

Traditional 'B' powers face off

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than Jesse Walker (of Milan who rushed for more than 2,000 yards). "They didn't punt in their last two games. They just keep moving the ball."

Since the Hawks also can move the ball, the key will be Harrison's ability to stop the Pioneers, and that should be a most interesting matchup because the Hawks possess an excellent defense, too.

Harrison, giving up a touchdown per game, is especially tough against the run, holding Allen Park to 13

rushing yards and 11 opponents to an average of 70.

"Hopefully, our big linebackers can get on them and stop them," Herrington said. "If (Blaze) Saravich and (Steve) Hill have good games scraping and getting to the tackle hole, we should be OK."

Tackles Cress Cove and Mandel Hightower, both of whom have played well this year, will have to be on their toes since East runs a lot of trap and counter plays. For that matter, noseguard Gary Devine and ends Matt Sperry and Joe George will need to be, also.

"You can't blitz or anything," Herrington said. "We'll have to play tough at the line and not allow any holes to open. It's really going to take 11 guys getting on the ball. And we have to be alert for the pass, too."

IF THE DEFENSE can get the ball for Coleman and the offense, the Hawks should have success, with the last 24 games supporting that claim.

Harrison has outgained its opponents by an average of 200-plus yards per game. Coleman is 100-of-177 passing for 1,736 yards and 16 touchdowns, and he has rushed for 618 yards and five TDs. Matt Conley is the leading rusher with 851 yards and 16 touchdowns on 184 carries.

Herrington, however, is concerned about the condition of the artificial turf at Atwood. If it rains or snows, that could make the field slick and bad for the field-footed Coleman and his receivers.

Harrison tried unsuccessfully to have the game switched to Alma College. Two years ago the Atwood surface was still covered with snow when the Hawks arrived on Saturday for their semifinal game with Marysville. Harrison was two TDs behind but rallied to win 35-20.



Mike Saputo leads the Harrison team with 413 yards in pass receiving, and his 20 catches puts him second to Joe George, who has 25 receptions.

"Friday nights up there are always tough because it's (usually) wet," Herrington said. "A coach said (Detroit) DePores couldn't stand up on it last week."

If the Hawks have a dry field, that will make Coleman especially dangerous since he can scramble and

confuse the East pass coverage.

"If there's any frosting, it will be good, because (Coleman) is quicker than anything they have," Herrington said. "He'll be running on them."

Harrison will play a school with a reputation for physical — clean but hard hitting — football, and the big offensive line the Hawks have employed of late will help in that regard.

"They've got an all-state linebacker (Jamie Billo) we've got to block," Herrington said. "The bigger line has really helped us the last few games when we couldn't throw for the whole game because of the wind and had to run."

Milhizer fired by Farmington

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administrators, parents — outside people basically."

He added he thought he was fired because of a personality conflict between he and Potter. Milhizer said Potter told him he didn't like the way he talked to him and that he (Milhizer) tried to intimidate him.

"I'm not his kind of guy," Milhizer said. "He likes having yes men around him. He's got his inner circle, and I'm not part of it and never tried to be."

"It's just a big political game here. There's a reason why Farmington High has been so bad for so long. As soon as I got the job, people were trying to undermine me."

Potter said the decision to fire Milhizer didn't stem from a personality conflict, and it wasn't because he refused to do things the way Potter wanted them done.

"THAT'S NOT true, not accurate," Potter said. "There's no such thing as a yes man in this building as far as the principal and a coach. All you have to do is interview the other coaches."

"That's certainly not a prerequisite to the job. That's just his own perception as far as I'm concerned."

The administrators acknowledged Milhizer's commitment to the job and the effort he expended in an attempt to revive the program.

"But if you look at some of your (Observer) papers you'll see a lot of controversy," Dickson said.

Milhizer said that is probably a reference to a series of news stories written last month about the football backers (separate from the boosters club) and their concern with the program.

"The positive morale-building feeling you want in any program" was lacking, said Dickson. "For various reasons, some of them beyond Rick's control, that wasn't developing here."

Milhizer, in his desire to gain support for the program and acquire needed equipment, said he initiated the backers club against Potter's wishes.

football

Player response, 4D

"WE NEEDED a lot of help, and I was supposed to sit back and wait for these things," he said. "Something like that is confrontational, and (Potter) didn't appreciate that."

The backers, however, became the tail that wagged the dog, according to Milhizer. Eventually, they tried to gain control of the program instead of serving as supporting players in the larger scheme, he said.

"When they got involved, they want to run the program, and they can turn on you," he said. "I'm sure some of them led to my downfall."

"I think they wanted a yes man, too, and I refused to be a yes man for them, too. There's some good ones, but a lot are not being football backers."

At his meeting with the administrative trio, Milhizer said Potter told him he could have better utilized personnel available to him within the school.

To Milhizer, that meant continuing to use former coaches in coaching capacities. Milhizer said some people in the inner circle he avoided tried to undermine his integrity and the program by spreading rumors and gossip.

"It was decision on my part not to use those people," he said. "It was my feeling, some of those people were part of the problem and not the solution."

"As a matter of fact, we had a meeting at the end of last year with all the head coaches at Farmington High about coaches bad-mouthing other coaches."

"There are people who sit back and judge others, and I avoided getting involved in all that," he added.

"I didn't cultivate that group, and I didn't want to. As far as interacting with teachers, how can I? I'm not a teacher. I just showed up every day and did my work."

EGR not impressed by foe's press

By Dan O'Meara staff writer

The fact Farmington Hills Harrison is the defending Class B football champion doesn't carry much weight in East Grand Rapids.

Neither does the team's No. 1 ranking in Michigan, its No. 3 rating in the Midwest nor its No. 9 ranking nationally.

East coach George Bartheski acknowledges Harrison quarterback Matt Coleman to be a fine player, but he bristled Tuesday when asked if the Pioneers have played a team or faced a player comparable to the Hawks and Coleman.

Harrison (11-0) plays East (10-1) in a semifinal game at 7:30 p.m. Friday in Flint Atwood Stadium.

The Pioneers are champions of what some consider the best Class B league in the state — the Ottawa-Kent White Division — which includes Zeeland, Wyoming Park and Forest Hills Central, and they open and end the regular season with Class A opponents.

"WE KNOW all about the publicity coming out of the Detroit area," Bartheski said. "You people had better start looking, because there's Zeeland and us and we're in the same conference."

"We've heard all the crap coming out of the Detroit area, making it sound like this (Harrison) team is a Godsend. We're not impressed."

The Pioneers also have a fine tradition and annually are among the best teams in the Grand Rapids area, if not the state. East has been in the playoffs six times and has won

two Class B titles.

"We're not going to be standing there in awe," Bartheski said. "In fact, they're going to get hit. The best team is going to win. But we're not going to be in awe, because — Christ — there's this All-American kid there."

The All-American kid is Coleman, whom Bartheski saw for the first time last Saturday in Harrison's 28-6 win over Allen Park.

"He's everything everybody said he is," Bartheski said. "He's the quickest quarterback I've ever seen."

"Defending the pass is not hard to do. Defending a passer and a runner is really hard to do. We have our

work cut out for us."

UNLIKE HIS two championship teams, Bartheski's current group doesn't have any big-name players. Fullback Brian Davis, who has rushed for 1,900 yards, and linebacker Jamie Billo, who averages 10½ tackles, come the closest to being star material.

"(Billo) is one of the best I've ever coached," Bartheski said. "He's a real, real hard tackler."

"Davis and Billo are real good and the rest are just good, hard-working kids. In two years, we've won 18 games and lost two, and we've taken on the best teams available."

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