ISSUE #18

FEB 2023

SKY HIGH SPORTZ

WITNESSING HISTORY

The 2022 OHSAA Football Championships had three schools win their 1st titles in school history. Check inside for our full playoff recap and more.

ON THE COVER

COACH TED GINN SR.

Pictured: Hunter Knauf - Photo by Lamar Sykes

What's Inside

AN EPIC NIGHT
Donovan Mitchell scores 71 in comeback win

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MORE MONUMENTAL MOMENTS

Articles in this issue were written by Lamar Sykes

This issue features photography from Lamar Sykes, Dane Gardner, Tim Phillis, and DJ Pelles

This issue was edited by Cori Sykes of Write and Vibe Publishing

SKY HIGH SPORTZ

Pictured: Donovan Mitchell- Photo by: Lamar Sykes

An Epic Night

Written by Lamar Sykes

"New Year, New Me" is a common phrase that people hear as the new year approaches. The hope for new levels of success and the desire for new experiences start to grow. Little did I know, two of those things would come to fruition the day after the start of 2023.

Thanks to a referral from a friend, Chris the Creatorr (formerly known as Courtside Chris) and I would be covering our first NBA game! Well, sort of. Our task for the night was to cover the follow-up story of two young friends, Romello Early and Melvin Anderson, who were thrust into the spotlight when one friend bought the other a pair of shoes after he saw him being bullied.
Andre Drummond of the Chicago Bulls (a former Cleveland Cavalier) chartered a limousine to the game for them and their families, and we were hired to capture their experience.

On this day, I served as a second shooter for the up-and-coming filmmaker, Chris the Creatorr. My job was to gather b-roll, photos, etc., for use in the final product. I made the most of my credentials and had a great time. At halftime, I had already registered this as one of the coolest experiences ever, but the show was just getting started. The Bulls led 65-47 with Cavaliers Guard Donovan Mitchell posting 16 points. Aside from typical game festivities such as t-shirt tosses and dance teams, there wasn't much for the home crowd to be excited about. However, that changed when Mitchell scored 24 points in the third quarter, bringing the Bulls' lead down to five. The score was 96-91 heading into the final period and Mitchell's solid 16-point half now had him approaching a 50-point night with 40 points heading into the final period.

Pictured: Donovan Mitchell- Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Pictured Left to Right: Romeo Early, Andre Drummond, Melvin Anderson - Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Mitchell was just getting started

Mitchell was completely in the zone and the crowd was ablaze as he added another 18 points to his total in the fourth quarter. He capped it off with a missed free throw that he grabbed and put back in circus-like fashion to send the game to overtime. The 58 points he now had were incredible, but he still was not finished.

High-fives and astonished looks filled the crowd as the shots continued to fall. The 60-point threshold was broken. Would 70 be next? As the final buzzer rang out, the Cavaliers had completed a massive comeback to win 145-134, and Mitchell had dropped 71 points. This secured him the Cavaliers franchise record for the most points in a game, previously held by Kyrie Irving, and the 8th-highest single-game point total in NBA history.

Although I am sure Andre Drummond would have preferred Romello and Melvin to see a Bulls victory, he understood that the boys had just witnessed a historical moment. As they chatted with him and took photos, their excitement was evident. Chris and I, on the other hand, tried to maintain our cool. That was until the ride home when we celebrated the moment and what it meant for us on our journeys.

What a night it was! And what a way to start off the year!

The Long Way Home

The road to Canton is a long one, and only a select few reach the desired final destination. The 2022 season saw some familiar faces reach the top, and some new teams etch their names in the history books.

Pictured: D'Shawntae Jones, Photo by: DJ Pelles

Pictured: DJ Waller, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

The Chaney Cowboys had a season to remember in 2022. In just its fourth year back after athletics were shut down in the school in 2011, the program found itself as a state title contender. The 9-1 regular season was their best since the early 2000s and hosting two home playoff games was something the school had never seen.

Led by Sophomore QB sensation Matt Jones and the dynamic duo of Jason Hewlett and DJ Waller, both University of Michigan commits, they pulled off a comeback win to beat Alliance 35-21 in Round 1. Their season came to an early end when the underdog #13 seed Kenston Bombers took down the Cowboys 31-7.

Before their second-round meeting with Chaney, the Kenston Bombers pulled off their first upset, beating the University School Preppers 40-33. The Preppers had an amazing turnaround season, finishing the regular season 8-1 after a 1-7 showing in 2021.

Kenston's Junior Running Back Sean Patrick had an impressive season, totaling 2,217 yards and 24 touchdowns, adding three interceptions. He lit up the stat sheet against the Preppers in Round 1, tallying 255 rushing yards, 105 receiving yards, and 4 touchdowns. They eventually fell to the defending state champion Chardon Hilltoppers 10-7 in the third round.

Pictured: Sean Patrick, Photo by: Tim Phyllis

A Comeback for the Ages

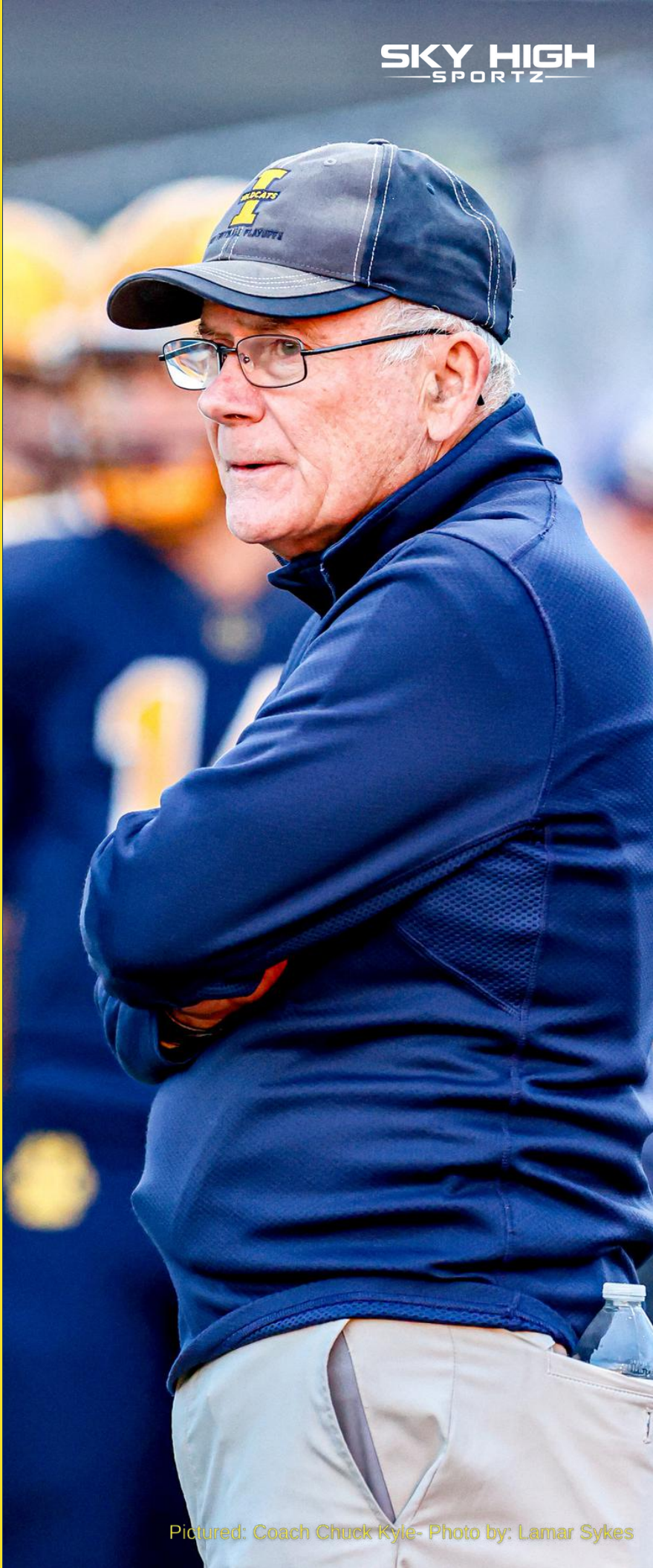
The potential storylines were endless as the Cleveland Heights Tigers welcomed the St. Ignatius Wildcats to Cedar Road in the 2nd Round of the playoffs. Would this be Coach Chuck Kyle's final game? Could Coach Mac Stephens and the Tigers make a statement to the area that public schools could beat the powerhouse private programs? Would Senior Quarterback Darreon Fair secure a signature win and strengthen his case for Ohio's Mr. Football award? Or would it be business as usual for the Wildcats, booking one last Holy War for Coach Kyle against St. Edwards?

Interestingly enough, depending on when you tuned into the game, all of the above scenarios seemed possible. The Tigers started with a scorching performance on the ground. A 1-yard plunge into the end zone by Senior Quarterback Darreon Fair, following a 55-yard run, gave the Tigers a 7-0 lead. In the first half, the Tigers added TD runs of 62, 46, 66, and 1 yard. The Tigers finished the first half with 371 yards on the ground, 191 of them from Fair.

The ease with which Cleveland Heights was scoring, the 42-14 lead after 28 unanswered points, and a pick-6 to close out the half made it seem impossible that the Wildcats could come back and win the game. But, I am not sure Netflix could have scripted a more epic ending to this game.

To say that the Wildcats rallied for Coach Kyle is an understatement. QB Joshua Papesh led the unexpected momentum shift, tossing two TD passes (35, 46 yards) and running in one of his own in the 3rd quarter. This resulted in 21 unanswered points, reducing the Tigers' lead to 42-35 heading into the final period.

Papesh and the Wildcats tied the game in the 4th quarter with a 17-yard TD pass to Jonathan Merimee. However, Darreon Fair's 1-yard TD run seemed to end the Wildcats' run and send them home for good, but Max Ritt's return TD on the ensuing kickoff made the score at 49-48. Coach Kyle made the bold decision to go for two, and it paid off when Papesh connected with Brandon Webster, sealing the greatest comeback in school history with a 50-49 victory. This win would be Coach Kyle's final win, bringing his career total to 377.



Pictured: Coach Chuck Kyle- Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Pictured: Joshua Papesh - Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Pictured: Darreon Fair - Photo by: Lamar Sykes

By the Numbers

50 - 49

28 The Wildcats trailed by 28 at the half. Their win marked the largest comeback in school history.

2 The Wildcats 1st (Cody Haddad) and game winning touchdown (Max Ritt) were kick returns.

5 QB Joshua Papeesh accounted for 5 of the ignatius touchdowns (4 pass, 1 rush).

42 The Tigers filled up the scoreboard in the 1st half, tallying up 42 Points.

511 The Tigers piled up a total of 511 rushing yards. QB Darreon Fair accounted for 258 of those.

28 The Tigers scored 28 unanswered points to close out the 1st half. They scored once in the 2nd half.

Sky High Sportz Playoff Coverage Rundown

Avon won their Regional Semifinal matchup 45-7 over Olmsted Falls. Jakorion Caffey tallied up 187 yards and 3 Tds, while Ethan Holbrook added 5 catches, 96 yards and a 70 yd TD.

Hudson defeated Walsh Jesuit 34-7 to to advance to the DII Regional Finals. Junior Running Back Ian Ludewig led the way for the Explorers by racking up 183 yards on the ground an 3 Tds.

Mentor brought Medina's season to a close with a 42-21 win in the Regional Semifinals. Mitchell Waite carried the load for Mentor with 191 yds on the ground and 3 Tds.

Medina beat Wadsworth 49-35 in exciting fashion. After trailing 28-21 at the half, Medina took the lead for good with two late 4th Quarter touchdowns.

Hoban's Lamar Sperling put on a show as he poured in 288 yds and 5 Tds on 36 carries. The Knights dominated the night and closed out the Region with a 41-7 win over Hudson.

QB - Danny Stoddard

Photo by: Dane Gardner

QB - Scotty Fox

Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Flight 44306

The Division II semi-finals featured the highly anticipated showdown between the AP #3 ranked Massillon Tigers and the AP #2 ranked Archbishop Hoban Knights. The Tigers were hoping to put an end to another strong season by the Knights, but the latter had other plans in mind.

Pictured: Jay'Vion Crable ,Photo by: DJ Pelles

Hoban defeats Massillon 41-20

The Archbishop Hoban Knights secured their spot in the 2022 Division II State Championship with a 41-20 victory over the Massillon Tigers in the state semifinals, held at Akron's Infocision Stadium. This marked the fourth time these two powerhouse programs have faced off in the playoffs, and the Knights' victory continued their strong showings against the Tigers. Massillon was able to claim a regional title victory over Hoban in 2019, however Hoban took them down in the state championship games of 2018 and 2020.

The Knights entered the game on a mission to avenge their loss to Cincinnati Winton Woods in the 2021 State Championship game and continue their quest for another state title. With five state championships already under their belt since 2015, the Hoban program established itself as one of the top teams in Ohio high school football.

In the game, Lamar Sperling continued his phenomenal season, finishing with 38 carries for 278 yards and four touchdowns.

He dominated from the start, rushing for 74 yards and a touchdown in the first half, and continued to make big plays in the second half to secure the win for the Knights. By the end of the game, Sperling had accumulated 3,511 rushing yards and 55 rushing touchdowns for the season.

Massillon Senior Running Back Willtrell Hartson also had a noteworthy performance, scoring two touchdowns for the Tigers. However, the Massillon offense was unable to match the dominant attack of the Knights.

The Knights faced Toledo Central Catholic in the state championship, where Lamar Sperling put in a heroic effort. Despite his performance, which included 359 rushing yards on 40 carries and three touchdowns, the Knights lost 28-21.

Pictured: Lamar Sperling, Photo by: Dane Gardner

The Big Show

The 2022 OHSAA State Football Championship games showcased teams from Northeast Ohio in all seven divisions. Northeast Ohio was able to secure four of those trophies, including three teams that found themselves as the last team standing for the first time in their schools' history.

Pictured: Wyatt Gedeon, Photo by: Dane Gardner

Photo by: Dane Gardner

Back to Back Championships for the Eagles

Final - 28-14

In a repeat performance of last year's Division I state championship, St. Edward once again rose to the occasion and defeated Springfield 28-14 to secure back-to-back titles. The Eagles' defense was dominant, led by defensive end Wyatt Gedeon who racked up 3.5 sacks, with Michael Kilbane adding 3 more.

A year ago, St. Edward claimed the title with a 23-13 victory over Springfield, and this year's match was no different in terms of tenacity and determination. The Eagles' defense was a wall, allowing only 20 points in their five playoff games leading up to the championship.

St. Edward's ground game was unstoppable, with 296 rushing yards compared to Springfield's 27. Senior Marvin Bell was a force to be reckoned with, racking up 172 yards, while QB Casey Bullock added 102 yards of his own. Kyan Mason also contributed to the victory with 6 catches for 73 yards and a touchdown.

This marks the sixth state title in St. Edward's history and the fourth under head coach Tom Lombardo. The Eagles once again proved they are a force to be reckoned with, and their back-to-back championships are a testament to the hard work and dedication of the players, coaches, and staff.

WR - Kyan Mason
Photo by: Dane Gardner

South Range Completes the Perfect Season

Final - 53-27

The South Range Raiders made history on the gridiron by winning their first-ever football state championship in 2022. They defeated Ironton 53-27 in the Division 5 championship game, finishing the season with a perfect record of 16-0.

Both teams entered the championship game undefeated with 15-0 records, but South Range emerged victorious with a dominant performance. At halftime, the Raiders led 32-14 and never let up.

Quarterback Billy Skripac was instrumental in securing the victory, scoring six touchdowns (three rushing and three passing) while accounting for 390 of the team's 564 total yards. Skripac's precision passing was on full display as he found three different receivers for touchdowns. Shane Lindstrom led the receivers with 6 catches, 176 yards, and a 65-yard touchdown catch.

The Raiders' defense also played a crucial role in the championship win. Senior Bailey Ryan led the charge with 2 sacks and a strong performance in total tackles.

The South Range Raiders' remarkable season will forever be remembered.

Pictured Left to Right: Aiden Dominguez, Bailey Ryan - Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Canfield tops Bloom-Carroll

Final - 35-14

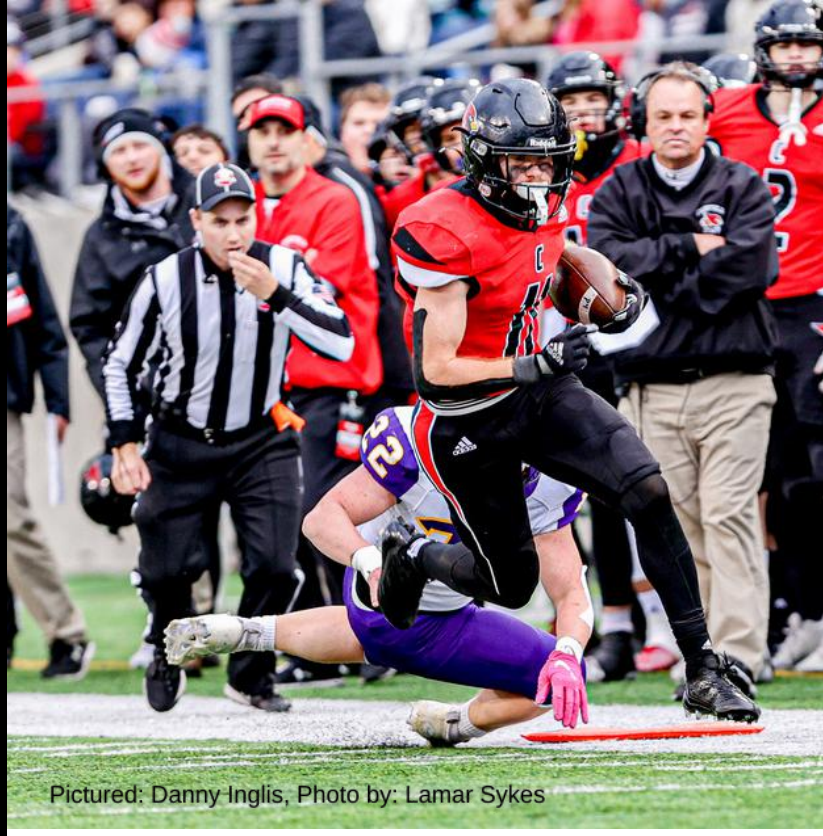
The Canfield Cardinals made a statement in their win over the Bloom-Carroll Bulldogs in the Division III state championship game, with a final score of 35-14. The Cardinals put on a show, showcasing their balanced offensive attack and suffocating defense.

Quarterback Broc Lowry had a standout performance, accounting for five of the Cardinals' touchdowns. He had three rushing touchdowns, one passing touchdown, and one receiving touchdown. His versatility and athleticism put the Bulldogs on their heels in the game from start to finish. One of the highlights of Lowry's performance was a 69-yard touchdown reception from running back Paul Bindas, which gave the Cardinals a 28-7 lead in the fourth quarter. The Cardinals' rushing attack was potent, tallying up 202 yards, while their aerial attack was added 164 yards through the air.

The Cardinals' defense was equally impressive, holding the Bulldogs to 223 offensive yards and scoring 14 points off of turnovers. The Cardinal defense was relentless, putting constant pressure on the Bulldogs and forcing them into mistakes.

The Canfield Cardinals finished the season with a 14-1 record and their first state championship title in school history.

Pictured: Bryce West, Photo by: Lamar Sykes


Pictured: Danny Inglis, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Glenville Wins one for the City

Final - 26-6

The Glenville Tarblooders etched their name into Ohio high school football lore by securing the program's first state championship in convincing fashion with a 26-6 victory over the Wyoming Cowboys. This historic triumph was the result of the tireless effort by players, coaches, alumni, and the community, all determined to bring the title home.

There were few teams that gave the Tarblooders or the Cowboys a significant challenge leading up to the game. Both teams were undefeated and loaded with talent on both sides of the ball, with explosive running games and impenetrable defenses. The Cowboys posted 10 shutouts during the season and the Tarblooders had 7 of their own. But the meeting between these two juggernauts presented challenges neither team had seen thus far this season.

Tight end Damarion Witten put the Tarblooders on the board first, hauling in the first touchdown of the night on a 39-yard catch from quarterback Deonte Rucker.

The Cowboys answered back with 4:45 left in the 1st quarter, as running back CJ Hester leapt over a defender and ran 81 yards for a touchdown. Hester, who rushed for 3,074 yards and scored 50 touchdowns, earning runner-up for Ohio's Mr. Football award, would not be a factor after that score and was ultimately removed from the game in the 2nd half due to concussion protocol.

Pictured: Jermaine Foster, Photo by: DJ Pelles

Pictured: Coach Ted Ginn Sr., Photo by: Lamar Sykes

The Tarblooders dominated both sides of the ball, led by running back D'Shawntae Jones' three touchdowns, on 28 carries for 195 yards. Ohio State commit Arvell Reese intercepted a pass as time expired in the first half, sealing the halftime score at 18-6 for Glenville.

Jones' scoring runs of 29, 1, and 45 yards were the highlights of the game, with the 45-yarder coming early in the 3rd quarter and serving as the final score. The Tarblooders outgained the Cowboys 358-276, with 267 of those yards coming on the ground. Five-star recruit Bryce West led the defense with 11 tackles on the night.

Under the guidance of Coach Tedd Ginn Sr., the Tarblooders remained focused and disregarded the pressure and expectations surrounding the game. Ginn stated in the post-game conference, "I just always want to make Cleveland proud, make our district proud, and make our kids know that we can achieve greatness." The Tarblooders did that and more.

Coach Ted Ginn Sr. is a seasoned veteran in the world of coaching, with approximately 40 years of experience. Despite his extensive background in coaching, he sees football as just a game and his true focus is on improving and saving the lives of his players. He considers himself an educator first, and has been a mentor and positive influence on countless young men.

Ginn Academy, his school, is now in its 16th year of operation. Over the years, Coach Ginn has inspired young men to not only excel in football, but also in life. He has instilled in them the importance of education, hard work, and perseverance, and has taught them the skills they need to succeed in the world beyond the field.

Coach Ginn's unwavering commitment to his players and the community has not gone unnoticed. He has received numerous awards and recognitions, including a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Greater Cleveland Sports Commission in January 2023. This award is a testament to Coach Ginn's positive impact on the lives of young men in Cleveland.

Ring SZN

SKY HIGH SPORTZ

Historical Season by the Numbers

QB - Broc Lowry
121 Yds Rushing, 95 Pass Yds, 69 Rec Yds
5 Total TD's (3 Rushing, 1 Pass, 1 Rec.)

RB - D'Shawntae Jones
28 Carries, 197 Yards, 3 TD's

QB - Billy Skripac
331 Pass Yds, 57 Rush Yds
6 Total TD's (3 Passing, 3 Rushing)

Canfield

Final 2022 Record
14-1
School Playoff Appearances
14
Playoff Record
23-13
Season PPG
32.3
Season Pts Allowed PG
12.3
Head Coach
Michael Pavlansky
22 years as Head Coach

Glenville

Final 2022 Record
15-0
School Playoff Appearances
19
Playoff Record
29-18
Season PPG
41.1
Season Pts Allowed PG
6.8
Head Coach
Ted Ginn Sr.
25 years as Head Coach

South Range

Final 2022 Record
16-0
School Playoff Appearances
20
Playoff Record
30-19
Season PPG
42.8
Season Pts Allowed PG
9.3
Head Coach
Dan Yeagley
28 years as Head Coach

Senior Spotlight Series

Photos by: Lamar Sykes

Troy Lane: The Track Phenom Aiming to Break the National High School 100 Meter Dash Record

Re-Writing The Record Books

Troy Lane took the Ohio high school track and field world by storm this past season, breaking the state record in the 100-meter dash with a time of 10.25 seconds at the 2022 Ohio State Championship meet. His impressive speed and exceptional talent have earned him a reputation as a force to be reckoned with on both the state and national levels.

His incredible performance at the 2022 state meet, where he won the 100-meter dash (10.25), 200-meter dash (21.09), and anchored an unbelievable comeback victory in the 4x100-meter relay (41.22), helped propel his team to their third state championship in four years. His electrifying performance at the state meet was just the start, as he matched his record-breaking time (10.25) at the New Balance National Meet and earned third place in the country.

The Lane family boasts a rich athletic history. When asked who, past or present, he would like to race the most, he replied, "My Uncle Omar Lane." Omar Lane was a star sprinter at Tiffin and now coaches sprinting for the Dragons.

His Uncle Ben played football for Youngstown State University, and both his Uncle Shaun and Grandfather, Garcia Lane, played football at Ohio State. Lane also played several seasons with the Kansas City Chiefs.

As he moves on to the next phase of his athletic journey, the track and field world will be eagerly watching to see what Lane accomplishes. He has set his sights on breaking the national high school 100m dash record (9.98) and the Ohio 200m record (20.5), as well as the national 60m record (6.57). In his first indoor meet this season, Lane posted a 6.75, which is the 6th fastest time in the country.

In addition to his athletic abilities, Lane excels academically and has committed to continuing his academic and athletic pursuits at the University of Kentucky where he plans to study aerospace engineering.

Lane's determination and relentless work ethic have earned him the respect and admiration of coaches, teammates, and opponents. His natural talent and drive to constantly improve make him a top athlete to watch now, and in the future.

We were honored to have the opportunity to sit with Troy Lane and ask him some fun questions. He exuded both humility and confidence. Here are some highlights from our conversation.

Q&A with Troy Lane

Time Goals for the Season

Troy: Breaking the National 100M Record of 9.98. I am trying to go for 9.97. I also want to break the 200M record in Ohio, which is 20.5. I want to try to go 20.4.

What do you believe is the strongest part of of your 100m race?

The strongest part of my race is my last 50 meters, I feel like I can catch anybody. My first 50 meters I am always behind so I have to catch up, you can see that in my regional race against Justin Braun.

Did you expect to run the times that you did this past season?

I had ran a 10.6 my sophomore year. My freshman year I was hurt so I didn't really know how fast I was. My Coaches didn't think I would be able to run a 10.2 until my senior year so to run it as a junior, it really surprised them. But I don't like to focus on times too much when I run.

What are some things that are important to your development as a student athlete?

My family is very important. They always come to my meets no matter how far. They even come to the out of state meets. So just to know that they are always there is awesome.

Who are some track athletes you grew up watching?

My Uncle Omar Lane, Noah Lyles, and Christian Coleman. He is a coach at Kentucky and who I strive for my start to be as good as.

What were some of deciding factors in choosing to commit to Kentucky?

Kentucky had the best coaching staff for me. They have multiple Olympians and I believe the atmosphere would be best for me.

With your success on the track, did you consider not playing football this past season?

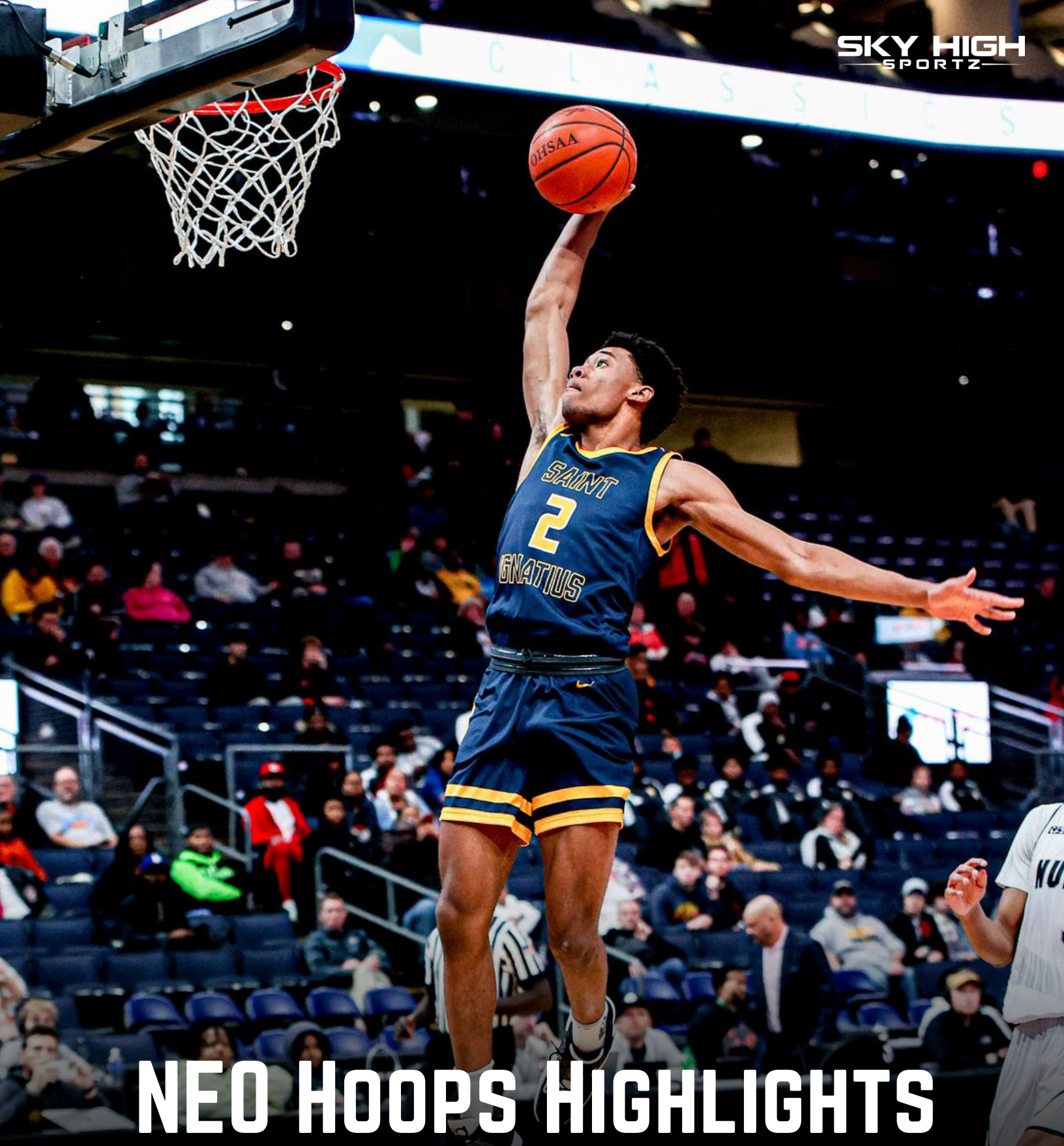
I almost did not play. I went out initially and then I quit. But after talking to my football and track coaches, they pushed me towards football. It was my senior season and I had played all of the other years so they thought it was best if I just went out and had fun.

What was going through your head during the viral walk down in the state 4x100 race?

I was thinking in my head, I've got to catch this dude. If we didn't win that race the team would not have won the overall state meet. If you see the race, you see me get a boost. That is where that came from. And after the race I couldn't stop watching the video. I couldn't believe that I had done that.

What advice would you give to your younger self or others who want to get to levels that you have reached?

Trust the process and trust your training. Also, sometimes you have to make sacrifices, sometimes you can't go out with your friends because you have training. I used to work and I had to stop in order to train and that's when my track career skyrocketed.



NEO Hoops Highlights

Our Sky High Sportz platform took off last year with our coverage of High School Basketball. With one year under our belt and a ton of talent returning across the state of Ohio, we are excited to share some of our hardwood coverage so far this season.

Pictured: Carter Jackson, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Showcase SZN

If you are a hoops fan, once the season begins, get ready to hit the invitational/showcase scene. Invitationals are a great way to see many of the best players and teams all under one roof. Although they can make for very long days, we get a lot of bang for our buck in regards to coverage. In the coming pages we will share some of our favorite moments from some of the invitationals that featured teams from Northeast Ohio.

Great Lakes Classic

The Great Lakes Classic marked the start of the basketball season for most participating teams. Hosted at Cleveland Heights High School, this annual event showcased top boys and girls teams and talent from Cleveland.

We witnessed the high school debut of Marcus Johnson as the Garfield Heights Bulldogs defeated the John Marshall Lawyers 87-20. The highlight of the event was the scrappy match between Lutheran West and Maple Heights, with Lutheran West emerging victorious 65-59, thanks to Junior Guard Jayson Levis' leadership.

Cleveland Heights got their season off to a strong start with a 75-60 win over Shaker Heights, driven by Senior Guard Shemarion Hardy's 23 points.

Play By Play Classics

Columbus and Cleveland

The Columbus and Cleveland Play-By-Play Classics lived up to expectations. Both events prominently featured teams from Northeast Ohio, attracting significant attention. The highlight was the return of Bronny James to face his father's alma mater, Akron St. Vincent-St. Mary, a familiar opponent.

Add a little bit of body text

Hosea Steele

Khoi Thurman

Luke Skaljac

Ace Buckner

Jesse McCulloch

Shemarion Hardy

Jayson Levis

Photos by: Lamar Sykes

Marcus Johnson - Garfield Hts.

Pictured: Bronny James, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Darryn Peterson

Kevin Hamilton

Marlon Barnes Jr.

Last year, when Sierra Canyon and St. Vincent-St. Mary faced off at the Staples Center in Los Angeles, Sierra Canyon won 71-53. But this time, the Irish duo of Kevin Hamilton and LA Hayes made sure that wouldn't happen again. They held Bronny James to just 7 points while scoring 20 and 15 points, respectively, securing a 67-61 victory for the Irish.

The Columbus Play-By-Play Classic culminated in the Division 1 State Championship rematch, where Centerville emerged victorious in overtime against Pickerington Central with a score of 60-54.

Garfield Heights, Lutheran East, and St. Ignatius were featured in both events. Garfield Heights and Lutheran East split their games, with Garfield losing to Chaminade Julianne 59-50 in Columbus and defeating Imani Christian 66-46 in Cleveland. Lutheran East made a strong early-season statement with a 62-51 win over CVCA, but fell 57-54 to Richmond Heights. St. Ignatius secured big wins in both showcases, with a 68-60 win over Africentric and a 84-47 victory over Mentor.

Photos by: Lamar Sykes

Cody Head

Jerry Easter II

Pictured: Josiah Gonzalez. Photo by: Lamar Sykes

East vs West - Ohio Invitational

In 2022, NOHS Games and Fungame Sports hosted the first edition of this event. The December showcase featured matchups between teams from Northeast Ohio and teams from Northwest Ohio. The action began with two girls games. Holland Springfield fell to Laurel 70-48 and Akron SVSM secured a 68-35 victory over Toledo Rogers.

The boys' games started with a buzzer-beater by Junior Guard Jayson Levis, leading the surging Lutheran West Longhorns to a 65-62 win over Ottawa Glandorf. The Longhorns, currently 16-1, are strong contenders for the Division II state title.

The premier talent match-up of the night was when Lutheran East, led by highly sought-after recruit Jesse McCulloch and Senior Guard Cody Head, faced nationally-ranked 2025 Guard Jerry Easter. Head and Easter battled it out from start to finish, with Easter scoring 33 points and Head pouring in 41 to secure a 81-67 win for the Falcons. The Akron SVSM boys closed the night out with a dominant 70-40 win over Toledo Central Catholic.

Hudson Classic

The Hudson Classic was an action-packed showcase that featured teams from all over Northeast Ohio. The Green Bulldogs faced off against the Warren Harding Raiders in the first game, with a strong performance by 6'8" Sophomore Nikola Bundalo, helping the Bulldogs lock in a 65-50 win.

The Chaney Cowboys, led by Josiah Gonzalez and Michigan football commit Jason Hewlett (21 and 20 points respectively), won 67-53 over the Mayfield Wildcats. Twinsburg followed with a 59-40 victory over Streetsboro.

The final two games of the night were close. Austintown Fitch faced a top-ranked Walsh Jesuit team, which was looking to bounce back from their first loss of the year to Stow. However, Fitch added insult to injury by handing them a 43-41 overtime loss.

Boardman secured a 48-46 win over Hudson with a last-second drive and layup by Terrell McDowell.

Michael Lewandowksi
Photo by: Tim Phillis

Rondelle Pollard
Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Saniyah Hall
Photo by: Lamar Sykes

NEO Youth Elite

NEO Youth Elite Christmas Classic is traditionally held on two back-to-back days but due to a snowstorm, the event had to resume the following week.

Some of the highlights from the weekend were Shaker Heights picking up a big win, defeating VASJ 71-51. Maple Heights, who defeated Euclid 61-47 at the event, are now on a 13 game win streak including wins over top Lake Erie League Teams, Garfield Heights and Cleveland Heights.

Garfield Heights defeated Glenville 68-53. And in one of the most surprising results, Cleveland Heights upset Lutheran East 76-60. The Cleveland Heights team played with great energy and intensity, and were led by a strong performance from their guards, Rondelle Pollard, Shemarion Hardy, and Jaeden Lawson. Each guard poured in double digit points and Hardy added 12 assists.

ELB Invitational

The Everything Leads Back (ELB) Invitational was a showcase of some of the best high school basketball talent in the area. In the first game of the tournament, East Tech defeated Shaw 64-54, setting the tone for the rest of the day. Strongsville took down University School 66-56 in another exciting match-up. Solon then beat Glenville 63-48, continuing the high-level play. The final game of the tournament saw Cleveland Heights defeat Gilmour Academy 74-42.

The most memorable moment of the showcase came during the VASJ vs Hawken game. With their fate hanging in the balance, VASJ needed someone to step up and deliver. Sophomores Ari Jones and Sean Shenker answered the call, with Jones connecting on six 3-pointers and Shenker nailing the game-winning shot in the final seconds. The 77-74 victory was a testament to the talent and determination of these two young players and the VASJ team.

Chet Mason Invitational

The Chet Mason Invitational was a high-energy two-day event. Day one was dedicated to the girl's games and day two was reserved for the boys.

Some of the standout performances from the weekend were, Laurel, led by Saniyah Hall and Mari Bickley. They defeated Toledo Rogers 46-40. Brush girls took down Lutheran East, 54-52. Brooklyn Vickers led the charge for the Arcs, putting up an impressive 27 points, including 5 three-pointers.

St. Edward and Garfield Heights squared off. The game went into overtime, with St. Edward coming out on top 56-48.

In the final game of the invitational, Brush boys took down Cleveland Heights 60-58. The game was highlighted by a last-second 3-point shot from Chris Brownlee that sealed the win for Brush.

MILESTONES

In the last few months we have been privileged to witness some monumental moments and journeys in our coverage. On the next couple of pages we will share some of these feats with you all.

Pictured: Jaleel McLaughlin, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

SKY HIGH SPORTZ

NCAA ALL-TIME RUSHING LEADER

Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Jaleel McLaughlin now sits atop the NCAA football record books. On November 12 he broke the all-time record for rushing yards in NCAA history with 8,166, surpassing Nate Kmic's previous record of 8,045. Additionally, McLaughlin scored an impressive 79 touchdowns in his career.

McLaughlin has long earned a name for himself on the field with his impressive statistics. Before transferring to Youngstown State University (YSU), he had impressive seasons at Notre Dame College, a Division II school in Cleveland, Ohio. He led the NCAA in rushing during both his freshman and sophomore seasons, surpassing the 2,000 yard mark in both campaigns.

During his career at YSU, McLaughlin carried the ball 535 times for 3,418 yards and 30 touchdowns, averaging 122.1 yards per game. After the 2022 football season, he declared for the NFL draft.

NCAA All Time Rushing Leader

JALEEL MCLAUGHLIN

8166

NCAA #2 All Time Rushing Yards

NATE KMIC

8074

Sonny Johnson gets win 300

Sonny Johnson, long-time coach of the Garfield Heights Bulldogs, reached 300 wins in the season opener at the Great Lakes Classic Invitational. The Bulldogs breezed past the John Marshall Lawyers with a final score of 87-20. To make the moment even more special for Coach Johnson, the game marked the high school debut of his son, Marcus Johnson, who is touted as the top-ranked player in the Class of 2026 in the country. Marcus secured MVP honors in the game, adding the perfect finishing touch to the day. Coach Johnson has the Bulldogs in great shape as the playoffs approach, with a current record of 14-3.

Darius Davis and Brandon Rose Reach 1000 Career Points

Darius Davis of Maple Heights and Brandon Rose of Gilmour Academy are two of Cleveland Area's premier guards in the Class of 2023. Davis transferred from Parma after his junior season and reached the 1000 career point mark in his season debut with Maple Heights, scoring 23 points in the game.

Brandon Rose played a key role in leading his team to the Division II state championship last year. He passed the 1000 point milestone in a tough loss against Cleveland Heights. Although the Lancers face a difficult road to get back to the championship game, with Rose on the floor, they always have a chance of winning.

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