

After 2 banner seasons

Will Raider football fortunes finally falter?

By C.J. RISAK

All good things must come to an end. And to hear North Farmington football Coach Ron Holland tell it, that statement would more than apply to the squad's upcoming season.

Gone are the 16 starters from last year's team who went all the way to the Pontiac Silverdome and the Class A championship game before losing. Most of the key members of that team that posted a 19-2 record over the past two years have graduated.

"It's a complete rebuilding job," Holland sighed as his team finished morning

drills on the last day of two-day workouts.

"This is a different type of pressure than last year," Holland said. "Last year, the team knew how to win. This year, it's the pressure to mold the team into a winning combination."

"I have to be more patient (with this year's team), tolerate more mistakes."

But don't lament North Farmington's fate just yet. Despite a lot of new faces, the Raiders still have some talent that, although it may not carry them to the Silverdome, it should keep them in the Northwest Suburban League (NSL) title picture.

Farmington Observer

SPORTS

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For one thing, Holland has more bodies to work with. Forty-six players populate the squad, the largest number

he's ever had come out for the team.

BUT NUMBERS OF players don't win football games — talent does. This year's squad won't have the talent last season's did, and it won't have the experience, either. Despite that, however, it should still be representable in the NSL.

Leading the returnees on offense will be quarterback Greg Goldstein and center Karl Hamina, both now seniors. Goldstein, (5-foot-9, 155 pounds) started and played most of the time last season. His biggest moment came in the semifinal victory against Birmingham Brother Rice, when he fired an opening period touchdown pass to Tom Godwin.

Hamina (6-0, 190) was an All-Conference pick at his position.

Also returning on offense are Rich Nutter and Dan Cohen. Last season, the pair started at the guard positions, but this year they'll be in the backfield — which is one reason why North may surprise a lot of people.

Both Nutter (6-1, 203) and Cohen (6-0, 193) are big and all three backfield men are fast. Goldstein and Cohen have

been clocked at 4.6 seconds in the 40-yard dash, and Nutter was timed at 4.85.

Of course, they can only go as far as the offensive line can block for them, and that's where Holland is short on experience. Besides Hamina, the rest of the players will all be newcomers.

The defense, Holland feels, will be a little stronger. George Houtteckier (6-2, 220) is back at one of the defensive tackle positions, and Jeff Rantz returns at his outside linebacker-defensive end post.

"TRADITIONALLY, OUR DEFENSE has been a good thing," Holland said. "We take a lot of pride in it."

One of the team's biggest assets will be its speed. Holland also thinks that, on offense, they should have a pretty good passing game.

But the inexperience in the offense is his biggest worry.

"I think I could just tape my voice on a recorder, then just keep playing it over and over again for them," Holland joked about the repeated mistakes committed by the newer players.

The Raiders will have to learn fast if they are going to make this season a success. They open with three straight road games, starting with Flint Southwestern. But their biggest test may come on Oct. 5 when they face Redford Union, the newest member of the NSL and Holland's pick as preseason favorite.

Whoever the favorite, Holland has something going for him none of the other NSL coaches have — a winning tradition. None have had the success

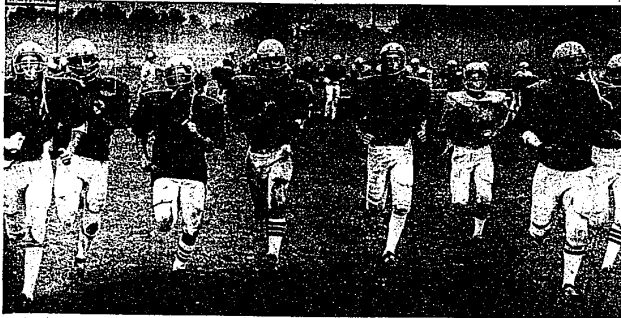
over the past two seasons that Holland has.

"The kids that are seniors now have only lost twice in their high school careers," Holland pointed out.

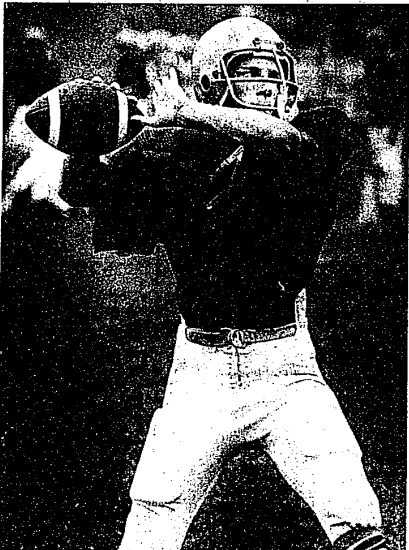
"We'll find out what kind of ball club we've got, and if they can carry on the winning tradition."

NORTH FARMINGTON FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

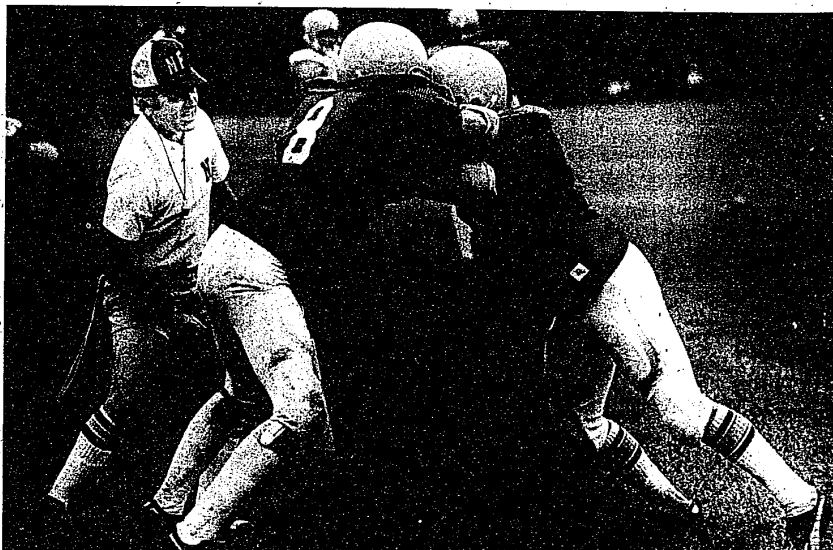
Sept. 8 at Flint Southwestern; Sept. 14 at Watford Lake Central; Sept. 21 at Garden City East; Sept. 28, Redford; Thursday, Oct. 5 at Redford Union; Oct. 12 at Larnia Franklin; Oct. 19, Westland John C. Brown; Oct. 27, Farmington Harrison; Nov. 2, Farmington.



Wind sprints end the morning practice session for the Raiders.



Quarterback Greg Goldstein, a major ingredient in North Farmington's drive to the Pontiac Silverdome and the Class A football finals last year.



Locked in combat, Marty Mazer (left) and Greg Brickley battle it out during a blocking drill, while assistant coach Ralph Tenby looks on. (Staff photos by Randy Borst)



Head coach Ron Holland.

Been playing 44 years

At 60, he's a softball fanatic

By MARTY BUDNER

Stanley Wiercinski is a softball addict. His blood bubbles with excitement when he plays, or speaks about the popular Detroit-area recreation. But, what's so unusual about that when there are thousands of softball players with similar sentiments?

Well, Wiercinski is 60 years old. His body seems to regenerate with the approach of each softball season. He loves the sport, and just can't seem to swing into retirement.

"I enjoy it, regardless of my age," said Wiercinski, who has spent 40

years working with the Sperry-Vickers Co. of Troy.

"I get to go out and run around, and I enjoy putting my two cents in. Right now, I don't know if I'll play again next year, but I'd sure like to. Even if I don't play, I'd like to coach. I like to keep up with all the young guys."

Wiercinski played with the Valente's softball team in the Troy Parks and Recreation's A League this summer. The A League is generally considered to have the most competitive teams.

Because of a rash of injuries to the team's regular players, Wiercinski

logged plenty of playing time this summer. And he excelled.

Wiercinski batted an even .600, with 15 hits in 25 trips to the plate. At one point in the season, he led the team in batting, with a .684 average.

The climax of Wiercinski's 44th year of softball came in a July 20th doubleheader. Valente's lost to Billings Landscape, 9-3, but rebounded to defeat K-Mart Koalas, 15-7.

In those two games, Wiercinski went six-for-six, including five singles and a double. Wiercinski batted, home, four runs, scored two runs — he might have scored three

but he was thrown out attempting to run from first to third base on a single — and had a sacrifice fly.

AGAINST HIS favorite team — Billings Landscape — the mobile Wiercinski was perfect this year. He never made an out in six at bat.

According to team member Doug Drummonds, Wiercinski's batting average for the past 11 years is a very respectable .477 (85-179).

"I've played so many games over the years that I really can't remember them all," said Wiercinski, who lives behind Eton Park in Birmingham. "I just go out and try to put in my best effort each time I play."

Wiercinski, who will be 61 years old in May, started playing organized softball in 1935.

His spectacular career began in the high-paced world of fast-pitch softball. He played with the old St. Hyacinth team in the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) League.

Wiercinski played fast-pitch for some 22 years, and then joined the bloop-pitch circuit — "where they had no plates, and you could throw the ball as high as

you wanted to." He played most of his games in the Southfield area.

After "three-to-four years of bloop-pitch," Wiercinski tackled slow-pitch. He's played with a multitude of teams and leagues, including the A League in Troy and B League in Birmingham.

Wiercinski said he often spent up to three or four nights a week during his younger days learning the game.

"I enjoyed all the leagues, but there is the most tension in fast-pitch," said Wiercinski. "You always have to be on your toes. To me, slow-pitch is for when you're getting older."

THE HIGHLIGHT of Wiercinski's experiences was in a game the year St. Hyacinth captured the CYO championship — "either 1936 or 1937." St. Hyacinth, batted St. Hedwig to a 2-1 victory in a 22-inning marathon won when pitcher Ted Bonkey hit a home run.

Wiercinski, who played left field, said he occasionally encounters some members of that championship team.

"I've played most of the time on Detroit's East Side, where we all grew up," said Wiercinski.

Angels bury foe

The Farmington Angels completed the summer portion of their schedule with an overwhelming 11-1 soccer win over Plymouth last Monday night at Plymouth's home field.

Debbie Hunt, who recently moved to Farmington from Los Angeles, proved to be a valuable addition as she tallied six goals against the overmatched Plymouth squad.

Debbie Pacheco, a Michigan All-State player, added three markers and Valerie Wrensch scored twice for the Angels.

The win gave the Angels a 4-0 record for the summer season of the

Women's Soccer League. A 1-1 tie with Ann Arbor earlier in the season was the only blemish on the Farmington team's record.

The future of the league will be discussed at a league meeting in the Farmington library on Sept. 8. Decisions on formalizing the league and its schedule next year, as well as whether or not to continue this season into the fall, will be made.

Monday's rout against Plymouth was the second time this season the Angels claimed easy wins. Earlier, the Farmington team posted a 7-1 victory.

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