



WESTMICHIGANOKSPORTS.COM & 96.1
HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL WEST MICHIGAN AREA TOP TEN: Playoffs - Week #1



BRET BAKITA

1. Unity Christian - (9-0) Congrats to Coach Tibbe and the Sadlers on a perfect regular season after not even qualifying for the playoffs last year at (3-6)! This has been an incredible story all season long, and with Mona Shores losing last Friday night, I have to move up U.C. to #1 this week!

2. Mona Shores - (8-1) I know that the Sailors have played an incredible non-conference schedule this year, and to play Toledo Central Catholic as close as they did is saying something about how good this Sailors' team really is! A rematch with Byron Center in the Div. 2 District final or a match-up with unbeaten Northview will be worth the price of admission!!

3. Byron Center - (8-1) Great regular season for Coach Cisco and the Bulldogs with a big win over Muskegon two weeks ago! Now they have a tough playoff opener against the unbeaten and OK-Black division champs - Northview!!

4. Zeeland West - (8-1) Hard to believe that the Dux and B.C. just above them are (8-1) this season and not OK-Conference division champs. That shows you how good the division realignment was this year for the football season!

5. Hudsonville - (8-1) What's in the water in Hudsonville this Fall? Great bounce back years for both the Eagles and the Crusaders, and they are both division champions and I think the teams' to beat in their respective playoff divisions in West Michigan!

6. Northview - (9-0) EGR, GR Catholic Central, Holland Christian, FHN....they keep adding to the football history books this season for the Wildcats, but they have a tough playoff draw in Division 2 falling in the same district with Mona Shores & B.C.!

7. Rockford - (7-2) - The Rams would love to get a rematch with OK-Red champ Hudsonville in the district final, but first things first....another rematch with the Dawgs of Grandville and "Tank" Terry!

8. Forest Hills Central - (7-2) The Rangers are quietly just collecting wins and getting better as a team because they have a state championship to defend! Could we get a playoff rematch of Zeeland West and FHC down the road again this year in Division 3?

9. Belding - (8-1) Monty Price and the Black Knights are rolling....the outright OK-Silver champs are riding an 8-game winning streak, and they are averaging 45 points per game on offense!

10. West Catholic - (6-3) The Falcons played a very tough schedule this year against bigger schools, and now it will pay dividends in the playoffs because I think they can make a run in Division 5!



JASON HUTTON

1 Unity Christian (9-0): I can't hold the Sadlers back from the top any longer after their impressive win at previously unbeaten Notre Dame Prep. They are now the favorite to win it all in division 4.

2 Mona Shores (8-1): The Sailors lost last Friday, but should still be considered one of the favorites in Division 2.

3 Hudsonville (8-1): The Eagles ride an 8-game winning streak into the postseason where they will have to bear two conference foes for a second time to claim their first district title since 2019.

4 Byron Center (8-1): The Bulldogs are part of one of the toughest districts in the state of Michigan that includes 3 of the top 9 playoff point getters in Division 2.

5 Zeeland West (8-1): The Dux have to be considered one of the top contenders in Division 3, but are not even a top seed in their district. That honor went to St. Joseph (8-1).

6 Rockford (7-2): For the first time in a long time the Rams are not unbeaten when the postseason starts and not a top district seed, I'm not so sure this doesn't work in their favor either.

7 Northview (9-0): The Wildcats are having arguably the best season in school history and their reward is a trip to Byron Center to start the playoffs. It's daunting, but Northview has been proving people wrong all year.

8 Forest Hills Central (7-2): The defending state champs in Division 3 are the number 1 seed in their district and the playoffs start with a rematch from last Friday with EGR.

9 West Catholic (6-3): The Falcons are the top seed in their Division 5 region, with a potential rivalry showdown looming in the district final against GR Catholic Central.

10 Grandville (5-4): The Bulldogs finished the regular season strong and they will get another shot at Rockford in the opening round of the Playoffs Friday night.



TOM KENDRA

1. Hudsonville Unity Christian (9-0) - Now the whole state knows about UC power. The Crusaders roll into unbeaten Pontiac Notre Dame, which had a week off to prepare, and put up 43 points in a convincing win.

2. Mona Shores (8-1) - Not my favorite term, but if there ever was a “good loss,” the Sailors’ 14-13 heartbreaker against Toledo Central Catholic was it. The Sailors came out relatively healthy, will still have home-field advantage for the first three playoff rounds, and never want to experience that losing feeling again.

3. Hudsonville (8-1) - The most impressive thing to me about the Eagles is their consistency. Hudsonville came to play every single week, which is what it takes to go undefeated in the O-K Red.

4. Byron Center (8-1) - Isaac Lee and his teammates are salivating over another shot at Mona Shores, after losing by two points earlier this season. But the Bulldogs can’t get ahead of themselves, with a home showdown against unbeaten Northview up next.

5. Zeeland West (8-1) - Perhaps the most battle-tested team in the state entering the postseason are the Dux, who rallied behind seniors Trey Sloothaak and Keaton Hendricks to upend a very good West Catholic team.

6. Rockford (7-2) - After a midseason malaise, it appears that Rockford is back to being Rockford. The Rams have now won four in a row heading into a rematch with rival Grandville.

7. Northview (9-0) - Three straight hard-fought wins give the Wildcats their first unbeaten regular season since 1970. Their reward? Perhaps the toughest district in the state, starting with a trip to Byron Center to face an 8-1 Bulldogs squad.

8. Forest Hills Central (7-2) - The defending Division 3 state champions have a new coach and a bunch of new starters, but they are looking very similar to last year’s team at the moment - coming off a 24-0 shutout of East Grand Rapids.

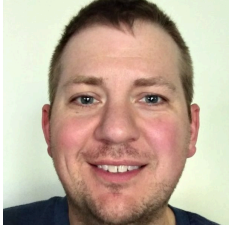
9. Forest Hills Eastern (7-2) - Senior quarterback Brendan Thompson and senior running back Max Ferrick have powered the Hawks back into the Top 10 entering the postseason.

10. Grandville (5-4) - Remember when Grandville was 0-3? Me either. I think Rockford could think of a few other teams it would rather play in the postseason than Jayden Terry and the Bulldogs.

Honorable Mention

West Catholic (6-3)

Lowell (7-2)



BUCK GENO

#1. Muskegon Mona Shores (8-1) – facing perhaps their biggest challenge this season, the Sailors fell 14-13 to Toledo (OH) Central Catholic in a marquee interstate matchup. A failed 2-point conversion with 2:23 left in the game was the difference. Now Shores prepares for their playoff run, which will be as a #1 seed in the region.

#2. Hudsonville Unity Christian (9-0) – there are no teams that the Crusaders are afraid to face, and after a convincing 43-21 victory over previously undefeated Pontiac Notre Dame Prep the entire state has been put on notice. Unity will now get ready to make a playoff run in Division 4 where they are the odds-on favorite to win the title.

#3. Byron Center (8-1) – a back-and-forth affair against visiting Morris (IL) ended with the Bulldogs pulling away 48-28 after leading 28-7 in the 1st half. All eyes are on a potential 2nd round rematch with Mona Shores in Division 2.

#4. Hudsonville (8-1) – an exclamation point on the Eagles' 2024 OK-Red title was the 46-8 win over West Ottawa on Friday. Now the playoffs begin with what project to be OK-Red rematches in the districts as a date in the regionals with #1 Howell looms for the winner.

#5. Zeeland West (8-1) – the Dux beat fellow Top 10 resident West Catholic in a 34-20 comeback victory on Thursday, and head into what projects to be a rematch of the Bird Bowl with cross-street rival Zeeland East in Round 1 of the playoffs.

#6. Rockford (7-2) – closing out the season strong with a 45-27 victory over East Kentwood, the Rams now look towards a rematch of Week 3 when Grandville returns to Carlson-Munger Stadium for a winner-take-all playoff game.

#7. Northview (9-0) – Northview held off a gallant effort from a Forest Hills Northern team that needed a win to get into the playoffs. The 28-26 victory gives the Wildcats their 3rd undefeated regular season in school history – they now look to play Byron Center in a Division 2 district that is arguably the toughest in this division and perhaps the whole 256-team bracket.

#8. Forest Hills Central (7-2) – the Ranger defense continues its strong play as they shutout East Grand Rapids 24-0. Those same two teams project to meet again this week in the 1st round of the playoffs in what is a wide-open Division 3 field.

#9. West Catholic (6-3) – the aforementioned Falcons loss to end the regular season @ Zeeland West did not remove them from a #1 seed in their district by an extremely thin margin, so all signs point to a reprise of the West Catholic/Catholic Central "Holy War" in the playoffs for the 2nd straight year.

#10. Forest Hills Eastern (7-2) – the Hawks had to hold on after having a 35-13 4th quarter lead before finally downing Reeths-Puffer 35-28. Next up, a probable home game vs. Whitehall in what should be a very intriguing contest.

Honorable Mention: Belding (8-1) - the OK-Silver outright champions after a 40-0 dismantling of Hopkins. Now Monty Price steers his team into the playoffs where the Black Knights look to get to the regional round or further for the 1st time since 2017.