

Harrison makes progress as building process continues

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A good showing in a four-team scrimmage has Farmington Harrison coach Tim Russell thinking positive about the upcoming boys soccer season.

The Hawks, who were winless last year with three ties, had a 2-0-1 record in preseason action. Harrison "worked the kinks out" during a 1-1 tie with Temperance Bedford before defeating Monroe St. Mary-Catholic Central and Monroe Jefferson.

"I see us doing quite better than we did," said Russell, who starts his second season as head coach.

"A lot has to do with it being the second year of everybody working together. We're changing the attitude in the program, basically."

Senior co-captain Marjell Tani and junior Fatos Gjetaj will start at the forwards with sophomores Chris Kollias and Brett Laird as backups.

SOCCER

"Marjell is probably the most gifted striker as far as offensive skills and speed," Russell said. "He's very creative and extremely aggressive in attacking the net."

Gjetaj was unable to play much soccer the last two years due to a family commitment, but Russell is happy to have the 6-foot-3, 200-pounder on board full time.

"He's very knowledgeable about the game, and he shoots well with both feet," Russell said. "We're expecting a lot of good things from him."

Kollias is the team's most versatile player and is able to play anywhere on the field. Laird is primarily a midfielder and someone who can play any position, too, except for keeper. Both win a lot of 50-50 balls and have good offensive skills, according to Russell.

In the midfield, the Hawks

also have senior co-captain Noah Bander, senior Ervin Kalaj, juniors Chris Fink, Eric White and Moon Lee sophomore Adi Djakovic. The first unit will be Laird, White, Bander and Lee.

Bander was the team MVP and an all-division player last year. He's a good passer and all-around player, according to Russell.

"Most of all he knows the game very well," he said, adding White is "a smart player and smooth runner," one of Harrison's best overall performers.

Laird intercepted a lot of balls in the scrimmage, and Lee is "probably the most athletic player. He goes into a bicycle kick without thinking about it," Russell said.

The defenders, in addition to Kollias, are seniors Emery Erikson and Alfred Gjekaj, junior Kurtis Lovio, sophomore Mark Leana and freshman Chris Diehl. Kollias will be the stopper and Gjekaj the sweeper with Erikson and Lovio at the marking back positions.

Gjekaj has good instincts when

and how to attack, and few people get around him one-on-one, Russell said.

"Chris Kollias is going to be very good for us. He's a smart tackler, and he doesn't miss many," he added. Erikson, who transferred too late last year to play soccer, is an unexpected and nice addition to the team, Russell said.

"Kurtis is probably the most aggressive defender," he said. "He was one of our toughest players last year. If he gets beat, he won't stop until he gets the ball back."

The goalie is junior Dustin Babler. He also can play forward and has one of the better shots on the team, Russell said.

Harrison starts the season

Wednesday when it plays host to Waterford Kettering at 7 p.m.

"We're looking forward to being around 500 or better, which is a big jump coming off last year," Russell said.

"The attitude we seem to have is very good. Everybody is aware we're trying to build something here, and I feel pretty good about what we've done so far."

Raiders drop opener to Mustangs

Senior receiver Brian Johns caught a pair of touchdowns passes from junior quarterback Rich Hegstrom in host North Farmington's 42-12 loss to Northville Friday.

Johns caught six passes in all for 121 yards. Hegstrom was 11-of-19 passing for 163 yards. The TD tosses to Johns covered 65 and 35 yards.

Tim Downing ran for first-quarter TDs of 28 and 3 yards as the Mustangs took a 14-6 lead.

Bill Atkins caught a 6-yard TD

FOOTBALL

pass and Matt Cornelius ran 63 yards for a TD, boosting Northville's halftime advantage to 28-6.

Atkins returned the second-half kickoff 85 yards for a score, and Downing was on the receiving end of a 25-yard TD pass in the fourth quarter.

Hegstrom and Johns hooked up for a second TD pass with four minutes remaining.

The Raiders had 61 yards on the ground, led by senior Justin Cook, who had 26 yards on 12 carries.

"The kids played hard right to the end," North assistant coach Rick Lee said. "But we can play better."

Cornelius rushed for 96 yards on nine carries, and Downing had 60 yards on 10 rushing attempts.

Farmington lost its season opener to Novi, 44-6. No details were available Friday night.

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drive with the opening kickoff. Harrison wasn't on the trailing end of a score until the ninth game against Country Day last season.

The Wildcats were helped by an inadvertent whistle that allowed them to replay a first down following an 8-yard loss.

The next play went for a 21-yard gain by Jason Eldredge and led to Kyle Rowley's 13-yard TD toss to Kurt Lubelan.

"Some of our fears came true," Herrington said. "We had a little trouble stopping the running game. We knew we had to be ready to hit (Oxford tailback Luis) Gomez, and we didn't tackle well early."

The first drive was disappointing to us. But, after they blocked and ran hard for six minutes, we scored on the first play, which had to be somewhat demoralizing to them."

Harrison's first offensive play of the season was the 66-yard, Stanton-to-Shabaz TD pass, and it took the Hawks all of nine seconds to reach the end zone and tie the score.

The Wildcats forced the Hawks to punt the next time, but Mayberry caused a fumble and Bill Richeson recovered at the Oxford 47.

Harrison maintained possession and took a 13-7 lead five plays later on a 2-yard run by Woods, who finished with 98 yards on 10 carries.

The Hawks scored on their last three possessions of the half for a 35-7 advantage. Stanton also passed to Shabaz for a two-point conversion that made it 21-7.

"We gave them a break; that happens in football, and they took advantage of it," Oxford coach Bud Rowley said, referring to the fumbled punt.

"We had them on the run. We battled them tooth and nail. They have a great team and so do we. They're a little better right now. I'd play them again next week if I had to."

"We'll go home and get ready for Flint Powers. We'll turn it around and get it going."

Harrison's first offense scored on its first two possessions of the second half. Stanton passed to Shabaz for a fourth TD, and Woods sprinted 37 yards around left end for his second TD and a 48-7 score.

Oxford's Steve Flores ran 2 yards for a TD against Harrison's second defense, and Harrison backup quarterback Jake Ghannam hit Mike Bartley on the run with a perfect strike for a 49-yard TD pass to complete the scoring.

Despite the awesome offensive display, Stanton believes the Hawks can do better.

"We've got a lot more in store," he said. "The defense can get better, and the offense needs to

work harder in practice.

"Everyone is comparing us to last year. That was in week 14. We're far from where we were last year."

"Everybody is talking about our offense, but the defense stepped up against Gomez. We watched the film of two years ago (when Gomez had a big game in an Oxford victory), and we didn't want to be embarrassed in the first game of our senior year."

Harrison had 606 yards in total offense, 363 of that through the air. Gomez had 98 yards on 17 carries, and Kyle Rowley was 8-of-12 passing for 98 yards. Oxford had 303 total yards.

"I thought the passing game was there," Herrington said. "We were extremely accurate and

efficient."

"(Defenders) just can't stay on Agim. Drew is very accurate; that's his main strength. Some quarterbacks might throw a prettier spiral, but he throws with velocity and on target."

PREGAME TRIBUTE: The Hawks remembered their No. 1 fan prior to Friday's game when they paid tribute to the late Fran Herrington in a pregame ceremony.

Fran, the wife of longtime coach John Herrington, died of cancer in June. With Harrison players and coaches lined up shoulder to shoulder on the sideline, the voice of the Hawks, game announcer Dave Tornquist eulogized Fran, recalling what a great fan she was of Harrison football for 31 years.

The Harrison boosters gave a 31-bell salute to Fran and placed a memorial plaque below the scoreboard that reads "Fran #1."

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