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## Highland's terror twins Carson Noonan and Ryan Zywiec key success in OHSAA playoffs

**Brad Bournival** Akron Beacon Journal

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It's hard to decipher Carson Noonan from teammate Ryan Zywiec when they're in helmets and pads for the Highland football team.

Noonan stands 6-foot-3 and weighs 270 pounds. Zywiec is 6-3 and weighs 260.

Put the "terror twins" next teach other in the trenches and you find out exactly why the second-seeded Hornets (13-0) are back in the Division II, Region 6 final with revenge on their mind against top-seeded Avon (13-0).

"What they do and what they bring to the table on both sides of the ball is pretty special," Highland coach Mike Gibbons said. "Just seeing that day in and day out — they're great kids, they practice hard every day, they work really hard. So, yeah, they're definitely part of our team's success whether it's on the O-line or the D-line.

"On the offensive side, they're really getting a push and moving the line of scrimmage. And then on defense they're in the backfield all the time, so just two tremendous players."

### The importance of Noonan, Zywiec on Highland's offense

Zywiec is the center blowing holes up the middle on offense and Noonan is at left tackle, keeping the edge sealed so backs can run outside, for an offense averaging 263.3 yards rushing and 434.3 yards of offense per game.

Quarterback Dylan Borla is 96-of-131 passing for 2,116 yards and has a school-record 27 touchdowns. Suburban League Offensive MVP Casey Myser has rushed for 2,024 yards on

230 carries and has a school-record 43 total touchdowns.

“They’re great,” Myser said. “It’s all about mentality. They come into every game and want it more than every team. Even the younger kids want to be like those two. They’re always pushing each other and pushing the younger kids, too.”

## **The importance of Noonan, Zywiec on Highland's defense**

On defense, Noonan is an end with Zywiec right next to him most of the time at tackle. Both return as All-Ohio linemen.

Zywiec (70 tackles, 9.5 sacks, 21 tackles for loss) was named the Suburban League Defensive Player of the Year this week. Noonan (63 tackles, 9.5 sacks, 18 tackles for loss), who is committed to Miami (Ohio), is the SL Lineman of the Year.

“It’s their ability to disrupt games,” Highland strong safety Garrett Phillips said. “No one does it like those two.”

Pay too much attention to Zywiec and Noonan and teams will find linebackers Evan Foust (81 tackles) and Jameson Gordon (63 tackles, seven TFL) in the backfield.

Highland gave up just 21 points in Suburban League play, and allowed just 8.2 points per game.

## **Competition drives Highland's Carson Noonan, Ryan Zywiec**

It’s an unwritten chemistry these terror twins have wherever they are on the field.

“There’s some competition between us, of course,” Noonan said. “Who’s going to get this sack? Who’s going to get this TFL? We compete to get the most stats each game, the most stickers.”

That said, the competition the duo has doesn’t take away from the game and it shows in the 182.4 yards the Hornets give up per game.

“We’re beneficial for each other,” Zywiec said. “It’s always great to have competition with two great teammates going at it.”

It’s why Gibbons heads into Friday's game confident his leaders will step up with Highland’s

first trip to a state semifinal since 2013 on the line.

“We're so proud of the fact that the younger kids look up to them for all the right reasons,” he said. “How they do everything, how they train, how they go to school, how they are at practice, they're just phenomenal leaders. That's really what you want.

"At the end of the day, they're going to be able to pass that torch to the younger kids. Those younger kids really do look up to them.”

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