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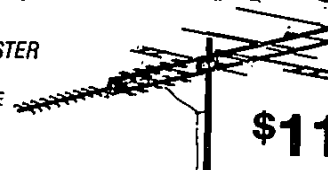

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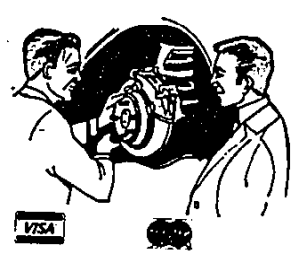
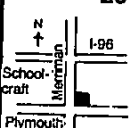
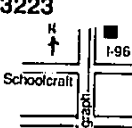
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Balance is strength of 6 GOAL squads

By MARTY BUDNER

One of the most balanced football leagues in the state this year should be the Greater Oakland Activities League (GOAL).

To a man, all six league coaches agree that no one should dominate this fall the way Clarkston did in 1977.

"There's not a bad team in the league this year," said Waterford Kettering coach Melvin Peterson. "It's very well balanced, and I think it's one of the better leagues in the state."

Clarkston did not lose a regularly scheduled game last year. The Wolves pranced to a GOAL title with a 5-0 record, two games ahead of runner-up Bloomfield Hills Andover.

In its only loss of 1977, Clarkston lost in the first round of the Michigan State High School Athletic Association (MSHSAA) playoffs to eventual state champion Birmingham Brother Rice, 10-0. For the season Clarkston scored 191 points, allowed 77 and won by an average score of 19-8.

Things should be different this season.

Although still strong, Clarkston graduated most of its starting players, and West Bloomfield and Bloomfield Hills Andover are eagerly shooting to dethrone the Wolves. Without a doubt, Milford, Rochester and Waterford Kettering will pull some upsets along the way.

Following is a brief preview of each GOAL team (teams previewed in order of finish in 1977):

CLARKSTON WOLVES

After six years of service—climaxing with a state playoff appearance last year—Rob White decided to step down as head football coach at Clarkston. He is now main man at Wayland High School on the south side of Grand Rapids.

His successor is Bill Valasco. At the moment, Valasco's biggest problem is familiarizing his players with a new system.

"We have a new numbering system, and it will take time for the players to learn that new system," said Valasco. "Once we get that down, and gain some consistency in our play, we'll be respectable."

"We have a lot of fine players, but so do all the other teams in our league," he said. "This league is very competitive, and every team has a good chance at beating another."

Only three starters among a group of 20 players on last year's state-qualifying team are returning. The trio of veteran players include linebacker and center Ed Eaglen (6-3, 210-pound senior), outside linebacker and guard Kevin Drake (6-2, 190-pound senior), and offensive and defensive tackle Ron LePere (5-10, 185-pound senior).

Valasco is counting on two other seniors to help stabilize his ballteam this year. Rich Ortwine (6-0, 235) is a two-way tackle out for the first time, and Mike Lattimer (5-9, 175) will handle offensive guard and linebacker positions.

Clarkston will begin its season with a test against rugged Grand Blanc, and end with Waterford Mott. The Wolves open defense of their league championship against Rochester, followed by West Bloomfield, Milford, Waterford Kettering and Andover.

Dalasco's assistant coaches include Gordie Richardson, Darrell Marsh, Al Merian, Gary Warner and Kurt Richardson.

ANDOVER BARONS

Andover's Frank Buford is the dean of

GOAL coaches. In 20 years of coaching, including terms at Detroit Salesian and University of Detroit, Buford has compiled an overall record of 84-54-4.

The Barons finished with a respectable 5-4 record in 1977, 3-2 in GOAL. Andover was the only team, besides Clarkston, to finish above .500 in GOAL last year.

Andover scored 192 points in 1977, and allowed 151. A large nucleus of players return from that offense which averaged three touchdowns per game.

Andover's highest-scoring game last year was a 51-15 trouncing of Kettering. It also shut out Berkley 39-0.

Leading the list is senior quarterback Ken Baer, and two competent receivers in Bill Hertle (spread end) and Steve Koch (tight end). The crunching interior line consists of senior veterans Jeff Sherman, Rich Dunlap and Bill Schmidt.

The defensive secondary, anchored by Mark O'Riley (cornerback) and Scott Allen (safety), is also an experienced group. Senior Kirk Harris will be Andover's tailback.

Andover has the distinction of opening the 1978 season against the defending state class 'A' champions Brother Rice.

Andover's assistant coaches are Paul Dain, Steve Price, Bruce Torgeson and Bob Hurdle.

MILFORD REDSKINS

Defense should be the strong part of Milford's lineup.

The Redskins, who were 5-4 overall last year (2-3 in the league), will have a number of returning defensive starters, with a bench full of capable linebackers. The offense, which generated only 96 points last year, is where head coach Bruce Gilbert will "have to fill."

Milford's defensive halfbacks are Joe Westemeier, a 5-1, 155-pound senior, and Tim Orr, a 5-9, 165-pound senior. Last year Orr had two interceptions, one of which he returned for a touchdown.

Another pair of veteran linebackers include seniors Dave Shepard (5-11, 175) and Suvit Miller (5-11, 175).

There are two returning offensive starters, running backs Bob Michie and Mike Pickles. Michie (5-11, 175) gained more than 600 yards in seven games last year, and Pickles (5-10, 165) gained close to 500.

Members of the interior line are Mike Strzeleck (6-3, 210)—a two-way starter—Brian Jacoby (5-11, 185) and James Brast (6-2, 195).

Milford opens on the road against Walled Lake Central, and closes at home against rival Milford Lakeland.

The assistant Redskin coaches are Ron Marinucci, Larry Blittinger and Ross Arnold.

KETTERING CAPTAINS

Waterford Kettering won only two games last year, and absorbed thrashing losses to Andover (51-15) and Clarkston (18-0).

It was the worst year in coach Melvin Peterson's five years of coaching.

"Everybody but one person is back on offense, and we'll be plugging to improve this year," said Peterson, who has a career coaching record of 22-24. "We had 12 people hurt at one time or another last year, so if we can stay healthy we should be alright."

Kettering's basic strength will be in its interior line. Senior captain Mark Moody (6-0, 205) will be pitted in the line with classmates Tom Farnum (6-2, 235) and

(Continued on page 21)