



OL-Mike Morris Catholic Central OL-Stove Dominguez Catholic Central OL-Nick Samples Westland John Glenn OL-Josh Abela Garden City WR-Brian Nelson Farmington Harrison TE-Brad Buckler Livonia Stevenson QB-Grant Weber Farmington RB-John Kava Catholic Central RB-Mike Sparks Garden City

Herrington, top gridders earn accolades

ALL-AREA

ALL-OBSERVER FOOTBALL

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

Offensive Linebacker

OL-Mike Morris (6-2, 275), Redford CC

OL-Stove Dominguez (6-2, 265), Redf. CC

OL-Nick Samples (6-2, 265), Garden City

OL-Josh Abela (6-2, 265), Garden City

WR-Brian Nelson (6-2, 185), Farm. Harrison

TE-Brad Buckler (6-0, 181), Liv. Stevenson

QB-Grant Weber (5-10, 187), Farmington

RB-John Kava (5-10, 187), Farmington

RB-Mike Sparks (5-10, 187), Farmington

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BY DAN O'MEARA
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You didn't see Farmington

Herrington ranked among the top

football teams in the state last

August. Neither did the Hawks

have anyone on the preseason

list of outstanding players.

But there were at the end

of the year. When it was all over,

the Hawks were back on top as

state champions.

Coming off back-to-back Class

A championship seasons, Herrington

had just one full-time starter

back and was not considered a

strong contender to win a third

straight.

But the Hawks not only reloaded

early in the season, but overcame

adversity to do just that.

Herrington won three in a row for the

first time

and captured

the 10th state title when it defeated

Grand Rapids Creston in the

Division 3 final Nov. 27.

For the job he and his coaching

staff did to remake the Hawks

into a championship team, Herrington's

John Herrington has been

selected Observerland Coach of the

Year.

"I think we were more talented

than some people think," he

said. "We did have four or five

really outstanding players. The

best thing was how other players

stepped up and did the job."

The Hawks, who forfeited two

games for using ineligible play-

ers, were 2-4 and facing early

elimination from playoff con-

tinuation. But they won their final

three regular-season games,

including wins over Division 1

quintuplet Livonia Stevenson and

Division 5 champ Country Day,

to qualify as a wild-card team.

The Hawks went on to have a

Cinderella-like finish, winning

their last two eighth-grade

games, including five in the post-

season.

"It was really gratifying to see

the improvement the kids made

from Game 1 to 14," Herrington

said. "A lot of players were asked

to switch positions and we had

to be very aggressive offensively

and defensively."

And they just kept winning.

"When we got to the tough

competition at the end of the

year, they were up to the task of

beating those teams like (Livonia)

Stevenson, Country Day and the

last three playoff teams."

The consensus opinion is that

Herrington and his staff did one

of their best coaching jobs.

"The coaching staff put in a lot

of hours and thought, trying to

prepare for each game," Herrington

said. "We probably did more

preparation for every game than

we ever did. Coach (Steve) Doll-

away's scouting reports were

very thorough and really helped

us prepare."

"The key to our season was

FIRST-TEAM OFFENSE

Mike Morris, OL, Catholic Central

Morris did a lot for the Shamrocks, and

some of it he did through pain. The

three-year starter played the last several

games with a cast over his broken hand.

He injured his shoulder and sat out the

second half of the playoff win over Liv-

onia Stevenson, but he played the follow-

ing week against Walled Lake Western.

Nimble on his feet, Morris played

tackle on both sides of the line. He had

45% tackles, including 41 sacks. The

strongest CC player, he bench presses

420 pounds and runs the 40-yard dash

in 4.9 seconds. Iowa and Toledo are

among the teams recruiting Morris.

"He went through a lot of pain just to

get out there," CC coach Tom Mach

said. "Colleges are looking at him as a

defensive player, but I think he's good

enough to play offense or defense. He

has excellent movement."

"I looked at him as the kind of impact

player Doug Brzezinski (Philadelphia

Eagles) was. He could be the star of

the line and was able to chase down

backs; he has the speed for defense."

Stove Dominguez, OL, Redford CC

Dominguez anchored the other side

of the line for the Shamrocks. He started

two years at left tackle on offense and

also excelled when playing defensive

tackle this season. Dominguez recorded

15 sacks and 100 tackles.

"He's very hard-nosed, a great

blocker, excellent one-on-one," Mach

said. "He has very good technique and

great temperament for the game."

Nick Samples, OL, Westland John Glenn

A versatile performer since his freshman

year, Samples' junior season was cut

short in a second-round playoff win over

Detroit Henry Ford when he suffered a

leg injury. The tackle underwent suc-

cessful surgery last month and is on the

road to recovery.

Samples was only one of two juniors

to make the All-WLAA squad.

"We're counting on him to rehab and

come back strong next year," Glenn

coach Chuck Gordon said. "He was our

best offensive lineman. He just had a

great year."

"We brought him up to the varsity as

a ninth grader and maybe that was too

soon, but he had the size (6-6, 260) and

we wanted to work with him early."

Josh Abela, OL, Garden City

Abela was the main offensive threat for

the Falcons, rushing for 1,167 yards and

15 touchdowns on 195 carries. He made

37 plays that went 20 yards or more.

Abela also passed for 654 yards and

three touchdowns, completing 55 of

105 attempts.

One of the strongest players on the

team, he also started at defensive back.

"For a big guy, he has very good

feet; he moves well. He's a very good

pass blocker; he sets up well with

strong legs and upper body."

"On fourth-and-1 from the goal line

against Wyandotte, we were in a

bind. Josh and I scored. On fourth-and-4

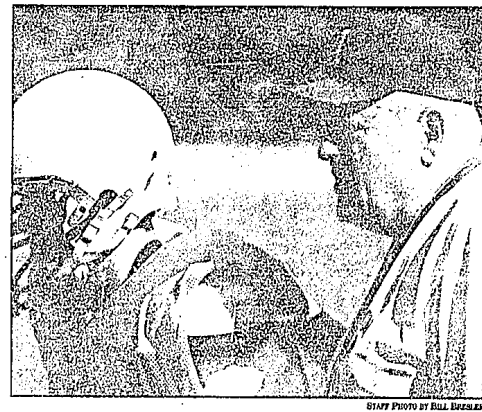
against Lincoln Park, we went behind

Josh and got the first down. When he

made big plays when we needed it all

year long."

Brian Nelson, WR, Farm. Harrison



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL DEZARIN

4-of-4 passing for 120 yards, and he

punted 37 times for a 36.4 average. On

defense, he was one of the leading tack-

lers with 102 hits, and he led the team

with eight interceptions.

"He was our best pass receiver," Her-

ington said. "He had to play tight and

when our tight ends got hurt, but he's

really more of a split end. He turned into

an outstanding punter, too."

"He knows coverages well and was

able to get our defensive backs in the

right positions. On offense, he has out-

standing hands. If he was near the ball,

he would catch it."

Brad Buckler, TE, Livonia Stevenson

The senior was a stalwart on both sides

of the ball for the Spartans.

He led Stevenson with 15 receptions

for 201 yards. On defense, he was the

team's leading tackler at linebacker

(31) and had four sacks.

"Brad was just relentless on

defense," Stevenson coach Tim Gabel

said. "He played every down just this

side of out-of-control, which caused him

to win our weekly 'Big Hit' award four

times in 10 games."

"On offense, he uses incredibly soft

hands to make every catch with text-

book form. He was our goto receiver."

Grant Weber, QB, Farmington

Weber was the main offensive threat for

the Falcons, rushing for 1,167 yards and

15 touchdowns on 195 carries. He made

37 plays that went 20 yards or more.

Weber also passed for 654 yards and

three touchdowns, completing 55 of

105 attempts.