

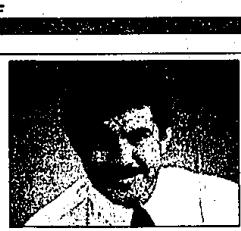
SPORTS

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Thursday, November 29, 2001



DAN O'MEARA

2001 Hawks rate a place in history

It was predictable, because it happens every year now. And that's because Farmington Harrison's football team seems to win a state championship every year.

Veteran coach John Herrington — chief guardian of the Hawk tradition and long-reigning king of its gridiron dynasty — was presented with what has become a perennial question.

Following a 28-6 win over Fruitport Saturday night in the Division 3 state final, reporters wanted to know if this was the best team he has had in his 32 years at Harrison.

Herrington dodged the question, as you might expect, but did say — "This team is one of the best we've had."

Indeed, it is. But the real question this time is one others have raised during the past season. Is the 2001 Harrison team the best high school team of all time in Michigan?

That might seem absurd to some, but coaches Chuck Gordon (Westland John Glenn), Brad Bush (Chesaning) and Tom Hoover (Allen Park) didn't think so. They said the Hawks would get their votes, and I don't believe they weren't just saying that for PR purposes.

Hawks set offensive standard

I think the 2001 Hawks had the best offense in Harrison history. It's hard to argue against a school-record 632 points.

Defensively, I'd have to say the Hawks have been as good in the past but not necessarily better. An average of nine points allowed per game is impressive, and the Hawks stayed strong on defense despite losing three starters along the way.

But the best ever? That covers a lot of years and good teams. The first that comes to mind is the 1973 Saginaw Arthur Hill ballclub, which outscored nine opponents, 443-0, and won the mythical Class A title.

Dearborn Divine Child's 1973 team was darn good, too. The Falcons were Class A champs and had one of the great passing combinations in state history in Gary Forystek and Ed Knapek.

Both went to Notre Dame, and Forystek was the starting QB. But then he got hurt, and that opened the door for some guy named Joe Montana. As they say, the rest is history.

The 1976 Brother Rice team with five sons of former Detroit Lions and a slew of college talent was pretty good, too.

And I'd be remiss if I didn't mention the North Farmington bunch with Drew Mahan (Notre Dame) and Mike Gow (Illinois) that was named Class A state champion of 1970.

There have been many great teams at school such as Detroit Catholic Central, Farmington, Ann Arbor Pioneer, Muskegon, Royal Oak Kimball, Dearborn Fordson, Bay City Central, etc. The list could continue.

But I wouldn't hesitate to put several Harrison teams, especially the last two, in the same class with those.

"I don't think you can compare teams like that," Herrington said. "People have a tendency to look at the team that's here now and forget how good some other teams were."

Harrison emphasizes the pass

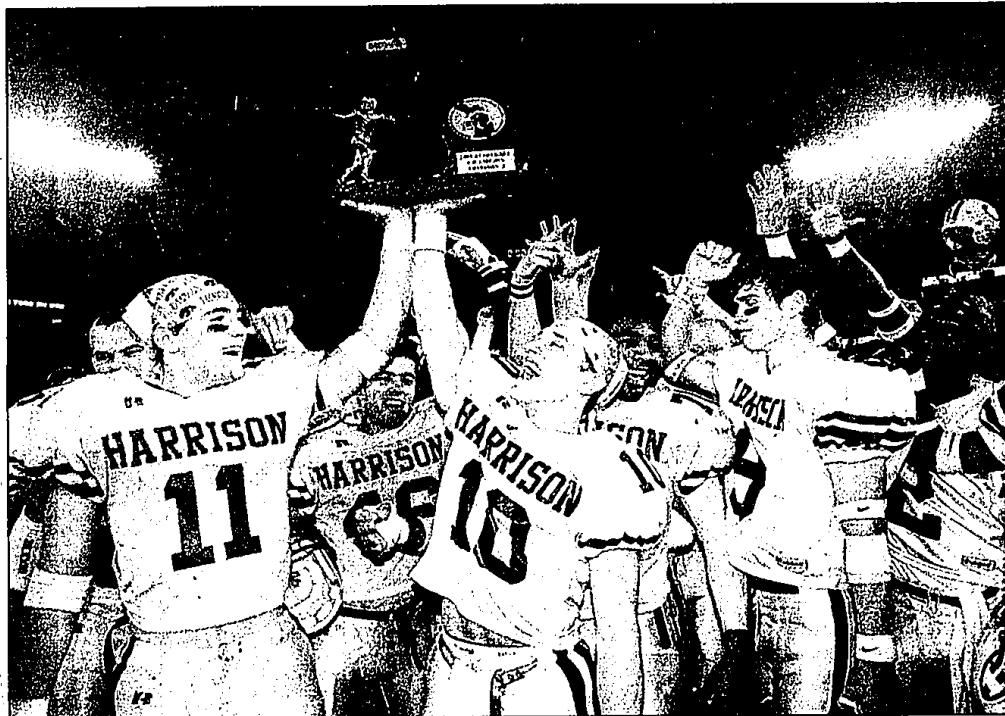
This year's Harrison team, like Divine Child in 1973, had an outstanding game led by Drew Stanton and Agim Shabaji — a pair of all-stars who will play college ball at the same school (Michigan State), too.

The one thing that separates Harrison from the vast majority of prep programs and distinguishes the 2001 team from many of the great ones of the past is a superior passing game.

Even in the years when they didn't have Mill Coleman or Stanton, the Hawks have always had a good quarterback (Plamion Magdevski, Andy Fitzpatrick, Joe Pesci, Kevin Barnabek, Jared Hopkins and Dave Pucci in the 1980s alone) with a better-than-average passing attack.

The emphasis on it and the development of it is where Herrington's coaching genius truly lies, I believe.

Please see O'MEARA, D2



State champions: Farmington Harrison seniors (left to right) Dave Condeni (11), Steve Wolff, Agim Shabaji (10), Aaron Kennedy, Drew Stanton and Terrill Mayberry celebrate after receiving the Division 3 championship trophy Saturday night at the Silverdome.

STAFF PHOTO BY TOM HAWLEY

Hawks win 5th state title in row



End zone-bound: Quarterback Drew Stanton passed for two touchdowns and ran 24 yards (above) for another Saturday night.

Harrison defeats Fruitport in Division 3 contest, 28-6

BY DAN O'MEARA
STAFF WRITER
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Fruitport's downfall was the one thing it had hoped to avoid, that which it could least afford to do.

It gave Farmington Harrison possession of the football and, furthermore, conceded field position in doing so.

A football in the hands of Harrison quarterback Drew Stanton and his offensive mates was a well-documented danger for opposing teams, and the Division 3 state final Saturday night was no different.

The Hawks capitalized on several early mistakes by the Trojans to take an early lead and eventually a 28-6 win in the Pontiac Silverdome.

It was the fifth consecutive state title and 12th overall for Harrison, which set records in both categories and extended its winning streak to 36 games.

"Very few kids get to play on a state

championship team," Stanton said. "Now we've won five in a row, and it's very special to be a part of Harrison football."

Unlike last year's 42-0 pasting of East Lansing in the championship game, this one wasn't the rout many people thought they'd see as Fruitport held Harrison to its lowest point total of the season.

But the Hawks (14-0) weren't in danger of losing either, not after the ball took a few fortunate bounces and they grabbed a three-TD lead.

That forced the Trojans, who needed to control the ball and the clock, to play catch-up, and run-oriented Fruitport (13-1) didn't have the quick-scoring offense to be able to do that.

Fruitport made three mistakes, actu-

Please see HAWKS, D3

CC celebrates championship win, too

Jakacki's 4th-quarter TD toss gives Shamrocks edge over Eagles, 24-21

BY RICHARD L. SHOCK
STAFF WRITER

Tom Mach reached into his bag of tricks and pulled out something that wasn't seen there a week ago.

Quarterback Tom Jakacki threw a 2-yard touchdown pass to Ryan Wroblewski on fourth down Saturday to give Detroit Catholic Central the Division 1 state championship with a 24-21 win over Utica Eisenhower.

Mach ordered up a pass on fourth down and short?

That's nearly as unthinkable as a hamburger with no meat.

"I learned my lesson last year," Mach said, recalling a 14-18 loss to the same team in the state semifinals.

"They shut our running game down. We didn't start passing until the second half."

"We wanted to use a little more balance this year, use the run and pass."

CC reached Eisenhower's 3-yard line

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when Mike Banaszak bulled 11 yards on first down.

But then he lost a yard, sophomore Derek Brooks made it back to the 3 and then the two on successive running plays.

The Eagles, with 1:31 to go, called their third timeout of the 40-yard drive. Mach knew instantly what he wanted to do.

He was going to call a play the Shamrocks put in at the start of the practice week.

"We worked on it this week specially," Mach said. "They hadn't seen that play, because we'd never shown it."

"That was the play that crossed my mind. But after that about 20 other plays crossed my mind."

"I was sure we were going to Ryan on

CC No. 1: Catholic Central quarterback Tom Jakacki of Farmington led the Shamrocks to the Division 1 state title Saturday afternoon at the Pontiac Silverdome.

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL REEDER



Please see SHAMROCKS, D3