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SKY HIGH SPORTS

JUST SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

Look inside for an in-depth look at high school and college football in Northeast Ohio. Dive into what's shaping up to be an exhilarating 2023 season.

ON THE COVER

MARQUISE DAVIS

PHOTO BY LAMAR SYKES

Pictured: Dorian Pringle, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

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Articles in this issue were written by Lamar Sykes and DJ Pelles

This issue features photography from Lamar Sykes, Dane Gardner, DJ Pelles, and Austin Souvanarth

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

SKY HIGH SPORTZ

1ST QUARTER REWIND

Over the first four weeks, our dedicated team has been on the ground, capturing the passion, talent, and spirit of more than 20 games. From underdog victories to last-minute touchdowns, our coverage has brought viewers closer to the action. This article delves into each game's highlights, standout players, and defining moments that have set the tone for the season. Join us as we relive the exhilarating journey of Ohio's football season so far.

Sean Patrick, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Friday Night Fireworks: Kenston and VASJ's Gridiron Duel

In a week 4 contest, the undefeated Kenston Bombers clashed with the VASJ Vikings. From the outset, Sean Patrick of the Bombers set the pace with an electrifying kickoff return touchdown. "Starting off fast early was crucial, and that kickoff set the tone," said Patrick.

The Vikings responded fiercely. Despite an early interception by Kenston's Tymir Cardona, VASJ's Kylan Stueball and Brian Kortovich connected for a significant 58-yard pass, culminating in Amani Powell's touchdown. The first quarter saw Patrick further stamp his mark with two additional touchdowns, including an agile 13-yard run.

The second quarter featured intense back-and-forth action. While Kenston's duo, Lucas Kaltenbach and Cardona, combined for a touchdown, VASJ's Stueball and Kortovich maintained pressure. The half concluded with VASJ intercepting a Kenston Hail Mary, making the score 35-27, favoring the Bombers.

In the latter half, Kenston solidified their lead with quarterback Kaltenbach and Patrick's continued dominance. Despite their best efforts, VASJ couldn't catch up to the Bombers. Sean Patrick had a standout performance, scoring 5 touchdowns and collecting over 300 total yards. Cardona contributed with 2 interceptions and added a receiving touchdown.The game ended 49-27 in the Bombers' favor. "Our goal is to continue winning and head to Canton for the championship," emphasized Patrick.

As both teams recalibrate, VASJ prepares for a showdown with the undefeated Gilmour Academy Lancers, while the Bombers anticipate a challenge against the 3-1 Lake Catholic Cougars next Thursday.

"Our goal is to continue winning and head to Canton for the championship."

Sean Patrick

Sean Patrick, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Shaker Heights Continues Undefeated Streak with Commanding Win

At Euclid Community Stadium, Shaker Heights extended their undefeated streak and surpassed their best win total since 2019. Despite Euclid's initial 7-0 lead from Marquise Hall's long touchdown run, Shaker's Abdullah Ahmad quickly responded with a 51-yard touchdown run.

The game's tide turned in the second quarter. A 51-yard touchdown pass from Ahmad to Kam Jackson shifted the momentum in Shaker's favor. Cornell Beard's subsequent 4-yard run further solidified their lead. By the second half, Shaker's dominance was evident with additional scores from Beard, Murray, and Ahmad.

Reflecting on the team's performance, Ahmad stated, "We just had to stick to our game plan and keep executing. We did a great job of minimizing mistakes and definitely started to click on all phases after the first." Echoing this sentiment, Stephen Henderson remarked, "One huge key to our victory was blocking out all the noise. There were a lot of negative thoughts about us this past week, but we chose to stay humble and not respond."

With this win, Shaker Heights has an impressive average win margin of 29.6 points in their last three games. They now set their sights on Maple Heights next Thursday. On the other hand, Euclid hopes to bounce back against 2-2 Strongsville.

Shaker Heights' resurgence this season is undeniable, making them a formidable contender in the league.

Abdullah Ahmad, Photo by: Dane Gardner

Pictured: Teagan O'Guinn, Photo by: Austin Souvanarth

Hudson Explorers Overcome Stow Bulldogs Despite Ludewig's Absence

Written by: Austin Souvanarth

In the Week 4 backyard rivalry game between the Hudson Explorers and the Stow-Munroe Falls Bulldogs at Bulldog Stadium. Both teams were looking to bounce back from their Week 3 losses.

Hudson got the ball first and started to gain some pace marching down the field, until cornerback Jeremy Turner intercepted Payton Neher's pass on the first possession, giving Stow the ball. Hudson, however, did not fold. The Explorers made it clear they were there to win, as running back Teagan O'Guinn quickly scored 2 touchdowns. Hudson's defense then forced a safety, putting them up 16-0. Seizing this momentum, Hudson made 3 more trips to the end zone before halftime. Teagan O'Guinn rushed for 2 more TDs, and quarterback Payton Neher added one of his own.

With Hudson completely taking over the game before the second half, Stow was desperately seeking answers to counter the dominant Explorers, now with a running clock. Stow managed to find the end zone in the 3rd quarter with a 24-yard pass from Jake Harrington to Daylon Keeling, marking the Bulldogs' first score of the night. After an interception by defensive back Jake Gosselin in the 4th quarter, Stow's Harrington managed to pass the ball to his senior brother, Tyler Harrington, while being dragged down, resulting in a swift 74-yard catch & run touchdown.

Unfortunately for the Bulldogs, it was too little too late. The Explorers controlled the rest of the game, bleeding the clock to secure a 44-14 victory. This win marked their 3rd of the season and their 1st Suburban League conference win.

Hoban Dominates Akron East in Renewed Rivalry

Written by: Austin Souvanarth

The Knights of Archbishop Hoban hosted the Dragons of Akron East on a warm, overcast Saturday afternoon. The first few opening series were 50/50, with both teams playing sharp defense, resulting in only a 3-0 Hoban lead through the first quarter.

Hoban started to click both offensively and defensively, quickly jumping to a 22-0 lead before halftime. Running back Caleb Jones started the spark with a 27-yard touchdown, followed by a 13-yarder from quarterback Tylan Boykin, ending the first half with a 5-yard pass to Payton Cook.

On the defensive side, Hoban's wall, led by defensive tackle Jordan Pritchard-Sewell, was letting nothing go by for East, forcing the Dragons into little positive traction. After a Hoban Athletic HOF Induction at halftime, Hoban kept their foot on the gas pedal.

The Knights put two more offensive scores on the board in the 3rd quarter with a 5-yard pass by Boykin to Parker Falkenstein and a 4-yard run by freshman Brayton Feister. The Knights capped off the win by forcing a safety, shutting out the Dragons and improving to 4-0.

Photo by: DJ Pelles

Hoban RB Caleb Jones, Photo by: Austin Souvanarth

Pickerington North Seals Victory in Intense Rivalry Clash

In a nail-biting showdown, Pickerington North edged out arch-rivals Pickerington Central 39-34, avenging their 14-7 loss from the previous year.

Entering the game, Central boasted a 3-0 record, while North, at 2-1, was looking to rebound from a recent loss. The match ignited immediately with North's QB, Landon O'Connell, connecting with Preston Bowman for an 85-yard touchdown. Central quickly leveled with Kaejuan Alexander's 1-yard run. The first quarter concluded with North leading 14-7, thanks to another O'Connell-Bowman collaboration.

Central's Aaron Heller tied the game with a 20-yard run, but Bowman's one-handed 15-yard touchdown catch gave North a 20-14 halftime lead. The third quarter saw Central briefly lead 21-20, but North's Michael Taylor reclaimed it at 26-21.

The final quarter was a seesaw of scores. Central briefly led 27-26, but North responded with touchdowns from Taylor and Angelo McCullom. Central's last-minute touchdown brought them close, but a failed onside kick ensured North's victory.

Star player Preston Bowman finished with 5 catches, 205 yards, and 3 touchdowns, highlighting his prowess on the field. The final whistle confirmed Pickerington North's thrilling win in this storied rivalry.

Pickerington North WR Preston Bowman, Photo by: DJ Pelles

DJ Sears, Photo by: Dane Gardner

Lake Catholic Prevails in Inaugural Matchup Against South

On September 8, the football community witnessed a significant event: the inaugural matchup between Lake Catholic and South. Lake Catholic took the honors, clinching a 34-7 win.

DJ Sears was undeniably the star for Lake Catholic. He not only scored the game's opening touchdown but also rounded off the scoring, totaling four touchdowns for the day. Impressively, three of these came in the first half. Cross Nimmo also made his mark with a touchdown catch, adding to the team's tally.

Frankie Trinetti, Lake Catholic's quarterback, continued his stellar season, throwing for 281 yards in the game. With this performance, he's now amassed 16 touchdown passes this season. Nimmo, not to be overshadowed, has contributed with 7 scores to his name this season.

On the other side, South faced challenges, particularly in offense, managing a total of just 190 yards. As the teams move forward, South is prepping for a game against Lorain on September 15, while Lake Catholic is keenly anticipating their matchup with Kenston. This first-ever meeting has set an intriguing precedent for future games.

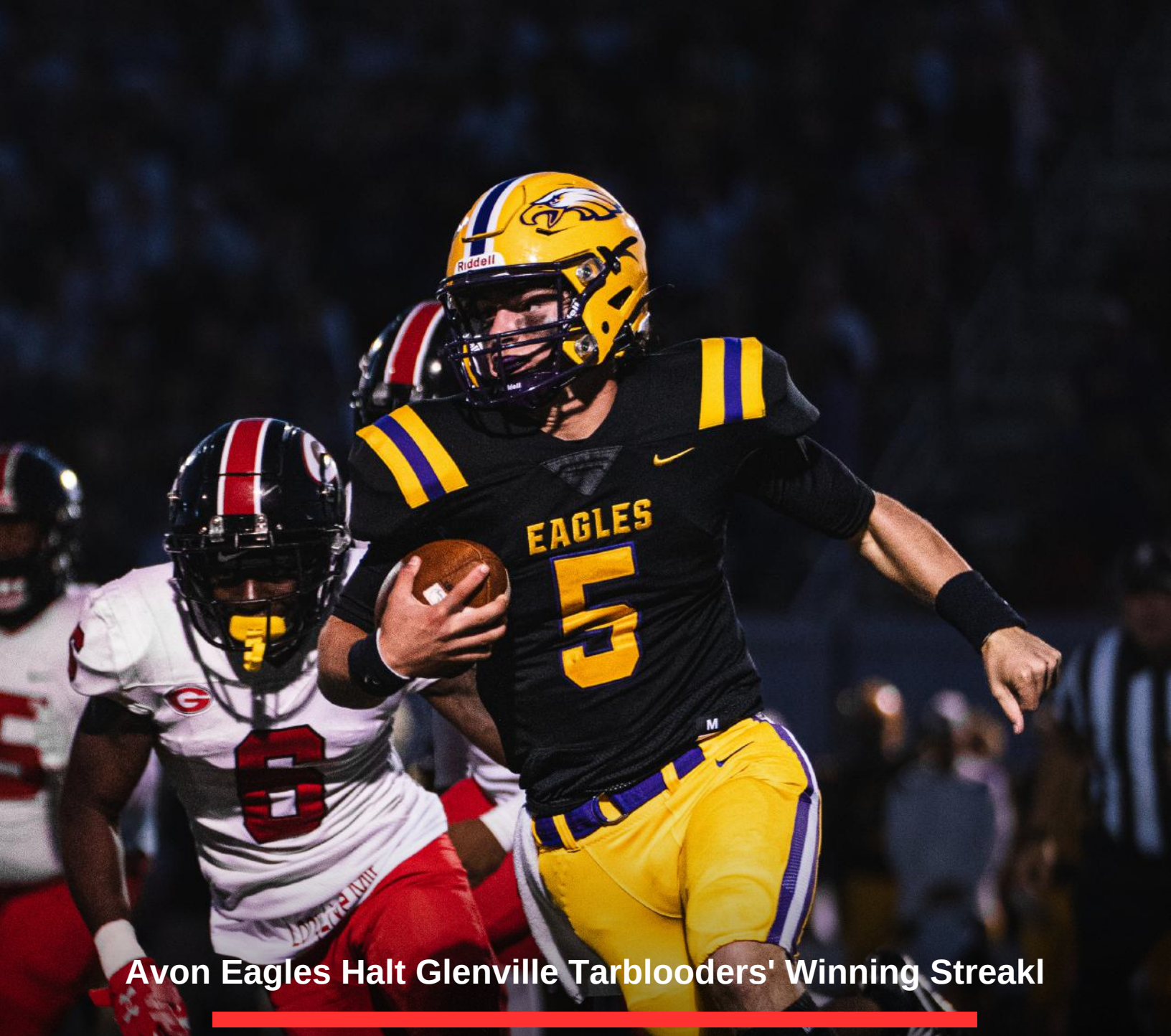
Marquise Davis, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Cleveland Heights Seals Dramatic Comeback Win Over Hudson

In a much-anticipated week 3 face-off, Cleveland Heights and Hudson clashed on the gridiron, each team eager to solidify their reputation following commendable 2022 campaigns. Hudson, boasting a 2-0 record, stormed into the game with confidence, especially with their star running back, Ian Ludewig, fresh off a record-setting 345-yard performance. They quickly established dominance, racing to a 17-0 lead.

However, the narrative took a turn when Marquise Davis of Cleveland Heights, who had previously impressed with a 194-yard, two-touchdown game, ignited a resurgence. His 60-yard touchdown sprint was the catalyst, cutting through Hudson's defense and reviving the spirits of the Heights' sideline. Davis continued to dazzle, including a staggering 93-yard touchdown run, pushing Cleveland Heights ahead. "Our offensive and defensive coordinators did a great job making adjustments at halftime," said Coach Stephens, praising his coaching staff.

Hudson, despite facing setbacks including an injury to Ludewig, showed resilience. Yet, the night belonged to Cleveland Heights and Davis, who amassed a jaw-dropping 333 rushing yards and four touchdowns. The final whistle saw Cleveland Heights narrowly edging out Hudson 34-31.



Avon Eagles Halt Glenville Tarblooders' Winning Streakl

In a highly anticipated showdown, the Avon Eagles clashed with the Glenville Tarblooders, a team riding a 17-game winning wave. Last season, Glenville had narrowly edged out Avon 27-21, but this encounter promised a fresh narrative. The game commenced with Avon's QB Nolan Good connecting with RB Jakorion Caffey for the first touchdown. Momentum continued with Good finding WR Cole Kepner, pushing Avon's lead to 14-0.

Glenville responded late in the first half when QB Ruel Tomlinson linked up with WR Jamari Townsend for a 45-yard touchdown. A successful two-point conversion brought Glenville closer, trailing 14-8 at halftime. The Tarblooders took a brief lead in the second half, courtesy of a 32-yard touchdown by Ohio State commit Damarion Witten. However, Avon's resilience shone through. A strategic 27-yard field goal by Owen Warrick, followed by Good's touchdown pass to WR Paul Leftrict, sealed the deal for Avon with a 24-16 victory.

Nolan Good's stellar performance, boasting 250 passing yards and three touchdowns, alongside Jakorion Caffey's 150 all-purpose yards, underscored Avon's triumph. This win propelled Avon to a 3-0 season start, while Glenville's impressive streak came to a halt.

Avon QB Nolan Good, Photo by: DJ Pelles

Medina QB Danny Stoddard, Photo by: Austin Souvanarth

Medina Overpowers Wadsworth in Week 3 Showdown

In a week 3 matchup, the Wadsworth Grizzlies traveled to Medina. The stakes were high as both teams vied for bragging rights in Medina County and crucial playoff points in Region 1. Medina set the pace early, with Jack Wojciack scoring the opening touchdown. However, a fumble by Wadsworth quickly turned the tide, as Cooper Josefczyk capitalized, returning it for another Medina score. Wadsworth rallied with Will Stacks' 38-yard touchdown, narrowing the gap. But Medina's Dan Stoddard connected with Austin Knowles for a decisive 52-yard touchdown. The final whistle saw Medina triumph 40-23, ending Wadsworth's impressive streak. Medina's victory was punctuated by standout performances, particularly from their offensive line.

Avon Lake Falters Against Chardon in Tense Matchup

In a pivotal match on September 1, Avon Lake Shoremen grappled with the Chardon Hilltoppers. Despite multiple advances deep into Chardon's territory, critical errors hindered the Shoremen. Chardon's defense consistently thwarted Avon Lake's efforts. Ultimately, the Hilltoppers clinched a 28-10 victory, marking Avon Lake's first defeat after a 2-0 season start.

Chardon RB Vinny Colombi, Photo by: Dane Gardner

GA QB Andy Kavcic, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Kavcic Brothers Propel Lancers to Commanding Victory Over Tigers

In a Week 2 showdown, the Gilmour Academy Lancers triumphed over the Warrensville Heights Tigers with a decisive 49-18 scoreline. The Tigers started strong in their new stadium, with Dominic Cole recovering a fumble that led to Makhi Jones scoring the inaugural touchdown. However, the Lancers retaliated swiftly.

Senior QB Jake Kavcic and his brother Andy showcased their synergy, connecting for a 49-yard touchdown. Jake Kavcic's brilliance continued, accounting for six touchdowns - three passing and three rushing, amassing 149 passing yards and 120 rushing yards. Andy Kavcic chipped in with 177 combined yards and a touchdown.

Despite Jamarrion Banks' impressive 166 rushing yards and two touchdowns for the Tigers, it wasn't enough to halt the Lancers' momentum. Reflecting on the game, Andy Kavcic emphasized the team's unity and determination, while Nick Iliano, who scored for the Lancers, highlighted their contender status.

St. Ignatius Wildcats Clinch First Win for New Coach Against Mentor Cardinals

In a nail-biter, the St. Ignatius Wildcats secured a 16-14 win over the Mentor Cardinals. This victory wasn't just another notch on the belt; it marked the inaugural triumph for the Wildcats' new head coach, Ryan Franzinger. Franzinger, succeeding the iconic Chuck Kyle, had much to prove.

The game's outset was characterized by a fierce defensive duel. St. Ignatius drew first blood with a 30-yard field goal by Thomas Kilbane. The Wildcats' defense, spearheaded by senior captain and linebacker Ryan Ardire, showcased their mettle with Ardire registering two game-changing sacks in the contest.

However, Mentor's Scotty Fox was determined to keep the Cardinals alive. Fox orchestrated a touchdown pass to Grant Cerny and later scored with a 6-yard run, momentarily giving Mentor a 14-10 edge. St. Ignatius' wide receiver, Jonathan Merimee, acknowledged the game's intense fluctuations.

The tide turned in the second half when Joshua Papesh connected with Merimee for a touchdown, reclaiming the lead for the Wildcats. Papesh's leadership, combined with running back Max Ritt's 130-yard performance, was instrumental in the win.

As the game neared its conclusion, St. Ignatius strategically consumed six minutes, culminating in a decisive sack by Ardire. The victory was particularly sweet, marking St. Ignatius' first home win against Mentor since 2017.

Reflecting on the win, Merimee expressed his elation, especially for Coach Franzinger stating, "It's awesome that we are able to deliver Coach Franzinger his first win, especially against Mentor. Coach has done a great job taking over this team. He knows what we need to do to win and accomplish our goal of getting state championship #12."The triumph signifies not just a win, but the promising commencement of Franzinger's tenure at St. Ignatius.

St. Ignatius RB Max Ritt, Photo by: Dane Gardner

Garfield Hts. ATH Tyrex Lawson, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Garfield Heights Overcomes Lutheran East in Thrilling Match

In a dramatic turn of events, Garfield Heights rallied to defeat Lutheran East with an 18-16 scoreline. The game saw Lutheran East taking an early lead, capitalizing on defensive strengths and leading 10-0 in the second half. However, Garfield Heights made a comeback, with D'Corey Martin and Tyrez Lawson scoring crucial touchdowns. Despite a late-game touchdown by Lutheran East's Jarell Melton, a missed two-point conversion sealed their fate.

Barberton's Balanced Attack Overwhelms Stow-Munroe Falls

The Barberton varsity football team clinched a 47-23 victory over Stow-Munroe Falls. Dominic Wilson shone with 282 passing yards and 4 touchdowns. Xzavier Macon led in rushing with 73 yards. Kenny Larry impressed with two receiving touchdowns, while the defense tallied 71 tackles and 4 sacks, showcasing Barberton's dominance.

Barberton RB Xzavier Macon, Photo by: Austin Souvanarth

St. Edward QB Casey Bullock, Photo by: DJ Pelles

St. Edward Eagles Soar to Victory Over Good Counsel Falcons

In a high-profile game broadcasted on ESPN, the St. Edward Eagles, ranked 18th, clashed with the 21st ranked Our Lady of Good Counsel Falcons from Maryland. The match began with both teams showcasing their defenses. The Eagles drew first blood when a mishandled snap by the Falcons led to Tayvin Shaw recovering the ball for a touchdown. Good Counsel quickly responded, leveling the score at 7-7, thanks to a touchdown by Dilin Jones. The first half ended in a deadlock, but the Eagles' offense ignited post-halftime. A series of strategic plays resulted in touchdowns by Bullock and Josh Groudle. By the fourth quarter, the Eagles solidified their lead with a 24-yard touchdown pass. Despite Jones' impressive 143 yards in the first half, an injury curtailed his impact later on. The Eagles' defense was formidable, limiting the Falcons to just 119 total yards. St. Edward's Camrin Boone notably restricted Florida State commit Elijah Moore to one catch. Following this 28-7 victory, the Eagles are prepping for their next challenge against Rock Creek Christian Academy.

Akron East RB Ziaire Stevens, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

Kent QB Jack Smith, Photo by: Austin Souvanarth

Chaney vs. Akron East: A Nail-Biting Opener

In a two-day match, the Chaney Cowboys were edged out 14-13 by Akron East. Akron East's junior running back, Ziaire Stevens, ran for 151 yards in the first half, including a 64-yard touchdown. Senior Ibraheem Kamara, intercepted a pass from Chaney's Drew Gault, scoring a 42-yard touchdown for the Dragons. Despite trailing at halftime, Chaney's quarterback, Matt Jones, narrowed the gap with a late touchdown. However, a crucial two-point conversion attempt failed.

Roosevelt Overcomes Ravenna in Week 1 Clash

In the celebrated 109th face-off between Roosevelt and Ravenna at Portage Community Bank Stadium, Roosevelt secured a 28-20 victory. Originally slated for Thursday, the game faced interruptions due to lightning and was ultimately wrapped up on Saturday. Early in the game, Ravenna's Daniel Sanders made a mark with two touchdowns, setting the score at 14-7. Responding swiftly, Roosevelt's quarterback, Jack Smith, delivered two touchdown passes, one of which was a standout 55-yard link-up with Jaiden Portis. This play positioned the Rough Riders at a 21-14 lead at halftime, before weather-related postponements. When play resumed, both teams added to their tallies. A missed extra point after Sanders' 39-yard TD run left Ravenna trailing by just one point. However, the Rough Riders sealed the deal with another touchdown pass from Smith, this time connecting with Theo Maccarone.

Youngstown State Penguins Make a Statement with Dominant Win Over Valparaiso

The Youngstown State Penguins began their 2023 season with a resounding victory over Valparaiso, showcasing their prowess right from the start. Tyshon King's 62-yard touchdown set the tone for the Penguins, and by halftime, they led 17-10. The third quarter was particularly eventful, with the team scoring 28 points, tying their own record for most points in a third quarter. Key plays, such as Michael Voitus blocking a Valpo punt and Jaylen Castleberry's subsequent touchdown, shifted the momentum firmly in the Penguins' favor.

The defense was equally commendable, forcing three fumbles and recording five sacks. Linebacker Alex Howard stood out with nine tackles and two sacks. Offensively, Mitch Davidson and CJ Charleston, who made a touching comeback after missing the 2022 season due to injury, were instrumental in the team's success. The game concluded with a 52-10 score in favor of Youngstown State.

Post-game, Coach Doug Phillips emphasized the team's resilience and the importance of learning from challenges. With a total of 471 yards of offense and a formidable defense, the Penguins are gearing up for their next big challenge against the 3rd ranked Ohio State Buckeyes.

YSU QB Mitch Davidson, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

NEO VS AMERICA

Held at two Northeast Ohio iconic venues, the NEO vs America High School Football Showcase highlighted Ohio's unmatched football talent. Spearheaded by Matt Hankins, Northeast Ohio teams went undefeated against top out-of-state teams. Players voiced camaraderie and pride, emphasizing their mission to elevate Ohio football nationally.

Pictured: Chase Bond, Photo by: Austin Souvanarth

Pictured: DaOne Owens, Photo by: Austin Souvanarth

Matt Hankins, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

In Northeast Ohio, where football is more than just a game, it's a way of life, a new chapter in high school sports was unveiled. The NEO vs America High School Football Showcase kicked off at the iconic Paul Brown Tiger Stadium at Massillon High School, a venue named after a legendary pioneer of the game. By the second day, the event shifted to an even more symbolic venue, the Pro Football Hall of Fame, a place where every football player dreams of being immortalized. These venues not only set the stage for the games but also underscored the significance of Northeast Ohio football to the rest of the world. The showcase wasn't just a series of games; it was a declaration of talent, passion, and the spirit of Ohio's young athletes and fans.

The Man Behind the Mission: Matt Hankins

Matt Hankins, the driving force behind this groundbreaking initiative, had a dream that went beyond the bright lights and roaring crowds. He envisioned a platform where Ohio's young talents could shine, proving to the nation that the state's football talent was unparalleled. But for Hankins, it wasn't just about the game; it was about community, camaraderie, and showcasing the heart of Ohio. "Our kids are not just special; they redefine the game. The nation needs to witness the depth of talent and rich culture we have here," he shared.

The results from the showcase were nothing short of spectacular. Northeast Ohio teams made an emphatic statement, going undefeated (4-0) against top-tier out-of-state opponents. They outscored their rivals 136-46, with the most significant margin being Archbishop Hoban's 45-6 triumph over Frederick Douglass (Ky)

Massillon Tigers vs. Valdosta Wildcats: A Grand Kickoff

In the NEO vs. America showcase's opening game, the Massillon Tigers and Valdosta Wildcats, two football powerhouses, ignited the 2023 season. Valdosta, known as "Titletown USA" by ESPN and spotlighted in Netflix's "Titletown High," led 14-0 in the first quarter. But with Coach Nate Moore's strategy, the Tigers rallied back. Senior Daone Owens was the star, with pivotal runs leading to touchdowns and accumulating 241 rushing yards. Despite their efforts, Valdosta fell 28-17, with notable plays from Shakevious Wright and Todd Robinson. Reflecting on the game, Hankins remarked, "Ohio football is tough, and Massillon exemplified that. It proves that Ohio players have resilience and grit. Our kids will fight and give their all until the very end."

Champions Collide: Eagles Outshine Center Grove in Marquee Matchup

In the showcase's second game, the two-time state champions, St. Edward Eagles, took on Indiana's three-time champions, the Center Grove Trojans. Ranked 13th nationally, the Eagles showcased their prowess with a 27-10 win. Senior Josh Groudle opened with a 24-yard touchdown, and despite Center Grove's efforts, the Eagles' defense held strong. Groudle finished with 68 yards and two touchdowns, while quarterback Casey Bullock contributed 180 total yards. Groudle passionately stated, “the showcase is great exposure to show the country what Northeast Ohio football is all about. Yes, we have rivals that played in the showcase alongside us, but I believe that we, as Northeast Ohio football teams, want to achieve the bigger picture: putting Ohio back on the map at the national level." St. Edward QB Casey Bullock echoed Groudle’s thoughts, stating “the showcase this past weekend allowed us to play for something bigger than just our school, our state. Knowing that we had all eyes on us to represent Ohio football was pretty special.”

Pictured: Josh Groudle
Photo by: DJ Pelles

Archbishop Hoban Freshman RB Brayton Feister powers into the endzone for a TD against Frederick Douglass (Ky). Photo By: Dane Gardner

Hoban Knights' Dominant Debut: A Statement Victory Over Frederick Douglass

Archbishop Hoban's football team commenced their 2023 season with an impressive 45-6 win over Frederick Douglass, the reigning Class 5A high school state champions from Kentucky. The Knights displayed their strength and skill on both offense and defense, establishing a commanding 38-0 lead by halftime. In his debut as quarterback, Tylan Boykin made an immediate mark, connecting with senior wide receiver Parker Falkenstein for a 46-yard touchdown in the opening quarter. The game witnessed standout performances from senior running back Caleb Jones, who accumulated 93 rushing yards and three touchdowns, and freshman running back Brayton Feister.

Boykin emphasized the unity among the NEO teams, saying, "This weekend, all NEO teams rooted for each other, aiming to put Ohio high school football on the national map." Linebacker Devin Bell added, "It showcased that Ohio football can match or surpass most. It was a moment where rivals united for a common cause. I'm thrilled with all four teams' performances."

Glenville Tarblooders Triumph in NEO vs. America Showcase, Extending Winning Streak

In the NEO vs. America showcase finale, the Glenville Tarblooders ensured a clean sweep for Northeast Ohio. The two-day event had earlier seen victories from Massillon, St. Edward, and Archbishop Hoban. Glenville, despite starting the first quarter 7-0 down against the 2022 Virginia Class 4 state champions, Glenville, showcased their resilience and extended their winning streak to 16 games. Glenville's talent was evident, with four players ranked in Ohio's top 100 class of 2024. The second quarter was dominated by senior running back D'Shawntae Jones, who scored four consecutive touchdowns. By halftime, Glenville led 36-7 and eventually won the game 36-13.

Challenges and Triumphs

The showcase's impact was palpable. The local community in Northeast Ohio rallied behind the event, with players and teams gaining national attention. The showcase was not just about football; it was about elevating the region and its players.

Glenville RB D'Shawntae Jones, Photo by: Austin Souvanarth

Pictured: Matt Hankins, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

"YOU CAN'T BE THE VERY BEST IF YOU DO NOT PLAY THE BEST"

Matt Hankins

Hankins, the visionary behind this grand event, had a simple yet profound goal: to shine a spotlight on the unparalleled talent of high school football in Northeast Ohio. And shine it did, as four of Ohio's top teams took on formidable opponents from out of state, proving that Ohio's brand of football is second to none.

Organizing an event of this magnitude was no small feat. From funding challenges to logistical hurdles, Hankins faced it all. But with unwavering determination and the support of his family, he overcame every obstacle. "No logistical issue can stop me," Hankins declared with conviction.

The Road Ahead

While the future of the NEO vs America Showcase remains uncertain, Hankins' commitment to promoting high school football in Ohio is unwavering. Through his platform, Ohio Big High School Football, he continues to provide players with exposure to colleges, fostering connections and opportunities.

Reflecting on the journey, Hankins fondly recalls the moments that stood out to him: "Seeing the players' comments, seeing the communities, seeing the kids visiting the HOF in amazement." These moments, he believes, are the true essence of the showcase.

In the end, the NEO vs America High School Football Showcase is more than just a game. It's a celebration of talent, passion, and community. And as Hankins so aptly put it, "Our brand is national!"

SHARP SHOOTERS

FROM THE SIDELINES TO THE SPOTLIGHT

Introducing DJ Pelles and Austin Souvanarth, the latest additions to the Sky High Sportz team. With a unique blend of artistry and innovation, they're reshaping how fans experience sports in Ohio. Join us as we explore their journey and the impact they're set to make in sports media.

In the vast and ever-evolving landscape of sports media, where moments are immortalized and emotions are encapsulated, two young visionaries have emerged, challenging the status quo and redefining the narrative. DJ Pelles and Austin Souvanarth, the fresh faces of Sky High Sportz, represent more than just the next generation of content creators; they are the vanguard of a transformative movement in sports media.

DJ Pelles: Painting Stories with Every Click

For DJ, the world of sports photography wasn't a premeditated choice. It beckoned him during his senior year when he aimed to capture memories for his football-playing comrades. This endeavor soon morphed into a profound passion. "I was always an artistic kid and loved sports my whole life," DJ reminisces. "Photography became the bridge between my love for art and sports." In DJ's perspective, sports photography is a dance of skill, intuition, and serendipity. From navigating the challenges of inadequate lighting at high school matches to immortalizing figures like Bronny James, DJ's lens has been a silent witness to countless tales. His mission? To redefine sports photography, transforming it from mere snapshots to evocative artistry, and in the process, inspire a new generation to embrace this perspective.

Glenville DB Bryce West, Photo by: DJ Pelles

"Photography became the bridge between my love for art and sports."
- DJ Pelles

“Sports photography encompasses many factors, whether it's the game itself, the players, fans, and so on. The stories and energy one can visualize speak volumes.”

- Austin Souvanarth

Austin Souvanarth: A Symphony of Motion and Emotion

Austin's love of sports media was ignited by the mesmerizing work of Phillip Pham in 2019. A pivotal decision to step away from the football field after his junior season in 2020 paved the way for his full-time immersion into media. "Sports photography encompasses many factors, whether it's the game itself, the players, fans, and so on. The stories and energy one can visualize speak volumes," Austin states. For him, every game is a canvas, and music is his muse, helping him attune his mind to the impending spectacle. From cherishing moments like his former football team's triumph in the Suburban League Championship to the adrenaline-charged journey of Stow basketball to the regional semifinals at KSU, Austin's lens has captured the very soul of sports. His ultimate aspiration? To be a part of the grandeur of the Olympics and encapsulate the fervor of Ohio sports.

While DJ and Austin each bring their distinct flair and inspirations to the table, their collective vision resonates with a shared ambition: to not just be a part of the sports media landscape, but to redefine it. Their commitment goes beyond capturing moments; it's about creating memories that will stand the test of time. As they weave their narratives, they're not just telling stories; they're building a legacy. Sky High Sportz isn't just witnessing the rise of two talented creators; it's experiencing the dawn of an era that promises to leave an indelible mark on the world of sports media.

Akron Ellet WR/DB Isaiah Brown, Photo by: Austin Souvanarth

THE MAIN ATTRACTION

As summer fades into fall, Northeast Ohio has taken center stage in the sports arena. This piece dives into the region's standout moments: Sean Lewis's ascent from Kent State to the University of Colorado, Drew Allan's impressive Penn State debut, and captivating documentaries like "The Untold Docuseries" featuring Johnny Manziel, Urban Meyer, and Jake Paul. Additionally, HBO's "BS High" unveils a fabricated football program's unraveling in Canton. Join us in exploring Northeast Ohio's undeniable sports influence.

Drew Allar, Photo by Gregory Fisher/Icon Sportswire

Colorado OC Sean Lewis, Photo by Jeff Halstead/Icon Sportswire

Colorado's Unsung Hero: OC Sean Lewis

When Coach Prime (Deion Sanders) declared “We Coming” upon joining Colorado, the college football world took notice. While stars like Travis Hunter and QB Shedeur Sanders grabbed headlines, a key component of Coach Prime's strategy was OC Coordinator Sean Lewis, previously the Head Coach for Kent State.

Known for introducing a high-speed offense at Kent State, Lewis, the youngest HC in the FBS at 31, was a strategic pick by Coach Prime. "We wanted to up the ante and take Shedeur to another level. Lewis was ready for the challenge," said Sanders.

Despite skeptics predicting a lackluster season for the Buffaloes, they stunned all by defeating last year's CFP runner-up, TCU, 45-42. Under Lewis's guidance, the Buffs showcased a formidable offense, with Shedeur Sanders throwing a record 510 yards and four touchdowns. Freshman Dylan Edwards scored four times, and four Buffs receivers each surpassed 100 yards.

In the ever-evolving world of college football, Sean Lewis has firmly established himself as a tactical genius, propelling Colorado into the limelight.

Drew Allar Shines in Penn State Debut

The Drew Allar era at Penn State kicked off with a bang. After a promising freshman year with 344 passing yards and four touchdowns in 10 games, Allar's first career start in the 2023 opener was eagerly anticipated.

And he didn't disappoint.

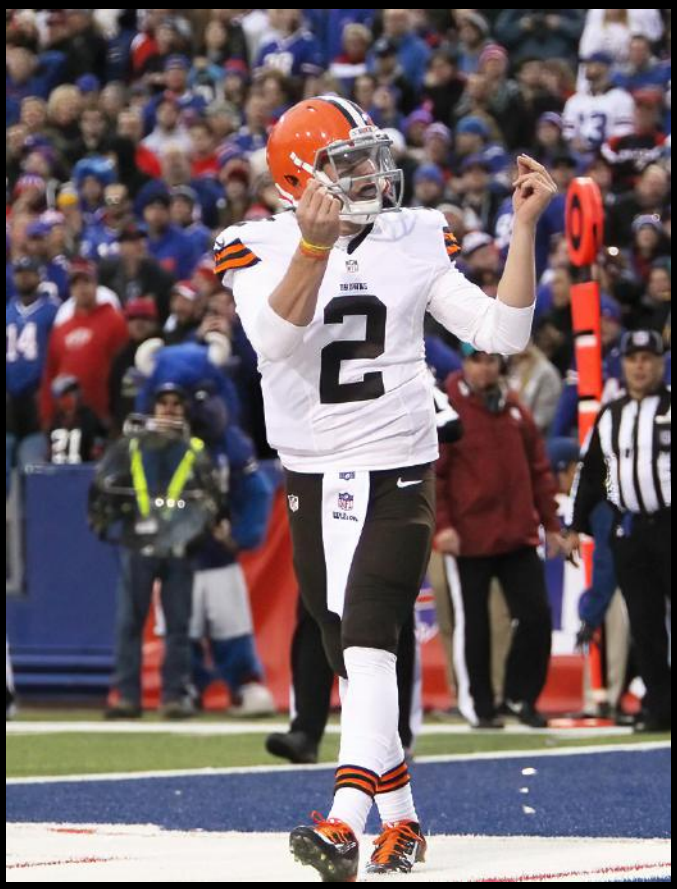
Four plays in, Allar connected with junior wide receiver KeAndre Lambert-Smith for a 72-yard touchdown. By game's end, he amassed 325 passing yards, three touchdowns, and a 72.4% completion rate, leading Penn State to a commanding 38-15 victory over West Virginia.

His stellar performance earned him the title of Big Ten Offensive Player of the Week.

A former standout at Medina, where he set county records with 4,444 passing yards and 48 touchdowns, Allar was a recognized talent, rated a five-star prospect by 247Sports and On3.

Reflecting on his debut, Allar said, "The relationship with the receivers is really good. The summer was huge for us." He added, "As a quarterback, I care about wins. Beating West Virginia at home was very cool."
With Allar leading the charge, Penn State's season looks promising.

Drew Allar, Photo by Gregory Fisher/Icon Sportswire



Johnny Manziel, Photo by: Kellen Micah/Icon Sportswire

Tim Tebow (left), Urban Meyer (Right) Photo by: St. Petersburg Times/Zuma Press/Icon Sportswire

Northeast Ohio at the Heart of Summer's Most Dynamic Sports Conversations

As summer unfolds, the sports world is abuzz with conversations, debates, and discussions. At the epicenter of many of these dynamic dialogues is Northeast Ohio, a region that has either produced or influenced some of the most captivating sports stories of the season. From Netflix's documentary anthology "Untold" to HBO's "BS High," the narratives rooted in Northeast Ohio have kept fans and critics alike talking.

Jake Paul - The Talk of the Boxing World:

Westlake's own Jake Paul has been a hot topic of discussion. His transition from a YouTube sensation to a professional boxer has been nothing short of controversial. The "Untold" segment, "Jake Paul and the Problem Child," premiering on August 1st, offers an in-depth look at Paul's journey. His decisions, fights, and outspoken nature have made him a central figure in boxing debates, proving that Northeast Ohio's audacity knows no bounds.

Johnny Manziel - A Cautionary Tale

The sports world has been rife with discussions about Johnny Manziel, especially after revelations in his "Untold" segment, premiering on August 8th. His candid admission about not watching any film while playing for the Cleveland Browns has ignited debates about athlete responsibility and the pressures of fame. Manziel's story serves as both a cautionary tale and a topic of intrigue, keeping sports enthusiasts engrossed.

Urban Meyer - A Coaching Conundrum:

Ashtabula-born Urban Meyer's coaching strategies, especially during his time at Ohio State after his successful stint with the Florida Gators, have been a focal point of discussions. The "Swamp Kings" segment, airing on August 23rd, delves into Meyer's era with the Florida Gators, sparking conversations about coaching ethics, leadership styles, and the challenges of managing top-tier athletes.

The Bishop Sycamore Controversy:

An honorable mention goes to HBO's "BS High." While Bishop Sycamore High School isn't directly from Northeast Ohio, the exposure of its dubious activities during a game in Canton, at the Pro Football Hall of Fame, has made it a central topic of discussion. The documentary has ignited debates about the integrity of sports programs and the lengths individuals will go to for fame and recognition.

In essence, Northeast Ohio has been instrumental in shaping the most dynamic sports conversations this summer.

FROM NEO TO THE NFL

John Carroll University and St. Ignatius High School stand as titans in football's vast landscape, consistently producing notable NFL talents. From Super Bowl successes to influential off-field roles, their alumni have left an indelible mark. As the new NFL season proceeds, this article explores the deep-rooted legacy of these Ohio institutions, highlighting key matchups and the continued influence of their illustrious alumni.

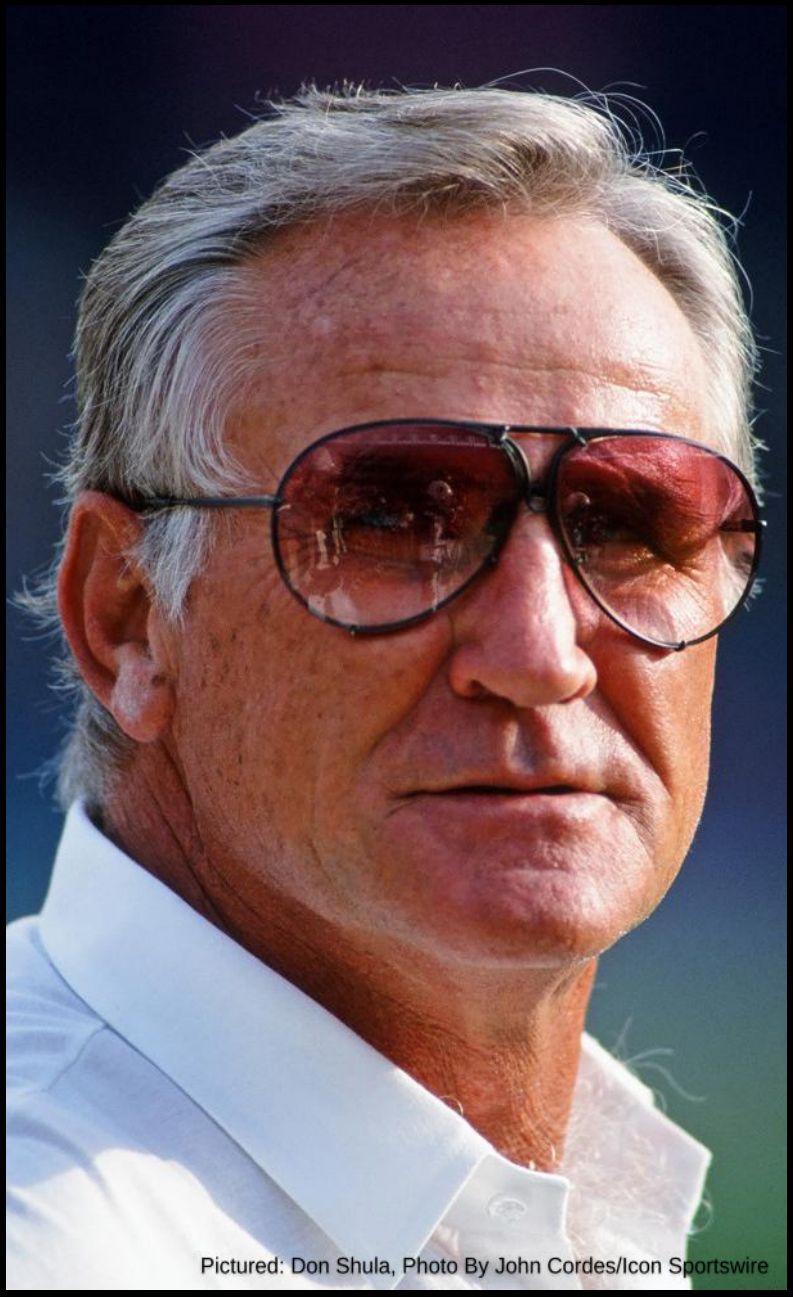
Photo by: Lamar Sykes

The Professional Football Legacies of John Carroll University and St. Ignatius High School

In the archives of football history, certain institutions stand out as factories of talent, churning out NFL stars with remarkable consistency. While Powerhouse schools or big state universities often grab the headlines, two institutions in Northeast Ohio, both birthed from the same foundation, have been quietly creating a football legacy that rivals any in the country.

St. Ignatius College, founded in 1886 by the Society of Jesus, was the seed from which both John Carroll University and St. Ignatius High School sprouted. While the college by that name no longer exists, its legacy lives on. John Carroll University, renamed in 1923 in honor of the first archbishop of the Catholic Church in the U.S., has been in continuous operation, producing not just academicians but also some of the finest talents the NFL has ever seen. Meanwhile, Saint Ignatius High School, standing tall at its historic location, is a testament to the enduring legacy of St. Ignatius College.

Raiders HC Josh McDaniels, Photo by John Rivera/Icon Sportswire


Pictured: Don Shula, Photo By John Cordes/Icon Sportswire

The impact of these institutions on the NFL is nothing short of remarkable. According to their school's website, heading into the 2022 season, 41 JCU Alumni and former coaches were working in the NFL on 16 different teams. Additionally, 16 of them made it to the playoffs. In 2019 six of its former students played pivotal roles in New England's Super Bowl LIII victory. One of the greatest connections from JCU to the NFL is the legendary Don Shula '51, a Pro Football Hall of Famer who won Super Bowls VII and VIII, and still has the NFL record for most wins by a head coach with 328.

Josh McDaniels, a standout from John Carroll's football history, is currently the Head Coach for the Las Vegas Raiders. Originally a high school quarterback, he shifted to wide receiver at John Carroll, competing with Nick Caserio who is now the General Manager for the Houston Texans. Both were a part of the glory years with the New England Patriots, with McDaniels clinching 6 Super Bowls as an assistant coach and offensive coordinator.

Pictured: London Fletcher, Photo by: Greg McWilliams/Icon Sportswire

While his time at John Carroll connected him with NFL legends like London Fletcher and Brian Polian, many of his peers, such as Jerry Schuplinski (TE Coach for the Raiders), Tom Telesco (General Manager for the Chargers), and Dave Ziegler (General Manager for the Raiders), are still making significant impacts in the league

Brandon Staley, who served as the Defensive Coordinator for John Carroll in 2013, is now the Head Coach of the San Diego Chargers. Tom Arth, another John Carroll alumnus, held multiple roles at the university, including Co-offensive coordinator, quarterbacks coach, and head coach from 2010 to 2016. He's now the Passing Game Coordinator for the Chargers.

Tom Arth bridges the rich football traditions of these two institutions. As he was also a graduate of St. Ignatius Other notable alumni still playing in the league include Brian Hoyer '04 with the Las Vegas Raiders, Dre'Mont Jones '15 with the Seattle Seahawks, and Liam Eichenberg '16 with the Miami Dolphins. The coaching realm isn't left behind either, with talents like Jonathan Gannon '01 leading the Arizona Cardinals and Dave Ragone '98 orchestrating the offense for the Atlanta Falcons.

Pictured: Brian Hoyer, Photo by: Tony Ding/Icon Sportswire

Pictured: Jonathan Gannon, Photo by: Nick Wosika/Icon Sportswire

Pictured: Brandon Staley, Photo by: Tony Ding/Icon Sportswire

In the vast realm of football, where countless stories of talent and triumph unfold, the tales of John Carroll University and St. Ignatius High School are truly exceptional. These institutions have not only produced NFL stars but have also nurtured the values of dedication, perseverance, and excellence. While this article touches on some of the luminaries, it's worth noting that there are many names, stories, and moments that remain untold. Even a comprehensive book or an in-depth documentary might find it challenging to capture the full essence of their remarkable legacies.

As the new NFL season dawns, one thing remains crystal clear: the legacy birthed by John Carroll and St. Ignatius is not just alive but thriving. With each game, each play, and each victory, they continue to etch their names deeper into football history. And while many tales have been told, countless more await, ensuring that their stories will inspire generations to come.

The upcoming NFL season promises several intriguing matchups that spotlight these individuals. Given the vast network of John Carroll and St. Ignatius alumni and affiliates throughout the league, there are specific games we're particularly eager to watch:

Games to Watch

Chargers vs Raiders (10/1/23 & 12/14/23):

- *A duel between Head Coaches: Josh McDaniels of the Raiders and Brandon Staley of the Chargers.*
- *Battle of the GMs: Tom Telesco ’95 for the Chargers and David Ziegler ’00 for the Raiders, both John Carroll alumni.*
- *Additional Key Personnel: Tom Arth '03 (Chargers Passing Game Coordinator) and Matt Feeney '15 (Raiders Defensive Quality Control Specialist).*

Cardinals vs Falcons (11/12/23):

- *Ignatius grad and Cardinals' new HC, Jonathan Gannon ‘01, faces off against Falcons' Offensive Coordinator Dave Ragone and new Offensive Assistant Patrick Kramer, both from John Carroll.*

Cardinals vs Texans (11/19/23):

- *HC Jonathan Gannon of the Cardinals meets a trio of John Carroll alumni from the Texans: GM Nick Caserio ’98, Assistant Director of Pro Scouting D.J. Debick ’13, and Special Teams Coordinator Frank Ross ’10.*

Falcons vs Texans (10/8/23):

- *A showcase of John Carroll talent: Texans' GM Nick Caserio ’98, Assistant Director of Pro Scouting D.J. Debick ’13, and Special Teams Coordinator Frank Ross ’10 against Falcons' Offensive Coordinator Dave Ragone and new Offensive Assistant Patrick Kramer.*

Rams vs Packers (11/8/23):

- *Rams' coaching staff boasts John Carroll alumni Nick Caley ’06 (TE Coach), Chris Shula (Linebackers/Pass Rush Coordinator), and Mike Harris (Safeties Coach).*
- *On the Packers' side, Rob Grosso '15 serves as the Offensive Quality Control - TE's, and St. Ignatius grad Chris Gizzi is the S&C Coach.*

These matchups promise thrilling encounters, showcasing the profound influence of John Carroll and St. Ignatius in the NFL.

FROM USFL TO THE NFL

The 2023 USFL season wasn't just about football; it presented players with the golden opportunity to transition to the NFL. While 28 players were given this chance, securing a spot on the final NFL roster is no small feat. The Birmingham Stallions and Michigan Panthers were at the forefront, producing the most candidates for this challenging transition.

Alex McGough, Photo by: DJ Pelles

The 2023 Transitions

The journey from the United States Football League (USFL) to the National Football League (NFL) is a testament to the talent and tenacity of players who dream of playing at the highest level of professional football. As the NFL finalized its 53-man rosters for the upcoming season, several USFL players from the 2023 season have successfully made the transition.

Leading the pack are former Birmingham Stallions kicker, Brandon Aubrey, and former Philadelphia Stars defensive tackle, LaBryan Ray. Aubrey has secured a spot on the Dallas Cowboys' active roster, showcasing his exceptional skills as a kicker. On the other hand, Ray's impressive performance as a defensive tackle with the Philadelphia Stars earned him a coveted spot with the Carolina Panthers.

But the transition doesn't stop there. Former Houston Gamblers receiver, Isaiah Zuber, although currently on injured reserve, has been signed by the Las Vegas Raiders. His potential as a receiver is undeniable, and fans are eagerly awaiting his return to the field.

Furthermore, 11 USFL players have been signed to NFL practice squads, indicating the depth of talent that the USFL has nurtured over the past season. Here's a rundown of these players:

- Levi Bell, a former defensive end for the Michigan Panthers, will be showcasing his skills with the Seattle Seahawks.
- The Cleveland Browns have recognized the talent of former Birmingham Stallions cornerback, Lorenzo Burns, and wide receiver, Austin Watkins.
- Josh Butler, a former defensive back for the Michigan Panthers, has been signed to the Dallas Cowboys' practice squad.
- The Arizona Cardinals have added former Michigan Panthers wide receiver, Kaden Davis, to their ranks.
- Khalil Davis, a former defensive tackle for the Birmingham Stallions, will be joining the Houston Texans.
- The Los Angeles Chargers have secured former Birmingham Stallions defensive back, Matt Hankins.

Pictured: Brandon Aubrey, Photo by: Dane Gardner

Alex McGough, Photo by: Dane Gardner

- Alex McGough, the 2x USFL Champion and 2023 USFL MVP who played as a quarterback for the Birmingham Stallions, has been signed by the Green Bay Packers.
- The Indianapolis Colts have added former Michigan Panthers wide receiver, D.J. Montgomery, to their practice squad.
- Former Houston Gamblers tight end, Josh Pederson, will be joining the Jacksonville Jaguars.
- The New York Jets have recognized the talent of former Memphis Showboats defensive back, Nehemiah Shelton.

As the NFL season progresses, fans and analysts alike will be keenly watching their performances, cheering them on as they make their mark in the world of professional football.

Josh Butler, Photo by: Lamar Sykes

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