

Foes look to unseat Hawks, Glenn

Races could be tight

By Steve Kowalski
staff writer

CAN ANYBODY UNSEAT Westland John Glenn or will the Rockets repeat as the Western Lakes Activities Association football champion?

One assumption says it is Farmington Harrison's turn to win back the title. Glenn, a member of the Lakes Division, won the WLA crown in 1985. Harrison, the perennial Western Division power, claimed top honors the next year before Glenn won it a second time last fall.

Now it would seem to be Harrison's turn again. Or maybe it's time for North Farmington to claim the coveted crown. The Raiders were beaten by Harrison in the '88 finale and tied Glenn and Livonia Stevenson for first place in the Lakes Division last year at 4-1.

Glenn, North and Stevenson figure to be the top contenders in the Lakes Division. In the Western loop, Harrison could be challenged by improved ballclubs at Livonia Franklin and Livonia Churchill.

The following is a summary outlook for each of the WLA teams.

Lakes Division

NORTH FARMINGTON

The Raiders were division tri-champs last year, and a strong senior class should assure North of being contenders again. North was 7-2 overall, 4-1 in the Lakes.

Back for their senior campaigns are linebacksers Joe Sturtz and Zain Cummins. Sturtz, who also doubles as a tailback, was an All-WLA first team choice in '87. Cummins also plays offensive tackle and was an All-Lakes pick.

Senior Mike Filipovich, a backup quarterback last year but a starting monster-back on defense, makes the transition to full-time duty on offense. His main target will be senior Jerry Hakala. Other seniors with starting experience are Jason Moncks, a two-way lineman, and Ryan Seyburn, who started at both offensive guard and linebacker.

Lost to graduation were wide receivers Todd Gesund (Grand Valley) and Chad Henry, so depth at the skilled positions will be a concern.

PLYMOUTH SALEM

The Rocks reversed their gridiron fortunes last year, finishing the season at 6-3 after consecutive campaigns of 3-5.

All three of Salem's losses came in the Lakes, where the Rocks settled for fourth place at 2-3.

Salem must replace its entire offensive line, an area of concern for a team that runs out of the wishbone. Only two linemen with experience return for the Rocks, Rick VanDomeelen, who also plays line-backer, and Scott Sauter.

Junior Ryan Johnson, a starter at full-back last year, is likely to lead the starters line, though he could be challenged by junior Rob Kowalski. Kowalski started for the Rocks last year.

Salem doesn't throw much, but when it does, look for senior split end Chris Forsythe. Doug Parrish will start at fullback and also play defensive tackle for the Rocks.

Regardless of his status at quarterback, the 6-3, 215-pound Johnson will start for

Western Lakes

WALLED LAKE CENTRAL

Vikings coach Gary Tuz inherited a team last year that owned an eight-game losing streak. The number has reached 17, and Tuz doesn't care to count any higher.

"It's something we'd like to put behind us," he said. "Hopefully, it's a distinction that we won't have very long. You have to get over the hump of winning games that you lost, which you shouldn't have."

Seven starters return on both offense and defense for Central, including senior quarterback Derek Wallace, who tossed five touchdown passes in '87. Dennis Dymann (6-0, 190) All-Oakland County selection, returns at offensive tackle and defensive end.

Another one of Central's few pleasant surprises last year was junior fullback/linebacker Nick Kilner, who was brought up in the middle of the year.

Senior defensive tackle Tony Lasher is a bit imposing at 6-1 and 225, and junior Brian Buchan will return to play strong safety.

FARMINGTON

First-year Farmington coach Rick Milner discovered the obvious last winter when he took over the struggling football program.

"The cupboards were not full," said Milner, 29. "But it's not fair to our seniors to call it a rebuilding year. We're doing everything possible to win now."

Farmington is inexperienced throughout its lineup, with most of its depth coming in the offensive backfield. Senior Paul Wojtowich will be a dependable runner from his tailback position. Tackle Dan Dressler is the only returning offensive lineman with any experience.

Quarterback Eric Miller, a starter on the junior varsity last year, will play the position on the varsity.

Jason Gutting and Sam Tanari are a pair of juniors expected to be two-way linemen. Others that figure to see action are Matt Jones, tight end/defensive end, and Bill Woodster, wide receiver/free safety.

JOHN GLENN

With all the talent Glenn lost to graduation, you'd think coach Chuck Gordon was ready to call this a rebuilding year.

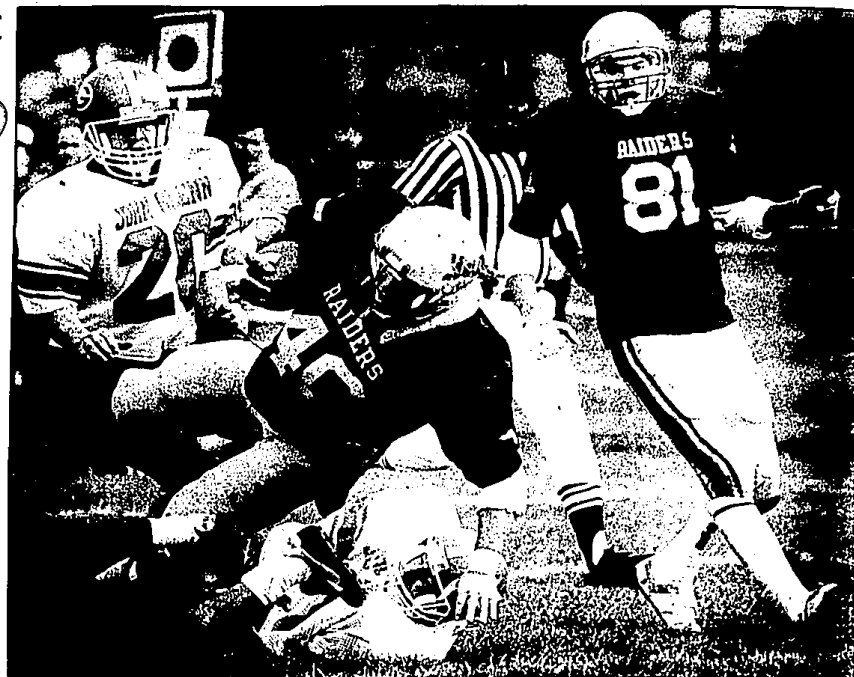
Glenn, which defeated Farmington Harrison in the title game, begins the season without quarterback Clint Straub, tight end Jeff Graham (Michigan State), and lineman Chris Schetter (Central Michigan). The only reason Straub isn't playing college football is because he signed at Western Michigan to play baseball.

But before counting Glenn out of this year's WLA title chase, remember Gordon never has had a losing season.

The Rockets are young, with just two starters returning on defense and one on offense. Bryant Saterlee will be the leader, moving from fullback to tailback on offense and returning to a linebacker position on defense.

"He doesn't have breakaway speed, but he's faster than you'd think," said Gordon.

The other returning starter for Gordon on defense is defensive back Dale Yanick.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Joe Sturtz (No. 40) of North Farmington is expected to carry much of the load for the Raiders, who hope to contend again

this season for the Western Lakes Activities Association football championship. North is coming off a 7-2 season.

Inheriting Straub's position at quarterback is Eric Stover, who has a good arm; the thing he lacks is experience," Gordon said. The fullback will be senior Andre Dixon.

The receiving group is led by Greg Anderson, a part-time starter in '87, and senior Casey Klingbeck. A pleasant surprise on the offensive line is Joe Williams, a senior tackle. Three players, Tim Kessler, Jeff Cooper and Dan Croft, are locked in a battle for the two guard positions.

Anderson, Klingbeck, Yanick and junior Brian Stephenson have secured positions in the secondary.

LIVONIA STEVENSON

The Spartans tied Glenn and North for first in the Lakes and were 7-2 overall. Stevenson isn't overwhelming on paper, with losses of Mike Nettie (Central Michigan) and Nick Pelouhoff (Saginaw Valley) in particular.

But coach Jack Reardon likes the Spartans' competitiveness, and he has a winner in tailback Rob Chanko, a tri-captain who broke four school records.

Chanko rushed for 979 yards and 12 touchdowns last year. Also returning for Stevenson are two-way tackles Eric Ruth and Joe Shymanski.

The quarterback position is unsettled, with senior Mike Delmonte and junior Jason Cotton vying for the job.

Western was 3-6 overall and placed fourth in the division at 2-3.

Appa said his best players, Bonar and Shoenne Scannell, are considerably stronger than they were last year. Bonar will start at offensive guard and Scannell, who played tight end in 1987, has converted to quarterback this fall. Both players also anchor Western's defense from their inside linebacker positions.

Appa is excited about Scannell's versatility and anticipates a line season from him.

"He could be a running back, a lot of different things," Appa said. "He's three times better and much stronger than he was last year, and I think he's one of the best in Oakland County."

The Warriors have seven starters returning on defense. Back for their senior seasons in the secondary are John Engoli, Mark Kocis and Brent Liddy.

Appa expects senior outside linebacker Aaron Emmott to add to an already strong linebacking corps.

PLYMOUTH CANTON

The Chiefs have not enjoyed a winning football season in 16 years of the school's existence. Veteran coach Bob Kheone likes the Chiefs to finally get going.

"Sooner or later, there has got to be a group of kids who say, 'Hey, let's get this done and set a better standard for Canton,'" Kheone said. "That's what we're hoping for."

Kheone welcomes back 19 lettermen on a team that was 3-6 overall and tied for last in the Western Division with Northville at 1-4.

Eight starters return on defense, led by the senior linebacking tandem of Scott Schwartz and Bruce Hermanson. Anchoring the secondary are seniors Jim Young and Kevin Steckpoole. Greg Westlake (6-1, 195) returns at a down line-man position.

Offensively, the Chiefs will suffer from inexperience, Kheone said. Gone is speedy tailback Roger Trico. The fullback position is solid, however, with the 6-foot, 175-pound Young returning for his second year as a starter.

At quarterback, Kheone has settled on junior Jason Demby, who played on the junior varsity in 1987.

"He's a thrower as opposed to a runner, but he can run because he's a very good athlete," Kheone said.

NORTHVILLE

The Mustangs tied Canton for last place in the Western Division, and coach Darrel Schumacher hopes for a modest improvement. Northville was 2-7 overall.

"We'd love to say we're contenders, but we're probably middle of the pack," said Schumacher. "When you've got Farmington Harrison in your division, things start tough right there. Livonia Franklin will challenge, and I think Canton has a lot of talent this year."

Five starters return on both sides of the line of scrimmage, with senior outside linebacker Mike Hala being the most impressive of the returnees. The three-year starter made first-team All-WLA and Schumacher calls him one of the better linebackers in the area.

Returning in the secondary for Northville is 5-foot, 175-pound senior Mike Karls, an all-Western Division selection. A-ho back is Sam Khashan at strong safety.

Senior quarterback Greg Price highlights the list of starters returning on offense. Price (6-3, 190) gained valuable experience last fall, as did split end Dave Cryderman. Also returning is Todd Daniels, a three-year starter at fullback. Daniels also will see action at linebacker.

Dave Felicelli (6-1, 215) will line up at tackle again, and Sean Siewers (6-3, 190) returns to his tight position. Northville is bigger than recent years, but the Mustangs still have trouble matching



BILL BRISLER/staff photographer

Ryan Johnson is only a junior, but will lead the Plymouth Salem Rocks into battle this season in quest of a WLA crown.

up against most WLA teams, according to Schumacher.

"For Northville, we've got decent size," he said. "We're much bigger than we've been in the past. But not as big as the rest of the teams."

LIVONIA CHURCHILL

The most veteran team in the area undoubtedly belongs to Churchill, which could start 19 seniors. Coming off a 4-5 campaign, the Chargers might be the team to watch.

All 11 starters on offense are seniors, led by split end and placekicker Jason Seanie Eric Olsen (6-2, 195) returns at quarterback, and Jeff Zawicki, a breakaway threat, will line up at tailback.

One of the two junior starters on defense is Trent Kaurischell, who may be the team's quickest athlete, coach Herb Osterland said. Junior Mike Juodawicki, who played last year as a sophomore, will split time at tight end with senior Jim Stoltz.

But the Chargers' success will be determined by their senior class.

"It's up to the seniors, where they want to go with their experience," Osterland said. "I'm not going to put myself on the spot, but these kids are capable of playing good football. They're not quitters."

Other players who should make a contribution to Churchill's success include safety/tight end Rob Moraschenoff, 255-pound lineman Jeff Bralrow, and two-way lineman Neil Clemens.

The Patriots were 5-4 a year ago, finishing second to Harrison in the Western Division at 3-2. Improvement means knocking off perennial state Class B power Harrison.

The Patriots won't meet the Hawks until the fourth week of the season, Sept. 24, at home.

"I won't know how we can do against Harrison until I see how we play in our first two games (against Lansing Sexton and Livonia Stevenson)," said 14-year coach Armand Vigna. "You're 100 percent right, though, about beating Harrison."

Vigna has a quarterback dilemma that may never be solved. Will he use senior Craig Allard, an option quarterback, who started all nine games last fall? Or will he go with strong-armed Jeff Roth, who improved in the off-season? Or will he alternate both?

"I'm tempted to use both, although the two-quarterback system is tough," Vigna said. "I'm tinkering with the idea. That's the question mark."

The Patriots have depth at the skilled positions, where running back Brian Drabick returns. Also back is Joseph Rankley, a senior flanker, and split end Michael Patschke, who also picks punts.

On defense, Franklin will call upon Scott Mayle to plug holes on the defensive line. Mayle (6-10, 225) is one of the strongest Patriots. Greg Pead, who was an All-Division choice, returns at inside linebacker.



STEVE FECHT/staff photographer

Churchill coach Herb Osterland eyes improvement over last year's 4-5 record. The Chargers are members of the Western Division of the WLA.

Western Division

FARMINGTON HARRISON

Only three starters return offensively for the Class B state runnerup, but one-third of the trio is quarterback Millard Coleman. Good news for Harrison, bad news for the rest of the teams in the WLA.

Coleman directed Harrison to an 11-2 record and he returns for his junior campaign along with senior split end Chad Burgess and senior tight end Bryan Wauldon.

In Coleman, the Hawks have one of the state's premier quarterbacks. An elusive runner and line passer, the 5-foot-9, 166-pound Coleman threw for 2,087 yards, completing 112 of 204 passes, including 17 for touchdowns.

Burgess caught 30 of Coleman's passes for 538 yards and five TDs. The 6-2 Wauldon emerged as Harrison's big play threat, catching 29 passes for a 24.6 yard average and six TDs.

Question marks remain on the offensive line, where Harrison lost five starters to graduation. Top candidates to play up front are tackles John Kennedy and Dale Katz, and guards Mark Sillor and Jeff Skinner.

The line will try to open holes for Coleman and running back Matt Conley, who last year carried the ball 50 times for 236 yards in a part-time role.

Defensively, coach John Herrington will be without nine of last year's starters, but Burgess returns in the secondary after leading the team with eight interceptions.

Also back is interior lineman Jeff Skinner. Steve Hill will handle the placekicking duties after converting 46 of 48 extra points a year ago.

WALLED LAKE WESTERN

One of Western's players, Steve Bonar, bulked up over the winter and can bench press 420 pounds.

But will the rigorous off-season weightlifting program employed by coach Chuck Appa be enough to lift the rest of Western's team into the elite class of the Western Division?