

STAFF PHOTOS BY BILL BRENDEL

**Lights, action:** For the first night-football game ever at Farmington High School, gridiron fans enjoyed a warm evening in addition to the action on the field. Harrison and North high schools also hosted their inaugural night games Friday.

## Lights on

### Area's three high schools light up Friday night football games

BY HEATHER NEEDHAM  
STAFF WRITER

Apart from one neighboring resident who blared her stereo to drown out the noise, the Farmington area's first high school night football home games apparently went smoothly.

Friday marked the first home games under lights at Farmington, North and Harrison high schools. Previously, home games were held on Saturday afternoons.

Farmington lost to visiting Novi 20-17, North beat visiting Roseville 31-30, and Harrison lost in overtime to Oxford 17-14.

Most people attending the home openers gave the lights rave reviews.

"This is really cool," said alumnus Curt Katsia, 22, who graduated in 1995. "I wish we had lights when I was at Farmington."

Debbie Lukasink of Farmington Hills, said she could tell early on the lights were a draw. She has a freshman on Farmington's football team. She was selling 50/50 tickets for the Football Backers, athletic boosters for Farmington High.

"I think it just brings more people," Lukasink said. "There's much more of a party atmosphere. We're the last district in the entire Oakland County to get lights."

Farmington freshman Aaron Scheides said he was also drawn by the lights.

"I just came for the lights. I don't even care about the game," Scheides said.

His friend, Bill Boskui, a senior, agreed.

"There's much more of an intensity to the gridiron," Boskui said while he stood in line for his



**Switching to a new era:** Grant Riddell is the groundskeeper who threw the switch to turn on the new lights at Farmington High.

ticket.

Farmington Principal John Barrett said before the game he was confident things would go smoothly.

"The kids at Farmington High are well-behaved," Barrett said, adding that they've never had problems with Farmington students at away games, which are also held Friday nights.

In an adjacent neighborhood, feelings were mixed about the first home game.

"This is the first night and

that's why I have the radio on so loud," said Jennifer McDonald, who has lived at 23091 Lakeway, just south of the high school for about four years. "I have to turn the radio up so I don't have to listen to the bands." She was listening to Van Halen.

Just down the street, resident Beth Gdowik said the night games didn't faze her.

"Most of the time we're gone Friday nights," she said. "I prefer Friday nights over Saturday afternoons."

"There's benefits to living near the high school but there's disadvantages," she said. The benefits are increased property values and the disadvantages include increased noise and traffic, she added.

Her husband Joe echoed her comments.

"You feel like you're part of the community," he said of living near the school.

Cmdr. Maria Putt of the Farmington Department of Public Safety said things went smoothly.

"I was there for the whole time and we really didn't have any problems," she said, adding she didn't field any complaints from people about noise or traffic.

The only problems stemmed from construction equipment in the parking lots, but she said that was to be expected because of the ongoing construction.

Farmington Hills Police Chief Bill Dwyer echoed Putt's comments.

"Everything went very well," Dwyer said. "There were absolutely no problems at all. I think night football is here to stay."

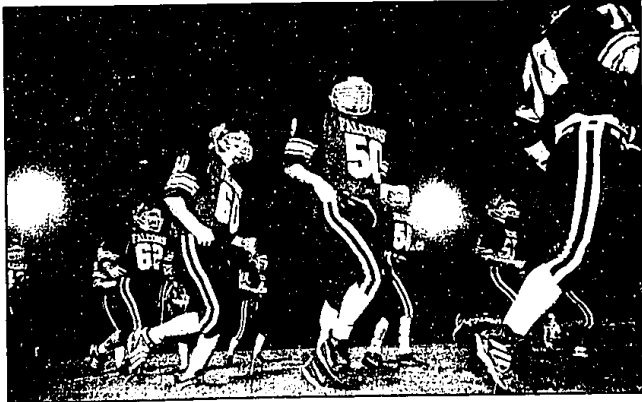
Each high school had six uniformed officers at the game, including one school liaison officer.

Farmington turned on its lights just before 8 p.m. Game officials made the call to turn on the lights, said Catherine Cost, assistant principal at Farmington. They look at light and shadow conditions to decide when to turn them on.

"We tested them a couple of nights and warmed them up today," Cost said Friday evening, adding they were still worried the lights might not come on exactly when they were tripped.



**Talk time:** Falcons coach John Bechtel peps up the team at half-time.



**Returning:** Farmington High School players take the field for the second half of the game.

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