

# Class A operation

## Harrison must face many changes in upcoming season

By Roger Hart  
staff writer

WITH THE beginning of each high-school football season, the coaching staff, along with the team members, set various goals for themselves. The goals the team sets could vary, from simply winning a game in the upcoming season to improving over last year's record, or from having a winning record to taking the conference championship.

But the ultimate goal — the dream that very few teams ever realize — is winning the state title. It's bragging rights, if you will, to be able to tell the rest of the state that you are in fact, "No. 1."

Nearly nine months ago on the artificial turf of the Pontiac Silverdome, the 1981 Farmington Harrison High School football team achieved that ultimate goal by shutting out highly ranked Muskegon Catholic Central, 7-0, to take the Class B state title.

As the 1982 season is nearly ready to begin, the Harrison team began work-outs knowing there is no possible way it could repeat the feat accomplished by last year's team.

have a football team with the ability to repeat as state champions.

But during the last school year, Harrison's enrollment gained a few students, and the school no longer is in Class B. If the Hawks make an appearance at the Silverdome this year, it will be in Class A.

Plus, Harrison captured the Western Six League title last year. That league no longer exists.

In 1982, Harrison will compete in the newly formed Western Lakes Activities Association, in the association's Western Division.

The Hawks and head coach John Herrington and his staff will have to deal with these many changes in 1982, including a nearly complete turnover of personnel.

Of the 22 starters on the championship team, only one returns — all-state kicking specialist Dave Blackmer. Blackmer is slated to start in the up-back (fullback) position on offense and at linebacker on defense, as well as handling the kicking duties.

BLACKMER HOLDS the state record for a field goal as he booted one through the uprights from 55 yards out last season.

"A good nucleus of players left us,"

assistant coach Jim Sallow said, filling in for head coach Herrington, who was home sick last week with strep throat.

"Our kids are strong, but we don't have many big kids. But, then, we are never big," Sallow said.

With only one returning starter, Harrison will use the first couple of games to see where certain players fit into the lineup.

"It will take us a couple of games to get into the swing of things," Sallow said. "Our juniors saw a little bit of game action last year when we got up on opponents, and they got in the game. I think most of the juniors last year got a good share of playing time, but the experience you gain by starting is a lot different than the experience you gain when you get into a game after it is pretty much decided."

Herrington, in a telephone conversation at his home Monday, agreed with Sallow's assessment.

"Seniors usually start for us, so having new people in the lineup is not an unusual situation," Herrington said.

"Besides, these juniors got to play against one of the finest teams in the state last year every day in practice," Herrington added.

SLATED TO START at quarterback is senior Ken Kish. With Kish and Blackmer in the backfield will be seniors Todd Smith and Flen Baker, who will alternate at the swingback position, and sophomore John Miller, who will start at tailback.

Herrington said the Hawk offense may have a few new twists this season, most notably the passing of quarterback Kish, who has looked very good in summer practice, Herrington said.

"Kish has really looked super throwing the ball. If he keeps throwing the ball as well as he has this summer, we'll be throwing the ball in the games," Herrington said.

"As it looks right now, we should have a pretty good backfield," Sallow said. "But we won't really know until the games get here."

"Our team will be strong, quick, of average size, and very smart. Intelligence is one of the things we look for in a ballplayer," he said.

Along with Herrington and Sallow, the coaching staff includes Bob Sutter and volunteer Steve Dolloway.

"This group of seniors was 7-2 as sophomores, so we're hoping this is a good indication of their talent. But then again, it really doesn't mean that much as an indicator, because the team that won the state title last year won only three games as sophomores," Sallow said.

WITH THE formation of the new league, Herrington said he believes the league competition will be a little stronger.

"This new league should really be a challenge. It doesn't appear that any one team has a lot of people back, but I think there is some good overall balance. And to win the conference, first, you've got to win your division and then come back in the last game of the year to beat another good team from the other side," he said.

The format for play in the WLAA calls for each team to play the members of its division one time and then play one crossover game, playing a member from the other division. Then, at the end of the season, the divisional winners will meet to decide the conference champion.

HARRISON OPENS the 1982 campaign with two non-league games before getting into league play. They open against West Bloomfield Sept. 10 and will be looking to avenge the 7-0 loss to the Lakers last year.

The opening-game loss was the only blemish on Harrison's record last season.

In the second week of the season, Harrison will play rival North Farmington.



All-stater Dave Blackmer is the lone returning starter from Harrison's 1981 Class B state championship team. Blackmer is slated to start as fullback on offense, linebacker on defense, and will handle the Hawks' kicking duties.

photos by HARRY BOHST/Hart photographer

The strong throwing arm of Harrison senior quarterback Ken Kish should give the Harrison offensive attack firepower in the 1982 season.



C.J. Risak

## The more some things change, the more they stay the same

Hear ye, Hear ye! Break out the champagne, fill your glasses and raise them in a toast!

To what, you ask? 'Tis the time to be jolly, for a New Year is upon us. School is back in session, and with it comes a new season of prep sports.

And, as someone somewhere once astutely exclaimed, "Things will never be the same again." There're changes aplenty this year, you know, supposedly aimed at overall improvement.

Changes don't always make a difference, however. For all those who muttered the above-mentioned adage, equal numbers shook their heads and said:

"The more things change, the more they stay the same."

NEW LEAGUE — A new league — that's the big news down in the western Detroit suburbs.

It's called the Western Lakes Activities Association (WLAA), and its members include former Western Six teams Farmington Harrison, Plymouth Canton, Northville, Livonia Churchill and Walled Lake Western in the Western Division, and Suburban Eight schools Plymouth Salem and Livonia Bentley, together with Farmington, Livonia Stevenson and Walled Lake Central of the now defunct Inter-Lakes League, in the Lakes Division.

Should make for an interesting year, right? They'll be league playoffs in both football and basketball, adding a little spice to the season. Nearly all the coaches are looking forward to this first year in the WLAA.

Nearly all. It's going to be much more difficult to win a league title now. And while the league may be different, look for the same schools that dominated before to be the powers here, too.

Harrison and Salem are early favorites in football. Salem and Bentley are the forces in Lakes Division girls' basketball. Canton, which won 52 straight girls' basketball games in Western Six play, could be the best again in the Western Division. And Stevenson should dominate in girls' swimming.

NEW RIVALRIES — They're congealing, you know, with fanaticism firing emotions. The newest rivalry is based on the oldest of principles — pitting teams from the same school district against each other.

For the first time, Canton and Salem will knock heads in a football game. Located 100 yards apart, the two schools will battle for district bragging rights on a field the same length. The first such contest is Sept. 17.

The new WLAA set-up is the reason, although this game will not be a league

contest. Canton and Salem will cross paths a lot more in the upcoming sports seasons. The girls' basketball teams could conceivably meet four times this year, with playoffs and state tournament included.

There might be a cross-city rivalry brewing, although it's still in its early stages. This is football only, and its between Harrison and Avondale.

Avondale has always been a Class B football power. But last year, with a state playoff berth on the line, Avondale was embarrassed by Harrison in the regular season finale, 37-0.

Avondale coach Rick Brewer, known as the "Rhino," isn't likely to forget the thumping. It was his team's first loss after 20 straight wins. Harrison, now a Class A school, went on to win the Class B state crown.

The two teams meet again Nov. 5 at Avondale, so look out.

While new rivalries blossom, old ones vanish. Never again will Garden City's East and West high schools line up on opposite sides of the scrimmage line. The two schools merged this year to form the Garden City High Cougars (a compromise between East's Tigers and West's Panthers).

Another intense football rivalry is also gone, at least for this season.

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