

# Unbeaten Huron will attempt to depose Class AA king

By CHRIS MAYER  
STAFF WRITER

Walled Lake Western veteran football coach Chuck Appa has an interesting approach to the current postseason.

"Right now we're in basic math two," he said. "We have four ballgames to win, and we're learning a little about fractions. Four fourths equals being No. 1 in the state again."

"We knew, to get into the playoffs, we had to pass basic math one," Appa added. "After losing to Farmington Harrison, we had to win our last five games to go 8-1 and make the playoffs."

"Now, we're in basic math two."

## FOOTBALL

If we got an A-plus in this course, we can be the first team to defend the Class AA championship.

The Warriors (9-1) continue their studies Saturday at Ann Arbor Huron. Kickoff for the region final is 7:30 p.m.

Western is coming off last Friday's dramatic, 29-28 road win over No. 3 Brighton that extended the its playoff winning streak to five games. Huron (10-0) registered a 34-14 victory over Belleville in its first-ever playoff appearance Saturday.

Huron has been on a roll since squeaking out an 8-7, season-opening triumph over Saline. The River Rats have scored 27 or more points in each of their last nine games, highlighted by a 33-14 victory over rival Ann Arbor Pioneer in Week 9.

"We thought we could be a pretty good team," Huron coach Paul Verska said. "On paper we thought we would be competitive in every game and if we got some breaks we might be able to run the table."

Junior quarterback Joel Przygowski (5-11, 185) directs the Huron offense. The River Rats run from the I-formation and

multiple sets. Fullback Michael Porter (5-11, 212), and tailback Pat "Thunder" Johnson (5-10, 187) and Thabiti "Lightning" Williamson (5-11, 180) lead the way, but the pass is also a viable option. The River Rats average 6-land 244 between the tackles.

Verska believes Huron, which has outscored its opponents by a combined 311-89, must be able to run and pass in order to keep Western's defense off balance.

"Defensively, Huron presents us with different types of problems than Brighton did," Appa said. "Huron has a strong running game and the ability to throw the ball."

Western lost two offensive starters to injury during the Brighton game — junior fullback Dave Johnson with a bruised bone in his lower leg and sophomore guard Adam Bobola with a concussion.

Appa said Johnson, who has 1,295 rushing yards and 24 touchdowns, will likely play. Bobola is doubtful, which means junior Steve Kashubara will take over at center and senior Ricky Styes will move from center to guard.

Huron's defense is led by ends Cinque Carter (6-0, 215) and Ashae Robinson (6-3, 215) and linebackers Greg Smith (5-11,

265) and Qasim Basire (5-11, 187).

The River Rats face the task of stopping the Warriors, who have amassed 3,162 rushing yards and 44 rushing touchdowns. Stanford has gained 870 yards on 110 carries, Sigo 472 on 61.

"They have big-play capabilities from anywhere on the field," said Verska of the Warriors. "They're unbelievably quick and they have to be one of the fastest teams I've seen in some time."

"We're going to try to keep the ball away from (Western) as much as possible, hope to win the field-position battle and try to avoid turnovers," he added.

## Hawks from page C1

real effectively against them. They have the skilled players in the secondary to match up with our skilled players, so passing could be a little difficult."

On the other hand, the Hawks will throw a balanced offense at the Braves and present some new challenges for Ypsilanti.

"I don't think they've faced an offensive line as good as ours, so it will be a little different up front for them," Herrington said. "We probably have a more varied passing attack than they've seen out of most teams."

"This game is going to come down to a battle of the line of scrimmage and who wins that," Brown said. "They have good kids up front, and we think we do, too."

**RE-ENERGIZED TEAM:** Herrington believes Harrison's first-half score in the first round Saturday has helped to refocus the Hawks.

"Some players came in (Monday) like they'd lost the game, and we won by 35, so I guess that shows what their expectations are," Herrington said. "(Edsel) put a pretty good scare into everybody, and that will probably help

us prepare even harder this week. "This team hasn't (fallen behind) all year. It's possible we didn't realize the challenge, but it was the first game of the playoffs and there's always a lot of tension. You know it could be the last (game) if you don't get the job done. I think we'll be more relaxed this week."

**ABOUT THE HAWKS:** "They have some real effective offensive weapons," Brown said. "The quarterback throws well and has composure. He has a strong arm and is still real accurate."

No. 3 (Ricky Byers) is very ahead and, if you let him catch the ball or make the big play, he's going to do it. The tight end (Mike Hood) is a big threat. He's a real active player and seems to be a very heavy player."

**PLAYOFF HISTORY:** Ypsilanti is making its fifth post-season appearance. The Braves lost to Westland John Glenn in 1986, Catholic Central in 1990 and Portage Central in 1993. In 1991, Ypsilanti defeated North Farmington (14-7) and Woodhaven (34-14) before losing to Brother Rice in triple overtime in the Class A semi, 21-14.

**TICKET SALES:** Tickets for the Harrison-Ypsilanti football game are on sale through Friday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. in the Harrison High School main office. The cost is \$3 per person. For more information call the school at (248) 489-3499.

## Heavyweights CC, Troy clash again in playoffs

By STEVE KOWALSKI  
STAFF WRITER

The last time Detroit Catholic Central and Troy met in a football playoff game, gaining three yards was a chore, and a cloud of dust was out of the question.

CC coach Tom Mach has fond memories of the 1995 Class AA regional final at Pontiac Wither Stadium, and none have to do with the weather.

The Shamrocks rallied for a 21-14 win over the Colts in the rain, sleet, and near-zero wind chill conditions.

The two teams hope to decide this year's Region III final under better conditions at 7 p.m. Saturday at Troy High School.

Troy ran its record to 10-0 with a 50-28 regional semifinal win over Detroit Redford. CC is 9-1 after a 28-6 win over Westland in its Glenn.

The Shamrocks have played the Colts two other times in the playoffs, losing 10-0 in 1985 and winning on a late field goal in 1992.

A win over Troy, the 1994 state champion, could be a good

omen. After each playoff win over the Colts, the Shamrocks have won state titles.

"I hope we have a dry field," Mach said. "Those were the worst weather conditions we've had in my 22 years (as coach)."

You couldn't kick, see or throw." Troy has one of the best two-way players in the state in senior tailback/defensive back Jim Essian, who has more than 1,500 yards rushing and 30 touchdowns.

The 6-foot-2, 205-pound Essian also has three interceptions and does the punting.

And football might be his second-best sport. He is the son of former Major League baseball player and coach Jim Essian.

Troy's offense is directed by junior quarterback Mike Clinton, who has completed 79 of 140 passes for 1,160 yards and 15 touchdowns.

His favorite target is wide receiver Tim Fralick, the son of former Redford Thurston boys basketball coach Gary Fralick, who has eight TDs among his nearly 60 catches.

Troy's offensive and defensive lines will be the biggest CC has faced. Their best linemen are juniors Brian Otney (6-6, 270) and Ryan Triemstra (6-3, 230).

"I think it's going to be a hard game, because I think they're very good," Mach said. "They have a little bit of everything. A good quarterback, receivers, two good backs — a tailback who's real good."

Troy coach Gary Griffith likes to use Clinton in roll-outs.

"He's quick. I haven't seen him sacked in two game films," Mach said. "They sprint him out quite a bit, so he can see over his big linemen."

Senior end Mark Bullock (6-3, 230) and senior linebacker Matt Alcorn (5-10, 185) anchor the Troy defense. Essian is an aggressive defensive back who

will be needed to defend CC's big tight ends, Don Slankster and Nick Brazinski, in deep routes.

Slankster caught three passes last week and leads the Shamrocks with 22 for 402 yards and eight touchdowns.

Adam Tubaro has completed 65 of 128 passes for 847 yards and 11 touchdowns. He has thrown only one interception.

Joe Janna, who had two interceptions at defensive back last week against Glenn, has 18 catches for 263 yards.

"CC will be the best defensive team we've seen," Troy coach Gary Griffith said. "They make no mistakes. You look at the films from five years ago, and they still run the same offense, very sound. They scare you because you never know if you can stop them."



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