Fall 2021 Volume 23 Issue 1



AM**930 (100.3**FM)

## Avon's Niko Pappas

2020 Lorain County Golden Helmet Award Winner



Medina's
Luke Hensley
2020 Medina Gazette MVP

INSIDE: High School Gridiron Clash Previews, plus...







Browns feature & schedule.

Buckeyes feature & schedule.





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# FORECASI 2021 Fall Preview

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#### WEOL FORECAST MAGAZINE Fall 2021 PREVIEW

A Publication of AM 930 WEOL and 100.3FM WEOL Volume 23 Issue 1

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#### **About the Cover:**

As any Avon fan knows, it's always a great day to be an Eagle. "Great" might not be enough to describe Niko Pappas' abilities under center last season for Avon. In his senior year, Pappas completed 66% of his passes, throwing for 1,839 yards along with 21 touchdowns. His arm wasn't the only thing worrying defenses. Niko also rushed for 700 yards, including nine touchdowns on a 8.1 yards per carry average. Those efforts led Avon to their fourth straight regional championship and fourth straight Division II state semi-final appearance. He will continue his collegiate studies at Baldwin Wallace University in the fall.

Coming back from a knee injury in the midst of a global pandemic isn't easy. Yet, for Medina wide receiver Luke Hensley, the challenge propelled him to a higher level. He was named GCC co-offensive Player of the Year, Northeast Inland District D-I Offensive Player of the Year, and first-team All-Ohio. His senior season saw him tally 66 catches for 1,039 yards and 15 touchdowns, all school records. Helping the team to playoff wins over St. Edward's and St. Ignatius capped a tremendous Bees career for Luke. Hensley is committed to play at Youngstown State this fall.



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# High School Football On AM930, 100.3 FM & WEOL com

#### All games air at 6:30pm unless noted otherwise Gridiron Clash on AM930 & 100.3 FM, and WEOL.com Stream 1

8/20 Elyria Catholic @ Elyria 9/18 Black River @ Clearview

8/27 Avon @ Medina 9/24 Avon Lake @ Midview

9/3 Elyria @ Lorain 10/1 Elyria Catholic @ Westlake

9/4 North Ridgeville @ Normandy 10/7 Shaker Heights @ Lorain

9/10 Avon Lake @ Avon 10/8 North Ridgeville @ Midview

8/20

9/17 Wellington @ Keystone 10/15 and 10/22 TBA

#### **WEOL.com**

#### Stream 2

8/20 Strongsville @ Avon Lake

8/27 Columbia @ Vermilion

9/3 Vermilion @ Firelands

9/10 Brookside @ Clearview

9/17 Midview @ Amherst

9/24 Wellington @ Oberlin

10/1 North Ridgeville @ Elyria

10/8 Keystone @ Black River

*10/15* TBA

10/22 TBA

#### Medina County Match-up Stream 3

Buckeye @ Cloverleaf

8/27 Highland @ North Royalton

9/3 Highland @ Brunswick

9/10 Columbia @ Black River

9/17 Medina @ Strongsville

9/24 Parma @ Buckeye

10/1 Solon @ Brunswick

10/8 Brunswick @ Medina

*10/15* TBA

10/22 TBA

## Friday Night Lorain County Lights

By: Rob Polinsky

David Bowie had a hit in the 70's with "Changes". That theme seems appropriate for the upcoming high school football season. "Changes" include a return to the tengame regular season following last year's pandemic shortened six-week regular season. Elyria joins the SWC, plus there are three county schools changing coaches at Amherst, Lorain & North Ridgeville. And the OHSAA doubling the amount of playoff teams this season rounds out the modifications.

Let's start in the SWC where Elyria renews some old rivalries & starts some new ones. Devlin Culliver's Pioneers went 3-7 last year. Culliver says they played ten sophomores who gained experience heading into this season. The Pioneers need to replace some quality players who graduated including Jaheim Atkinson (RB) and three-year starter Daylan Sharlow (QB). Coach states they will be ready for week one with the players who deserve to start.



Avon Lake's Owen Wiley tries to send one through the uprights.

Avon had another amazing season going 10-1 and advancing to the state semis for the fourth consecutive year. The

Eagles need to replace three All Ohio two-way players in Niko Pappas, Mason Bingham & Devon Hunter. Captains and leading this year's squad are Jackson Blodgett (OLB), Tim Cornwell (WR), Michael Dertouzos (OL), Anthony Drenik (DL), Colin Kaufmann (LB), Trevor Norman (LB), & Ryan Ptacek (S).

Avon Lake had another terrific season going 8-2, and Coach Kostelnik expects his team to compete at the high level that is required in the SWC. Up front they return three-year starter Joe Lubertozzi (OG), Brady Shildwachter (OT), & Hunter McHugh (OT). Skill players to watch on the offense include Jeremy Dzik (OB), Jake DePaul (WR), Matthew Stuewe (WR), Jason Krukowski (RB), Nate Schillinger (TE). Over on defense Schillinger (DE) and Sam Fedders (OLB) are being counted on.

Amherst has a new head coach in Ken Fritz. Last year they went 4-3 losing in the first round of the playoffs in 3OT's to North Royalton 48-45. Top Comet returners include George Gotsis (WR), Torre Weatherspoon (RB/WR), RJ Morales (OLB), Mark Poalson (OL) & Logan Stewart (OL). Key



Amherst's George Gotsis on the move.

See FOOTBALL, 5

#### **FOOTBALL**

From 4

losses include Lavell Gibson, Tyler Brezina, Aiden Steele & Ty Weatherspoon.

Luke Beal returns to guide Midview for a second campaign, as last year the Middies went 1-7. The good news is they return 9 starters on O and 8 starters on D. According to Coach Beal the Middies return a senior class with a lot of experience and a good core group of starters. Like most teams, depth is a concern, and they are looking forward to the challenge of the SWC. Ethan Surdock (QB) is back along with Tim Henson (RB/WR), Connor Awad (RB/ WR) & Bryce Newton (RB/WR). Up front Beau Zan & Nick Skolnicki returns as does most of the offensive line. On defense, some of the returners are Steven Hawkins (DB), Cai Cooksey (DB), Tyler Smith (LB), Mason Kucera (DB), and RJ Lambert

At **North Ridgeville**, longtime basketball coach Bryan Morgan replaces Luke Durbin on the sidelines. The Rangers went 2-8



Firelands' Kyle Ransom looking to make a play.

in 2020. According to Morgan, the number of players are up which is a great sign. Morgan goes on to say they have a great group of senior leaders that are dedicated to setting a positive

hard-working culture. Morgan is counting on Dom Farago (RB/ILB), Kosta Thrasivoulou (WR/S), and Dain Bartlebaugh (LT/DL).

Moving to the LC8, **Oberlin** went 0-7 last year. Coach Mike Akers says the Phoenix return most of the starters. He feels his team can surprise some folks this year if they get some key players back in the program. Some players Akers is counting on are Andre Yarber (QB/OLB), Luke May (OG/ILB), Brandon Eason (OG/DE), and Jonny Frazier (SE/OLB). A key loss from last year is Jayden Turner.

At Clearview, Mike Collier is back for year 15. Last year the Clippers went 2-6. Key two-way starters include Jason Green (OL/DL), Terrance Cavin (WR/ DB), and Ethan Lorenzana (RB/LB). Collier likes the work ethic and commitment from his young team. Jason Ward's Columbia Raiders went 7-3 last year good for third in the LC8. They beat Black River in the first round of the playoffs. The good news, 18 of 22 starters return but they lost key players to graduation including Joe Governale (RB) and Cameron Coleman (DL). Marco Cirigliano will be counted on in the backfield. The OB tandem of Andrew

Champagne and Carter Kalamasz both return as does (WR) Owen Menge. The offensive line will be led by Nick Stopiak, Nick Reljin and Michael Chapman. The o-line will also feature Hayden Garrow (OL/LB). Other key linebackers are Tom Reljin and Dom Governale. Eli Goodman (S) will lead the secondary. Ward expects another solid season in Raider country.

Defending conference champs Keystone went 7-1 last vear, the Cats should be really. really good on offense. On defense they have some questions that need to be answered. A real strength is having a roster of 50 kids. Some of the key returners are Gideon Lampron (RB/LB) who ran for over 1,300 yards & had 115 tackles in just 8 games. Ryne Shackelford (WR) is incredibly fast and dangerous every time he touches the ball. Christian Pataky, according to Coach Griswold, can play anywhere the Cats need him to. Evan Miden DE/WR/RB) is the strongest player on the team and also does a little bit of everything. Also looking for another very productive campaign is Konnor Rodick (QB).

Over at **Wellington**, Rob Howells enters his fourth season as

See FOOTBALL, 6



Midview's Ethan Murdock escapes from pressure.



Keystone's Gideon Lampron leaps a defender.

#### **FOOTBALL**

From 4

head coach of the Dukes. A year ago they went 3-6, and Howells expects the Dukes to improve and hopefully finish in the top half of the LC8. They could have over 50 on the roster & return 6 starters on O & 7 starters on D: Jon Brasee (WR/DB), Ty Moore (QB/WR/DB), Drew Unangst (FB/TE/LB), and Cayden Sherpita (OL/DL/P). They are looking to replace Caleb Teague, Jayden Skinner, Cam Barker, and Luke McClellan.

Scott O'Donnell has 20 letter winners back at **Brookside** including his signal caller Kenny Grobolsek. Other returning starters in the back field are Michael Gomes (RB) & Karson Nail (RB). O'Donnell says the

key to success will be the offensive line led by Collin Houpt.
Jake Montgomery (WR) and
Ryan Scott (TE) will be top-targets. They also will help block
for the running game. Over on
D, Montgomery, Grobolsek, and
Scott all play defensive back.
Nail will lead the linebackers.
Ryan Kelley & Aidan McLaughlin will be counted on for the
defensive line.

At Firelands the Falcons had a great season last year finishing 8-2. Coach Ryan O'Rourke led the team to their first two playoff wins in school history. Top players are Kyle Ransom (QB), Weston Strader (RB/DL), Carter Janicek (RB/LB), and Austin Copen (WR/s). Big losses from last year include Alex Angle, Jack Valerius, Caden Bomback & Donald Crawford.

O'Rourke says his talented group with over fifteen letter winners will need to adjust to the Friday Night Lights.

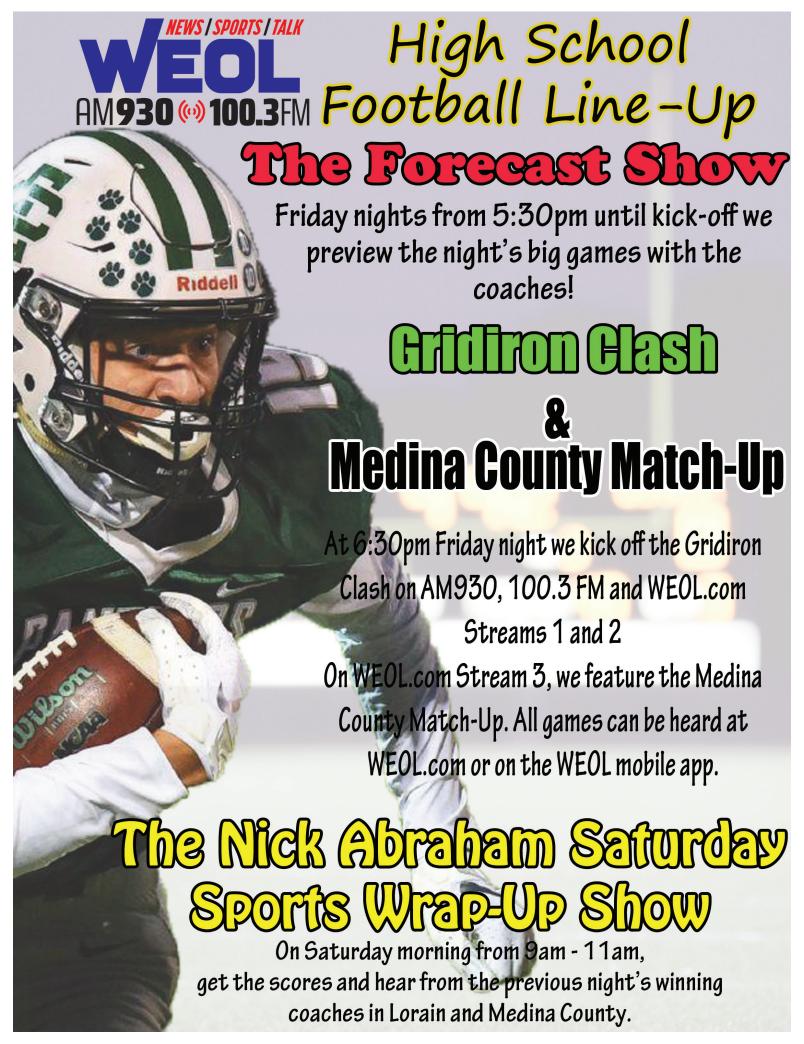
Elsewhere in the county, Elyria Catholic went 3-3 last year. According to Coach Fox, strengths will be linebackers along with ten returning starters on defense. Key players include Hayden Gerhart (OL/DL), Levi Ellis (RB/DB), Jack Kenneally (WR/DB), Jack Budinger (WR/DB), Alex Carandang (LB), and Tony Grasso (LB). The offensive front lost four starters and the Panthers also graduated Steven Navalinsky and Jaret Frantz. The Panthers are excited to play on the newly installed turf field.

At **Vermilion**, Coach Colahan's Sailors went 3-8 in 2020. Back is Ben Rini (QB/DB/P),

Bryce Hoerig (WR/DB), and Mike Grable (C). Colahan is also counting on three-year letter winner Tyler McCale (WR/DB), Keegan Frey (WR/DB), Dylan Willard (OL/LB), and others. Losses are 13 seniors from a year ago.

And finally, we head over to Lorain where the Titans have a new head coach Damion Creel. Lorain didn't play last year due to the district opting out because of the COVID-19 pandemic. They have two returning starters from two years ago, Jacob Addis & Tracy Williams. The Titans did participate in the spring in full pads as the OHSAA allowed this for teams who didn't play last fall. 2021 should make for an interesting and entertaining year for all.





## A New Normal in Medina County

#### By: Brad Bournival

After a pandemic-shortened 2020 season that saw the Suburban League and Great Lakes Conference not crown champions, everything should be back to normal this season in Medina County football.

Well, at least the new normal. That said, the area is coming off a very successful year and is looking to bounce back with even higher expectations after the Ohio High School Athletic Association expanded the playoff format to 12 teams per region.

Not everyone will make the postseason like they did a year ago, which leaves some lofty goals around the county.

This year's crop should be led by Medina, which is looking to take the next step with unquestionably the best player among the seven teams back in Penn State recruit Drew Allar.

The 6-foot-5, 230-pound senior quarterback will look to build on his 4,659 career yards passing and 49 touchdowns.

Here's a look at all area teams: Black River (5-5, 3-3, 4th in Lorain County League)

The run-heavy Pirates aren't about to change what works and with a backfield full of returning starters, they'll look to improve upon a season where they scored just a little over three touchdowns a game (22.0).

The good news is 5-foot-10, 190-pounder Joe McKean is back. The senior led the county in rushing (1,196) and scoring (17 touchdowns, 102 points).

Senior Brandon Rollin, who is 5-10 and 170 pounds, returns with 422 yards rushing and three touchdowns.

They'll run behind two-way 6-2, 240-pound senior lineman Trayis Owen.

"We do have a lot of returning starters in the backfield, which is nice," coach Kyle Clark said. "They've all put in a lot of work and have gotten stronger, gotten faster. Now, we're trying to figure out the pieces in front of them on the line. That will be the biggest question mark."

Brunswick (6-3, 3-2, T-3rd in Greater Cleveland Conference)

Blue Devils fans would think losing West Virginia two-way line-



Black River's Joe McKean is looking for another big season.

man Tomas Rimac, who was The Gazette Senior Male Athlete of the Year, would be huge.

It is, but there are pieces that will help.

The biggest is 6-foot, 285pound two-way lineman Evan Sevastos, who should help an offense that returns 6-foot, 170pound senior Ethan Fritz at quar-



Medina's Drew Allar is verbally committed to play at Penn State in 2022.

terback.

and threw for 798 yards and eight touchdowns.

Fritz was 73-for-138 last season

Senior David Hamrick, who is 5-10 and 170 pounds, will help at defensive back and running back.

Last season, Hamrick had a county-high eight interceptions and was honorable mention Division I All-Ohio.

The junior varsity, freshman and eighth grade teams combined to go 19-5-1 last season, so the future is extremely bright.

"The Blue Devils are solid this year at each grade level after graduating a strong senior class," coach Mark Pinzone said. "Our strength lies in the offensive and defensive line."

#### Buckeye (4-3)

There are some solid pieces returning for the Bucks in 5-10, 181-pound senior running back Ben Barnes and 5-8, 154-pound senior wide receiver Kaymen Marshall.

Last season, Barnes was the workhorse for the squad with 706 yards rushing on 102 carries. He scored 13 touchdowns and averaged 7.5 yards per carries.

In Luke Dennison's offense,

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#### **MEDINA**

From 8

Marshall flourished with 610 yards rushing and scored five touchdowns, while averaging 8.6 yards per carry.

The two will have experience up front with 6-foot, 214-pound senior lineman Nick Bostic leading the charge.

"We have a lot of experience returning on both sides of the ball and have a strong senior class," Dennison said. "We will be challenged early with a difficult schedule and we're very excited to get back to a normal season.

#### Cloverleaf (7-2, 6-1, 2nd in Metro Athletic Conference)

The Colts are coming off a second straight solid season and are looking to build off it with all-league players in two-way lineman Luke Yuravak (6-5, 235), guard/linebacker Kevin Bittaker (6-1, 205), running back/safety Cade Cass (5-8, 155) and running back/linebacker Emilio Rivera (5-8, 215).

The seniors were part of an offense last season that broke a school record in scoring (31.2 points per game) and averaged 306.3 yards.

Bittaker was a beast with a county-best 95 tackles and also had 12 tackles for loss.

"We are looking to pick up where we left off last season," coach Justin Vorhies said. "We have a great group of players who work hard, bond together, and expect to win."

#### Highland (4-3)

The Hornets were one of the feel-good stories of 2020 after fighting through the pandemic that only gave them five regular season games.

Thought to be a season away, Highland managed a D-II, Region 6 playoff game and have most of the tools back with 17 returning starters. Eight of those come on the offensive side.

The Hornets return 6-1, 205-pound senior Aaron Filips at quarterback after a season where he was 56-for-106 for 699 yards and five touchdowns under Mike Gibbons' run-heavy offense. Filips also rushed for 456 yards and six touchdowns on 106 carries.

Standout junior Lukas Stile brings his 5-11, 220-pound frame back at running back after a



Cloverleaf's Caden Cass isn't letting a little mud stop him.

season where he rushed for 710 yards on 134 carries and scored 12 touchdowns.

If that's not enough, 6-4, 240-pound junior defensive end Andrew Tatulinski (7 tackles for loss, 3 sacks) returns.

"We return most of our starters from last season and are looking forward to seeing what our team can do this year against some great competition," Gibbons said.

#### Medina (6-4, 2-3, T-4th in GCC)

Ignore the fourth-place finish in the league, last season was incredible for a Bees team that knocked off St. Edward and St. Ignatius in consecutive weeks to reach the Division I, Region 1 final.

With Allar back at quarterback, Medina could reach even bigger heights.

While Gazette MVP Luke Hensley graduated, the second-team All-Ohio quarterback is ready to build on a junior season where he was 209-of-397 for 2,857 yards

and threw 26 touchdowns.

He's got a gigantic weapon back in 6-1, 180-pound senior receiver Jajuan Jackson (27 catches, 489 yards, 3 touchdowns).

If that's not enough, 6-4, 240 senior Matt Spatny (53 tackles, 7.5 for loss, 3 forced fumbles, 3 fumble recoveries) is back at linebacker.

"We are expecting to capitalize on the momentum that the program achieved last season," coach Larry Laird said. "We are looking to take another step forward as a program."

#### Wadsworth (2-6)

The Grizzlies will have to break in a quarterback for the third season in a row after Mitchell Evans left for Notre Dame where he will be a tight end for the Fighting Irish.

That said, there's strength on the offensive side of the ball with senior running back/wide receiver Anthony Cirino, who his 5-10, 175-pound frame back to Wadsworth.

The honorable mention All-Northeast Inland receiver had 29 catches for 50 yards and seven touchdowns and averaged 28.9 return yards on kickoff.

Junior Davis Nye, who is 6-2, 195, will join Cirino on offense after a standout season at the junior varsity level.

Two-way lineman Conner Frisby, a 6-2, 205-pound senior, will shore up the trenches for a team that averaged over 36 points per game.

"They're an extremely young, but hardworking and spirited group," coach Justin Todd said. "Their discipline and focus in the offseason have been elite. The young players will need to adjust to Friday night speed and physicality. The team will be tested in the preseason and early on with a difficult schedule."

Contact Brad Bournival at bournival929@gmail.com.



# The Nick Abraham Hear from Friday's winning coaches from 9am - 11am

#### **Amherst Comets**

8/20	Valley Forge	Home
8/27	Riverside	Away
9/3	North Olmsted	Away
9/10	North Ridgeville	Away
9/17	Midview	Home
9/24	Berea-Midpark	Home
10/1	Avon Lake	Away
10/8	Olmsted Falls	Home
10/15	Elyria	Away
10/22	Avon	Home

#### **Avon Eagles**

8/20	Brunswick	Away
8/27	Medina	Away
9/3	Glenville	Home
9/10	Avon Lake	Home
9/17	Elyria	Away
9/24	North Ridgeville	Away
10/1	Olmsted Falls	Home
10/8	Berea-Midpark	Away
10/15	Midview	Home
10/22	Amherst	Away

#### Avon Lake Shoremen

8/20	Strongsville	Home
8/27	Brecksville	Away
9/3	Tiffin-Columbian	Away
9/10	Avon	Away
9/17	Berea-Midpark	Home
9/24	Midview	Away
10/1	Amherst	Home
10/8	Elyria	Home
10/15	Olmsted Falls	Away
10/22	North Ridgeville	Home



#### **Bay Rockets**

8/20	West Geauga	Away
8/27	Lakewood	Home
9/4	University School	Away
9/10	Valley Forge	Home
9/17	Westlake	Away
9/24	Rocky River	Home
10/1	North Olmsted	Home
10/8	Fairview Park	Away
10/15	Elyria Catholic	Home
10/22	TBD	

#### **Berea-Midpark**

8/20	Highland	Away
	_	Away
8/27	Nordonia	Away
9/3	St. Francis de Sales	Home
9/10	Elyria	Home
9/17	Avon Lake	Away
9/24	Amherst	Away
10/1	Midview	Home

0/8	Avon	Home
0/15	North Ridgeville	Away
0/22	Olmsted Falls	Home

Away

#### **Black River Pirates**

Akron Manchester

11 20	Tiki off Mulicifester	2 ivva y
3/27	Northwestern	Home
9/3	Cloverleaf	Away
9/10	Columbia	Home
9/18	Clearview	Away
9/24	Brookside	Away
10/1	Oberlin	Away
10/8	Keystone	Home
10/15	Firelands	Away
0/22	Wellington	Home

#### **Brookside Cardinals**

8/20	Wickliffe	Home
8/27	Cuyahoga Heights	Away
9/3	Chagrin Falls	Home
9/10	Clearview	Away
9/17	Columbia	Away
9/24	Black River	Home
10/1	Keystone	Home
10/8	Firelands	Home
10/15	Wellington	Away
10/22	Oberlin	Away

#### **Brunswick Blue Devils**

8/20	Avon	Home
8/27	Olmsted Falls	Away
9/3	Highland	Home
9/10	Morrison R. Waite	Home
9/17	Euclid	Away
9/24	Mentor	Away

## Games can be heard on:

AM930/100.3 FM WEOL.com WEOL.com and WEOL.com Stream 2 Stream 3



Stream 1



10/1	Solon	Home
10/8	Medina	Away
10/15	Hudson	Away
10/22	Strongsville	Home

#### **Buckeye Bucks**

8/20	Cloverleaf	Away
8/27	Conneaut	Away
9/3	Copley	Home
9/10	North Olmsted	Away
9/17	Valley Forge	Away
9/24	Parma	Home
10/1	Normandy	Home
10/8	Lakewood	Away
10/15	Holy Name	Home
10/22	TBD	

#### **Clearview Clippers**

#### Home Games @ George Daniel Stadium

110111C (	Junios C George Dunier ou	ididili
8/20	Parma	Away
8/27	Scott	Home
9/3	Smithville	Away
9/10	Brookside	Home
9/18	Black River	Home
9/24	Columbia	Away
10/1	Firelands	Away
10/8	Wellington	Home
10/15	Oberlin	Home
10/22	Keystone	Away

#### **Cloverleaf Colts**

8/20	Buckeye	Home
8/27	Keystone	Away
9/3	Black River	Home
9/10	Streetsboro	Away

Cal	mbio Boidoro	
10/22	Coventry	Away
10/15	Norton	Home
10/8	Woodridge	Away
10/1	Springfield	Home
9/24	Ravenna	Away
9/17	Field	Home

#### **Columbia Raiders**

8/20	Independence	Home
8/27	Vermilion	Away
9/3	Northwestern	Home
9/10	Black River	Away
9/17	Brookside	Home
9/24	Clearview	Home
10/1	Wellington	Away
10/8	Oberlin	Home
10/15	Keystone	Away
10/22	Firelands	Away

#### **Elyria Pioneers**

8/20	Elyria Catholic	Home
8/27	Bedford	Home
9/3	Lorain	Away
9/10	Berea-Midpark	Away
9/17	Avon	Home
9/24	Olmsted Falls	Away
10/1	North Ridgeville	Home
10/8	Avon Lake	Away
10/15	Amherst	Home
10/22	Midview	Away

#### **Elyria Catholic Panthers**

8/20	Elyria	Away
8/27	Perkins	Home
9/3	Midview	Away

3	9/17 Rocky R 9/24 Fairview 10/1 Westlak 10/8 North C 10/15 Bay	v Park Away e Away
10/22 TBD		Away

#### **Fairview Park Warriors**

8/20	Lutheran West	Away
8/27	Parma	Home
9/3	Lakewood	Away
9/10	Normandy	Home
9/17	North Olmsted	Home
9/24	Elyria Catholic	Home
10/1	Rocky River	Away
10/8	Bay	Home
10/15	Westlake	Away
10/22	TBD	•

#### **Firelands Falcons**

8/20	Edison	Away
8/27	Rocky River	Away
9/3	Vermilion	Home
9/10	Wellington	Away
9/17	Oberlin	Away
9/24	Keystone	Home
10/1	Clearview	Home
10/8	Brookside	Away
10/15	Black River	Home
10/22	Columbia	Home

#### **Holy Name Green Wave**

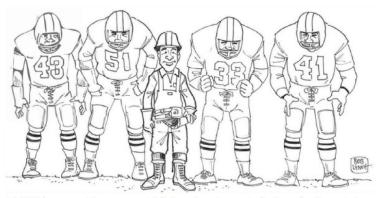
_		
8/21	Padua Franciscan	Home
8/28	VASJ	Home

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Riverside	Away
Elyria Catholic	Away
Parma	Home
Lakewood	Away
Valley Forge	Away
Normandy	Home
Buckeye	Away
TBD	
	Elyria Catholic Parma Lakewood Valley Forge Normandy Buckeye

#### **Highland Hornets**

8/20	Berea-Midpark	Home
8/27	North Royalton	Away
9/3	Brunswick	Away
9/10	Tallmadge	Home
9/17	Barberton	Home
9/24	Kent Roosevelt	Away
10/1	Revere	Away
10/8	Cuyahoga Falls	Home
10/15	Aurora	Home
10/22	Copley	Away

Kovetono	Wildcats
veasinie	willucats

8/20	Northwestern	Away
8/27	Cloverleaf	Home
9/3	LaBrae	Away
9/10	Oberlin	Home
9/17	Wellington	Home
9/24	Firelands	Away
10/1	Brookside	Away
10/8	Black River	Away
10/15	Columbia	Home
10/22	Clearview	Home

#### **Lakewood Rangers**

8/20	John Marshall	Home
8/27	Bay	Away
9/3	Fairview Park	Home
9/10	Rocky River	Away
9/17	Normandy	Home
9/24	Holy Name	Home
9/30	Parma	Away
10/8	Buckeye	Home
10/14	Valley Forge	Away
10/22	TBD	

#### **Lorain Titans**

8/20	Olmsted Falls	Away
8/27	Sandusky	Away
9/3	Elyria	Home
9/10	Bedford	Away
9/17	Cleveland Heights	Home
9/24	Maple Heights	Home
10/1	Garfield Heights	Away
10/7	Shaker Heights	Home
10/15	Medina	Away
10/22	Shaw	Away

#### **Lutheran West Longhorns**

8/20	Fairview Park	Home
8/27	Kirtland	Home
9/3	Lutheran East	Home
9/10	Brooklyn	Away
9/17	Vermilion	Home
9/24	Wickliffe	Away
10/1	Trinity	Home
10/8	Cuyahoga Heights	Home
10/15	Independence	Away
10/22	Painesville	Home

#### **Medina Bees**

8/20	Warren Harding	Away
8/27	Avon	Home
9/3	Wadsworth	Home
9/10	Stow	Away
9/17	Strongsville	Away
9/24	Euclid	Home
10/1	Mentor	Away
10/8	Brunswick	Home
10/15	Lorain	Home
10/22	Solon	Away

#### **Midview Middies**

8/20	Rocky River	Away
8/27	Strongsville	Away
9/3	Elyria Catholic	Home
9/10	Olmsted Falls	Home
9/17	Amherst	Away
9/24	Avon Lake	Home
10/1	Berea-Midpark	Away
10/8	North Ridgeville	Home
10/15	Avon	Away

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10/22	Elyria	Home	10/1	Elyria	Away	9/10	Sandusky	Home
Маже			10/8	Midview	Away	9/17	Ellet	Away
NOTM	andy Invaders		10/15	Berea-Midpark	Home	9/24	Lake Catholic	Home
8/20	Warrensville Heights	Away	10/22	Avon Lake	Away	10/1	Maple Heights	Away
8/27	Cuyahoga Falls	Home	<b>O</b> I		.	10/8	NDCL	Away
9/4	North Ridgeville	Home	Oper	lin Phoenix		10/15	Walsh Jesuit	Home
9/10	Fairview Park	Away	8/20	Plymouth	Away	10/22	VASJ	Away
9/17	Lakewood	Away	8/27	Lutheran East	Home	_	-	J
9/24	Valley Forge	Home	9/3	Brooklyn	Away	Parm	na Redmen	
10/1	Buckeye	Away	9/10	Keystone	Away	8/20	Clearview	Home
10/8	Holy Name	Away	9/17	Firelands	Home	8/27	Fairview Park	Away
10/15	Parma	Home	9/24	Wellington	Home	9/3	West Geauga	Home
10/22	TBD		10/1	Black River	Home	9/10	Westlake	Away
NI			10/8	Columbia	Away	9/18	Holy Name	Away
North	Olmsted Eagles		10/15	Clearview	Away	9/24	Buckeye	Away
8/20	North Ridgeville	Away	10/22	Brookside	Home	9/30	Lakewood	Home
8/27	Green	Home	•			10/8	Valley Forge	Home
9/3	Amherst	Home	Olms	ted Falls Bulldogs		10/15	Normandy	Away
9/10	Buckeye	Home	8/20	Lorain	Home	10/22	TBD	iiiu
9/17	Fairview Park	Away	8/27	Brunswick	Home			
9/24	Westlake	Home	9/3	Norwalk	Away	Rock	y River Pirates	
10/1	Bay	Away	9/10	Midview	Away	8/20	Midview	Home
10/8	Elyria Catholic	Away	9/17	North Royalton	Home	8/27	Firelands	Home
10/15	Rocky River	Home	9/24	Elyria	Home	9/2	Valley Forge	Away
10/22	TBD		10/1	Avon	Away	9/10	Lakewood	Home
			10/8	Amherst	Away	9/17	Elyria Catholic	Away
North	Ridgeville Range	rs	10/15	Avon Lake	Home	9/24	Bay	Away
8/20	North Olmsted	Home	10/22	Berea-Midpark	Away	10/1	Fairview Park	Home
8/27	Valley Forge	Home		•	·	10/1	Westlake	Home
9/4	Normandy	Away	Padu	a Bruins		10/0	North Olmsted	Away
9/10	Amherst	Home	8/21	Holy Name	Away	10/13	TBD	ivvay
9/17	Olmsted Falls	Away	8/27	Orrville	Home	10/22	עעז	
9/24	Avon	Home	9/3	Firestone	Home	St. Ed	dward Eagles	



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8/28	HD Woodson	Home
9/4	Mentor	Home
9/11	Elder	Away
9/17	Massillon Washington	Away
9/25	Bishop Sycamore	Home
10/2	St. Ignatius	Home
10/9	Rock Creek Christian	Home
10/16	Moeller	Home
10/22	Hoban	Away

#### St. Ignatius Wildcats

8/21	Bishop Sycamore	Home
8/27	Mentor	Away
9/4	Mt. St. Joseph	Home
9/10	Euclid	Away
9/18	Hoban	Home
9/25	River Rouge (MI)	Home
10/2	St. Edward	Away
10/9	Moeller	Away
10/16	St. Xavier	TBD
10/23	Canada North-Clarkson	Home

#### **Strongsville Mustangs**

	-	
8/20	Avon Lake	Away
8/27	Midview	Home
9/3	Brecksville	Home
9/10	Solon	Away
9/17	Medina	Home
9/24	Cleveland Heights	Away
10/1	Dover	Away
10/8	Euclid	Home

10/22	Brunswick	Away
Valley	y Forge Patriots	
8/20	Amherst	Away
8/27	North Ridgeville	Away
9/2	Rocky River	Home
9/10	Bay	Away
9/17	Buckeye	Home
9/24	Normandy	Away
10/1	Holy Name	Home
10/8	Parma	Away
10/14	Lakewood	Home
10/22	TBD	
Vermi	ilion Sailors	
8/20	Margaretta	Home
8/20 8/27	Margaretta Columbia	Home Home
	o .	
8/27	Columbia	Home
8/27 9/3	Columbia Firelands	Home Away
8/27 9/3 9/10	Columbia Firelands Scott	Home Away Away
8/27 9/3 9/10 9/17	Columbia Firelands Scott Lutheran West	Home Away Away Away
8/27 9/3 9/10 9/17 9/24	Columbia Firelands Scott Lutheran West Oak Harbor	Home Away Away Away Away
8/27 9/3 9/10 9/17 9/24 10/1	Columbia Firelands Scott Lutheran West Oak Harbor Port Clinton Huron	Home Away Away Away Away Home
8/27 9/3 9/10 9/17 9/24 10/1 10/8	Columbia Firelands Scott Lutheran West Oak Harbor Port Clinton Huron Edison	Home Away Away Away Away Home Home
8/27 9/3 9/10 9/17 9/24 10/1 10/8 10/15 10/22	Columbia Firelands Scott Lutheran West Oak Harbor Port Clinton Huron Edison	Home Away Away Away Home Home

9/17	Hudson	Away
9/24	Nordonia	Away
10/1	Stow	Home
10/8	Austintown Fitch	Away
10/15	North Royalton	Away
10/22	Twinsburg	Home
Welli	ngton Dukes	
8/20	Western Reserve	Home
8/27	Mapleton	Home
9/3	New London	Away
9/10	Firelands	Home
9/17	Keystone	Away
9/24	Oberlin	Away
10/1	Columbia	Home
10/8	Clearview	Away

#### **Westlake Demons**

Brookside

Black River

10/15

10/22

8/20	North Royalton	Away
8/27	James F. Rhodes	Home
9/3	Warrensville Heights	Away
9/10	Parma	Home
9/17	Bay	Home
9/24	North Olmsted	Away
10/1	Elyria Catholic	Home
10/8	Rocky River	Away
10/15	Fairview Park	Home
10/22	TBD	

Home

Away

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8/27

9/3

9/10

Wooster

Medina

Brecksville











## A Postseason for All?

#### By Todd Shapiro

There are two things that always bring joy in late October: Halloween candy and high school football playoffs.

Anyone who has ever pulled their 16th mini-Snickers bar out of a Trick-or-Treat bag knows you can have too much of the former. Area football fans will soon find out this fall if it's possible to have too much of the latter.

Earlier this year, the Ohio High School Athletic Association announced the latest expansion of the football playoffs doubling the number of team that will qualify for the post season in each of its seven divisions.

This fall, 448 schools from across Ohio will make the playoffs in seven divisions, 16 from each of 28 regions, compared to just 224 teams in 2019. In 2020, all teams were eligible for the postseason due to the pandemic shortened season.

The playoffs will start the weekend of October 29-30 with the state championship games returning to Canton's Tom Benson Stadium December 2-5.

It remains to be seen if late season scoreboard watching and logging onto joeeitel.com to see where your favorite teams currently sits in the standings will be the same now that more than half of the state's 709 football-playing schools will make the playoffs.

It wasn't always easy to make the playoffs. In fact in the early years it was nearly impossible.

Clearview was the first Lorain County school to make the playoffs in 1972, the first year the OHSAA crowned an official state champion. In that year the Clippers were one of just four teams to make the playoffs in Class A, and one of only 12 teams in Ohio to earn their way into the inaugural postseason. Clearview needed to finish first in its 42-team region just to earn the right to play in the state semifinals.

That same year in Class AAA, Region 1 Lorain, Admiral King, Southview, Avon Lake, Midview and Amherst were among 69 schools fighting for a single playoff spot.

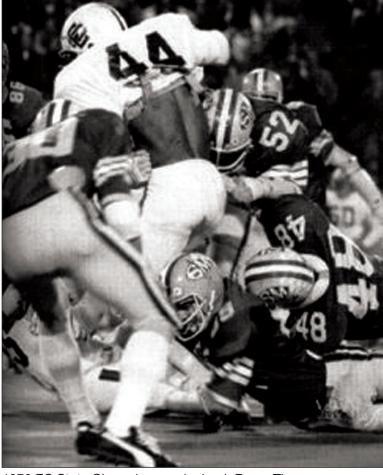
That's the way the playoff system remained for the next eight years.

When Elyria Catholic became the first Lorain County school to win a state championship in 1976 the Panthers, who finished the regular season 8-1, were the only team to qualify for the Class AA playoffs with a regular season loss on their resume.

The gradual expansion of the playoffs began in 1980 when the original three classes shifted to five divisions with two teams from each region, a total of 40 statewide making the playoffs.



EC Head Coach Brian Fox Fired Up on Sidelines.



1976 EC State Champion runningback Bryan Thomas.

However, in 1981, the first year Lorain County had two teams qualify for the playoffs, Avon Lake and Elyria Catholic had to finish in the top two in regions of 36 and 37 teams respectively to qualify for the postseason.

In 1985 the OHSAA doubled the playoff field again to 80 teams with the top four in region advancing to the postseason. One year later Lorain County had three postseason participants for the first time with Vermilion, Elyria Catholic and Clearview all making the playoffs.

The playoff field remained steady at 80 qualifiers until 1994 when a sixth division was added, bumping the number of teams to qualify for the postseason up to 96.

The next round of playoff expansion took place in 1999 with the top eight teams in each region advancing to the postseason, increasing the number of schools that quali-

fied for the playoffs to 192. That was also the first year teams that finished in the top four in their region earned the opportunity to host its opening playoff game. It wasn't until a year later that Avon Lake, Amherst and Wellington became the first trio of Lorain County teams to earn an extra home game at the conclusion of the 2000 season.

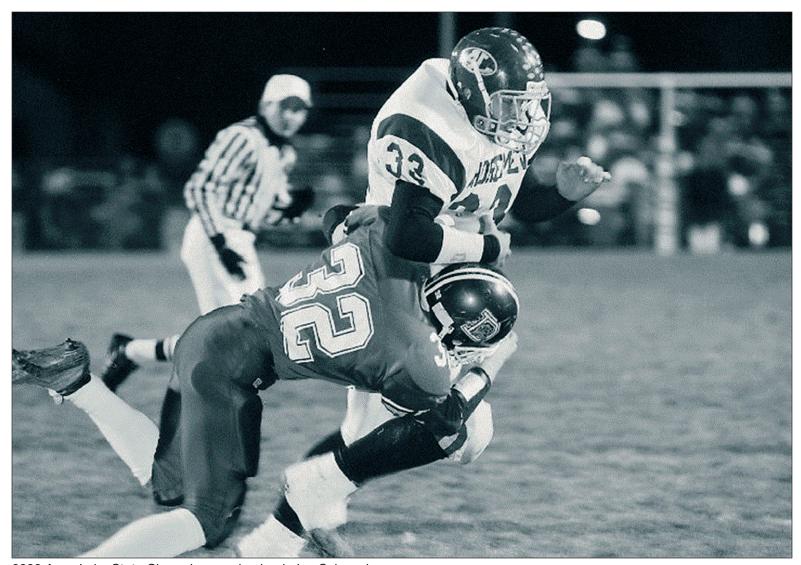
It was under this format that Avon Lake won the 2003 Division II state championship, the most recent state title for a Lorain County team.

After decades of postseason expansion the Shoremen needed to win five playoff games to secure their championship compared to the two games Elyria Catholic needed to win back in '76.

The next expansion came in 2013 when a seventh division was created with 32 more playoff qualifiers for a total 224 earning a playoff berth. This

See **POSTSEASON**. 16





2003 Avon Lake State Champion running back Jon Schroeder.

#### **POSTSEASON**

From 15

format remained intact through the 2019 season.

In 2020 the OHSAA announced a planned expansion of the playoffs to 12 teams in region with the top-four teams in each division earning a first-round bye beginning with the 2021 season. Then earlier this year the OHSAA went one step further, eliminating the byes and sending 16 teams from each division into the playoffs.

That means Division I schools like Lorain and Elyria, who play in a 17-team region, begin the year with a 94 percent chance of advancing to the playoffs. The recent changes also mean it will take six wins to win a state championship, a longer postseason than what is required to win a Super Bowl or the NCAA FCS. Division II or III

championship.

While the latest expansion means twice as many student-athletes across the state will get at least one more week of football at the end of the season, it will also take away some of exclusivity that made qualifying for the playoff such a special feat both for the players and coaches as well as the communities they represent.

In April, when the OHSAA announced the new format, Columbia coach Jason Ward, who is also the Region 4 director of the Ohio High School Football Coaches Association, expressed his displeasure with this latest expansion telling the Chronicle-Telegram.

"I don't think this is what's good for kids. I don't think a No. 16 seed versus a No. 1 seed is good for kids," Ward said. "It's not going to take you very long to find a 16-seed who played a No. 1 seed in the regular season and got beat by over 70 points

then they have to go into the playoffs and play that team again."

At that same time Elyria Catholic coach Brian Fox



Columbia Head Coach Jason Ward celebrates after a big stop.

offered an opposing view to the Chronicle-Telegram, one that is likely shared by most high school football fans.

"There's nothing like high school football. I don't think expanded playoffs will devalue the regular season," Fox said. "You get an extra game of playoff football. How could you not be excited about that? I think it's going to be amazing and I think kids across the state will be excited."

No matter which side of the expanded playoff debate you come down on one thing seems certain, there's no going back.

Nearly a half century ago the OHSAA created a playoffs system to answer the questions posed by mythical, poll-based state championships. In 2021 we may finally get the answer to the question is there any such thing as too much high school football.



### **Unfinished Business in Columbus**

Ryan Day came one step closer to capturing his first National Championship last year. His Ohio State Buckeyes avenged the previous year's loss to Clemson but ultimately fell short against Alabama. Now with a new quarterback under center and fresh faces across the depth chart, Buckeye football is due for another great season in the Big Ten Conference.

#### **Replacing Fields**

A pair of four-star recruits, C.J. Stroud and Jack Miller III will lead the competition for starting quarterback. Stroud has the advantage heading into the summer. He impressed in the spring game, leading two touchdown-ending drives.

He's 6'3" and 195 pounds. That's a bit smaller than the typical Ryan Day quarterback. Still, 247Sports, one of the biggest recruiting sites in the country, ranks him as the 2nd-best pro-style quarterback in his class. It still has to translate onto the field when the fall rolls around. Scouts have been clamoring about his NFL-level ability for the past year though, so expectations are that he'll be just fine.

The Rancho Cucamanga High School product, who once thought basketball would be his career choice, will look to lead the Buckeye offense this fall.

#### The Rest of the Offense

The backfield will have some changes as well with the departure of Trey Sermon. Master Teague III, who played in spurts in 2020 after injuring his Achilles in the spring, is looking forward to a healthier season.

"I've been feeling good, no worries... Ultimately, I just feel better in my body control and mechanics



Receiver Chris Olave hauls in a touchdown against Clemson.

of it", Teague told reporters during recovery. "I think it had something with me just being able to restart and rebuild from the injury".

Five-star freshman TreVeyon Henderson is a marquee name in the running back room. Some compare him to Christian McCaffrey with his ability to hurt you with both his legs and hands out of the backfield. He missed his entire senior high school season because

of COVID-19, so he'll be looking forward to cracking some pads again.

Fans should also become familiar with Miyan Williams. He's a shorter but stockier tailback who's nickname "Meatball" makes him all the more endearing.

The receivers are a loaded bunch with Chris Olave and Garrett Wilson anchoring the unit. Pro Football Focus rated them at 84.8 and 82.9 respectively last season, first and second among Big Ten wide receivers. They are two extremely polished route runners who possess blazing speed.

In the slot it will be Jaxon Smith-Njigba. The Rockwall, Texas native didn't see much action his freshman season, catching just one touchdown pass in the win over Nebraska (he did have an incredible TD catch taken away in the Alabama game). He was a five-star recruit for a reason though, and the coaching staff is excited to use him.

Julian Fleming and Marvin Harrison Jr. are two other receivers to keep an eye on. Day snagged Fleming from the recruiting backyard of Penn State two years ago in what might be the steal of the decade. He was the number one ranked receiver in the 2020 class and third highest rated overall. Fleming appeared in just four games in 2020 but will see a much higher snap count this season. Harrison Jr. (yes, the son of the Marvin Harrison) could be a standout freshman with his speed and length and is another one plucked from the Nittany Lions pipeline.

Senior Jeremy Ruckert captains the tight ends in what will be his final season in Columbus. Ruckert

See OSU, 18

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#### OSU

From 17

announced he would be staying in April as opposed to entering the NFL Draft. He stated he had "more to give", which should excite the Buckeye faithful.

#### The Silver Bullets

The Buckeye defense regressed from 2019 to 2020. In terms of vards allowed, they were the best in 2019, allowing just 260 yards per game to the opposition. That number spiked to just over 401 last season. That was somewhat expected with how many pieces they lost to the NFL after 2019. Schematically, don't anticipate many changes for Ohio State. They still love their four down-lineman, three cornerback, two linebacker, and one safety set with the "bullet" position. The "bullet", a safety-linebacker hybrid, can either cover a tight end or running back as well as shoot gaps to stop the run. Pete Werner and Baron Browning played the spot most recently, but with both guys gone, a replacement must be found. Ronnie Hickman and Craig Young

are two hybrid linebacker-safety candidates who could be exactly what defensive coordinator Kerry Coombs is looking for.

On the defensive front, two top-five defenders in Power 5 football return in Zach Harrison and Haskell Garrett. Pro Football Focus scored them as the first and fourth-best defenders respectively in 2020 and they should help anchor the Buckeye defense. Senior K'Vaughan Pope, Dallas Gant, and Teradja Mitchell will lead the linebacker unit. The three had just 10 games played combined last season, so each will be placed in a much larger role this time around. At the time this is being written, former 5-star prospect Palaie Gaoteote apparently is in Ohio State's Student Directory but played last season at USC. If he does end up in Columbus, expect him to have a huge impact.

The secondary, the weakest spot on this Buckeyes defense last season, will be looking for answers early. They return starting cornerbacks Sevyn Banks and Marcus Williamson. With no Shaun Wade this season, both guys will have to step up in increased roles. Redshirt Freshman Ryan Watts, the nation's 17th-best cornerback according to 247Sports, will be an emerging name to keep an eye on. Safety Josh Proctor is back as the team continues to look for elite safety place since the departure of Jordan Fuller. The Buckeye defense also plans on utilizing a cover safety as opposed to a slot corner based on their personnel.

Overall, improvement is needed on the defensive side of the football. The National Championship loss exposed just about every weakness the Buckeye defense had, so Day and Coombs have their work cut out for them in 2021.

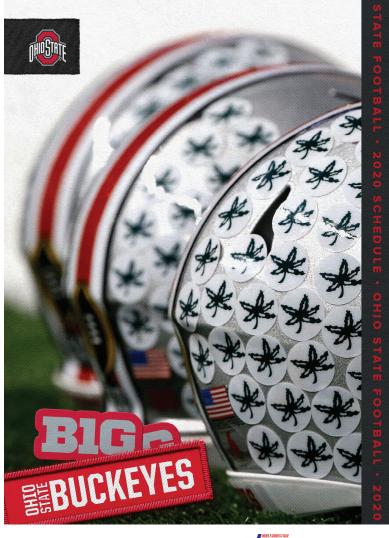
#### Back to the CFP?

It wasn't a shock to see Ohio State in the College Football Playoff again last season and the expectations shouldn't change heading into the new year. "I tell the guys: I wake up scared every day, you know, that people want what we have. The expectations have been set, we know that," said Coach Day back in April. "It was the same expectation when I was fortunate enough to be the head coach a couple years ago, and the expectation hasn't changed, and it won't in 20 years here at Ohio State."

The return of the 12-game season will be a treat for fans this season. After a Thursday-night opener against Minnesota, the Buckeyes are set for a monster Week Two contest in Columbus against Oregon. The two sides last met in the 2015 CFP Championship Game where Ohio State won the title by a final score of 42-20.

For those in Summit County, the Akron Zips pay a visit to Ohio Stadium on September 25th. Tough road games this year could include Weeks Seven and Nine against Indiana and Nebraska respectively. Of course, the regular season concludes on a date with Michigan in Ann Arbor.

If the Buckeyes take care of business in those marquee matchups and don't lose any of those "sleeper" games (think Iowa and Purdue in recent history), a return to the CFP could very well be in store





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9 MARYLAND

23 AT INDIANA

30 PENN STATE

NOV 6 AT NEBRASKA

13 PURDUE

**20 MICHIGAN STATE** 

27 AT TTUN

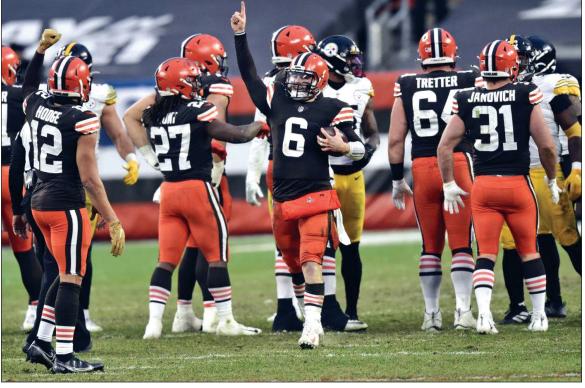
# A New Type of Bark

"The Browns is the Browns" were the words uttered by Pittsburgh Steelers wide receiver Juju Smith-Schuster prior to the Browns Wild Card victory at Heinz Field in January. The Steelers found out quickly that evening that this Cleveland Browns team is the real deal. In 2021, the Browns will be looking to put the rest of the league on notice as well.

#### Continuity... Finally!

It hasn't been often that the same General Manager, Head Coach, and starting quarterback from the year before all return. Yet, that's exactly what's happening in Cleveland. Andrew Berry, the maestro of the front office, shined all offseason and has earned the respect of the Browns faithful. Kevin Stefanski remains as the team's cool, calm. and collected but spirited leader. Of course, Baker Mayfield will be back under center. Those three positions are the most important to any NFL franchise, and Cleveland is set in all three.

"They both stepped right in, they are natural leaders, they are very calm, they are thoughtful, and they plan and organize things well", owner Jimmy Haslam said



Baker Mayfield celebrates a big win.

of his GM and head coach back in April. "I do not want to say it was a surprise because we had our expectations, but they surpassed

expectations in terms of becoming the top person in personnel and head coach in the NFL."

The one who benefits the most from the personnel continuity is Mayfield. After dealing with numerous head coaches already in just three professional seasons, he'll enjoy returning to a system he is already familiar with instead of having to start over.

#### Offensive Identity

"Identity" was one of those buzz phrases surrounding the Browns offense early last season. The team, especially Mayfield, struggled in those first few weeks. Baker wasn't making great decisions and sustained drives were hard to come by. Changes were made after the week six injury to Odell Beckham Jr., and the offense took off. Week's one through six saw Mayfield possess a Pro Football Focus rating of just 58.6, 31st in the league. For the rest of the season, his score elevated to a 90.3, 5th best of any quarterback. Some took that to mean the offense would be better without OBJ moving forward. Offensive coordinator Alex Van Pelt has since dismissed that notion.

"You're always better with great

players. Anytime you take a great player off the field, you're going to have to find ways to generate more offense", Van Pelt said in June. "We'll be better with Odell, no doubt".

Baker's aerial targets are a solid group as well. We've mentioned OBJ, and his LSU buddy Jarvis Landry will be back as well. Rashard Higgins, Donovan Peoples-Jones, and rookie Anthony Schwartz will all compete for depth chart positions throughout camp. The tight end room is alive and well with Austin Hooper and David Njoku back along with Harrison Bryant. Fans wanted more out of Hooper than they got last year. Some added familiarity with Mayfield should lead to more production.

#### **Ground and Pound**

The duo of Nick Chubb and Kareem Hunt will once again help carry the offense. They led the third-best rushing offense in the NFL last season and compliment each other wonderfully in the backfield. Chubb will run you over and carry you downfield while Hunt provides a nice change

See BROWNS, 20



Myles Garrett plans on putting more QBs in the turf this season.



#### **BROWNS**

From 19

of pace with his quickness and strength. With Chubb eligible for a contract extension and back-toback 1,000-yard rushing seasons under his belt, expect a new deal for him sooner than later.

The big fellas up front deserve plenty of love, too. Pro Football Focus has them ranked as the best offensive line heading into the 2021 season, and for good reason. PFF held them as both the best pass-blocking and run-blocking unit in 2020 with most of the group returning for 2021. Second-year man Jedrick Wills Jr. will look to build off the success in his rookie season, along with veterans Jack Conklin, Joel Bitonio, Wyatt Teller, J.C. Tretter, and Chris Hubbard. Injuries weren't foreign to these

guys, so the depth Cleveland has up front is a luxury to have. No other AFC North offensive line is in PFF's top-ten.

#### **Revamped Defense**

Most of the later criticism with the Browns in 2020 revolved around the defense. A plethora of injuries before the season even started derailed what could have been a much better unit. Safety Grant Delpit and Greedy Williams, two guys who missed all of 2020, will both be back looking to make an impact.

Myles Garrett returns to anchor the defensive front in dominant fashion. Contracting COVID-19 later in the season slowed his production a bit, but Garrett still finished the season with 12 sacks (6th most in the NFL), 10 tackles for loss, and four forced fumbles. He also earned Pro Bowl honors along with being named First Team All-Pro

Opposite Garrett will be Jadeveon Clowney. The former number one overall pick has declined in his two seasons since leaving the Houston Texans. He was injured most of 2020 and only played in eight games. When healthy, he is still one of the most prolific pass rushers in the league.

The secondary was bolstered tremendously this offseason. First round pick Greg Newsome II was electric in his collegiate days at Northwestern and will look to start immediately opposite of Denzel Ward. On 3rd and 4th downs last season at Northwestern, Newsome II allowed a 0.0 passer rating. He was the only cornerback in the draft class to do so.

Troy Hill and John Johnson III both come over from the Rams via

free agency and help shore up the secondary. The linebackers continue to be the weakest link of the defense. Ideally, rookie Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah will quickly develop. Defensive coordinator Joe Woods has a much healthier bunch to work with this season, so expect the Browns to be crisper defensively.

#### How High is the Ceiling?

It's not Super Bowl or bust for the Browns this year. But, there are expectations for a deep postseason run. The Browns were just a few plays away from making the AFC Championship game last season. Being born in 1996, that's not something I ever thought I would type out. But here we are, with the brown and orange poised for another huge season. Oh, and a full, sold-out Cleveland Browns Stadium will thunderously welcome the boys of fall back.







