

FOOTBALL KICKOFF '89



Captain Coleman Stats take backseat to leadership quality

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Mill Coleman is accustomed to being a leader.

In two seasons as quarterback of the Farmington Hills Harrison football team, he has provided the direction that has made the Hawks a prolific offensive machine. Coleman, heretofore, has led by example.

The quiet, introverted player has made his statement with his tremendous skills and been content to let the upperclassmen do the cheerleading.

Coleman enters the 1989 season as a senior, and that adds another dimension to his role on the team. As a tri-captain, Coleman will be expected to lead in word as well as deed.

"Being a quarterback the past few years, you have to be a leader on the team, so it's not something totally new to me," Coleman said. "I just have to take on a little more leadership."

COLEMAN KNOWS fellow captains Matt Conley and Steve Hill can be counted on to rally the troops in time of need, but he plans to assert himself, too, in ways he wasn't expected as a sophomore and junior.

"As a captain, I may have to be a little more vocal," he said. "There will be others to get the guys fired up, but I may have to say 'Come on, guys, get your heads up' or 'Keep going, we're not finished yet.' I'll have to be more vocal in that respect."

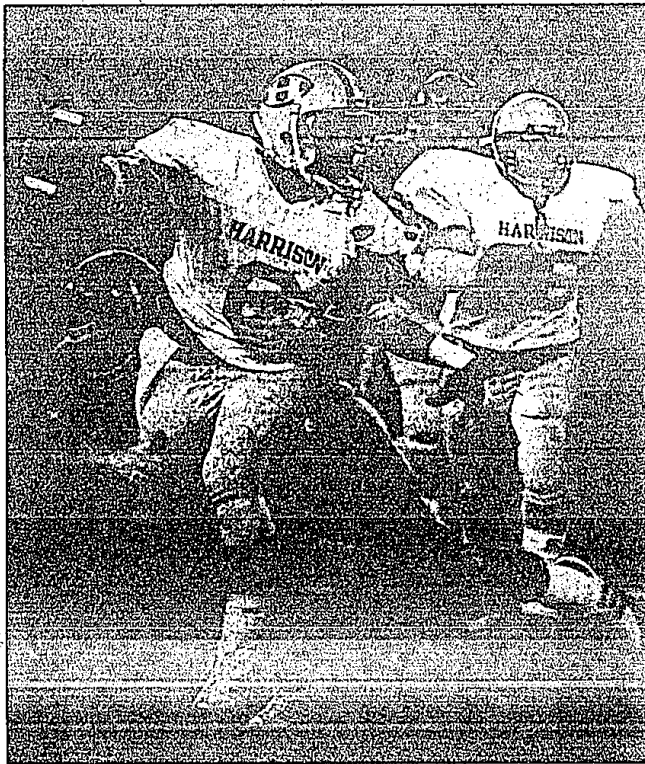
Anyone who knows Coleman knows he will assert himself on the playing field. As a senior, friend, and foe alike expect him to perform the same feat, work the same magic, he has the last two years.

He enters his final year at Harrison as one of the top-rated high school quarterbacks in the country and with some impressive statistics, which undoubtedly will increase handsomely before he's done.

Coleman passed for 2,074 yards in 1988 — his second straight year over 2,000 — and 28 touchdowns. In the process, he connected on 103 of his 171 attempts for a 60-percent completion rate.

He added 470 yards and seven TDs running, to boot, as Harrison, the No. 1-rated team in Class B all season, compiled a 13-0 record, won its fifth Western Lakes Activities Association title and captured a third state championship.

"IT'S KINDA hard to top last



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Mill Coleman, the fleet-footed, strong-armed quarterback at Farmington Hills Harrison, enters his senior year as one of the top-rated

prop quarterbacks in the country. He has passed for more than 5,500 yards and could leave his mark on several national record lists.

season, but I'm only worried about winning our games and the league before I think about the state championship," Coleman said.

"If we do the things we're supposed to, any stats and numbers will be there. So I don't worry if I'm going to pass for 200 yards in this game or run for 100."

Though Coleman's reserved na-

ture makes it easy to believe he's genuinely not concerned about stats, the fact remains he could leave his name on several national lists of statistical achievers.

Though it would take another season like he had in '88 and then some to set any records, Coleman could realistically move into the top 10 in career TD passes, com-

pletion percentage and passing yards.

Coleman has completed 55.3 percent of his passes, which ties him for ninth place on the National High School Athletic Association chart. He has 60 career TDs and needs another 21 to become one of the 10 best. He has passed for 5,498 yards and conceivably could sur-

pass 7,000, pushing him well past No. 10 on that list.

"To be honest, it wasn't something I set out to do," Coleman said. "My dad was looking through a stat book and happened to notice I was up there with some of the leaders in the country."

"IT'S NICE TO be up there, but it won't be the end of the world if I don't set any records."

Coleman possesses an amazingly strong arm that will astonish first-time observers, who assume a 5-foot-9, 165-pound youth can't possibly throw as far and with such accuracy as he does.

And he has chosen timely occasions to do just that, Coleman qualifies unreservedly as a gunner, having some of his greatest moments in the state playoffs. He led Harrison back from a 20-7 deficit in the 1987 semifinals against Marysville to win 35-20, and he passed for a state-finals record 216 yards in the 1988 championship game as the Hawks whipped St. Joseph 44-9.

Harrison plans to continue throwing the ball, but it could be more difficult for Coleman to repeat the numbers he racked up as a junior. The reason is the two receivers who caught most of those passes and had most of the receiving yardage, Bryan Wauldron and Chad Burgess, have graduated.

Steve Hill is the lone holdover at swingback, but Coleman is learning to work with an essentially new group of receivers this year. Instead of throwing to two all-stars, most of Coleman's passes will go to Scott Ratson, Roy Granger and Jon Schaeffer.

"I've been working with the new receiver corps for a while," Coleman said. "We have Steve Hill back. But it's hard at times because some of the guys don't have the speed Chad and Bryan did and I've overthrown them."

"I KNEW WHAT (Burgess and Wauldron) could do and what they couldn't. It's different, getting the timing down and knowing what (the new receivers) capabilities are. But we have good receivers and the potential is there. We're coming along, and we'll get there."

Coleman, being true to his modest nature, isn't making any bold predictions, but he believes the Hawks have the ability to organize another massive aerial strike this year.

"I'm not going to say I want to pass for so many yards and touchdowns, but we have receivers capable of getting 2,000 yards," he said.

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Central Division

Rice bids to break CC hold

By Brad Emons
staff writer

There's no room for the faint of heart in the tough Central Division of the Catholic League.

The 1989 football season for six schools will again test each member in a survival of the fittest.

For the past two seasons Redford Catholic Central has ruled the Central and won the Catholic League A-B Division title.

A bridesmaid for the past two seasons, Birmingham Brother Rice appears to be the favorite to reclaim its first crown since 1986.

But watch out for three other contending teams including always tough Warren DeLaSalle, along with Harper Woods Bishop Gallagher and Harper Woods Notre Dame.

Only Redford Bishop Burgess appears to be a long shot for the title. Here is a preview of the Central:

REDFORD CC

The Shamrocks (12-1 overall, 5-0 Central) lost several key performers including All-State nose tackle Lee Krueger (University of Wisconsin), quarterback Scott Haunicher, center/linebacker Pat McHale, tackle Jack Dankert, and Lou Yeager and kicker Pete Elezovic.

But tackle Ryan Bell, a 6-foot-3, 245-pound senior, anchors another strong CC line. The team's strength lies in its skill players with the return of senior tailback Dave Owens (716 yards), wide receiver Mike Mathis and fullback Arthon Stewart.

The quarterback situation rests with a pair of juniors — 6-1, 185-pound Jason Carr, son of University of Michigan defensive coordinator Lloyd Carr, and 5-10, 170-pound Jack Davidson.

"We have a lot of people we can go to," said CC coach Tom Mach, who has guided the Shamrocks to one state title (1979) and a pair of second place finishes (1987-88).

BIRMINGHAM BROTHER RICE

Optimism is running high in the Warriors' camp as coach Al Fracasso, entering his 21st season, welcomes back senior quarterback Bob Uiter, who completed 101 of 160 passes for 1,127 yards and nine touchdowns last season.

Uiter compares favorably to former student Rice quarterbacks, including Don English, Dave Yarema, Allen Sydlowski and Jon Gieselman.

"Bob is probably one of our hardest workers," Fracasso said. "He's a real leader. He can also run. He ranks right up there with the other fine quarterbacks we've had at Rice."

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Blue chippers catch eye of colleges

By Brad Emons
staff writer

WHO ARE SOME of the top college football prospects around Overland? Some past Overland standouts have had a big effect on the collegiate gridiron, including University of Michigan linebacker Alex Marshall (Bishop Burgess High), U-M tailback, Tony Boles (Westland John Glenn), Michigan State tailback Scott Salzer (North Farmington) and Eastern Michigan defensive back John Stoltzelski (Livonia Churchill).

Others have gone on to the pro ranks including Michigan's Mark Messer (Redford CC), trying to hold on with the Los Angeles Rams; and ASU's John Miller (Farmington Harrison), who is trying to stick with the Detroit Lions.

It will take awhile to determine how this class ranks, but the Observer sports staff has compiled the following list with the help of area prep and college coaches. A list of some of the top underclassmen has also been compiled.

TOP 15 SENIORS

1. Mill Coleman, quarterback, Farm. Harrison: Mill "The Thrill" is by far Overland's top player, having thrown for 2,074 yards (103 of 171) last year and over 5,000 during his three-year varsity career. Rated one of the nation's top prop quarterbacks by the Sporting News, Coleman's only drawback is his lack of size (5 feet 9 inches, 165 pounds), which may scare away some coaches. But don't forget, Doug Flutie made it big at Boston College and is now playing in the NFL.

2. Ryan Bell, lineman, Redford CC: Designated

"our best lineman" by coach Tom Mach says it all. The 6-3, 245-pound two-way tackle is a fierce pass rusher and good blocker. The second-team All-Observer pick from a year ago follows the likes of former CC offensive line stalwarts Joe Moirana, Jeff Wisla, Dan Nash and Toby Houston.

3. Ryan Johnson, tailback/safety, Ply. Salem: The 6-3, 215-pound Johnson could also play quarterback and linebacker, but coach Tom Moiramer prefers him at tailback and strong safety. He's not afraid to make contact and his very mobile for his size. Reminds some of former Salem standout Scott Jurek, who went on to perform at Eastern Michigan University. Johnson was second team All-Area last year.

4. Dave Owens, tailback, Redford CC: Expected to have a big year after gaining a year's experience (176 yards). Small for a running back (5-7, 105), but added strength should make him CC's best ball carrier since Aaron Roberts (1980). His brother Fred, who played at Redford Bishop Burgess High, is a senior tailback at the University of Wisconsin.

5. Andy Sapientza, fullback/linebacker, Liv. Churchill: It motivated, the 6-2, 215-pound Sapientza could be in the class with the late Churchill great Matt Foster, who started on Michigan State's 1978 Big Ten championship club. The word is that Sapientza's work ethic is better than any year ago, which should make him Division I caliber come November.

6. Steve Hill, linebacker/fullback/kicker, Farm. Harrison: A hernia problem slowed him during the pre season, but the 6-3, 210-pound Hill has bounced back. He is probably the area's most versatile performer. Hill can play swingback and is the Hawks' leader on defense at linebacker. Kicking, however, may be his forte. Last year he made 62 of 65 extra points and booted six field goals en route to first-team All-Area honors.

7. Mike Mathis, wide receiver/defensive back, Redford CC: Saw considerable action last year for a team that matched the Class A state title game. He could be a bonafide Division I player before his senior year. Ends. Speed to burn, Mathis (6-1, 190) will be a deep threat on offense and a good cover man on defense.

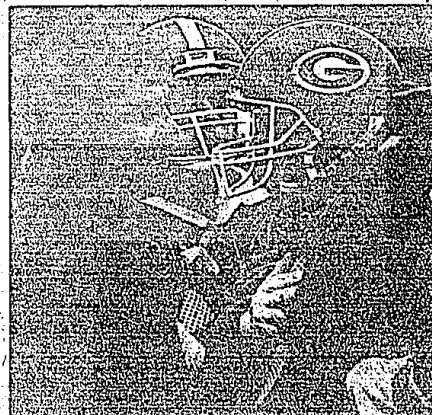
8. Pierre Hixon, defensive back, Wayne: An All-Wolverine A League pick as a junior, Hixon (5-11, 165) is fast and strong. He's not afraid to make contact and should be one of the area's standouts before the 1989 season ends. Also an excellent basketball player and track performer.

9. Mark Johnston, offensive tackle/linebacker, Westland Glenn: The second-team All-Observer pick has his presence known as a junior and should be in line for a big senior year. The 6-2, 230-pounder is a Mid-American Conference caliber player and is one of the reasons why Glenn could be making its fourth state playoff appearance in five years.

10. Eric Stover, quarterback, Westland Glenn: Although overshadowed by Coleman, the 6-1, 168-pound signal caller threw for 13 TDs as a junior and should be even better this season. He is quick enough to scramble and should drop up some impressive passing numbers this year, surpassing the likes of former Glenn standouts Steve Irwin, Steve Hawley and Clint Straub.

11. Matt Conley, tailback, Farm. Harrison: Missed the first three games of 1988 because of a knee injury, but rebounded to lead the state Class B champions in rushing (463 yards and 13 touchdowns). In the playoffs he scored a school-record six TDs against Avoca. The 5-11, 192-pound running back should be able to double his rushing total this season.

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Observer photo

Eric Stover, consulting with Glenn coach Chuck Gordon on the sidelines, helps to make the Rockets a preseason contender for Lakes Division and WLAA honors.