

Hawks

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The starters returning up front are senior Ed Hight (6-1, 182) and juniors Brian Lewis (6-1, 240) and Mike Fisher (6-3, 240).

Lewis moves from guard to center and is replaced by junior Matt Struble (6-2, 185); Hight is back at guard and Fisher tackle. Anchoring the other side of the line is senior tackle Francis Gajcaj (6-3, 285).

"That's our strength," Herrington said of the line, adding senior Joe Parrelly (6-2, 190) will play a lot, also. "It's one of the biggest we've had. They still have to prove themselves, but they have the potential to be very good."

"Lewis and Fisher are still maturing; they're only juniors but played all the time last year, and Hight is a very physical player."

Senior Nick Shaleh (5-9, 190) has recovered from a broken arm that caused him to miss the playoff game and returns at upback. He rushed for 239 yards and five TDs.

The Hawks might run the upback more and even use Gajcaj at that position in goal-line situations, according to Herrington.

Junior and former quarterback Zack Cornwell (5-11, 190) returns to football as Shaleh's

backup and the replacement for All-Area kicker Kyle Vessell.

Cornwell is the first straight-on kicker since all-star Dave Blackmer. Sophomore Joe Ghanam will do the punting.

Sophomore tight end Mike Head (6-1, 190) is inexperienced but a good all-round athlete, according to Herrington.

Sophomore Ricky Bryant (5-11, 150) has experience at wide receiver and is a skilled, acrobatic pass catcher. Harrison has a good backup and depth in junior Kareem Smartt (6-0, 165).

Senior Adam Smerecki (6-0, 175) has alternated at swing-back for three seasons and is a good blocker out of the power-I.

"The offense will be very solid," Herrington said. "It may not be spectacular but will be efficient. With the line and kids we have (in the backfield), we should be able to move the football."

"I think we'll count on a strong defense and field position and rely more on the passing game."

On defense, the Hawks could draw comparisons with past Harrison defenses that were so stingy against the run.

"It should be as good as we've had since '91 (when the Hawks won the Class BB state title)," Herrington said.

"We've been a little soft against run the last few years, and I think it will be stronger. At this point, we look to be better on defense than offense."

Gajcaj and Shaleh were All-Observers players at tackle and linebacker with 92 and 84 stops, respectively. Hight, the other inside linebacker, was the leading tackler with 117.

"Francis is a force to be reckoned with," Herrington said. "He's physical and quick for a guy 280."

"Shaleh is one of the best we've had. He has a great nose for the ball and is an outstanding leader. Ed is a no-fear type of kid who loves contact."

Fisher has experience at the other tackle, and Herrington expects him to be much improved. Junior Shawn Mayberry (6-5, 180) is the typical Harrison megawatt -- small and quick, Herrington said. "He's a kid who will go hard every play and go from sideline to sideline."

Lewis goes from being a backup linebacker to starting strong-side end. Senior Chris Burgess (6-1, 165) will play the weakside position.

"We're inexperienced at end, but we have athletes there," Herrington said. "Defensive end is the most difficult position in our defensive scheme, and it's some-

thing we have to work hard on."

The secondary has experienced players but has to play better than it has, according to Herrington.

Smerecki is a three-year starter at monster, Bryant moves from halfback to free safety and Sarafeld will play halfback. The cornerback will be either Chris Ghanam or Knox.

Harrison should be among the Western Division contenders, but Walled Lake Western and Livonia Franklin are worthy opponents. The Hawks had to rally to beat Franklin last year, 22-21.

The season starts Friday, Sept. 6, at Oxford. Harrison visits North Farmington on Sept. 13 and ends the regular season as host to defending Class B champ Detroit Country Day on Saturday, Nov. 2.

"If we get (to the league final), I think we have a good chance," Herrington said, "but it's going to be very tough in our division. We may not see anyone go undefeated in our division."

As for a possible 16th playoff appearance, "you never know about the other teams in the region," he added. "Some years 6-3 will get you in, and some years 7-2 doesn't."

"If we jell, I think we will have a team worthy of the playoffs."

Trojans have talented backs but need help on line

By BRAD EWING
STAFF WRITER

At first glance, Livonia Clarenceville's football fortunes will ride with the talented running back duo of Donahue Fulton and Walter Ragland.

But third-year coach Chuck Donaldson knows better. It's the line play, the fundamentals of blocking and tackling, that will earn most of his attention.

"We'll try and run the ball with those backs," said Donaldson, whose team finished 3-6 overall and 3-3 in the Metro Conference last year. "And if that doesn't work, we'll have to put the ball up. We're hoping the blocking will come. We're still looking for two other people on the line. We're young and inexperienced up front, and we have no depth. We can't afford to have any injuries."

With only 24 players in the program and no junior varsity team, Donaldson has to scale back during practice ses-

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sions. "Today (Friday) was the first time we went 11-on-11," Donaldson said. "We've had to go with a lot of halfline stuff. We really can't get an honest look at our personnel until our first scrimmage (held last Saturday with Ann Arbor)."

Fulton, a 5-foot-10, 160-pound senior, is the team's speedster who displayed big-play capabilities last season. He made second-team All-Metro Conference.

Ragland, 6-1, 190-pound sophomore, played the entire 1995 season on the varsity as a freshman. He gives the Trojans ball carrying threat with power and speed.

"Donahue is a year older and our fastest threat," Donaldson said. "Walter is also a year older, bigger and stronger. He can run and he's not

afraid to hit you."

Senior Chris Lakner (5-9-155) is also quick out of the backfield.

The quarterback position goes to junior Craig Rose (6-1, 160).

"He's a smart kid who puts the ball where it needs to be," Donaldson said.

Four offensive linemen do return, led by 6-foot, 180-pound senior guard Jason Dillaha, who was a first-team All-Metro pick last season.

Dillaha will be joined by holdovers Tim Atkins, a 5-10, 210-pound junior tackle; Josh Fritch, a 6-foot, 170-pound sophomore center; and Brian Page, a 5-10, 180-pound sophomore tackle.

Junior tight end Justin Villanueva (6-3, 170) and senior split end Paulo Hernandez (6-0, 165) will be the receiving targets if Rose has to go to the air.

On the other side of the ball, defensive coordinator Ken Fry will employ a 4-3 alignment.

"We'll have a bend but don't break philosophy," Fry said. "We played (the 4-3) last year with some wrinkles put

in. We have strong linebackers and secondary who will have to make a lot of tackles because we don't have as much up front."

"We have some kids in the secondary that can play man-to-man and that makes it fun."

Ragland, Lakner, Rose and Hernandez comprise the secondary, while Fulton, Dillaha and Villanueva make up the linebacking corps. The tackles will include Atkins, Fritch and Page.

As for the kicking game, Donaldson is entertaining thoughts of using the strong leg of Chris King, who is a member of Clarenceville's inaugural varsity soccer program.

As for the prospects in the Metro, Donaldson believes his team belongs somewhere in the middle of the pack.

"Lutheran East is going to be good," he said. "And don't count out Hamtramck or Lutheran North."

"We just hope our guys play as hard as they can. If they come together as a team, it will be a successful season."



STAFF PHOTO BY CRAIG BAZEL

Varsity veteran: Senior Adam Smerecki is one of four three-year starters on the Harrison football team.

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