

Akron Beacon Journal

Summit County High School Football | Top games, who makes OHSAA playoffs & more for 2nd half

Brad Bournival Akron Beacon Journal

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There are five weeks left in the high school football season, and a ton of excitement comes with it.

Here are the five games to watch and five five potential breakout stars. We're also predicting conference winners and playoff qualifiers.

5 OHSAA football regular-season games to watch in second half featuring Greater Akron area high schools

Hoban at Walsh Jesuit, Oct. 4: The Knights hold an 11-game winning streak and a 18-8 edge in the 26-game history of the rivalry. Furthermore, Hoban knocked Walsh out of the postseason at the regional final level a year ago. Is this the year the Warriors end the slide?

Nordonia at Wadsworth, Oct. 4: These two could very well come into a Week 7 game undefeated. While the Grizzlies hold a 9-4 edge in the series against the Knights, the last four games have been split down the middle. Both teams should come in ranked in the top five of the Greater Akron power rankings.

Triway at Manchester, Oct. 11: The upstart Panthers have taken a 1-19 record the last two seasons and turned it into five straight wins. Should the status quo continue, both teams should come in undefeated. Triway has won the last three games, but last year it was 24-21.

Highland at Aurora, Oct. 25: Aurora won the league last season with a wild 9-7 victory over the Hornets in Week 10. Highland won the league in 2022 and only gave up 17 points in the league. The Greenmen score 43.6 points per game. The Hornets average 42.6. Something has to give.

Hoban at St. Edward, Oct. 25: What's better than a Knights team that has been in the state finals going against an Eagles squad that has won the last three big school titles? It took a touchdown by Brandon White with 3:39 left for St. Edward to win 14-7 at Hoban a year ago.

5 breakout player candidates for the second half

Brysen Hall, Wadsworth: The freshman quarterback has broken out to an extent in starts against Medina, Twinsburg and Brecksville, but expect his 70 completions, 797 yards and 10 touchdown passes to get a considerable jump as he gets more comfortable with the offense.

Caleb Aiken, Nardon: Aiken might have the the most under-the-radar 44 tackles, three for loss and sack in Greater Akron this season. He also has two fumble recoveries. As the Knights turn their attention to Wadsworth and Hudson the next two weeks, expect to hear the senior's name more and more at linebacker.

Jake Livingston, Manchester: Yadin Sharp, Phil Partin, Evan Kusmits and Trevor Kusmits are getting their just praise for the Panthers this season, but Livingston could be the forgotten man. He's been a big piece on Manchester's rush defense and runs crisp routes on offense at wide receiver.

Caden Carter, Walsh Jesuit: With the Warriors churning things out on offense, Carter, who is the son of Copley great Delone Carter, hasn't garnered the attention he probably should. With 35 tackles, four for loss, and three sacks, a forced fumble and two pass breakups, expect the junior linebacker to become even more of a force when it matters the most.

Reno Ferri, Hudson: The Explorers have always been a run-heavy squad, and they've found their next back in the sophomore. Ferri heads into Week 6 with 512 yards rushing and 10 total TDs and is averaging 7.0 yards per carry.

Predicting the champions of the City Series, Metro Athletic Conference, Portage Trail Conference, Principals Athletic Conference, Suburban League and Federal League

City Series:East. ... The league is a combined 5-25 in nonleague play, but the Dragons look like the team to beat after wins in two of the last three weeks. That includes a 37-9

win over University School last week.

Federal League: Canton McKinley. ... The two-time defending league champs have outscored conference opponents 73-13 and could go a long way in the race with a win over Green this week.

Suburban League National Conference:Wadsworth. ... This one comes down to a huge Week 7 matchup with Nordonia at Wadsworth, but the Grizzlies have all the makings of holding off a very game Knights squad.

Suburban League American Conference:Highland. ... It will come down to Highland and Aurora again in Week 10, but the Hornets have just a little more up front to give them the edge in what has become a fantastic rivalry.

MAC:Streetsboro. ... All eyes will be on the Streetsboro-Norton game this week. The Rockets have outscored the opposition 269-21 this season. Win there and only Field stands in their way in Week 9.

PAC-7:Manchester. ... This one will come down to a Week 8 game when Triway travels to Manchester. The Panthers are seven-point favorites according to Fantastic50.net and have the defense to back that up.

PTC: Warren John F. Kennedy. ... The Eagles enter league play with the only winning record, but don't be surprised if Mogadore claims another title. The two play each other this week.

Projecting Greater Akron area OHSAA football playoff qualifiers

Pairings for the OHSAA state playoffs are released Oct. 27, the Sunday after the regular season ends. The opening round of the playoffs begin five days later on Nov. 1. How many Greater Akron teams will be the postseason? We're projecting 18 teams from the area qualifying, including 16 from Stark County and eight from the Suburban League.

Division II

Region 5

Green: The Bulldogs haven't played a game decided by more than eight points. They know how to get things done in a tough Federal League.

Hoban: The Knights have made the finals nine times in the last decade. Book the trip to Week 11. It's happening.

Hudson: The Explorers have won three straight with a big game against Nordonia on the docket this week. Even if it falls to 6-4, Hudson should make it.

Lake: Canton McKinley, Hoover and Green remain on the schedule. One win in those

three for the four-win Blue Streaks would all but secure the postseason.

Nordonia: The Knights' only obstacles should be Hudson and Wadsworth. Even if they win eight games, they should be playing at home in the playoffs.

Twinsburg: If the Tigers, who are 2-3 at this writing, can get their record somewhere near .500 they should garner a low seed.

Walsh Jesuit: The Warriors are undefeated and have a huge game with Hoban in Week 7. They're in — in fact, they could be a top-four seed.

Region 6

Highland: The Hornets should run the table until Week 10 and a game with Aurora. Nine wins should give them a home game.

Wadsworth: The defending Suburban League National Conference champion Grizzlies are arguably even better than last year when they made the playoffs in Division I.

Division III

Region 9

CVCA: The two-win Royals are projected favorites in their last five games and could face an undefeated Manchester team in Week 10.

East: The Dragons have won two of their last three and are the odds-on favorite in four of their five City Series games. That would make them 6-4 and put them in the bottom tier of the playoffs.

Tallmadge: A win over Revere this week could go a long way for the Blue Devils. At worst, they're probably 6-4.

Region 10

Copley: Even though Copley has only one win so far, should it finish with three more wins it could put the squad in the top 16 of the region.

Revere: The Minutemen have won four games already. If the momentum continues, a home game isn't out of the question.

Division IV

Region 13

Buchtel: The Griffins' 22-13 win over Hoover in Week 1 was gigantic. Four more wins should keep Buchtel in the top 16.

Norton: The Panthers stumbled out of the gate, but won their last three, including a 28-7 over previously unbeaten Field last week. Expect them back in the playoffs.

Division V

Region 17

Manchester: The Panthers have looked great this season. With Triway and CVCA still left on the schedule, seven wins will be more than enough to put them in the postseason.

Division VI

Region 21

Mogadore: The Wildcats are projected to win four of their final games. That would give them six wins and a 38th playoff appearance that includes 25 straight Week 11 showings.

Contact Brad Bournival at bbournival@gannett.com and follow him on Twitter at [@bbournival](https://twitter.com/bbournival)