

Falcons from page 1C

They were close last year, losing twice in overtime and 7-0 to Lakes Division champ Livonia Stevenson.

If not for a loss to Plymouth Canton on the eighth Friday, Farmington would have qualified but finished fifth in its region.

"We were right there," Niakanen said. "We want to get in the playoffs and do something in the playoffs. But it's going to be tough to get in because of the teams in our region."

A factor in Farmington's favor is senior tailback Jake Siskosky (6-1, 190). He rushed for a school-record 1,163 yards and 12 touchdowns while averaging 5.3 yards per carry.

The All-Observer player will play two ways again, moving from free safety, where he caught a break from the heavy work he did on offense, to outside linebacker.

"We expect Jake to have a great year," Niakanen said, "not only offensively but also defensively. He's a hands-on player; he has to be up there in close contact. Offensively, we're going to give him the ball."

While opponents will key on stepping Siskosky, senior quarterback Tim Streit (5-10, 172) and senior fullback Nick Latra (6-0, 185) will try to offset that fact.

Streit has a full season of starting experience behind him, passing for 465 yards and three TDs while completing 28 of 65 passes.

"He's confident in what he does; he's a leader," Niakanen

said, adding Streit is a 4.0 student. "Because he's an outstanding student in the class, he's also an outstanding student of the game."

Latra was a backup to Ryan Lewis but rushed for as many yards (224) and a touchdown on 39 carries. Like Siskosky, he's an all-round athlete who plays basketball and baseball.

"When the game is on the line, he wants the ball in his hands," Niakanen said. "Not that he doesn't practice well, but he's a gamer."

Latra can run the trap and dive plays and Streit throws a nice quick pass, according to Niakanen, but there's no doubt Siskosky will see the ball most.

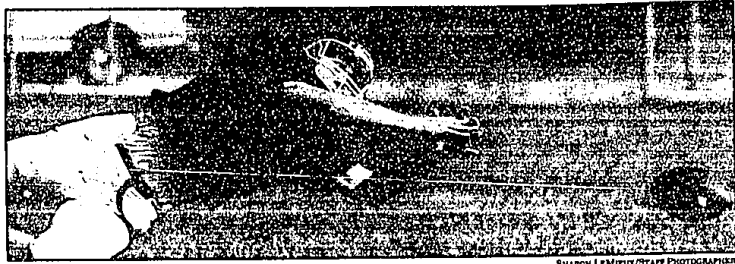
"We'll run play-action and bootleg to take the pressure off Jake," Niakanen said, "but in the information people have to stop the I-back."

Niakanen is positive about the running game because of a good offensive line, too.

Senior Adam Taniellan moves from guard to center and is a Division I prospect at 6-foot-3 and 272 pounds.

"Size-wise, he's there, but a lot depends on what he does this year," Niakanen said, adding Taniellan also snaps on extra points and field goals. "Sometimes that's the difference between a partial scholarship and no scholarship."

Senior Patrick Seremet (5-8,



SHARON LAMER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

196) trades places with Taniellan and will play left guard.

"He's a great example of a kid in our program," Niakanen said. "He started out at 138 pounds. Most kids would have hung it up, but he stuck it out and ended up starting last season."

The right side has senior Justin Fisher (6-1, 216) at guard and senior Mike Foreman (6-4, 250) at tackle. Junior Scott Smartt (6-1, 182) will play left tackle.

"Jake is only as good as those guys up front," Niakanen said.

Tight end is a new position for junior Adam Weber (6-4, 191), who will rotate with seniors Dave Dilworth (6-3, 185) and Matt Niakanen (6-2, 182) since all three will be needed on defense. Tim Wheelis caught 16 passes last year but has graduated. Next among pass catchers was Dilworth with four receptions.

The wide receivers will be sen-

iors Wes Cornwell (6-0, 168) and Dan McLaughlin (6-0, 150).

"We'll mix in play-action passes, screens and draws, so we have a full complement of plays to offend anyone ganging up on us," Niakanen said.

Defense was Farmington's strength last year, but the Falcons must replace the front seven in their 5-2.

Junior Nick Bieri (5-9, 222) is the new noseguard, senior Kyle Dubuc (6-9, 178) and Fisher the tackles, Siskosky and Weber the outside linebackers.

Taniellan and Foreman will probably play up front in goal-line situations.

The Falcons have a handful of candidates at inside linebacker—Niakanen, Dilworth, seniors Tom Mandoux (5-9, 167), Nick Brown (5-9, 168), Ben Lewis (6-10, 193) and Matt Hickey (5-11, 174) as well as junior Mike Johnston (6-0, 163).

"With the scheme we play up front, we think we'll be able to cause havoc and turnovers," Niakanen said. "Because we have so many candidates, we have great competition. If one guy doesn't do the job, we move the next guy in there."

Latra, who had a team-high four interceptions and is the top returning tackler (36), is back at strong safety, and Cornwell moves to free safety from halfback.

Junior Corey Fernandes (5-6, 143) and McLaughlin are the cornerbacks. Seniors Andre Monge (5-8, 164), Don Phillips (5-8, 160) and Jon Hoad (5-10, 171) are secondary backups.

Hoad returns as the punter and also will do the placekicking. "The defense is unproven, but overall I think we might be as good or better," Niakanen said. "We just have to play great team defense. I think our kids will get after you."

Role reversal: Senior quarterback Tim Streit will be distributing the football for Farmington High again, but he was on the receiving end of a pass play this time.

The variety also includes: quarterbacks Sean Urquhart (senior) and Jared Fitzpatrick (junior), junior running backs Brian Sawulski and Matt Ostachy, senior receiver Aaron Phillips, centers Chad Fernandez (junior) and Matt Taylor (senior), guard Pete Hutchinson (senior), Paul Bojicic (junior) and Aram Sahler (junior); junior tackles David Kim and Jason Cavochioli, junior defensive lineman Josh Richardson and senior linebacker Bert Davis.

Farmington begins the season Saturday, Sept. 2, at home against Waterford Mott and then plays Livonia Churchill in the Western Lakes crossover game.

"Last year we thought we had to win to turn the program around," Niakanen said, "and now we have to win and get in the playoffs. I won't say how many we have to win, but we have to win."

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17	Westland John Glenn	20
28	Walled Lake Central	21
0	Livonia Stevenson	7
21	Plymouth Canton	23
28	Lakeland	3
169	6-8-0	112

The games with Westland John Glenn and Livonia Stevenson were decided in overtime. The Falcons were 2-2 in the Lakes Division.

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