

# GOAL LINE

## THE WEEKLY AREA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PREVIEW SECTION

### Division VII State Championship Preview

# INDIANS READY FOR WILDCATS

By COLIN FOSTER  
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A budding football program (Fort Recovery) will face an already-established state power (Mogadore) for the Division VII state championship.

The Indians haven't been intimidated in games against tradition-rich programs the past two seasons and they won't be when they step onto the FieldTurf of Ohio Stadium at 3 p.m. on Friday.

Niekamp's bunch turned in A+ performances in the regional final and state semifinal — scoring impressive victories over higher-ranked teams. First, the eighth-ranked Indians dethroned defending Division VI state champ/ fifth-ranked Minster 33-21 and then they handed fourth-ranked McComb a 35-14 loss.

“(State ranking) doesn't make a lot of difference to us,” Fort Recovery coach Brent Niekamp said. “Part of that comes from the challenges we've faced all year in playing in the MAC and playing against teams that are ranked in the state, playing against teams that are playoff-caliber teams pretty much week in/week out. Nothing's ever given. ... The last two games we played in, the score may have indicated one thing but they were not easy games — I promise you that. We're getting ready for another really tough challenge. We feel like if we play really well, we'll have a chance to win.”



Mark Pummell/The Daily Standard

**The passing of Caleb Martin has been key for Fort Recovery's run to their first-ever state championship game.**

Fort Recovery has been good in all phases throughout this playoff run. The offensive line has opened holes to free Will Homan for 607 rushing yards and nine touchdowns in the last four victories for the Indians. On the season, the sophomore running back has 1,094 yards and 13 scores. Junior quarterback Caleb Martin has been on point in his second season as starter, completing 151-of-270 passes for 2,021 yards and 17 touchdowns. His favorite weapon, Wes Wenning, has caught 66 passes for 1,022 yards and eight TDs.

See DIVISION VII, page 2B

### Division V State Championship Preview

# CAYS, CRUSADERS READY FOR ROUND TWO

By GARY R. RASBERRY  
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It will be a rematch at Ohio Stadium on Friday as Coldwater takes on Canton Central Catholic in the Division V state championship game at 10 a.m.

However, it will be two different-looking teams from last year's 62-21 effort that gave the Cavaliers their third straight state title and fifth in program history.

Last season's title game featured a battle of athletic quarterbacks in Coldwater's Brody Hoying, who rushed for 236 yards and four touchdowns, and CCC's Jake Bocuti, both of whom shared the state's offensive player of the year award.

With both quarterbacks having graduated, the teams have shaped their teams differently.

“It's kind of similar to us,” Coldwater coach Chip Otten said. “They do spread the wealth a little bit more than last year with 4-5 good receivers, a quarterback that can run and all the jet sweeps. Spreading the wealth makes it difficult on who to focus on defensively.”

“I think they're a little more diverse this year,” CCC coach Jeff Lindesmith said. “Our kids are familiar with how they play. They taught us a lesson last year.”

Dan Platek is at quarterback this season for the Crusaders. Platek has thrown for 1,592 yards and nine touchdowns in the run-heavy CCC offense.

Leading the running game is Justin Ditty. The 5-8, 180-pound senior has rushed for 1,126 yards and 23 touchdowns this season. Platek has added 452 yards rushing and three scores and John Colangelo, who had a touchdown and 53 yards of offense in the loss to Coldwater last season, has 390 yards and eight scores. Colangelo is the top receiver for Platek, snagging 39 passes for 368 yards and a touchdown. Colangelo also has five return touchdowns

Nick Wenning/The Daily Standard

**Coldwater's Aaron Harlamert looks to help the Cavaliers win their fourth straight state title.**

See DIVISION V, page 2B



### Division VII State Championship Preview

# FLYERS, HORNETS HAVE PLENTY OF MUTUAL RESPECT

By COLIN FOSTER  
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Tradition vs. tradition. Talent vs. talent. Tiger vs. Tim.

Marion Local and Kirtland for the Division VI state championship — it's a matchup that's long overdue.

It'll finally happen on Saturday as the Flyers and Hornets — two of the most storied small-school football programs in Ohio — are scheduled for a 10 a.m. date at Ohio Stadium in Columbus.

Marion Local is vying for a fifth consecutive state title — a remarkable feat considering the number of talented players who graduated from last year's team.

“We graduated just a tremendous senior class last year that had started for three years,” Marion Local coach Tim Goodwin said. “We kind of had to rebuild this team. We kind of had some younger guys who we liked but we were pretty inexperienced to start with. We had a rough-go early

on, some bumps in the road.”

The road wasn't too bumpy last week as the Flyers handed Tinora a 34-10 loss in the state semifinal.

Kirtland's postseason resume can only be topped by that of Marion Local's. The Hornets are appearing in their fifth straight championship game and trying to claim a third title in that span. Kirtland already knows all about the Midwest Athletic Conference but it has never faced Marion Local.

“We just have tons of respect for Kirtland,” Goodwin said. “Our kids are going to be excited because they thrive on competition and I'm sure the Kirtland kids are the same way.”

The Hornets won their first title in the five-year run with a 28-7 victory over Coldwater in the 2011 Division V championship game. The Cavaliers got a little payback the following season with a 10-9 victory over Kirtland. In the 2014 Division VI final, Minster erased a late deficit to defeat the favored Kirtland 46-42 at Ohio Stadium.

Kirtland coach Tiger LaVerde knows his team faces a completely different challenge this week than it did against Minster in 2014.

“They're totally different teams,” LaVerde said. “Minster threw the ball almost every single play against us last year. Marion has some good running backs and they're very good up front. They execute extremely well and they run the ball very well. They throw the ball well, too. That's why they're one of the best teams in Ohio — they execute whatever plays called and they do it very well.”

Marion Local and Kirtland were each hit hard by graduation. Both have reloaded, worked hard and remained the class of small-school football.

“I think football is kind of a delayed-gratification sport for a lot of kids,” Goodwin said. “We have kids every year who don't play a lot until their senior year. I think in other places they would probably quit and do something else, but here at Marion Local and at places like

Kirtland, they stick it out. They play JV as juniors and their senior years, they're ready to go. They know the systems and they have great years.”

“We've had some talented kids who are playing Division I football right now. This team's different,” LaVerde said. “We don't have the D-I guys anymore. We just have a bunch of great kids who work hard and they love each other and they are playing very well right now. They believe in themselves.”

The Hornets' playoff path began with a 49-0 thumping of Western Reserve. They defeated Brookfield 27-17 in the regional semifinal and then Cuyahoga Heights 34-13 in the final.

Defensive back Peter Gabor helped Kirtland secure a spot in the state final by intercepting Grandview Heights' QB Andre Readey in the end zone late in the fourth quarter for a 13-9 victory.

Kirtland returned only three

See DIVISION VI, page 2B



Mark Pummell/The Daily Standard

**Marion's Hunter Wilker, 21, looks to finish his high school football career with his fourth state football title.**



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Good Luck to the Coldwater Cavaliers, Marion Local Flyers and Fort Recovery Indians at the OHSAA State Football Championships.



