



HIGHLAND HORNETS

HISTORY LESSON

All-time record: 368-341-9.
Record vs. current county teams: 72-80-5.
Record vs. all county teams: 78-80-5.
Coaches, records: Augie Rios (1952) 7-1; Tom Bangert (1953-54) 10-5-1; Jim Tyree (1955) 8-0; Wes Crile (1956-1958) 4-21-1; Bill Horn (1959-60) 8-8; Dave Beckman (1961-64) 13-22-3; Jim Wagner (1965) 0-9; Phil Hahn (1966-67) 16-2; Bob McFarland (1968-72) 34-9-2; Dave Ring (1973-77) 32-17; Dick Fletcher (1978-82) 22-27-1; Joe Paul (1983-85, 1992-94) 13-47; Dave Poetter (1986-91) 20-40; John Hopkins (1995-01) 30-44; Tim Snook (2002-06) 19-31; Tom Lombardo (2007-14) 61-29; Mike Gibbons (2015-present) 71-29.
Best season: 2013 — 13-1 (D-II state semifinals).
Worst season: 1985 — 0-10.
Best 10-year period: 1966-75 — 75-15-3 (.806).
Worst 10-year period: 1989-98 — 23-77 (.230).
Most points in game: 88 vs. Copley, 2023.
Most points allowed in game: 72 vs. Orrville, 1964.
Biggest margin of victory: 88-14 vs. Copley, 2023.
Biggest margin of defeat: 72-6 vs. Orrville, 1964.
Most common opponent: Revere (69 games, 33 wins, 1 tie).
Who they own: 12-1 vs. Columbia.
Who owns them: 1-9-2 vs. Black River.
Conferences: Suburban League American Conference 1956-57, 1976-present (championships — 2022, 2013, 2008, 2001, 1979); Inland Conference 1966-75 (championships — 1975, 1974, 1969, 1968, 1967, 1966); Chippewa Conference 1963-64 (championships — none); Medina County League 1952-55 (championships — 1955, 1952).

STARTING LINEUP

Offense			
Pos.	Player	Ht.	Wt.
QB	Dylan Borla	6-0	185 sr.
RB	Casey Myser	6-2	205 jr.
WR	Nick Dobkowski	6-3	195 jr.
WR	Lucas Gerding	5-11	185 sr.
WR	Luke Berkmyer	5-8	160 sr.
WR	Kyle Williams	5-10	190 sr.
TE	Caleb McKeen	5-11	220 sr.
H-B	Evan Foust	6-0	195 so.
LT	Carson Noonan	6-3	270 sr.
LG	Ryan Zywiec	6-3	260 sr.
C	Ben Nowack	5-11	240 jr.
RG	Brady Bendau	6-4	260 sr.
RT	Ben Coyne	6-4	255 sr.
K	Jonah Kowza	6-1	155 so.
KR	Casey Myser	6-2	205 jr.
KR	Garrett Phillips	5-10	185 sr.

Defense			
Pos.	Player	Ht.	Wt.
E	Carson Noonan	6-3	270 sr.
T	Josh Messina	5-11	240 jr.
T	Cody Bendau	5-11	235 jr.
T	Ryan Zywiec	6-3	260 sr.
LB	Caleb McKeen	5-11	220 sr.
ILB	Jameson Gordon	6-3	200 jr.
OLB	Evan Foust	6-0	195 so.
OLB	Kallen Whitting	5-7	185 jr.
CB	Colton Foust	6-0	175 sr.
CB	Nick Dobkowski	6-3	195 sr.
FS	Garrett Phillips	5-10	185 sr.
SS	Josh Arvanetes	6-2	185 sr.
PR	Nick Dobkowski	6-3	195 jr.
PR	Luke Berkmyer	5-8	160 sr.
PR	Nick Dobkowski	6-3	195 jr.

ROSTER

No.	Player	Pos.	Ht.	Wt.	Yr.
1	Dylan Lazar	RB/WR	5-7	170	sr.
2	Luke Berkmyer	WR	5-8	160	sr.
3	Lucas Gerding	WR/DB	5-11	185	sr.
4	Kyle Williams	WR/DB	5-10	180	sr.
5	Colton Foust	WR/DB	6-0	175	sr.
6	Nick Dobkowski	WR/DB	6-3	195	sr.
7	Jameson Gordon	WR/LB	6-3	200	jr.
8	Matthew Desai	TE/DE	6-1	205	sr.
9	Mikhael Abuhamdeh	WR/DB	5-11	180	sr.
10	Alex Wojtylak	WR/DB	5-10	165	sr.
11	Josh Arvanetes	WR/S	6-2	185	sr.
12	Evan Foust	RB/TE/LB	6-0	195	so.
13	J.P. Quinn	WR/DB	5-6	165	sr.
14	Aiden Price	QB	6-0	180	jr.
15	Cooper Ziellinski	WR/DB	5-11	155	jr.
16	Grady Gibb	QB	5-11	185	jr.
17	Chris Metzger	WR/DB	6-2	205	jr.
18	Dylan Borla	QB	6-0	185	sr.
19	Johnny Prucha	QB/S	6-0	160	so.
20	Kallen Whitting	LB	5-7	185	jr.
21	Liam Ziellinski	WR/DB	5-9	150	sr.
22	Garrett Phillips	LB	5-10	185	sr.
23	Derick Falen	TE/LB	5-6	190	sr.
24	Noah Wolny	RB/LB	5-9	165	sr.
25	Casey Myser	RB	6-2	205	sr.
26	Frankie Iannaggi	WR/DB	5-7	150	so.
27	Josef Plamper	RB	6-1	165	so.
28	Niel Flannery	WR/LB	5-10	175	so.
29	Colton Winston	RB/LB	5-9	155	so.
30	Jackson Watts	LB	5-9	155	so.
31	Chatham Phillips	WR/DB	6-0	165	so.
32	Anthony DePompa	WR/DB	5-7	155	so.
33	Owen Ziellinski	WR/DB	5-9	140	so.
35	Carson Kwiatkowski	K	5-8	135	sr.
36	Xavier Lyons	RB/WR	5-8	135	so.
37	Zaid Abuhamdeh	LB	5-9	175	so.
39	Marcus Nedelcu	TE/DE	6-0	180	so.
40	Jonah Kowza	K	6-1	155	so.
42	Omar Abuhamdeh	LB	5-10	170	jr.
44	Ryan Haney	RB/LB	5-9	170	o.
45	Landon Kuzma	K	6-1	170	jr.
46	Thomas Trausch	TE/LB	6-0	170	so.
50	Ryan Zywiec	OL/DL	6-3	260	sr.
51	Conner Howman	OL/DL	5-11	185	so.
52	Sean Sender	OL/DL	6-0	235	so.
54	Carson Noonan	OL/DL	6-3	270	sr.
55	Brock Leatherman	OL/DL	5-7	220	jr.
56	Josh Pavlock	OL/DL	5-10	225	so.
57	Gavin Olsen	OL/DL	5-10	165	so.
58	Ben Coyne	OL/DL	6-4	255	sr.
58	Josh Messina	OL/DL	5-11	240	jr.
60	Ben Nowack	OL/DL	6-4	260	sr.
65	Cody Bendau	OL/DL	5-11	235	jr.
66	Brady Bendau	OL/DL	6-0	285	sr.
67	Brady Jeffers	OL/DL	5-11	190	so.
68	Tommy Nilson	OL/DL	5-11	190	so.
70	Drew Davis	OL/DL	6-1	230	jr.
71	Wyatt Sitz	OL/DL	5-11	220	so.
72	Tommy Fearn	OL/DL	6-2	230	so.
73	Elliot Throckmorton	OL/DL	6-4	270	sr.
75	John Pavlock	OL/DL	6-2	250	sr.
77	Tyler Brown	OL/DL	6-0	245	so.
78	Cain Taylor	OL/DL	6-2	280	so.
79	Spencer Marquis	OL/DL	6-0	180	so.
80	Jake Weber	OL/DL	5-10	170	so.
81	Kaden Planicka	OL/DL	5-11	195	jr.
82	Dan Miller	OL/DL	6-0	230	jr.
81	Will Mandara	OL/DL	5-11	185	so.
84	Brystin Glaugue	WR/DB	5-11	130	so.
85	Ryan Zahir	OL/DL	5-11	225	jr.
86	Justin Weaver	OL/DL	6-3	195	so.
87	Caleb McKeen	TE/DE	5-11	220	so.
88	Ben Radigan	WR/DB	6-0	175	so.
89	Ethan McCarthy	WR/DB	5-11	155	so.

BY THE NUMBERS

15
 Winning records over the last 17 seasons.
1,309
 Rushing yards by Casey Myser, one of the highest totals by a sophomore in Medina County history.



Running back Casey Myser

Two sports, one focus

Baseball standout Myser also an impact player on football field

Rick Noland
The Gazette

For a young man who considers himself a baseball player first, Highland junior Casey Myser is a pretty darn good football player.

Already a two-year starter for the baseball team, the left-handed pitcher and left-hand hitting outfielder also already has earned two letters in football.

In fact, the 6-foot-1, 210-pound Myser is coming off a sophomore season that saw him carry the ball 179 times for 1,309 yards (7.3-yard average) and 16 touchdowns and catch seven passes for 133 yards (19.0 average) and two scores as the Hornets went 11-3 overall and 6-1 in the Suburban League American Conference.

That production, combined with the fact he has two high school seasons remaining and runs the 40-yard dash in 4.6 seconds, has attracted the attention of several Mid-American Conference schools, but right now Myser is hoping to land a scholarship to play college baseball.

"It's just something I've always loved," the 17-year-old said. "My grandpa (the late Richard Szalay) coached in high school (at Olmsted Falls) and made me fall in love with the sport. Right now I'm leaning that way, but I'm keeping my options open."

"He's one of those kids you saw come up through the youth program and middle school. Not that it always happens at the high school level, but we knew he was a special talent. He was one of those kids that every time he touched the ball (when he was younger), it was a touchdown. We knew what he could do, but it was good to see it at the varsity level."

Hornets coach Mike Gibbons on Casey Myser

Should Myser, who bench presses 295 pounds, squats 485 and deadlifts 440, decide to pursue football after high school, he should have more than a few options available.

"He's a combination of great strength and good speed and he has really good vision," Highland coach Mike Gibbons said. "His ability to see things and make cuts on a dime are

what makes him special."

After playing mostly on special teams as a freshman, Myser was the featured back as a sophomore. He credits fellow running back Evan Grant, who was a senior, and a talented offensive line for making that adjustment fairly easy but also modestly points out his numbers might have been even bigger had he been 100% healthy.

"I had a tweaked ankle the entire year, so I was more of a downhill back," he said. "This year my ankle is healthy, so I'll be a little more side to side."

With a line led by Carson Noonan and Ryan Zywiec, it won't be hard for Myser to find holes, but the Hornets are hoping to increase his usage in the passing game, especially now that he's gotten bigger and stronger.

"It's definitely been a focus in the offseason," Gibbons said. "We want to get him the ball in different ways. He's got really good hands and he's a matchup nightmare for defenses. You feel comfortable in any situation, whether it's handing the ball off to him or throwing him a pass."

"He's one of those kids you saw come up through the youth program and middle school. Not that it always happens at the high school level, but we knew he was a special talent. He was one of those kids that every time he touched the ball (when he was

younger), it was a touchdown. We knew what he could do, but it was good to see it at the varsity level."

Myser missed two games last season due to the ankle injury and barely touched the ball in a few absolute blowouts, but he was usually the guy who had the ball when Highland was being pressed.

It will be the same story this season, though there will likely again be a few games where a very good Hornets team doesn't use him beyond the first half, or even the first quarter.

The season opener tonight against Hudson, though, won't be one of those games.

"We want to go 10-0 in the regular season, but Week 1 vs. Hudson will be tough," Myser said. "We want to win a state championship every year, but we'll just get better every day in practice and every week on the field. We want to go as far as we can. We had a lot of good receivers and linemen leave us (through graduation), but we had other kids work super hard, so I think we're going to be a really tough team to beat this year."

"I'm not shooting for any individual goals. I'm just going to go out there and try to help my team win every game we possibly can. If I end up breaking records along the way, that would be awesome."

Contact Rick Noland at (330) 721-4046 or rnoland@medina-gazette.com. Follow him @RickNoland on X.

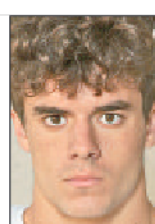
SEASON OUTLOOK

COACH: Mike Gibbons. **Age:** 41. **College:** Mount Union ('06). **Overall record:** 82-40 (12th season). **Record at Highland:** 71-29 (10th season).
ASSISTANTS: Chris Meyer (defensive coordinator), Jordan Gribble (wide receivers), Mike Nettling (safeties/special teams), Larry Lambright (linebackers), Kenny Fritts (offensive line/defensive line), Nate Bracey (running backs), Tristan Endo (defensive line).
DIVISION: II, Region 6 (enrollment: 432 boys).
LEAGUE: Suburban American Conference American Conference (since 1976; titles in '79, '01, '08, '13, '22).
PLAYOFF APPEARANCES: 2000 (D-III regional semifinals), 2001 (D-III regional semifinals), 2008 (D-II regional runner-up), 2009 (D-II first round), 2011 (D-II first round), 2013 (D-II state semifinals), 2014 (D-II first round), 2015 (D-II first round), 2017 (D-II regional semifinals), 2020 (D-II second round), 2021 (D-II regional semifinals), 2022 (D-II regional semifinals), 2023 (D-II regional semifinals).
LAST SEASON: 11-3, 6-1 (2nd in SL American).
BEST OF THE BEST: All-Ohians Carson Noonan (6-foot-3, 270 pounds) and Ryan Zywiec (6-3, 260) headline powerful lines that will be the backbone of what the Hornets want to accomplish. They're especially disruptive defensively and will each post double-digit tackles for loss for a second straight season.

● Casey Myser lived up to years of hype in his first season as starting running back, rushing for 1,309 yards despite splitting reps with Evan Grant. The junior is the bell cow considering the Hornets graduated all other skill positions. Myser will be in contention for SL American Offensive Player of the Year.
 ● Second-team All-SL American strong safety Garrett Phillips is one of the better ballhawks



Zywiec



Phillips



Coyne

Highland's had in recent years, racking up four interceptions and more than 50 tackles last season. He's aggressive, smart and will get to show off his downhill running skills when Myser needs a blow.

STRENGTHS: The offensive line is arguably the best in the 16-team SL, regardless of conference. Noonan and Zywiec are joined by fellow returnees Ben Coyne (RT, 6-4, 255) and Brady Bendau (RG, 6-0, 285), newcomer Ben Nowack (6-4, 260) has good size and tight end Caleb McKeen (5-11, 220) played well when the Hornets went to heavy personnel last season. Noonan is committed to D-I Miami of Ohio, while Zywiec and Coyne have D-II offers.

● Running back depth is so good with Myser, Phillips and H-back Evan Foust that junior varsity standout Lucas Gerding was moved to wide receiver. Quick-cutting Luke Berkmyer (5-8, 160) is an interesting prospect running jet sweeps.

● Despite returning only four starters, the run defense was nasty in the preseason, upholding a high standard set by the last three teams. New linebackers Jameson Gordon, Foust and Kallen Whitting are upgrades athletically, allowing Highland

to blitz and disguise coverages more than in years past.

QUESTION MARKS: Highland has new starters at quarterback (Dylan Borla), wide receiver (Nick Dobkowski, Gerding, Berkmyer) and H-back (Foust). Borla (6-0, 185), who is coming off a torn ACL, isn't a flashy runner like the graduated Peyton Janickas but has embraced the game-manager role and understands where the ball needs to go in the passing game.

● The Hornets will need to rely on the front six or seven to create pressure and help out an inexperienced secondary outside of Phillips. What's working in Highland's favor is it won't face many talented passers in the regular season.

● Returning kicker Carson Kwiatkowski is perfect on 82 career extra points but tore an ACL over the summer. Highland also is breaking in a punter, and replacing Matt Ciryak's six career punt return TDs is a daunting task. The Hornets take pride in special teams.

THE SKINNY: Region 6 is not deep. Powerhouse Avon is the overwhelming favorite and Wadsworth, Highland and Whitehouse Anthony Wayne appear to be the next tier, so another deep playoff run could be in store. The Hornets have slowly evolved from a spread option/RPO offense into more of a power/outside zone team that dominates the line of scrimmage, which fits the current personnel well. While Highland has yet to clear the monumental hurdle that is Avon, the program has continued to steam along and should be in position to once again go to war with Aurora for the SL American championship in the regular-season finale.

PREDICTION: 9-1.

— Albert Grindle