

Championship game marks end of era in WLAA football



GRID PICKS
The Western Lakes Activities Association will celebrate its 20th — and undoubtedly last, at least as we know it — year of football competition with a championship match-up worthy of its history.
Farmington Harrison will be making its 17th appearance in the title game. In the league's 20 years, the only other school to represent the Western Division in the football final is the Lakeland Western.
John Herrington's Hawks have been better than the New York Yankees in post-season play, with a 14-2 record in WLAA championship games and 11 state championships.
Westland John Glenn has been good, too; this will be its 10th appearance in the WLAA final. Chuck Gordon's Rockets have won three conference crowns and, although they can't match Harrison's post-season record (who can't), they have qualified for the state playoffs 13 times since 1985, reaching the state championship game in 1993 and the state semis in '96.

So the WLAA's two premier football teams, both past and present, will clash at John Glenn at 7:30 p.m. Friday. They won't meet again for the league title unless something quite unexpected happens and the Farmington schools opt to stay in the WLAA next year instead of jumping to the Oakland Activities Association.
In Observerland playoff news, both Glenn and Westland have assured themselves of a state berth by posting their sixth victories last weekend.
As far as the predictors' standings?

Brad Emmons continues to run away with the overall title, posting a 13-2 record last week. Redford/Garden City's Paul Beaudry and Plymouth/Canton's C.J. Risak (that's me) were 12-3, while Farmington's Danny O'Meara's gambles did not pay off in his 11-4 week.
Emmons leads at 86-16; Beaudry and O'Meara are tied for second at 79-23, and Risak is just one game behind them at 78-24.

FRIDAY GAMES
(all at 7 p.m. unless noted)
Redford Thurston (2-4, 3-4) at Highland Park (6-0, 7-0), 4 p.m.; Thurston saw its playoff hopes end with a 35-0 trouncing at the hands of Dearborn

Highland Robichaud. Highland Park has already qualified for the state playoffs. Friday's game pits the best of the Mega's Gold Division against the Blue's middle of the pack. **PICKS:** Highland Park — Risak, Beaudry, O'Meara, Emmons.

Taylor Truman (2-3, 3-4) at Wayne Memorial (3-2, 4-3); The Zebros had their playoff fate in their own hands and let it slip, losing 14-13 at home to a Lincoln Park team that had just one prior win. Truman suffered a similar fate, losing 13-12 to a previously winless Dearborn Edsel Ford, thus ending its playoff hopes. Wayne must win out to qualify. Home field doesn't mean much here — the Zebros are 0-3 this season on their turf. **PICKS:** Wayne — Risak, Beaudry, O'Meara, Emmons.

Monroe (3-2, 5-2) at Garden City (1-4, 3-4); Monroe was in the running for the Mega Red lead with Wyandotte Roosevelt, Allen Park and Belleville but dropped out when it lost 21-6 to Belleville. Now the Trojans are seeking that magic sixth-win quality. Garden City, on the other hand, got its first win in the conference, barely beating winless Romulus 14-7. The only thing left to play for for the Cougars is pride. **PICKS:** Monroe — Risak, Beaudry, O'Meara, Emmons.

Redford Union (2-4, 2-5) at River Rouge (3-2, 4-3); Perhaps Friday's 23-6 loss to Melvindale, second in the Mega Gold, will serve as a wake-up call to River Rouge, which now must win its final two games to qualify for the state playoffs, starting with Friday's game against RU. One thing's for certain — the Panthers will win. OK, both teams

are the Panthers. **PICKS:** River Rouge — Risak, Beaudry, O'Meara, Emmons.
Livonia Churchill (0-5, 1-6) at Farmington (0-5, 0-7); Both teams have struggled throughout the season, as their records indicate. Churchill is coming off a 21-0 homecoming loss to Northville, while Farmington was crushed by Westland John Glenn, 41-0. **PICKS:** Churchill — Risak, Beaudry, O'Meara, Emmons.

Northville (2-3, 4-3) at North Farmington (2-3, 2-6); This will be the second meeting of the season between these two. They met in a non-conference season opener, which Northville won 42-12. The Raiders have played better since, but have they improved enough to upend the Mustangs, who still have a good shot at the state playoffs? **PICKS:** Northville — Risak, Beaudry, O'Meara, Emmons.
Livonia Franklin (1-4, 2-6); 7:30 p.m. at Plymouth Salem (1-4, 2-6); 7:30 p.m.; Franklin was playing its WLAA rivals pretty tough, until last Friday's unfortunate meeting with Harrison, which resulted in a 54-7 loss. Salem, on the other hand, has to play everyone in the WLAA who is tough. They've lost to Harrison, Glenn, Stevenson, and last Friday to a field goal with nine seconds left, to Walling Lake Central. **PICKS:** Franklin — Beaudry, O'Meara, Emmons; Salem — Risak.

Walled Lake Western (3-2, 5-2) at Westland John Glenn (5-0, 6-1), 7:30 p.m.; There's a lot at stake in this game. Stevenson needs to win its final two contests to assure itself of a state playoff berth; Western has to be one of its final two, but its last game is against a

very strong Walled Lake Central squad. Last week, Western was embarrassed by a fired-up Canton team, 18-0. Stevenson managed to escape from North Farmington with a 14-7 win. **PICKS:** Western — Risak, O'Meara, Beaudry, Emmons.

Plymouth Canton (5-1, 6-1) at Walled Lake Central (4-2, 5-2), 7:30 p.m.; Walled Lake Central very nearly gave up its shot at the playoffs last Friday against Plymouth Salem, but a 30-yard field goal by Mike Hildebrand saved the Vikings. Canton has a half dozen guys who can run the ball, so why throw it? If the Chiefs can keep possession of the ball, they'll win. If Canton can utilize its speed and throw the ball, it will win. By the way, yours truly made the Worst Pick of the Week last week when I chose Western over Canton. **PICKS:** Canton — Risak, O'Meara, Beaudry, Emmons.

Grosse Pointe University Lidgett (5-1, 6-1) at Livonia Clarenceville (0-0, 7-0), 7:30 p.m.; Watch out, Trojans. This could be a test. University Lidgett survived a challenge with Bloomfield Hills Cranbrook, winning 28-20 in two overtimes. Meanwhile, Clarenceville was passing Harper Woods Lutheran East, 49-0. It's been awhile since anybody challenged the Trojans. Lidgett just might. **PICKS:** Clarenceville — Risak, O'Meara, Beaudry, Emmons.

WLAA Championship
Farmington Harrison (5-0, 7-0) at Westland John Glenn (5-0, 6-1), 7:30 p.m.; So many weapons, starting with quiet, torbered Drew Stanton and wideout Agim Shabaz and running back Marcus Woods and — where do you draw the line? It's like the Lions against the

Rams, a near-impossible task for John Glenn. If the Rockets play well, they just might do as well against the Hawks as Canton did (an 11-point loss). **PICKS:** Harrison — Risak, O'Meara, Beaudry, Emmons.

SATURDAY GAMES
Harper Woods (3-3, 3-4) at Luthern Westland (2-4, 3-4), 1 p.m.; Harper Woods is coming off a convincing 34-20 win over winless Hamtramck, while Luthern Westland lost a heartbreaking 14-13 decision to once-beaten Macomb Lathrup North. Pride is, once again, the only motivating factor in this game. Can the Warriors retain their title? **PICKS:** Harper Woods — O'Meara, Emmons, Luthern Westland — Risak, Beaudry.

R.O. Shrine (4-0, 5-1) at Redford Bishop Borgese (4-0, 7-0), 4 p.m.; These are the only two teams of any consequence in the Catholic League's C-Section. Both won lopsided games last weekend, Royal Oak Shrine beating Ann Arbor Gabriel Richard 42-14 and Borgese walloping East Catholic, 35-0. This game won't be that one-sided, not with a berth in the Prep Bowl at stake. **PICKS:** Borgese — Risak, Beaudry; Shrine — O'Meara, Emmons.

Detroit Country Day (5-2 overall) vs. Redford Catholic Central (4-3 overall), 7 p.m. at Kraft Field; Country Day met Memphis (Ohio) St. John's and came up short last week, 28-24, while CC plastered Warren DeLaSalle, 37-0. The Shamrocks could win to regain their accustomed spot in the state playoffs; for Country Day, this would be nice. After all, CC always has a target on its back. **PICKS:** CC — Risak, O'Meara, DCD — Beaudry, Emmons.

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defense is nipped up. We've lost two inside linebackers and a defensive end. We're going to struggle to repair that."
"But our defense has done pretty well over than a couple of drives we gave up early in the season. Most of the time we've been able to shut teams down except at the end of some games."

Harrison's defense is led by three-year starter Aaron Kennedy at tackle.
"He's probably the leader just by the way he plays," Herrington said of Kennedy. "We also have two excellent players in the secondary in Terrill Mayberry and Dave Condeni."
"We can also use both Agim and Drew in the secondary if we need them."
Glenn counters with tailbacks DeAnthony Granberry, a sopho-

more, and Tony Davis, a junior, along with senior wide receivers Andrew Peiffer and Anthony Harrell.

Junior quarterback Brian Ceckiewicz, in his second full year as a starter, has also shown flashes of brilliance. He completed 13 of 21 passes for 228 yards Sept. 28 in a 24-21 overtime win over Walled Lake Central which clinched the Lakes crown for the Rockets.

"I've seen them on film, and they have a good throwing quarterback and two good tailbacks," said Herrington, who has 292 career victories. "They don't run that straight-6 defense exclusively any more. They'll use a lot more blitzing. Chuck is also spreading more."

One of the best WLAA championship games occurred in 1993 when Harrison beat Glenn in

two overtimes, 7-6, giving Herrington his 200th win. Harrison went on to win the Class A state title, while Glenn fell in the AA state final to Dearborn Fordson.

The first time the two teams met in the WLAA final was 1985 when Glenn running back Tony Boles, who later starred at the University of Michigan, rushed for 242 yards in 28-7 Rockets victory.

"That's the most any back ever gained against us," Herrington said.

But now the shoe is on the other foot. Glenn is facing some Big Ten caliber talent.

"Nothing I've seen so far has been successful against them," Gordon said. "If you want to play ball control, that's a nice strategy. But they're so good on defense. That's often overlooked. They really don't have any weak-

nesses on defense. Everybody moves fast."

Gordon can only hope he catches the Hawks on bad night and the Rockets play the game of their lives.

"We've improved everywhere this season, and our guys have played hard," Gordon said. "From a coaching standpoint, it's comforting to know they're going to play hard and give a good effort every week."

But will they be enough to slay the Goliath of Michigan high school football?

HARRISON GRID STATS: Senior quarterback Drew Stanton has completed 69 percent of his passes. He's 51-of-81 for 1,338 yards and 19 touchdowns with five interceptions.

The leading receiver is senior flanker Agim Shabaz with 29 receptions for 793 yards and 10 touchdowns. He is averaging 27.6 yards per catch.

Senior wide receiver Terrill Mayberry and senior tight end Dave Condeni have caught 10 passes each for 233 and 224 yards, respectively. Mayberry has five touchdowns and Condeni four.

Junior tailback Marcus Woods is the leading rusher with 918 yards and 15 touchdowns on 73 carries. Junior Charles Pickett has rushed 32 times for 274 yards and four touchdowns. Woods averages 12.5 yards per carry and Pickett 8.6.

The leading tacklers are Condeni, who plays strong safety, and senior linebacker Bill Richeson with 54 apiece.

Mayberry and Shabaz have two interceptions each. Richeson and noseguard Chris Kuclo one apiece. Mayberry and Kuclo have scored touchdowns on interception returns.

Harrison has outscored seven opponents, 248-0. The Hawks have a 242-41 advantage in the first half.

Harrison has outscored other teams on the ground, 1,530-705, and through the air, 1,538-695.

FOOTBALL

WESTERN LAKES ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION CHAMPIONSHIP FOOTBALL SCORES

1982:	Harrison 14, Plymouth Salem 7
1983:	Harrison 30, W.L. Central 0
1984:	Harrison 31, Farmington 3
1985:	Harrison 28, Harrison 7
1986:	John Glenn 34, N. Farmington 7
1987:	John Glenn 14, Harrison 6
1988:	Harrison 43, John Glenn 7
1989:	Harrison 23, John Glenn 15
1990:	Harrison 29, John Glenn 6
1991:	Harrison 20, North Farm. 34, OT
1992:	W.L. Western 10, John Glenn 7
1993:	Harrison 7, John Glenn 6, 2OT
1994:	Harrison 21, Stevenson 20
1995:	Harrison 31, Stevenson 16
1996:	John Glenn 24, W.L. Western 0
1997:	Harrison 27, W.L. Central 8
1998:	W.L. Western 9, John Glenn 14
1999:	W.L. Western 8, Farmington 7
2000:	Harrison 42, W.L. Central 7

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