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HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

# Best running backs in Ohio Division I, DII high school football entering 2026

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Massillon running back Savior Owens stiff-arms McKinley's La'Nauz Brown on a rush in the second half at Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium John Kuntz, cleveland.com



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By Bob Lundeberg | Special to cleveland.com

High school football season in Ohio is here again.

Leading up to the 2026 fall high school sports season, cleveland.com has been highlighting the top football players in Ohio.

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Over the next couple of weeks, we'll feature the best players in Division 1 and Division 2 Ohio high school football. First up were the top quarterbacks, and now it's the running backs' turn.

We contacted coaches across the state and asked them to fill out a survey requesting information about their team.

If you are an Ohio high school football coach who did not receive the survey, email [mswanson@advancelocal.com](mailto:mswanson@advancelocal.com). We will continue to add to these lists throughout the summer.

Below the coaches' picks are all the returning all-state running backs in DI and DII high school football.

**Top DI and DII RBs, as highlighted by coaches**

**Cole Allison, North Ridgeville, Senior**

Allison averaged 13 yards per carry from the H-back position as a junior. He also averaged 11 yards per catch on 31 receptions. "Cole will more than likely be a captain this year as he has been a great leader and hard worker," head coach Bryan Morgan said.

**Josh Bell, Cuyahoga Falls, Senior**

Bell is a one-cut power runner who likes to get downhill. He has a low center of gravity. "As one of the team's primary ball-carriers, he is expected to shoulder a significant portion of the rushing attack this season," head coach Kevin Pask said.

**Kendrick Boddie, Strongsville, Senior**

A returning all-state player, Boddi averaged 9.3 yards per carry while running for 1,043 yards as a junior. “He is a very dynamic runner with great vision and breakaway speed. We look forward to him having a great senior year leading the run game,” head coach Jason Trusnik said.

### **Caden Boyd, Stow-Munroe Falls, Senior**

Boyd will play baseball at the next level, but he is also a standout running back for Stow-Munroe Falls. “Caden is a throwback player who leaves everything on the field each Friday night,” head coach Dan Larlham said.

### **Makhai Brogdon, Warren G. Harding, Junior**

Head coach Matt Richardson said Brogdon will carry the load for Warren G. Harding this season.

### **Grayson Davis, Olentangy Liberty, Senior**

Davis notched 132 carries for 647 yards and three touchdowns as a junior while adding 27 receptions for 210 yards. He is committed to Columbia. “He is big, strong, athletic and catches the ball well. He is hard-working, selfless, humble and wants to be coached,” head coach John Sansbury said.

### **Jordan Davis, Anderson, Senior**

Davis earned all-state honors last season after running for 674 yards and 21 touchdowns while catching 76 passes for 743 yards and four scores. He holds multiple Division I offers, including Kent State, Miami (Ohio) and Toledo.

### **Sidney Davis, Youngstown, Senior**

Davis is a downhill runner who can also punish defenses on the perimeter. “He has great speed and acceleration. He can play multiple positions at the next level,” head coach Seth Antram said.

### **Matthew Flesher, North Ridgeville, Junior**

Flesher was an injury fill-in midway through last year and performed well for North Ridgeville. “He was our best running back for the remainder of the season,” head coach Bryan Morgan said.

### **Evan Foust, Highland, Senior**

Foust led Highland with 73 total tackles last year and is also an impact player at running back.

Harden, who is also a wrestler, had 152 carries for 804 yards and eight touchdowns last fall. He added 26 catches for 245 yards and three scores. “Xaviere is an extremely hard worker and a team-first player who will also start at safety for us this upcoming season,” head coach Jonathan Hunek said.

### **John Lipinski, Cuyahoga Falls, Sophomore**

Lipinski is a change-of-pace back who is ticketed for a major role as a sophomore. “He brings speed and versatility to the backfield while providing another valuable option in the running game,” head coach Kevin Pask said.

### **Zamani Matsuo-Jamieson, Valley Forge, Senior**

Matsuo-Jamieson will be the lead back for Valley Forge this season.

### **Chase Maurer, Jackson, Senior**

Maurer suffered a Week 2 collarbone injury last year after running for nearly 200 yards on opening night. Head coach Jay Rohr said he runs the 40-yard dash in 4.6 seconds. “He is strong, smart, and athletic. We are expecting big things from Chase,” the coach added.

### **RJ Mays, St. John’s Jesuit, Senior**

Mays holds St. John’s Jesuit’s single-game rushing record with 306 yards and five touchdowns in a win over University of Detroit Jesuit last year.

### **Liam Nowakowski, Perrysburg, Senior**

Nowakowski became Perrysburg’s starting running back in Week 4 of last season and ran for 742 yards and 10 touchdowns. “He performed tremendously and is going to have a great year for us,” head coach Dirk Conner said.

### **Brody O’Banion, Edgewood, Senior**

A varsity player since his freshman season, O’Banion has run for a combined 1,771 yards and 19 touchdowns over the last two years. Head coach Matt Root said he was clocked at 4.47 seconds in the 40-yard dash. “He is an extremely hard worker who is very talented with the ball in his hands. He works hard in the classroom and expects big things for himself,” the coach added.

Phillips is an explosive senior running back for Warren G. Harding.

### **Bryer Pickana, Solon, Senior**

Pickana is a physical runner who gets better as the game goes on, head coach Antonio Hall said.

### **Tristan Pollard, Youngstown, Junior**

Pollard runs with power and speed and could be a potential college tailback, head coach Seth Antram said. “He is a downhill runner that has the speed to hurt a defense on the perimeter,” the coach added.

### **Israel Purkiss, Stow-Munroe Falls, Senior**

Purkiss is a two-way player for Stow-Munroe Falls at running back and linebacker. “Israel is a smooth runner and tough,” head coach Dan Larlham said.

### **Austin Tatulinski, Strongsville, Sophomore**

Tatulinski had a monster freshman season with 1,105 yards on the ground. “He has great vision, is very smart in picking up protections and where to run and reads very well. We look forward to him having another big role this year,” head coach Jason Trusnik said.

### **Kwan Ward, Elyria, Junior**

Ward is a returning varsity player who should have a bigger role this season. “He is a strong runner with good quickness,” head coach Matt Wilson said.

### **Owen Wilson, Louisville, Junior**

Wilson suffered a season-ending injury in Week 5 of last year but is back to full strength as a junior. “Owen brings energy to the entire team while on the field by the way he plays. Coaches and teammates describe him as fearless. His vision and toughness is what makes him a standout back heading into 2026,” head coach Jake Adkins said.

### **Colton Winston, Highland, Senior**

Winston will play baseball at the next level for Ohio Dominican, but he is also a standout on the football field.

**Kendrick Boddie, Strongsville, Senior**

**Nolan Buirley, Sunbury Big Walnut, Senior**

**Jordan Davis, Anderson, Senior**

**Logan Doty, Kettering Fairmont, Senior**

**Jeremiah Fuller, Toledo Central Catholic, Senior**

**Jahmeir Gordon, Lancaster, Senior**

**Tai'Rese Highsmith, Toledo Start, Senior**

**Jett Jerwers, New Albany, Senior**

**Edmund McAllister, Pickerington Central, Sophomore**

**Kenyon Norman, West Chester Lakota West, Senior**

**Savior Owens, Massillon Washington, Senior**

**Deon'Dray Richard, Austintown Fitch, Senior**

**Jamari Snow, Canal Winchester, Senior**

**Austin Tatulinski, Strongsville, Sophomore**

**Andyriq Thomas, Pickerington North, Senior**

**Kyelin West, Canton McKinley, Junior**

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