

MLB

DETROIT 4
CLEVELAND 1

UP NEXT
Today's matchup:
Cleveland (David Huff 1-1, 0.51 ERA) vs. Detroit (Doug Fister 4-13, 3.59).
First pitch: 7:05 p.m.
Where: Comerica Park, Detroit
TV: SportsTime Ohio

MORE INSIDE
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Hot hitting catcher leads Tigers

Associated Press

DETROIT — By July, Alex Avila had gone from an unknown to the American League's starting catcher in the All-Star game.

What he has done in August has been more impressive.

With Victor Martinez hobbled by a sore knee, Avila has caught Detroit's last 13 games despite manager Jim Leyland's concerns about wearing out the 24-year-old.

Instead, Avila has hit .420 in the stretch with a .531 on-base percentage and four homers. On Friday night, he homered in first-place Detroit's 4-1 victory over second-place Cleveland.

"This has been very impressive, both mentally and physically," Leyland said. "I've never seen a catcher that gets hit by foul tips as often as Alex does, but he keeps going out there every day and doing the job."

Avila brushed off any praise, saying that the cooler weather has been the most important factor. But his teammates are gushing over his performance in the AL Central pennant race.

"What Alex is doing is amazing," said Max Scherzer, Friday's winning pitcher who went seven innings. "He's irreplaceable right now."

The Indians could have taken over the division lead with a sweep of the three-game series, but Scherzer's pitching and three Detroit homers mean they are 2½ games back.

"The way they are playing, the way we are playing and even the way Chicago is playing, I don't think this is going to be decided in the next couple days," Indians starter Josh Tomlin said.

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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL



Mansfield Senior's Terrell Dorsey clears the Fredericktown defense and heads for a touchdown during Friday's Jamboree Game at Arlin Field. DANIEL MELOGRANA/NEWS JOURNAL

Changes on the table

OHSAA still looking at fixing playoff imbalances

By **Vince Guerrieri**
CentralOhio.com

The Ohio High School Athletic Association is considering a change in divisional alignment for football — again.

OHSAA Commissioner Dan Ross told administrators at a regional meeting last week that a committee is being formed to look at the divisional assignments, and they are soliciting thoughts and suggestions from members of the OHSAA.

Five years ago, the OHSAA board of control looked into realigning the divisions, but stopped short. This time, Ross said he wants a solution.

"This committee may not make a recommendation that everyone likes, but we're not going to leave it on the table," he said.

In June 2006, the board of control approved a measure that would place the top 10 percent of schools (by enrollment) that field

football teams in Division I.

The smallest 2 percent of schools would be automatically assigned to Division VI and the rest of the schools would be distributed equally between Divisions II and V.

The idea behind the proposal would be that schools of more equal size would play each other.

This year Division I in football is made up of schools with enrollment greater than 494 of boys in grades 10 through 12. Theoretically in the playoffs, a team like Cleveland Glenville, with an enrollment of 506 boys, could meet a team like Cleveland St. Ignatius, with more than double the enrollment of 1,181.

However, the proposal would have left an imbalance in Division VI. Football is the only sport in the OHSAA where every team doesn't qualify for the postseason. A total of 192 teams — 32 in each division — qualify in football.

If it was implemented at the time, a total of 73 schools would have been in Division I, and a total of 139 schools would have been in Division VI — with 32 playoff spots for each division, so almost 44 percent of Division I schools would make the playoffs, but 23 percent of Division VI teams would have made the playoffs.

The rest of the divisions would have had 123 schools each, so roughly 26 percent would enter the playoffs.

Mohawk coach Erik Baker, a regional director for the Ohio High School Football Coaches Association, said the organization discussed the issue in their meeting this summer.

"We didn't have a clear-cut proposal," he said. "But something has to be done."

Baker said some of the same teams in Division I are further apart in enrollment than Division II schools are to Division VI. He coached previously in Georgia,

where there were five divisions and a "super division" with some of the bigger powers in the state, and the teams in the super division played each other.

Last spring, OHSAA principals voted on a competitive balance proposal that would have adopted a formula combined with enrollment numbers to assign divisions.

The formula would have taken into account tradition, socioeconomic and boundaries. Fremont St. Joseph Central Catholic athletic director Gary Geller said that he believed one of the reasons the proposal failed is because it didn't address the Division I disparity.

Ross said the OHSAA is soliciting opinions before the committee presents something to the board of directors.

"I think we're going to start with football and see where it goes," he said.

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AUTO RACING » MID-OHIO MEMORIES

Spending 46 years at the track



Jim Mudra interviews Izod IndyCar Series star Dario Franchitti at Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course. SUBMITTED PHOTO

Editor's Note: This is the third of a seven-part series on Mid-Ohio memories from a variety of perspectives. To share your own memories, use the contact information below.

By **Jim Mudra**
Special to the News Journal

LEXINGTON — My story of Mid-Ohio Sports Car Course begins when I was 15. I had met my best friend when I was in third grade at Brinkerhoff Elementary School. It was through him that I was introduced to "the track."

His name is Louie Letizia and his dad owned the Safety Cab and Safeway Transit Company in Mansfield. We used to think we were big time going down to the garage on Sunday to gas up the cabs and check the oil. Hey, we

were working on cars, but how does this relate to Mid-Ohio?

Louie and I did everything together as kids, always working on our bikes and as we grew older our mini bikes. One weekend in 1966, Louie's older brother asked us to go to Mid-Ohio with him and his wife.

Mid-Ohio owner Les Griebing had asked Louie's dad if he could provide a bus for the track that weekend. When we got there, he and his wife, who had followed us to the track in her car, left us to drive the press bus.

But we were only 15, and didn't have driver's licenses. How could we drive the bus, we asked. We were told not to worry because we were on private property and to

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MID-OHIO 50TH SERIES SCHEDULE

- » **Today:** Mansfield City Schools teacher Jim Mudra on how Mid-Ohio has impacted his life.
- » **Sunday:** Graham Rahal.
- » **Monday:** Bob Miller, the chief pit reporter at the track since the mid-1980s.
- » **Tuesday:** John Fippin, track announcer, offers his insights.
- » **Wednesday:** Former News Journal reporter T.E. McHale on his 18 years of covering Mid-Ohio.
- » **Previously:** Readers shared Mid-Ohio memories Thursday and former News Journal sports writer and Mid-Ohio PR man Dave Arnold shared his memories.

NFL PRESEASON » LIONS 30, BROWNS 28

Browns starters sparkle in first half of loss to Lions

By **Tom Withers**
Associated Press

CLEVELAND — Colt McCoy threw three touchdown passes — two to tight end Evan Moore — in the first half, but the Cleveland Browns blew a 15-point lead after halftime and lost 30-28 to the Detroit Lions on Friday night in a penalty-filled exhibition that showed both teams have plenty to fix in the next three weeks.

McCoy finished 10 of 18 for 96 yards, his second straight solid

performance running first-year Browns coach Pat Shurmur's new West Coast offense. McCoy was victimized by a few drops and wasn't as sharp as in last week's win over the Super Bowl champion Packers. However, the second-year QB showed poise, ran away from Ndamukong Suh and didn't force any throws while playing most of the first half.

The Lions (2-0) trailed by 10 entering the fourth, but got a 20-yard TD pass from Drew Stanton and Dave Rayner's 48-yard field goal.

Referee Mike Carey and his officiating crew had a busy night. The teams were assessed 26 penalties for 211 yards.

Moore caught TDs of 2 and 21 yards, rookie Greg Little grabbed a 13-yarder from McCoy, and rookie Armond Smith had an 81-yard TD run in the third for the Browns (1-1), who were without eight starters, including star running back Peyton Hillis.

Detroit quarterback Matthew Stafford threw one TD pass to Nate Burleson. Stafford went 6 of

10 for 85 yards in four series.

Jason Hanson kicked two field goals for the Lions, who also rested several starters, including wide receiver Calvin Johnson, because of injuries.

McCoy seems perfectly suited for the West Coast attack, an offense that puts a premium on accuracy, timing and precision — by the QB and receivers. Earlier this week, McCoy revealed he spent time during the NFL lockout in Mississippi learning the offense's many nuances from Brett Favre,

the three-time NFL MVP who was taught it in Green Bay by Browns president Mike Holmgren.

With the Browns thin at wide receiver, Moore, who showed potential last season but has had injury issues, could become McCoy's favorite target. The 6-foot-6, 250-pounder certainly looks the part, but it remains to be seen if he can handle it. McCoy found him twice in the first half, helping the Browns build a 21-10 lead.

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