

LOOKING AHEAD TO WEEK 9

Avon at North Ridgeville,
Friday, 7:30 p.m.
WDLW 1380-AM

North Ridgeville suffered a difficult setback Friday night, falling 18-13 to Vermilion. But the

Rangers still have plenty to play for.

Starting with the West Shore Conference championship.

Despite the loss, which snapped a four-game win streak, North Ridgeville (5-3, 4-1) remains directly in the mix — just a game back of unbeaten Avon in the WSC. (Vermilion is also a game back at 4-1.)

But the Rangers will have their work cut out for them as they try to upset the Eagles, who improved to 8-0, 5-0 WSC with a 55-20 win over

Firelands on Friday night.

The Eagles have outscored their opponents 348-124 and are ranked second in the C-T's Top 10 poll.

Last year's matchup between the rivals was a tight one, with Avon prevailing 14-12 over North Ridgeville at home.

Other games of interest in Week 9: Oberlin at Clearview; Brecksville at Amherst; Elyria Catholic at Trinity.



AMHERST 35

MIDPARK 19

Comets hang onto ball, perfect mark

Joel Hammond

The Chronicle-Telegram

AMHERST — Amherst coach Kevin Fell had seen enough of Jamaine Cook, Midpark's all-anything spark plug of a running back.

There he was on tape, rushing for 1,168 yards and scoring 18 touchdowns through the Meteors' first seven games.

There he was Friday night, taking a second-quarter screen pass 49 yards to set up Midpark's first touchdown. And there he was, on the opening kickoff of the second half, squirting untouched through the kick coverage to bring the Meteors within two, 21-19.

Fell had a simple solution: Don't let Cook touch the ball. The Comets held the ball for 19 minutes in the second half and shut out Midpark after Cook's return, improving to 8-0 and 4-0 in the Southwestern Conference with a 35-19 victory.

"(Possessing the ball) was exactly what we had to do," Fell said. "Our strategy was to not give them the ball. With teams like that, you're just not comfortable. You have to be ahead of them and keep the ball. Cook's a great, great football player."

To accomplish that goal, Amherst running backs Shane Bockey and Brandon Morgan shouldered a heavy load: The

duo combined for 362 yards on 55 carries, as the Comets threw only four passes and ran on their final 17 plays from scrimmage. After Cook's runback, the Comets marched 80 yards in 13 plays, took 6:10 off the clock and stretched their lead on Morgan's 26-yard touchdown run. Midpark, unable to ride Cook while trailing, moved to Amherst's 34 but failed on fourth down.

After trading punts — true to the second half's theme, Amherst held the ball for 4:48 before punting, while Midpark went three-and-out — Amherst applied the finishing touches with a 14-play, seven-minute drive that fittingly

ended with a 4-yard Bockey score for the final margin.

Bockey and Morgan say the Comets aren't looking ahead to a possible playoff berth or the team's final two games — at home against Brecksville and at Avon Lake, both a game behind Amherst in the SWC standings. The Comets entered Friday's action third in the Division I, Region 2 computer standings.

Coincidentally, it was Midpark that taught the Comets a lesson.

"We've looked ahead in past years, thinking we could go win games ahead of time," said Bockey, who gained 189 yards on 35 carries and scored three

touchdowns. "We looked past opponents last year, like Midpark, who was 0-7, and we lost (38-26). We know we have to go one game at a time."

Morgan, who ran for 173 yards on 20 carries, agreed.

"We're always thinking play-offs, but to get there, we know it's one at a time," he said. "We don't look at the weeks ahead. We look at the game we have this week, try to get a win."

Fell said the Comets' early lead also was crucial, as the Meteors offense never established a rhythm. Amherst jumped out to a 14-0 lead after its first two possessions: Bockey capped the Comets'

10-play opening drive with a 3-yard run, and had a 60-yard run on Amherst's next possession to set up Andrew Eliopoulos' 2-yard touchdown.

KEEP RUNNING: Bockey credited the Comet offensive line and admitted to being a little sore after his career-high 35 carries. "(The linemen) blocked great, and when they do that, it's easy for me," Fell said he had no intention of giving anyone 35 carries, and that Bockey told him during the third quarter that he was A-OK. "We wanted to throw the ball, and Midpark just wouldn't let us," Fell said. "When they ran that kickoff back, I wasn't going to give them the ball back. Shane's a crazy man. He'd run it 50 times."

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MIDVIEW 42 | FAIRVIEW 21

AVON 55

FIRELANDS 20

Middies regroup

John Taylor

The Chronicle-Telegram

GRAFTON — Mired in the midst of a three-game losing streak, Midview coach Bill Albright decided there was only one thing to do.

Start over.

That plan set in motion five days ago bore fruit early, late and often Friday night, as the Middies smash-mouthed their way to an early 21-point lead, then cruised to a comfortable 42-21 win over West Shore Conference foe Fairview.

The win bumped the Middies to 4-4 overall and 2-3 in the WSC, while the Warriors fell to 2-6 and 2-3.

"We accomplished what we set out to do at the beginning of the week," Albright said. "We just decided to start over, built it back up from scratch. With all of the injuries, we're kind of a M*A*S*H unit right now. But I'm proud of them for responding the way they did."

One prominent patient in Midview's infirmary, running back Josiah Holt, returned to the playing field with a vengeance after a month filled with injuries and missed playing time. After missing last week's loss to Avon, the junior back rushed for 170 yards and a touchdown in the first half en route to a 229-yard, three-touchdown performance.

Holt's 2-yard TD run late in the first quarter pushed the Middies' lead to 14-0, while a pair of TD runs in the third quarter — the first from 8 yards out, the second from 6 — stretched the lead to 35-14 with 3:09 left in the period, and effectively iced the game.

Needless to say, Albright was happy to see his star back make his return.

"He was outstanding," Albright said. "He made some great reads out there, and he has great vision. It was just great to have him back. But he'll be the first to credit his offensive line."

And that he did.

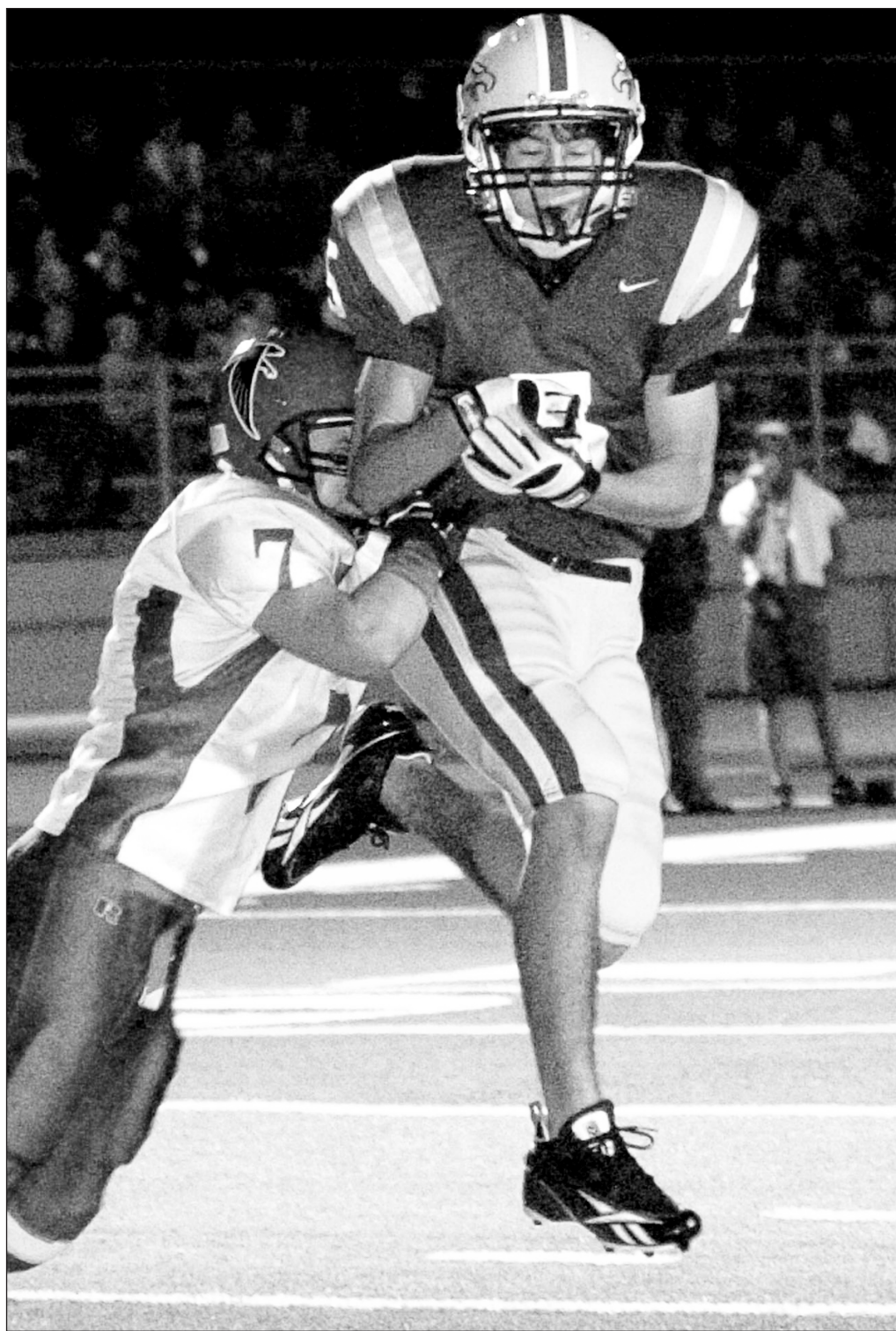
"That's it right there, the offensive line. They were amazing," said Holt, who has battled collar bone and ankle injuries the past couple of weeks. "That was a great job by them, opening up holes."

Holt was part of a unit that rolled up 340 yards on the ground and 463 yards in total offense, both highs for 2008. Junior quarterback Brett Whitesel, himself fighting his way through injuries, was very solid, as he threw for 123 yards and ran for 38 yards and a 4-yard score that gave the Middies a 21-0 lead in the second quarter.

"I just can't say enough about these kids. They've hung in there," Albright said.

POINT MONGERS: The 42 points Midview scored accounted for a season high. The Middies' previous best was 34, which they scored twice, once in a victory over Firelands and once in a loss to Vermilion.

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LINDA MURPHY / CHRONICLE

Avon's R.J. Kauffman makes a touchdown catch in front of Firelands' Zack Zachary.

Eagles streak to win

Chris Assenheimer

The Chronicle-Telegram

AVON — Firelands is a better team, already winning more games this year than it has combined over the past two seasons. Still, the Falcons haven't improved nearly enough to deal with what Avon is bringing these days.

Firelands was the latest casualty consumed by the high-powered Eagles, who rolled to a 55-20 victory Friday to remain unbeaten at 8-0 overall and 5-0 in the West Shore Conference.

Led by the usual suspects — quarterback Ryan O'Rourke and running back Marquis Harrell — Avon reached a season-high point total and racked up 40-plus points for the seventh straight time since the season opener.

"They're explosive," understated Firelands coach Todd Pooch, whose team fell to 2-6, 0-5 in the conference. "They've got a lot of great athletes. O'Rourke is an amazing quarterback. They've got a very nice ballclub. They're well-coached and well-disciplined."

"They're just good."

The Falcons discovered as much early and often.

Avon scored touchdowns on each of its six first-half possessions, including a 70-yard return of the opening kickoff by senior Matt Logan.

All three of O'Rourke's touchdown passes came in the first 24 minutes — two of them to senior Brett Jensen — while Harrell (110 yards on 13 carries) scored two of his three rushing touchdowns prior to the break.

It all added up to a 41-0 half-time advantage — the kind of start Avon coach Mike Elder was hoping for, with his Eagles set to travel to North Ridgeville on Friday for a pivotal WSC showdown.

"I was a little concerned they might look ahead to next week," said Elder, who employed his pair of offensive catalysts for just one second-half series, Harrell scoring from 30 yards out to put Avon in front 48-0. "They didn't. They stayed focused."

Virtually all of Firelands' offense came with Avon's starting defense on the side-

line.

The Falcons, who amassed just 28 yards and one first down in the opening half, crossed midfield for the first time with five minutes left in the third quarter. Conversely, the Eagles punted just once — with nine minutes remaining in the game.

Another sizzling performance from its offense and a stingy effort from its defense leave Avon on the verge of producing a perfect season, with Ridgeville, which already owns one conference loss, next in line.

"If we win, we'll get a share of the conference championship and can punch our ticket to the playoffs," Elder said. "Those were two of our goals."

MERCY RULE: With Avon in front 41-0 at intermission, a decision was made to run the clock pretty much continuously in the second half. Though it was designed to benefit Firelands, it actually hurt the Falcons, who scored all of their points in the second half, including 13 in the fourth quarter.

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ROUNDUP

Mansnerus runs for 369, record

BEREA — Mike Mansnerus set a school record with 369 yards rushing — third best in Lorain County history — as Avon Lake rallied from a fourth-quarter deficit to beat Berea 36-25 in the Southwestern Conference on Friday night.

Mansnerus' rushing total was behind only Lorain Catholic's Zack Warner (438 yards in 1998) and Amherst's Alex Knipp (375 in 2005) on the all-time county list.

Mansnerus ran for four touchdowns and threw a 39-yard halfback option pass to Kevin Morrisette for a fifth score to carry the Shoremen (6-2 overall, 4-1 SWC).

Derrick Paster threw three touchdown passes for Berea (4-4, 2-3).

Admiral King 44, Warrensville Heights 14

LORAIN — Anthony Harrison ran for 157 yards and three touchdowns as Admiral King broke open a close game with 24 points in the fourth quarter to beat Warrensville Heights in a Lake Erie League game. The Admirals are 5-3 overall and 1-1 in the LEL Erie Division.

Olmsted Falls 48, Westlake 28

WESTLAKE — Brandon Russo ran for four touchdowns and Olmsted Falls outlasted Westlake in a Southwestern Conference game. The Bulldogs improved to 3-5 overall and 2-3 in the SWC while Westlake fell to 2-6, 0-5.

Brecksville 14, North Olmsted 0

BRECKSVILLE — North Olmsted turned the ball over three times and couldn't put anything together offensively in a Southwestern Conference loss to Brecksville. The Eagles (4-4 overall, 2-3 SWC) had a chance at a fourth-

KEEPING TRACK

Most yards rushing in a game, Lorain County

438 — Zack Warner, Lorain Catholic, vs. Marion Catholic, 1998
375 — Alex Knipp, Amherst, vs. Olmsted Falls, 2005
369 — Mike Mansnerus, Avon Lake, vs. Berea, 2008
355 — Dave Dorinski, Clearview, vs. Avon, 1976
354 — Alex Knipp, Amherst, vs. Brecksville, 2005
348 — Jeff Hughes, Southview, vs. Lakewood, 2002
347 — Devin Martin, Oberlin, vs. Sts. John & Paul, 2008
339 — Bobby Doyle, Avon Lake, vs. Elyria, 2004
332 — Raymond Harris, Admiral King, vs. Lorain, 1988
329 — Matt Wilhelm, Elyria Catholic, vs. Trinity, 1999
327 — Jon Senters, Lorain Catholic, vs. Bedford Chancel, 1993
325 — Andy Ogles, Wellington, vs. Monroeville, 2002
324 — Brett Boron, Midview, vs. Wellington, 1999
313 — Jeff Strauch, Avon Lake, vs. North Olmsted, 2000
309 — Alex Knipp, Amherst, vs. Fairview, 2004
305 — John Perretti, Avon Lake, vs. Olmsted Falls, 1993
305 — Jeff Hughes, Southview, vs. Sandusky, 2000
303 — Tony Godbolt Jr., Elyria, vs. Vermilion, 1989
293 — Tyrone Nelson, Elyria West, vs. Oberlin, 1997
287 — Bryan Thomas, Elyria Catholic, vs. Brookville, in state title game 1976
287 — Greg Jones, Elyria West, vs. Columbia, 1976

quarter touchdown but a pass was intercepted at the Brecksville 1-yard line by Drew Bandsuh of the Bees (5-3, 4-1).

Brooklyn 29, Columbia 7

COLUMBIA TWP. — Travis Burgess scored on runs of 71, 62 and 58 yards to lead the Hurricanes (4-3 overall, 2-2 Patriot Athletic Conference).

Brett Doult caught a 4-yard touchdown pass from John Banyasz and Brandon Heidinger ran well for Columbia (1-6, 1-3).

Rocky River 21, Bay 14

BAY VILLAGE — Rocky River evened its record at 4-4 with a win over Bay in the West Shore.

The Pirates (2-3 WSC) came back from a 7-6 halftime deficit. Bay (2-6, 1-4) was led by Brendan Rehor's two touchdown passes.

SAILORS

From D1

found an open Dallas Burt in the back corner of the end zone. Mees was being hit as he lofted the ball. Jordan Akdogan added the extra point, and the Rangers were still in the game.

Vermilion added its third touchdown with 6:18 left in the third quarter as Justin Turner capped off a 94-yard, seven-play drive to put the Sailors ahead 18-7. The big play was a 42-yard run down the sidelines by Jon Hawkins, who carried the ball from the Sailor 20 to the Ranger 35.

Although they were down by 11, the Rangers still had opportunities to pull out the win, but a combination of the Vermilion defense and self-inflicted wounds caused them to squander all but one chance to score.

An interception in the end zone killed one drive and then the strangest play of the night cost Ridgeville another score.

Starting the fourth quarter, North Ridgeville had the ball at the Vermilion 14. After gaining 13 yards on two rushes, the Rangers had second-and-goal at the 1. Mees handed off to Shane Friend, who appeared to

score, but no signal was given.

As the whistles blew, Vermilion's Derek Hoebing was running free with the ball that he had taken from Friend's hands. The whistle had blown and the steal was allowed, but the Sailors were given the ball on the 13, apparently the spot that Hoebing had reached when the whistle blew.

"We came in with the plan to stop the run and force them to throw the ball and our defensive backs would make some plays. And they did," Horvath said. "Offensively we wanted to spread them out, but they started bringing some heat so we started running the ball and controlling the clock a little more. We always try to go in and run the ball and tonight we did in the first half."

Now North Ridgeville has to get ready to host Avon and hope to force a three-way tie for first place.

BIG DECOY, BIG IMPACT: Although Vermilion's Derek Hoebing, a 6-foot-6 tight end, is an imposing target, he was a non-factor on offense as Vermilion went to its other receivers. It was his defense that was more important as he hurried the quarterback several times and stopped North Ridgeville's outside running game.