

Heftier Hawks have to contend with quicker foe

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Farmington Hills Harrison will enjoy a size advantage when it takes on Marysville in the semifinals of the Class B football playoffs Saturday, but that doesn't necessarily mean the Hawks will have an edge over their opponent.

Harrison will have to rely on more than the assumption it can push the smaller Vikings around.

Coach Walt Braun has built a program at Marysville that rivals the one coach John Herrington has established at Harrison, and the tournament-tough Vikings have not won without talent.

"Most of the Vikings who play on the front lines are in the 170-pound range. Yet the offensive line, led by All-State guard Matt Gressell (5-9, 170), is considered the strength of the Marysville team. The biggest player is tight end Mike Quintan (6-2, 215), who is an ex-tackle and an often-used receiver.

"They execute very well because the head coach is also the line coach, and they pride themselves on accomplishing things up there," Harrison defensive coordinator Bob Sutter said.

BESIDES BEING quick, the Vikings also have emphasized proper technique under Braun's tutelage. That has gone a long way toward overcoming lack of size.

"Size is not that important," Herrington said. "They're fast and strong, and it could be a disadvantage to us that they're smaller."

"Marysville has been outzined in most of its playoff games, but the Vikings have used their quickness on defense well and 'fly to the football,'" according to a source who has seen them play.

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The Vikings play a 5-2 defense and are led by All-State linebacker Jeff Patterson, the biggest defender at 5-10, 190 pounds, with 125 tackles.

"We've got to make sure we lock on to them, so they don't angle and get away from us," Herrington said. "We have a tenacious defense that has kept us in every game, an excellent offensive line that has enabled us to move the ball and we have a fine kicking game," Braun said.

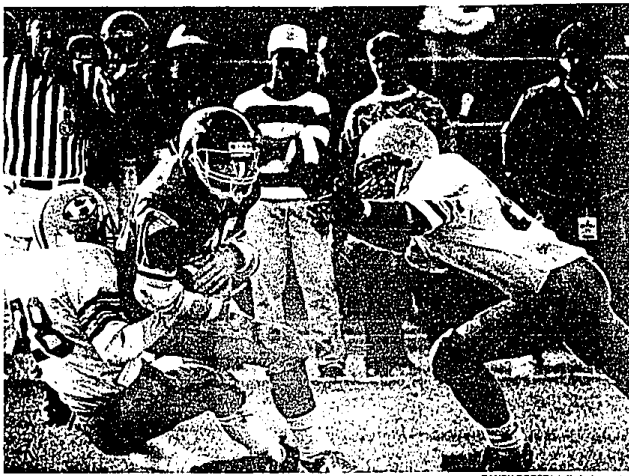
FURTHERMORE, Marysville is entirely a two-platoon team, and that might be the biggest factor in its success. Delton, the Vikings' most recent playoff foe, played nearly 10 players both ways.

But the Hawks are close enough to being a two-platoon squad, also. Center Chris Cox, guard Jim Fowlkes and end Chad Burgess are the only ones who play defense regularly.

Emotion is certain to play a major role in this game, presumably more so than Harrison's first two playoff encounters since the Hawks have the chance to average last year's 22-6 loss to the Vikings.

"It'll be a big factor," Herrington said. "You have two well-known Class B programs. It means a lot statewide and, of course, there's a trip to the Silverdome at stake."

But we'll make sure we're not so high we can't function," he added. "I think both teams will have plenty of motivation," Braun said, "because the winner gets to play in the Silverdome. Both will be at their peak."



Brian Soeder wraps up SMCC's Eric Kuehnlein and is about to get help from Jim Fowlkes in Harrison's 35-6 victory. Kuehnlein had his team's lone pass reception as the Hawks forced them to do what they were unaccustomed to doing.

Harrison gets gridiron wish

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and Millard Coleman's passing (222 yards and two touchdowns) bombed St. Mary-CC into submission. Coleman, who has rushed for nearly 100 yards and two TDs in the playoffs, has completed 9 of 167 passes this year for 1,692 yards and 15 touchdowns. He has been intercepted seven times.

"We'll try to have a balanced offense," Herrington said. "Though they're small, they move well and hit well. But we have some tall receivers who can get there."

"If we can throw for 300 (yards), we won't be that important, but we don't anticipate that. We need a balanced effort."

Chad Burgess and Bryan Waul-

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dren, a pair of 6-foot-2 juniors, have 55 and 22 catches for 605 and 318 yards, respectively. Both have five TD catches.

MARYSVILLE'S secondary is known as "The Snuffs." Nobody weighs more than 156 pounds, but they're said to be a tough unit. John Levandowski, the smallest at 5-6 and 150, is "a terror back there," according to one observer, and had three interceptions in the playoff game against Auburn Hills Avondale.

The only way Harrison's playoff opponents have gotten close to the end zone is by way of the kickoff, returning one for a TD and another to set up SMCC's only score.

Levandowski scored on an 87-yard kick return against Delton, and Braun has taken note of the Hawks' apparent weakness in that regard. He said he tried to call Herrington the other night, but couldn't reach him.

"He was still looking at our game film," Braun said. "Obviously, John is taking this game too seriously."

"But I would tell John he'd better work on his kickoff coverage."

"Needless to say, we're going to try and improve that phase of our game," Herrington said.

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Here is an overview of Marysville's football season and its history in the playoffs.

The Vikings' 10-5 season in Farmington Hills was their first since 1971. Marysville, which narrowly missed qualifying for the Class A playoffs, had a record of 10-5.

Marysville allowed only 30 points during the regular season and scored 284 points. The Vikings have been in the playoffs since 1971, when they lost to Delton in the first round.

The toughest game was not the loss to Delton in 1971, in which the Vikings had five turnovers, but a 17-0 win over Jackson Lumen Christi. Coach Walt Braun said.

"The loser we had to beat them to get into the playoffs," he said. "It was like being a playoff game in the eighth week of the season."

Marysville has become the perennial Class B power, four straight times, including last year's win in the regular season and in the playoffs.

The Vikings have been in the playoffs since 1971, when they lost to Delton in the first round. In 1972, they won the state championship.

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Players recall defeat, await rematch

By Dan O'Meara
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Farmington Hills Harrison's football team was stopped one game short of its fourth appearance in the Pontiac Silverdome and a state championship game last year.

Now the Marysville Vikings, who sidetracked the Hawks and went on to claim the title for themselves, stand in Harrison's way once again.

For the second straight year, the teams will meet in the Class B semifinals at 3:30 p.m. Saturday in Flint's Atwood Stadium.

"It means getting back for a loss," said senior defensive tackle Mark Bonasso, one of four players who started against Marysville last year.

"Of course, it means we would get to go further. Technically, this could be my last game, and I don't want it to end right now."

BONASSO said he doesn't recall much about the 22-6 defeat, possibly having blocked out what is considered to have been a less than standard performance for the usually efficient Hawks.

"My brother (John) graduated last year, and I was close to (the previous senior class), and it not only ended our season but our (football) association with the seniors we played with all year."

The last group of seniors to play for Harrison left the underclassmen with a challenge, which they have the opportunity to meet Saturday, or at least take a step toward doing so.

"The seniors told us to go all the way next year," said senior Phil

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Hird, who is starting in the defensive secondary again, "and do it for us." We've been dreaming about the chance of seeing them again, and now it's here.

"The thing I remember is the sadness of walking off the field and knowing we wouldn't be playing again," he added. Defensive tackle Jeff Skinner and end-defensive back Chad Burgess, started as sophomores against the Vikings a year ago, too.

NOSEGUARD BOB Hird had a reserve role last year but has played a

key role as a senior, harassing opposing defenses and earning all-league honors.

"I sat on the sidelines and watched, but it still hurt," he said. "We've wanted this game since last year."

"Coach (John Herrington) says there's no if what or if I could have done this after a game. We have to do it now."

Senior center-linebacker Chris Cox is another who has come to play a prominent role this fall. He also recalled the disappointed feeling after last year's loss to Marysville and said a rematch is something the Hawks have had in the back of their collective mind all season.

"We've been watching the papers and how they were doing all year," he said. "I had a feeling we were

going to play them again, and now it's here.

"I REMEMBER how poorly we played, and I couldn't wait to get another chance."

Going into their regional final with Monroe St. Mary-Catholic Central last Saturday, the Hawks knew Marysville had won the night before and a victory would guarantee the much-anticipated rematch.

"We knew we had to win that game, but when we did we were excited," Cox said. "Everybody is coming out fired up. We will be up."

"We're not going to think about that (going to the Silverdome for the first time in five years). This is our biggest game, our toughest game of the season."

"The seniors told us to go all the way next year and 'do it for us.' We've been dreaming about the chance of seeing (Marysville) again, and now it's here."

— Phil Hird
Harrison senior

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