

BEAUDRY

FROM PAGE D1

defense that has been the key to a solid team.

"Coach Mach has said all year that offense wins games, but defense wins championships," defense end Brian Hanley said. "Our defense stepped up when it had to, but our offense really came through."

Hanley was the most vocal of the five captains, who spoke at Monday's school pep assembly. And he finally let go with something that has been sticking in his craw since the second game of the playoffs - a 24-7 win over Canton - when Chiefs' coach Tim Baechler slapped the Shamrocks by proclaiming "No one respects their titles" and "They're a bunch of all-stars and they should win."

To that, Hanley told his classmates, "I agree with half of what he said. We are a team of all-stars. But he's wrong when he said that the championships mean nothing. Tell that to the 66 guys who were out sweating in the 95-degree heat; to the alumni who put their lives on hold to come out for these games, to all of you. It means everything."

Afterward, Hanley was a little more subdued, but the message still rang loud.

"It just added more fuel to our fire, I think. We just won a hard-fought football game and his team played hard, and he's out there talking smack. Coach Mach gave them all the respect in the world, and this guy gave us none. It motivated us."

What it all comes down to is Mach. He'll credit his staff, the hard work put in by assistants like Mark Gagnon, George Kuncie, Roy Dudas and Rick Coratti - whose defense paved the way for another state title. He'll credit the student body for their hard work, the other team for making his squad work that much harder.

But in the end, it comes

down to the guy who - for the last 27 years - has made CC the program that other teams in the area, whether or not they respect them, set as the measuring stick.

To be THE man, you have to beat the man. And that doesn't happen very often.

Although the prediction column last week and the preview story, an East Kentwood fan e-mailed me that I didn't know much about East Kentwood football, how their defense was better than I gave it credit for. I said that his team would win the game.

Sunday morning, he mailed back that CC was the best team in Division I "period. The best team doesn't make mistakes and we made too many."

He then went on to describe an incident with a fan or parent from CC.

The EK roster told the man, "We'll see you next year. The CC backer told him that he wouldn't, because EK wasn't going to get to the finals next year, they didn't have gone there this year and then gave him a one-finger salute "hopped in his SUV and roared out of the parking lot."

The writer was left with a sour taste in his mouth about the story in the paper on Sunday morning.

"I read the comments coach Mach made at the news conference after the game," wrote the fan.

"He sounds like a class act! If only this yahoo I encountered could read those comments. He could learn a thing or two about sportsmanship."

There's a reason that, after 27 years, CC football is on top for another year. Tom Mach, coach of CC, its fans, students, alumni and boosters, he's got the right number - No. 1.

Paul Beaudry is the Redford Garden City sports editor for the Observer and can be reached at (313) 953-2106 or by e-mail at pbeaudry@oehome.com.

CC wins D1 shootout with Falcons

BY BRAD MONASTIERE
STAFF WRITER

The Pontiac Silverdome is still a comfortable home for the Redford-Detroit Catholic Central football team.

CC played its best offensive game of the season in capturing the 2002 Division I state title Saturday with a 36-26 win over East Kentwood.

The championship is the second straight and fifth in eight years for the Shamrocks, dating back to 1995 for one of the most dominating runs in state history among Class A or Division I teams.

Taking on one of the most explosive teams in the state, CC was able to rely on its tough defense, despite giving up nearly twice as many points as it had in any game all season.

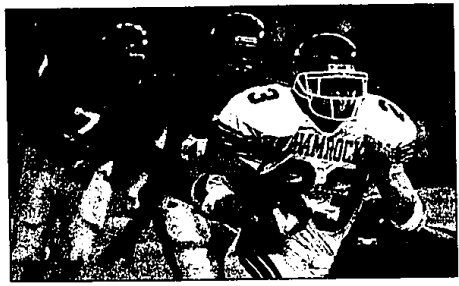
"This was one of the greatest games I've ever been involved with," said CC coach Tom Mach, who won his seventh state championship as head coach.

"East Kentwood has one of the best offenses I've ever seen, and we never felt comfortable that entire game. But we responded well. Our offensive line played a great game, and we made good adjustments on defense."

The Falcons went into the game averaging more than 45 points per game and hadn't been held to less than 34 in any game.

Conversely, the Shamrock defense hadn't given up more than 14 points in one game. Although the Falcons (13-1) got off to a flying start in the first quarter, the Shamrocks tackled more effectively as the game wore on.

"For us, it was a matter of not having enough possessions," Kentwood coach John Shillito said. "CC played great offensively. Their offensive line made us a little tentative as the game went on, and we got scrambled on offense a little bit. They made us work very hard for



JIM JACFIELD / OBSERVER
Catholic Central junior running back Derek Brooks rushed for four touchdowns Saturday in a 36-26 victory over East Kentwood in the Division I state final.

everything we got."

The key play of the game took place on an otherwise innocent-looking fourth-and-3 for the Shamrocks from their own 14-yard line.

The Falcons jumped offside on the punt attempt, giving the Shamrocks an automatic first down with the 5-yard penalty.

On the next play, junior Derek Brooks burst over the right side and ran 81 yards for a touchdown, giving CC a 22-14 lead early in the third quarter. East Kentwood never regained the lead.

"It's high school football, and those kind of things are going to happen," Shillito said. "But you've gotta be ready to bounce back from those kind of things. Our kids kept playing hard after that, but no doubt it was a big play in the game."

Mach agreed with his counterpart about the offside call that led to one of four touchdowns on the day by Brooks, who tied a state-finals record.

"It allowed us to keep the momentum," Mach said. "In a game like that, the big thing is to try and keep the momentum after they score."

Brooks had another fantastic game on the ground for the Shamrocks, gaining 205 yards on 24 carries. He broke tackles at the line of scrimmage and made people miss in the secondary.

"The holes were huge today," Brooks said. "Our line had a great week of practice, and I knew they would come out

ready to do the job today."

It was the third 200-year-plus rushing game for Brooks in the 2002 playoffs. He said he was ready for a big game after being held to just 60 yards against Macomb Dakota in a semifinal game.

"I've never been more tired in my life," he said after the game. "But when we lined up in our formation, the five and six holes (on the right side) just opened up all day."

The Falcons made it look easy on the game's opening drive, marching down the field to take an 8-0 lead. Star full-back Noel Aleman, who had 228 rushing yards, busted off runs of 22 and 20 yards on the drive, which took just eight plays.

CC scored perhaps its most important touchdown of the day on the very next drive, a methodical 70-yard push that culminated with a Brooks score from 16 yards out.

Junior quarterback Dave Thomas found Jeffrey McMichael for a two-point conversion pass, tying the score at 8-8. Aleman, who finished with 2,836 rushing yards this season, answered with a 70-yard TD sprint on Kentwood's second drive. The CC defense made a key stop on the two-point attempt, putting the Falcons up just six, 14-8.

The Shamrocks used almost the entire second quarter on one drive, taking up more than six minutes before Thomas tossed an option to Brooks for a

4-yard TD in the final minute of the first half. Jason Gingell's extra point gave CC the half-time lead, 15-14.

Aleman had a highlight-film run in the third quarter, dragging four defenders into the end zone on a tough 26-yard TD run. But the CC defense stuffed the two-point conversion attempt again, so the Falcons were still down, 22-20.

A 41-yard scramble by Thomas set up the lone CC touchdown, not scored by Brooks. Senior Randall Means cut through the heart of the East Kentwood defense for a 10-yard score in the waning moments of the third quarter, giving CC a 29-20 lead.

East Kentwood still wouldn't go away, pulling out a TD pass on fourth down near the CC goal line.

Quarterback Cory Sanders was chased 15 yards back from the line of scrimmage and threw a desperation pass that was caught by Tom Slager in the back of the end zone. The Shamrocks foiled a third two-point attempt by the Falcons.

CC put the nail in East Kentwood's coffin with a decisive 66-yard drive that took just seven plays. Brooks ran off right tackle once again for a 6-yard score with 4:34 left, making it a 10-point game.

Means picked off a Sanders pass, and junior Blake Kavanaugh recovered a fumble off a sack on East Kentwood's last two possessions to secure the victory.

North grid team receives academic honor

North Farmington's varsity football team has been awarded academic all-state honors by the Michigan High School Football Coaches Association.

Three members of the 11-man team nominated for the award have perfect, 4.0 grade-point averages: junior guard Christopher Doughty, junior offensive tackle Kyle Goldman and senior center John Symusniak.

The honor squad also includes junior guard Zachary Yost (3.964), junior defensive tackle Safet Cummulaj (3.929),

senior offensive tackle Christopher Cyrus (3.881), sophomore safety Scott Hepstrom (3.857), junior tight end Brad Stulberg (3.857), senior tight end Will Hathaway (3.833), senior linebacker Steve Kahn (3.786) and senior defensive end Ashwin Raghu (3.740).

Symusniak was named an individual first-team, academic all-stater, too.

In addition to his perfect GPA, he achieved an ACT score of 34.

All 11 players were starters on offense, defense or special

teams. Their average GPA is 3.89.

The MHSFCA picks four teams in each division. The players with the 11 best academic credentials on a team are nominated by their coach to represent the school.

The Raiders were fourth in Division II behind Midland Downs, Birmingham Brother Rice and Grand Rapids Northview.

"These scholar-athletes represent the best of Raider football for achievement on the field and in the classroom," North coach Rich Burrell said.

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!

Est. 1965
2002
Joe Louis Arena

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2002

S vs. **B**
MICHIGAN STATE vs. BOSTON UNIVERSITY
4:00 p.m.

M vs. **T**
MICHIGAN vs. MICHIGAN TECH
7:30 p.m.

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2002

Third Place Game - 1:30 p.m.
Championship Game - 5:00 p.m.

Tickets are \$25, \$20, \$15, \$10 & \$5 and are available at the Joe Louis Arena box office, University Athleticism in Troy (ticket service charges and all other restrictions included).
CHARGE BY PHONE 248-645-8888
or log on to collegehockeyatthejoe.com

COLLEGE HOCKEY AT "THE JOE"

ENTER TO WIN DETROIT RED WINGS TICKETS
Check Today's Classifieds Section to See How You Can Enter to Win!

THE Observer & Eccentric
WE WORK FOR YOU!

JINGLE BELL RUN FOR ARTHRITIS.

Abbott Immunology RUN / WALK Arthritis Foundation

The **JINGLE BELL RUN** is a 5K Run/Walk, 1/4 Mile Children's Snowman Shuffle which Benefits the Arthritis Foundation

SUNDAY December 8, 2002 BIRMINGHAM
Pierce Elementary 9:00 a.m.
800-968-3030 EXT 233

SUNDAY December 15, 2002 NORTHVILLE
Northville Downs 9:00 a.m.
www.arthritis.org

REGISTER IN PERSON AT THE new balance STORES

new balance FARMINGTON HILLS
37606 W 12 Mile & Halsted Rd
Approx 1 mile east of Haggerty Rd
248.324.0506

new balance TROY
821 E Big Beaver RD, at Rochester Rd
248.740.9221

HOURS MON - THUR 10 A.M. - 8 P.M.
FRI & SAT 10 A.M. - 6 P.M.
CLOSED SUNDAY