

Highland Hornets 2023 high school football preview



Mike Gibbons knows Highland lost quite a bit of his Suburban League American Conference championship team. That said, there's an undeniable tradition of winning with the Hornets.

Brad Bournival, Akron Beacon Journal

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HIGHLAND HORNETS

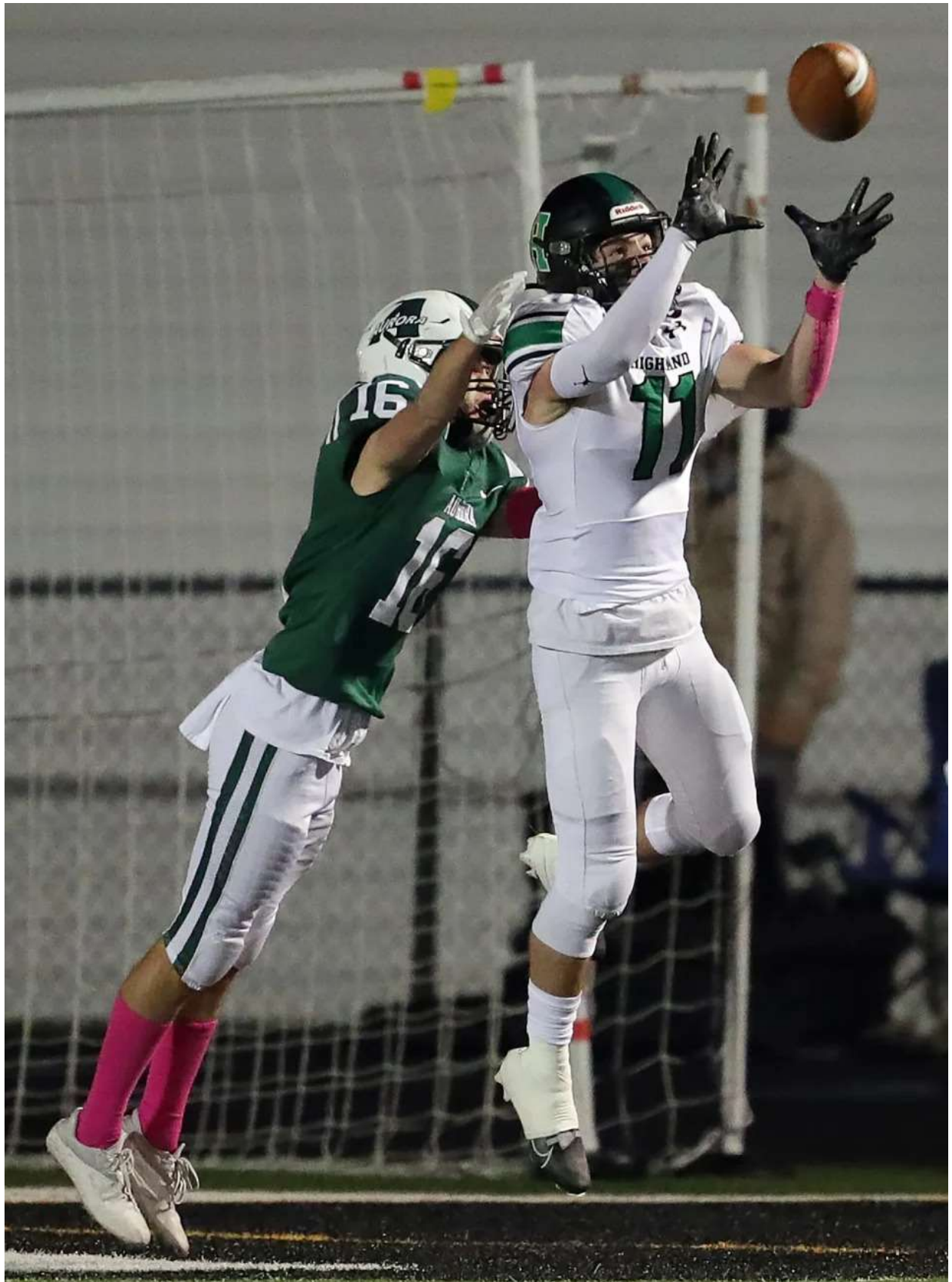
HEAD COACH: [Mike Gibbons, ninth year, 60-26](#)

LAST YEAR: 12-1, 7-0

POSTSEASON: Division II, Region 6

RETURNING LETTERMEN

- [Matt Ciryak, WR-CB, 6-3, 195, Sr.](#)
- [Chase Crutchley, S, 5-9, 170, Sr.](#)
- Brodie Davis, OL, 6-2, 210, Sr.
- Ben Fearn, OL, 6-0, 220, Sr.
- Carson Noonan, OL-DL, 6-3, 255, Jr.
- Tommy Schondel, TE, 6-0, 200, Sr.
- Johnny Siliko, WR, 5-8, 150, Sr.
- Tommy Turk, WR, 5-10, 165, Sr.



Highland's Chase Crutchley, right, is back and hopes to lead the Hornets to another Suburban League American Conference title.

IMPACT PLAYERS: The Hornets lived on defense last season, so it's no surprise to see Gibbons relying heavily on that side of the ball again. In 2022, [Crutchley](#) and Ciryak were part of a Hornets defense that gave up 8.2 points per game. ... Ciryak was a second-team All-Ohioan last season. He registered seven interceptions. ... Crutchley led Highland with six pass breakups. ... The Hornets are always a run-first offense but have a solid receiver in Siliko, who caught 22 passes as a junior for 352 yards and scored four receiving touchdowns. ... Siliko also had two rushing touchdowns.

WHAT'S NEW: The obvious question is who will take over for [Lukas Stiles](#). The answer is Even Grant and Casey Myser. ... Some at Highland believe Myser, who is a sophomore, could be the next big thing for the Hornets. Stiles rushed for 1,423 yards and scored 24 touchdowns last season. Stiles broke career records for points (324), rushing touchdowns (51) and total touchdowns (54). ... Andrew Lurtz has graduated and left quarterbacking duties to Peyton Janickas. As a junior, Janickas was 9-for-18 passing for 117 yards and threw a touchdown pass.

OUTLOOK: Let's not ignore the elephant in the room. There are only eight returning letterwinners from last season's undefeated Suburban League American Conference champions. ... Highland has won 15 straight regular-season games and are 23-3 over the last two seasons. ... Toledo Central Catholic has knocked the Hornets out of the playoffs in each of the last two seasons. Last year, it came in a Division II, Region 6 semifinal. The year before it came in the regional final. ... Highland averaged 372.4 yards and gave up 151.2 last season.

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This article originally appeared on Akron Beacon Journal: [Ohio high school football: Highland Hornets 2023 preview](#)