

Pioneers get 2026 campaign underway with win

By Tim Peterson
Sports Correspondent

LUDLOW – Since joining USL League Two in 2019, the Western Mass. Pioneers have qualified for the league playoffs each season. A new group of Pioneers players are hoping to continue the post-season tradition this spring.

In front of a large crowd at historic Lusitano Stadium in Ludlow, the Pioneers began the 2026 campaign with a 4-2 victory over the Albany Rush, last Friday night.

“Most of the players on last year’s team graduated from college, so we do have a lot of first-year players this season,” said Pioneers head coach Federico Molinari. “I thought we played well in tonight’s game. We had a lot of opportunities, especially in the first half.”

The Pioneers posted a 10-1-3 regular season record a year ago. They lost to FC Motown STA, 2-1, in the Eastern Conference quarter-finals.

A couple of the Pioneers players from last year’s squad have signed with professional soccer teams.

“It’s really nice to see your players playing soccer at a high level,” said Molinari, who’s been leading the Pioneers since 2012. “That’s our main goal every year.”

One of the local players listed on the 2026 Pioneers roster is Thomas Wadas, who’s played soccer for the Ludlow Lions and is currently a member of the UMass-Amherst men’s soccer team.

Wadas has been listed on the Pioneers roster for the past several years. He made his first start for the Pioneers in the season opening match.

“I used to watch the Pioneers games from the stands, so I’ve been looking forward to this moment for a long time,” said Wadas, who’s a midfielder. “Being a starter in the season opener is a very special thing to me. We played hard for the whole 90 minutes of tonight’s game. When we come together as a cohesive team, we can look forward to another strong season. Anything less than making the playoffs seems like a failure.”



Sam Montalto looks to pass.



Fernando Delgado dribbles up the field.



Michael Gouvin, of Monson, sends a pass away.



Jaiden Williams, of Belchertown, competes with an opponent.

Wadas was a starter in ten of the 15 games that he played in for the Minutemen as a freshman last fall. He finished the 2025 season with two goals and three assists.

“It was a big adjustment going from the high school level to the collegiate level,” Wadas said. “All of the players are bigger and stronger in college. The game is also a lot more physical. I’m just glad that I was able to contribute as a freshman. Playing for the Pioneers is only going to help me prepare for my sophomore season at UMass.”

A first-year player member of the Pioneers is Michael Gouvin, who’s from Monson. His older sister, Laura, played for the New England Mutiny several years ago.

Gouvin, who comes from a soccer family, attended Avon Old Farms before playing two seasons for the men’s soccer team at the University of New Hampshire. He decided to transfer to Bentley University before the start of last season.

“I used to play youth soccer games on this field. It feels awesome to be back here playing again,” said Gouvin, who’s a starting defender. “I’ve never



Turley photos by David Henry www.sweetdogphotos.com
Thomas Wadas, of Ludlow, is new to the Pioneers this season.

played a game in this type of environment before. Winning our first game of the season feels incredible.”

The Pioneers have won every match that they’ve played against the Rush since 2022. They outscored them, 11-0, in both matches last season.

Prior to the start of the match, third grader Brooke Lamothe did an outstanding job of performing the National Anthem.

The Rush ended their scoreless spell against the Pioneers when Lucas Horja

fired a shot into the back of the net past Western Mass. goalie Ben Alexander for an unassisted goal during the 11th minute of the opening half.

The Pioneers quickly took over the momentum.

The home side had five corner kicks before scoring the equalizer in the 37th minute.

An Albany player fouled Wadas, which gave the Pioneers a free kick. Pearse O’Brien booted the ball into the box and Matiwos Rumley managed to score the tying goal.

Two minutes later, an



Pearse O'Brien advances the ball.

Albany player fouled O’Brien inside the box resulting in a penalty kick.

O’Brien, who’s from West Hartford Conn., stepped up to the spot and lined a shot into the back of the net giving the Pioneers the lead for the first time.

Horja scored the tying goal nine minutes into the second half.

Five minutes later, Gouvin sent a pass into the box from the right wing where Felipe De Andrade, who had just entered the match as a sub, headed the ball into the net.

“I saw that Felipe was

open and I just sent him the ball,” Gouvin said. “It was a perfect play. My main goal in every game is to make an impact.”

The duo of Alfred Baafi and Martin Echarren, who also came off the bench, hooked up on the Pioneers final goal during the 82nd minute. Echarren flicked a shot into the net for his first goal as a Pioneers player.

The Pioneers are scheduled to play a road game against the Seacoast United Phantoms on Wednesday night before returning home to face NEFC at 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

► Public Notices

City of Holyoke Notice of Public Hearing

The Ordinance Committee of the Holyoke City Council and the Planning Board will hold separate public hearings to hear a zone change application from BG (business general) to DR (downtown residential) of Irfan Raheel at 172 Sargeant Street (060-06-001) to allow for second floor residential use. **Planning Board public hearing will be held on Tuesday, June 9th, 2026 at 5:30 p.m. remotely via zoom.us** with Meeting ID 836 3939 8493 or by call in at 1-646-558-8656 using same meeting ID. **Ordinance Committee public hearing will be held on Tuesday, June 30th, 2026 at 6:30 p.m.** at Holyoke City Hall 536 Dwight St and can be accessed remotely via zoom.us Meeting ID 886 8239 2822 Meeting Passcode 994415 or by call in at 1-646-558-8656 with same Meeting ID and Passcode. For a copy of the application or to provide comments to the

Planning Board, please contact Brianna Tejada at tejadab@holyoke.org. For the Ordinance Committee, please contact City Council Admin Asst Jeffery Anderson-Burgos at anderson-burgosj@holyoke.org or by phone 413-322-5525.

Planning Board Chair
Lauren Niles
Ordinance Chair
Meg Magrath-Smith
05/22, 05/29/2026

HOLYOKE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Holyoke Public Schools will be holding a public hearing on the Fiscal 2027 School Department Budget on **June 8, 2026 at 5:00 p.m. in the Field Room at Dean Technical School.** Public comment can be submitted via email to Irene Feliciano at ifeliciano@hps.holyoke.ma.us no later than 3:00 p.m on Monday, June 8, 2026. A copy of the budget is available for inspection at the Holyoke Public

Schools Business Office beginning on Wednesday, June 3, 2026 at 8:00 a.m.

ESCUELAS PÚBLICAS DE HOLYOKE

Las Escuelas Públicas de Holyoke celebrarán una audiencia pública sobre el Presupuesto del Departamento Escolar para el Año Fiscal 2027 el 8 de junio del 2026 a las 5:00 p. m. en la Sala Fielde de la Escuela Superior Dean Tech. Los comentarios del público pueden enviarse por correo electrónico a Irene Feliciano, a la dirección ifeliciano@hps.holyoke.ma.us, a más tardar el lunes 8 de junio del 2026 a las 3:00 p. m. Habrá una copia del presupuesto disponible para su revisión en la Oficina de Administración Financiera de las Escuelas Públicas de Holyoke a partir del miércoles 3 de junio del 2026 a las 8:00 a. m. 05/22/2026

Commonwealth of
Massachusetts
The Trial Court
Probate and Family Court
Hampden Probate and
Family Court
50 State Street
Springfield, MA 01103
Docket No.
HD26P0960GD
In the interests of
Ja'zier Amiri Negron
of Holyoke, MA
Minor

NOTICE AND ORDER:
Petition for Appointment
of Guardian of a Minor
NOTICE TO ALL
INTERESTED PARTIES

1. **Hearing Date/Time:** A hearing on a Petition for Appointment of Guardian of a Minor filed on 05/05/2026 by **Natasha Escano of Holyoke, MA** will be held **06/05/2026 08:30 AM Guardianship of Minor Hearing.** Located: **Hampden Probate and Family Court, 50 State Street, Springfield, MA 01102-0559.**

2. **Response to Petition:** You may respond by filing a written response to the Petition or by appearing in person at the hearing. If you choose to file a written response, you need to:

File the original with the Court; and
Mail a copy to all interested parties at least five (5) business days before the hearing.

3. **Counsel for the Minor:** The minor (or an adult on behalf of the minor) has the right to request that counsel be appointed for the minor.

4. **Counsel for Parents:** If you are a parent of the minor child who is the subject of this proceeding you have a right to be represented by an attorney. If you want an attorney and cannot afford to pay for one and if you give proof that you are indigent, an attorney will be assigned to you. Your request for an attorney should be made immediately by filling out the Application of Appointment of Counsel form. Submit the application form in person or by mail at the court location where your case is going to be heard.

5. **Presence of the Minor at Hearing:** A minor over age 14 has the right to be present at any hearing, unless the Court finds that it is not in the minor’s best interests.
Date: May 5, 2026

Rosemary A. Saccomani
Register of Probate
05/22/2026

City of Holyoke Public Hearing Notice

The Holyoke Planning Board will hold a Public Hearing on **Tuesday, June 9, 2026, at 5:30 p.m. via Zoom.com** ID: 836 3939 8493; CALL IN *67 646 558 8656 to hear, pursuant to the Holyoke Zoning Ordinance, Section 6.4.6.4, a Special Permit for an Increase in Sign Size for Stack- Holyoke & Main, LLC at 679 Main Street and 689 Main & Beaulieu Street, Holyoke MA (055-00-009, -0091, -009.2).

For a complete copy of the application, contact the Planning Dept, M-F, 8:30-4:00p.m.

Applicant:
Stack- Holyoke & Main, LLC
Planning Board:
Lauren Niles, Chairperson
05/22, 05/29/2026

City of Holyoke Notice of Public Hearing

The Holyoke License Board will be holding a Public Hearing on **Wednesday, June 3, 2026, at 5:15 pm.** You can join via Zoom.com; ID **83974921923**; CALL IN: ***67 646 558 8656** or in person at **City Hall, 536 Dwight St. in the Old Tax Collector Office Room 6,** regarding the application for a **New Seasonal All Alcohol On-premises License for De Todo Un Poco Restaurant & Bakeshop LLC DBA De Todo n Poco 325 Main Street** pursuant to M.G.L. Ch.138.

Applicant:
Todo Un Poco Restaurant & Bakeshop
License Board:
Jose Correa, Chairman.
05/22, 5/29/2026

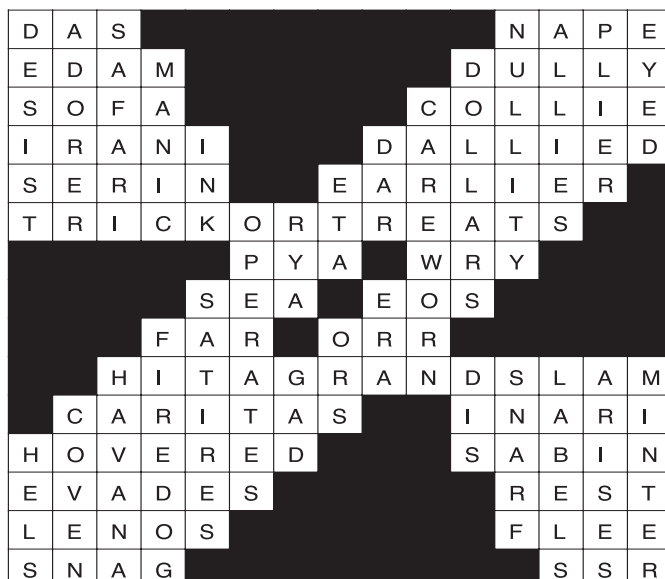
The Holyoke Sun OBITUARY POLICY

Turley Publications offers two types of obituaries.

One is a free, brief **Death Notice** listing the name of deceased, date of death and funeral date and place.

The other is a **Paid Obituary**, costing \$275, which allows families to publish extended death notice information of their own choice and may include a photograph. **Death Notices & Paid Obituaries** should be submitted through a funeral home to: obits@turley.com.

Exceptions will be made only when the family provides a death certificate and must be pre-paid.



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