

# Hawks prepare for playoff foes

BY DAN O'MEARA  
STAFF WRITER

Having been in the state playoffs 15 times now, you'd think nothing would surprise Farmington Harrison football coach John Herrington.

But there's a first time for everything, even after 26 years as a head coach.

Herrington and his assistants spent a good part of Sunday preparing to play the wrong team in the first round of the Class A playoffs.

Due to a slight miscalculation in point totals, the coaching staff thought South Lyon would be the Harrison opponent and completed 6½ hours of preparation at 8:30 p.m. Sunday.

At his appointed time that evening, Herrington then called the Michigan High School Athletic Association to confirm the pairings.

A worker in the MHSAA office said he'd be playing (Detroit) Chadsay, Herrington said. "I said 'What?' When I heard that, I about fell off the chair.

"We've always been right.

## FOOTBALL

There have been times we told opposing coaches they were playing us, and they didn't believe us.

So it was time to take a deep breath and start over.

"(Assistant coach) Steve Dolley had driven to home and got all the stuff on Chadsay," Herrington said. "We had all the material; we just hadn't done the report."

The JV coaches were scouting Brother Rice (in the Catholic League Prep Bowl at the Silverdome). They saw the cars were still here and made the mistake of coming in.

"I kept them here until 1 a.m. to get it all done. It was a unique experience in all our years of coaching."

For the record, the Hawks will play the top-seeded Explorers at 1 p.m. Saturday at Martin Luther King High School. Both teams are 8-1.

This will be the second time the teams have played, and Her-

rington will no doubt have a look at the film of the 1994 game.

Harrison defeated Chadsay in the first round two years ago, 14-6, en route to winning the Class A title.

"They look very much the same," Chadsay coach Charles Spann said.

Hubbard, however, played little if at all in Harrison's two scouting trips against Redford and Detroit Cady.

"He hurt his ankle against Redford after three plays, and then kept him out to get him ready for the state playoffs," Herrington said. "I've heard he's a dynamite back, but I've never seen him play."

Junior left-handed quarterback Tony Shields (6-3, 180) has good speed, a strong arm and a fine receiver in senior Ronaldino Hill (5-10, 170), a brother of Michigan State defensive back Raymond Hill.

"They're big at all positions, but I think we match up well," Herrington said. "The key will be to contain Hubbard, the speed of the tailback, but we have to make sure Ronaldino Hill doesn't get deep on us."

The Explorers are led by senior running back Chris Hubbard (5-7, 175). He has rushed for over 1,000 yards for the second straight year and has scored nearly a dozen touchdowns.

"He's a good back who reminds

me of (former Harrison tailback) Jason Granger, although I don't know if you can put him in the same class," Chadsay coach Charles Spann said.

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## Shamrocks always

### threat to win it all

BY STEVE KOWALSKI  
STAFF WRITER

If you think Detroit Catholic Central's scoring drives on the football field are simple, you should see how coach Tom Mach gets to and from work.

Mach's coaching personality is reflected in the car he drives: it rusted out 1977 GMC pick-up truck. He bought it off his father-in-law about 12 years ago with 80,000 miles on it.

"Now it's got 82,000," laughs his assistant coach Roy Dudas. "He drives about two miles a day 2½ when he gets gas."

Mach drove the pick-up Monday night to an all-state meeting where there was valet parking.

"I gave the valet guy \$1 and he gave it back," Mach said, laughing. "He must have felt sorry for me."

Like his beat-up old ride, his football team usually makes it to its final destination. The Shamrocks are the defending Class AA state champions and have reached the final four times in this decade, winning three.

The Shamrocks won their final four games to finish the regular season as the No. 4 seed in Region 3 with a 7-2 record.

Standing in the way of another playoff run is No. 1 seed and undefeated Westland John Glenn, which hosts the Shamrocks in a regional semifinal game at 1:30 p.m. Saturday.

Everyone who thinks of CC as invincible forgets the Shamrocks have had to sweat out several of their victories during their fabulous run in the '90s.

There was the overtime win over Detroit King in the 1991 state semifinals.

How about 1992? There was a late field goal that beat Troy in the regional final, followed by the overtime victory over Utica Eisenhower and a comeback win in the finals against Saginaw Arthur Hill.

The Shamrocks didn't have it easy last year either, holding on to beat Livonia Stevenson 14-6 in a regional semifinal and rallying in the fourth quarter to beat Troy 21-14 in the semifinals.

The only close playoff game the Shamrocks have lost in the '90s was the '91 championship game won by Saginaw Arthur Hill.

Mach thinks Glenn is as formidable as any of those teams.

"They have a good balance, strong linemen and speed in the backfield," Mach said.

"Their defense puts a lot of pressure on you, has good pursuit and gets to the ball well."

Glenn's 6-foot-6 junior quarterback Justin Berent concerns Mach. Berent also has a tall and fast receiving group, led by 6-3, 195-pound David Jarrett, and tight end Jon Becker (6-4, 217).

"We're not going to bat a lot of passes down," Mach said. "We have to put pressure on him. He does back and sees the holes field."

The Shamrocks have outlasted their opponents, 201-74, including 89-13 the last three games. The offense has come on, but it's the defense that's been the constant.

Leading the way is 6-4, 260-pound all-state candidate Gino DiGiandomenico, a senior tackle, with nine sacks.

The linebacking unit is led by senior Milam Brooks, who has a team-high 88 tackles.

The Shamrocks have a shifty tailback, senior Greg Alcalá, who has gained 663 yards in 114 carries with four TDs. Senior quarterback Greg Call does whatever asked, running for 278 yards in 87 attempts with four touchdowns and completing 31 of 63 passes for 384 yards and two TDs.

"He's a winner," said Mach, who playfully knocked his own playcalling. "He's thrown for 500 yards, counting little league and high school."

## Harrison offense finds way to get job done

BY DAN O'MEARA  
STAFF WRITER

The Farmington Harrison name still carries weight in the high school football playoffs, but the Hawks certainly aren't taking anything for granted in this year's tournament.

After winning its last six games to qualify as the No. 4 seed in Class A Region 3, seventh state champion Harrison is just glad to be in the 16-team field.

"We want to go as far as we can and have as much fun as we can; that's our goal right now," Harrison coach John Herrington said.

"We're pleased to be there again, because people thought, when Jason Granger left, he was our whole team and we wouldn't be able to qualify. I'm happy the kids came back."

Detroit Chadsay will play host to the Hawks at 1 p.m. Saturday. The game will be played at Detroit Martin Luther King

High School.

The Hawks have reached this point with another solid defense and an offense lacking superstars but good enough to average 27 points per game.

"Overall, we've done what we had to do to win," Herrington said. "Either the defense or the offense has stopped up and done the job."

"This is a fun team to coach, because the kids have always come to play. We have no particular stars but some outstanding players, and we have really played as a team."

Offensively, the Hawks have done the job by committee or had a big game from a different player on a given day.

Senior quarterback Kevin Bambenek passed for 255 yards and a touchdown against Livonia Franklin, and senior upback Nick Shafer rushed for a near-record 304 yards and two TDs Saturday as Harrison defeated Detroit Country Day, 34-27.

"I wouldn't say they don't have big-play guys," Chadsay coach Charles Spann said. "They're a good team that's used to winning. Consequently, we still feel we're playing a good team."

Shafer's yardage was the second-highest single-game total in school history and a big surprise as Harrison rarely gives the ball to the upback.

"It was a shock to me as much as anybody," Herrington said. "We ran him and it worked, so we kept doing it."

"We had good blocks by (Francis) Gocaj and (Brett) Foster. Other times they pinched the middle, and Nick had the ability to slide outside and go around the end."

The Hawks have been successful without an outstanding tailback, which is almost a tradition and a focal point in Harrison's information offense.

Shafer is the leading rusher with 577 yards and nine touchdowns on 69 carries. Including

Shafer, the Hawks have used five different tailbacks: Chris Ghanian (71-238-3), Sean Sarsfield (43-185-1), Chris Knox (32-102-1) and Matt Reed (19-109-2) have played this position.

"We usually have somebody who's a 1,000-yard rusher, so we've had to look at different ways of moving the ball," Herrington said. "It's been a year when we've had to pass sometimes and return the fullback, too."

"At this point in the year, we'll just run the plays we've run and see what works. We'll see what kind of weather we get and what we can do."

Bambenek has completed 54 of 115 passes for 1,034 yards with eight TD tosses and five interceptions.

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