

Imaginary football playoff decides who's No. 1 in area



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By all rights, we should be done with high school football.

In theory, that ended the night of Nov. 24 in the Silverdome with Farmington Harrison and Catholic Central winning state championships and Clarenceville advancing to the finals.

Being inquisitive, we started wondering what would happen if the two local state champions met for a title. After all, even though everyone thinks Harrison is the greatest team since the 1986 Chicago Bears, you still have to play the games.

Then that list expanded to Clarenceville, since the Trojans also played in the Silverdome.

We also tried to come up with a fourth team to make a pure playoff out of it. Naturally, we couldn't think of just one, so we expanded it to six teams.

So we give you now, in the great tradition of the Bowl Championship Series, the Observer Championship Series—mostly hypothetical, purely in fun. Yes, some teams haven't played in three weeks. Some players are still licking their wounds.

But if you asked any player or coach if they'd want to be a part of this, they'd do it in a heartbeat.

The two state champs—Division 3 Harrison (14-0) and Division 1 CC (11-3) are our No. 1 and 2 seeds and get first-round byes. Division 5 runner-up Clarenceville (13-1) weighs in as our third seed, while Division 1 regional finalist John Glenn (9-3) is the fourth seed. Canton (9-2) a Division 1 district finalist, is the fifth seed, while Division 8 regional finalist Bishop Borgess (10-2) is the sixth and final seed.

As always, this is purely for entertainment value. And remember, no gambling of any kind is allowed.

FIRST ROUND GAME 1

Bishop Borgess at Clarenceville
Two different teams take the field at Clarenceville. The Spartans are very rested from their three-week layoff since getting wowed by Division 8 champion Mandon. The Trojans are still shell-shocked from their 49-0 loss to Jackson Luman Christi.

And at 11, Borgess takes over—using a 21-yard touchdown run by Darryl Anglin and 2-yard run by Jason Smith—for a 12-0 lead by the half.

But in the second half, Clarenceville comes out of its funk. Steve Meadows picks off a DeJuan Kea pass and returns it for a touchdown and Pate Shaw's extra point cuts it to 12-7.

Coach Gicé Hudkins puts a trick out of his bag, pulls off an onside kick and, two plays later, Tim Shaw rambles 42 yards for a score and a 14-12 lead.

In the final minute Borgess drives down to the Trojans' 22 with a 6, 11 and 10. Three straight runs go nowhere and on fourth down, Kea's pass is just tipped away from Gordon Piznie at the goal-line by Jeff Fioritti, allowing Clarenceville to advance with a 14-12 win.

FIRST ROUND GAME 2

Ply. Canton at Westland John Glenn
Two of the top teams in the Western Lakes have to wait until December for their first meeting and it's worth the wait.

Once again, John Glenn's offense sputters early in the game and the Rockets punt on every first-half possession. But their defense makes up for what the offense lacks and holds Canton to just a 24-yard field goal by Dutch Morrell.

The Chiefs make it 10-0 in the third quarter with Reggie Joiner shaking a tackle and scoring on a 25-yard run.

But in the fourth quarter, John Glenn finally gets untracked, scoring on the first play of the period when Brian Czeklewicz hits Andrew Peiffer on a 42-yard post pattern. The defense holds Canton on the next series, and three plays later, Czeklewicz and Peiffer hook up again on a 35-yard score as Glenn holds on for a 14-10 win.

SEMIFINAL GAME 1

Clarenceville vs. Catholic Central at Redford Union's Kraft Field
With a week off to rest and nurse their wounds, the Shamrocks jump out to a 28-7 lead in the first half as Derek Books scores on TD runs of 10, 4 and 42 yards, while Mike Bonaszak scored from the 3.

Meanwhile, the Trojans can't get untracked—turning the ball over three times inside their own 25, scoring only when Tim Shaw breaks three tackles en

route to a 92-yard TD run.

The second half is a punting battle. A slight rain turns Kraft Field into a swamp and neither team can get footing and the game is played between the 30s as CC moves into the finals with a 28-7 win.

SEMIFINAL GAME 2

John Glenn at Harrison
The rematch of the Western Lakes title game proves to be no match again. Glenn gamely tries to hang with the Hawks, but winds up getting shut out 38-0 with Marcus Woods rushing for TDs of 10 and 2 yards and Drew Stanton running for an 8-yard score and passing for two more TDs to Agim Shabaji.

However, Stanton, winches a knee when he's sacked by Will Kennedy and has to leave the game in the third quarter. With second-string quarterback Jake Ghanemann unable to play the spot makes to a fractured wrist. Shabaji finishes out the game—with Stanton questionable for the finals.

FINALS

Catholic Central vs. Harrison
Trying to find a piece to host the game proved harder than trying to win the semifinal.

For starters, we wanted to make it a neutral site. Clarenceville and Glenn both laughed when we asked them to host the game, saying if they couldn't make the finals, they weren't hosting the game. Kraft Field was a mess; Plymouth-Canton schools declined, saying they wanted to save the grass for soccer.

Livonia Public Schools administrators felt that activities such as a championship would set a dangerous precedent for their middle school students, who are only allowed to play intramural sports. Thurston didn't want to rent the field out and Ganson City administrators said that they didn't want to rent the field for a game with a Redford school.

Finally, one school came forward—Bishop Borgess and its tall grass, no-crowns, dips and ruts, no-stands, can-only-kick-to-one-goalpost field.

"We could use the concession money to fix the field," said Borgess athletic director Rodney Getey. "And besides, we can use the gate money to fix the fence that surrounds the field."

A standing-room only crowd of 2,000 surrounded the field at Borgess expecting to watch a battle for the ages. But to the surprise of many, the game was a rout.

Stanton's knee places him on crutches. Shabaji moves to quarterback and Mike Bartley takes his place at flanker.

CC isn't unscathed either. Ryan Rogewski tried coming back from surgery too soon and he is replaced at

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