

Final weekend filled with suspense

By Dan O'Meara and Brad Emmons staff writers

THE 1990 HIGH SCHOOL football season is going down to the wire on two fronts. The last weekend of the regular season holds the key for area teams hoping to make the post-season playoffs.

But undoubtedly of greater interest to fans and readers alike, Week No. 9 will determine this year's prognostication — not to be confused with procrastination — champion. While sports editor will have office bragging rights for the next year — Brad Emmons or Dan O'Meara?

Five of the 12 games involving Observerland teams this week have playoff implications. Westland John Glenn, Wayne Memorial, Plymouth Canton, Plymouth Salem, Farmington Hills Harrison, Redford Bishop Borgess and Redford Catholic Central are either headed for post-season play, can clinch a playoff berth or greatly enhance their chances by winning the last game.

Glenn and Wayne play each other, and Canton and Salem meet in their annual season finale. So two area teams will benefit at the expense of other area squads.

Harrison will probably still qualify in the unlikely event of an upset by host Standish-Stirling, a 3-5 team.

Borgess and CC have uphill battles Sunday against Birmingham Brother Rice and Detroit DePores, respectively, in the Catholic League's annual Prep Bowl at the Pontiac Silverdome.

On the prediction scene, O'Meara

enters the final weekend with a two-game lead over Emmons.

O'Meara went 13-2 last week while Emmons was 11-4, breaking the previous stalemate. For the season, O'Meara is 97-23 and Emmons 95-25.

After a poor showing in September, O'Meara has rallied in October. Surely, it must have been the mid-season vacation that cleared the cobwebs from the crystal ball (or should we say the brain).

Perhaps he really did return from the Auld Sod with an unfair advantage, the leprechauns according to his pleas for help in his bid to unseat defending champion Emmons.

O'Meara figures he can't lose now, not with the mothers of the Harrison football players rooting for him. Emmons is a formidable opponent, however, and at least two thirds of this week's games can be considered toss-ups.

For a closer look at who's favored and who's not this week, read on:

FRIDAY'S GAMES (all times at 7:30 p.m.)

Red, Thurston at Liv, Clarencville: The host Trojans (4-4) finished fifth in the eight-team Metro Conference (3-4) and Thurston sixth in the Tri-Valley League (2-5). The Eagles are 2-6 for the season. Clarencville lost 10-6 to Luthersen last week, while Thurston is coming off a 14-1 loss to Greenwood. PICK: Clintrick Harrison leads the Trojans to a winning season, according to O'Meara, but Emmons likes Thurston's chances.

Liv, Churchill at Liv, Stevenson: The Spartans also hope to finish above .500 after losing Waldo Lake Western 14-11 last week and improving to 4-4. Churchill has one last chance to register its first victory. Farmington did that last week when it beat the Chargers 21-13. PICK: Stevenson.

grid predictions

son isn't too sympathetic to Churchill's plight, both agree.

Liv, Franklin at Garden City: The Patriots have won two in a row, including a 21-6 win over Waldo Lake Central last week, and would like to end the year at 4-5. Garden City was shut out by Clankton 45-0, falling to 3-5. PICK: Ben would be proud of Franklin's finish, both agree.

Wayne Memorial at Westland Glenn: The Rockets (7-1) were stunned by Harrison in the Western Lakes Activities Association championship game Saturday (29-0). They don't want to lose, back-to-back games. Furthermore, the Rockets have the playoffs for motivation, but so does Wayne. The Zebras (6-2) were third in Class AA Region II but dropped after losing to Monroe. They're in a must-win situation and must have help in addition. Glenn was No. 1 in the same region but stands a good chance if it wins. Everybody in the region has two losses except for Glenn, Canton, Battle Creek Central and Ypsilanti — all once-beaten teams. PICK: Ben sees the Rockets finishing 8-1.

Farmington at Redford Union: Farmington (1-7) got its first win for first-year coach Bernie Call last week and could make it two straight to end the season. The Panthers (2-6) were beaten 27-6 by Waterford Mori, but they still count a victory over Dearborn Edgel Ford among their successes. PICK: RU takes a turn at winning, both agree.

Ply, Canton at Ply, Salem: A win almost certainly puts Canton (7-1) in the playoffs. Even with a loss, the Chiefs might qualify, but they'd be pressing their

luck. The Rocks (6-2) have an outside chance at making the playoffs, but a victory is absolutely necessary. The situation entering this game parallels that of a year ago. Both teams were 7-1, but Canton was higher in the playoff ratings. In that game, Salem rocked the Chiefs 25-0 and barely missed making the playoffs itself. PICK: Both cast a vote for Canton.

N. Farmington at South Lyon: This game is one of those toss-ups. At least, that's the way it appears on paper. North Farmington has a tough year for St. Agatha, which dropped to 1-7 in letting Dearborn St. Alphonsus take its first win last week, 14-13. Holy Redeemer (1-7) is still trying to build a program after not playing football for some years. The Lions lost to Wyandotte Mount Carmel 13-8 last week and defeated Cardinal Moorey for their only win. PICK: The Aggies still have enough to beat Holy Redeemer, both agree.

W.L. Western at W.L. Central: The home team has scored first and won each of the last three meetings between these two teams. The Vikings have the better record at 2-6. But the Warriors (1-7) have the edge in talent with Jeff Kubik and Chad Piller leading the charge. PICK: It's unanimous. The home streak is snapped as the Warriors put it out.

SATURDAY'S GAMES

Det. Luthersen West at Luth. Westland: 1 p.m.: Luthersen West (6-2) crushed Cranbrook 42-6 last week to finish third in the Metro Conference. The host Warriors (5-3) punned in North Branch Wesleyan last week. Luthersen Westland will have to stop running back Damon Butler, who rushed for 183 yards and two TDs in West's victory. PICK: The Leopards win this match between fellow Luthersens, both agree.

Farm, Harrison at Standish-Stirling: 4 p.m.: The Hawks (7-1) caused a lot of people to believe in them again after their

impressive win over Glenn. Standish is a Class B school with an enrollment of 580. The Panthers defeated Saginaw Buena Vista 31-20 last week but are only 3-5 for the year. Standish played other tough teams, losing to Chequamegon and Plover, both unbeaten teams in Class BB.

Region I PICK: O'Meara and Emmons agree: It's Harrison hands down.

Red, St. Agatha vs. Det. Holy Redeemer: 7:30 p.m. at RUI's Kraft Field: It's been a tough year for St. Agatha, which dropped to 1-7 in letting Dearborn St. Alphonsus take its first win last week, 14-13. Holy Redeemer (1-7) is still trying to build a program after not playing football for some years. The Lions lost to Wyandotte Mount Carmel 13-8 last week and defeated Cardinal Moorey for their only win. PICK: The Aggies still have enough to beat Holy Redeemer, both agree.

SUNDAY'S GAMES

Red, Bishop Borgess vs. Birm. Brother Rice: 1 p.m. at the Silverdome: It will be a bit of an odd game, with the Spartans (6-2) meet Rice (6-2). Borgess, a former Central Division member now in the Tri-Sectional, was tri-champion with Saginaw Newell and Orchard Lake St. Mary's but got the playoff nod because of a better point differential. The Warriors have lost only to Ypsilanti and CC. The playoffs enter the picture here, too. Rice was fourth in its region last week and should qualify in Class A II if it wins. Borgess, seventh in Class B Region IV a week ago, definitely needs a victory and could jump considerably by beating a Class A team with six wins. PICK: Rice goes to the playoffs instead.

Red, Catholic Central vs. Det. DePores: 7 p.m. at the Silverdome: The Catholic League championship is at stake in this game, a rematch of an earlier meeting this season. DePores (8-0) won that game 30-0. The Eagles, who are in the Class CC playoffs, have enough points to qualify as a AA team in some regions. The Shamrocks (6-2) definitely need a win to qualify in Class AA Region II, but they'll need some help from other teams if they do. PICK: Emmons predicts CC to avenge its loss to DePores. The Eagles' speed on the carpet will be too hard to stop, says O'Meara.

Victory boosts Harrison stock

Farmington Hills Harrison gained added respect Saturday when it defeated Westland John Glenn by a convincing, 28-0 margin to win the Western Lakes Activities Association championship.

The Hawks are 7-1 overall and have won seven straight since losing the season opener to Class CC power Detroit DePores, 18-15.

Harrison jumped to No. 2 in the Class BB poll and is third in its playoff region behind Mount Clemens, Clintonville and Allen Park. Auburn Hills Avondale is No. 4.

"When we lost to DePores, a lot of people counted us out," coach John Herrington said. "But they don't realize how good they are. We were young at the time and have improved."

"This year we didn't think we were favored to win the division. We played some bad football early in the year — not bad football, but we made mistakes — and now we're starting to come together."

The Hawks (7-1) should qualify for the playoffs regardless of what happens Saturday, when they play at Standish-Stirling. The Panthers are 3-5 and haven't had the kind of year they envisioned when they agreed to play Harrison.

For the seniors, it's a once-in-a-lifetime thing," said coach Paul Wadewick, in his 13th year at Standish. "It's a great opportunity for us and the people up here to see a team such as Harrison."

Standish was 8-1 last year and 7-2 the previous two years. The Class-B Panthers were 1-5 in the Northeast Michigan Conference, beating Gladwin (38-7) and losing to once-beaten Plover, West Branch, Ogemaw Heights, Tawas and Oscoda.

The Plover and Oscoda games ended in one-point losses. Standish lost the season opener to unbeaten Chequamegon — a playoff-bound team in BB — and defeated Chequamegon and Saginaw Buena Vista.

Quarterback Pete Suminski suffered a bruised knee three weeks ago in the Tawas game and is done for the year. Jacob Coquillard replaced him and passed for 106 yards and two touchdowns against BVM.

Standish's top linemen are center Chris Niedzwiecki (5-10, 175), tackle Ray Kraatz (6-4, 270) and tight end Ken Nelson (6-4, 222).

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