

County Football Week 12



BUCKEYE BUCKS (10-1)

COLORS: Brown and orange
CONFERENCE: Cleveland West Conference (champion)
COACH: Greg Demmon (8th season, 67-21 record)
PLAYOFF APPEARANCES (6-15 record): 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013, 2009, 2005, 2003, 2002

NOTEWORTHY: With 31 rushing touchdowns this season, Troy McCann is tied with Highland's Casey Myser (active) and Wadsworth's Jack Snowball (2011) for second behind Medina's Jimmy Daw (32, 2016). It is the only notable rushing or scoring record McCann can realistically break tonight.

- With 22 career TD receptions, Tye Widemeyer needs one to match the Medina County high end record of 23 set by Wadsworth's Chris Brink from 1998-99. The senior also needs three receptions to break the school career record of 63 set by Darren Cereszko from 2002-03.
- Buckeye has tied the school record of 10 wins set in 1979, 2005, 2015, 2017, 2018 and 2023.
- With 16 passing touchdowns, Turner Dolata needs four to break the school season record of 19 set by Nathan Poldori in 2015. With 995 passing yards, Dolata needs 15 to pass his father, Morgan (1997), for 14th place on the school's season leader board.
- The defense was outstanding last week against Norwalk with 10 tackles for loss, two sacks, three Nick Balaban interceptions and a fumble recovery. Ryan Wisnem (8 tackles, 2½ for loss, ½ sack), Landon Porec (5, 2½, 1½ forced fumble) and Widemeyer (3 TFL, fumble recovery) each made multiple impact plays.
- The Bucks have been on a serious roll defensively over the last four games, racking up 35 tackles for loss, 12 sacks, nine interceptions and three fumble recoveries. They now hold a 74-71 edge over Highland for the county lead in tackles for loss and also top the area with 18 INTs.
- The kickoff coverage team has been outstanding all season, allowing an average starting field position of the 25-yard line despite getting only five touchbacks.
- Buckeye has outscored opponents 126-7 in third quarters this season.



End Landon Porec

PADUA FRANCISCAN BRUINS (6-5)

COLORS: Brown and orange
CONFERENCE: Crown Conference (3rd place)
COACH: Kevin Kubit (2nd season, 10-11 record)
PLAYOFF APPEARANCES (11-12 record): 2024, 2022, 2021, 2020, 2017, 2010, 2009, 2008, 2007, 2003, 1994, 1993, 1979 (Class AA state runner-up)

NOTEWORTHY: The Bruins have a unique résumé, beginning with blowout losses to 10-1 Sandusky Perkins (35-0), 11-0 Mentor Lake Catholic (46-17), 11-0 Walsh Jesuit (42-0) and 7-4 Sandusky (28-0). While Padua Franciscan has not beaten anyone currently with a winning record, it does own a quality 35-28 triumph over Suburban League National Conference co-champion North Royalton and handed Midway, which Buckeye has traditionally scrimmaged under Demmon, 31-14 last week. Fantastico50.net ranks the Bruins' strength of schedule 20th out of 109 D-III teams. Buckeye's is 71st.

- Running back Roderick Love is the Bruins' offensive centerpiece and will spend a notable portion of the snaps as Wildcat quarterback. The senior, who had 14 touches for 157 yards from scrimmage two years ago in a 35-7 win over Buckeye, has 157 carries for 1,215 yards, 22 catches for 392 yards and 18 touchdowns in 10 games. Nick Barker has thrown for 1,366 yards but owns just a 6-12 TD-INT ratio, while the receiving corps has been balanced between Love, Christian Ruggiero (92 catches, 318 yards, 0 TDs), Connor Williams (22, 300, 0) and Riley Cervenka (53, 255, 2). The line averages 6-foot-1, 248 pounds.
- The defense is a 3-4 similar to Buckeye in that the outside linebackers can function as stand-up defensive ends or bump out to cover slot receivers. Middle linebacker Devin Shaw-Mason has been a tackling machine with a team-high 11, nearly double the second-place Athan Midey (7, 7 for loss). Sophomore Nick Kelly has 11 tackles for loss. But the Bruins have only forced six turnovers.

HIGHLAND HORNETS (11-0)

COLORS: Green and black
CONFERENCE: Suburban League American Conference (champion)
COACH: Mike Gibbons (10th season, 62-29 record)

PLAYOFF APPEARANCES (17-13 record): 2024, 2023, 2022, 2021, 2020, 2017, 2015, 2014, 2013 (D-II state semi), 2011, 2009, 2008, 2001, 2000

NOTEWORTHY: Highland has scored at least 30 points in 11 straight games, the second-longest active streak in Ohio behind Gnadenhutten Indian Valley's 17. The Hornets have allowed fewer than 10 points in nine straight games, second to D-VII superpower Marion Local (17).

- With 228 points and 38 touchdowns, Casey Myser needs 21 and four to break the Medina County season records set by Medina's Jimmy Daw in 2016.
- Dylan Boris is tied for 10th in county season history with 24 touchdown passes.
- Jonah Kovza's 40-yard field goal last week against Fremont Ross is tied for eighth longest in school history.
- Carson Noonan led the defense against Ross with eight tackles, 2½ for loss and 1½ sacks, giving him 47, 15½ and 7½ on the season. Lucas Gering had a strip-sack recovered by Ryan Zywic, Kyle Williams had a 23-yard interception return for a touchdown, Chris Metzger and Dylan Lacer also picked off passes and Colton Foutz and Nick Dobkowski broke up two others.
- Noonan and Zywic (17 TFL) have 32½ of the team's 71 tackles for loss and 15 of its 27 sacks.
- The Hornets need one point to become the ninth Medina County team to surpass 500 points in a season. The school record of 554 was set in 2022.
- Highland is the first Medina County school to reach 10 wins in four straight seasons.
- Despite losing a muffed punt and throwing an interception in the end zone against Ross, Highland is still plus-16 in turnover margin.



Running back Casey Myser

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES KNIGHTS (8-3)

COLORS: Blue and red
CONFERENCE: Detroit Catholic High School League AA Division (2nd place)
COACH: Josh Linke (1st season, 8-3 record)
PLAYOFF APPEARANCES (20-15 record): 2024, 2021, 2020, 2019, 2013, 2009, 2004, 2003, 2002, 2001 (D-II state champion), 2000, 1999, 1997, 1995, 1992, 1984 (D-I state champion), 1982 (Class D-II state runner-up), 1980

NOTEWORTHY: St. Francis de Sales has a major Medina County connection, as 1965 Medina graduate Dick Cromwell coached the Knights to their state titles in 1984 and 2001. Cromwell compiled a 208-65-1 record at de Sales over stints from 1979-84 and 1990-2009. Cromwell is a member of the Ohio Football Coaches Association, Toledo City League, St. Francis de Sales, Medina County Sports and Ohio Wesleyan Athletic halls of fame. Heading into this season, the Knights had a meager 46-96 record since the 1990s.

- After the Three Rivers Athletic Conference dissolved, St. Francis joined the Detroit Catholic High School League. The Knights went 2-1 in the AA Division, beating Dearborn Divine Christ 28-21 and University of Detroit Jesuit 28-21 and falling to Jackson Lumen Christi 63-35. The other regular-season losses were to Perrysburg (28-21) and Toledo Central Catholic (28-7).
- The St. Francis offense is conceptually similar to Highland with a lot of zone and power options. The Knights' offense is led by quarterback Justin Todd (1,800 yards and 25 touchdowns, Corey Schwartz has thrown for 1,758 yards and 14 TDs while adding 280 yards and five scores on the ground and top receiver Raheem Brown boasts 44 catches for 780 yards and eight scores.
- Highland's offense is led by quarterback Justin Todd (1,800 yards and 25 touchdowns, Corey Schwartz has thrown for 1,758 yards and 14 TDs while adding 280 yards and five scores on the ground and top receiver Raheem Brown boasts 44 catches for 780 yards and eight scores.
- The Knights are led by talented linemen Jermaine Polk (6-foot-3, 250 pounds, 71 tackles, 6 sacks) and Deon Banks (5-10, 250, along with Beau Thomas (88 tackles), Von Graham (66) and Brian H. Interceptions). St. Francis was forced into zone coverage after Avon Lake found success through the air last week.

Gazette Pick-It Line

Overall: 64-9, 64-9, 63-10, 63-10

Last week: 7-0, 7-0, 6-1, 7-0

Buckeye vs. Padua Franciscan
 Highland vs. St. Francis de Sales
 Wadsworth vs. N. Ridgeville

D-LINE

From C1

Wise, who usually plays end and lines up against the left tackle will sometimes flip positions with nose guard Myers.

Regardless, the primary job of the front three is to keep O-linemen off strong-side linebacker Brady O'Connor (or Boden Ballinger), middle linebacker Jacob Earnest and weak-side backer Shawn Kincaid (or Brad Watson).

"We're very interchangeable," Wise said. "Each of us can play each position. During the week we get rep at each of them. You don't really see that with a lot of D-lines. We can change and go wherever we need to be."

"We'll make plays, but our main job is to let the linebackers make plays. That's a running joke between us. They're the pretty boys and we do the dirty work."

At 6-0, 195, Myers is one of the smaller nose guards in D-II, but he doesn't mind.

"We combine our different strengths," he said. "I'm not what a usual nose guard would be, so usually I'm using my speed or taking on a couple of blockers. (Wise) is a really good stuffer from the end position and (Polczak) is really good at creating pressure. I don't know anybody else who bats balls down in the passing game so easily. He doesn't even have to jump."

Myers' athleticism is such that not only does he have 64 tackles, eight tackles for loss, three sacks and a forced fumble, he also returns kicks and punts for the Grizzlies, which might make him the only player in Northeast Ohio who legitimately can have his positions listed as WR/NG/RK on the roster.

"He's a fighter," Wise said. "His motor just never stops. He's always going. He could be tak-

ing on a center and a guard on a double team, but he'll make plays and do what 'Troy does."

Wadsworth coach Justin Todd summed up Myers' ability in a different way.

"Troy is so fast, he's our kick returner, for crying out loud," he said. "That's a unique combination."

The long-limbed Polczak and tough-as-nails Wise are unique in their own right, which is why Todd didn't pay a whole lot of attention to the scale when he decided to put them on the D-line.

Not only that, the Wadsworth coach expects his D-linemen to make more plays than in previous seasons, which they have.

"Pound for pound they're the strongest kids on our team," Todd said. "We have to take advantage of what our kids do well, so we'll move our defensive linemen around and allow them to create some havoc."

"They're three of our most explosive kids and they are athletic and difficult to deal with on one. That allows them to be successful."

The Grizzlies expect that success to continue tonight, though the Rangers' size up front will pose a stern test.

"It's always a little bit of a struggle getting used to how strong they are," Myers said of O-linemen in general, "but I don't think I've ever been really out-strengthened by someone. I can usually get around them."

"We're going to have to definitely stop the run game," Polczak added. "That means we have to be physical up front."

In addition to being physical, Wadsworth will likely use a few stunts and move people around in an attempt to confuse North Ridgeville O-linemen.

"They're a lot bigger than us, so it's going to be a challenge to keep control of their tackles, but we are quicker," Wise said. "We'll do some stunts to counteract what they do."



Myers

WADSWORTH GRIZZLIES (10-1)

COLORS: Red and white
CONFERENCE: Suburban League National Conference (champion)
COACH: Justin Todd (9th season, 68-32 record)

PLAYOFF APPEARANCES (14-15 record): 2024, 2023, 2022, 2020, 2019, 2018, 2017, 2014, 2013, 2011, 2009, 2007, 2003, 2002, 1999, 1996

NOTEWORTHY: From 1928-30, Wadsworth and Ridgerville Township (incorporated as North Ridgerville in 1958) were members of the Northern League with Wellington, New London, Amherst, Medina and Vermilion. Wadsworth, which was not yet known as the Grizzlies, lost the first two meetings 13-6 and 12-0 before romping 71-0 on Oct. 24, 1930 behind five rushing touchdowns from Bruce Trent. Tonight will be the first meeting since then.

- Brysen Hall needs 5 passing yards to become the sixth player in school history to reach 2,000 in a season.
- Wadsworth needs 285 yards total offense to join 2017 (6,697) and 2015 (5,190) as the only teams to 5,000.
- Tommy Hohn led the defense last week against North Royalton with an interception, forced fumble returned by Brady O'Connor and a pass breakup in the end zone. Jacob Earnest (10 tackles) returned an interception 4 yards. Zach Wise had a fourth-down strip-sack and Gavin Madigan added nine tackles.
- Earnest has 60 tackles over the last five games.
- Hohn and Calix Lemp are first and second in Medina County with nine and eight pass breakups, respectively.
- Kent State has offered Lemp.



Quarterback Brysen Hall

NORTH RIDGEVILLE RANGERS (9-2)

COLORS: Navy and gold
CONFERENCE: Southwestern Conference (T-2nd place)
COACH: Bryan Morgan (4th season, 24-19 record)
PLAYOFF APPEARANCES (2-5 record): 2024, 2023, 2022, 2020, 2015, 2009

NOTEWORTHY: Morgan began his head coaching career with the Black River boys basketball team, compiling a 29-35 record from 2007-10 that featured the Pirates' lone winning season since 1998 when they went 12-9 in 2008-09. He took over North Ridgeville a couple years later and stepped down after the 2020-21 season to live his dream as a head football coach. The Rangers have steadily improved since, going 3-7, 4-6, 8-4 and 2-2 capturing the first two playoff wins in program history.

- The Rangers are a veteran-laden team with multi-year starters at every level of the offense and defense. Their best player by far is Charlie Steinmetz, one of the most unique players in Northeast Ohio who will line up in multiple positions. H-back or fullback and sometimes goes in pre-snap motion. Steinmetz has 60 carries for 524 yards and eight touchdowns and 36 catches for 554 yards and six more scores, and a lot of his touches come after play-fakes to bruising running back Zack Barnhart (171 carries, 1,133 yards and 11 scores). Left guard Andrew Fiescher is a four-year starter, while tackles J.D. Radway (6-foot-4, 315 pounds) and Tim O'Rick (6-4, 300) bring beef to the line.
- Interestingly, Steinmetz and Barnhart don't play defense. The Rangers use a 3-3 stack system similar to Wadsworth, mix coverages and blitz a little more than 50% of the time. Leading tackler Austin DeShazo is a unique player who also is an All-Ohio kicker, while Carson Madis (77 tackles), Nolan Gail (63), Tyler Peneperd (62) and Brett Linerth (61) also have more than 50 tackles.
- North Ridgeville has committed only five turnovers all season.

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