

Sports

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Granger, Hawks soar to 5th state title



SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Roy Granger befuddled the Cheboygan defense with his speed and moves.

Cheboygan routed 34-7 by Harrison

By Dan O'Meara
staff writer

Roy Granger could easily have been the legendary Red Grange as far as the Cheboygan defense was concerned. Saturday night in the Silverdome.

The Farmington Hills Harrison tailback was the Galloping Ghost, presenting the Chiefs with an elusive, phantom figure whom they could never catch.

Granger left his mark on the high school football playoffs, rushing for a state-finals record 295 yards and leading the Hawks to a 34-7 rout of Cheboygan in the Class BB championship game.

The victory netted Harrison its third state title in four years and its fifth overall. Only Detroit St. Martin DePorres has won more championships (7) since the playoffs began in 1975.

"This is what we worked for since Day One of our freshman year," senior noseguard Leon Jefferson said. "We started the new year saying we were not going to lose anything."

"WE WANTED to win the first and last (games) in the Dome and everything in between," senior linebacker Mike Pesel said. "There wasn't any pressure on us to win. It was just a desire."

The Hawks, ranked No. 1 in Michigan and No. 13 in the country, finished with a 13-0 record for the third time in four years, also. The Chiefs ended 10-3.

"They definitely earned their ranking all year long, and I see why they deserved a national ranking," Cheboygan coach Jack Coon said.

Granger, who carried the ball 21 times and scored on runs of 50 and 73 yards, finished his senior season with 2,025 yards and 38 touchdowns, which included 31 rushing. He also caught one pass and returned four



SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Roy Granger Sr. cheers for his son and the Hawks. On his left is Millard Coleman Sr., father of former Harrison great Mill Coleman.

punts for 355 yards in total offense Saturday.

His rushing record broke that set by former Forest Hills Northern and University of Michigan player Kerry Smith, who had 278 yards on 27 attempts against Bad Axe in the Class C final of 1978.

"I have to give a lot of credit to the guys up front," Granger said, referring to senior linemen Fred Klotzer, Frank Ankaw, John Spisz, Jason Gloetzer and Mike Story.

"THEY WERE throwing a lot of great blocks, and (upback) Pesel always takes out the linebacker on the blast play. Every team knew we were going to the left on the blast, and the line still blew them out."

Granger set the record with a 41-yard dash to the Cheboygan 8-yard line late in the third quarter, setting up Harrison's last TD after which the Hawks led 34-0.

Pesel scored twice on a pair of 1-

yard runs, and senior quarterback Andy Fitzpatrick passed 45 yards to senior tight end Greg Piscoplank for the other TD.

"Coach (John Herrington) said: 'You have to get 24 yards, so go out and get it on this play,'" because Herrington was ready to send in the second-team offense, Granger said. "I was kind of nervous, so I ran until I got pushed out (of bounds)."

Granger went to the sideline in the first quarter with a twisted ankle, but he "had to suck it up because it was the biggest game of my career" and returned to have that big game.

He showed the Cheboygan defense what he could do right away, and Harrison consequently wasted no time getting a lead on the Chiefs. After senior Duane Anderson returned the opening kickoff to midfield, Granger dashed 50 yards off right tackle for a TD and a 6-0 lead.

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'91 champions noted for their toughness

By Dan O'Meara
and Brad Emons
staff writers

As has been his policy, John Herrington wouldn't compare the many great football teams he has coached at Farmington Hills Harrison after the Hawks won their fifth state championship Saturday night.

But the 1991 team will leave its own legacy at Harrison and will be remembered as one of the finest in the 17-year history of the high school football playoffs.

"The thing that separates this team is its toughness and its meanness," Herrington said. "This is the most physical team I've coached."

"Some may say they were not always perfect gentlemen, and some may say I have a few more gray hairs because of their cockiness. But they love each other and they always stuck together."

While the latest team might have included more "free spirits" than previous ones, the players were no less committed to the game and to continuing the school's winning tradition — an attitude that will remain after they leave Harrison, according to Herrington.

"These guys love football," he said. "They'll come back to the Turkey Bowl we have every year (for alumni players), and they'll go out there and kill each other."

"They worked very hard and were a challenge to coach. In some ways, they were free spirited, but they were one of the best even though it's hard to compare with other teams."

Considering all but a few Harrison games resulted in routs, the practice sessions might have been more competitive. But the family theme never failed, according to Mike Pesel, a senior tri-captain with Jason Gloetzer and Greg Piscoplank.

"We had our share of skirmishes, and it got even more tense when we were fighting for the playoffs," he said. "We had some very competitive practices, guys fighting for positions all year long."

"But we never took it into the locker room. We were always together whether it was playing pool at the Gloetzers' house or wherever. We were a very together team of the field."

Harrison, which celebrated its first state title by winning a fifth on the 10th anniversary of that initial triumph, has produced so many quality teams a popular topic for discussion is the question of which is best?

The word this year, though not from any of the Harrison coaches, was the '91 team might be the all-time greatest. But that would diminish a tradition that was built over many years by many teams, according to Herrington, and current players agree.

"We might be but no one will ever know," Pesel said. "No one really cares. We got our state championship and that's all that matters."

"We're our own team and we don't want to be compared. We don't try to compare ourselves to (the 1988 and '89 championship teams led by quarterback Mill Coleman). We're as good as our record shows. I know this is the best team I've ever played on."

"All state champions are good teams," Herrington said. "All of them do different things and play different people. But this was the most physical team, I'll say that."

Harrison's 34-7 defeat of Cheboygan in the Class BB final was a much different outcome than the last time the Hawks were in a championship game.

In the 1989 final, Harrison had to rally with time running down to beat DeWitt 28-27. The Hawks led 28-0 midway in the third quarter Saturday and had clinched the win well before time expired.

"Except we didn't keep them in their seats like we did the last time," Herrington said. "We got the third (TD) and I felt we had won. I was upset we didn't get it in the first half."

A fake field goal from 35 yards with 2 1/2 minutes left in the second quarter resulted in an incomplete pass. Harrison led 14-0 at halftime.

Herrington used to jokingly say he would leave coaching when Coleman was asked playing following the '89 season.

He was asked if he would miss tailback Roy Granger as much as Coleman after Granger rushed for a state-finals record 295 yards Saturday.



SHARON LEMIEUX/staff photographer

Coach John Herrington, assistant coach John Wilkowiak (left) and players Andy Fitzpatrick (center), Dan Hight (22) and Greg Piscoplank (4) can unwind and enjoy the remainder of the championship game with the Hawks safely ahead. Harrison won 34-7 over Cheboygan.

The Hawks will lose 22 seniors, many of them two-way players. The regulars also include Andy Fitzpatrick, Jason and Mike Gloetzer, Piscoplank, Pesel, Fred Klotzer, Duane Anderson, Matt Gordon, Frank Ankaw, Mike Story, Dan Hight, John Spisz, Jefferson and Rip Wolff.

"I'm going to miss all these guys because all of them are physical, hard-nosed players," Herrington said. "But it's a great way to go out, so you don't miss them as much when they've accomplished all they can in their high school careers."

Herrington was concerned about Cheboygan throwing the ball

because the Hawks had made such a big commitment to stopping its wing-T offense. But the Chiefs attempted only six passes, and quarterback Tom Tryban completed three for 30 yards.

Granger dashed 50 yards on the first play from scrimmage to score a touchdown and give Harrison a quick lead from which Cheboygan never recovered.

"I had a vision it would work," Herrington said. "You just feel something is going to go. I wasn't surprised that it did. We felt all along we would be able to move the ball."

Granger, who had been accused of show-boating during the season, was a class act in the Silverdome press room after the game. Sitting next to Tryban, he initiated a conversation, congratulating Tryban on leading his team to the final and talking about the game.

The post-game session ended with Granger, Pesel and Jefferson standing with Cheboygan's Scarbrough, Tryban, linebacker Steve Konicki and Coon to have their picture taken. It was a good display of sportsmanship.

Cheboygan scored its only touchdown with 0:46 remaining, and

Harrison had been substituting but still had a handful of regulars on the field when fullback Shannon Scarbrough barely broke the plane from a yard out.

The Harrison defense gave up only three TDs in the first three quarters all season, and one followed a fumble recovery at the Harrison 11-yard line in the semifinal game with Treumseh.

"We took a lot of pride in that last drive," Cheboygan coach Jack Coon said. "They had lot of those good kids in there. We wanted to score against their best. We didn't want to score against their second team."