-St. Joseph, sr.; Brady Engle, Amherst, sr.; Alex Frenk, Wellington, jr.; Isaiah Garcia, Clearview, sr.; Jackson Gula, Streetsboro, sr.; Cody Haddad, St. Ignatius, sr.; Mitchell Hausler, Berea-Midpark, sr.; Aiden Henry, Walsh Jesuit, sr.; Tallen Hulvey, Medina, sr.; Tyler Kaufmann, Avon, sr.; Brett Lienert, North Ridgeville, sr.; Gavin Madigan, Wadsworth, jr.; Trey McNutt, Shaker Heights, sr.; Josh Mommers, Rocky River, sr.; Garrett Phillips, Highland, sr.; Nico Samac, Kirtland, sr.; Luke Stuewe, Avon Lake, sr.; Camron Taylor, Mentor, sr.; Brayden Thomas, St. Edward, jr.; Jayshon Thomas, St. Ignatius, jr.; Javlen Ward-Effinger, Cleveland Heights, sr.; Buddy William Norton, jr.

Punter

Sasha Sunjevaric, North Royalton

Height, weight: 6-4, 190

Year: Senior

About Sunjevaric: Also a basketball standout at North Royalton, Sunjevaric made the All-Ohio first team in Division II as a punter. He rocked 19 punts in the regular season for an average of 50.5 yards. That pushed the field in favor of the Bears (5-6), as they won a share of the Suburban League's National Conference title with a late-season upset of Wadsworth. Sunjevaric also had 24 of 47 kickoffs for touchbacks.

Second team: Kellen Moyer, St. Edward, sr.

Honorable mention: Cole Ducas, Chagrin Falls, sr.; Jake Eyerman, Crestwood, jr.; Evan Foust, Highland, so.; Jake Hassman, Walsh Jesuit, sr.; Grady Kucharson, Kenston, jr.; Bryce Lehmkuhl, Wellington, so.; Patrick Radigan, Lake Catholic, sr.; Colin Starling, Norton, sr.; Chase White, Madison, jr.; Trey Widenmeyer, Buckeye, sr.

Contact sports reporter Matt Goul on X ([@mgoul](#)), Threads ([@mgoul](#)) or email (mgoul@cleveland.com).

©2024 Advance Local Media LLC. Visit [cleveland.com](https://www.cleveland.com). Distributed by Tribune Content Agency, LLC.

Sponsored Content

More for You

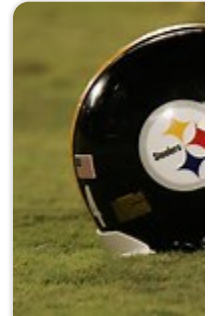


FTW For The Win

Notre Dame's radio call of Jeremiyah Love's 98-yard CFP touchdown run was so electric

93

3



Steelers Re

Key Steel Downgra Ravens G

7



The Mirror US · 4h

Bryson DeChambeau sets up Tour return with US Open champion moving away fro...

7



Detroit Lions On SI · 20h

Campbell Offers Grim Update on Davis, Moseley Excelled

12



Athlon Spc

Big Ten F Players T Following

1



Akron Beacon Journal

Follow

13.2K Followers



Drew Allar, Mitchell Evans headline Akron-area players in College Football Playoff

Story by Brad Bournival, Akron Beacon Journal • 1d •

4 min read

Featured games in the NCAA FB

Final  Indiana Ho... vs  Notre Dam...

Puff out that chest a bit Greater Akron.



Five area players have a national championship in their grasp when the College Football Playoff starts this weekend,

Seventh-seeded Notre Dame and starting tight end [Mitchell Evans](#) of Wadsworth play 10th-seeded Indiana at home at 8 p.m. Friday.

Sixth-seeded Penn State and starting quarterback [Drew Allar](#) of Medina welcome 11th-seeded SMU on Saturday at noon.



Notre Dame tight end Mitchell Evans scores a second-half touchdown against USC, Nov. 30, 2024, at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum.
© Gary A. Vasquez-Imagn Images

Ninth-seeded Tennessee and backup center [William Satterwhite](#) of Hoban travel to eighth-seeded Ohio State on Saturday at 8 p.m. The [Buckeyes](#) have wide receivers [Brennen Schramm](#) of Medina and [Shawn Lodge](#) of St. Vincent-St. Mary on their roster.

"I always say Ohio has the best football," Evans said. "We've got big

Northeast Ohio football is the best football, especially in the state of Ohio. Not just because I'm, from Northeast Ohio, but because we produce great athletes. I mean, we're home to LeBron James. He was a football player. He was first-team all-state. People forget he was a

Continue reading

Sponsored Content

More for You

