

FOOTBALL

Highland score vs. Nordonia. Hornets hang on to hand Knights their first loss



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Key Points

Highland defeated Nordonia 23-21 in their first game in the Suburban League National Conference.

Highland built a 23-0 halftime lead with two passing touchdowns and three field goals.

Nordonia mounted a second-half comeback, scoring two long touchdowns in the second half.

GRANGER TOWNSHIP — Highland football's introduction to life in the [Suburban League National Conference](#) provided hope and showed how tough conference can be.

[Highland](#) (3-1) scored 23 first-half points and weathered a comeback by [Nordonia](#) (3-1) to win 23-21 at North Gateway Tire Stadium Friday, Sept. 11. Nordonia kept fighting until the last second, but ran out of time.

"Their offense is really explosive. Their quarterback is great," Highland coach Mike Gibbons said of the Knights. "We got out to that early lead. We knew it wasn't over. We knew it was going to be a four-quarter game, and credit Nordonia for making all those plays in the second half."

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It truly was a game of two halves, as Highland looked unstoppable early.

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Highland QB Colton Wadle threw first-half touchdowns to Evan Foust and Anthony Depompei of 21 and 28 yards, respectively.

A backup quarterback who is playing for injured Highland started Jonathan Prucha, Wadle was Highland's best weapon. He finished 6-of-13 passing for 130 yards and two TDs passing, and rushed for 15 times for 32 yards.

"I love to see his growth from week to week," Gibbons said. "That's what you want to see from a young player."

Nothing went right for Nordonia in the first half. The Knights had a drive stall on fourth down because of a fumbled snap, and QB Steve Fakult was picked off twice in the second quarter.

Those interceptions led to field goals of 40, 34 and 40 yards in the second quarter by kicker Jonah Kowza.

"In the first half, we just couldn't establish anything rhythm-wise," Knights coach Scott Barwidi said. "We turned it over on offense three times and couldn't set up our runs correctly."

Nordonia's offense looked more like itself in the second half, though Highland was able to stop the Knights twice on fourth down.

The Knights got back into it thanks to the long ball. Fakult hit Jamiere Davis with a 51-yard TD pass late in the third quarter, followed by a 79-yard bomb to Davis to open the fourth quarter.

Davis finished with three catches for 130 yards and Fakult finished 17-of-29 passing for 281 yards, three TDs and two picks.

Nordonia played to the final whistle, as Fakult hit Grant Kaminski with a 19-yard TD pass with one second left. However, Highland jumped on the onside kick to

end the game.

Here is how the game went via live updates from North Gateway Tire Stadium.

Highland football scores 23-21 win over Nordonia to open Suburban League play

Nordonia scored with 1 second left in the game, as QB Steve Fakult found Grant Kaminski in the back of the end zone for a 19-yard TD. Jackson Neal the extra point to make it 23-21.

That would not be enough, however, as Highland covered the onside kick to clinch the win. Highland and Nordonia both moved to 3-1.

Highland football stops Nordonia on fourth down

Steven Fakult tried to scramble on fourth down and 2 at the Knight 48. He as stopped at midfield, just short of the first down, giving Highland the ball back up 23-14 with under five minutes left.

Nordonia football hits big play to open fourth quarter

On the first play of the fourth quarter, Nordonia announced this game is not over yet.

Knight QB Steven Fakult hit Jamiere Davis over the middle. Davis broke a tackled and galloped 79 yards for a TD. Fakult then hit Brock Barwidi with the 2-point conversion pass, making it 23-14 Highaldn with 11:48 left in the game.

Highland football leads Nordonia 23-6 after three quarters

Highland football still leads 23-6 after three quarters. Nordonia with second and 10 at its own 21 to start the fourth quarter.

Nordonia football goes to the air to get on the board

Nordonia's passing game finally found its groove.

Knights QB Steven Fakult hits Jamiere Davis down the left sideline and Davis ran in a 51-yard TD pass. A bad snap foiled the extra point, but Nordonia finally is on the board, down 23-6 with 2:46 left in the third quarter.

Nordonia drives to start the second half, but stalls on fourth down

Nordonia was able to drive from its own 20 to start the third quarter deep into Highland territory. However, QB Steven Fakult's pass into the end zone was high on fourth down. Highland takes over up 23-0 at its own 28 with 6:30 left in the third quarter.

Halftime stats for Highland-Nordonia football

Highland - 130 yards passing; 104 yards rushing. Leaders: Colton Wadle 6-of-9 for 130 yards, 2 TD; Evan Foust 5 rushes 54 yards; Jake Weber 1 catch, 42 yards.

Nordonia - 18 yards passing; 40 yards rushing. Leaders: Steven Fakult 3-of-6 18 yards, 2 INT; CJ Mayes 5 rushes 28 yards; Brock Barwidi 2 catches 15 yards

Highland has run 36 offensive plays to Nordonia's 17.

Highland football hits third FG to end first half with 23-0 lead over Nordonia

A second interception by Nordonia led to the third field goal of the half by Highland.

Jonah Kowza hit his second 40-yard FG of the game as time expired in the first half, giving Highland a 23-0 lead heading into the locker room.

Nothing has gone right for Nordonia in the first half. Knights will receive the second half kickoff.

Highland football's Jonah Kowza hits second FG of quarter

Jonah Kowza is living up to his reputation as one of the best kickers in Ohio.

Kowza nailed his second field goal of the second quarter, this time from 34 yards out. Highland pushes its lead to 20-0 with 1:43 left in the first half.

Highland football turns interception into field goal

Highland got the first turnover of the game when Evan Foust picked off Nordonia QB Steven Fakult and returned it the the Nordonia 28.

Highland's offense couldn't move the ball, but kicker Jonah Kowza hit a 40-yard FG to make it 17-0 Highland with 4:34 left in the first half.

Highland football goes to the air to stretch lead

On the first play of the second quarter, Highland football found the end zone again.

Under heavy pressure, QB Colton Wadle threw a high ball into the end zone that was caught by Athony Depompei for a 28-yard TD. Jonah Kozwas hits the PAT to make it 14-0 Highland with 11:53 left in the second quarter.

Highland football leads Nordonia 7-0 after one quarter

Highland's running game is taking care of business, as the Hornets are driving on their second possession. Highland has second and 3 at the Nordonia 28 to start the second.

Highland football opens game with TD drive

Highland moved the ball on the ground in its opening drive, but found the end

zone through the air.

QB Colton Wadle hit Evan Foust open in the flat for a 21-yard TD. Jonah Kowza hit the PAT to make it 7-0 Highland with 7:12 left in the first qu

Nordonia football kicks off to Highland to open the game

Nordonia kicker Jackson Neal kicks off. Highland's Jake Weber returns the ball to the 32 yard line. We are underway at North Gateway Tire Stadium.

Nordonia football wins coin toss and defers; Highland to receive

Nordonia football won the coin toss and deferred to the second half. Highland will receive the opening kickoff and defend the south goal in the first quarter.

Highland wearing the all grey uniforms with green numbers and helmets, white trim and the black "H" on the helmet. Nordonia in the road white uniforms with hunter green numbers, letters and helmets. It's an all-green matchup tonight at North Gateway Tire Stadium.

Dominick Jackson and Collin Atha both not dressed for Nordonia tonight.

Key players for Highland

Quarterback Colton Wadle is coming off a near perfect game against Avon Lake. He went 11-for-11 passing for 270 yards and three touchdowns, and also ran for 39 yards and two scores. Ben Radigan has been Wadle's favorite target. He caught three passes for 128 yards and two TDs vs. Avon Lake. Tight end/linebacker Evan Foust is a returning All-Ohioan, and kicker Jonah Kowza might be the best kicker in the Northeast Ohio.

Key players for Nordonia

Quarterback Steven Fakult continues to be one of the best in Greater Akron. In Week 3 vs. Cleveland VASJ, he passed for 284 yards and four TDs. Fakult has an

embarrassment of riches at wide receiver with Dominick Jackson, Karsen Fisher, Collin Atha, Brock Barwidi and Jamiere Davis all capable of having big games. CJ Mayes has been the Knights primary running back, while Fisher anchors Nordonia's defense at linebacker.

Who are the head coaches for Highland, Nordonia football?

Mike Gibbons is in his 12th season at Highland, leading the Hornets to the playoffs most of those years. His record is 98-32 with the Hornets.

Scott Barwidi is in his debut season as Knights head coach after nearly two decades as an assistant. He is 3-0 this fall.

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