



DAN O'MEARA

## One more chance to see great team

It was late in the game on a near-balm, sunny, November afternoon at Flint's Atwood Stadium Saturday when the Farmington Harrison student section (Does such a thing really exist?) began chanting "One more game! One more game!"

Indeed, there would be one more game for the 2001 Hawks to play. The Drive for Five was very much alive.

Harrison had a comfortable lead over Saginaw, 31-14, with little time left for the Trojans to really do much about the inevitable.

The Hawks were headed to the Pontiac Silverdome for the sixth straight year with the goal of winning their fifth consecutive state title and defending their Division 3 championship.

Harrison has done this so many times, I'm afraid an awesome record of achievement has become a commonplace occurrence to many people.

The Hawks will play in a state-final game for the 15th time and could win a 12th championship. One is a record; the other would be an extension of a record they already own.

### Always thrill to cover finals

As for me, I've covered Harrison since 1987; that's 12 times working the finals at the Dome. A co-worker asked me recently: "Don't get you get tired of that?" If that were so, then I'd be just plain tired of being a sports writer and tired of doing this job. I'm not there yet.

I say who cares about the Michigan-Ohio State game, the Harry Potter-movie craze or a post-Thanksgiving shopping trip to the mall?

I'm going to the Dome for an Observers' first Saturday afternoon - a tripleheader involving area teams. I'll be Redford Catholic Central at 1, Livonia Clarenceville at 5 and Harrison at 8.

If Clarenceville should pull off an upset over defending champion Jackson Lumen Christi in Division 5, the Trojans will become a real "Hoosiers" success story.

Clarenceville already is a success story, however. It wasn't long ago the Trojans were one of the worst teams in the Metro Conference. Now they're one of the best in the state.

If Lumen Christi has the best team, Clarenceville senior running back Tim Shaw will be the best player on the field, I believe. Hopefully, he can make a difference in the outcome for the Trojans.

Another Trojans team can relate to Clarenceville's underdog role in a championship game - the Fruitport Trojans, who won provide competition for nationally-ranked Harrison in Division 3.

### Experience a plus for Hawks

While Harrison is an old hand at playing in the finals, it will be Fruitport's first visit to the Dome.

The game will match Harrison's wide-open, finesse style of offense against Fruitport's ground-oriented running game.

"I think David and Goliath is another way of describing it," Trojans coach Steve Wilson said. "The biggest thing we have to work with our kids on is not being in awe of the whole thing."

"Farmington Hills has that experience. For our kids to go down there, it will be an unbelievable experience to walk in there."

Harrison will be a heavy favorite, understandably. But it seems Fruitport is very similar to the 1996 Grandville team that defeated Harrison in the Class A final.

The Trojans rely more on deception that straight-ahead power, but they have a strong line with a solid corps of backs and the ability to control the line of scrimmage just as the Bulldogs did five years ago.

That was the last time the Hawks lost a playoff game. They've won 22 straight since then, but even a team as good as Harrison has to be on its guard.

While a virtual unknown to most fans on this side of the state, Fruitport has a successful program, though

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Family ties: Members of the Woods family and senior tackle Aaron Kennedy (bottom right) hope to have more to celebrate Saturday night following the Division 3 state final. Junior tailback Marcus Woods has a seat on the Atwood Stadium wall while his parents, Anita and Kevin Sr., show their enthusiasm following Harrison's 31-14 win over Saginaw in a state semifinal game last week.

## Hawks on familiar turf in Dome



STAFF PHOTO BY BILL BARKER

Forward pass: Drew Stanton goes to the air versus Saginaw.

BY DAN O'MEARA  
STAFF WRITER  
domeara@oe.homecomm.net

Farmington Harrison football players have big plans for Saturday night. Their goal is to win another state title and add to an impressive playoff record that is unprecedented in state history.

Playing in its first state final, Fruitport would like nothing better than to upset those plans by achieving the biggest victory in the history of the West Michigan school.

Both teams will take 13-0 records into the Division 3 championship game with kickoff set for 8 p.m. at the Pontiac Silverdome.

The Hawks, who have won the division crown the last two years, hope to win their fifth consecutive state title and a record 12th overall. A victory will extend Harrison's winning streak to 36 games and give coach John Herrington 299 career wins.

"There's no question Harrison has one of the best programs in the state at

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any level," Fruitport coach Steve Wilson said. "John has had his team in the Silverdome and winning state championships more times than we've made the playoffs."

"It's hard to compete with the tradition they have, but our kids are excited about it. We're coaching our kids to go in and play the absolute best game they can."

Fruitport, which is located a few miles east of Muskegon, will present the Hawks with a different kind of opponent and challenge than they've faced the last two weeks.

Instead of the pass-oriented offense of Allen Park and the perimeter speed of Saginaw, Fruitport prefers to battle in the trenches and run the ball while operating from the Wing-T.

Ball fakes and deception are a big part of the Fruitport scheme, which

Wilson compares to the old Belding offense under Irv Sigler.

"We probably run 85 percent of the time," Wilson said. "If we're throwing 10 times a ballgame, it's too much. We like to grind it out."

"We've run this offense at least six years, and it's been very successful for us. The years we haven't been that successful we just haven't had the athletes with the schedule we play. This year we have a nice mix of kids."

Halfback Mark Langlois is the workhorse as far as carrying the ball. He has 2,005 yards and 26 touchdowns through 13 games.

Fullback Greg Schultz and halfback Philip Wilson, the coach's son, are 220-pound runners, blockers and big loads for the defense to handle. Wilson has rushed for 740 yards and 13 touchdowns, Schultz 633 yards and seven touchdowns.

"We have three tremendous running

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## Trojans play Titans for Division 5 crown

BY BRAD EMONS  
STAFF WRITER  
bemon@oe.homecomm.net

They've been ranked No. 1 and 2 all season in Division 5, so it's only fitting that the two 13-0 teams, Jackson Lumen Christi and Livonia Clarenceville, square off for state football championship.

The much-anticipated matchup will kick off at 5 p.m. Saturday at the Pontiac Silverdome.

Lumen Christi is the defending Division 5 state champion and riding a 27-game winning streak.

Meanwhile, Clarenceville comes in battle-tested after knocking off Beverly Hills-Detroit Country Day (27-20) and Detroit Crockett (22-16) in the playoffs.

The Trojans are coming off an impressive 46-10 semifinal win over Capac.

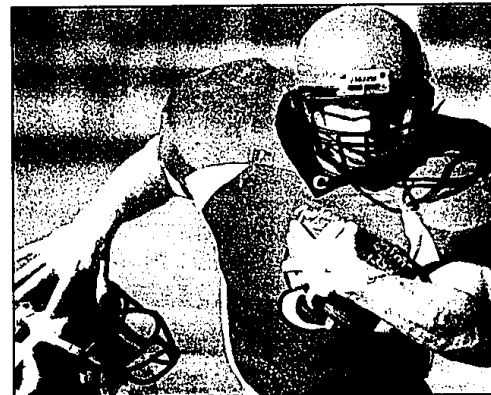
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Lumen Christi has not really been pushed in the playoffs other than a 28-7 regional final win over Battle Creek Perfield. Last week the Titans spanked Boyne City, 46-0.

"You can't let them run the ball down your throats because they're very good technique-wise and they're strong," Clarenceville coach Greg Hudkins said of the Titans. "They just line up and try and wear you down. But they'll also do some other stuff to keep you honest."

Ted Plopkow, a 6-foot-2, 200-pound senior quarterback, has thrown for 1,030 yards and rushed for nearly 900

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STAFF PHOTO BY TIM HARRIS

Title time: Senior Tim Shaw hopes to lead Clarenceville to a state title Saturday night in the Division 5 championship game.

## Flyers earn championship trophy in RU tourney

Farmington Unified won the championship of the Redford Unified Invitational with a 4-3, double-overtime victory Saturday over Troy Unified.

It marked the first time the Flyers have won a championship trophy in the program's four-year existence, and they presented it to Farmington Athletic Director Brian Swinehart Wednesday night prior to the home opener against Birmingham United.

"Our players made a commitment to do everything they possibly could to

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win this tournament," Farmington coach Mike Harris said.

"We played hard and played smart most of the time. The team is just excited. The chemistry is such that, even though we're a unified team, the players are united as one in the locker room."

After a scoreless, 10-minute overtime, Mike Hand scored his third goal

of the game with two minutes remaining in a second, eight-minute OT to give the Flyers (2-0) the win. Brett Ramsay and Keith Hay assisted.

Troy led 1-0 after one period on a goal by Greg Nikkila. In the second period, Hand's power-play goal from Hay and Hay's goal from Chris Frayne put Farmington on top, 2-1.

Hand's second goal, from Ramsay again, gave the Flyers a two-goal lead early in the third period.

"We thought we had the game under

control, but unfortunately we had two errors in our own zone," Harris said.

Troy capitalized with goals by John Gorski and James Shappee to tie, 3-3, but Hand won it in overtime.

"We're really excited about this team," Harris said. "I think we have enough talent and depth to challenge. We're going to keep Stevenson, Churchill and Northville honest this year. We came out of the gate strong, and we want to stay focused. We're playing to win this year; we really are."