## Warriors end 14-0 season with 2nd state crown

Football is a team sport and it took a total team effort from Walled Lake Western to bring home the school's second football

state championship. Behind a stellar defensive performance, a couple big plays by special teams and enough timely special teams and enough timely offense to pave the way to victory the Warriors (14-0) won the Division 1 state championship Saturday at the Pontiae Silverdome with a 19-7 victory over Utica Eisenhower (11-3). The hard-hitting battle warf decided until the Warriors scored twice in the fourth quarter - both scoring drives being set up by turnovers from the Warriors' special teams.

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"It really hasn't sunk in yet," said Western senior quarterback Chris Payton moments after the victory. "It makes you realize that hard work really does pay

## FOOTBALL

off. We put in so much time during the season that you don't really see your family that much. These guys are your family. This is phenomenal. Very few kids get to experience something like this."

to experience something like this."
The state championship is Western's second. The Warriors wen the Class AA crown in 1996. With the game tied at 7-all late in the third quarter, and Western's defense dominating the Eagles, Warriors senior Dave Merandi caused a fumble on an Eisenhower punt return and sophomore Mike Pisha recovered at the Eagle 43-yard-line. Eight plays later senior teiliback Cody Cargill (25 carries for 88 yards) plowed in from 3-yards out for a 13-7 lead and what proved to be the winning points.

"In practice we spend a lot of time on special teams," Payton

said. "Big games usually come down to special teams. We work hard on special teams and we have outstanding athletes that help our special teams out." Western's special teams cump big once more on the ensuing kickoff when senior Ethan Farkas caused another fumble and junior Josh Cavins was there to pounce on the lose ball at the Eisenhower 21. It took the Warriors just three plays to cash in this time with Cargill again doing the honors from 8-yards out.

doing the honors from S-yards out.

"The ball game really came down to special teams," said Elsenhower coach Bob Lantzy. Tronically, the thing that set us here is the thing that kind if worked against us. We've had good special teams play all year." While Western's special teams certainly deserve accolades, it was the dominating performance put forth by the defense that kept the Warriors in a position

to win the game.

Facing a balanced offensive attack that entered the game averaged 27.5 points per contest Western's defense was undaunted and cominated the line of scrimmage. At halftime Eisenbower's heralded offense han't produced a single point (Eisenbower's buchdown came on a returned interception) and was held to minus-eight yards of total offense. By the end of the game the Eagles had accumulated a measly 55 yards of total offense.

ed a measly 53 yards of total offense.

"I thought they'd (defense) be fast, but they were explosive," Lantry said of Western's defense. It's ironic to run into a team here at the Dome that has exactly what we have speed on the defensive side of the ball.

The Warriors bitteed, pounded and punished the Eagles, recording 12 tackles for a loss including seven sacks. Senior nose guard Todd Saroki led the way

with six tackles including four for a loss with two sacks. Senior defensive back Lorenzo Parker had five tackles, two for a loss and an interception late in the fourth that ended Eisenhower's final threat. Senior defensive end Brad Roumays recorded two sacks; senior free safety Farkas, senior defensive end Robert Pishs and senior lineman Joe Saferian each recorded a sack.

"We have the kids believing that if they put their time in and sacrifice their personal life they'll be successful. That's our foundation," first year Western head coach Mike Zdebaki said.

"I've said it all along, our

head coach Mike Zdebski said.
"I've said it all along, our coaches and players are students of the game. Our coaches put so much time in to get these kids into the right position. We have great athletes and they're sharp as a raxor on the field. Our kids adjust very quick."

Eisenhower scored first when

sophomore linebacker Joe DiGiorgio stepped in front of a Payton pass and returned it 57 yards to paydirt. Mike Gruwalski's extra point kick gave the Eagles a 7-0 lead with :13 left in the first quarier.

DiGiorgio picked off another pass on Western's next drive and returned it to the Warrior 5-yard-line. But a clipping penalty brought the ball all the way back to the Eisenhower 30 from where they were forced to punt four plays later.

The Warriors finally got untracked late in the second quarter when Payton threw a 15-yard TD strike to semior split end Brandon Routhier. Alan Mukhtar's extra point kick tied the game at 7-7 with 48 esconds left in the half.

"If it has to end, there's no better way to end it." Payton said. "We're 14-0 and state champions."

## **Yellow** Jackets win shootout for Division 5 gridiron title

The comming adversity is a small of a championship in 1886 and more of the committee of the

## State champs from page C2

nowhere at the line of scrimings for a 3-yard TD run, and Woods mado his record-tying TD run from 10 yards.

"I thought the best defense was their offense," McSwen said.
"In the second half, they kept our offense of the field. We knew Farmington Harrison culd score a lot of points.

Harrison apparently had Creston stopped see a lot of points of the second half, they kept out of the second had been a lot of points.

Harrison apparently had Creston stopped see next posession, but Brewster's fourth-and-16 pass resulted in a 56-yard TD by Richard Gill. That made the score 42-35 with seven minutes still to play.

The Hawks failed to get a first down on either of their last two possessions, and the Polar Bears had the ball at their 20 with 57 seconds remaining after a 45-yard attempt by Wong was short.

Brewster completed four of

short. Brewster completed four of seven passes and scrambled 18 yards to put the ball on the Hartison 39 with :01 left on the clock. His final pass was batted out of the end zone, ending an exciting, suspenseful game.

"It was certainly never for

sure." Horrington said. "We needed to go down and make a couple first downs and we didn't do it. That (Creston) offense can score from anywhere on the field. It was in doubt until the last play of the game." "At this time, our kids feel real bad; they came out and fought twey hard," McEwen said. "We knew it would be a tough game, and we were playing a legendary program."

Division 3 state players
Division 3 state players
Hurrison 49, B.H. Andorer, 0.
Hurrison 47, St. Clair 2.
Hurrison 47, St. Clair 2.
Hurrison 41, Filin Powers 0.
Hurrison 24, Monroe Jefferson 20.





