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SKY HIGH SPORTZ

AHEAD OF THE PACK

Ride the wave of excitement as we bring you in-depth coverage of the latest basketball and track championship coverage in NEO!

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PHOTO BY DANE GARDNER

Photo by: Dane Gardner

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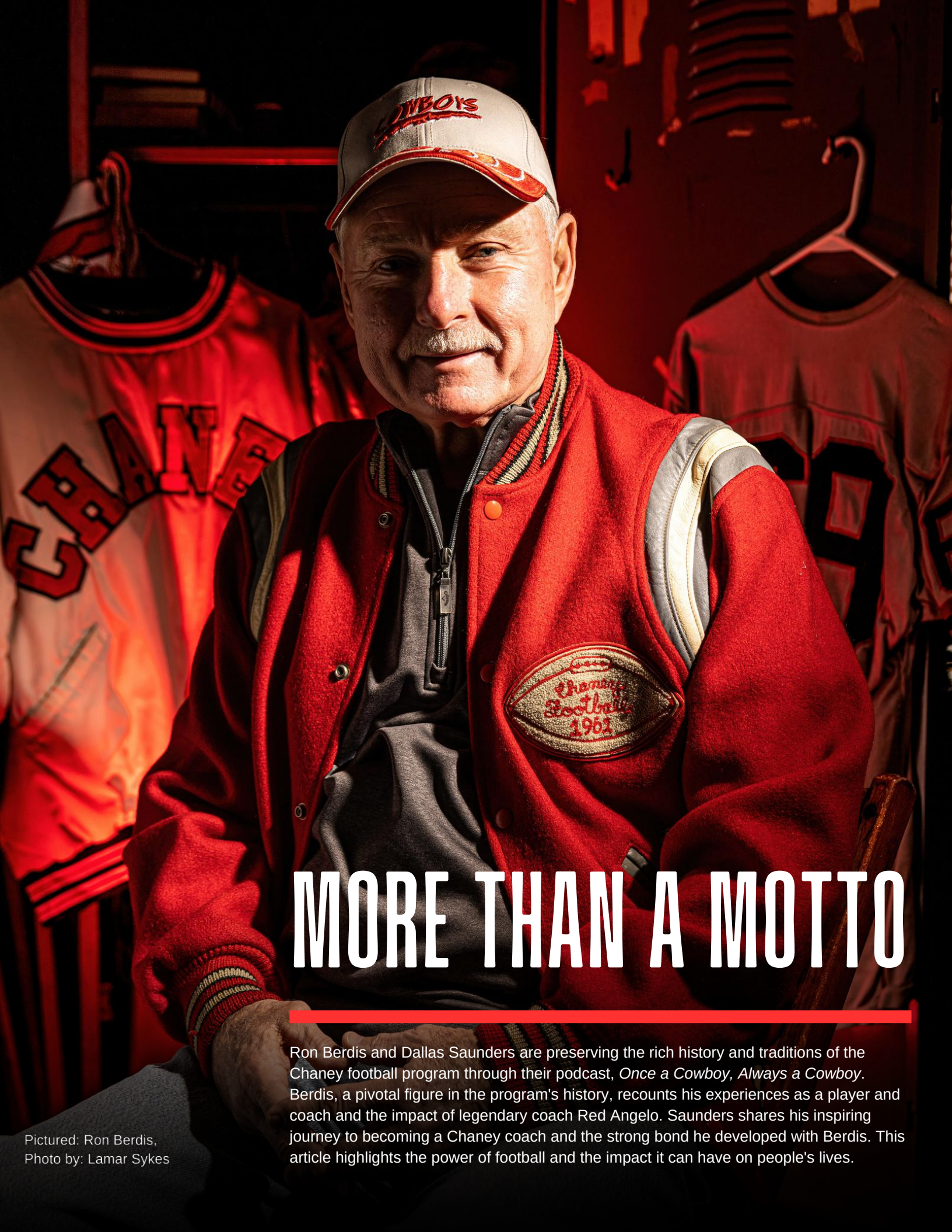
SKY HIGH SPORTZ



MORE THAN A MOTTO

Ron Berdis and Dallas Saunders are preserving the rich history and traditions of the Chaney football program through their podcast, *Once a Cowboy, Always a Cowboy*. Berdis, a pivotal figure in the program's history, recounts his experiences as a player and coach and the impact of legendary coach Red Angelo. Saunders shares his inspiring journey to becoming a Chaney coach and the strong bond he developed with Berdis. This article highlights the power of football and the impact it can have on people's lives.

Pictured: Ron Berdis,
Photo by: Lamar Sykes

I felt a sense of pride and nostalgia as I watched the Chaney Cowboys play during the 2021 season. Standing on the sidelines, watching the red and gray uniforms fly up and down the field, I couldn't help but feel grateful for the lessons I had learned during my time as a running back for the team during my high school days in the early 2000's.

Thankfully, two of my former coaches, Ron Berdis and Dallas Saunders, had started a deep dive into those lessons and the rich tradition of Chaney football through their podcast, *Once a Cowboy, Always a Cowboy.* I got to sit with them to talk about the rich Cowboy history of the forgotten stories and legends, and their podcast.

Coach Ron Berdis is a pivotal figure in the history of the Chaney football program, connecting its origins to present day under the leadership of Coach Seth Antram. Berdis, who grew up around the program, served as one of just four Head Coaches over the 1st 80 year span in the program's long and storied history, which began in 1927. During my time there, I experienced firsthand, the many drills and other aspects of the program that were passed down through many years of tradition, a testament to the enduring legacy of Coach Berdis and the other great coaches who came before him. Berdis's connection to the program runs deep, as his father played for the program's first Coach, Chester McPhee. But it was Red Angelo, the program's second coach, who had the greatest impact on Berdis's life and career.

As a young player, Berdis was personally introduced to Angelo by McPhee. It was a pivotal moment that set the course for his future involvement in the program. When Berdis eventually took over as the school's fourth coach, he carried on the traditions put in place by both of these larger-than-life Chaney figures.

Berdis recalls that moment clearly. “I remember thinking, this is the guy that coached your father introducing you to the guy that you see on Friday nights, orchestrating this thing that you want to be a part of, that you want to make a key feature of your life. I'll be honest, I was in awe.”

To Berdis and many others, Red Angelo was a legend in the football world, a coach who demanded nothing but the best from his players and instilled in them a sense of pride and camaraderie that lasted long after their high school days were over. "Playing for Red Angelo was a major highlight of my life because he was the absolute best as far as I'm concerned," said Berdis.

Berdis' love for Chaney High School football was infectious. He shared his journey that went from being a player to coaching for twenty years. And it wasn't just about being a coach, it was about mentoring and guiding every kid he coached.

Coach Dallas Saunders' story of how began coaching at Chaney is an inspiring one as well. After a knee injury cut short his baseball career at Youngstown State University, Saunders was looking for a way to stay involved in sports.

Pictured Left to Right: Ron Berdis, Dallas Saunders
Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Pictured Left to Right: Ron Berdis, Dallas Saunders Photo by: Lamar Sykes

"Chaney is in good hands with Coach Antram and his staff. They are doing things the right way and it is paying off."

He was fortunate enough to reconnect with his former high school coach, Matt Giambattista, who brought him into the Chaney program. Despite coming from rival school Ursuline, Saunders quickly became immersed in the Chaney culture and developed a deep appreciation for its history.

Under the mentorship of Berdis and other seasoned coaches, Saunders honed his skills as a football coach and worked his way up the ranks. His dedication and hard work paid off, as he eventually earned a higher coaching position within the program and eventually led several other programs in the Mahoning Valley.

Coach Saunders and Coach Berdis' shared passion for the sport and the community helped build a friendship that has lasted for years and has traversed the sporting world. Early in his coaching tenure at Chaney, Saunders went through a difficult time in his personal life; his father was diagnosed with cancer and succumbed to the illness. Berdis and his staff were there through the trying time. “It was just a time where I needed to be plugged into the right things, the right people. Because it could have went either way for me,” Saunders said. The bond between them is a testament to the power of the sport and the impact it can have on people's lives.

The emotional stories of Coaches Berdis and Saunders provides a touching insight into the history and traditions of the Chaney football program that transfers into the efforts they put into preserving the program's traditions and connecting with the community.

The genesis of the podcast, which Saunders and Berdis created to capture the history and memories of the program, was a moving moment in the interview. Saunders' son's interest in digital media led to the idea, but Coach Berdis was initially hesitant. However, Saunders convinced him of the need to preserve the oral knowledge of the program, especially since there had only been four head coaches prior to Berdis leaving.

When asked about the future plans for the podcast, Saunders highlighted that their goal is to not only capture the history of Chaney football, but also bring former players and coaches up to speed with where the program is now. He emphasized the podcast's role as a bridge between alumni events and reconnecting with the team. The new administrations willingness to come on the podcast has opened the door for more people to become involved and has strengthened the bond between past and present Chaney Cowboys.

Berdis's words serve as a reminder that football is not just a game, but a way to teach young players about values that they can carry throughout their lives. His advice to "give back to the community and keep the conversations of God, family, and education alive," is an important reminder for coaches at all levels.

Berdis also praised the current Chaney football coaching staff, led by Coach Seth Antram, for doing things the right way. Antram and his staff have continued the proud tradition of Chaney football, while also instilling important values in their players. Through their hard work and dedication, they have helped to ensure that the program will continue to thrive for years to come.

As for the *Once a Cowboy, Always a Cowboy* podcast, Berdis and Saunders are continuing to work on capturing the history of Chaney football, and inspiring a new generation of players and coaches to carry on the tradition. Their passion for the program is evident in every episode, and their dedication to preserving the legacy of Chaney football is truly remarkable.

With a rich 80 year history, the Chaney football program has a legacy that will be remembered and cherished. Berdis' and Saunders' efforts to document and share the history of the program have helped to inspire a new generation of players and coaches, and their message of community, family, and education will continue to resonate with anyone who has been a part of the Chaney Cowboys football family.

Pictured Left to Right: Kenyon Giles, Antwan Reynolds, Demetrius Jones
Photo by: Lamar Sykes

SENATE LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP GLORY!

By Lamar Sykes
Photographs by Lamar Sykes and Marlin Helsel

Rhodes High School claimed the Senate League Championship for the first time in 13 years! In a thrilling game at the Rocket Mortgage Fieldhouse, Rhodes faced off against Glenville, who upset them in last year's championship with a 57-54 victory.

This year's championship game was a much-anticipated rematch, with Rhodes coming out on top with a final score of 66-58. Junior point guard Kenyon Giles started the game off with the first points and Antwan Reynolds, the junior sharpshooter, led all scorers with 27 points. Giles, the 2022-23 Senate League MVP added 19 points and 7 assists.

Reynolds was instrumental in securing the victory for Rhodes, with two back-to-back buckets to close out the first half with a score of 30-21, in Rhodes' favor. Reynolds also hit back to back three 3-pointers in the 3rd quarter, which helped Rhodes maintain their lead.

For Glenville, Damarion Witten was a force to be reckoned with, scoring 17 points and grabbing 12 rebounds. Jakobi Laster led the team in scoring with 24 points, but it wasn't enough to overcome Rhodes' solid performance.

After the win, Rhodes Head Coach Shawn Spencer had this to say about his team. "This team is very resilient. Even after some difficult close losses, they show up the next day ready to work. Much credit to our leaders on the team."

Pictured: Top: Kenyon Giles
Bottom: Shawn Spencer
Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Pictured: Top: Zhaniah Ervin
Bottom: Vynetta Crider
Photos by: Marlin Heckel

"The final buzzer is the most memorable part of winning the city championship. I've been there twice before and came up short both times. To win this game meant a lot to our program."

Rhodes Coach Shawn Spencer

The John Hay Lady Hornets also made a statement in their Senate League Championship game against Max S. Hayes, dominating their opponent with a score of 56-26 to claim their 5th consecutive championship title on the girls' side.The Lady Hornets were led by an impressive display of teamwork and individual performances from their star players.

India Ramos played a solid game, contributing 10 points, 8 rebounds, and 4 steals to help her team secure the victory. Tylia Parker was also instrumental in the Lady Hornets' success, scoring 14 points and tallying 6 steals. However, it was 2022-23 Senate League MVP Zhaniah Ervin who stole the show.

"I'll always cherish this season. They didn't want to be the group at Hay that didn't win. They didn't want to let each other down. This win shows that you don't have to pick between top academics and basketball. You can get both at John Hay. We put our name in John Hay's history and this win helps us compete for years to come."

Rhodes Coach Vynetta Crider

Ervin showcased her versatility and dominance throughout the game, pouring in 16 points, pulling down an incredible 15 rebounds, and adding 4 steals and 3 blocks to her impressive stat line. Her outstanding performance was a key factor in the Lady Hornets' victory, and her MVP award was a well-deserved recognition of her talent and hard work.

THE HUMBLE HERO

Steve Newton, better known as 3rd Coast Hoops, is a man whose passion for high school basketball has left an indelible mark on Northeast Ohio. For over a decade, he has been capturing the best moments of local players on camera, and in doing so, has become a legend in the area. But his impact goes far beyond his extensive coverage of local games.

Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Steve Newton, a native of Texas who also spent time living in Arizona and Ohio as a youth, went on to play basketball at Lorain County Community College and later at Abilene Christian University in Texas. Unfortunately, he had to quit due to a back injury. Reflecting on his experience, Newton remarked, "There is no such thing as a four-year scholarship...Halfway through the season, after the first semester, they said they were going to send me home because I literally could not play. I didn't know stuff like that was possible." After this happened, he was determined to use his experience to assist young players in navigating the complexities of the recruitment process. He aimed to provide them with the necessary knowledge and support they needed to make informed decisions about their future.

This led to filming basketball games, where he did some recording with a recruitment service called Next Level Recruits, which a group of friends started in Arizona. With his passion for filming growing, he wanted to record as much as possible, but he didn't own a camera. Steve had to borrow a camera from a friend until he could eventually purchase his own. When Newton moved back to Ohio, 3rd Coast Hoops was soon born. His childhood friend from Arizona, Robert Holmes, would soon join him, and the legend of 3rd Coast Hoops would take off.

Steve's dedication to his craft paid early dividends. In just his second year of filming, Steve extensively covered Charlotte Hornets Guard Terry Rozier, who was then playing at Shaker Heights High School. Steve attended various summer leagues in the Cleveland area, including Cleveland AmPro and the Drew Joyce league at The Word Church, to improve his filming skills and the quality of his footage. Although he initially struggled, Steve's best friend Vance Marbury allowed him to film a league between Tri-C and Walsh University, which gave him the motivation to take his filming seriously and continue to improve his skills.

At the time, there were only a handful of people filming events, including themselves, and it was not a common practice. Newton credits several of his early counterparts from around the country for inspiration in the growth of 3rd Coast Hoops, including HoopMixtape, YayAreasFinest, and CityLeagueHoops.

As 3rd Coast Hoops grew and became a staple in the mixtape culture, Steve expanded into writing articles, doing basketball showcases, and more.

Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Despite resistance from those who didn't understand the growing movement, Steve persevered and continued to innovate in the industry, hitting new levels in his favorite season, 2017-18. That was the first class of kids that graduated in 2018 and he had been with them since they were in middle school; he felt that they embodied 3rd Coast Hoops as a whole.

In spite of now doing most of the work on his own, when Steve speaks for the platform, he always uses "we," never "I." According to Steve, "we" included not only him but also the players, coaches, families, and fans who made up the basketball community in Northeast Ohio. This sense of community was at the heart of 3rd Coast Hoops.

Steve's influence is undeniable, and it's not just about the fame or recognition. He's motivated by a genuine desire to make a difference in the lives of the players he covers, as well as in the world of sports media. As Chris the Creatorr puts it, "When I was younger, I would watch 3rd Coast mixtapes and want to make them. I actually imagined myself on them. Newt really inspired my work in a sense of the culture. Watching his mixtapes inspired me to make my own."

Kenny Roye, Founder of Next Generation Sports Media explains, "When I was in high school playing football, I used to wish there was a 3rd Coast for football players, not just hoopers. Once I graduated in 2017, I became the 3rd coast for football, and it just led to covering all other sports as well."

But it's not just about the content creation. As T.J. Peatross, Founder of NEO Spotlight says, "3rd Coast Hoops laid the foundation for media outlets in Northeast Ohio. His work behind the camera has inspired others to express themselves, and he has served as a mentor to many."

T.J. is a testament to the impact Steve has had, having been given a chance to provide coverage for student athletes in Ohio through 3rd Coast Hoops. "My work with 3rd Coast Hoops redirected the course of my life and allowed me to hone in on my passion. I will forever be in debt to Steve, and I appreciate the brotherhood we've been able to build over the years," T.J. adds.

When asked about his influence on the culture, Steve humbly stated, “I still don't even want to halfway take credit for it, but It's a blessing. I'm glad that I've been able to inspire some people. Purpose is everything. And if my purpose is the inspiration for people to do other things to bless others, then I can't run from that.”

Steve's impact on Ohio high school basketball and the wider sports media landscape cannot be overstated. His dedication to his craft, his passion for the game, and his desire to make a difference in the lives of young players have inspired countless others to follow in his footsteps. Steve's legacy will continue to be felt for years to come, as his work has paved the way for others to tell the stories of student athletes and showcase the best moments of high school sports.

Steve Newton, the humble hero of Ohio high school basketball, is leaving an indelible mark on the sport, and his impact will not soon be forgotten.

LA Hayes (Left), Steve Newton (Right), Photo by: Lamar Sykes

The Spire Institute in Geneva, Ohio, played host to one of the most electrifying event of the year: the 2023 Big10 Indoor Track and Field Championships. With athletes from various universities pushing their limits to be crowned champions. From the sprinters to the hurdlers, the jumpers to the throwers, every athlete came to win, and the competition was nothing short of breathtaking.

Aasia Laurencin (Left), Myreanna Bebe (Right), Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Pictured: Lawrence Johnson, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

BIG10 TRACK & FIELD CHAMPIONSHIPS

The 2023 Big10 Indoor Track and Field Championships were held on February 24-25 at Spire Institute in Geneva, Ohio, and it was a weekend of intense competition as athletes from various universities gathered to compete for the championship title. In the end, the Wisconsin Badgers and Michigan Wolverines emerged victorious in the men's and women's categories, respectively.

Wisconsin Athletes Shine

The Wisconsin Badgers clinched their first Big10 Championship since 2014, thanks to the incredible performances of their athletes. Lawrence Johnson, a senior sprinter, made his mark in the Men's 60 Meter Dash, finishing first in a time of 6.61. Johnson, a Wisconsin native and son of two former UW athletes, had come in second place at the 2022 Big10 Indoor Championships but made sure to take the title this year.

Nick Foster (4th in 2022) of Michigan and Adam Spencer (5th in 2022) of Wisconsin switched places this year as they finished first and second, respectively, in the men's mile race. Spencer won the race with a time of 4:13.03, while Foster came in second with a time of 4:13.58.

Michigan Standout Performances

On the women's side, the Michigan Wolverines took home the indoor title for the first time since 2016. The Wolverines had some incredible performances. Michigan dominated in the 400m events, with Dubem Amene winning the men's 400m title with a time of 46.41, while Ziyah Holman won her third straight 400m championship for the women, finishing in a personal record time of 51.39 seconds. Holman's teammate, Savannah Southerland, finished just behind her in second place with a time of 51.41 seconds.

In the women's 60m hurdles, Myreanna Bebe of Iowa won the title by a mere .02 seconds, beating Michigan's Aasia Laurencin at the finish line with a time of 8.07 seconds.

Wisconsin Men win the 2023 Indoor Track & Field Title for the 1st time since 2014

Michigan women win the 2023 Indoor Track & Field Title for the 1st time since 2016

Pictured: Amira Young, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

REDEMPTION ROAD

AND OTHER GREAT PERFORMANCES

Amira Young of the Minnesota Golden Gophers was a showstopper at the event, winning the women's 60m dash in a conference record-breaking time of 7.18 seconds, beating her own previous record of 7.19 seconds. Young also secured the indoor 200m title, finishing with a time of 23.31. After winning the 60M and 200M titles in 2021, Young finished 4th in the 60M and 3rd in the 200M last year. This was certainly a year of redemption for her.

Darius Luff from Nebraska showed immense potential when he recorded the fastest qualifying time in the 60m hurdles (7.69) at the 2022 Big Ten Indoor Championships. However, his dreams were shattered when he had to sit out of the final race due to a false start. Nevertheless, Luff came back with a vengeance this year, showcasing his resilience and skill by finishing first with an impressive time of 7.65, cementing his position as one of the best hurdlers in the Big Ten Conference.

Pictured:Darius Luff, Photo by: Dane Gardner

Shelby Frank of Minnesota won the weight throw competition with a mark of 24.14m (79-2 1/2). She later became the runner up at the NCAA Indoor National Championship.

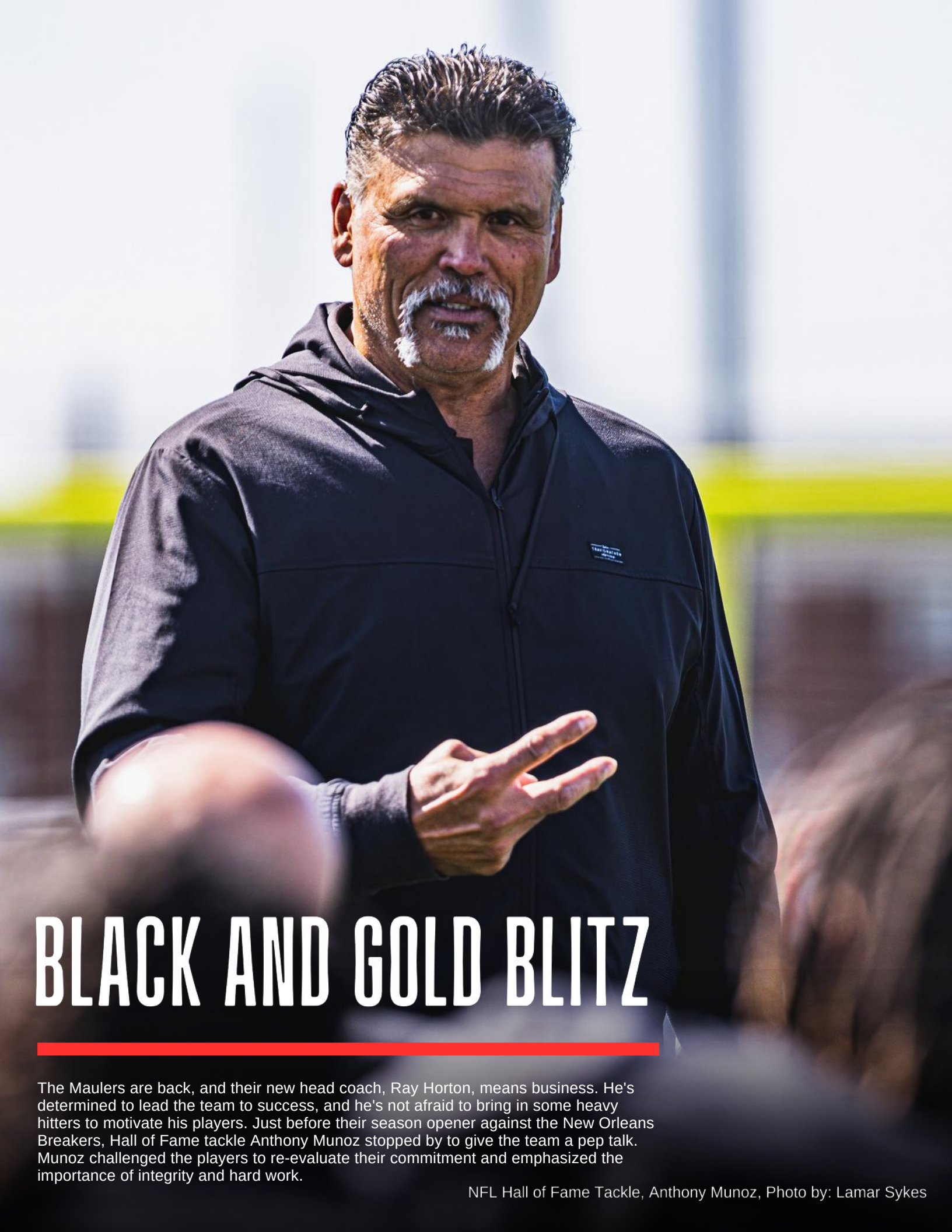
In the women's mile race, senior Olivia Howell of Illinois won her third straight Big Ten Indoor Mile Title, finishing with a time of 4:35.48. She went on to win the NCAA Indoor National Championship.

Nick Foster (Left), Adam Spencer (Right), Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Pictured: Ziyah Holman, Photo by: Dane Gardner

Pictured: Olivia Howell, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Congratulations to the Wisconsin Badgers and the Michigan Wolverines for emerging victorious in the men's and women's categories, respectively. Their incredible performances and determination have earned them the recognition they deserve. With outstanding records and personal bests being set, the future of the Big10 Indoor Track and Field Championships looks promising, and we can't wait to see what the outdoor season has in store.



BLACK AND GOLD BLITZ

The Maulers are back, and their new head coach, Ray Horton, means business. He's determined to lead the team to success, and he's not afraid to bring in some heavy hitters to motivate his players. Just before their season opener against the New Orleans Breakers, Hall of Fame tackle Anthony Munoz stopped by to give the team a pep talk. Munoz challenged the players to re-evaluate their commitment and emphasized the importance of integrity and hard work.

NFL Hall of Fame Tackle, Anthony Munoz, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Coach Ray Horton, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Maulers New Head Coach Ray Horton is determined to lead the team to success, and he brought in Hall of Fame tackle Anthony Munoz to speak to the team before their season opener against the New Orleans Breakers. Munoz, who spent 13 seasons playing for the Cincinnati Bengals, is widely regarded as one of the greatest offensive tackles in NFL history.

Coach Ray Horton described Munoz's speech as follows: "He talked to our players about the opportunity, integrity, and what it takes to be great." Munoz asked the players a critical question, "Are you guys committed or are you interested?" It was a thought-provoking inquiry that challenged the team to re-evaluate their level of dedication to their craft. Munoz went on to emphasize the importance of integrity and doing the work when no one is watching, stating, "It's one thing for us to do something when the camera is looking at us or the fans, but it's another thing when you are by yourself and you have to do something to prepare for this game. That's what your integrity is all about: to do something when nobody is watching, to better your life and your profession. It's nice to have a coach give you a little kick, but get it done yourself."

Horton is also excited to have a chance to redeem the Maulers' 1-9 record from last year. “They’re ready to go.” he said. “We’ve got a mission. We’re going down to New Orleans to take on the New Orleans Breakers and we’re talking about winning. That’s the last thing I said to our guys (at the end of practice).”

Jarren Horton, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

The Maulers have made some notable changes to their defense this season, thanks in part to the return of Defensive Coordinator Jarren Horton, son of Head Coach Ray Horton. One of the biggest additions to the team is former University of Alabama standout Reuben Foster. Foster was a key player on the Crimson Tide's national championship team in 2015 and was named the nation's top linebacker in 2016, earning unanimous All-American recognition and the prestigious Butkus Award. He was drafted in the first round of the 2017 NFL Draft by the San Francisco 49ers but has faced numerous setbacks since then. Despite being plagued with off-the-field issues and injuries, the Maulers are confident that Foster's talent and experience will make an immediate impact on their defense this season. With Horton leading the charge and Foster ready to prove himself on the field, the Maulers' defense looks poised to be a force in the league.

Rueben Jones, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Arnold "Tre" Tarpley III, the returning safety for the Maulers, is eager to make his mark on the team this season. Tarpley III is encouraging fans to attend the home opener, as the team is ready to compete and showcase their talents. "We're all looking to get to the NFL to some extent. You have a lot of hungry people out here competing. So it's fun, and a friendly environment for people to come out," said Tarpley III. Coach Horton has instilled a winning mentality in the team, emphasizing the importance of doing whatever it takes to win. Tarpley III shared the one rule that Coach Horton gave them, stating, "if it's going to help us win, we need to do it."

The Maulers have made a significant change this season by updating their colorway to match the other professional franchises out of Pittsburgh, shifting from purple and red to black and gold. However, Coach Horton is not solely focused on the color change; his attention is on winning. "Every week is critical to get a win. You have to start stacking them up," said Coach Horton. The team knows that every game is crucial, and they are determined to come out on top. As they prepare for the upcoming season, they understand that their hard work will determine their success on the field.

Garrett Groshek, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

The United States Football League is gearing up for its second season, with eight teams set to compete in four hub cities. The season will run from mid-April to early July, with each team playing 10 regular-season games followed by two playoff rounds. The inaugural season was played exclusively in Birmingham, Alabama, but this year's games will be spread across four host sites: Protective Stadium in Birmingham, Simmons Bank Liberty Stadium in Memphis, Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium in Canton, Ohio, and Ford Field in Detroit.

The Pittsburgh Maulers will be playing their home games at Tom Benson Hall of Fame Stadium in Canton, Ohio, alongside the New Jersey Generals. The two teams will face off in the home opener during Week 2 in Canton, in a doubleheader with the Michigan Panthers taking on the Philadelphia Stars.

USFL

REBUILDING WITH RESILIENCE

Marv Rashad, the head coach of Shaw High School's basketball team, has an impact on the game of basketball that goes beyond the hardwood. He sees basketball as a means to empower and impact young minds.

"I have to remember what motivated me. It's never been money. It's my kids. It's about the lives I'm impacting."

When it comes to basketball in Cleveland, Marv Rashad's name is a household one. Marv's journey is one that inspires, highlighting his perseverance and unwavering commitment to achieving excellence.

His path to becoming a basketball coach was shaped by his middle school mentor, Nathaniel Wright IV. Marv recalls Wright as a coach who genuinely cared for his students and left a positive imprint on their lives. It was under Wright's guidance that he developed a passion for basketball and decided to pursue coaching. Marv fondly recollects, "I could feel that he cared. He cared about us... I knew then that I loved basketball, and when my playing days were over, I wanted to be a coach."

On the road to become a coach, Marv used his playing career as a steppingstone. He dialed into the strategies of the game to prepare. He wanted to be balanced in his understanding of the game and not just rely on his team's talent. He knew that coaching was more than just drawing up plays; it was about building a team and a culture.

Over the years, Marv Rashad's coaching style has continued to evolve. While he initially coached skilled players, who made executing X's and O's a breeze, he remained committed to refining his coaching skills. He spent five years under Jordan Duke's tutelage, who at the time coached at Cleveland Central Catholic and currently leads the Lutheran West Longhorns, who were the DII State-Runner-Up. Reflecting on his time with Duke, Marv noted, "Despite being younger than me, he's like an old soul. He thinks and moves like he's fifty years old. I learned a lot from him." Today, Marv exudes confidence in his coaching abilities and his ability to outmaneuver opponents strategically. Although he acknowledges the possibility of being outplayed at times, he maintains a growth mindset and a relentless drive to improve his coaching skills, even in the face of adversity.

On his 2021-22 team, there were 11 seniors who mostly played varsity ball for the first time. One such athlete is Chaysean Chavis, who had a tough time in his early years. Chavis was not very vocal and was on house arrest when they first met but Marv saw something in him and believed that he could guide him to a better path.

Coach Marv reached out to Chavis's mother, assuring her that he would guide her son and help him get back on track.

Marv Rashad, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Chaysean Chavis, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

As the seniors prepared to graduate and enter the summer, Marv was faced with the daunting task of rebuilding the team with a completely new set of players and also helping his former players cope with the aftermath of their loss. This led to a tumultuous ride during the 2022-23 season. Although the team struggled in the regular season with a 5-15 record, they managed to pull off a remarkable upset against Tallmadge, securing their second consecutive Sectional Championship. Despite the highs and lows, Marv's leadership and resilience kept the team motivated and focused throughout the season.

Outside of coaching his commitment to inspire young men is just as valuable. When not coaching, Marv is working at MAGNET's Early College Early Career (ECEC) program. He connects his players who may not be moving on to the next level basketball-wise or going to college with manufacturing jobs to support themselves while they figure out what's next.

His efforts have paid off in many ways. He has encountered many talented, amazing young student-athletes who are excelling at the next level or just in life in general, and that makes him proud.

Coach Marv Rashad is not just a basketball coach; he's a mentor, a guide, and a life-changer. The work he does outside of coaching also helps empower players on the next level, not just through basketball. It's no wonder that he has encountered many talented, amazing, young student-athletes who are excelling. Coach Marv Rashad is a true inspiration to both his players and the basketball community.

That meant attending Chavis' hearings with his parole officer and having a meeting to get Chavis re-enrolled in school, which showed that he not only cared about his players' performances on the court but he was also committed to their academic progress and overall well-being.

Chavis went on to have a great year with Marv and the team. The Shaw Cardinals won Sectionals and Chavis won the Division II Northeast District Player of the Year. Chavis never expected to receive college offers or to be taken to college campuses by his coach. But Marv saw something in him that he didn't see in himself; something that he didn't know was there. After graduating, Chavis went on to trade school and took up welding.

Unfortunately, everything wasn't great at the school. Shortly after the season, the teams student-manager was tragically killed. This incident rocked the school and the team to its core.

DOUBLE DOWN

With DJ and Dane

"Get ready to double down on sports excitement with our new column featuring two of Ohio's finest photographers - DJ Pelles and Dane Gardner. Through their lenses, they capture the raw emotions, the heart-stopping action, and the intense rivalries that make sports so thrilling. In 'Double Down,' we'll showcase their stunning photos and bring you the latest recaps of the hottest sporting events they've covered. Get ready to go all-in on sports with 'Double Down' and our dynamic duo of photographers, DJ and Dane.

Pictured: Devin Brown, Photo by: DJ Pelles

Hoban Gets Redemption:
Takes Down St. Edward in Regional Semifinal

The Kent State University was buzzing with excitement as the Archbishop Hoban Knights took on the St. Edward Eagles in a highly anticipated Division I boys basketball regional semifinal. Both teams were determined to secure their spot in the Regional Final.

Will Scott Jr., stepped up and delivered an outstanding performance throughout the contest. Scott scored an impressive 27 points. He also added three steals, further demonstrating his outstanding abilities on the court.

Hoban trailed by four points with just three minutes remaining in the game, but they refused to give up. The Knights mounted an impressive 8-0 run to secure a 44-40 victory. Andrew Griffith, son of Hoban's head coach TK Griffith, hit a clutch three-pointer gave Hoban the lead, which they held onto for the rest of the game.

This victory was especially sweet for Hoban, who were seeking redemption after losing to St. Edward in the regional finals last year. St. Edward had beaten Hoban 63-46 in that game, but this year, Hoban emerged victorious.

Photo by: Dane Gardner

Pioneers Prevail: Olentangy Orange Wins First-Ever District Title

The first game of the day saw the Olentangy Orange Pioneers take home their first ever district championship in their school's 15 year history. The Pioneers were led by Jordan Edwards, putting up 14 points, grabbing 11 rebounds, and dishing out 4 assists. Delaware Hayes came to play, and kept things close with an Orange team who was struggling to make shots fall. Jesse Burris of Delaware Hayes finished with 21 points and 14 rebounds, but was ultimately shut down by a suffocating defensive effort from Orange in the second half, leading the Pioneers to victory.

Jordan Edwards (Left), Elias Lewis (Right), Written by DJ Pelles, Photo by: DJ Pelles

DOUBLE DOWN

With DJ and Dane

PICKERINGTON CENTRAL - 55
HILLIARD BRADLEY - 43

Pickerington Central continues their run towards a second straight State Championship. The Tigers were tested Saturday, but ultimately their depth and talent pulled away at the end. Cade Norris led the way for a gutsy Hilliard Bradley team, finishing with 16 points, it wasn't enough though. Pickerington Central Guard, Amare Spiva provided a huge spark for the Tigers off of the bench, with a couple of high flying dunks and an outstanding effort on the defensive side of the ball. Ohio State commit, Devin Royal led the Tigers with 16 points and 6 rebounds on Saturday.

WESTERVILLE SOUTH - 62
DUBLIN JEROME - 60

In a highly anticipated rematch of last year's double overtime thriller, the Wildcats of Westerville South prevailed once again. Dublin Jerome overcame a 13 point deficit within the last 5 minutes of the game and had a shot to win it all at the buzzer, unfortunately for the Celtics, the shot found back-rim and the Wildcats held on to win. Westerville South was led by an 18 point outing from Kruz McClure and another 17 points from Jalen Wheeler. The Wildcats, behind legendary Coach Ed Calo, continue their improbable run and will face Pickerington Central for a shot to play for the regional championship.

Amare Spiva (Left), Jade Cunningham (Right), Written by DJ Pelles, Photo by: DJ Pelles

Marcus Johnson's clutch free throw seals Garfield Heights' win over St. Ignatius

The Garfield Heights Bulldogs defeated St. Ignatius in the Division 1 Regional Semifinal basketball game at Kent State University, Ohio, thanks to a last-second free throw by Marcus Johnson. The game was closely contested, with both teams relying on their defense to remain competitive, but the lead kept changing. Despite being a player down for much of the game, Garfield Heights never gave up and continued to fight for the win. Finally, Johnson was fouled with 2.3 seconds left, and he made the game-winning free throw to give Garfield Heights a 38-37 victory.

Calvin Little (Top), Marcus Johnson (Bottom) Photos by: Dane Gardner

Golden Weekend:
Northeast Ohio Schools Take Home State Basketball Titles

Northeast Ohio had an unforgettable performance at the OHSAA state championship, with their teams dominating the courts at UD Arena. The area's boys basketball teams showed remarkable skills and resilience, losing only one game throughout the entire tournament - and even that was to another Northeast Ohio team! The crowd was electrified as Archbishop Hoban, Buchtel, Lutheran East, and Richmond Heights brought home the gold, securing victories and thrilling their fans with their outstanding performances. All five teams made it to the final day, marking a historic achievement for Northeast Ohio basketball.

Pictured: Amire Robinson, Photo by: DJ Pelles

Pictured: Dorian Jones, Photo by: DJ Pelles

Spartans Prove Their Dominance in Ohio High School Basketball with Back-to-Back Titles

The Richmond Heights Spartans took on the Russia Raiders in OHSAA D IV semifinal basketball game. Despite both teams having impressive records, the Spartans had the upper hand with 47 straight wins and the title of OHSAA Division 4 defending state champions. The Spartans are a young team, with three sophomores and two juniors in their starting lineup, but two of those sophomores were returning starters from last year's championship team.

The game was close throughout the first half, with both teams trading baskets. However, the Spartans pulled away in the second half, with Hosea Steele, Demarris Winters, and Dorian Jones leading the way. Jones had a big fourth quarter, hitting three 3-pointers and scoring 11 of his team-high 17 points. The Spartans took the win with a final score of 66-51, earning a spot in the state championship game.

The Spartans went on to win their second straight OHSAA Division 4 state championship in an impressive victory against the Crestview Rebels, with a final score of 66-25.

Led by the talented trio of Dorian Jones, Hosea Steele, and Demarris Winters, the Spartans dominated the game from start to finish.

Jones, the team's standout player, had a record-breaking performance, hitting seven three-pointers and finishing with 25 points. He kicked off the scoring with a deep three-pointer and added another to help build a 10-2 lead early in the first quarter. Steele, the senior guard, contributed 12 points, seven rebounds, and five assists, while Winters, the junior guard, added 10 points and seven rebounds.

The Spartans were in control from the opening tip-off and held the Rebels to just two points in the second quarter, going on an impressive 29-0 run that featured six three-pointers from all five starters. Their commanding 38-point lead triggered the running clock rule, and the Spartans continued to pour on the points in the second half, with Crestview scoring their first points of the half with just 4:28 left in the game.

In addition to their impressive offensive performance, the Spartans also played lockdown defense, forcing 22 turnovers and limiting the Rebels to just one basket in the second half. With this win, the Richmond Heights Spartans have cemented their place as one of the most dominant high school basketball teams in Ohio.

Photo by: DJ Pelles

Dorian Jones (Left), De'Erick Barber (right) Photo by: Dane Gardner

Ron Taylor (Left), TJ Crumble (Right) Photo by: Dane Gardner

Pictured: Cody Head, Photo by: Dane Gardner

Lutheran East Powers Through Tough Competition to win their 4th State Championship

Lutheran East and Harvest Prep faced off in the OHSAA basketball tournament semifinal. Brandon Roddy of Harvest Prep came out hot and scored the first seven points, but TJ Crumble and Cody Head of Lutheran East kept their team in the game. Crumble's six straight points gave Lutheran East a 17-16 lead and sparked an 11-0 run. Lutheran East ended the first half with a 29-20 lead.

In the second half, Lutheran East continued to pull ahead, outscoring Harvest Prep 19-6 in the third quarter alone. Crumble led the way, attacking the basket and finishing with a game-high 23 points, eight rebounds, and two blocks. Head also had an impressive showing, using his athleticism to throw down a windmill dunk and knock down crucial free throws. Despite Harvest Prep's best efforts to mount a comeback in the fourth quarter, Lutheran East's resilience and tenacity enabled them to secure a decisive 65-44 victory.

With this win, Lutheran East has secured their spot in the championship game, dominating in the paint and showcasing their outstanding rebounding skills.

Lutheran East won the OHSAA championship game against Ottawa Glandorf with a final score of 67-61. Although Ottawa Glandorf had a 15-game win streak and made it to the state championship last year, they couldn't overcome Lutheran East's defense in the first half. With 6 steals and 3 blocks, Lutheran East had a significant advantage over Ottawa Glandorf's 1 steal in the first half, resulting in 12 points off turnovers for Lutheran East compared to only 2 for Ottawa Glandorf.

Cody Head and TJ Crumble led Lutheran East with back-to-back buckets, including a dunk by Crumble, to give Lutheran East a 15-11 lead. They continued to dominate in the second half, with Head opening the scoring in the fourth quarter and Crumble knocking down a three to close out the third quarter. McCulloch and Taylor also made significant contributions to the team's victory. This win marks Lutheran East's 3rd State Championship in the past 6 years, and the 4th in school history.

Buchtel Griffins Make History with 1st State Championship Win

Buchtel Griffins landed an upset by beating Bishop Ready Knights in the OHSAA Division II State Semifinal at the University of Dayton. The Knights had come into the game with an unbeaten 28-0 record and were ranked #1 in the final AP poll of the year, while the Griffins had a record of 21-6. Buchtel started the game strongly, with Marcel Boyce scoring 6 quick points to give his team an 11-2 lead. However, Bishop Ready fought back and ended the first quarter 15-12 behind.

Despite a strong defensive effort from the Griffins, Bishop Ready's Charlie Russell hit three three-pointers in the second quarter to keep the Knights in contention. But Buchtel managed to regain the lead and ended the first half 30-26 ahead. The Griffins then persevered in the second half and won the game, with a final score of 66-62, to advance to the state championship for the first time since 1997. They went on to face the Lutheran West Longhorns, who defeated Chaminade Julienne 56-54 in the earlier semifinal game.

Buchtel Head Coach Rayshon Dent, Photo by: DJ Pelles

Pictured: Khoi Thurman, Photo by: Dane Gardner

The game got off to a quick start, with the Griffins jumping out to a lead in the first quarter, thanks in part to two early threes by Maxwell. The Longhorns fought back in the second quarter, with Smith hitting two jumpers and Dylan knocking down two three-pointers to give Lutheran West the lead. The two teams continued to trade buckets, with Lutheran West ultimately leading 30-27 at halftime.

The game remained close throughout the second half, with the score tied at 42 to close the third quarter. The battle continued into the fourth quarter, with both teams fighting hard for the win. The Longhorns thought they had secured the victory with a last-second layup by Joshua Meyer, but after an official review, the basket was ruled invalid, and the Buchtel Griffins were crowned state champions for the first time in history. It was an exciting game between two talented teams, and the Griffins took home the first title in school history.

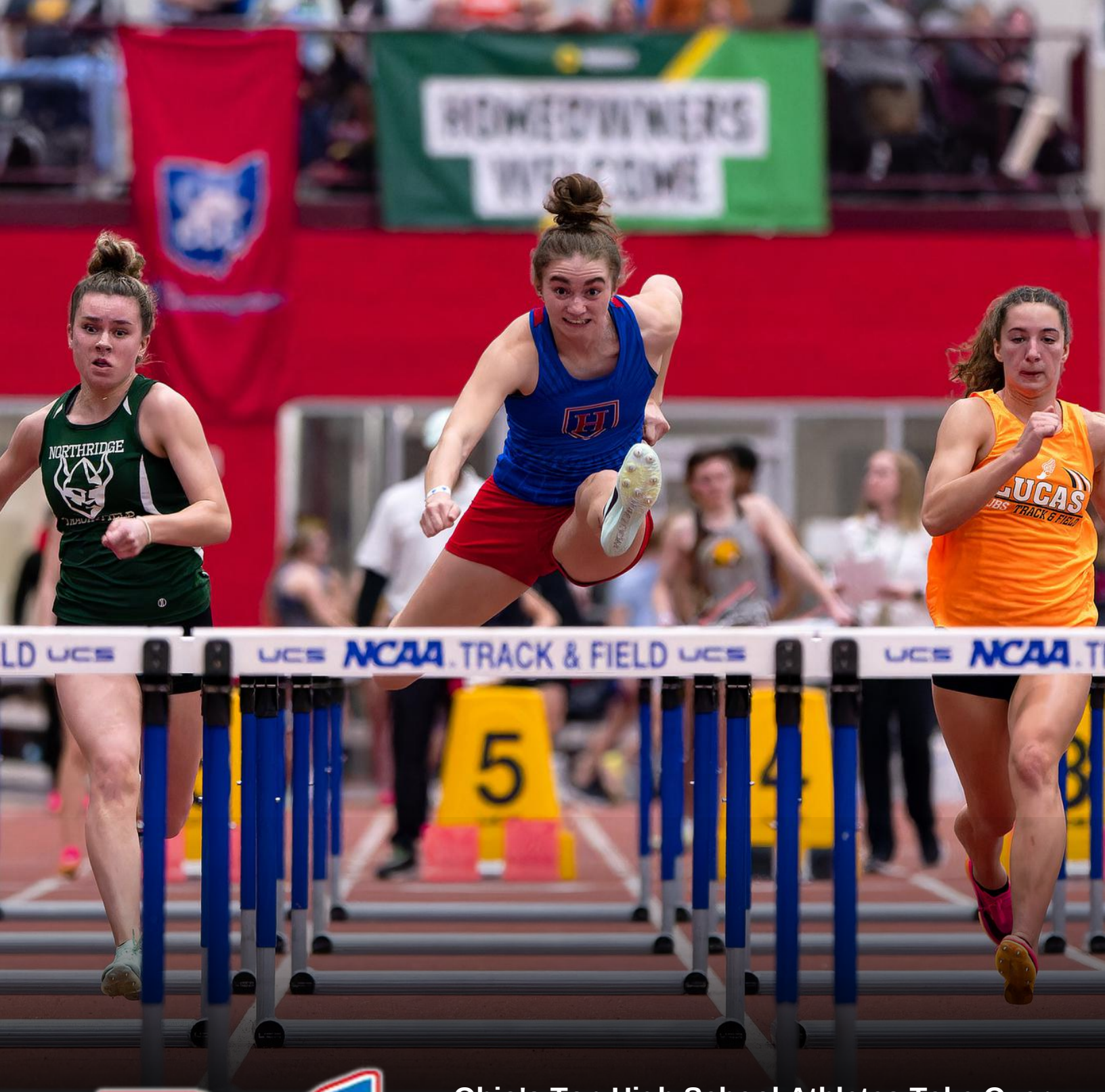
Will Scott (Left), Jonas Nichols (Right), Photo by: Dane Gardner

Archbishop Hoban stuns Pick Central to win OHSAA Division I Title

In a thrilling upset, Archbishop Hoban shocked defending champions Pickerington Central in the OHSAA Division 1 championship game. Led by Ohio Mr. Basketball winner Devin Royal, Pickerington Central was the favorite to win, but Hoban had other plans. The game was off to a quick start, with Markelle Johnson hitting a deep three to open the scoring for Pickerington Central, but Hoban quickly tied it up with a three-pointer from Logan Vowells. From there, the game went back and forth, with both teams trading buckets until Hoban pulled away with a 10-2 run in the final minutes of the game.

Hoban's victory was a historic one, as it was their first appearance in a state championship game since 1998. The team was led by a strong showing from Vowells, Sam Greer, and Andrew Griffith, who combined for 22 points and 12 rebounds in the first half alone.

Despite Pickerington Central's best efforts, Hoban's lead was too much to overcome in the end. The victory was especially sweet for Hoban head coach TK Griffith, who won a state championship as a player in 1989. The win also cemented the first time since 2017 that Northeast Ohio had swept all four divisions. Overall, it was a thrilling game that showcased the best of high school basketball in Ohio, and a reminder that anything can happen on the court.



Ohio's Top High School Athletes Take Over Spire Institute: A Recap of the OATCCC Indoor Track Championships

The Spire Institute played host to the OATCCC Indoor Track Championships, where the state's finest high school track and field athletes came together to compete for individual and team glory. The standout performer of the event was Juliette Laracuente-Huebner, who carried her Marengo Highland High School team to the D2/3 team title all by herself, with an astounding 40 points.

Pictured: Juliette Laracuente-Huebner, Photo by: Brian Fisherr

Pictured: Juliette Laracuente-Huebner, Photo by: Brian Fisherr

Her incredible athleticism saw her win four individual state titles in the long, high, and triple jumps, as well as in the 60mH. Her performances in these events ranked among the top 25 in the nation, and she set a new personal best in the 60mH with a time of 8.56. The cherry on top was when she broke the state records in the long and triple jumps, with leaps of 20-3.5 and 41-8.75, respectively. Her remarkable achievements earned her a No. 4 and 5 ranking among the nation's best in the long and triple jumps, respectively. Laracuente-Huebner then continued her indoor season at the New Balance Nationals Indoor meet, where she won the national title in the Triple Jump with a mark of 42-00.5.

The Cleveland Glenville Boys' team, led by Coach Ted Ginn Sr., also put up an impressive showing, winning the D2/3 Title. Bryce West, a 5-star football recruit, won the 200m title in a time of 21.76, and he also placed second in the 60M dash with a time of 6.81. Christian Anderson of Hawken tied the meet record with a time of 6.78 to win the 60M crown and went on to place 5th at the New Balance Nationals the following weekend. The Glenville Boy's 4x200m Relay team also set a new record with a time of 1:28.03.

Pictured: Bryce West, Photo by: Brian Fisherr

Connor Ackley (Middle), Photo by: Brian Fisherr

More Top Tier Performances From the Weekend

The OATCCC D2/D3 Indoor track championship meet saw several records broken by talented athletes, in addition to the standout performances. The Salem Girl's 4x800m Relay team broke the Division 2/3 record with a time of 9:43.13, while Jaylee Wingate of Norwayne set a new Division 2/3 record in the Girls 1600m Run with a time of 4:56.82. Amy Weybrecht of Gilmour Academy also set a new record in the same event with a time of 4:58.98. Mason Louis of Bexley set a new Division 2/3 record in the Boys 400m Dash with a time of 47.80, and Alexa Fortman of Ottawa Glandorf set a new record in the Girls 800m Run with a time of 2:11.15. Kaleb Nastari of United set a new record in the Boys 800m Run with a time of 1:50.

In the Division 1 Championship, several athletes showcased their exceptional skills, setting new records and securing victories in their respective events. Camden Bentley continued her reign of dominance by breaking the meet record in the prelims with an 8.44 and winning the finals with an 8.46, adding to her already impressive season. She also placed seventh in the 400m Dash and contributed to Gahanna Lincoln's victories in both the 4x200m and 4x400m Relays. Cols. Beechcroft's Jayden Douglas defended his 60m Hurdle crown in style, clocking a blistering 7.76 in the finals, which now ranks him at OH #3 All-Time. Connor Ackley, a Hilliard Davidson senior and Syracuse University signee, proved himself to be a dominant force in the 1600m Run and the 3200m Run, winning both events with remarkable times of 4:07.51 and 9:04.00, respectively. His performance in the 1600m set a new state record across all divisions, breaking Dustin Horter's previous record by just a hundredth of a second.

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