

Area's grid talent always first rate

Talk about a dream team! If a coach were to take the 1996 All-Observer football team on a barnstorming tour, the 26 players featured on this page would be a part of it.

Observerland talent is always among the best in the state, and this year is no exception.

Westland John Glenn, the Western Lakes Activities Association champion and a Class AA semi-finalist, leads the way with seven first-team selections.

Catholic League champion Redford Catholic Central and Class A runner-up Farmington Harrison have four players each on the squad.

Six players are repeat honorees: Francis Gujani, Rob Johnson, Matt Griglio, Greg Call, Lorenzo Guess and Nick Shabot.

Scott Wiemer of Lutheran High Westland was chosen Coach of the Year after guiding the Warriors to an 8-1 record in his first year as head coach.

Lutheran High began the season with a 16-14 loss to Harper Woods and then won its last eight games. The Warriors just missed qualifying for the playoffs, however, finishing fifth in Class C Region 4 behind Southgate Aquinas, Almont, Deckerville and Harper Woods.

"We were disappointed we didn't make the playoffs, but we had a very, very good year," Wiemer said. "We feel we could have competed with those teams, because our defense had improved so much in the last four games."

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

Matt Lawson, lineman, Franklin: Lawson is a two-year starter at offensive and defensive tackle. He had 42 tackles and four sacks. Only a junior, he is one reason the Patriots expect to have a strong team against next season.

"He's a real stud of his position," coach Lee said. "He had quick feet and was a dominating linemen. Against the big teams we played, Matt played even better."

Eric Jachym, lineman, John Glenn: Much of the reason Glenn was effective in the air and on the ground was due in large part to the blocking of this two-year starter.

Jachym used his superb footwork and balance to defend linemen in check. According to Glenn coach Chuck Gordon, his outstanding ability to move for a player his size made the difference.

"Ed works very hard," Gordon said. "He had a great off season in preparing for his senior year. He's one of the best linemen we've had."

Rob Johnson, lineman, Franklin: Johnson was a three-year varsity player and the best linemen on Harrison's offensive and defensive lines this year. He played offensive guard and defensive tackle; he was second in tackles (96) with 66 first hits in 13 games. He also returned a fumble 73 yards for a touchdown.

"I was told by one coach school, he might be our best guard and the best tackler in the state," coach Tom Hartington said. "He has great athletic ability for someone that size."

"He's a very tough, hard-nosed player. Nobody liked to run toward him, and we loved to run over him on the goal line."

Jay Myrand, lineman, Franklin: Myrand started 27 games at the guard and also was a two-year starter at defensive tackle. He's a star to me. The running game goes, he had 54 tackles and five sacks. Myrand can bench press 360 pounds.

"Jay has been the foundation of the program since I took over," Leo said. "He was the first kid we looked at to bring up as a sophomore. He contributed on and off the field with his leadership; he is well-respected by his coaches and his peers."

Matt Kuksa, tight end, Thurston: Kuksa was a three-year starter who excelled on both sides of the ball.

At tight end, he caught 30 passes, including three for touchdowns; also caught a pair two-point conversion passes. He had 71 career catches. As a linemate, Kuksa had 109 tackles, including 11 sacks and 13 for losses.

He had two interceptions.

"Matt's a first-class, quality kid," coach Bob Scoll said. "He's done what ever we've asked the last three years on both sides of the ball. He really missed a snap and, for a big guy, has excellent feet and tremendous hands."

Paul Terek, wide receiver, Franklin: Terek was an All-Observer for the Patriots and was selected as a pass receiver with 32 receptions for 602 yards and a touchdown, 10 rushing attempts for 102 yards.

As a defensive back, Terek had four interceptions, five pass deflections and 38 yards in punt returns.

"He's the best pure athlete I've ever coached and one of the best athletes to ever play football at Franklin High School," Leo said. "Even in double coverage, he would go up and take the ball away from defensive backs. He made big plays for us all year long."

David Jarrett, wide receiver, Franklin: Jarrett did just what was needed for the Rockets to snap their six-game losing streak. The two-year starter was most resourceful with 12 receptions with 29 receptions for 542 yards and five touchdowns.

Jarrett also excelled at defensive



Matt Lawson
Livonia Franklin



Eric Jachym
Westland John Glenn



Francis Gajcaj
Farmington Harrison



Jay Myrand
Livonia Franklin



Matt Kuksa
Redford Thurston



Paul Terek
Livonia Franklin



Rich Depulta
Catholic Central



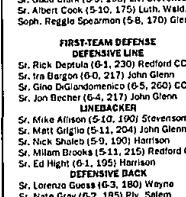
Matt Johnson
Livonia Franklin



LaVelle Guess
Wayne Memorial



Rob Johnson
Plymouth Canton



Kevin Bambenek
Farmington Harrison



Justin Berent
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Gade Clark
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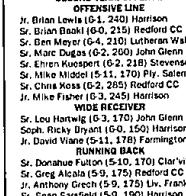
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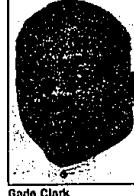
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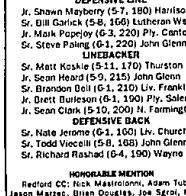
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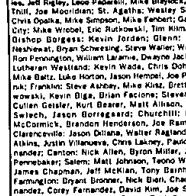
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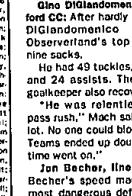
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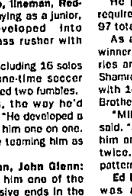
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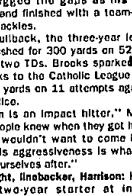
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Justin Berent, quarterback, Glenn: Berent led the Rockets to another win in the state and the Class AA semifinals. Berent gave foes more than just the Glenn defense and tailback Reggie Spearmon to worry about.

The secondary starter was able to establish an explosive passing attack. He set school records with 101 completions and 179 attempts while passing for 1,448 yards and 10 touchdowns.

Rob Johnson, offensive guard, Franklin: Johnson made his college choice last weekend when he committed to Northwestern University. He displayed his intelligence on the field as well, doing a bit of everything for the Chieftains.

Johnson was 68-of-154 passing for 968 yards, with eight touchdowns and three interceptions. He also rushed 79 times for 359 yards and 10 TDs, returning 10 two-point conversions for 213 yards (an average of 24 carries a game), including 14 touchdowns. He also caught 10 passes for 108 yards and returned 18 kickoffs for 393 yards.

"Gado was an absolute force this year," Stevenson coach Tim Gable said. "He really had an ideal senior season in that all his talents came together in a complete package. He had the ability to blend his speed and power with knowing when to cut and when to lower his shoulder."

Reggie Spearmon, back, Glenn: Spearmon used his cutback ability and elusiveness to rush for 1,340 yards on 180 carries and find the end zone 13 times. He also started as a defensive back.

The tailback was forced to miss Glenn's regional championship victory over Dearborn Franklin with a sprained ankle but played the semifinal game against Sterling Heights Stevenson.

"Reggie is very quick and runs hard," Gordon said. "He is also an excellent cover guy as a defensive back."

Alvert Cook, back, Lutheran Westland: The Warriors had their best season ever,

yards and 42 touchdowns. "He really improved as the season progressed," Harrington said. "He was required to do more and more; he was the only other quarterback who played that much (in his career) was Mill Coleman."

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FIRST-TEAM DEFENSE

Rich Depulta, Ilionman, Redford CC: Depulta played equally well against the pass and rush for the Shamrocks.

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