

Hawks were close to winning it all

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

Farmington Harrison was just one first down, seven yards and an overtime away from possibly winning the Class A championship last week.

While Grandville dominated the rushing statistics and claimed a 24-17 victory in the end, the Hawks weren't that far away from capturing what would've been their eighth state title in 10 attempts.

On Harrison's last offensive play, sophomore receiver Ricky Bryant caught a fourth-down pass for a 15-yard gain but was stopped at the Grandville 7-yard line — four short of the first down.

"If we had (made the first down), I think we would've scored, and overtime would've been a war because they were a

FOOTBALL

very tough team," Harrison coach John Herrington said.

"But, sure, you wonder (what might have happened)." The Bulldogs, who played in their first state final, rushed for 303 yards while holding the Hawks to 68.

Harrison fired back with 282 yards passing — a record for all classes — by senior quarterback Kevin Bambenek.

"(Grandville) was an excellent team that was a little more physical," Herrington said. "A lot of times we were in the right position to make plays and they blocked us over."

We had trouble getting our linebackers to their backs because of the good blocking and deception by Grandville.

"We needed to score more points; we had been averaging a lot more. If we had scored our 30, we would've won. It wasn't strictly defense; the offense didn't come through either."

It was another good year for the Hawks, who finished 11-2 and won nine straight after losing to Class AA champion Walled Lake Western in the third game.

"We expected quite a bit from them at the start of the season," Herrington said.

"We knew we had some solid players, and we could see through double sessions and the scrimmages we were going to be a good team."

"Then we hit a real good team (Western), but we didn't realize how good they were at the time. We were reeling after that and didn't play well. Then we beat

Livonia Franklin, which we thought was a good team, and we thought we could do something in the playoffs."

"Beating the good teams that we beat in the tournament was a good accomplishment."

The Hawks will have to contend with Western and Franklin in the Western Division of the Western Lakes Activities Association again next year but should have another good team.

"We have quite a few experienced players coming back now," Herrington said.

"A lot depends on the development of Jared Hopkins at quarterback. He's been with us for three years, but he hasn't had much game experience."

"He's a big quarterback with a strong arm. If he comes through, we should be a pretty good football team again."

Herrington said. Herrington had intended to convey to his players what senior quarterback Kevin Bambenek had said to reporters about the Harrison tradition.

"We have Hawk Pride; we came back from a lot of things and stayed together as a team all year," Bambenek said.

"For all the seniors to leave the tradition like this is hard. But I think we made a pretty good tradition for ourselves, even by not winning."

It seemed Kevin was expressing the disappointment of the moment but also seeing the big picture of a job well done over the course of four months.

"He was saying what we believe you go there to win," Herrington said. "We have the tradition, but we don't rely on what other players did. We believe in our tradition, but we want to make our own. He showed a lot of maturity."

When a team wins 11 of 13 games, loses only to the very best, reaches the state finals for a 10th time in school history and comes close to winning it all, I'd say the '96 Hawks more than upheld the tradition.

That's how I'll remember this year's Harrison football team.

BASKETBALL

REDFORD CATHOLIC CENTRAL

Head coach: Rick Coratti.

Season opener: 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 10, at Ypsilanti.

Last year's overall record: 19-5.

Notable losses to graduation: Chris Miskie (playing at Wayne State); Justin Horner (playing at West Liberty (Va.) State); Eric Gilbo (Bowling Green football); Evan Kasprowski (Midwestern football); Richard Tuley (playing at Albion); Chris Kennedy (UDM soccer); Michael Jordan.

Leading returnees: Marc McDonald, 6-1 guard; First Team All-Area, tendered to Loyola of Illinois; Chris Young, 6-10 junior center.

Promising newcomers: Nick Moore, 6-1 sophomore guard; Brian Teeter, 6-3 forward; Joe Jones, 6-1 junior guard; Matt Martinez, 6-0 guard; Daniel Kennedy, 6-4 forward; Adam Rivers, 6-2 junior; Rob Dinnel, 6-3, join DeCordova, 5-9; Don Sliemster, 6-3 junior; Chris Respondek, 6-3 junior.

Coach's 1996-97 outlook: "We have a lot of newcomers so it's going to be interesting early on. I think we're going to be better as the year goes on. We have a good presence outside with McDonald and Moore and Chris Young inside. Young is going to be a good big kid."

(Note: All players are seniors unless otherwise designated.)

LIVONIA FRANKLIN

Head coach: Dan Robinson, first season.

Season opener: 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 10, at home vs. Garden City.

Last year's overall record: 5-15.

Notable losses to graduation: Tim Miller, Eric, Ryan Davis, Eric Bowman.

Leading returnees: Matt Bauman, 6-8 center; Second Team All-Area; Pete Sosa, 5-10 guard; Mike Wiaz, 6-6 forward; Brian Falcione, 5-3 junior guard; Brian Mongeau, 5-8 junior guard; Pat Teeter, 6-2 forward; Kevin Bige, 5-1 guard; Greg Durey, 5-11 guard; Pat Cur-

ren, 6-5 forward.

Promising newcomers: Jay Fontaine, 6-3 junior forward; Jacob Odojko, 6-3 junior forward; Brent Accardo, 5-11 junior guard.

Robinson's 1996-97 outlook: "We're looking to be improved over last year. And obviously we have a lot of returning players. We're going to be bigger than most teams we play, so we'll try to punch the ball inside quite a bit. We'll run when the opportunity presents itself. We're trying to keep things simple and get good at a few things. I think we can be successful by doing that."

LIVONIA STEVENSON

Head coach: Tim Newman, first year.

Season opener: 7 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 10, at home vs. Northville.

Last year's overall record: 11-11.

Notable losses to graduation: Jim Green and Matt Quarter, both playing soccer at the University of Detroit Mercy; Eric Curt, playing football at Bowling Green; Eric Gowan, playing at Madonna; Jim Balow, playing at Concordia.

Leading returnees: Tyone Davidson, 6-1 guard; Ed Stuminski, 6-2 guard; Scott Babin, 6-1 guard; Mike Potempa, 6-3 forward; center; Wayne Bowser, 6-3 forward; center; Brady West, 6-0 guard; Tony Detrick, 6-0 guard.

Promising newcomers: Andy Lamott, 6-4 forward; center; Mike Voutsas, 6-4 junior forward; center; Mike Blazakis, 6-1 junior guard; Bill Bauer, 6-3 junior guard.

Newman's 1996-97 outlook: "We're playing a league game as our opener for the first time ever, due to a scheduling conflict. The league is going to be extremely competitive from top to bottom. That's good, because it makes for good games, something for people to come to. I don't know if we can live for the top. We don't have as much size as we have had in the past. So we're going to have to outsmile a little bit."

Title from C1

and Joel Morse (5-10, 185) and tight end Kevin Crane (6-4, 220). Styles is the only junior in the group.

Senior Nick Gerhard (6-0, 205) was a member of that unit until breaking his hand in the sixth game of the season against Livonia Franklin. He returned for the second game of the playoffs but played defense exclusively.

"The line had all that experience from last year," Keigen said. "Coach Z (defensive coordinator Mike Zdebak) coached them last year, and they had really good fundamentals."

"All we did this year was come in and make sure they always knew who they were blocking."

"Steven was a lot bigger and stronger than us, but all we had to do was get in their face. We have good speed and, if the timing is there, we slip (the Western backs) through; then we have them into the secondary."

Keigen was just as happy for his brother-in-law, veteran head coach Chuck Appa.

"They put in so much time over the weekends, just like every coach does," he said. "Chuck is a very positive person. He's well organized and doesn't let a stone go unturned."

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in the Silverdome. I think Western would have welcomed a rematch with Glenn, and I'm sure some were disappointed that didn't happen.

When the Western players said quotes from the Glenn players saying they had quit and didn't want to hit anymore, Appa said that motivated his team for the playoffs.

If the Warriors had played Glenn a third time, they probably would've been bigger prodigies than they were. But Western was playing so well I'd have cautioned anyone against betting his house on Glenn a third time.

It didn't matter who we were playing," Appa said. "We didn't care about that part of it. It didn't matter if it was Glenn, Rockford, whoever; we were going to keep coming after you."

How about one final reason for picking Western? It's the Macomb County factor, or jinx.

As one who was raised in Macomb County, I don't say this lightly, but no Macomb County school has ever won a Class AA or A title.

Another writer, also a native of Macomb County, goes so far as to say no team ever will, either. His thinking is only two schools

(Stevenson and Utica Eisenhower) have programs good enough to win in any given year, and one always eliminates the other.

Of the 29 teams that have won Class AA or A titles, nine were from Oakland County, seven from West Michigan, six Wayne County, three Saginaw Bay Area and four other parts of the state.

Brother Rice (4) and Harrison (3) have combined for seven Oakland County championships and Cheshire Central four Wayne County titles. Macomb County has had three runners-up: Stevenson twice and Fraser.

Hawks add to tradition

Harrison's season didn't have the happy ending Western's did, with the Hawks losing to Grandville in the Class A championship game Friday, 24-17.

But a little perspective is needed, so consider this: You were a state champion if you defeated Harrison this year.

I was told it was an emotional scene in the Harrison locker room afterward when coach John Herrington addressed the team.

"When I got back with the team (from the post-game interviews) and saw the looks on their faces and the disappointment, I got a little choked up."

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up for a lack of height in a lot of other ways.

"We can't turn the ball over. We have to get a shot every time; we're definitely a perimeter-oriented team. We do have to get up and down the floor."

Forth, a team captain along with Cochran and Rivers, understands the game, knows the system and is a tough competitor, Swinehart said.

Lousin was on the varsity for the last nine games, averaged just under four points and was fourth in assists.

"His strength is his passing ability," Swinehart said. "He sees the floor real well, and he plays hard all the time."

To help with rebounding, the Raiders have added a pair of 6-2 forwards in 225-pound senior Harry Banks and 205-pound junior Carter Campbell. Banks was a tackle and Campbell a tight end on the football team.

Banks hasn't played in two

years but "gives us that physical presence inside," Swinehart said.

"We look for Harry to be a screener and bang with the other post players."

Campbell asserted himself during summer ball. Swinehart added. He showed an ability to score over taller players, screen effectively and be a solid rebounder.

The Raiders have six other juniors off a JV squad that was 15-5. The group consists of 5-8 Joel Starks, 5-10 Alan Pennala, 5-9 Dan Singer, 6-1 Kirk Moundros, 5-9 Evan Schlaff and 6-0 Pat Mackel. All are guards except for Moundros and Mackel, both of whom are forwards.

Nort begins the season Tuesday at South Lyon.

"We've got a group of kids who will show up and play every night," Swinehart said. "They work hard and give you everything they've got."



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