

Sports

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Harrison has big holes to fill in starting unit

By Steve Kowalski
staff writer

Farmington Harrison is a testament to how talent-laden the Western Lakes Athletic Association is in soccer.

The Hawks finished fourth overall last year in the Class A-dominated WLAA at 5-4-1, but advanced to the semifinal round of the Class B tournament, losing to East Grand Rapids, 4-3.

Coach Glenn Bruehan doesn't mind seeing his players humbled some in the regular season if it will help them in the long run.

"A lot of teams we played in the state tournament were 13-1-1 and here we come in with a .500 record," Bruehan said.

"It really helps to prepare us for the state tourney. Any time you finish .500 in the WLAA, it's a successful season, because it's such a tough league."

The Hawks might have a tougher time of it this fall in the WLAA, with three of their top players graduated. Gone from the 12-5-2 team are striker Craig Bailey, who led Harrison with 13 goals; sweeper Peter VanVleet and goalkeeper Gary Wegner, who had a goals-against average of 1.3. All three made All-State.

BAILEY AND Wegner are attempting to walk-on this fall at Central Michigan University, and VanVleet earned a scholarship to Siena Heights College. Three other starters also must be replaced.

"We're going to have to patch three big holes, and the other three starters were excellent, too," said Bruehan. "We're hoping the other young players will take up the slack and fill in. So far, I've been impressed with our practice sessions."

Bruehan might already have filled the vacancy at striker in senior Therry Bersot. The 5-foot-8, 165-pound Bersot moves to Bailey's striker position after scoring 10 goals last fall at left wing.

"Bersot is a very strong player, short and stocky and fast," Bruehan said. "He's right on Bailey's caliber and one of our top candidates to make All-State."

soccer

Returning to center-midfield is senior Edward Dzyngel, whom Bruehan thought "played in the shadow of Bailey, VanVleet and Wegner" last fall. "Dzyngel can handle the ball well," he said. "He's a field general with an excellent shot. He makes things happen whenever he gets the ball."

OTHER MIDFIELDERS returning include sophomore Mark Lebavitz, who scored four goals in '87, and junior Matt Ripen. Junior Patrick Maitreplet, an exchange student from France, will add depth.

Bruehan said he probably will alternate seniors Chris Yoerg and Grant Hubbard at goalkeeper in place of the graduated Wegner, who played brilliantly during Harrison's state title run. Another possibility at goalie is freshman Chris Schrowe.

Yoerg played defender last year and also was a backup goalie, though his play in the nets was limited. This is Hubbard's first year on the high school level.

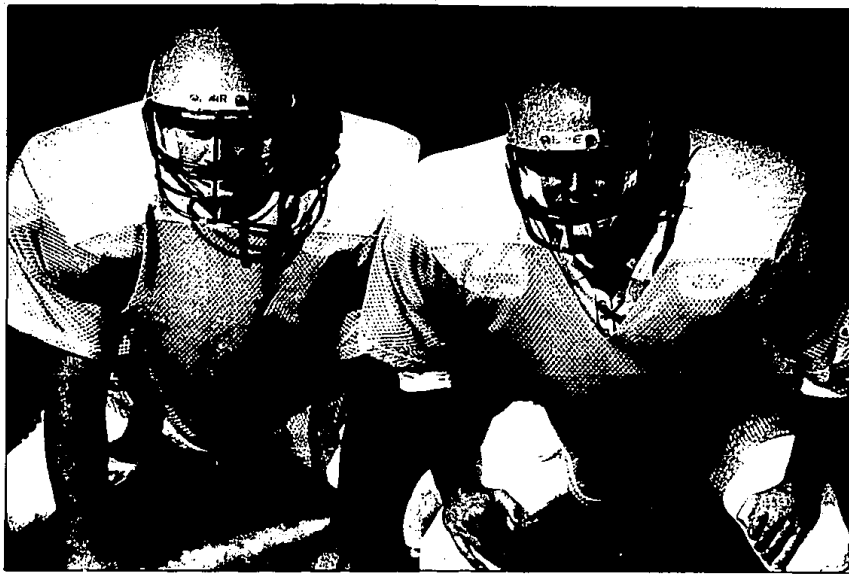
"Goalkeeping seems to be the hardest thing to replace," Bruehan said. "Gary (Wegner) played so well in the state last year it will be hard to find anyone who can do that."

"I think as the season progresses, one of the goalies will become our regular keeper and the other will play as needed."

Defensively, senior Todd Whittemore will move from defender to sweeper. Freshman Ben Pinsky also could make a contribution.

About 20 players came out for Harrison's team, a figure that lags behind the powerhouse teams of the WLAA. This is the second-straight season Harrison will not have a junior varsity team.

"In talking to some of the coaches from Livonia Churchill, Plymouth Salem and Livonia Stevenson, they have anywhere from 50 to 80 guys coming out," said Bruehan. "Football is so strong at Harrison, we just don't have the numbers."



Zalm Cummalaj (left) and Joe Sturtz give North Farmington a formidable inside linebacking combination. The seniors, two of the area's best players, will make it difficult for opposing teams

to run the ball up the middle. Cummalaj goes 6-foot-1 and 225 pounds, Sturtz 5-foot-10 and 190 pounds.

RANDY BORSIT/staff photographer

Heavy hitters

North linebackers bullish on foes

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

football

Nobody will be too surprised if opposing offenses prefer running to the outside when they play North Farmington.

The reason is they probably won't have much success trying to run straight ahead. And the reason for that will be middle linebackers Joe Sturtz and Zalm Cummalaj.

The Raiders believe they have two of Observer-land's best football players in their senior standouts, let alone one of the most formidable defensive duos.

The 5-foot-9, 190-pound Sturtz, who will double as the tailback on offense again, has improved 100 percent from a year ago when he won all-division

honors, according to coach Jim O'Leary. "He always had the potential to be as good as (former Farmington Harrison star) John Miller," he said.

"HE'S THE TYPE of kid who can dominate a game. Sometimes you get a kid who is a game breaker — and he is, on offense or defense."

The 225-pound Cummalaj, who has added 15 pounds to his 6-foot-1 frame since last season, is a bigger version of Sturtz. Both are the rugged, aggressive sort.

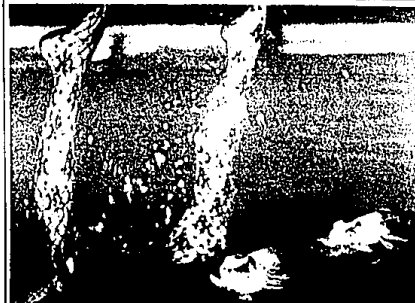
Cummalaj, a two-way tackle as a junior, is playing a new position on defense, but there's no doubt about his mobility. An accomplished wrestler, he was a regional champion at 198 pounds.

And O'Leary defies anyone to find an ounce of fat on Cummalaj, who runs a 4.9 in the 40-yard dash, bench presses 300 pounds and could end up doing the placekicking, also.

"If you wanted to build the prototype lineman, he's what you'd build," he said. "He loves to hit. I never saw a kid who gets so excited about hitting people."

"And he's a smart football player. And you know he's got good reactions (because of his wrestling)."

Please turn to Page 2



RANDY BORSIT/staff photographer

Swim show

Kentfieldwood Swim Club performed its annual synchronized swimming show Aug. 16 and 17. This year's program was entitled "TV Tunes: A Saturday Morning Lineup." The club performers included (above, left to right) Erin Shanahan and Caroline Gregory, (left, front to back) Emily Shively and Mickey Lyone and (right) Kim Burcar.



Shoulder injury sidelines Houle

THE ANNOUNCEMENT was mysterious, generating suspicion. Dave Houle left camp without reason, New York Giants coach Bill Parcells said, and he couldn't understand why. Houle had been doing so well.

In an age when many athletes are nothing more than pampered criminals, accepting illegal payments and delving deeply into drugs, this sounded like another problem waiting to surface.

Except for one rather important detail — Dave Houle himself.

The massive former Michigan State offensive tackle from Plymouth (Salem) didn't fit the mold mentioned above. In his five years at MSU, he was never the troublesome sort. True, he had his addictions — to training, particularly in the weight room, where he built himself up from a 215-pound freshman tight end to a 280-pound all-Big Ten tackle.

HOULE EARNED his bachelor's degree in communication last spring. He tried to put it to use two weeks ago when he left the Giants' camp, but apparently he couldn't get his message across to management because they didn't endorse his reasons.

Houle says he gave the Giants good reason — actually, two good reasons — for leaving. And it's an even bet he won't be back. "I had a lot of shoulder problems through college," Houle said Thursday from his parent's home in Plymouth. "And I hurt one of my shoulders again. I took some time off, came back and started playing again, then my other shoulder went out."

When Houle talks about hurting his shoulders, he hardly means a muscle strain or a bruise. He's had three operations on his shoulders already, "which did help," he insists. "I



C.J. Risak

thought I was 100 percent better."

SO DID the Giants when they drafted him in the sixth round last spring. There was little doubt regarding Houle's potential. He started his career at MSU as a scout team tight end, signing late that recruiting year.

Only through diligent weight room training, Houle was the strongest of MSU's linemen, bench pressing well over 500 pounds — did he grow into a solid offensive tackle.

The Giants, desperate for offensive linemen they drafted two other tackles before Houle, moved him to center and happily watched him develop. At least until his shoulder miseries reoccurred.

"I've been in three different doctors," Houle said, adding that the prognosis was basically the same — give the game up, at least for now. "It ends up that my shoulders got hurt at the Giants' camp. I couldn't raise either arm. I have an impingement problem. Once it gets bad and starts acting up, it lasts a whole season."

"I can have another operation, but that's no guarantee I could play."

HIS PRO career is probably over, Houle realizes. But after years of punishing work to build himself into a top-flight player, he resists reality. "I suppose I never will give it up."

Please turn to Page 2