

Rematch cause to remember '76 contest

THE HISTORY

FARMINGTON HARRISON'S FOOTBALL PLAYOFF HISTORY

1997 — CLASS A

Final: Harrison vs. Midland Dow
Semifinal: Harrison 21, Seasholm 7
Regional: Harrison 38, Yelland 10
Playoff: Harrison 56, Edsel Ford 21

1996 — CLASS A

Final: Grandville 34, Harrison 17
Semifinal: Harrison 52, G.P. North 37
Regional: Harrison 35, Trenton 21
Playoff: Harrison 45, D. Chesley 22

1995 — CLASS A

Playoff: South Lyon 40, Harrison 0

1994 — CLASS A

Final: Harrison 17, F.H. Central 13
Semifinal: Harrison 38, Kimball 25
Regional: Harrison 28, So. Lyon 28
Playoff: Harrison 14, Del. Chesley 6

1993 — CLASS A

Final: Harrison 12, Midland 9
Semifinal: Harrison 35, Fraser 14
Regional: Harrison 40, Northville 16
Playoff: Harrison 44, Edsel Ford 23

1991 — CLASS BB

Final: Harrison 34, Cheboygan 7
Semifinal: Harrison 32, Tecumseh 7
Regional: Harrison 21, Allen Park 6
Playoff: Harrison 49, Crestwood 8

1990 — CLASS BB

Semifinal: Oxford 48, Harrison 38
Regional: Harrison 48, Avondale 16
Playoff: Harrison 22, Clomondale 19

1989 — CLASS B

Final: Harrison 28, Delwitt 27
Semifinal: Harrison 3, E. Grand Rapids 2
Regional: Harrison 28, Allen Park 6
Playoff: Harrison 23, Riverview 7

1988 — CLASS B

Final: Harrison 44, St. Joseph 9
Semifinal: Harrison 42, Avondale 7
Regional: Harrison 35, Riverview 0
Playoff: Harrison 32, Clewiston 0

1987 — CLASS B

Final: Gid. Rapids CC 19, Harrison 7
Semifinal: Harrison 35, Marysville 20
Regional: Harrison 35, Monroe CC 6
Playoff: Harrison 29, Allen Park 6

1986 — CLASS B

Semifinal: Marysville 22, Harrison 6
Regional: Harrison 36, D. Northern 18
Playoff: Harrison 21, Riverview 14

1984 — CLASS A

Semifinal: Fordson 9, Harrison 6
Regional: Harrison 17, Seasholm 6

1982 — CLASS A

Final: Harrison 17, Fordson 14, 20T
Semifinal: Harrison 6, Lakeland 3
Regional: Harrison 23, Lahser 0

1981 — CLASS B

Final: Harrison 7, Muskegon CC 0
Semifinal: Harrison 36, Willow Run 0
Regional: Harrison 23, Marysville 13

1980 — CLASS B

Semifinal: Okemos 14, Harrison 3
Regional: Harrison 7, Lumen Christi 6

1978 — CLASS A

Final: Midland Dow 36, Harrison 27
Semifinal: Harrison 21, Lamphore 0

THE LINEUPS

MIDLAND DOW OFFENSE

Q: Junior Mike Messner (5-10, 180)
Q: Junior Jim Gay (5-9, 198)
Q: Senior Brad Currie (6-1, 225)
T: Senior Curtis Wright (6-1, 222)
T: Senior Jason Smith (6-2, 255)
T: Senior Alan Tripp (6-3, 180)
E: Senior John Gay (5-9, 202)
Q: Senior Mike Johnson (6-1, 175)
Q: Senior Jason Speice (6-2, 235)
T: Senior Matt Samocki (5-8, 175)
B: Junior Andrew Smith (6-0, 200)

MIDLAND DOW DEFENSE

M: Junior Clay Lewis (5-8, 185)
T: Junior Chris Platt (8-3, 215)
T: Junior Sean Parkhurst (5-11, 170)
E: Senior Doug Church (5-8, 165)
E: Senior Chris Emmott (5-11, 195)
T: Senior Alan Tripp (6-3, 180)
Q: Junior Andrew Smith (6-0, 200)
B: Junior Phil Brabbs (6-2, 175)
M: Junior Jeff Winner (5-11, 165)
B: Junior Thomas Sterling (6-1, 170)

HARRISON OFFENSE

Q: Senior Brian Lewis (6-1, 205)
Q: Senior Brett Foster (6-1, 205)
Q: Senior Matt Struble (6-2, 195)
T: Senior Mike Fisher (6-3, 225)
T: Senior Chris Gadjew (6-0, 240)
E: Junior Mike Hoad (6-1, 200)
Q: Junior Ricky Bryant (6-1, 155)
Q: Senior Jared Hopkins (6-1, 200)
T: Senior Zack Cornwell (5-10, 180)
T: Senior Chris Gadjew (6-1, 175)
B: Senior Tom Salley (5-8, 175)

HARRISON DEFENSE

M: Junior Bryan McGhee (6-1, 235)
T: Senior Mike Fisher (6-3, 225)
T: Senior Brian Lewis (6-1, 205)
E: Senior Matt Struble (6-2, 195)
Q: Junior Brett Foster (6-1, 205)
T: Senior Matt Walker (6-2, 200)
T: Junior Mike Hoad (6-1, 200)
Q: Senior Kareem Smartt (6-0, 165)
E: Senior Zack Cornwell (5-10, 180)
M: Senior Jason Sharp (5-11, 150)
B: Junior Ricky Bryant (6-1, 155)

FOOTBALL

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER

The names of the players competing for the Class A football championship will be different than they were two decades ago when Farmington Harrison and Midland Dow first met in the Silverdome.

But there is one very important constant for the Hawks — their coaching staff.

Head coach John Herrington and assistants Bob Sutter and Bob Sallow were there in 1976 and will be again Friday for the rematch between the same schools.

Harrison lost the first game with Dow, 36-27, but the Hawks have been back to the Dome nine times and won seven championships. Friday will be their 11th appearance in the finals.

The Chargers are making their first visit to the Dome since winning their only championship 21 years ago.

His longevity (28 seasons with the Hawks) has enabled Herrington to witness firsthand the evolution of the high school game from the coaching aspect.

"Football has changed a lot since 1976," he said. "It's become more complicated. In 1976, I was offensive coordinator, the defensive coordinator and the kicking coordinator."

"I soon realized that wasn't the way to be successful. That's too much for one person to do. Bob Sallow (kicking) and Sutter (defense) took over the next year."

"And the players are bigger and stronger. There's more emphasis on weight training than there was in the '70s."

There's much more film evaluation. There was no videotape;

it was all 16-millimeter film. You had one film of the opponent, maybe two."

In the first Harrison-Dow game, Scott Alexander, who later played at the University of Toledo, ran for 169 yards and two scores to lead the Chargers.

Harrison quarterback Jeff Thorne completed seven of 13 passes for 185 yards, including a pair of touchdown passes to wide receiver Brad Bach.

The Hawks also had a pair of all-state players in tailback Mike Bowden, who was recruited to play at Iowa State, and tackle Bill Blackmer.

"In 1976, they were running the wishbone, which was a fairly new offense at the time," Herrington said. "We had played (Plymouth) Salem and had a special defense for it. But we couldn't stop them, and they could stop us."

In the first quarter, we were down 20-7. I thought, 'If this keeps up, they'll score 80 points.' I turned to Bob Sutter and said 'This would be a great game if we didn't have to coach,' because it was exciting, up and down the field."

The key play in the game was an option pitch to Alexander, who lost the handle on the ball before he could turn the corner.

"The ball hit the ground and bounced up right to him," Herrington said. "He reversed his field and went the other way for what proved to be the winning touchdown."

MOVING ON UP: The Hawks have been No. 1 in Class A all season and

now are nationally ranked.

With Rockford, the No. 1 team in AA, losing to Ann Arbor Huron, Harrison moved into the USA Today's national rankings this week.

"There's no way you can compare all the teams in the nation, but it's a great honor for the kids," Herrington said. "It's nice to have a national reputation, but our main goal right now is to win a state championship."

"It's nice to have the alumni who live around the country pick up the paper and see how the Hawks are doing."

ROAD WARRIORS: A good thing about Harrison advancing to the Silverdome and the state final is the assistant coaches can finally see the Hawks play on game day.

Coaches Jim Weston, Steve Hill, Don Devine and Mark Judkins, with help from John Hixon, Jack Merritt and Iv Horvitz, have been traveling around the state the last three Saturdays scouting potential opponents while Harrison was playing.

With no more games to play after this week, they'll be in attendance Friday.

All the Harrison coaches were treated to a dinner of prime rib on Sunday, the day they meet to prepare plans for the upcoming game.

"Last week was the big Italian feast," Herrington said.

HARRISON STATISTICS: Chris Gannam leads the Hawks in rushing with 1,077 yards and 14 touchdowns on 206 carries. Zack Cornwell has rushed 71 times for 469 yards and 16 touchdowns.

Quarterback Jared Hopkins has completed 50 percent of his passes (94-of-156) for 1,624 yards and 18 touchdowns with seven interceptions.

Ricky Bryant has 38 receptions for 802 yards and eight touchdowns. Mike Hoad 14 for 325 and five touchdowns. Cornwell has scored 59 points in three playoff games, pushing his season total to 145. Gannam has scored 99 and Bryant 66.

Bryant also leads the team with five interceptions. Kareem Smartt has four. Jason Sharp and Cornwell three apiece.

DEFENSIVE STRUGGLE: Dow edged East Lansing in a semifinal game Saturday, 7-0.

They were able to beat them because we got one touchdown," Altmore said. "That's literally the answer. Neither team, other than the one touchdown, got inside the others 25-yard line."

It was a battle of two very fine defensive teams. It was a game of both teams working hard for field position and, when we got it, couldn't do anything with it.

"We took the opening kickoff in the second half and drove for the touchdown. It was third and short; we broke one (25-yard run by Matt Samocki) and that was the whole game."

NICE COMEBACK: The Chargers rebounded from a 5-4 season to go 8-1 in the regular season this year. In all four losses, Dow had a chance to win at the end of the game.

"We felt we had an excellent team last year," Altmore said. "We lost four, all by a touchdown and all on the last drive of the game."

"In one game, we ran into and zone without the ball; we went for two at the end of the game and dropped two. We dropped the winning touchdown on the last drive, against Saginaw, we caught the ball in the end zone, and the official ruled us out of bounds."

"We knew at the end of last year our team could compete with any team in the state. We won our last three games against Flint Northern, Central and Midland — three pretty good teams."

SENIOR LEADERSHIP: Considering both teams have had good leadership from their seniors, it's no surprise Harrison and Dow have done as well as they have.

"That's the mark of any good team," Altmore said. "You have to have good seniors take charge."

"We were down 27-0 to Flint Central and came back to make it 27-21. The kids felt they were going to win the ball game."

"They just had to get to halftime to regroup. They were mad and ready to go back out again. We strung up 21 points and were driving for the winning TD and Flint stopped us."

"That's the kind of attitude they

have. If the game is close at halftime, they think they're going to win. They've been that kind of team all year; they don't give up."

FORMIDABLE FOE: Dow coach Frank Altmore has seen the Hawks play. Well, it wasn't really the Harrison Hawks but some teams that looked similar.

"Harrison reminds me a lot of a (Saginaw) Valley (Conference) team," Altmore said. "They have speed guys on the flank and they can run power; they have a veteran coaching staff. They're a combination of the best of the Valley."

"Their wideouts are as good as any in our league, and the interior blocks as well. Their DBs cover you, their linebackers hit you and their down linemen are very aggressive. So we're going to have our hands full."

PLAYOFF HISTORY: The Hawks can equal the record of eight state championships held by Detroit DePue if they win Friday.

The Eagles failed to make the playoffs this year, allowing Harrison the chance to gain ground. DePue, Harrison and East City have qualified for post-season play a record 18 times.

DePue is 5-for-8 in state finals — two in Class CC, four in C and two in D. Harrison is 7-for-10 with three Class A championships (1982, 1993-94), one in BB (1991) and three in B (1981, 1988-89).

The Hawks were undefeated in the regular season and through the playoffs in 1982, 1988, 1989 and 1991. They were 12-0 in 1982, 13-0 the other years.

Dow has qualified for the playoffs three times. Besides winning the Class A title in 1976, the Chargers lost to eventual 1988 state champion Traverse City in the first round, 14-0.

The Chargers were No. 3 seed in Region 3 this year. Dow defeated No. 2 Saginaw and then No. 1 Flushing.

While Harrison was ranked No. 1 all season in Class A, Dow wasn't an unknown. The Chargers were No. 3 until losing to Flint Central in the fourth week of the season and finished at No. 10. In pre-season pool of all teams statewide, Harrison was No. 4, Dow No. 10.

Grubbers

from page C1

They're certainly one of the biggest and strongest, averaging 230 pounds between the tackles.

"I haven't seen all the offensive lines in the state, but I'm really pleased with this one," Sutter said. "It ranks up there as one of the top ones. They're intelligent, have good quickness and work well together."

"We have a unit going now with five starters that is exceptional."

The Grubbers include Lewis at center, seniors Matt Struble and Mike Fisher on the right side, junior Brett Foster and senior Chris Gadjew on the left.

Junior Mike Hoad plays tight end and is considered part of the Grubbers since much of his responsibilities include blocking.

"He's a glorified Grubber!" Sutter said, a reference to Hoad's 14 receptions and five touchdown catches. "He gets way too much publicity."

Actually, the definition of a Grubber has expanded over the years to include defensive linemen and linebackers, too.

Four of the above start both ways, and Gadjew sees his share of dual action. Include junior Bryan McGhee and senior Matt Walker, and you have Harrison's front seven on defense.

"The coaches call me and Mike the bookends," Lewis said. At 250-plus pounds each, they fit the description. "When we played JV, he was the right tackle and I was the left tackle."

When the coaches came to our games they called us the bookends and it stuck."

Lewis is the team's most vocal player. He calls out blocking assignments and, generally, things the way he sees them.

"Lewis runs the whole show up there," Sutter said. "He makes sure everybody is blocking the right people. On defense, he gets us in the correct position and, heck, he's even a part-time official out there."

"Lewis just speaks up more; I kinda lead by example," Fisher said. "I'll say something if I'm getting out of hand, but Brian is usually right there."

"I'm a very competitive person and, when I get out on the field, I want to win; when I'm off the field, I just do my job in school and don't do anything stupid."

One of the benefits of being a Grubber is the opportunity to play for Sutter, he added.

"He's a great coach and knows what it is like to win games," Fisher said. "He's a great guy, fun to be around; he's kinda like your dad in a way. It's an honor to play for him and all the coaches."

Foster was a fullback at the start of his sophomore year but offered to move to guard and was a starter by the end of last season. Struble was effective on the kickoff team last year, waited his turn for a starting role and has played well.

"(Foster) lacks a little bit of the power of the seniors, but he



In the line of duty: Harrison offensive linemen Matt Struble (78), Brian Lewis (50) and Brett Foster (55) provide pass protection for Jared Hopkins against Edsel Ford.

doesn't lack intensity and ability," Sutter said. "Struble isn't big but he's strong and wiry. He and Foster are real good at pulling and blocking outside on the pitch sweeps and trapping inside."

The most improved player, not just among the Grubbers but the entire team, is Gadjew.

"We never seen a kid who has improved this much from his sophomore year to now," coach John Herrington said, adding Gadjew was overweight and slow.

"Through hard work in the weight room, he made himself into an excellent offensive lineman."

"He was determined to become a good player and he has," Sutter said. "That was a position we were concerned about, and since Day One we were no longer concerned because he's done a fine job."

Sutter also buys the Grubbers a Wendy's Frosty every Monday if they didn't allow a sack in the

previous game.

They earned the treat through the first seven games of the regular season but have given up some sacks in the playoffs.

The Grubbers get one more chance Friday in the state championship game, but they'll settle for a win instead of a Frosty.

"The satisfaction at the end of the day is what's on the scoreboard, not if your name or picture is in the paper," Lewis said. Spoken like a true Grubber.

Hawks earn return trip to Dome by defeating Maples

BY MARTY BUDNER
STAFF WRITER

"We're going to the Dome! We're going to the Dome!" That's what Farmington Harrison fans enthusiastically chanted Saturday following a 21-7 win over Birmingham Seasholm in a Class A semifinal game at Rochester High School.

The No. 1-ranked Hawks earned their 11th trip to the state football finals and will play for their eighth state championship Friday at the Pontiac Silverdome.

Although Harrison won by two touchdowns Saturday, the victory didn't come easy.

Seasholm, riding the momentum of its best season in school history, gave unbeaten Harrison (12-0) its closest game of the playoffs and one of its toughest games of the season.

The Hawks and Maples (10-2)

FOOTBALL

did all the scoring in the first half. Seasholm controlled the ball in the second half but had nothing to show for it.

"It was like two different games," Harrison coach John Herrington said, adding the Hawks dominated the first half.

In the second half, they took the ball and we had a hard time getting it back. The only good thing was we were ahead and they were eating up the clock."

Harrison opened the scoring with a 67-yard pass from quarterback Jared Hopkins to Ricky Bryant in the first quarter.

The ball bounced off a Seasholm defender, who fell down. Bryant had to wait for the ball to come down. There was no one between him and the end zone. The Hawks scored twice in the

second quarter on 1-yard runs by tailback Chris Gannam and upback Zack Cornwell.

Harrison's second scoring drive covered 49 yards after a punt, and the clinching TD resulted from a Seasholm miscue on the ensuing kickoff.

The Maples failed to field the ball as it rolled to their 30-yard line where Kareem Smartt recovered it for the Hawks, who needed five plays to score again and lead 21-0.

The Hawks mustered all of their points in the first 19:17 and threatened to make it a rout.

But Seasholm rebounded after Harrison's third touchdown and eventually scored when quarterback Bill Schuerman rolled left and kept going for a 25-yard TD.

The Maples came out with a vengeance in the second half. In the third quarter, Seasholm ran 25 plays to Harrison's five and

had the ball for 10 of 12 minutes. However, it couldn't dent a Harrison defense that allowed more than one touchdown in only three of its 12 games.

Seasholm's opening drive of the third quarter, which lasted more than 10 minutes and included 15 plays, ended when Smartt intercepted a pass in the Harrison end zone.

Smartt made three big plays, also tackling Gabe Hemmingsway on fourth-and-2 at the Harrison 15 in the third quarter. The Maples were unsuccessful on fourth-and-12 at the Harrison 17 in the fourth, too.

"I'm really proud of how we played them tough all the way to the end," Seasholm coach Doug Fraser said. "It would have been easy to give up against that team."

"We moved the ball well the last drive of the first half and most of the second half. But give

credit to their defense; they stiffened when they had to down in the red zone."

Harrison did like Seasholm when it got the ball with 9:28 remaining and held it for the duration of the game, running the ball on 16 of 17 plays.

Gannam was the workhorse for the Hawks, who finished with 285 total yards in tying their lowest point total of the season. He carried 31 times for 146 yards. Hopkins completed four of eight passes for 96 yards.

Seasholm had 221 yards. Asa Sherwood finished with 126 yards on 29 carries. Schuerman completed four of 17 passes for 46 yards with two interceptions.

"I didn't think we contained (Sherwood), but he didn't have any long runs," Herrington said. "Their passing game was off a little, and we could load up on the run."