



LOOKING AHEAD TO WEEK 5

North Olmsted at Amherst, Friday, 7:30 p.m.

It's only the second week of the league schedule, but this game should go a long way toward determining the Southwestern Conference champion.

Amherst, the No. 1 team in the C-T poll, edged Olmsted Falls 13-12 Friday night in the conference opener to improve to 4-0.

North Olmsted beat Berea 28-16 and is 3-1. The Eagles' only loss came at the hands of a tough Padua team in Week 2.

With Avon Lake and Olmsted Falls losers in the first week of conference play, the winner of the North Olmsted-Amherst game will have at least a one-game lead on the other three contenders from the area.

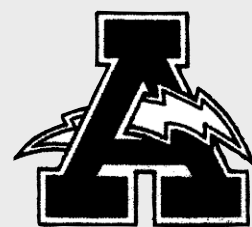
Brecksville, which beat Avon Lake on Friday, also looks to be in the title hunt.

Amherst struggled to a 4-6 finish last year, 3-4 in the SWC, but won at North Olmsted 32-13. The Eagles went 5-5 and 3-4.

Both teams have brighter outlooks in 2008.

Other games of interest in Week 5:

Olmsted Falls at Avon Lake (Thursday night); Keystone at Oberlin; Buckeye at Lutheran West; Rocky River at Avon.



BLACK RIVER 28

OBERLIN 8

O'Connors lead Pirates past Phoenix

Jim Jablonski

The Chronicle-Telegram

SULLIVAN — Everything is relative.

Black River proved it once again as their O'Connor family celebration turned into a horror show for Oberlin, which fell 28-8 in the teams' Patriot Athletic Conference opener.

The O'Connor boys — senior quarterback Anthony and sophomore running back Jake — combined on touchdown passes of 17, 36 and 40 yards.

Jake kicked four extra points and Anthony passed for 139 yards.

"They're good athletes and we're fortunate to have them," Black River coach Al Young said. "We were going to use alternate quarterbacks tonight but Anthony started pretty good and we thought we better stick with him."

It would have been hard to replace him after the quick start that saw him connect with Jake twice in the first quarter. Anthony found his

brother over the middle for a 17-yard scoring strike with less than four minutes gone.

"It was a post across the middle, a perfect pass," Jake said. "It felt good to catch a touchdown pass from my brother."

An Oberlin fumble set up Matt Jopeck's 14-yard touchdown run just 55 seconds later. Then, with 1:05 left in the first, Jake worked his way open on the left side and Anthony found him for a 36-yard touchdown.

For the second straight year, the Phoenix started the season 3-0 only to see its winning streak halted by the previously winless Pirates. The Oberlin players' nightmare was made worse by their own mistakes in the form of seven fumbles — four lost — seven penalties and two poor punts — one went into the back of a lineman for negative yardage.

"We were physical, we hit them, we stuffed them but we have to get more focused,"

Oberlin coach Dave McFarland said. "We just make too many mistakes. I couldn't be any more disappointed but we're getting better and I'm proud of the kids."

To its credit, the Phoenix responded quickly in the second quarter. Taking over at his own 36, quarterback Gilbert Harris fired a laser over the middle to Tim Hill who outraced three defenders for the score. Harris, who passed for 104 yards and rushed 19 times, took in the

2-point conversion. Oberlin moved into River territory two more times before the half but came away empty-handed.

Oberlin, down 28-8 late in the third, drove to Black River's 29 following a 27-yard connection from Harris to Hill. Dan Sas' hard sack of Harris helped end the final Phoenix threat.

BEST BAND IN THE COUNTY?

The Black River band performs a well-done script BR, a take on the similar feat performed by Ohio State's band each Saturday.

LUTHERAN WEST 21

WELLINGTON 14

Dukes suffer 2nd late loss

Matt Florjancic

The Chronicle-Telegram

WELLINGTON — It was a comeback the Buffalo Bills would be proud of.

Lutheran West was down two touchdowns and fumbled a Wellington kickoff back to the Dukes in the fourth quarter. However, the Longhorns stopped the Dukes on fourth-and-short inside the 1-yard line, then scored three touchdowns to claim a 21-14 victory in the Patriot Athletic Conference opener for both teams.

"It was just unbelievable," Lutheran West coach Dave Geye said. "I give all the credit to our kids — we kept telling them to keep believing. In the first half, a lot of penalties killed us on offense and Wellington moved the ball enough just to keep us out of scoring range. We'd get the ball and shoot ourselves again."

"In the second half, Wellington had that drive that ate up most of the third quarter. They get the ball right back and we have a huge goal-line stand down there to hold them."

The rally was eerily similar to the Dukes' loss in Week 3 when Edison erased a 26-7 fourth-quarter lead. Wellington coach Matt Stoll said the latest defeat did nothing for the Dukes' confidence.

"It's pretty low, at rock bottom right now," he said. "You lose two tough ones like that,

it's a tough pill to swallow. We're going to have to see what kind of character we have and bounce back because we have a season to play. They made the plays and we didn't."

The loss drops the Dukes to 0-4, while Lutheran West is 3-1 after rebounding from a Week 3 loss to Independence.

With 1:08 left, Wellington had the ball on its 38-yard line and ran an option to the right side. Steve Simonson rolled out, pitched the ball behind senior running back Jerry Herman and the Longhorns recovered.

Lutheran West quarterback Paul Fackler dropped back on first down and found Bo Heinemann open along the right sideline. Heinemann had slipped past the defender in wet and muddy conditions and hauled in the fade pass for the winning score.

"When we were able to get the inside kick (on the previous drive) and were able to score to tie it, we were playing to go to overtime," Geye said. "We wanted to hold them, go to overtime and see what happened."

After completing a 99-yard drive with 2:40 remaining in the game, Lutheran West tried the inside kick. Though it did not go the required 10 yards, the Dukes fumbled the football and the Longhorns' Sam Lempke recovered for a first-and-10 from the Wellington 36-yard line.



STEVE MANHEIM / CHRONICLE

Midview's Josiah Holt is tackled by Firelands' Nate Stack, left, and Matt Deichler.

MIDVIEW

From D1

Hagg's big-strike ability.

"Each time he did that we answered it," Albright said. "We kept storming back, which I like."

Whitesel got the final score of the night himself, weaving through the Firelands defense on a 9-yard run to put the game out of reach.

"We played real well at times," Firelands coach Todd Pooch said. "What we're preaching here is consistency. But we had a lot more positives in this game, and we're getting better."

The Falcons, who already have more victories this year than they had in their last three seasons combined, stopped the Middies on their drive following Hagg's second TD. Firelands reached Midview's 33-yard line before being stopped on fourth down.

"We're going to turn this program around," Pooch said. "Our team could have rolled over when it was 27-7, but they battled all game. There's no quit in this bunch."

SACK CITY: One positive Firelands took out of Friday's loss was a strong pass rush. The Falcons sacked Whitesel four times for 44 yards. Jacob Earl (twice), Jake Niece and Matt Deichler got credit for bringing down Whitesel behind the line.

Contact Steve Byrne at 329-7135 or ctsports@chroniclet.com.

KEYSTONE 22

COLUMBIA 7

Sprouse starts strong

Jerry Rombach

The Chronicle-Telegram

LAGRANGE — With Keystone's Jim Reid and Joe Keger sidelined with injuries, junior Cory Sprouse got the starting nod at running back against Columbia on Friday night.

Sprouse took his first carry 68 yards for a touchdown and the Wildcats rolled to a 22-7 victory in the Patriot Athletic Conference opener for both teams. He finished with 146 yards on 20 carries (7.3 yards per carry) and ran for a pair of conversions.

Will he start the Wildcats' next game?

Coach Rob Clarico just looked over at him and nodded with a big smile on his face.

"Corry has a lot of ability," Clarico said. "Watching him get that touchdown on the game's very first offensive play felt good."

The coach, though, wasn't pleased that his Wildcats (3-1) were shut out the entire second half after carrying a 22-0 lead into the locker room.

"I think we came out flat," he said of the second half.

Keystone scored its second touchdown on a 16-yard pass play from Tyler Minnich to Kyle Smith with 8:00 left in the second quarter and added an insurance score when Casey Conrad picked up a Columbia fumble and rambled 19 yards

for a touchdown.

Columbia (0-4) earned its lone score on a fumble return as Ryan Sevaro scooped up the ball and went 30 yards in the third quarter.

"We made strides tonight," Columbia coach Jason Ward said. "I really liked the way we played defensively, even in the first half. It was our best game of the year even though we made some mistakes. My hat is off to Keystone. I know they've had some injuries."

Sprouse admitted he was really excited about his first start.

"That 68-yard run was my longest, although I did have a 67-yarder in eighth grade," he said. "It was a nice hole I ran through and I just took off. All the way down the field I kept thinking somebody will catch me from behind."

While Columbia showed some bright moments defensively, especially in the second half, Keystone was also tough on the Raiders, holding them to just 69 yards rushing and 58 yards passing.

DOUBLE DUTY: Columbia freshman defensive tackle Kyle Pratt had double duty Friday night. In addition to being suited up to play football, he played trumpet for the Columbia band's halftime show. Actually he was the only band member in uniform during the marching routines. The rest of the band was in street clothes while wearing green raincoats.

ROUNDUP

Eagles fly by Warriors in WSC

FAIRVIEW PARK — Ryan O'Rourke threw four first-quarter touchdown passes to lead Avon to a 43-12 victory over Fairview in West Shore Conference action on Friday night.

Garrett Gronowski caught two of O'Rourke's TD tosses, and Matt Logan and Brett Jensen were on the receiving end of the other two.

Patrick Furnas returned an interception 33 yards for a fifth Avon touchdown, while Alex Tabar's 1-yard run closed out the Eagles (4-0, 1-0 WSC) scoring in the second quarter.

Clearview 14, Buckeye 7

MALLET CREEK — James Washington caught a 57-yard

touchdown pass from Zach Anderson, and Anthony Hitchens had a 3-yard TD run for the Clippers (4-0, 1-0 Patriot Athletic Conference) in a PAC game. Hitchens finished the game with 32 carries and 182 of the winners' 191 rushing yards.

Brooklyn 35, Brookside 7
SHEFFIELD — The Hurricanes (3-1, 1-0 PAC) led 21-0 at halftime and 35-0 after three quarters before the Cardinals 0-4, 0-1) scored their touchdown in the fourth quarter.

North Olmsted 28, Berea 16

BEREA — Nick Gessner had touchdown runs of 15 and 43 yards for the Eagles (3-1, 1-0 Southwestern Conference), who overcame a 10-0 halftime deficit in SWC action. Trevor Huber and Joe Kaczmarek intercepted

Berea (2-2, 0-1) passes in the fourth quarter.

Midpark 13, Westlake 6

WESTLAKE — Jimmy Campbell had a 3-yard touchdown run in the first quarter for the Demons (2-2, 0-1 SWC).

Admiral King 37, Sandusky 6

SANDUSKY — John Gerber had three rushing touchdowns for the Admirals (3-1), who amassed a total of 16 rushing first downs and 295 rushing yards in non-conference action.

Cleveland Heights 74, Southview 28

LORAIN — Aaron Serrano and Ricky Earl had rushing touchdowns for the Saints (1-3), while teammates Zeno Inchurreui and Joshua Biber caught TD passes.

NORTH RIDGEVILLE 22
ROCKY RIVER 9

Rangers run by Pirates

Ron Nenadal

The Chronicle-Telegram

NORTH RIDGEVILLE — North Ridgeville took a step in the right direction Friday night. In fact, the Rangers took a lot of steps in the right direction as they defeated Rocky River — the two-time defending West Shore Conference champions — 22-9.

On a night made for the ground attack, the Rangers rolled up 264 rushing yards while the Pirates managed a meager 32.

Trailing 9-7 at the half, the Rangers coaches put together a second-half game plan that led to North Ridgeville's total domination of the Pirates. While the Rangers defense allowed just 1 yard rushing and 32 yards passing, the offense put together a 14-play, 80-yard drive to open the half. Derek Lozano scored from the 3-yard line and the Rangers took a 14-9 lead.

North Ridgeville forced Rocky River into a three-and-out, then put together another 14-play drive — but didn't score — to eat up the clock and keep the ball away from the potent Pirates attack.

Another three-and-out led to a third long drive — 11 plays, 62 yards — that ended in an unusual manner.

With the ball on the 1-yard line, Rocky River attempted to stop a dive play by sending one of its defenders over the top of the line. The move caused the Rangers center to fumble the snap and offensive tackle John Howells recovered in the end zone for a touchdown. Shane Friend ran in the conversion.

When asked what changes the coaches made in the locker room at halftime, North Ridgeville coach Jeff Riesen gave credit to assistant Ray McLaughlin.

"When we came into the locker room, you could tell there were a lot of people upset," Riesen said. "I told everybody to be quiet and I asked, 'Hey, what's the score?' and they replied, '9-7.' Some people were acting like we were behind by two touchdowns.

"Then (McLaughlin) wrote on the board ... finish. That's something we haven't been doing. We said let's go. We have a second half so let's go out and finish the game."

And finish they did. The Rangers ran 39 plays during the second half while Rocky River only ran 15.

OUCH: The North Ridgeville running corps was a little short Friday night as junior tailback Taylor Abraham was watching from the sideline. Abraham fractured his collarbone early in the third quarter against Midpark last week, but did not realize he suffered the injury and continued to play. The coaching staff was unaware of the injury until the following Monday when he arrived at school with his arm in a sling.

Contact Ron Nenadal at 329-7135 or ctsports@chroniclet.com.