

CC tackles giant killer

By Steve Kowalski
staff writer

Christmas is more than a month away and already Saginaw football coach George Genyk feels he has received a most treasured gift: a date Saturday with Redford Catholic Central.

Kickoff for the Class AA semifinal playoff game is set for 3:30 p.m. at Flint's Atwood Stadium.

"This is like Christmas," said Genyk, the seventh-year coach. "It's exciting, something I've worked very hard toward. CC has the tradition, quite a bit of depth and all the ingredients. It's an honor to step on the field with them."

Always a state basketball power, Saginaw is making its first trip to the football state playoffs a memorable one. The Trojans, 10-1 overall, opened with an overtime win over defending Class A champ Muskegon and last week rallied to oust three-time winner Traverse City, 28-14.

IF YOU'RE impressed by that, consider both wins came on the road. Also consider that Muskegon yielded only 25 points all year before Saginaw won the shootout, 33-27.

CC, 9-2 overall, has had an easier road, beating Ypsilanti and Plymouth Canton by a combined score of 52-28.

"We did it the hard way," Genyk said. Most of Genyk's seven years at Saginaw have been a struggle. The Trojans were combined 4-23 in his first three years before going 6-3 in 1987. It has been all uphill since.

"I think now we realize what it takes to be successful," Genyk said. "There was a real losing mentality there (in 1984). As far as attitude in the early years, a lot of our victories were not on the scoreboard. They were in our attitudes, fundamentally developing and playing the game."

CC HELD OFF an explosive Canton team, 35-22 last week for the Region II championship. The Shamrocks ran expect a similar wide-open offense from Saginaw — only it's more dangerous.

Saginaw runs out of an inverted wishbone offense, one which has a tendency to spread defenses, according to CC coach Tom Mach. Running the offense is 5-foot-10 senior quarterback Jamie Lay, who has completed

89-of-142 passes for 1,529 yards and 16 touchdowns. Lay is a double threat, having also run for about 500 yards and 13 TDs.

Senior Eric Smith, 6-foot, 220, has gained most of his 675 rushing yards from tailback, but will line up at fullback, according to Genyk. Greg Pritchett, who gained 96 yards last week against Traverse City, will play tailback.

WIDE RECEIVERS Daniel West and Terrance McMillan each are Division I prospects and caught 48 passes combined during the regular season. McMillan caught seven passes for 82 yards against Muskegon and five for 86 yards against Traverse City.

The Atwood playing surface is artificial and that makes no difference to Mach.

"These guys are fast on (artificial) turf or grass," Mach said. "They are talented and the quarterback (Lay) may be the most talented we've faced all year. They've got you spread out over the place and that would be very comfortable with Saginaw."

An interesting matchup could take place between CC's 6-2, 215-pound senior fullback Jon Barbara and Smith, who also plays on Saginaw's defensive line. Smith goes by the nickname "Tank."

"What a tiger," Genyk said of Barbara. "It'll be a good matchup between him and 'Tank.' That's the one who really helped us shut down Traverse City."

ONE OF SAGINAW'S defensive tackles is Roshawn Williams, a 6-8, 270-pound senior.

"This whole season, we've been outweighed, from King to (Detroit St. Martin) DePorres," said Barbara, who leads CC with 666 yards on 149 carries. "But we keep on winning. We've got confidence in our defense to get us where we want to go. The D makes the big play and our offense will take it in. We know we have two more to play and there's no state title without a victory."

Defensive tackle Rob Sylvester, an All-Catholic choice for CC, lines up next to Gary Gurgold, who leads CC's defense with 81 total tackles. The Shamrocks are strong at the ends with Brian Chaney and Dave Dominick. Mach is hoping to have injured seniors Mike Thomas (at fullback/defensive back) and Jack Davidson (wide receiver/defensive back) back in the lineup.

Both were expected to practice this week, Mach said.

Top-ranked teams collide

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HARRISON'S DEFENSE was expected a test from Avondale's veer-offense offense, but the first-year unit held the Rhinos to three yards rushing. It's the balance in Oxford's offense, however, that concerns Herrington and defensive coordinator Bob Sutter.

First-round opponent Mount Clemens Clintondale was dangerous because of its passing attack, and Avondale was strictly a running team. The Wildcats seem to be a little better at both.

A difference between Harrison and the Wildcats is that Oxford runs the fullback more. Lee Fragoos (6-3, 200) rushed 21 times for 117 yards and three TDs in Oxford's thrashing of Hartland last week, giving him over 600 yards and 10 touchdowns for the season. Dustin Rust (6-4, 230), a three-year starter at center, and guard Eric Ebeling (6-0, 190) are the top linemen.

"We gotta commit a lot of people to the option, and that leaves people open for passes," Herrington said. "So we think it will be a big game for our secondary."

Senior end Chris Laidlaw (5-9, 150) has caught 38 passes for 580 yards and four TDs. In Oxford's swingback Dave Berny (6-1, 190) is on the other side of formation.

"We feel we've got two wideouts who catch the ball nice," Rowley said. "They're not big and fast, but they do the job. We have three nice tight ends. We feel we've got some offensive threats there."

JUNIOR HALFBACK Dan Hight has six interceptions and is among the top Harrison tacklers. Senior

football

FARMINGTON HARRISON

15	Detroit DePorres	18
53	Walled Lake Central	12
21	Plymouth Canton	15
21	Livonia Churchill	0
14	Northville	7
35	Livonia Franklin	0
35	Walled Lake Western	0
29	Westland John Glenn	0
54	Standish-Stirling	0
22	Mt. Clemens Clintondale	19
48	Auburn Hills Avondale	16
347	10-1-0	67

OXFORD

42	Holly	8
40	Linden	0
35	Lapeer East	0
34	Lakeville	14
41	Durand	6
22	Lapeer West	3
35	Millford	2
28	Mount Morris	6
21	Fenton	20
20	PLAYOFFS	19
47	Marshall	9
365	Hartland	106
	11-0-0	

safety Andy Smith has picked off five passes, and junior monsterback Greg Piscopink is an all-league player.

Senior linebacker Blazo Sarceovich (6-3, 230) became Harrison's all-time leading tackler this season. He has 126 tackles this year and 286 during

his four-year varsity career, surpassing Sam Pink, who established the old record of 273 from 1971-74.

"The defense is really a team defense, but he's the leader of it," Herrington said. "He leads by example. He gets to the ball and prevents the big run."

The Hawks hope to make their offense a good defense Saturday. With Devine running the ball, a 204-pounds-per-man line blocking and Magdevski providing a credible passing threat, the Hawks have been nearly as efficient on offense as in previous years.

"We want to get the power game going and, like the Canton game, keep the ball away from their offense," Herrington said. "It's hard to say (if Harrison can pass with success) because Hartland runs the wishbone and didn't throw much. But they must have a pretty good secondary; otherwise, they wouldn't have won 11-0."

Fedorinich doubles as a cornerback on defense. The other two-way players are Fragoos at end, guard/tackle Nick Neira (6-0, 195) and tight end/linebacker Mike Jensen (6-0, 190).

Oxford has limited seven opponents to one TD or less, and its leading tacklers are defensive end Jason Boose (6-3, 200) and linebacker Carl Reeves, a 6-2, 210-pound sophomore.

"We don't have a Blazo Sarceovich, but we've got some players," Rowley said. "I think (the success of the defense is due to) the kids' desire to play; the kids liking to play defense."

Hawks provide opposition in Oxford's big test

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Oxford's football team is having its finest season ever, and Saturday it will play the biggest game in school history.

The unbeaten Wildcats (11-0) will oppose two-time defending state champion Farmington Hills Harrison (10-1) in a Class BB semifinal game at 3:30 p.m. in Jackson Wingham Stadium.

I suppose if you want to be the best, you have to beat the best," Oxford coach Bud Rowley said. "And by all means Farmington Harrison is the best."

The winner earns a trip to the Silverdome for the championship game at 8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 21, against the winner of the Cheboygan-Dowagiac semifinal being played Saturday in Grand Rapids.

"This is something, a once-in-a-lifetime thing for us," Rowley said. "(Harrison coach) John

Herrington is there every year. The last two years have been banner years for Oxford football."

IT SEEMS like the Hawks have been there every year. Harrison is trying for its fourth straight appearance in the state finals and seventh overall. The Hawks have set their sights on a possible third consecutive state title and fifth overall.

"The hardest game of the tournament is always the semifinal, which gets you to the Dome and is the goal of everybody," Herrington said. "Sometimes there's more pressure than the final."

Saturday's game matches the top-ranked teams in Class BB against each other, too. The Hawks ended the regular season No. 1, the Wildcats No. 2.

Harrison, the top preseason team, went from one to none after losing its first game to Detroit St. Martin DePorres. Oxford became the new No. 1 and held that position until the final ranking.

The Hawks, who beat playoff qualifiers Plym-

football

outh Canton and Northville by a touchdown each early in the season, worked their way back into the ratings and jumped ahead of Oxford after finishing with eight straight wins.

I think we've progressed tremendously since double overtime," Herrington said. "The team has developed a toughness and a never-quit attitude. The seniors wanted to show they could still play football without (former all-state quarterback) Mui(Coleman)."

Oxford had three one-point victories over Flint Metro League members Lapeer West and Fenton in the regular season and Marshall in the first round of the playoffs. They enter Saturday's game

following a 74-point thrashing of a big, strong Hartland team.

"THEY WERE a helluva football team," Rowley said. "Our kids played well. They were pumped up and did the things they were told."

While nobody on the Oxford schedule is the caliber of a Harrison, according to Rowley, the Wildcats won't easily concede Saturday.

"Any time you pull out (a close game) it builds kids' confidence in what you're doing and in themselves," Rowley said. "Ninety-five percent of football is mental. We're 11-0 and we play good football. Two fine football teams will be battling it out. It'll be a full-out war."

Oxford made the playoffs for the second straight year, but last year was its first experience in post-season play. The Wildcats lost 28-14 to East Grand Rapids in a regional final, and Harrison beat EGR the following week 3-2 on a covered Flint Atwood Stadium.

The Wildcats were 6-2 last year and 6-3 the pre-

vious year after four straight 7-2 seasons.

"If you can win more than you lose every year, you're doing a real good job," Rowley said. "There was no way in our wildest dreams we thought we'd be 11-0. We knew we'd be there for the league championship, but we didn't know we'd be 11-0 and playing Harrison in the semifinals."

HAVING PLAYED the last four years at Atwood, Herrington is glad Harrison is going to Jackson, which also has an artificial surface.

"We had such bad experiences there, they decided not to penalize Region 4 again," he said. "The carpet is no good. Any time you run near the scoreboard you fall down because the nap all goes one way."

"At this time of the year, you're taking a chance (playing on grass). It's beautiful right now but it could start snowing Friday night. Plus, if you win, you have experience on turf before going to the Dome."

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