

Who's the best of the best in Greater Akron football? Beacon Journal reporters rank them

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With one game left in the high school football regular season, we thought it would be interesting to have a quasi draft.

It came with parameters, as only four selections were made per position – five for offensive linemen – and once a player was picked he was off the board.

Before you think it's an All-Star team, it's really not as Brad Bournival, Michael Leonard, Michael Beaven and Nate Ulrich each selected a player they thought they'd start a team with.

We chose a quarterback, running back, wide receiver, offensive lineman, defensive lineman, linebacker, defensive back, kicker/punter and return specialist.

The order rotated starting with quarterback and was done for fun.

Here's what we came up with:

Offense

Greater Akron area quarterbacks

- 1. Beaven — Keller Moten, Walsh Jesuit.** Moten is a senior dual-threat quarterback who has led his undefeated team to victory with late fourth-quarter touchdowns against Ursuline and Hoban. He has completed 81 of 132 passes for 1,301 yards with 16 touchdowns and three interceptions. He has rushed for 855 yards and 13 TDs on 84 carries. Moten earned third-team All-Ohio honors at quarterback in Division II last season. He has college scholarship offers from Mercyhurst and Saint Francis.

- 2. Bournival — Brysen Hall, Wadsworth:** Hall is only a freshman, but you wouldn't know it. He picked up his first start in Week 3 and has gone 7-0 since then for the undefeated Grizzlies. Hall comes into Week 10 102-of-165 passing for 1,664 yards with 17 touchdowns.
- 3. Ulrich — Ben Chesser, Nordonia.** The senior sets a high standard for work ethic on the field and in the classroom (4.35 GPA). He has gone 95-of-147 passing for 1,102 yards and nine touchdowns with five interceptions this season. He has rushed 106 times for 667 yards and 13 TDs.
- 4. Leonard — Dylan Borla, Highland.** The senior has been a dual threat for the undefeated Hornets all season, but has proven to be a weapon on a team full of them. He has gone 71-of-94 passing for 1,484 yards and 20 TDs with just one interception. He has also rushed for 211 yards and three touchdowns.

Greater Akron area running backs

- 1. Bournival — Casey Myser, Highland:** This one was a layup. The honorable mention All-Ohioan should be much higher this season as a junior. Myser, the Akron Beacon Journal Midseason Offensive Player of the Year, enters Week 10 with 1,346 yards on 140 carries. That's 9.6 yards per carry. He's scored a school-record 26 touchdowns on the ground. He also has 11 catches for 322 yards and five scores.
- 2. Ulrich — Ziaire Stevens, East.** The Purdue commit and East's all-time leading rusher has an elite combination of speed and vision. So far this season, the senior has compiled 153 carries for 1,188 yards and 10 TDs. Last season, he rushed 238 times for 2,001 yards and 20 TDs en route to being voted the City Series Offensive Player of the Year and a Division III All-Ohio Offensive Player of the Year.
- 3. Leonard — Rocco DeLorenzo, Nordonia.** The rock of Nordonia's rushing attack, DeLorenzo leads the Knights as they have turned more to read-option attacks this year. He has 697 yards and nine TDs and has not fumbled in 118 rushing attempts this fall.
- 4. Beaven — Brayton Feister, Archbishop Hoban.** The sophomore has stepped into a larger role this season for the Knights with 140 carries, 902 yards and 12 touchdowns rushing and nine catches for 81 yards and one TD. Feister, also a standout wrestler, has football scholarship offers from Wisconsin, Kentucky, Akron, Kent State, Miami of Ohio and Toledo.

Greater Akron area wide receivers/tight ends

- 1. Ulrich — Milan Parris, Walsh Jesuit.** The 6-foot-5, 200-pound junior possesses a

blend of size and speed college programs covet. He has compiled 21 catches for 512 yards and eight touchdowns this season. His receiving yards and receiving TDs are team highs for unbeaten Walsh.

- 2. Leonard — Calix Lemp, Wadsworth.** Lemp has given Wadsworth the home-run threat it needs to run its rush-heavy offense. He has snagged 10 TDs and is averaging 20.4 yards per catch, which is crazy.
- 3. Beaven — Andrew McKnight, Copley.** McKnight is a top target for quarterback Gabe Mansel with 50 receptions, 848 receiving yards and 12 touchdowns. McKnight caught three TD passes in a Week 9 win over Revere. He also played quarterback for a half in a Week 2 win over Firestone when Mansel was out with an injury and ran for 53 yards and a TD on 13 carries and completed 4 of 8 passes for 26 yards.
- 4. Bournival — Antonio Martin, Green:** Martin was a third-team All-Ohioan last season. Green is a deep threat every time he runs a route with 380 yards and five touchdowns on 25 receptions. I'll save you the math. That's 15.2 yards per reception.

Greater Akron area offensive linemen

- 1. Leonard — Carson Noonan, Highland.** If you're looking for the reason Highland's run game has been unstoppable this season, Noonan might be it. Although he will play on the defensive line in college, Noonan anchors a stout Hornets offensive line that has paved the way for Casey Myser's record season. The senior is a Miami (Ohio) recruit and was named first team All-Ohio.
- 2. Beaven — Sam Greer, Hoban.** Greer is a junior tackle with good size and athletic ability. He has football scholarship offers from colleges around the United States, including Ohio State, Michigan, Penn State, Oregon, Tennessee, Miami of Florida. He anchors an offense that gains 318.4 yards per game. He has basketball scholarship offers from Akron and Kent State after being the starting center as a freshman on Hoban's Division I state championship team in 2023.
- 3. Bournival — Lucas Tielsch, Copley:** Copley has 3,448 yards total offense with the three-star Tielsch as its left tackle. That's 383.1 yards per game. Still not sold? Tielsch picked up offers from Virginia Tech and Minnesota in the last week and counts Kentucky, Louisville, Pitt, Cincinnati and USF among his 17 offers.
- 4. Ulrich — Kodey Kish, Walsh Jesuit.** Warriors coach Nick Alexander refers to Kish as "our rock at left tackle." The 2023 third-team All-Ohio selection in Division II is a three-year starter and two-year captain. The 6-foot-3, 230-pound Kish has not allowed a sack on 134 passing attempts this season. The senior has also helped pave the way for Walsh's

2,792 rushing yards.

- 5. Leonard — Jake Clapper, Hudson.** Clapper has been a three-year starter for a Hudson team known for producing great linemen. During that time, he has played just about every position on the line. An all-district player as a junior, the senior showed his academic chops by committing to Army.

DEFENSE

Greater Akron area defensive backs

- 1. Bournival — Elbert Hill IV, Hoban:** Come on. Is there any easier pick than this one? The four-star Hill is ranked as the No. 1 defensive back in the nation. He's accumulated over 30 offers and is down to Ohio State, Tennessee, Oregon, Michigan, Texas A&M, USC, Alabama, Notre Dame, Penn State and UCLA. Hill has four interceptions, 35 tackles, a sack and 15 pass breakups this season.
- 2. Leonard — Gavin Madigan, Wadsworth.** Coach Justin Todd referred to Madigan as "the heart and soul of our football team." That's quite the compliment given the Grizzlies' talent level. While Madigan is a safety, he can be seen all over the formation. His versatility shows on offense as well, as he had 753 yards and 10 TDs on the ground.
- 3. Ulrich — Aiden Henry, Walsh Jesuit.** The senior is picked here as a defensive back, but he's a standout wide receiver and returner, too. He has compiled 32 tackles, with seven assists and three for loss, to go along with three pass breakups this season. On offense, he has caught 35 passes for 499 yards and three TDs, rushed twice for 13 yards and thrown a pass for a 26-yard TD. He also has a 91-yard kickoff return for a TD. He has scholarship offers from Central Michigan and Robert Morris.
- 4. Beaven — Terrell Wharton Jr., East.** Wharton has college scholarship offers from all over the United States, including Penn State, Wisconsin, Pittsburgh, Indiana, Purdue, Kentucky, Central Michigan, Akron and Kent State. The honorable mention All-Ohioan last season is a lockdown corner who doesn't get the ball thrown his way very often. He has seven pass deflections and 21 tackles (three for loss) and also plays receiver with four touchdown catches.

Greater Akron area linebackers

- 1. Leonard — Jacob Earnest, Wadsworth.** Earnest comes from a long line of Wadsworth athletes who enjoyed success on the gridiron and the mat. He was critical to the Grizzlies' Week 8 win over Nordon, with a double-digit tackles, a late touchdown

catch and a blocked extra point in overtime. Where does he get his tackling form? Off the wrestling mat, where he was a state qualifier last March.

- 2. Ulrich — Eli Lee, Hoban.** The Ohio State commit is a dominant senior inside linebacker who can rush, cover and make plays from sideline to sideline with the best. As a junior last season, Lee was a first-team All-Ohio selection in Division II. This season, the 6-foot-3, 230-pound Lee is even better. He has 89 tackles, with 22 for loss and eight sacks, two interceptions (one returned for a TD) and two forced fumbles.
- 3. Beaven — Tanner Mintz, Hoban.** Mintz committed to Robert Morris University over scholarship offers from Bowling Green, Miami of Ohio, Kent State and Ohio. The dynamic linebacker enters Week 10 with 86 tackles (12 for loss), six sacks, three interceptions and two touchdowns.
- 4. Bournival — Declan Norton, Walsh Jesuit:** The Warriors often get overlooked when it comes to defense, but Norton has been a standout this season. He enters Week 10 with 65 tackles, three for loss, a sack and has forced a fumble.

Greater Akron area defensive linemen

- 1. Ulrich — Ryan Zywiec, Highland.** He's a senior defensive tackle and interior offensive lineman who finishes plays with admirable ferocity. This season, he has 46 tackles (10 solo and 36 assists), with 15½ for loss and seven sacks. He has tallied a forced fumble, a fumble recovery and a pass breakup. As a junior last season, he was voted the Suburban League American Conference Lineman of the Year and third-team All-Ohio in Division II.
- 2. Beaven — Nick Crawford, Hoban.** Crawford is a senior leader and presence up front for Hoban's defense. The Akron Beacon Journal Midseason Defensive Player of the Year enters Week 10 with 42 tackles (13 for loss), 13 sacks and three forced fumbles and has scored a touchdown.
- 3. Bournival — Ace Brown, Hoban:** You can't miss the 6-foot-4, 220-pound junior when he lines up on the edge. The three-star standout has offers from Illinois, Kentucky, Toledo, Bowling Green and Miami (Ohio). Michigan, Michigan State, West Virginia, Iowa State, Wisconsin and Rutgers also have expressed interest. His 39 tackles, 13 for loss, nine sacks and two forced fumbles show why he's one of the best.
- 4. Leonard — Jordan Jackson, Nordonia.** Jackson has anchored the Nordonia defense by clogging up the middle. The 6-foot-2, 260-pound senior has been a force at defensive tackle. Despite drawing the most attention from opponents, Jackson has 14 tackles for loss and three sacks this season.

Greater Akron area kick/punt returners

- 1. Beaven — Elbert Hill IV, Hoban.** Hill, a first-team All-Ohio defensive back in Division II last season, is a standout on offense, defense and special teams with scholarship offers from colleges across the United States. Hill has returned two kickoffs for touchdowns. He has 11 receptions for 289 yards and three touchdowns and 12 carries for 161 yards and one TD on offense. His notable stats on defense are four interceptions, one TD, 35 tackles, 15 pass breakups and one sack.
- 2. Bournival — Tylan Boykin, Hoban:** Central York, Pa., kicked right to the three-star Eastern Michigan commit and Boykin housed it from 50 yards out last week. With a 4.5 40-yard dash, the 6-foot-1, 175-pound senior is a threat whenever he touches the ball, as his two punt returns for scores show.
- 3. Leonard — Buddy Willig, Norton.** Willig has played a much larger role in Norton's offense this season, but he is still most dangerous when he drops back to return kicks. How good a teammate is he? He gave up a sure punt-return touchdown when he lateraled the ball to lineman Jeffrey Becker just to give his blocker a chance to score.
- 4. Ulrich — Antonio Martin, Green.** The senior who plays wide receiver and cornerback in addition to returning kickoffs and punts is electric in all phases of the game. A 2023 second-team All-Ohio defensive back in Division II, Martin is one of the area's top talents despite suffering a torn ACL twice in the same knee during his time at Green. In six games this season, he has returned six punts for 40 yards and seven kickoffs for 88 yards. As a junior, he tallied more than 500 yards on returns.

Greater Akron area kickers/punters

- 1. Bournival — Jack Dinwiddie, Wadsworth:** Dinwiddie is a four-star kicker who is three points away from becoming the first kicker in Medina County to score 200 points. He is 95 percent on extra points (170 of 179) and 9 of 15 on field goals. Those 197 points are already school and county records.
- 2. Leonard — Riley Edgehouse, Nordonia.** Edgehouse continues Nordonia's tradition of solid kickers. He is 9 of 10 on field goals this year, with his lone missing coming on a 45-yard attempt that hit the upright. He's also 43 of 45 on extra points, and both of his two misses were blocked.
- 3. Ulrich — Jeremy Hammel, Hoban.** The sophomore has made 39 of 39 extra-point kicks and all five of his field-goal attempts this season. His resume includes a 41-yard field goal Oct. 11 against Glenville.
- 4. Beaven — Jonah Kowza, Highland.** Kowza has made 45 of 46 extra-point kicks and

both of his field goal attempts with a long of 34 yards. He has executed 56 kickoffs with 28 resulting in a touchback.

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