

Hey, pay attention to this!



PAUL BEAUDRY

'So I'm sitting in the office the other day, writing yet another story on Garden City's Brian Bedgood getting yet another hole-in-one — his third in six weeks, and I'm just steaming over it.

Not because I had to write about him again and not because he's a bad guy. In fact, he seems really likeable, which is even more irritating.

But you wait a lifetime to get a golf ball close to the hole on a tee shot — once, and Bedgood's dropping the ball in the cup like he's pulling it off a shelf at Sam's Club. ("Look, honey, here's one that's 205 yards out. Don't we need one of these?")

Anyway, one of the other gurus in the sports department asks, "Who's doing the first week of football picks? Being absorbed in Bedgood's doing things like 'Golf is tough' or 'Watch me pull a rabbit out of my hat.' I wasn't paying attention."

It's not the first time. Lloyd O'Meara told me that once. Before Michigan won at Colorado in 1996, I asked what trick he had up his sleeve. He looked around and muttered "Blitz." Or I thought he did.

What he later said he said was "Woodson," in reference to Heisman winner Charles, who debuted that day on offense, defense, special teams and might even have bagged groceries before the game at the Safeway. Hearing "blitz," I wrote about "blitz."

After the next home game, Lloyd growled at me "You don't pay attention. I said WOODSON, not blitz."

Anyway, back to the original

GRID PICKS

point. I wasn't paying attention — again — and thought the other guy said, "Can anyone open this bag of chips?"

I said "I will!" It was "picks," not "chips," and that's how I ended up writing with this week's grid picks. We'll rotate it among our sports staff: Brad "Lemme Tell Ya Somethin'" Emons, C.J. "Rockers Rule" Risk, and last year's overall winner, "Dapper Dan" O'Meara.

Each will take two weeks and the one with the worst record after the eighth week will pick for the ninth. At least, I think that's what we agreed on. I wasn't paying attention.

Friday's Games

(all games at 7 p.m., unless noted)
Wayne at Romulus: How can Romulus send seven players to a IICCA Division 1 school from a team that couldn't make it into November? Easy, the D1 school was Eastern Michigan. This year, it gets worse for the Eagles — high school and college. PICKS: Wayne — Beaudry, Risk; Romulus — O'Meara, Emons.

Det. Kettering at John Glenn: And you know, when he reads this column, Rocket Boy Chubbs is going to be right on the phone to Lloyd saying, "It's true? Beaudry doesn't pay attention? Yes, I do — on occasion. Like I remember that Sundaycomcasted Matt Kettering took to Glenn last year. And that was with Dan Smithner. PICKS: John Glenn — O'Meara, Risk, Emons; Kettering — Beaudry.

Churchill at Redford Union: Yeah, I remember this one, too. PICKS: Churchill — Beaudry, O'Meara, Risk, Emons. Cretwood at Garden City: And I remember Garden City being pretty good last year. And I also remember that Sundaycomcasted Matt Kettering took to Glenn last year. And that was with Dan Smithner. PICKS: Garden City — Beaudry, O'Meara, Risk, Emons.

Oxford at Harrison: I paid attention to this one: if Harrison loses a game this year, O'Meara promised to give the team a motivational speech. If that's not motivation to win, nothing is. PICKS: Harrison — Beaudry, O'Meara, Risk, Emons. Northville at Farmington: In the battle of North's, some team goes south or the other. PICKS: Northville — Beaudry,

O'Meara, Risk, Emons.

North at Farmington: Hey, it's the first day. Anything can happen. RIGHT PICKS: North — Beaudry, O'Meara, Risk, Emons. Lutheran Westland at Hainesville, 7:30 p.m.: Come ready for the food, star for the fireworks. PICKS: Hainesville — Beaudry, O'Meara, Risk; Lutheran Westland — Emons.

Lincoln Park at Franklin, 7:30 p.m.: This year, Franklin has an offensive line. Where was it last year when the Patriots needed it? PICKS: Franklin — Beaudry, O'Meara, Risk, Emons; Lincoln Park — Risk.

Dearborn at Stevenson, 7:30 p.m.: Last year, Stevenson qualified for the playoffs. Last year, Stevenson lost to Dearborn in the opener. So even in a loss, there could be a win. But what happens if Stevenson opens with a win? PICKS: Stevenson — Beaudry, O'Meara, Risk, Emons.

Canton at Ypsilanti, 7:30 p.m.: Yeah, I remember this one, too — Ypsilanti with all of its D1 players was supposed to whip Canton. Instead, the Braves pulled one of the greatest choke jobs since the 1978 Red Sox. I make no such mistake this time. PICKS: Canton — Beaudry, O'Meara, Risk, Emons.

AA Pioneer at Salem, 7:30 p.m.: That "pick us, pick us..." PICKS: Pioneer — Beaudry, O'Meara; Salem — Risk, Emons.

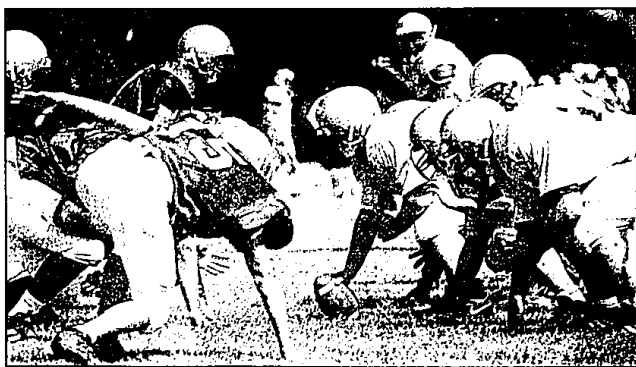
Lutheran North at Clarensville, 7:30 p.m.: Clarensville went all out this year with new lights, a new press box and new bleachers. This year, it gets worse for the bleachers will be empty, the hot dogs will be gone from the press box and the lights will have been burned out on North. PICKS: Clarensville — Beaudry, O'Meara, Risk, Emons.

Weston at Thornton, 7:30 p.m.: This year, a nominee for all-time team is Thornton nose tackle Chase Waterstradt. Getta love a defensive player named Chase. Let's hope that's not what the Eagles' defense spends the whole game doing. PICKS: Thornton — Beaudry, O'Meara, Risk, Emons.

St. Agatha at Battle Creek, 8 p.m.: As long as you can stay healthy, the Spartans will be fine. If not, combining the team with St. Agatha next season will look better and better. PICKS: Battle Creek — Beaudry, O'Meara, Risk, Emons.

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STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BREKLER

Crunch time: North Farmington gridders get ready to mix it up on the practice field.

Raiders from page D1

rell said. "He's the most intelligent player I've ever coached. He's like having a coach on the field."

The swingback is junior Marcus McComb, who gives the Raiders "a dangerous, one-two punch on the perimeter" with Johna, Burrell said.

"They'll present nice problems for other people. They have great hands and are good basketball players. They run 4.6 in the 40 and are great athletes."

Senior Chris Moses is the only returning lineman with experience. He'll rotate at tackle with juniors Lucas DiGin and Darwin Young. The center is senior John Szymusiak; the guards are junior Chris Cyrus and senior Eugene Franklin.

Junior Will Hathaway and senior Scott Bernstein are a couple of good-sized tight ends. Ksargoris is the leader on defense at inside linebacker after setting a school record with

138 tackles, including 70 solos.

Kirksey will be a force at the other inside position, according to Burrell, and Franklin returns to start at defensive end.

Johna, a third-year varsity player as is Franklin, heads up the secondary and "in the kind of guy you want as the quarterback of your defense," Burrell said.

The tackles are junior Jon Moll and Cyrus, and the other end is senior Aaron Drury. Playing outside linebacker are senior Brian Sinar and junior Neil Alkamm.

With Johna playing safety, the backfield includes senior Dan Perach and McComb at the cornerback spots.

"Conceptually, people are starting to understand what we want to accomplish on defense," Burrell said. "I want us to be a tough, intelligent defense that can play multiple fronts and be physical."

"We should be better prepared

this season with the Attack 44 Defense we installed last season to capitalize on our strengths. With small, quick players, we hope to confuse offenses with a lot of movement and blitzing."

North starts the season Friday night with a home game against Northville, one of five playoff teams the Raiders played in '00.

"Tremendous potential exists within this group of young men," Burrell said, adding this season promises to be better. "They know what it takes to be successful and have paid the price in the off season."

"They want to deserve victory. That desire combined with a dedicated coaching staff could put together a team that just might shock some people this season."

"This program has an outstanding heritage and tradition. We'll build upon that and continue to play football with Raider pride and toughness."

O'Meara from page D1

yardage on third down," an opposing coach told the Detroit Free Press. "They just ran the play behind Beer for the first down."

In a city championship game, Beer broke through the opposing line, stole the ball from the Detroit Pershing quarterback as he attempted a handoff and kept running for a touchdown.

The following year, when Beer was a freshman at the University of Detroit, I had the honor of actually meeting my idol. Well, sort of...

We were at the old U-D Stadium for the '63 Sox Bowl, which is what the Catholic League championship game was called for good reason. The proceeds went to support the Capuchin Charity Guild and its soup kitchen in Detroit.

During the game, my dad turned to me and said, "Dan, here comes Tom Beer walking up the steps."

I walked with eager anticipation until he was one row in front of us. Then I sprang from my seat and shouted, "Hi, Tom!" and began rambling about St. Ambrose football.

I can still see the surprised look on his face. It was a look that said, "Who's the little kid, and how does he know me?"

Mercifully for Beer's sake, my dad interceded and explained the St. Ambrose connection. Beer politely disengaged and was on his way again.

I was all aglow, however. That it had been a one-way conversation didn't matter to me. I had met the great Tom Beer!

And the word great isn't an exaggeration in describing Beer either. He was the best player to come out of St. Ambrose — there were quite a few

— and was one of the finest in the storied history of the Catholic League.

When I-D dropped football after the '64 season, he transferred to the University of Houston, where former St. Ambrose coach Tom Boisture was on the staff.

Beer became an All-America tight end, was drafted by the Denver Broncos and played in the '67 College All-Star Game against the NFL champion Green Bay Packers. He ended his pro career in the '70s with the New England Patriots.

Cavaliers had soon-to-be famous coach

There was another person at St. Ambrose in 1962 who would go on to greater career heights, too.

The defending city champion had a new coach. He was 28, had been at Chicago St. Rita and was returning to the city where he grew up. His name? George Perles.

He stayed three years at St. Ambrose and coached two undefeated teams in '62 and '64. He left to become an assistant with the University of Dayton, Michigan State and Pittsburgh Steelers, and he was briefly a head coach in the USFL before returning to Michigan State in 1983.

In contrast to the big bucks Perles earned coaching the Spartans, it's my understanding, as a bonus for a good year at St. Ambrose, he received a set of golf clubs from the school's athletic association.

With all that as background, the high school game was my reference point in those early days,

and I thought only the big boys of high school age played such a rock 'em-sock 'em sport.

I recall being utterly astonished to learn of the existence of college and especially pro ball.

One Sunday afternoon in the early '60s my dad was sitting in front of the old 13-inch, black-and-white TV watching a football game.

I was curious to know more, and the ensuing conversation went something like this:

Dad: Who's playing in this game?
Dan: It's the Lions and the Bears.
Dan: What schools are they from?
Dad: They're out of school.
Dan: You don't have to be in school to play football?
Dad: No. They're done with school; they're professional players.

Dad: What's a professional?
Dad: That means they get paid to play.
Dan: Do high school players get paid to play, too?

Dad: No. If you're a good high school player, you go to college and play, and then the pros take the best college players.

Dan: How old are these guys (because they must be really old by the time they do all that)?

Dad: Oh, most are in their 20s, but some are in their 30s, too.

I didn't say anything more. I was awestruck. Imagine that, I thought. Old men playing football! How do they do it?

Now, I've become one of those old men and then some, minus the football career, of course.

But through the years, as spectator, player and reporter, my passion for prep football has never faded, and I'm looking forward to the start of another season just as I have every year since 1962.

And now that I've reminisced and told my story, whaddya say we tee it up tomorrow night and do it all again in 2001?

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