



## LOOKING AHEAD TO WEEK 6

### Avon Lake at North Olmsted, Friday, 7:30 p.m.

The winner stays alive in the Southwestern Conference race. The loser can just about forget winning a league crown.  
Avon Lake (3-2, 1-1) is fresh off a convincing

and impressive 34-7 victory Thursday night over Olmsted Falls. If the Shoremen can beat North Olmsted and keep winning in the SWC, they could set up a showdown with currently unbeaten Amherst in the season finale at Avon Lake's Memorial Stadium.

Of course, Brecksville (2-0) might have something to say about that.

As for the Eagles (3-2, 1-1), they must find a way to bounce back from a tough loss Friday night to Amherst. North Olmsted led 12-0, but

lost 15-12 to lose a share of first place in the conference.

But the Eagles proved they can play with the league's best, which should give them confidence against perennial power Avon Lake. North Olmsted will also be seeking a measure of revenge after falling to Avon Lake 41-20 last season.

**Other games of interest in Week 6:** Westlake at Amherst; Avon at Vermilion; Midview at Rocky River; Elyria at Brunswick.



AVON 41 | ROCKY RIVER 16

# No ladder necessary, as Eagles soar

Tim Gebhardt

The Chronicle-Telegram

AVON — If Avon goes on to win the West Shore Conference title, it may want to give the keys to the city to Garrett Gronowski.

Gronowski made the play of his life as time expired to end the first half to put Avon comfortably in front, 27-14, on its way to a 41-16 rout of two-time defending champion Rocky River.

"The play was actually called for the hook and ladder," Gronowski said. "We ran it a couple games before and I heard (Rocky River) saying 'hook and ladder, hook and ladder.' I saw them on the outside and I figured

I'd fake it and see if I could get inside. I got some great blocks — some people got some big hits in there — and it was wide open."

With less than 10 seconds to play in the half, quarterback Ryan O'Rourke delivered the ball to Gronowski in the flat, but instead of pitching the ball to Marquis Harrell trailing the play, Gronowski faked the pitch and darted the other way past River's defenders and raced 30 yards to score.

"Our signals for that play probably need to change," said Avon coach Mike Elder, showing reporters his sideline signal in the no-huddle offense. "It's pretty

obvious. (Rocky River) saw it was coming but (Gronowski) is such a smart kid, he faked it and made the play. I told Beau Balderson (offensive coordinator) we'll just lie to everybody and say we designed it like that."

Had Gronowski not scored, Rocky River gets the ball to start the third quarter trailing by just six points and confident it could move the ball after scoring twice on sustained drives. Instead, it gave the Eagles the lift they needed.

"(Avon) made a great call on that," said River coach Rick Adams. "It's something we saw on film with them throwing that

play but it's the first time we actually saw him keep it. We were there to make the tackle but (Gronowski's) a great player, broke a couple tackles and got into the end zone."

Avon is 5-0 overall and 2-0 in the league and travels to Vermilion (2-3, 2-0) next week. River fell to 2-3 overall, 0-2 WSC.

"The big play was before that where Brett Jensen got out of bounds for us," said O'Rourke, who had another spectacular night with three TD passes and 183 yards passing. "We actually had time to think about that play. Garrett overheard Rocky River talking about the lateral

and he faked it and just made an athletic move."

Rocky River kept things interesting through the third quarter, sacking O'Rourke in the end zone for a safety, but Avon's defense stiffened and the offense started clicking on the ground. Harrell had a pair of first-half touchdowns while Zak Wearsch scored twice in the fourth quarter. The two combined for 147 yards rushing.

Avon's defense was led by Gronowski, Harrell, Jensen, Matt Logan, Emery Rowe, Patrick Furnas, Alex Tabor, Bryant Robertson, Dustin Cranford, Josh Conrad, Josh Pierce, Matt Kiessling

and Vic Jenkins. They all made big plays to keep River on its heels.

"Our kids needed this," said Elder. "We needed to be challenged and tested. We made some mistakes but the kids responded and we were able to get out with a win."

**FIRST TIME:** Avon's victory was its first over the Pirates in conference play. In three previous tries, the Eagles came up short by a combined score of 97-30.

"That's about three years worth of frustration (taken out) right there," said O'Rourke. "It was great to get it at home, too, our senior year. We just played great."

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NORTH RIDGEVILLE 33  
FAIRVIEW 14

## Rangers prevail

Ron Nenadal

The Chronicle-Telegram

NORTH RIDGEVILLE — The North Ridgeville Rangers had their hands full Friday as they let Fairview hang around. It almost came back to bite them despite a 33-14 final score.

"You have to give Fairview credit, I know I do," North Ridgeville coach Jeff Riesen said. "They came in with a good game plan and moved the ball on us the first half. We knew if we let them hang around they would get the idea that, hey, we can play with these guys."

The Rangers (3-2, 2-0 West Shore Conference) kept shooting themselves in the foot from their first play, an interception. On their second possession, the Rangers put together a nine-play, 76-yard drive to take a 7-0 lead. It would have been 8-0, but an illegal procedure wiped out a successful trick play on the 2-point conversion. It was one of 10 penalties for 80 yards called on the Rangers.

Fairview (0-5, 0-2 WSC) fumbled the ball back to the Rangers, who set up Fairview's tying touchdown by snapping the ball over the punter's head to give the Warriors possession on the Rangers 34-yard line. A pass interference call in the end zone aided Fairview's nine-play drive.

Following the kickoff, North Ridgeville took over on Fairview's 45-yard line. Seven plays later, the Rangers took a 13-7 lead as Mohammed Jaber scored the first of his two touchdowns.

The Rangers had won the coin toss at the start of the game and deferred to the second half. It was a decision that paid off handsomely as they quickly increased their lead to 19-7 on a five-play, 69-yard drive highlighted by a 24-yard run by Derek Lozano.

"When we went in at halftime I told everyone to just settle down," Riesen said. "I didn't scream and yell because if we were to calm down I had to be the example. Sure, I knew they were excited because of it being Homecoming, but they would have to put that out of their minds and do what we had to do."

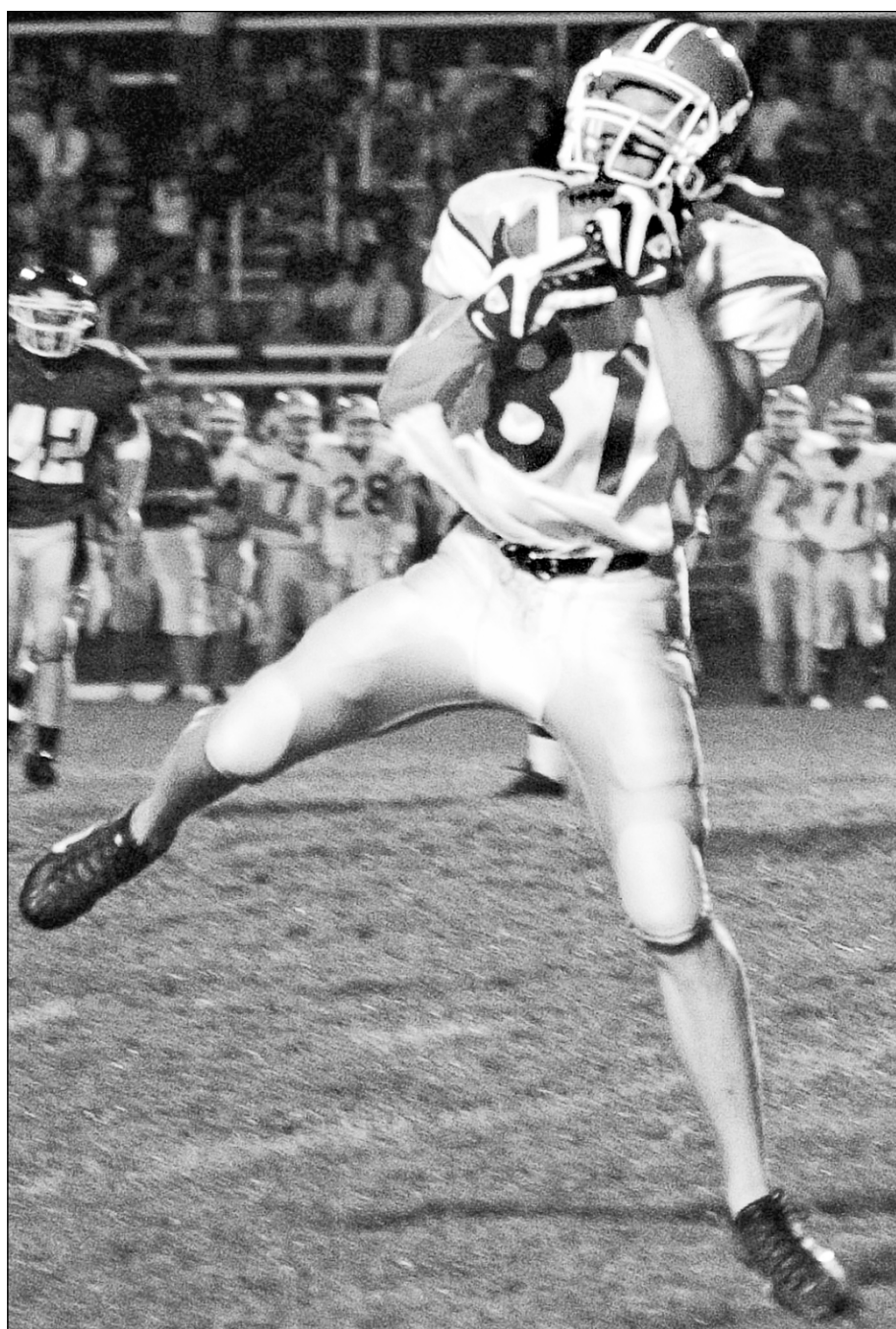
"Coming out in the third quarter with that touchdown drive changed the momentum to us. That touchdown catch by Nate Alpine, a junior tight end filling in for us due to an injury to the starter, showed that he pays attention during practice because he ran the pattern just like it was supposed to be run. We knew if we didn't take control, their confidence would just keep building."

Fairview failed to take advantage of two Rangers' mistakes in the third quarter, recovering a fumble on the Rangers 34-yard line and intercepting a pass on North Ridgeville's 20. The interception came on an excellent play by John Fritz, who read the play as a screen pass, jumped up to tip the ball and caught the deflection.

When the Warriors couldn't capitalize, Dallas Burt added to the score with a 43-yard run. Jaber added his second touchdown with 3:01 left in the game. After being called on to run up the middle most of the night, Jaber showed his speed by going outside left end and into the end zone.

**HONORED:** During the pep rally at the high school Friday afternoon, athletic director Nori Okuma presented the Harold Meyer Sportsmanship Award, given by the Ohio High School Athletic Association Sportsmanship Committee, to the student body. North Ridgeville is one of 83 schools statewide to meet the sportsmanship criteria.

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LINDA MURPHY / CHRONICLE

Vermilion's Ray Anthony makes a catch near the end zone and runs in for a touchdown Friday night in the second quarter of the Sailors' 42-34 win.

## VERMILION

From D1

and failed on a 2-point try after taking an eight-point lead late.

The Middies (3-2, 1-1) needed a touchdown and a 2-point conversion to send the game into overtime and looked like they might pull it off as they drove down the field with the clock winding down. But Anthony ended the rally with an interception near the goal line with less than 30 seconds remaining.

"If we would have made the extra point then the end of the game would have been anticlimatic, right?" Horvath said. "We wouldn't have had that defensive stand and that's something to build on, too."

Midview coach Bill Albright wasn't in the same joking mood.

"We didn't play defense — they marched up and down the field," Albright said. "Defense is nothing but heart and desire and we need to find 11 guys who

have that.

"That's just a horrible effort for a team to put up 34 points and still get beat. That's just wrong."

Further adding to Albright's dismay were injuries to both ankles of star running back Josiah Holt. The junior had picked up 165 yards and a pair of touchdowns but was pulled from the kick return team — he had an 85-yard return that set up a touchdown run by quarterback Brett Whitesel in the second quarter — and was standing on the sideline for a large portion of the second half.

"We're not sure what his status will be for next week," Albright said.

**SWITCHING GEARS:** Horvath made mention of a new "wrinkle" the Sailors added to their offense that helped open up the field for Clark, a move that probably caused some coaching angst for Albright. The veteran Midview coach used all three of his first-half timeouts by the 1:28 mark of the first quarter.

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## AMHERST

From D1

"We gave ourselves some chances," North Olmsted coach Mike Ptacek said. "I don't question our effort. Amherst just got it done when it had to do it."

"We won because we have a bunch of seniors who play hard and can play some defense," Fell said. "We were lucky we found something that worked in the end."

The first half was a nightmare for Amherst. The Comets missed converting

on three fourth-down chances and saw Pat Tomko intercept Eliopoulos on the 1-yard line after Amherst had reached the 4. Kirks, meanwhile, was gaining 128 yards on 13 attempts in the first half, including a 68-yard touchdown with 1:08 to go in the first quarter on which he broke two tackles on his way down the right sideline.

"We were lucky to be down only 6-0 at halftime," Fell said. "We didn't do anything offensively. They had us stymied. They had a terrific defensive game plan against us."

Amherst outgained the

Eagles 256-200 in the opening two quarters. Amherst's first-half drives were stopped at the North Olmsted 28-, 20-, 6- and 13-yard lines.

**VITALI VITAL:** North Olmsted quarterback Joe Vitali went through a stretch of failing to complete 12 straight passes. But Vitali heated up on the Eagles' final drive, competing three of four passes for 43 yards, including a 33-yarder to Jordan Hoppole over the middle to get the Eagles to Amherst's 35-yard line with a little more than a minute left. The drive stalled via a fumble recovery on the next play.

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## ROUNDUP

# Dukes cruise to first victory

BROOKLYN — Winless no more.

Wellington scored two touchdowns in each quarter as the Dukes (1-4, 1-1 PAC) trounced Brooklyn 55-14 Friday night in a Patriot Athletic Conference crossover game to pick up their first win.

Jerry Herman scored four of Wellington's touchdowns on runs of 6, 3, 2 and 3 yards. Steve Simonson added a 40-yard TD run and threw a 30-yard scoring strike to Charlie Coleman.

Coleman also returned a kickoff 65 yards for a touchdown, and Aaron Switzer recovered a fumble in the end zone for the eighth touchdown.

### Admiral King 42, Marion Harding 7

LORAIN — Anthony Harrison had 22 carries for 231 yards and touchdown runs of 53, 14, 18 and 19 yards to lead the Admirals (4-1), who play their first Lake Erie League Erie Division game at Shaw next Friday night.

John Gerber scored a fifth touchdown for the winners on a 3-yard run, while teammate Jamal Lee closed out the scoring with a 90-yard TD run.

### Bay 35, Firelands 20

BAY VILLAGE — Paul Garcia

had touchdown runs of 21 and 7 yards for the Falcons (2-3, 0-2 WSC) in West Shore Conference action.

Jared O'Keefe scored the first Firelands touchdown on a 3-yard run as the Falcons were victimized by two 25-yard fumble recovery returns and an 85-yard kickoff return.

### Brecksville 34, Midpark 7

BEREA — The Bees (3-2, 2-0 SWC) led 28-0 at halftime of a Southwestern Conference game that saw all six touchdowns scored via runs.

### Berea 14, Westlake 13

WESTLAKE — A missed extra-point kick after their first touchdown proved costly for the Demons (2-3, 0-2 SWC).

Jimmy Campbell had a 2-yard TD run for Westlake, while Scott Bishop tossed a 42-yard touchdown pass for the second touchdown for the Demons.

### Fremont Ross 41, Southview 7

FREMONT — Anthony Browning caught a 20-yard touchdown pass from Matthew Andujar for Southview's only touchdown.

## OBERLIN

From D1

Aaron James carried three straight times, the last time over the left side for 25 yards and the score. Erickson Andrews' kick put Oberlin up 13-3.

The Wildcats proved they're a gutsy team, too. With Sproue carrying six times for 62 yards, they marched to a third-quarter score with 3:36 remaining in the period. Tim Giesel's first failed conversion of the season left the score at 13-9 entering the final period.

Keystone's next drive stalled and when Giesel went back to punt on the first play of the fourth quarter, the snap sailed over his head. He was lucky to cover it at his 11. Four plays later James was in for his second score. Andrews' conversion put the Phoenix up 20-9.

But when it seemed the Phoenix was preparing to run out the clock, Harris was thrown for a big loss on fourth-and-1 at the Keystone 37. Minnich, completing passes of 37, 9 and 5 yards, marched his team down the field and then ran the ball in himself from the 6 with 4:12 left. A conversion pass to Matt Herb pulled the Wildcats to within a field goal at 20-17.

Giesel's onside kick was recovered at the Oberlin 30 and suddenly the game was very much in doubt. At that point the Phoenix defense rose to the occasion, holding Keystone to

just 5 yards on two possessions before Jeris Geiger pulled in an interception to secure the win.

"The focus of our kids is starting to show," McFarland said after his team improved to 4-1. "They're not panicking when something bad happens. I couldn't be any prouder."

And they're not getting down after a big loss.

"We had a lot of good practices and came together as a team this week," said Illinois-bound defensive end Hugh Thornton.

Coach Rob Clarico was obviously disappointed with the loss suffered by his up-and-down Wildcats (2-3).

"Good teams make their own breaks and right now we're not a very good team," Clarico said. "Oberlin was a lot stronger than we were and they controlled the line of scrimmage on both sides of the ball."

**THEY'RE SMART, TOO:** McFarland wanted to talk even more about his team's academic performance than its athletic performance Friday night. "Look at that sign right there," he said, pointing to a large sign on the school. "It says Oberlin is a school of excellence. That's really important to me. These kids have to get together at the study table every day at school. We hold our players to a 2.0 grade-point average, unlike any other school in the county. The focus in the classroom is starting to translate into focus in football."

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