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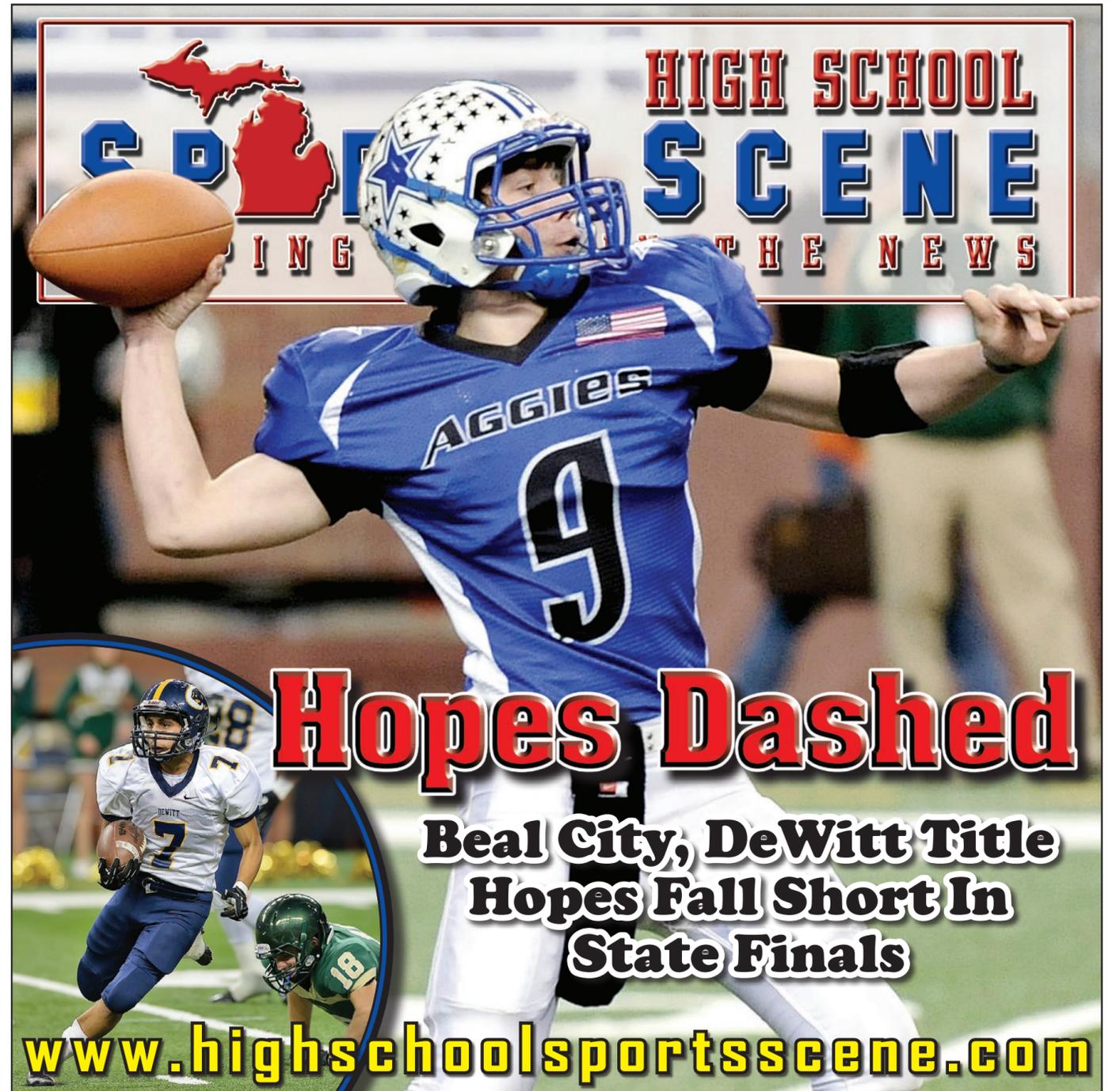
**PUBLISHER NOTE**

I have known Terry Hessbrook, coach of the four-time state champion Ithaca Yellowjackets football teams, for my entire life. We graduated together from Ithaca in 1985. As a competitor and as a friend, we played on baseball teams together from little league through high school, and we both were captains of our respective sports. When it came to winter sports, we split our leadership roles, as he played basketball while I pursued wrestling, but we did share great moments on the roundball court through the eighth grade. Football was the ultimate team sport, and our senior year (1984), we reached a milestone for Ithaca High School. Our team was undefeated and made the playoffs for the first time in school history, it does not seem like 29 years have passed...

Terry has had incredible success as the head coach of Ithaca High School football over the last ten years!! He has established a great program and has developed a strong circle of assistant coaches around him ( Craig Snyder, Brad Showers, Todd Hessbrook, John Mirranek, Josh Rayburn, Noah Moomney, Justin Seamon, Craig Fenn, Luke Kanine, Andrew Snowblein, Brandon Gillette, and Glenn Stevenson). Terry has always received great respect as a leader and a coach. As for the community of Ithaca, Terry Hessbrook and his undefeated Yellowjackets football teams over the last four years have brought a huge degree of pride and an undenyng feeling of family within the community during this nationally recognized STREAK of 56 games!!

Speaking for High School Sports Scene, for the community of Ithaca, and as a lifelong friend, thank you Terry Hessbrook and the Ithaca High School Fighting Yellowjackets for another perfect season! We all look forward to your continued success with your program and the development of our young athletes.

Randy Miniard  
Publisher

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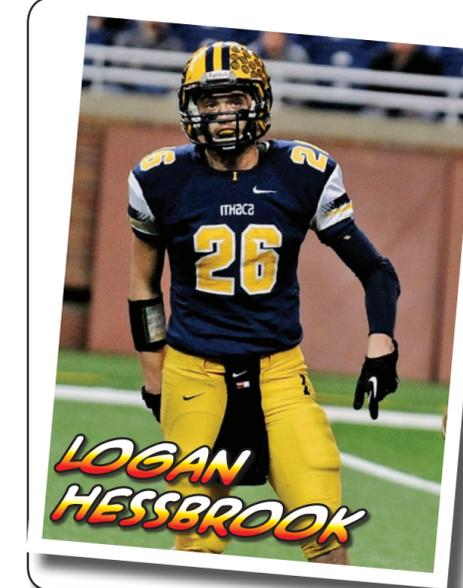
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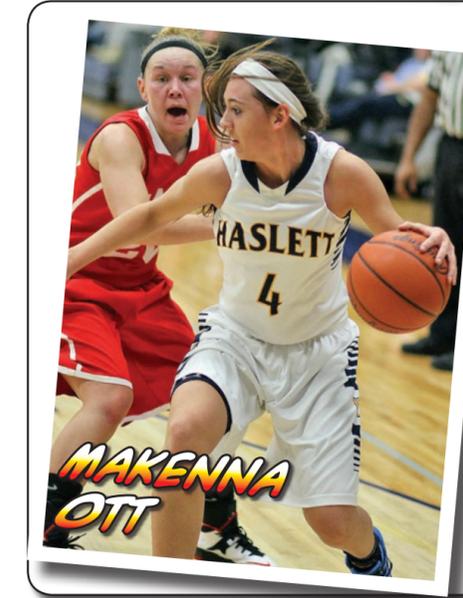


**LOGAN HESSBROOK**



**SCHOLAR-ATHLETE OF THE MONTH MALE**

**The Logan Hessbrook File**  
Ithaca High School  
Class: Senior  
Sports: Football, basketball, baseball  
Accomplishments: All State First-Team (football), All State First-Team (baseball) as a junior, All-Conference First Team (basketball) as a junior. Key contributor in Ithaca's 41-22 Division 6 state final win over Clinton.  
GPA: 4.0  
College: Plans on playing college football but currently undecided on a college



**MAKENNA OTT**



**SCHOLAR-ATHLETE OF THE MONTH FEMALE**

**The Makenna Ott File**  
Haslett High School  
Class: Junior  
Sport: Volleyball, basketball  
Accomplishments: All-State Second team (Class A), All-Region, and First Team All-Conference for the second year in a row. Led Haslett to the Class A semifinals, where her team lost to eventual state champion East Grand Rapids. Haslett finished the season with a 54-4-3 record.  
Other: Will be one of the top returning volleyball players in the state in 2014



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**ATHLETE OF THE MONTH**  
FEMALE

**KEYON ADDISON**

**KARLI HERRINGTON**

**The Keyon Addison File**  
Saginaw High School  
Sports: Football / Basketball  
Season Accolades: Addison scored a game-high 10 points in Saginaw's season-opening 74-27 win over Heritage. In football, he was one of the top running backs in the league and a key defender.  
Accomplishments: As a sophomore, Keyon was a key member on the Class A state championship team and as a junior helped the Trojans make it back to the Breslin Center and the state semis before losing to Detroit Southeastern. Keyon was a four-year starter on the Trojans' football team.  
Future: Addison has set his sights on playing football at the next level and hasn't given up on possibly playing basketball at the next level.

**The Karli Herrington File**  
Hemlock High School  
Sports: Volleyball / Basketball / Track / softball  
Season Accolades: In a 57-14 win over Ovid-Elsie during the fourth game of the season, Karli joined sister Shelby and became only the second player in school history to eclipse the 1,000-point mark during a career. She scored a game-high 16 points in the win.  
Accomplishments: Karli averaged 19 points, 15.1 rebounds, and 4.1 blocked shots per game a season ago. She also led the Huskies to the volleyball regional final, where Hemlock lost to Unionville-Sebewaing. All-Conference in volleyball, basketball, and softball. All-State in volleyball, basketball, and softball. MVP in volleyball, basketball, and softball. As a freshman, she played on the Hemlock team that made it to the Breslin Center.  
Future: Herrington will attend Central Michigan University on a basketball scholarship.

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Senior Eli Vilalobos takes a pass from quarterback Travis Smith and streaks down the sideline for a first down during the Division 6 state championship game held at Ford Field. (Randy Miniard Photo)

# 56 WE BELIEVE!

*During this streak many players come and go but the tradition of winning continues in Ithaca. Congrats to coach Hessbrook and the team for a job well done. Thanks for another exciting year of outstanding football.*

**John Raffel**  
Sports Scene

Ithaca is 56-0 and four-time state Division 6 champion during the last four seasons. It's as simple as that.

The Yellowjackets held back Clinton 41-22 November 29 at Ford Field to win their fourth straight state title while going 14-0 for the fourth straight year.

They did find themselves behind a couple of times in the game, which featured two 13-0 teams.

"We battled the champs for 2 1/2 quarters," said Clinton coach Scott McNitt. "We knew it'd have to be a perfect game; a few things would have to go wrong for them. We did what we could. In the end, the defensive line in my opinion controlled our offensive front. We were running for our lives a little bit there."

Coach Terry Hessbrook, in 10 years at Ithaca, now has a 101-17 record plus four state titles and a 56-game winning streak.

"It was a very entertaining game, I've got to believe, from a fan's perspective," Hessbrook said. "They gave us everything we expected. They're every bit as good as we expected. We were very concerned about their team speed and their athleticism they had on the perimeter and how well they matched up with us. Everything we were concerned about came true in that first half. We're very fortunate."

Ithaca had built a 14-0 lead on a 15-yard pass from Travis Smith to Josh Hafner and a 30-yard interception return for Smith. But Collin Poore's 86-yard punt return for a touchdown, plus a 2-point conversion, gave Clinton a 15-14 lead.

The punt return was further marred with an injury to Ithaca linebacker Dallas Reeser, who sustained a broken arm and was tended to for several minutes.

"We got quite a punch from them early," Hessbrook said. "The adversity these guys have to face during the 56-game streak, and we don't get a lot of adversity during the regular season... during the playoffs, they seem to bounce back.

Nobody has ever done this in the state of Michigan. Someday these kids will look back and say we went undefeated four years and 14-0. Someday, we'll realize how special this is. Right now, we're all caught up in the moment."

"I anticipated they would take the opening kickoff and score," McNitt said. "I thought our kids would adjust to it as the game went on. The pick six put them up 14-0. I wasn't sure what would happen. We were teetering, but we responded. We got the momentum back. But they overwhelmed us as the game went on."

Smith passed to Eli Villalobos for a touchdown late in the second quarter and gave Ithaca a 21-15 halftime lead. Collin Poore's 8-yard TD run gave Clinton a 22-21 advantage in the third.

But Ithaca scored three unanswered touchdowns, with Smith passing 14 yards to Hafner at 7:56 of the third quarter and 21 yards to Logan Hessbrook at 6:17 of the third, and Smith running for a 10-yard score at 5:21 of the fourth.

Smith gained 123 rushing yards and was

17 of 27 for 246 yards and a TD. Bryan Shaw had 41 yards rushing. In receiving, Hessbrook caught six passes for 93 yards, Villalobos six for 82, and Hafner four for 45.

Smith and Hafner both had interceptions.

In total yards, it was 317 for Clinton and 419 for Ithaca. Poore led the Redskins in rushing with 125 yards.

"They blitzed us, as we anticipated they would," McNitt said. "They were more physical than we were up front. We struggled with our passing game. We had a hard time getting people open."

"In the second half, we really decided to get after them on the option," Hessbrook said. "We gave them a couple of different looks on the option. We decided to bring the pressure a lot harder. We talked at halftime about being more physical on the edge and brought people from different areas."

Linebacker Jace Demenov had six solo tackles and two assists, defensive end Seth Capen had five solo tackles and two sacks, and the

other defensive end, Lam Morgan, had a sack and four solo tackles.

"Ithaca is a great football team," McNitt said. "It was an honor to play them."

But, Hessbrook admitted that the last four weeks of the 56-0 win streak weren't easy, starting with the district final.

"We played Glen Lake in the district championships and faced Trevor Apsey, one of the best backs we've ever faced at Ithaca," he said. "Then we got to the regional finals and saw Negaunee with Kyler Lajoie who might be the best back we've ever faced at Ithaca. Then we faced Montrose and had a problem with their overall size and revenge factor they had. Today, we may have faced one of the best backs because of the speed and big-play ability they had to offer.

"We've been behind four weeks in a row, four playoff games in a row we've been behind. It does not seem to phase them. With the big heavy weight burden on their shoulders of the bullseye and the winning streak and all that kind of stuff, I have to think a lot of

high school kids would crumble under that pressure. These guys will go on to accomplish amazing things in life because they're special people. They don't seem to care. We get behind, and they just keep playing. A lot of times, we make big plays and get back in the game."

It's definitely been a four-year dream, according to Hessbrook. "We're being given a chance to live our dream," he said. "Nobody ever thought...we were 5-4 in 2008 and probably a lot of people in Ithaca wanted to see me down the road. In 2009 we broke through. That was a special group of kids, and we won our first regional championship and got to the semifinals. In that game, the first quarter, we played with Montague, who won the state championships the year before, for one quarter. The second quarter, they showed us who the best team was, and we learned that we weren't ready.

"What happened was our players started to believe we have a chance to play with these guys. Our conditioning that we do at Ithaca is fantastic. These kids work hard to condition. It's been a factor during our streak."



Ithaca fans came to Ford Field in droves to support their team in its quest to bring home its fourth Division 6 title. Ithaca didn't disappoint winning the game 41-22 over Clinton. (Staff Photos)

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# HUMBLLED

## Ithaca's Travis Smith Named Top Football Player In Michigan; Honor Well Deserved

### Jeff Chaney Sports Scene

Like most teenagers, and like just about all high school athletes, Travis Smith thought he was indestructible.

So when the Ithaca quarterback injured his throwing shoulder on the second play of last year's Division 6 state championship game against Constantine and was unable to return to help his teammates, it was a tough life lesson to learn.

The lesson was to not take anything for granted.

But it was also a lesson that motivated the Yellowjackets signal caller to work even harder to make it back to Ford Field and finish what he started.

"I never thought I would get hurt last year, and when it happened, it really motivated me all off-season," Smith said. "It made me put in more work. I thought about it all off-season when I got hurt, and I really wanted to get back to Ford Field and play. I just wanted to go out and play at my highest level at Ford Field my senior year."

So Smith worked, as did his teammates, and Ithaca made it back to Ford Field

November 29 for the Yellowjackets' fourth straight state championship game, this year against Clinton.

Prior to the state final game, Smith had completed 170 of 237 passes for 3,017 yards and 38 touchdowns. He had only thrown six interceptions. Smith had also run 61 times for 414 yards and six touchdowns.

During the final, Smith did play at the highest level, throwing for 247 yards and four touchdowns. He also ran for a touchdown and intercepted a Clinton pass that he returned 30 yards for another touchdown.

The Yellowjackets scored six times, and Smith had his hand in all of them.

"He had absolutely complete motivation from last year," Ithaca coach Terry Hessbrook said. "When he got hurt, his only goal was to get back to Ford Field."

"I was very happy Travis was able to start and finish this game," he added. "Last year was tougher when we had to scramble when [wide receiver Logan Hessbrook] had to go in for him. I was happy he was able to finish this year."

"I knew we had a great team this year, and great players around me," Smith said.

"After I got hurt last year, I was in shock, but I knew we could come back and win this year. Now it is hard to believe it is all over."

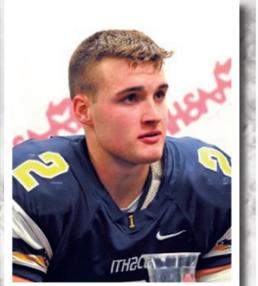
Smith will leave Ithaca for the University of Toledo as one of the most decorated quarterbacks in Michigan history. He was recently named Mr. Football and was also named the first-ever Michigan High School Football Player of the Year presented by Mlive.

Smith is a player Hessbrook will surely miss. "Sure I'm going to miss him; he is the all-time career leader in touchdown passes in the state of Michigan," Hessbrook said. "And he will probably have the second most yards. A great career."

The good thing for Hessbrook is that there is another Smith ready to fill the hole.

"I have a feeling you will see Travis' little brother Jake step in and see a pretty talented young man himself," Hessbrook said. "He is very smart and talented."

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# Ithaca Born & Raised

## Hessbrook Family Continue To Build Legacy On Gridiron

*Terry and Todd Hessbrook breathe Blue and Gold. Although there might have been some rough patches in the beginning, the Hessbrook brothers have guided Ithaca to four straight Division 6 titles and the nations longest consecutive game winning streak at 56 games. All in a days work for the two brothers who hail from the little farming town in Central Michigan.*



(Scott Keyes Photo)

### John Raffel Sports Scene

Ithaca football coaches, players, and fans like to refer themselves as one big family. But there are unique families within that one big family at Ithaca, one of which is the Hessbrook family.

Terry Hessbrook has a stunning 101-17 record over 10 years as Ithaca's head football coach. Do the math, and it was 45-17 the first six seasons prior to the four-year run of 56-0.

Hessbrook's tenure has been a family affair of sorts, with his brother Todd serving as an assistant coach. Todd's son/Terry's nephew Logan has been one of the outstanding performers over the years.

Logan called it a "great feeling" to play for his uncle as head coach and his dad as an assistant coach.

"I've got my little cousin [Brady Hessbrook] as a water boy," Logan smiled. "There's a lot of Hessbrooks out there on the sidelines. I couldn't ask for a better family. My uncle and I, me and my dad, we have a strong bond. It's tremendous. We're working the off-season and watching film constantly. It

definitely pays off."

Logan is a defensive back, while his dad coaches the linebackers.

"He directly doesn't deal with me, but he coaches me during the game as well," Logan said. "He's a very knowledgeable coach. [Terry] gives me pointers on how I can get better. Our coaching staff is tremendous in helping us on working on our weaknesses."

Logan Hessbrook has played split end for the last three Ithaca state championship squads. He said the 2013 title would probably rank as the most memorable.

"We're 14-0 for the fourth straight year. You play with your best friends you grew up with your whole life," he said. "It's the best group of friends I could ask for, plus the coaching staff and community. It's amazing. Ithaca is a special place. Coach says it, and everyone says it. When I get out of college, I'm going to try to come right back to Ithaca. It's amazing to live there."

Logan caught six passes for 93 yards in the title game. Defensively, he had four solo tackles and two pass breakups.

In the second half, "their option was getting on the edge and their receivers were blocking strongly," Logan said. "That was definitely some fits for us. Our coaches made some adjustments to make the outside linebacker go toward the pitchman instead of the quarterback."

Terry Hessbrook enjoyed coaching his nephew. "We have a rule so-to-speak in Ithaca that our best players have to be our hardest workers," Hessbrook said. "If our best players are our hardest workers, then everyone else will buy into it. It's a pleasure to coach [Logan]. My brother Todd is one of the first people I hired when we put the staff together in 2004. He has a tremendous way of relating what he wants done to his players. He has a tremendous rapport. He doesn't work at the school. He works at Consumers Energy. He always says it's the highlight of his day when he shows up at 3 p.m. The core of our staff has been here the entire time."

Todd is 16 months older than Terry was only one year ahead in school. Both are Ithaca graduates.

They weren't able to play football together. "There's quite a story there," Todd said. "That's why football is so near and dear to my heart

and why I'm so passionate about it. When I was 5, I had my left kidney removed. I grew up in a football family, and we played football every weekend in the fall in the front yard. I always said I'd be able to play football some day. When I hit ninth grade, I couldn't get a physical for a contact sport. No doctor in the world would clear me for a contact sport, because I've only got one kidney."

Hessbrook's dad went to the Ithaca school administrators to get permission for his son to play freshman football as a punter and kicker and avoid all contact.

"I lasted four or five games and was actually getting involved in some contact," he said. "I was a healthy kid and wanted to play football. They called me in the office and said 'young man you may not realize it, but your life is more important than high school football.' They kicked me off the freshman team and I never got to play again."

"I would always tell Terry that I used it for motivation to motivate him. When you can't play high school football, that's tough to deal with. When he hired at Ithaca, he came to me and said he needed coaches and asked me about it."

Todd got his family's blessing to take the job. He had coached three seasons in the late 1980s with Jim Ahern but hadn't planned on returning to coaching until his brother got the Ithaca head job.

"I had two sons coming up that were going to play football, and if I was going to be in the program, I wanted to be in for the duration," Todd said. "I didn't want to be a parent that got in when your kid was in the ninth grade and got out when your kid leaves. I'm proud of the fact I've been here 10 years. I primarily work with the JVs. I work with the linebackers with the varsity and help Brad Showers [defensive coordinator] with the defensive plan and adjustments."

Todd Hessbrook is among those coaches, athletes, and fans who never would have thought four years ago that a 56-0 run was coming up.

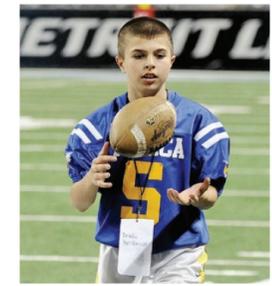
"I never could have imagined it, and I still can't believe it," he said. "I'm just so happy and blessed to be able to do it and to have two great sons and a great family. It's Ithaca, and we're on top of the football world right now."



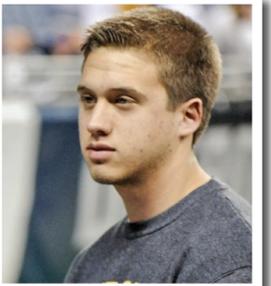
Logan Hessbrook, the nephew of coach Terry Hessbrook and the youngest son of assistant coach Todd Hessbrook was a key contributor in Ithaca's fourth straight Division 6 title. (Scott Keyes Photo)



Todd Hessbrook, an assistant coach under his brother Terry watches the action on the field during the state finals game at Ford Field. (Randy Miniard Photo)



Brady Hessbrook, the youngest child of Terry Hessbrook roams the sideline during the D6 state finals held at Ford Field. (Scott Keyes Photo)



Jordan Hessbrook, who was an All-State standout for Ithaca until he graduated in 2013. (Scott Keyes Photo)



Terry Hessbrook celebrates winning another state championship with his wife and children at Ford Field. (Scott Keyes Photos)

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# 'Streakin'

## Sports Scene breaks down the significance of Ithaca's 56 game winning streak

### In Our Opinion

Jeff Chaney  
Sports Scene

The Hudson football teams of the late 1960s and early 1970s may have had more consecutive victories.

And East Grand Rapids of late last decade and early this decade may have had more consecutive state titles.

But no team has been able to put a streak together like the one that Ithaca continued this year.

The Yellowjackets won their 56th straight game, and their fourth straight state championship, when they beat Clinton 41-22 in the Division 6 title game November 29 at Ford Field.

That's 56 straight wins and four straight state titles in the playoff era, an incredible feat.

That Hudson team won 72 straight games from September 20, 1968, through November 22, 1975, but that wasn't in the playoff era, as the Michigan High School Athletic Association didn't start determining its champions with a playoff until the 1975 season.

In fact, Hudson dropped its first game in 73 outings when the Tigers fell to Ispeming 38-22 in the Class C state title game in 1975.

And East Grand Rapids did win an incredible five straight state championships, but in that five-season span, it lost three games.

So when Ithaca coach Terry Hessbrook says that his team has accomplished what no other has, he's not lying. The Yellowjackets are currently on



Ithaca's Bryan Shaw rumbles for a first down during the Yellowjackets 41-22 Division 6 state finals victory over Clinton at Ford Field. Ithaca finished the season with its 56 game winning streak in tack. The streak is the longest in the country. (Gary Williams Photo)

a streak like no other.

To not lose a game in four years, when other teams know that you are the team to beat, is a pressure that not many can handle.

It looked like this year's

team might buckle under that pressure, as Ithaca trailed in four of its five playoff games, including a 15-14 deficit to Clinton in the championship game.

But the resilient 2013

Yellowjackets fought back and won all five of those games, including the title game.

This streak hasn't come without its share of adversity, as Ithaca lost starting quarterback Travis Smith to

a shoulder injury at the start of the 2012 championship game with Constantine. The team was able to win 37-27, thanks to Hessbrook's nephew, Logan Hessbrook, who filled in for Smith admirably.

That's the secret to Coach Hessbrook's success. "The secret to winning: get really good players and then get out of their way," he said.

The philosophy hasn't been truer than at the most important position on the field - quarterback. Hessbrook and his staff had Alex Niznak during the first championship run, and Smith for the last three two.

Niznak is currently on Central Michigan University's roster, and next year Smith will be playing for Mid-American Conference rival University of Toledo.

"When you have two Division I quarterbacks when you are coaching Class C football, that is quite an honor," Hessbrook said. "We try to manage them, make sure we get them in position to succeed, then get out of the way."

Some inspirational tricks also help to keep a team focused.

"They tore the field out of Ford Field in the off-season, and when they tore it out, our maintenance guy got us a couple of pieces, and we laid that down across our track. That is what we run across to the field, and in our first game against Williamston, I said that is our first step to get back to Ford Field. That was really cool."

What is the coach going to do to keep his Yellowjackets perfect and bring them back to Ford Field for a fifth straight year?

# Hafner makes most of senior season for 'Jackets

Jeff Chaney  
Sports Scene

It's never easy for a student to transfer to another school right before his or her senior year - no matter what the reason.

But that is what Josh Hafner did, transferring from St. Johns High School to Ithaca before his final year of high school.

He did not transfer because of a job change of one of his parents. Hafner is a talented football player, and he transferred because he wanted to be part of something special.

Hafner was a solid wide receiver/defensive back in St. Johns, and he brought his talents north to Ithaca to play for a team that was looking to win its fourth straight state title.

Ithaca did win the title, and Hafner played a big part, catching four balls for 45 yards and a touchdown in the 41-22 win over Clinton in the Division 6 state title game.

"It was an extremely tough decision," Hafner said. "I thought a lot about it, I had a lot of talks, and at one point I



Ithaca's Josh Hafner, a transfer from St. Johns made the most of his first year playing for the Yellowjackets as he played a key role in the teams championship run. (Scott Keyes Photo)

called it off and thought I was going to stay with my friends. But I had to make a choice of what I wanted to do with my life."

That decision turned into

a memory of a lifetime, as it gave him the opportunity to play for a state championship team at Ford Field.

"Even though I left my friends, I have had a lot of

support," Hafner said. "It was the right decision; we won a state championship, and I still have all my friends, too - and new ones now."

Hafner said that the reason

he made the move wasn't just to have the opportunity to play for a state championship team. That was just an added bonus. The biggest reason was that, as a wider receiver, Ithaca's wide open offense and the chance to play with top-notch quarterback Travis Smith were too much for him to pass up.

"St. Johns has a great running program; here, we throw the ball a lot," Hafner said. "Defenses can't cover that, and Travis is such a great quarterback. Defenses had a hard time stopping us, because if they stopped one thing, we would just throw to another route."

That's exactly what happened in the state championship game, as Hafner caught a 15-yard pass from Smith and went head-over-heels into the end zone for the Yellowjackets' first touchdown of the game.

"I had dreams of [that] moment," Hafner said. "I can't even tell you; it's the best feeling in the world. I actually had a dream that I was doing that - if we could have made it to Ford Field I was going to jump over someone."

**Tommy Fuerst**

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Ithaca's Dallas Reeser lies motionless on the Ford Field turf as he suffered a broken arm during the Yellowjackets' 41-22 victory over Clinton in the Division 6 state finals. Reeser, a junior is expected to make a full recovery. (Scott Keyes Photo)

# Reeser, Ithaca overcome injury

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

It was a low point for the Ithaca Yellowjackets in the Division 6 state championship football game. Clinton overcame a 14-0 deficit in the first half with 15 straight points. The 15th point came after a punt return by Mathew Sexton for an 86-yard touchdown, one yard shy of a state finals record. Prior to the extra point, the game was delayed for about 20 minutes when Ithaca's Dallas Reeser, a junior 5'11", 210-pound running back and linebacker, lay on the field near the 10-yard line, his arm broken after he tried to make a defensive play.

Reeser was carted off the field to an ovation by Ford Field fans and taken to a local Detroit hospital. The Yellowjackets went on to win 41-22. But Reeser was on everyone's mind after the game.

"I was very very concerned with Dallas' injury," said coach Terry Hessbrook. "The doctors on our sideline, who I think are just fantastic, as soon as I got out to him said it's a broken arm and broken in a couple of places. It was a bad injury. They were able to get it set. They got him some medication and he was able to listen to the end of the championship game, so he knows we were victorious, which was fantastic."

Reeser remembers going after the return, getting hit, and going down.

"I didn't realize I had broken anything," he said. But as he tried to get up, his right arm went out and would not support him.

He doesn't recall feeling any pain. When the doctors came out to look at him, they asked if Reeser if it was his knee, as he had had a previous knee injury.

"I said, 'No, it's my arm,'" he said. "Right away, the guy said, 'It's broken.'"

He could feel some pain when the medical staff turned him over onto his back. He recalls some type of cardboard material being placed around the arm to keep it firm and isolated.

Not wanting to take a chance with the arm, medical officials put Reeser on a stretcher and onto the back of a cart and then wheeled him off the field.

"That was a crucial point in the game," Hessbrook said "I felt

when we got our players together, Brad Showers, my defensive coordinator, and myself were out and concerned about Dallas' welfare. I said, 'Brad, either you and I have to get back to the sidelines and get this team rallied back together.' He went back and we were able to get Dallas secured and taken care of."

Reeser, in the one quarter of football that he played, had a tackle and an assist.

An ambulance took him to Children's Hospital, about a 10-minute drive away. He eventually was given painkillers. It was his humerus bone that was broken. He wound up with a sling and said he'd be wearing it for two months and then start physical therapy for another month. The healing process will be about three months.

Reeser was able to find out how his team was doing while at the hospital. "When I was at the hospital, the guy turned on the radio for me and it was 22-21, [Clinton] leading at that point," he said. "I listened to it from there on out."

Considering that the Yellowjackets scored 22 unanswered points to win the game, Reeser's spirits were obviously bolstered.

"When I had to leave the game, I was very disappointed," he said. "I had worked all year to get there and opening quarter... When I found out they won, I was excited and was proud of them, and I texted them all that night."

Reeser and his parents left the hospital later that night and returned to Ithaca around 3 a.m. Some of his teammates visited him at his home the following day, and others texted him.

Reeser fondly reflected on being a part of Ithaca's fourth straight 14-0 squad. "I'm satisfied with how it turned out," he said.

An 18-tackle performance in a 49-14 win over Carrollton during the regular season stands out as one of the major highlights of his season. He had 61 solo tackles and 43 assists for the season, including 18 tackles for loss. He also had one fumble recovery and two forced fumbles.

How about next year?

"Our goal for the summer is to win state, but we don't focus on it right away. We focus on one game at a time," Reeser said. "I believe we'll still be a pretty good team. A lot of the players were sophomores this year."



Beal City's Ty Rollin runs for a first down during the Aggie's 35-12 Division 8 state finals loss to Muskegon Catholic. This is the second year in a row that Beal City has lost in the finals. (Scott Keyes Photo)

# Title hopes dashed

Beal City's quest for a Division 8 title comes up short for second year in a row after loss to Muskegon Catholic

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

For the second straight time, a magnificent Beal City season ended in disappointment at the state finals.

The Aggies lost Nov. 29 to Muskegon Catholic Central 35-12 at Detroit's Ford Field in the Division 8 title game.

"Obviously, it didn't turn out the way we had hoped and prepared for," said coach Lou Rau, who now has a 14-year record of 144-39. "We cleared a big hurdle by getting here two years in a row. We couldn't quite finish it off with a W."

The Aggies' season ended at 13-1.

Catholic Central showed that it meant business on the first play from scrimmage when Alex Lewandoski scampered 78 yards for a touchdown. Beal City responded with a 55-yard drive and 2-yard touchdown run by Hayden Huber. The kick failed and MCC led 7-6.

The Crusaders scored on runs of 1 and 66 yards by Lewandoski in the second and third quarters and a 21-yard jaunt by Tommy Scott in the third for a 35-6 lead. Nick Holt scored for the Crusaders early in the fourth. Ryan Tilmann caught an 8-yard pass from Tucker Gross for a late-game Aggies touchdown.

It was 14-6 at halftime, and an interception by Nick Hoogerhyde stopped a Crusader drive. The Aggies seemed to have a little momentum.

"I thought if we made the right adjustments and could establish something on the ground and get things moving in the air, we'd be in great shape," Rau said. "It was one of those things. It's a big momentum killer when they have a big play and get a score and you don't

get that drive."

Rau acknowledged that while his team had to grind it out for everything it got, MCC prospered with the big play.

"When you give up the first play of the game, that hurts, and you try to dig yourself out of the hole right off the bat," Rau said. "It definitely changes what you do and how we do it."

Two pass interceptions against Beal City hurt the Aggies, who had 263 total yards compared to 402 for MCC.

"There were some cleanup things we didn't do," Rau said. "We had some assignment errors here and there that were crucial. Obviously, they're a great strong and fast team."

Beal City's passing game seemed to improve after the second quarter. "Starting out, we wanted to use as much possession time as we had," Rau said. "Obviously as we got behind, we needed to complete more passes downfield."

MCC was also blitzing its linebackers. "We didn't pick them up," Rau said. "To be honest, they didn't start stunting until later. When they send more guys than you can block, it's tough to pick them up."

Gross was 8 of 16 for 94 yards and one interception. Ryan Tillman and Ty Rollin caught three passes apiece for 33 and 32 yards. Huber led in rushing with 52 yards, while Rollin had 44.

Even with the loss, it was still quite season for the Aggies. "We knew with [Lewandoski], they were going to be troublesome," Rau said. "They ran our T offense to a tee. You had to play tight to what they usually do to try to make them go outside. When we couldn't stop it up the gap, we were in trouble."

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# Small town support

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

Beal City won't forget the fall sports season of 2013 for a long time. The Aggies won a state title in one sport and finished runners-up in two others. That fact wasn't lost on the Beal City football team after it settled for second place in Division 8 after a 35-12 loss to Muskegon Catholic Central.

"The community stands behind us, no matter if we're in the state championship game or losing all of them," said running back Ty Rollin. "It's a great feeling. It sucks not to come out on top. But we're still proud of what we've done."

His teammate, quarterback Kurt Gross agreed. "It's great to be a part of a community that's good in athletics and in academics," he said. "There's never a downtime. There's always something going on...the next day you have a practice for the next season."

Football coach Lou Rau reflected on what's it's been like to have so many teams at Beal City flirt with state championship success. "To be able to come out and put two years and be 26-2, how great is that?" he said. "Our girls' cross country team won a state championship, our girls' volleyball team was state runners-up this year. It shows the great tradition and attitudes we have at Beal City."

Athletic director Aaron Butkovich noted that the Beal City community takes pride in its sports achievements while keeping academics No. 1.

"For the most part, during the school day, it has been business as usual," he said the week after the football state final. "Extracurricular activities are just that - they are after



Beal City athletics has a lot to be proud of this year thus far as its girls cross country team won a Division 4 state championship and the volleyball and football teams made it all the way to state title games before losing in their respective sports. Not bad for the small town north of Mt. Pleasant. (Staff Photo)

school events, and we try to keep the events and activities to after school. We did have a homecoming assembly, which is annual, and we had a 15-minute assembly honoring the girls' cross country state championship during the school day. It was the first championship for that program and the first female state championship for any sport in school history."

At the same time, Butkovich acknowledged that there's something special about being an Aggie fan.

"The community was buzzing all fall about the in season successes, and of course the energy and excitement was extended with the long playoff runs and successes," he said.

After the girls' cross country state championship, there seemed to be some extra excitement and energy in the community and school. Despite the long travel

for several of the tournament events, there was still great support from the school and community at all of the events.

Butkovich has seen positive outcomes from the sports program's success. "Aside from the normal positives of teamwork, humbleness, organization, time management, commitment, etc., in addition this year there was an extra level of support for each other across all extracurriculars: marching band, cheer, football, cross country, football, and winter sports," he said. "Everyone worked together providing the best opportunities for everyone. Bottom line, all of the young men and women created memories for a lifetime."

The fall of 2013 isn't the only time that Beal City compiled memorable moments with its sports program. "Last year, out of the 10 varsity sports Beal City sponsors, there were six regional

champions, including three state runner-up teams and two fourth-place teams at the state level. The 2012-13 athletic season, overall, was quite impressive. The fall 2013 season was unprecedented at Beal City with a state championship, two runner-up finishes, and a program-best 7th place finish by the boys' cross country at state finals. All four Beal City fall sports teams had outstanding years."

For Butkovich, it's easy to explain the reason for this success. "The bottom-line key is far as it happening again, who knows? Athletics are impossible to predict, especially at the high school level; after all, that is why you play the game. I do not foresee our attitude, expectations, or commitment levels changing."

"Beal City athletics has three core covenants: pride, work ethic, and respect. All of our fall sports teams exhibited these covenants."

is huge in a small school, when most of the student/athletes participate in multiple sports."

"Our coaches have committed huge amounts of their time providing opportunities and knowledge for these young men and women to grow as student/athletes. The student/athletes on these teams have cherished those opportunities. The elements of enjoyment and fun are crucial."

Can the fall of 2013 be duplicated at Beal City?

"This fall's successes are quite rare," Butkovich said. "As far as it happening again, who knows? Athletics are impossible to predict, especially at the high school level; after all, that is why you play the game. I do not foresee our attitude, expectations, or commitment levels changing."

"Beal City athletics has three core covenants: pride, work ethic, and respect. All of our fall sports teams exhibited these covenants."



Beal City quarterback Kurt Gross was solid for the Aggies during their state championship run this season. (Randy Miniard Photo)

## Beal's Ty Rollin reflects on memorable career

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

It wasn't easy reflecting on a 35-12 loss to Muskegon Catholic Central in the Division 8 state title game. But running back and defensive back Ty Rollin had to admit it was a pretty good season and career at Beal City.

"It's tough going down in the state championship two years in a row," he said. "When we look back at the season, especially this season, we broke a lot of records. Everybody came so far and worked so hard in the off-season both seasons. No one has to hold their heads. Everybody worked their butts off in the off-season, and it showed, until this game

I guess," he continued. "We broke a lot of records at our school for a longstanding football program. Nobody has anything to hang their heads about."

"We gave ourselves a shot to win it all, and that's what we're looking to do," he said. "[MCC's] just a good team."

The game plan for victory was simple, Rollin said.

"We knew we'd have to stop [quarterback Nick Holt and running back Alex Lewandoski]," Rollin said. "Offensively, we knew we'd have to stay on our blocks until the whistle and give what we've got 200 percent."

Lewandoski ran for 218 yards and Holt rushed for 123 yards.

Lewandoski took the first play from scrimmage 78 yards for a touchdown.

## Aggies' Gross solid

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

Kurt Gross had to battle hard in the preseason to secure the Beal City quarterback position. It was the one position that was basically up for grabs on a team that had a lot of starters returning.

While the 35-12 loss to Muskegon Catholic Central in the state final was disappointing to Gross, it was hard for the Aggies' senior signal-caller to not reflect favorably on his team's 13-1 season.

Beal City opened 61-0 over Sacred Heart, beat Clare 48-0, Pine River 64-13, Manton 77-0, Pinconning 74-0, and Marion 70-0 during the regular season and topped Mio 68-15 and St. Ignace 55-0 during their playoff run.

Against MCC, "offensively, we wanted to do what we do, run the ball off tackle, pass once in awhile, and catch them off guard," Gross said. "They were bigger, faster, and stronger."

Early in the game, Gross was hurt when he was hit by an MCC lineman and left the game for a few plays. "I was shaken up for a second, but then I felt better and knew that I had to get back in there," he said.

"It was probably the best pass rush [Beal City faced all season]," said Gross.

Gross was 8 of 16 for 94 yards and one interception. For the season, he led an offense that put up a ton of points.

"Muskegon Catholic sends a lot of guys. They're on a mission," Gross said. "They

knew what they were doing. Their DBs were covering well. They shifted over well. They were disciplined. That's the best way to describe them."

It was definitely not what the Aggies were hoping for when they embarked on a new season, following the disappointment of last year's state final loss.

"They're a great team, the best team we've faced all year, obviously," Gross said. "We had some mistakes here and there, but they were the best overall team we've faced. I thought."

Gross' successful season at quarterback is among the reasons the Aggies made it to the state final.

"Coming into the season, I wasn't sure if I'd be able to play or not," he said. "When I got the job, I had high expectations. Before that, I was just hoping to get the job...and then try to get to Ford Field."

The most memorable game for Gross was the victory over Forest Park in the Superior Dome in Marquette when the Aggies secured a 34-18 state semifinal victory.

"When I was little, I went up there and watched them play and we got beat," Gross said. "I always wanted to go back up to Crystal Falls and beat them."

Gross is also on the basketball and baseball teams, which he hopes will allow him and his teammates get that elusive state title.

"[In baseball], we want to get back and take care of some unfinished business," Gross said.



Ty Rollin

"Right off the get go, we scored 60 points and 70 a couple of times."

They opened 61-0 over Sacred Heart Academy, beat Clare 48-0, Pine River 64-13, Manton 77-0, Pinconning 74-0, and Marion 70-0 during the regular season and topped Mio 68-15 and St. Ignace 55-0 during their playoff run.

MCC "is a good team. They came at us hard. We went 100 percent but didn't come out on top," Rollin said. "We had good initial blocks, but they move so hard to the ball, it's tough to break one."

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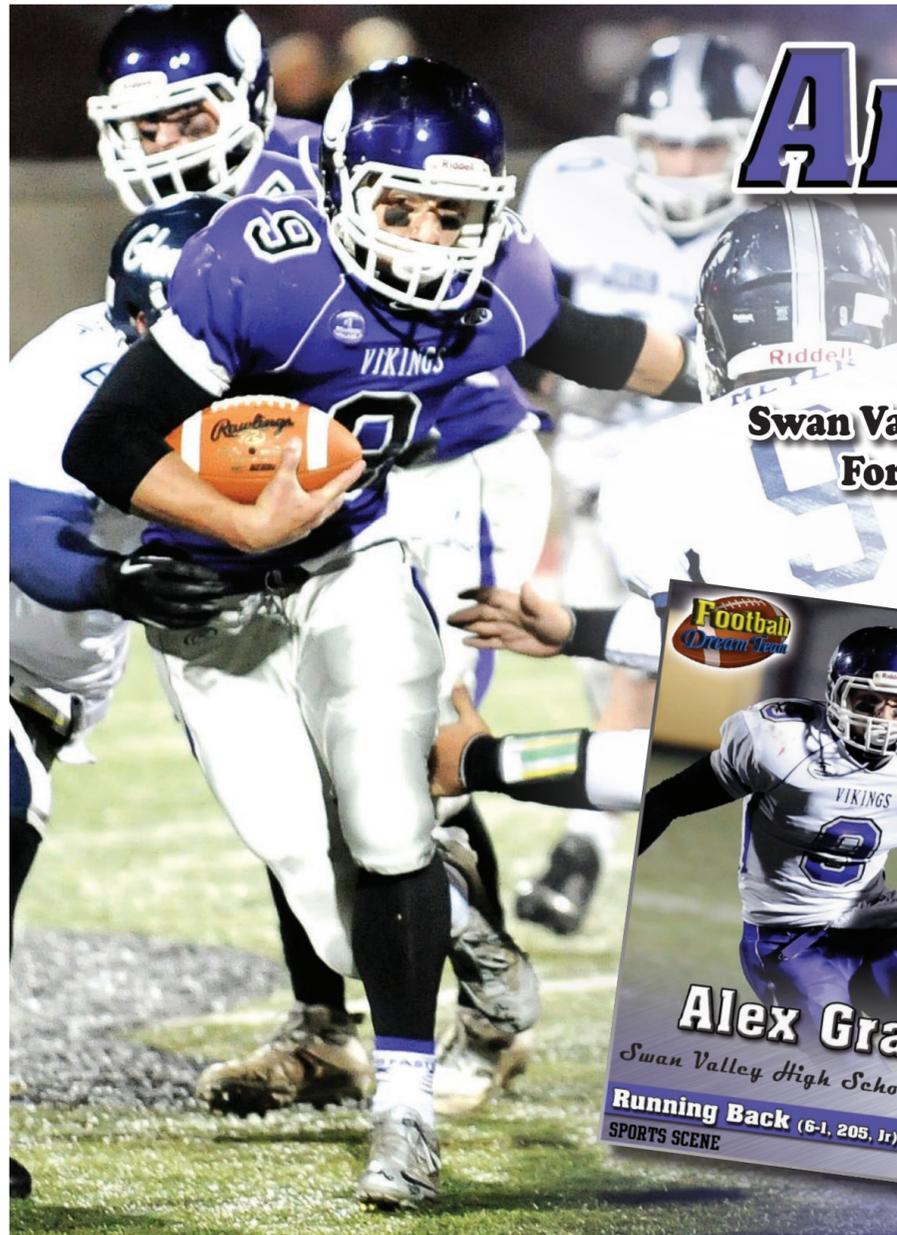
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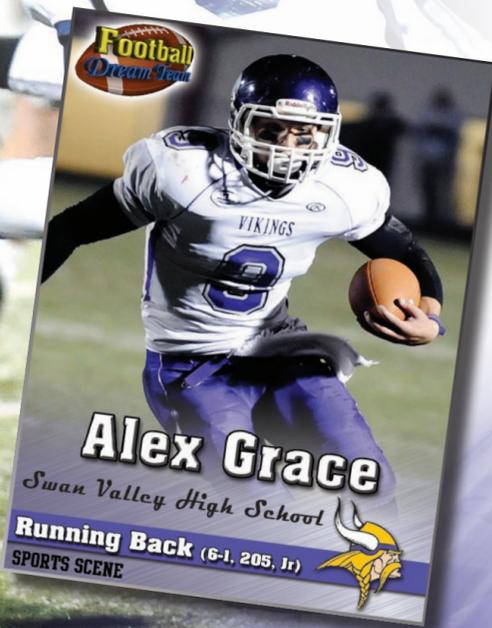
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# Amazin' Grace

**Swan Valley's Alex Grace Has A Season For The Ages; Becomes Michigan's Single-Season Rushing Leader**



**Geoff Moff**  
Sports Scene

Beyond the record-shattering statistics and the postseason honors, Swan Valley junior running back Alex Grace had a season full of memorable highlights on the field.

When the Vikings needed the 6'1", 205-pounder to provide a big play, he did.

Grace broke the Michigan High School Athletic Association record for season yards in what looked like a script from a storybook. With his team trailing Lansing Sexton 20-14 late in the fourth quarter of the Division 4 state quarterfinal game, he smashed the state record with a 80-yard touchdown run that eventually gave the Vikings a 21-20 lead with less than four minutes left.

Sexton responded with a touchdown and knocked off Swan Valley 26-21. Grace finished the game with 36 carries for 236 yards and set the state record at 2,952 yards, eclipsing the 2,890 yards set by Chipewala Valley's Chris Lomasney.

The season ended like it started, with Grace making the big plays.

In the season-opener against rival Nouvel Catholic Central, Grace fumbled twice in the first half, as Nouvel staked a 20-7 halftime lead. Grace battled through heat-related cramping to score three touch-

downs, including a 6-yard touchdown run with 22 seconds left in the game to lift the Vikings to a 27-20 victory.

After a light load and an easy win over Shepherd, the Vikings started slowly against Freeland, which had come in with a two-game win streak against the Vikings. By the end of the first quarter, Grace had only 15 yards, and his team was down 13-0. He ended the game with a career-high 337 yards and four touchdowns on 38 carries.

"It all starts up front," said Grace, who credited his offensive line throughout the season. "The offensive line did an excellent job of making holes. When I got a little tired in the end and I was breathing heavy, I just kept thinking this could be my last play and just keep running hard."

In wins over Freeland, Ovid-Elsie, Alma, and Hemlock that improved the Vikings to 6-0, Grace rushed for 1,256 yards and 13 touchdowns. His encore to that four-game stretch was 145 yards rushing and three touchdowns on seven carries in a win over Chesaning. He also threw a pair of touchdowns in the win.

After closing the unbeaten regular season with 276-yard and 243-yard efforts, Grace was limited to 187 yards and two touchdowns on a rain-soaked, mud-filled field at Heritage for the Division 4 first round playoff game with Yale. With the top-ranked Vikings on the verge of getting upset, Grace squirted through for the game-winning 4-yard touchdown run with 2:10 left in the game.

He continued his penchant for big games when the Vikings needed him the most. He scored four of his five touchdowns in the first quarter of Swan Valley's 54-28 win over Garber in the second round of the playoffs. Grace finished with 19 carries for 262 yards in the win.

Grace was rewarded as The Associated Press Division 3-4 Player of the Year. He ranks 13th on the MHSAA career rushing yard list with 5,115 yards, and he needs only 2,689 yards to reach the second-most career yards in MHSAA history. He probably can't catch East Grand Rapids running back Kevin Grady, Jr., who holds the career mark at 8,431 yards.

And while it's unlikely Grace will smash his own state record and take the career mark with 3,316 yards next season, he's going to have plenty of memorable moments again during his effort.



## The Alex Grace File

**Sports Scene's Offensive Player of the Year**

Date	Game	ATT	YDS	AVG	TD
8/29	Saginaw Nouvel @ Saginaw Swan Valley	29	202	7.0	3
9/06	Saginaw Swan Valley @ Shepherd	9	145	16.1	2
9/13	Freeland @ Saginaw Swan Valley	38	337	8.9	4
9/20	Saginaw Swan Valley @ Ovid-Elsie	24	264	11.0	4
9/27	Alma @ Saginaw Swan Valley	22	337	15.3	3
10/04	Saginaw Swan Valley @ Hemlock	39	318	8.2	2
10/11	Saginaw Swan Valley @ Chesaning	7	145	20.7	3
10/18	Midland Bullock Creek @ Saginaw Swan Valley	21	276	13.1	5
10/25	Bay City John Glenn @ Saginaw Swan Valley	21	243	11.6	4
11/01	2013 Division 4 Pre-Districts - Yale vs. Saginaw Swan Valley	27	187	6.9	2
11/08	2013 Division 4 District Finals - Essexville Garber vs. Saginaw Swan Valley	19	262	13.8	5
11/15	2013 Division 4 - Regional Finals - Saginaw Swan Valley vs. Lansing Sexton	36	236	6.6	2
<b>Total...</b>	<b>Rushing Attempts</b>	292	<b>Rushing Yards</b>	2952	
	<b>Rushing Yards Average</b>	10.1	<b>Rushing Yards Per Game</b>	246	
	<b>Rushing Yards Average Per Game</b>	10.8	<b>Rushing Touchdowns</b>	39	

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# Panthers Battle Tested

## DeWitt falls short in D5 finals

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

The final game of the Division 3 football season went down to the wire, but the result wasn't what the DeWitt Panthers wanted. DeWitt's bid for that elusive state title fell short short at Ford Field with a 34-27 loss to Zeeland West.

Both teams ended their years at 13-1. Zeeland West built a 28-7 halftime lead, but DeWitt fought back with a 20-6 scoring edge in the final two quarters.

"It was tough to lose a game like this," said DeWitt coach Rob Zimmerman. "We played our hearts out tonight."

"We completely dominated the second half," he continued. "I can't believe there's a better group in the state of Michigan than these kids."

Late in the game, Zeeland West punted in DeWitt territory. The punt was nearly blocked. If it had been, DeWitt might have been able to go for the tying or go-ahead score. But the Panthers missed the block and were called for roughing the kicker.

Zimmerman noted that going for the block nearly worked. "We had 48 seconds left and had no time out, so if they punted and we get it at our 10, it's a long way to go," Zimmerman said. "It obviously didn't turn out in our favor. But you have to take chances when you're in that situation."

"We had to make a choice. If they punt and it pins us, we have to go 80 or 90 yards with no timeouts. So we decided to go after it. Obviously, we didn't have a very good angle on it. I would call the same thing every single time in that situation."

DeWitt is now 0-5 in state title games.

"I'm really proud of these kids and the season they had," Zimmerman said. "That's the most important thing. They did a great job. It's about our kids and the program."

"We made some adjustments at halftime that I think really helped us defensively. We tweaked something offensively to get some things going. They're a very good football team. We had to play our best football game tonight. We didn't play our best game. But I'm proud of our kids' effort. It wound up being a great football game after it started out looking like it was going to get ugly."

Zeeland West was able to take advantage of DeWitt mistakes in the first half. "We had

two turnovers in the first half, which hurt us," Zimmerman said. "We traditionally don't turn the ball over a whole lot. Those were significant. I thought we moved the ball in the first half, too. We had two turnovers. Thought it was the tale of two halves. They got the better of us in the first half. We definitely outplayed them in the second half."

"They're physical and execute the offense extremely well. You can't make mistakes against them. There's a reason they beat everybody as bad as they did during the season. They're pretty doggone good. They're a senior-laden team. They execute well. Doggone, I would have liked one more possession."

It appeared that Zeeland's misdirection plays were giving DeWitt troubles early in the game. "You have to pick your poison when you play that offense," Zimmerman said. "You take one thing away, they're good enough to adjust and play something else. It's cat-and-mouse when you play the Wing T. [Danny Bauder] is a heckuva back with his speed and presents some problems. You take one thing away and you'll get something else."

DeWitt was down 22-0 when it scored in the second quarter on a 4-yard pass from Jake Johnson to Justice Shankel.

Chris Ruby had a 56-yard run and Jake Johnson threw scoring passes of 29 and 75 yards to Josh Borta. "Josh had a ridiculous game," Zimmerman said of his leading receiver, who caught five passes for 183 yards and two touchdowns.

"Jake struggled a little bit early, but he made some great throws," Zimmerman said.

Johnson was 15 of 24 for 289 yards. "I'm extremely proud of our kids," Zimmerman said. "I thought our defense played extremely well. We dug ourselves into a little too deep of a hole. With one more possession, who knows what might have happened?"

Despite the Panthers inability to win the state title, they may have enough talent to make a run next season.

"We'll be very good next year. We return seven guys on offense and have five underclassmen on defense," Zimmerman said. "I expect us to be very good. But right now all that matters is our seniors. The character they have displayed, the team unity these guys exhibited, and how hard they work...I wouldn't trade them for any team in America. They're great kids."



The DeWitt football team finished the season 13-1 after losing to Zeeland West 34-27 in the Division 3 state finals held at Ford Field. (Staff Photos)



# Heads High

*DeWitt coaches, players proud of entire body of work during stellar season*

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

The DeWitt Panthers sneaked through the semifinal round with a 21-20 victory over St. Clair and seemed ready to take home that elusive state title. Rob Zimmerman, in his 15th year as coach, entered the Division 5 state title game with a 149-34 record. Win No. 150 at Ford Field would have been sweet.

But the Panthers were denied by a tough and talented Zeeland West team that walked away with a 34-27 victory and the Division 3 state title.

"I couldn't be more proud of our kids," Zimmerman said. "13-1 is a doggone good season. When you lose to a team like this, obviously we're not happy we lost. But I'm proud of what our kids accomplished and what we did this year."

The Panthers have appeared in previous state final games and been unable to pull out a win. But this year, there was plenty to smile about, as far as the DeWitt coaching staff was concerned.

"This was a much closer game and a much better game," Zimmerman said. "This was as good of a team as we've played. The mentality all week in practice was great. Their preparation was outstanding. We made some mistakes, but I thought we played very good football. To come back from being down...generally, when these guys get on someone like that they blow them out. To come back like we did is a great tribute to the character of these kids."

"I'm pretty proud of what we accomplished. [Media] can take the negative approach if you want. But I'm proud of what we accomplished as a program. I think there's a few schools that would like to be in our shoes."

Zeeland West team is coached by nine-year veteran John Shillito, who has an 85-21-9 record and has also had success at other schools like Orchard View and East Kentwood.

"They deserve all the credit in the world, their coaching staff and kids," Shillito said. "To hang in there when you're down like that...they made some plays."

"John's a great coach and has a lot of senior kids," Zimmerman said. "This is the first team we faced that matched us physically. I thought our kids rose to the occasion. We didn't win...generally when they get up, it's 'Katy, bar the door.' Our defensive coaches did a nice job at halftime and our kids played their hearts out. It's a tough loss. I'm proud of their effort."

"[Danny Bauber] presents some major problems. If you key on him too much, the other guys are good enough that they can hurt you. It's a tough loss; we knew we'd have to play our best game to beat them."

Zimmerman had an emotional final huddle with his team when the game ended.

His message?

"How proud [I am] of them," he said. "We have to have a great off-season. But we have a lot of talent returning. We return our quarterback, we have a good starting quarterback there."

Another junior who will return next year is starting safety Ben Zamiara. "It's very tough, I feel for our seniors," he said. "We worked so hard this year. We listed our goals for this season and accomplished every goal up to this point. When we reflect, we'll realize we had one heckuva season. It's tough right now."

"I'll never forget these guys. Our relationships will last a lifetime. It's tough, coming that close."

But the Panthers can take pride, Zamiara agreed, in coming back from a huge early deficit. "In the halftime lockerroom, we talked about it; that we weren't going to lay down," he said. "We talked all year about getting back up and fighting back. And we did. It's a testament to our team. We never give up."

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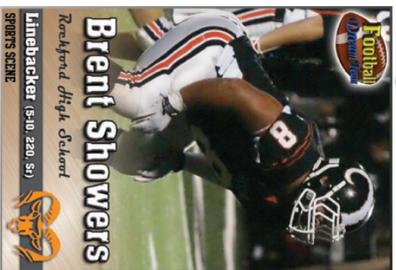
**Travis Smith**  
*Ghacaa High School*  
**Quarterback (6-3, 200, Sr.)**  
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**PLAYER OF THE YEAR**



**Alex Grace**  
*Swan Valley High School*  
**Running Back (6-1, 205, Jr.)**  
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**Offensive Player Of The Year**



**Brent Showers**  
*Rockford High School*  
**Linebacker (5-10, 220, Sr.)**  
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**Defensive Player Of The Year**

**Record-Breakers & Highlight Makers**

**Scott Keyes Sports Scene**  
When he graduates in the spring, Ithaca's Travis Smith will leave behind a legacy that will likely never be seen again in our lifetime.

A member of four Division 6 state championship teams. A winning streak that reached 56 games with the 41-22 state final victory over Clinton. A 41-0 record as a starting quarterback. Multiple state and school records.

The accolades keep pouring in for Smith, who was recently named Mr. Football and Michigan's High School Football player of the Year. Now he can be also called Sports Scene's Player of the Year for the second time. Smith is the only two-time winner of the Sports Scene honor, and it is well deserved.

Smith started at receiver in the first game of the 2011 season but took over at quarterback when David Brown was injured. He then led the team to a 13-0 record and his second state title.

Prior to the state final game against Clinton, Smith had completed 170 of 237 passes for 3,017 yards and 38 touchdowns with only six interceptions. He also had run 61 times for 414 yards and six touchdowns. In the final, he completed 17 of 27 passes for 247 yards and four touchdowns and also ran for 123 yards and another score. Smith also intercepted a pass in the game and ran it in for the first score of the contest.

He will continue his career at the University of Toledo. Smith is definitely deserving of the honor, but Swan Valley's Alex Grace was a close second after he set the Michigan single-season rushing record with 2,952 yards, only 48 yards away from becoming the first player ever to hit the 3,000 yard mark in a season in the history of Michigan high school football. Grace, Sports Scene's Offensive player of the year, averaged more than 10

yards per carry while scoring 39 touchdowns for the Vikings. Grace and Heritage's Brian Cole will be front runners for the award heading into next year.

Score's Defensive Player of the Year. A starter for the Rams the last three seasons, Showers had 120 tackles this season, including 40 unassisted. Outside football, he has a 3.9 grade-point average and is the catcher on the baseball team.

Although Ithaca was the only local team to walk away from Ford Field with a state title, Beal City and DeWitt had solid seasons in their respective divisions. Both teams finished the year 13-1, with the Aggies losing to Muskegon Catholic in the D8 finals and the Panthers losing to Zeeland West in the D5 championship game.

Both teams are well represented on Sports Scene's Dream Team. The smallest member of the Dream Team is Ty Rollin, the 5'8", 185 pound running back for the Aggies. While Jake Johnson (quarterback) and Chris Ruby (defensive back) lead the way for the Panthers.

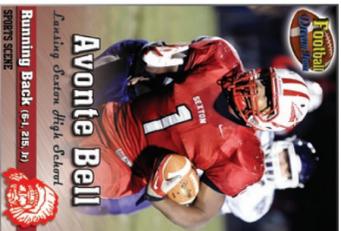
Overall, this year's team of star-studded players is highlighted by a strong senior class, including Alma's Curtis Doyle, Ithaca's Logan Hessebrook, Midland's Mike Alexander, Nottawale's Tyler Jacqmain, New Lothrop's Amari Coleman, and two-time Dream Team punter Austin Feldpausch of Fowler. Six juniors made the team, including Grace, Cole, and Swan Valley's Taylor Reune.

As hard as it was to pick this team, picking the coach was just as difficult. Beal City's Lou Rau, Carson City's Dustin Pringle, DeWitt's Rob Zimmerman, and the 2011 Coach of the Year Jason Melnyk of NML Pleasant were all worthy candidates. But the honor of leading this great team goes to Ithaca's Terry Hessebrook, who led his team to its fourth straight Division 6 championship this year. Here is the 2013 Dream Team.

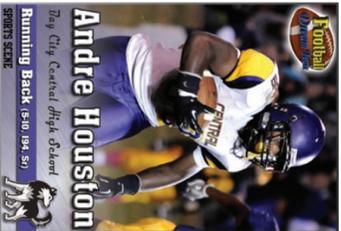
**OFFENSE**



**Jacob Johnson**  
*DeWitt High School*  
**Quarterback (6-2, 185, Jr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



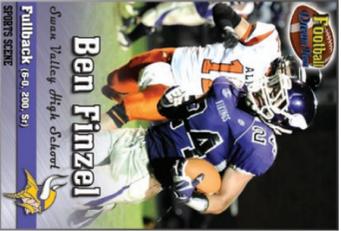
**Avonte Bell**  
*Lansing Eastern High School*  
**Running Back (6-1, 215, Jr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



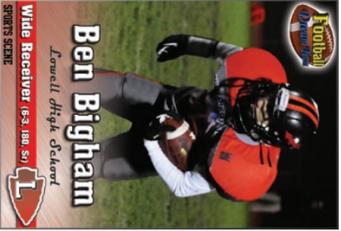
**Andre Houston**  
*Bay City Central High School*  
**Running Back (5-10, 195, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



**Ty Rollin**  
*Beal City High School*  
**Running Back (6-2, 185, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



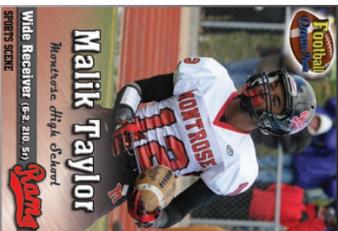
**Ben Finzel**  
*Swan Valley High School*  
**Fullback (6-0, 200, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



**Ben Bigham**  
*Lionell High School*  
**Wide Receiver (6-3, 180, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



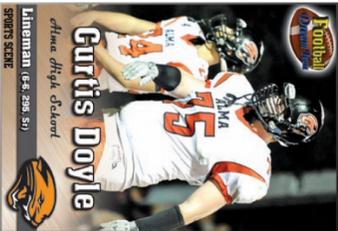
**Logan Hessebrook**  
*Ghacaa High School*  
**Wide Receiver (6-3, 200, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



**Malik Taylor**  
*Northwest High School*  
**Wide Receiver (6-2, 210, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



**Alex Neering**  
*Eastville-Goshen High School*  
**Linebacker (6-3, 220, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



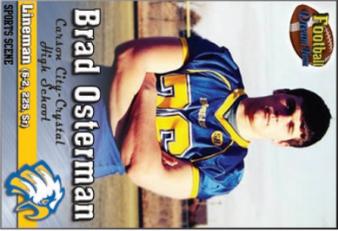
**Curtis Doyle**  
*Alma High School*  
**Linebacker (6-5, 280, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



**Erik Belco**  
*Mr. Pleasant High School*  
**Linebacker (6-4, 280, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



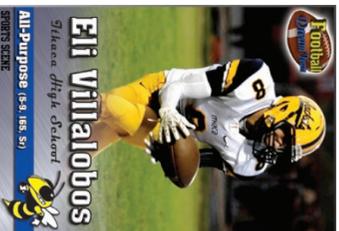
**Dakota Jelimek**  
*Northwest High School*  
**Linebacker (6-2, 280, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



**Brad Osterman**  
*Carson City-Cybernet High School*  
**Linebacker (6-2, 225, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



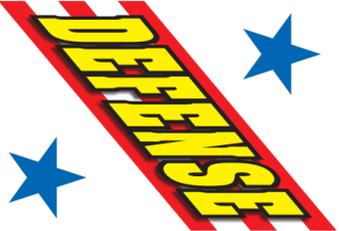
**Amari Coleman**  
*New Lothrop High School*  
**All-Purpose (6-11, 185, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



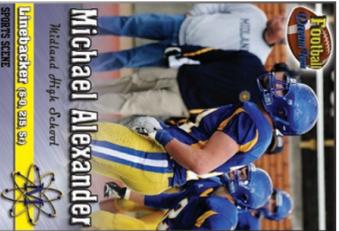
**Eli Villalobos**  
*Ghacaa High School*  
**All-Purpose (6-9, 165, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



**Josh Flamme**  
*New Lothrop High School*  
**Kicker (6-0, 160, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



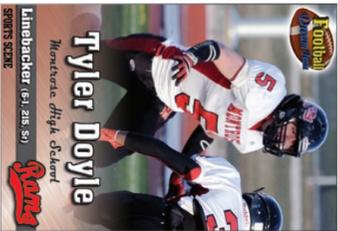
**Michael Alexander**  
*Midland High School*  
**Linebacker (6-0, 210, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



**Taylor Reaume**  
*Swan Valley High School*  
**Linebacker (6-1, 195, Jr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



**Tyler Jacqmain**  
*Alma High School*  
**Linebacker (6-1, 200, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



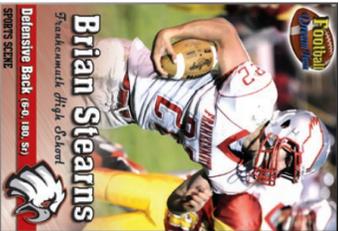
**Tyler Doyle**  
*Northwest High School*  
**Linebacker (6-3, 235, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



**Brian Gole**  
*Alma High School*  
**Defensive Back (6-2, 205, Jr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



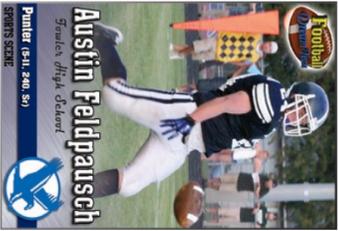
**Chris Ruby**  
*DeWitt High School*  
**Defensive Back (6-0, 190, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



**Brian Stearns**  
*Swan Valley High School*  
**Defensive Back (6-0, 180, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



**Taylor Krupp**  
*New Lothrop High School*  
**Defensive Back (6-5, 190, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



**Austin Feldpausch**  
*Swan Valley High School*  
**Punter (6-11, 240, Sr.)**  
SPORTS SCENE



**Terry Hessebrook**  
*Ghacaa High School*  
**Coach Of The Year**  
SPORTS SCENE

**HONORABLE MENTION**

Brennan Miller, Midland Dow  
Kyler Stewart, Lowell  
Kanon Dean, Lowell  
Max Dean, Lowell  
Ty Glover, Holt  
Leonard Terry, Lansing Everett  
Ethan Johnson, Lansing Everett  
John Colmore, Lansing Everett  
Kevin Alexander, Flint Caman-Almsworth  
Eckia Henderson, Saginaw Arthur Hill  
James Claborn, Fenton  
Trevon Avery, Grand Blanc  
Lucas Barner, Lansing Everett  
Joe Reverman, Grand Leige  
Brandon Scott, Grand Blanc  
Dylan Johnson, Grand Blanc  
Daleford Jawon, Holt  
Patrick Moriarty, East Lansing

Randy Garrin, Rockford  
John Reynolds, Fenton  
Alex Brackett, Grand Blanc  
Mac Hamilton, Fenton  
Derranion Allen, Flint Caman-Almsworth  
Konner Doster, Holt  
Drew Johnson, Grand Blanc  
Quinn Norrell, Rockford  
Alec Schwartz, Lake Fenton  
Kyle Rachwal, Lapeer East  
Ja Von Way, Lansing Sexton  
Michael Myles, Corunna  
Erik Belco, Mount Pleasant  
Tim Symons, Lake Fenton  
Neil Alton, Lake Fenton  
Dylan Johnson, Grand Blanc  
Bryce Dickman, Haleside  
Austin Gregory, Ionia

Noah Baragondy, Essexville-Gader  
Colin Prominski, Ionia  
Jason Cooney, Lansing Sexton  
Christopher Bukoski, DeWitt  
Shaun Shannon, Lansing Sexton  
Bryce Wilkes, Bedford  
Drew Johnson, Grand Blanc  
Pam Haber, Mount Pleasant  
Jacob Kimmel, Portland  
Cody Payok, Reese  
Brian Burton, Bridgeport  
Jaylan Henderson, Midland Bullock Creek  
Jaquan Taylor, Flint Beecher  
Mustafa Hopkins, Flint Beecher  
Charlie Ferraris, Freeland  
Dylan Johnson, Grand Blanc  
Mike Pratt, Vassar  
Christian Perez, Sanford-Meridian

Tony Poljan, Lansing Catholic  
Jordan Gross, Clare  
Jake Wezrick, Sanford-Meridian  
Trent Gimms, Flint Powers  
Ricky King, Ithaca  
Cody Payok, Ithaca  
Drew Johnson, Grand Blanc  
Drew Kellie, Orono  
Josh Harner, Ithaca  
Kevin Schbert, Sanford-Meridian  
Tony Beatty, Reese  
Joe McGuire, Clare  
Ryan Walters, Williamston  
Adam Strenlow, Coleman  
Ryan Timmons, Beal City  
Dylan Johnson, Grand Blanc  
Josh Wendling, New Lothrop  
Matthew Warner, Coleman

Kyle Nurenberg, Pewamo-Wesphalia  
Dylan Moffitt, Bath  
Dustin Neyer, Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart  
Austin Cook, Fowler  
Nathanan Schroeder, Saginaw Michigan  
Lutheran Seminary  
Nick Ward, Beal City  
Christian Benavidez, Veshsburg  
Lane Simon, Pewamo-Wesphalia  
Keigan Beckman, Veshsburg  
Grant Steinborn, New Lothrop  
Jake Jankoska, Freeland  
Darron Robinson, Arthur Hill  
Kemar Harris, Arthur Hill High  
Raymond Beck, Saginaw High  
Blake Blackford, Mt. Pleasant

# Another near miss for DeWitt

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

It was a banner season for DeWitt's Jake Johnson, a 6'2", 185-pound junior quarterback, and for Chris Ruby a 5'10", 175-pound senior defensive back.

Both were named to the Division 3-4 All-State team by the Associated Press. But both would have preferred a 14-0 season that did not materialize because of a 34-27 loss to Zeeland West in the Division 3 state final.

Ruby had a 56-yard touchdown run that helped the Panthers get back into the title game. Johnson was 15 of 24 for 289 yards and three touchdowns. He had two passes intercepted. He rushed 13 times for 41 yards. Josh Borta was his favorite target, with five catches for 185 yards.

Defensively, Ruby had six solo tackles and three assists.

But for both Johnson and Ruby, not getting the championship ring was disappointing, even though it was a fun season.

"We had a very good season," Johnson said. "It was an awesome season for us this year."

"We were expecting to end up where we did," said Ruby. "When we lost to Grand Rapids South Christian last year in the semis, it was our mindset we'd go to semi and win. That was our goal from game one, to get to Ford Field. We wanted to win. But it was our goal all season to get to Ford Field."

In August, Johnson had the inkling that something special was in the making. "We had very high goals this season, and we knew we were going to be a pretty good team and hopefully fulfill all our goals this year," he said.

Major highlights were a 21-20 squeaker over St. Clair in the state semifinals and a 48-20 victory over St. Johns in the regular season.

"Beating St Johns, we had a new school record in total offense with 605 yards," Johnson said.

This marked Johnson's second varsity season at quarterback. Last year, he was injured for half the season after breaking his throwing hand. He returned in time to take the team to the state semifinal.

He worked hard in the off-season to get ready for 2013. "My arm strength definitely got stronger and [also] reading defenses," he said. "I put on about 20 pounds and got faster."

He takes pride in being a pocket passer, being able to get out and run, being accurate, and being able to make good decisions. His best game was 258 yards passing and 160 rushing against St. Johns.

Johnson enjoyed working with Borta. "He's a special kid," Johnson said. "He's strong and athletic. No one seems to be able to guard him, because he's fast and catches the ball very well."



DeWitt quarterback Jake Johnson rumbles down the sideline for a first down during the Panthers' 34-27 loss to Zeeland West in the Division 3 state championship game. Johnson will return next season to lead the DeWitt offense. (Scott Keyes Photo)

Against Zeeland West, a slow start marked by turnovers was critical for the Panthers.

"In the second half, we scored early, got a turnover, and didn't look back," Johnson said. "Defensively, we made a lot of adjustments [at halftime]. Offense just had to get our composure and settle down a little bit. We were down by three touchdowns."

It didn't surprise Ruby that his team overcame the steep deficit and nearly won. "In that locker room, we believed we could come back and make it a game," he said. "Our coaches made some adjustments on defense that helped us in the second half."

"We just played like we normally do in the second half."

For DeWitt players, it was a thrill being at Ford Field for a state title game.

"It was an amazing experience being able to play over there on TV," Johnson said. "It was incredible to get down there."

"I think everyone is pretty much proud of what we did," Ruby said. "We really wanted to win that game. Once we beat St. Clair, all we were thinking about was winning that state championship. It was unfortunate we didn't. I don't think there's one person on our team or in our community that wasn't proud or satisfied with how the season went. We did a lot of neat things this year. We came up a little short at the end. Overall, it's a really great season."

Johnson is one of several players returning. "We'll be very good next year, also," he said. "We'll try to get down to Ford Field again. We'll set some high goals."

Johnson started quarterbacking in the sixth grade, broke his hand in the seventh, and played in the eighth. He focused on the job starting as a freshman. "It's my favorite position," he said. "It's where the coaches put me."

Johnson is already thinking about 2014. "I need to get bigger...get faster, and study the game and keep getting stronger," he said.

Johnson used to play basketball, but he will not this season. He is a sprinter and a long jumper in track.

When it comes to football, Johnson and Ruby will always remember the 2013 season, one in which the Panthers continued the strong tradition of outstanding football at DeWitt.

"I think it's got to come down to the coaching," Ruby said. "If you look at the record of coach Zimmerman, it's really remarkable. Coach Zimmerman is so well-respected, not just in DeWitt but in communities around us. [The coaches] know how to inspire the players to buy into what they believe we can do. They pushed us and challenged us and made us believe we can do what we did. Without the coaching, I don't think we would have been close to doing anything like what we did this year."

# Another successful football season in the books

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

Kurt Richardson was in the spotlight as the coach of the Division 1 state champion and loved every minute of it.

Clarkston won its first football state championship ever with a 32-14 victory over Detroit Catholic Central Nov. 30 at Ford Field.

"This one was for every kid that's worn a uniform for us, every fan that's sat and frozen their butts for us, every parent that's yelled and called me names, whatever. This one is for C-town," Richardson said. "Our biggest goal we were striving for was balance, balance, balance. The offensive line doesn't get enough credit. They really deserve it for this one."

Ian Eriksen had touchdown runs of 37, 1, and 12 yards for Clarkston. The winners also got touchdown passes of 15 and 47 yards from D.J. Zezula to Shane Holler and Alexander Bock.

## DIVISION 2

Brother Rice ended the Al Fracassa era with a perfect 14-0 record and the Division 2 state title with 38-21 victory over Muskegon at Ford Field.

Fracassa ended his 45 years of coaching the Warriors with a 386-98-2 record and three straight state crowns.

Brother Rice led at halftime 21-14, with Alex Malzone throwing touchdown passes of 16 and 34 yards to Damarius Woods and Grant Perry, respectively, in the first quarter. Malzone had a 17-yard touchdown run in the fourth on a fake field goal and also passed 21 yards to Corey Lacandaria for a score. Jason Alessi added a 36-yard field goal.

Malzone was 20 of 24 for 263 yards and four touchdowns.

## DIVISION 4

Michigan high school football history was made Nov. 29 at Ford Field when Marine City's junior

placekicker Olivia Viney kicked seven extra points and became the first female to score in the state football finals.

Marine City improved to 13-1 with a 49-35 victory over Grand Rapids South Christian for the title. South Christian ended the year at 12-2.

Viney also tied the state football finals record for most extra points in a title showdown. Alex Merchant threw three touchdown passes to Peter Patsalis in the first half to spark the Marine City effort and lead his team to a 21-21 tie at halftime. Marine City then outscored the Sailors 28-14 in the second half.

## DIVISION 5

Grand Rapids West Catholic was 0-3 at one stage of the season and 1-4 at another. It then won its last four games, including a 21-20 squeaker over Forest Hills Eastern to end the regular season, and it sneaked into the playoffs with a 5-4 record.

Five weeks later, West Catholic was the Division 5 state champion.

The Falcons ended a stunning 5-0 run in the playoffs with a 27-14 victory over previously undefeated Menominee and took the crown with a 10-4 record.

The West Catholic defense was very impressive, led by Jason McDonough with seven solo tackles and two assists. The Falcons controlled the vaunted single-wing offense from the Upper Peninsula school.

Travis Russell threw touchdown passes of 24 and 45 yards to David Bancuk and Drake Wooten and also ran 25 yards for a score. Travis Hoving passed 30 yards to Bryce Witham for another touchdown.

## DIVISION 7

Ishpeming built a 22-0 lead and hung on against Loyola for a 22-12 victory in the Division 7 state final at Ford Field.

Alex Briones threw touchdown passes of 17 and 2 yards to Marcus Antilla and Mitch Laurin in the first



Zeeland's Jordan Dort (No. 81) lunges for the ball during the D3 state championship game against DeWitt. (Scott Keyes Photo)

half and had a 2-yard touchdown run in the third quarter.

Loyola had touchdown passes of 34 and 31 yards from Garrett Schaller to Keith Graves for its two touchdowns.

Ishpeming was one of two Upper Peninsula schools to qualify for the state finals but was the only one to win it.

Briones was 6 of 13 passing for 76 yards and rushed for 60 yards. Adam Prisk led Ishpeming in rushing with 77 yards.

## 8-MAN FOOTBALL

For the second straight season, Greenville hosted the 8-man state title game. Peck reigned supreme with a 67-32 win over Rapid River from the Upper Peninsula. Tristen Haener completed 12 of 16 passes for the winners for 379 yards and seven touchdowns. His favorite receivers were Kyle Abrego with six catches for 236 yards and four touchdowns and Tyler Beurmann with five catches for 133 yards and two touchdowns.

# Legendary coach Al Fracassa retires after team wins third state title in row

John Raffel  
Sports Scene

When you love something so much, it's very difficult to leave.

Brother Rice ended the final season of the Al Fracassa era with a perfect 14-0 record and the Division 2 state title after a 38-21 victory over Muskegon November 29 at Ford Field.

Quarterback Alex Malzone was 20 of 24 for 263 yards and four touchdowns.

"When you've got good athletes, you can win," Fracassa smiled. "They make you look good."

"It feels great with this being Coach Fracassa's last year," said Malzone. "To give him a third one meant a lot to us and him, especially going undefeated, getting that Catholic [league] championship, and the state championship. It's just a great feeling to send him out like that, great coach, great man."

Fracassa is not leaving the cupboard bare for his successor. "We're in good shape," he said, noting that Malzone and wide receiver Grant Perry are coming back. "We have a few others coming back for a good

nucleus. We had a very good JV team."

Fracassa has won nine state titles, but this marked his first undefeated team in 30 seasons.

"I can't believe it," he said. "I had hoped for one. We had one in 1974 and 1977. In 1977, we had no players that got a scholarship to a Division I school. I call them my termites, because they're so little. There's good things about every team I've had. It was a great year, a great three years. Don't know many coaches that can win a state championship three years in a row. It's awesome. Learned that word from my kids."

"My wife never comes to games. She used to come, but she'd get so nervous she'd beat everyone up next to her," Fracassa joked. "Today, she came with my daughter, who flew in from Omaha. It was nice for them to see us play and have a great victory."

But Fracassa admitted it will be tough to leave. "I wish I was young enough to coach some more," Fracassa said. "I'll still love football. It's done a lot for me. It's given me a scholarship to Michigan State. I enjoyed being an athlete. I learned so much back. "We have a few others coming back for a good

streak. Biggie Munn and Duffy Daugherty were my coaches. They taught me so much. They would say the difference between a good team and great team is something like a little extra effort. Biggie Munn used to say that every day at practice."

Fracassa said the realization that this was his last year after 57 years of coaching "has hit me during the whole season. When I'd go home every night, I couldn't believe this was going to be my last year. I tried [not] to think of it. Football kept me busy. But it's here and time for someone to take over."

"I had a great coaching staff. My defensive and offensive staff, five of those guys played for me. We were all together as a family. They're great coaches. They did an outstanding job coaching my boys. They coach. They did most of the coaching. I did most of the yelling. That's my job. Their job was to prepare the team and they did a fantastic job."



Al Fracassa

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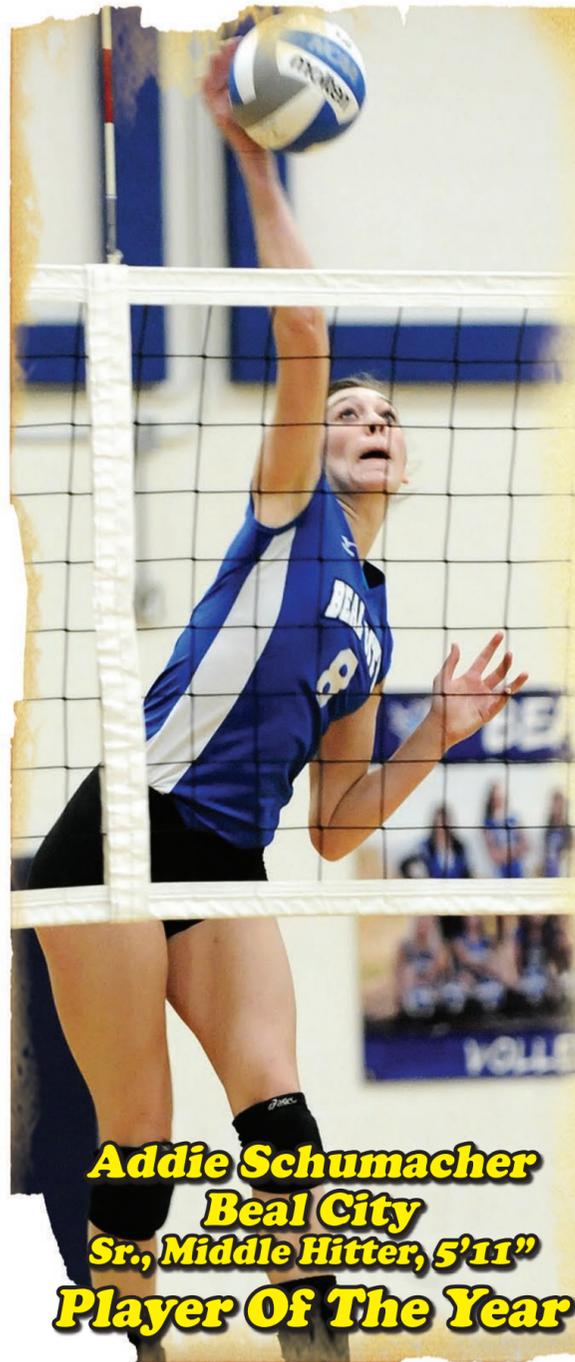
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**Addie Schumacher**  
**Beal City**  
**Sr., Middle Hitter, 5'11"**  
**Player Of The Year**

# HUSTLE... HIT... DON'T QUIT

## Meet the 2013 Sports Scene Volleyball Dream Team

### Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Addie Schumacher, Beal City, senior, Middle Hitter, 5'11"

Schumacher, as a hitter, compiled 630 kills and 164 blocks. She also had 412 digs, 55 aces, and 13 assists as a third-year varsity player and earned all-conference and all-state honors.

"From her sophomore to her junior season, she improved a ton," said Beal City coach Kelly David, who was also named Sports Scene Coach of The Year. "She kept on improving this year. She's just a very smart hitter. She just finds open spots on the court. She's aggressive. She swings for the kill every time she goes up.

She knew this was her last year and put everything she can into it."

Kayla Rosman, Morley Stanwood, junior, Outside Hitter, 5'10"

All-conference and all-state. Rosman had 39 blocks, 516 digs, 54 service aces, 564 kills, and 19 assists. "Kayla's teammates look to her to help lead them to success in matches," said Morley Stanwood coach Robin Kozich. "She knows that if she shows that she has confidence in herself and her teammates, the team will perform well. She will be a valuable asset to some college program in the future."

Bri Alspaugh, St. Louis, senior, Middle Hitter, 6'0"

Alspaugh was the team block leader with 126, team attack leader at .297, and fourth in career blocks at 462. Her career attack efficiency was .303, and she had 430 kills and 35 assists and earned all-Conference and all-state honors. "Bri is present at the net with her ability to attack the quick set and stretch defenses with the slide attack," said St. Louis coach Gary Stanglewicz. "Her blocking causes teams to have to adjust their offense away from what they want to do."

Brooke Tubbs, St. Louis, senior, Outside Hitter, 5'8"

Tubbs was team leader in kills with 634, aces with 126, digs with 406, and receptions with 884. "Brooke was a key component of our team's success this year," said coach Gary Stanglewicz. "As an attacker, she is a dynamic player with a terrific arm swing able to hit

for power and place shots. When she rotates to the back row, she scores points with a wicked jump top spin serve at an incredible 28 percent rate and with her ability to attack from behind the spiking line."

Sara Hansen, Sacred Heart Academy, senior, Setter, 5'6"

Hansen is a four-year varsity player as a setter and was all-conference and all-state for two years. She had 1,160 assists; 123 kills; 204 digs; 85 aces; and 19 blocks; and she served at 97 percent.

"Sara led her team to four conference championships, three district titles, and two regional titles in her four years," said Sacred Heart coach Mike Kruscke.

Shannon Winicki, Rockford, senior, Outside Hitter, 6'1"

Winicki tied the school record for kills in a match with 25. She broke the school record for kills in a season with 560 and had a .234 hitting percentage with 17 aces, 94 digs, and 71 blocks. "Shannon was an offensive powerhouse for us this year," said Rockford coach Kelly Delacher. "Shannon was incredible down the stretch for us, averaging 17.5 kills per match over our last 20 matches of the season."

Courtney Reinhold, Swan Valley, senior, Middle Hitter, 5'10"

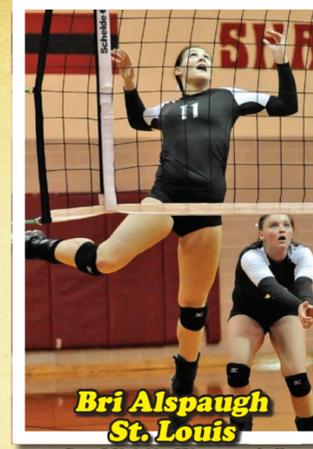
Reinhold had 552 kills, 109 blocks, 346 digs, 25 aces, 271 service points, and 121 service receive passes as a fourth-year varsity starter. She was first team all-conference, honorable mention all-state, and academic all-state. "Courtney is an all-around athlete, extremely consistent, and is always reaching to step on the court and play. She wants the ball in the most difficult situations," said Swan Valley coach Kristin Palmer.

Makenna Ott, Haslett, junior, Middle Hitter, 5'10"

Ott was a key force behind Haslett's season and led her team to the Class A state quarterfinals, where it lost to eventual state champion East Grand Rapids. Haslett finished at 54-4-3. Ott's totals included 29 aces, 304 kills, 36 blocks, and 237 digs. She was second team all-state class A and a unanimous pick for first team all-conference. She was also all-state class B as a sophomore. "She is a very special athlete," said Haslett coach Wendy McCann.



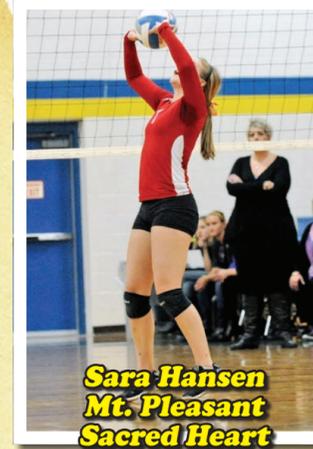
**Kayla Rosman**  
**Morley Stanwood**  
**Jr., Outside Hitter, 5'10"**



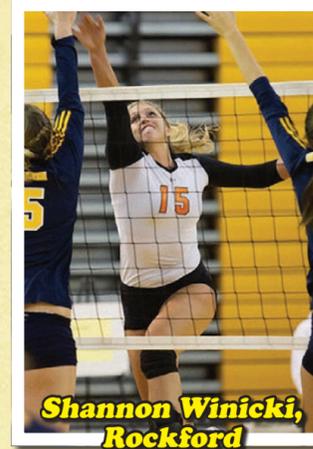
**Bri Alspaugh**  
**St. Louis**  
**Sr., Middle Hitter, 6'0"**



**Brooke Tubbs**  
**St. Louis**  
**Sr., Outside Hitter, 5'8"**



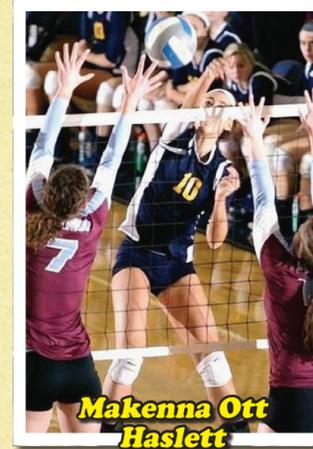
**Sara Hansen**  
**Mt. Pleasant**  
**Sr., Setter, 5'6"**



**Shannon Winicki,**  
**Rockford**  
**Jr., Outside Hitter, 5'10"**



**Courtney Reinhold,**  
**Saginaw Swan Valley**  
**Sr., Middle Hitter, 5'10"**



**Makenna Ott**  
**Haslett**  
**Jr., Middle Hitter, 5'10"**



**Kelly David**  
**Beal City**  
**Coach**

### SECOND TEAM

- Karli Herrington, Hemlock, Sr., Outside Hitter, 6'2"
- Laura Wilson, North Branch, Jr., Outside Hitter, 6'1"
- Kelsey Baarck, Frankenmuth, Sr., Outside Hitter, 5'10"
- Ashley Youngstrom, Freeland, Sr., Middle Hitter, 5'10"
- Michaela Austin, St. Louis, Sr., Setter, 5'4"
- Alexa Methner, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart, Jr., Middle Hitter, 5'11"
- Cori Crocker, Grand Ledge, Jr., Outside Hitter, 6'3"
- Mekayla Carey, Morley Stanwood, Jr., Middle Hitter, 5'11"
- Abigail Brenke, Perry, Jr. Outside Hitter, 5'10"

Coach: Russ Kela, Hemlock

### HONORABLE MENTION

- Abby Carlson, Rockford
- Maria Kronner, Haslett
- Sarah Hayataka, Rockford
- Ashley Bearden, Fenton
- Kelli Combs, Grand Ledge
- Mady Ruhlman, North Branch
- Jamie Barrows, North Branch
- Sarah Tabit, Mt. Morris
- Monica Skrabut, Essexville Garber
- Melissa Schoenow, Frankenmuth
- Sara Kamen, Mt. Morris
- Anna Reihl, Beal City
- Lindsey Veersma, Morley Stanwood
- Nicole Gross, Beal City
- Melanie Schafer, Beal City
- Jordan Schneider, Beal City
- Candace Martin, Pewamo-Westphalia
- Morgan Rombach, New Lothrop
- Paige Gotham, Reese
- Brooke Williams, Montrose
- Bainbridge Scully, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart
- Maggie Voisin, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart
- Kelsey Smith, Ashley
- Meggan Andrews, Ashley

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# Brent Showers is as tough as they come

## Named Sports Scene's Defensive Player of the year



Rockford linebacker Brent Showers, who led Rockford with 120 tackles and a 9-2 record this season is named Sports Scene's Defensive Player of the Year. Showers is also a standout catcher for the Rams baseball team. (Staff Photo)

Jeff Chaney  
Sports Scene

Defense in football is meant to be played with an attitude.

That's exactly how Brent Showers played it during his career at Rockford High School.

The 5'11", 235-pound Showers led the Rams in tackles with 120 and helped his team to a 9-2 record and a Division 1 district championship game.

For that kind of season, he earned his second straight all-state status and was named the High School Sports Scene Defensive Player of the Year.

"I like to play with a chip on my shoulder and knowing that I am going after someone else," Showers said. "Knowing that I have an advantage, more than a disadvantage as an offensive

player, knowing I'm trying to take you down, that's what's great about playing defense."

Of the 120 tackles, 23 were for loss. Showers also had four sacks, two pass break ups, and three forced fumbles for a Rockford team that was definitely led by its defense this year.

He also played a little offense for the Rams at fullback and thrived at that position, also.

Currently, several teams in the Great Lakes Intercollegiate Athletic Conference, as well as some teams in the Mid-American Conference, are looking at him for the linebacker position.

A three-year starter for the Rams, Showers is also a very good baseball player. It is no surprise that he starts at catcher, a position closely related to linebacker.

"My leadership skills [are my greatest asset]," Showers said. "I'm a very vocal person and love talking, and that has made it possible for me to communicate better on the football and baseball fields.

"My dream is to play both in college," he added. "Knowing how hard it would be to be a quarterback of the defense and quarterback on a baseball team as a catcher, that would be hard. I'm leaning towards football now. I'm just glad to start the next chapter in my life."

Showers is happy with what he is leaving behind.

"I'm glad with how I went out as a player [at Rockford]," he said. "I wish we could have ended as a team better. I learned a lot from the program, and it was a blessing to play for Rockford so long."



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# Winter Preview

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**SPORTS SCENE'S**

**St. Johns' Hall On Verge Of Making History Vying To Become Only Second 4-Time Team And Individual State Champ**

*St. Johns' senior Zac Hall, who will attend the University of Michigan next fall, is looking to help the Red Wings win their fifth consecutive Division 2 championship, while trying to become a four-time individual state champion. If Hall and St. Johns win state titles he will become only the second wrestler in the history of high school wrestling to achieve such an honor. Davison's Brent Metcalf was the only other wrestler to achieve it.*  
(Staff Photos)

**Butch Harmon**  
Sports Scene

**DIVISION 1**

**Top teams statewide: Detroit Catholic Central, Davison, Hartland, Oxford**

Detroit Catholic Central has won three of the last four D1 state team titles, including the last two. While the Shamrocks lost some talented wrestlers last year, they return eight state qualifiers and are gearing up for another run at the title. Senior Drew Garcia (171 pounds) is a two-time state champion, while senior Malik Amine also won a state title last year, and senior Logan Marcicki won a state title in 2011.

Davison lost in the state finals to Detroit Catholic Central, and the Cardinals' power-packed lineup this season is led by a trio of two-time state champions. Junior Lincoln Olson (125), senior Justin Oliver (140), and senior Jordan Crooks (171) are all setting their sights on their third individual state titles. The Cardinals also have plenty of depth. Seniors Derek Humphrey (135), Dom Russ (145), and Thomas Garty (152) are a trio of two-time state placers. Senior Jacob Madrigal is a two-time state qualifier, and senior Matt Miller (140) was a state runner-up last year.

As usual, Hartland will have another squad capable of making it to Battle Creek at season's end. The Eagles have made it to the state finals for 14 straight seasons, and with eight state qualifiers returning, they are poised to make it 15. Senior Austin Eicher (140), a returning state champion, leads the way along with junior Jacob Gorial (145), who was a state runner-up last year.

Oxford returns five state qualifiers this season. Senior Wes Maskill (160) and sophomore Alex Hrisopoules (103) both placed fifth at the individual state meet last season.

Top area teams: Holt, Grand Ledge, Rockford

Holt returns five state qualifiers from a team that won a regional championship last year. Junior Benny Gomez (112) is a returning state champion who leads the way along with senior Martin Rodriguez (125), who was a state runner-up. Senior AJ Presley (160) is a two-time state qualifier, while senior Kyle Granger (145) and junior Mino Trevino (130) also qualified for state last year.

Grand Ledge will battle it out with Holt for the top spot in the CAAC. The Comets return three state qualifiers, led by senior Jay Jay Brickley (119), a two-time state qualifier. Junior Patrick Powers (140) and sophomore Dylan Steward (135) also qualified for state last year. Grand Ledge has talented freshmen looking to work their way into the lineup in Cole Janes (103) and Jack Snauko (112).

Rockford will be battling it out with Grandville, Grand Haven, and Forest Hills Central for D1 supremacy on the west side of the state. The Rams return senior Stephen Jendritz (119) and junior Jared Bennett (112).

Top area individuals: Benny Gomez (112) Holt, Lincoln Olson (125) Davison, Martin Rodriguez (125) Holt, Justin Oliver (140) Davison, Jordan Crooks (171) Davison, Brian Darios (285) East Lansing

HSSS State final prediction: Detroit Catholic Central over Davison

**DIVISION 2**

**Top teams statewide: Lowell, St. Johns, Lakeshore, Lincoln**

Lowell has fallen to St. Johns in the last two D2 state championship finals. This is Red Arrows head coach Dave Dean's final season at Lowell before heading off to a college position at Cornell University, and this year's squad is loaded with talent. Lowell returns eight state placers, led by returning state champ Bailey Jack (125). Senior Garrett Stehley (189) and

# Wrestling Preview

sophomore Zeth Dean (119) are a pair of returning state runners-up, while sophomore Lucas Hall (103) finished fourth last year. Junior Jordan Hall (140) is a two-time state placer. The Red Arrows also have firepower in senior Kanon Dean (160), who placed fifth at state, and sophomore Max Dean (171), who placed sixth.

St. Johns has won the last four state titles, but with five state champions having graduated, it faces some retooling this season. The cupboard is far from bare, however, as junior Logan Massa (152) is a returning state champion and one of the finest individual wrestlers in the state. Senior Zac Hall (140) is a three-time state champion who is geared up to make it four this year. Senior Angus Arthur (189) is the third returning state champion. St. Johns also adds junior Tyler Wildmo (189) to the lineup. Wildmo placed third in Division 1 last year while wrestling for Davison. Sophomore Ian Parker (112) is a returning state runner-up, while senior Mark Bozzo (145) placed fourth. The Red Wings also have a talented cast of freshmen waiting in the wings, led by Emilia Sanchez (103) and Lucas McFarland (119).

Lakeshore will be a threat from the southwest corner of the state. The Lancers have six state qualifiers returning, led by senior Noah Hanau (140), who placed fourth at state last year. The Lancers also have a talented crop of freshmen.

Lincoln returns five state qualifiers and adds, arguably, the top freshman wrestler in the state in Jelani Embree (160).

Top area teams: Lowell, St. Johns, Greenville, Bay City Western, DeWitt

Mid-Michigan wrestling teams dominate Division 2 this year, as Lowell and St. Johns will be overwhelming favorites to battle it out for the state title.

Greenville has captured four consecutive regional titles, and with five regional qualifiers back, it will be eyeing a fifth straight trip to Battle Creek. Senior Alec Ward (145) is a two-time state placer who has his sights set on an individual state title this year. Seniors Will Parmalee (135), Jake Hopkins (152), and Jordan Dassinger (160) and sophomore Andrew Bowen (189) round out Greenville's list of returning regional qualifiers.

Bay City Western welcomes back four state qualifiers and will be looking to upend Greenville at team regional time. Juniors Chris (140) and Tom (135) Schoenherr are a pair of returning state placers. Chris was a runner-up last year, while Tom placed eighth. Freshman Noah Schoenherr (112) will be trying to make it three Schoenherrs at the state finals this season. The Warriors also welcome back senior Jacob Alarie (215), who placed eighth at state, and senior Jacob Wibirt (130), who qualified for state.

DeWitt returns a number of talented wrestlers, led by seniors Aaron Young (130) and Kam Melton (130) and sophomore Austin Melton (140).

Top area individuals: Ian Parker (112) St. Johns, Zeth Dean (119) Lowell, Bailey Jack (125) Lowell, Nathan Ellis (125) Goodrich, Jaedin Slapsky (130) Eaton Rapids, Zac Hall (140) St. Johns, Jordan Hall (140) Lowell, Chris Schoenherr (140) Bay City Western, Alec Ward (145) Greenville, Logan Massa (152) St. Johns, Angus Arthur (189) St. Johns, Garrett Stehley (189) Lowell

**DIVISION 3**

**Top teams statewide: Richmond, Dundee, Grand Rapids Catholic Central, Allegan**

Richmond will be looking for its fourth state title in the last five years. The Blue Devils have a talented, veteran team that returns 10 individual state qualifiers. Junior Devin Skatzka (160) is a two-time state champion, while senior Nick Burg (140) is a returning state runner-up. Sophomore Aaron Kilburn (112) placed third last year.

Dundee captured last year's state title, and with six state qualifiers returning, it will be a force again this year. Seniors Doug Rojem (145) and Teddy Warren (15) both captured state titles last season, while senior Brendon O'Connor (135) placed third.

Grand Rapids Catholic Central has eight returning state qualifiers, and the Cougars are poised to make a serious run at a state title. Sophomore Devin Schroder (119) is a returning state champion and one of the premier individuals in the state. Junior Nate Limmex (140) is also gunning for a second consecutive state title.

Allegan, a perennial state power in Division 2, dropped to Division 3 this season and has the talent to make a run at a state title. Senior Kyle Simaz (160) is a three-time state finalist in Division 2 who captured a state title last year. Foster Karmon (125) is one of several talented sophomores in the lineup. Karmon placed third at state last year.

Top area teams: Swan Valley, Lake Fenton, Chippewa Hills, Birch Run

Swan Valley welcomes back five state qualifiers, including four state placers. Sophomore Matt Santos (125) leads the way after placing second in the state last year. Senior Anthony Schiavone (119) placed fourth last year, while senior Josh Flores (152) and sophomore KJ Suito (103) both placed seventh.

Lake Fenton builds around a trio of state qualifiers and has some impressive newcomers. Senior Carson Whaley (171) placed sixth in Division 1 last year while wrestling for Grand Blanc. Senior Jared Corcoran (119) also placed at state last year. In addition, the Blue Devils have several talented freshmen ready to make an impact.

Chippewa Hills has won a regional title three of the past four years. While the Warriors suffered major graduation losses, they still have a solid nucleus around which to build. Senior Zach King (119) is a two-time state placer, while seniors Richie Ostrander

(103) and Kevin Briscoe (145) are a pair of returning state qualifiers.

Birch Run has won back-to-back regional titles, and with six regional qualifiers returning, the Panthers are gearing up for a third straight trip to Battle Creek. Senior Jerry Fenner (125) is a returning state champion, while senior Jared Elliott (160) is a returning state runner-up. The Panthers also welcome back Mitch Franklin (152), a state placer, and senior George Lahar (215), a two-time state qualifier. Sophomore Ean Taylor (145) is a talented newcomer in the mix.

Top area individuals: Tristan Serbus (103) Corunna, Zach King (119) Chippewa Hills, Jerry Fenner (125) Birch Run, Matt Santos (125) Swan Valley, Nathan Weckesser (125) Big Rapids, Josh Schlack (130) Freeland, William Young (130) Portland, Jared Elliott (160) Birch Run, Boyd Hubbard (160) Alma, Michael Walker (160) Belding, Logan Emery (160) Clare, Neil McGully (189) Belding, Eric Fader (215) Meridian

HSSS State final prediction: Richmond over Grand Rapids Catholic Central

**DIVISION 4**

**Top teams statewide: Hudson, Hesperia, Lawton, Addison**

Hudson is looking to make history this year, as it guns for a sixth straight state title for head coach Scott Marry. With six state placers back, the Tigers have plenty of talent to accomplish that goal. Cole Weaver (140) is a two-time state champion, who returns to lead the way along with Roddy Hamden (112) and JD Waters (145), who also captured state titles last year. Also returning are Issac Dusseau (119), who placed second, and Kyle Johnson (160), who finished third.

Hesperia has lost to Hudson in the finals by eight or fewer points in three of the past five years. It has plenty of talent to challenge again with the return of 10 state qualifiers and seven state placers. Zack Yates (130) is a returning state champion, while Chase Siersema is a two-time state runner-up.

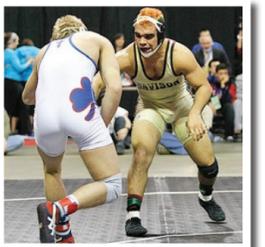
Lawton looks to be the best coming out of southwest Michigan. It returns four state placers, led by Kyle Barkovich (125), who finished fourth last season.

Addison returns six state qualifiers, including three state placers. Senior Jake Voss (135) placed third last year, while junior Jason Richardson (119) placed fourth.

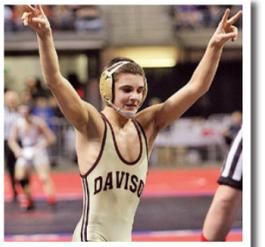
**For Publisher Randy Miniard's Wrestling Rankings And State Finals Predictions Please Visit Page 34**



Leslie's Kanen Storr is expected to be a contender once again for a state title this season. (Staff Photos)



Jordan Cooks - Davison



Lincoln Olson - Davison



Logan Massa - St. Johns

Davison's Jordan Cooks and teammate Lincoln Olson along with St. Johns' Logan Massa are back this season to defend their state championship they won a year ago. All three wrestlers will go into the season as favorites to win state titles once again. (Staff Photos)

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# ROCKIN' RANDALL'S SMOKEIN' HOT WRESTLING RANKINGS



Coaches and wrestlers please submit records and common opponents for monthly rankings to [randy@highschoolsportsscene.com](mailto:randy@highschoolsportsscene.com)

- Division 1**  
**103** Jonathon Hollinshed, Dow Deven Perez, Davison  
**112** Benny Gomez, Holt Noah Gonsler, Grand Blanc Max Johnson, Davison Jared Bennett, Rockford  
**119** Jay Jay Brickley, Grand Ledge  
 Jacob Madrigal, Davison Stephen Jendritz, Rockford Nathaniel Flemming, Grand Blanc  
**125** Lincoln Olson, Davison Martin Rodriguez, Holt  
**130** Brenen Merill, Davison Dylan Stewart, Grand Ledge Mingo Trevino, Holt Billy Reed, Grand Ledge  
**135** Derek Humphrey, Davison  
**140** Justin Oliver, Davison Matt Miller, Davison  
**145** Dom Russ, Davison Malik Dawkins, Carman Ainsworth  
 Darius Bodine, Heritage Kyle Granger, Holt  
**152** Davon Jackson, BC Central Thomas Garty, Davison  
**160** Marco Reyes, Holt  
**171** Jordan Cooks, Davison Herbie Kesgies, Carman Ainsworth  
**189**

- Tanner Thomas, Davison  
**215** Jarren Thomas, Carman Ainsworth  
 Anthony Whyte, Heritage  
**285** Brian Dories, East Lansing Brandon Houle, Rockford  
**Division 2**  
**103** Lucas Hall, Lowell Shukargni Nybenda, Lansing Eastern  
**112** Ian Parker, St Johns Jacob Chapman, Kearsley Jordan Richardson, Ionia  
**119** Zeth Dean, Lowell Mason Smith, Clio Austin Hutchinson, Eaton Rapids  
**125** Bailey Jack, Lowell Nathan Ellis, Goodrich Zack Shaw, Linden Mitchell McArthur, Kearsley  
**130** Jaedin Slapsky, Eaton Rapids Darek Krajewski, Lowell Aaron Young, Dewitt Mike Rojas, Bay City  
**135** Tom Schoeherr, BC Western Bret Fedewa, St Johns Will Parmalee, Greenville  
**140** Zac Hall, St Johns Jordan Hall, Lowell Chris Schoeherr, BC Western Austin Melton, Dewitt  
**145** Chase Smith, Clio Alec Ward, Greenville Mark Bozzo, St Johns  
**152** Logan Massa, St Johns  
**160** Kanon Dean, Lowell Drew Wixson, St Johns Ethan Smith, BC John Glenn  
**171** Max Dean, Lowell James Davis, Kearsley Rylen Droscha, Mason Jacob Taylor, BC Central  
**189** Angus Arther, St Johns Garrett Stehley, Lowell Robert James, Kearsley Andrew Bowen, Greenville  
**215** Ty Wildmo, Davison Chase Challender, Charlotte Cameron Lee, Lansing

- Waverly  
 Jacob Alarie, Bay City  
 Western  
**285** Josh Colgrove, Lowell Tyler Eble, Clio  
**Division 3**  
**103** Tristan Sebus, Corunna Ricchie Ostrander, Chip Hills Nick McGhan, Tri County Nolan Saxton, Lakeview Colton Hanyak, Williamston  
**112** Kanen Storr, Leslie KJ Sutor, Swan Valley Zack King, Chip Hills Arther Payne, Montrose Glenn Beardslee, Farwell Isaiah Rodriguez, Chesaning  
**119** Cody Veltkamp, Cent. Montcalm  
 Landon Honsinger, Hemlock Branton Wymer, Ithaca Keith Wirostek, Chesaning  
**125** Jerry Fenner, Birch Run Matt Santos, Swan Valley Damian Castillo, Alma Joe Shuler, Sanford Meridian Kolten Radaz, Freeland  
**130** Nick Torres, Bullock Creek Gerard Bott, Swan Valley William Young, Portland Jessie Scheidel, Belding Ian Nemeth, Perry  
**135** Zehlin Storr, Leslie Josh Schlak, Freeland Colin Dole, Swan Valley Marshall Conley, Caro Brandon Smith, Farwell  
**140** Adam McCann, Bullock  
 Creek  
 Charlie Ferens, Freeland Jared Peterman, Alma Alim Muhammad, Big Rapids  
**145** Jordan Bennett, Odessa Sam McLean, Swan Valley Brett Green, Caro Kevin Brisco, Chip Hills Sam Bumhoffer, MLS Jared Weisenberg, Chesaning Justyn Veneklasen, Tri County  
**152** Josh Flores, Swan Valley Mitch Franklin, Birch Run Terry Geiser, Lakeview Derek Teed, Ithaca  
**160** Gabe Bennett, New Lothrop

## State Finals Predictions

- Division 1**  
 HSSS State final prediction: Detroit Catholic Central over Davison  
 Miniard says he is taking former MSU teammate Roy Hall's Davison Cardinals.  
**Division 2**  
 HSSS State final prediction: Lowell over St. Johns  
 Miniard says "Zac Hall left Ithaca and four state football titles to get four wrestling titles at St Johns and match Metcalf at Davison" Hall and St Johns get their 4th!  
**Division 3**  
 HSSS State final prediction: Richmond over Grand Rapids Catholic Central  
 Miniard says Coach Rose and coach Simaz are tough and Allegan will create problems for Dundee and Richmond this year dropping from D2 to D3, after all that take Coach Roberts and Dundee to repeat!!  
**Division 4**  
 HSSS State final prediction: Hudson over Hesperia  
 Miniard says it time for New Lothrop and coach Jeff Campbell to end Scott Marry and Hudson's dominance.

- Jared Elliot, Birch Run Boyd Hubbard, Alma Michael Walker, Belding Brody Noykos, Swan Valley Logan Emery, Clare Jonah Loomis, Ithaca Noah Bargouthy, Garber  
**171** Skyler Ley, Caro Tristin Zienkiewks, Farwell Brandon Ayris, Clare Justin Sloan, Chesaning Seth Capen, Ithaca Alex Proudfoot, Perry  
**189** Neil McGully, Belding Alberto Flores, Hemlock Tyler Boerma, Chip Hills  
**215** Kendall Betteridge, Caro Eric Fader, Sanford Meridian  
 George Lahar, Birch Run Keegan Reimus, Freeland  
**285** Joe Foret, Essexville Garber  
**Division 4**  
**103** Mason Rife, Webberville Chaz Kehres, Dansville Taylor Barkley, CCC  
**112** Clay Ragon, Dansville Trevor Hilgendorf, Fulton  
**119** Dresden Simon, Dansville  
**125** Cole Hersch, New Lothrop Konnor Holton, St Louis  
**130** Gabe Bennett, New Lothrop

- Malachi Marshal, Lainsburg Dallas O'Green, CCC Delton Kuklewski, Montabella  
**135** Tristin Viglianco, Montabella  
**140** Steve Garza, New Lothrop Jed Abbott, St Louis Garner Cusack, CCC  
**145** Dillen Decker, CCC  
**152** Austin Hughes, Nouvel Aaron Bauman, NL Darren Decker, CCC  
**160** Josh Wendling, NL Lincoln Burnham, CCC  
**171** Taylor Krupp, New Lothrop Johnny Durham, Montabella  
**189** Cody Symons, New Lothrop  
**215** Kevin Koenig, Lainsburg Mykhalo Hetmanky, St Louis  
 Dakota Clark, New Lothrop  
**285** Danny Davidson, Montabella  
 Owen Wilson, New Lothrop

## 2013-14 Hockey Preview



The Saginaw Heritage hockey team made it all the way to the Division 2 semis a year ago before losing to Livonia Stevenson 10-2. Although the Hawks lost a lot to graduation it should be interesting to see how far they can advance this season. (Scott Keyes Photo)

# Making a statement

## Can Heritage make another run?

The state crowns three champions in hockey. Will the area get a state champion this year? Right now, it's not likely unless someone emerges with a hot postseason.

### DIVISION 1

**Teams to watch statewide:** Brighton, East Kentwood, Detroit Catholic Central

**Preview:** Coach Paul Moggach's Brighton team will be going for its third straight state title with plenty of firepower. Captains Danny Boso, Tyler Hayes, and Brett Pietila will head a balanced attack.

Detroit Catholic Central hasn't won a state title since 2010 but had a 21-0 scoring advantage over its first six opponents in going 6-0 to start this season.

**Top players in state:** Danny Boso and Tyler Hayes of Brighton, Carter Cerratani of Detroit Catholic Central

**State final prediction:** Detroit Catholic Central over Brighton

### DIVISION 2

**Teams to watch statewide:** Hartland, Livonia Stevenson, Port Huron Northern, Trenton

**Top local teams:** Davison, Midland Dow, Heritage

**Preview:** Hartland was state finalist last season and figures to be one of the main powers again along with Port Huron Northern and Livonia Stevenson. Dominic Lutz returns for Stevenson.

He scored two goals the championship game, and he

remains the top player for Stevenson. Midland Dow has started out 5-0 and could make some noise.

**Top players in state:** Dominic Lutz and Tyler Irvine of Livonia Stevenson, Austin Flores and John Nagel of Hartland

**Top local players:** Kevin Cressy, Heritage

**State final prediction:** Livonia Stevenson over Trenton

### DIVISION 3

**Teams to watch statewide:** Cranbrook, Houghton, Sault Ste. Marie

**Top local team:** Powers Catholic

**Preview:** Sault Ste. Marie may be ready to take that step up this season after being runner-up last year. "We will have a solid year and move guys to the next level," said coach John Ferroni

Defending champion Cranbrook showed how tough it is in a mid-December game against Detroit Catholic Central.

Cranbrook posted a 5-2 victory over the Division 1 power. Sam Miletc had 12 goals and 19 points in his team's first six games.

**Top players in state:** Will Gauthier and Chase Gamelin of Sault Ste. Marie, Sam Miletc of Cranbrook

**Top local players:** Austin Kane and Spencer Owen, Powers Catholic

**State final prediction:** Cranbrook over Houghton

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**Goodrich junior guard Tania Davis is hoping to lead Goodrich back to the Breslin and a shot at the Martians third straight Class B championship.**

(Alan Holben Photo)

## SPORTS SCENE'S

# Girls Basketball Preview

### Could Ms. Basketball Be Staying In The Tri-Cities?

### Area Loaded With Hot Bed Of Talent

**Butch Harmon**  
Sports Scene

**CLASS A**

Top teams statewide: Detroit King, Marian, Muskegon, Grosse Pointe South

King has one of the tallest teams in the state and plenty of players coming back from a squad that went 22-1 last year.

Marian has been one of the most consistent teams in the state the past several years and has an athletic squad led by Laura Burton (6'1"), who can score inside or out.

Grosse Pointe South has been the Class A runner-up the last two years and will make another run at the state title, led by junior point guard Cierra Rice.

Top area teams: DeWitt, Grand Ledge, Greenville, Midland, Rockford

DeWitt went 17-4 last year and also has a deep and talented squad. Senior Hannah Stoll (6'0") is headed to Michigan Technological University next year and is an excellent shooter. Senior Natalie Knauf (5'6") is an athletic guard, while junior Claudia Reid is another excellent shooter. Lexi Banaszak (5'11") and junior Abby Nakfoor (5'10") offer size and rebounding up front.

Grand Ledge reached the state quarterfinals last season and finished the year with a 21-5 record. The Comets return a host of talent this season. Senior twins Lindsay and Hannah Orwat averaged a combined 31 points per game last year and are dangerous either shooting from the perimeter or driving to the bucket. Junior Cori Crocker (6'3") is an outstanding athlete who nearly averaged a double-double in points and rebounds last year. Cori Drake (6'1") adds more size up front, while Lauren Bachert and Sophia Guzman are skilled point guards.

Greenville returns a load of talent from a team that turned in an 18-5 record last year and captured the OK Bronze title. Senior post Leah Somerfield (6'1") is a four-year starter who averaged 15 points and 11 rebounds per game a year ago. Senior Nikota Howe (5'10") is another veteran back for a team with good size and quickness.

Midland is led by senior Jessica Walter (5'11"), who is one of the best players in the state and a Miss Basketball candidate. She is a versatile talent who averaged 22 points, 5 rebounds, 5 assists, and 3 steals per game last year. Lily Hami (5'10") is another offensive threat who averaged 15 points per game a year ago, while Emily Reser (5'9") returns in the post.

Rockford finished second to state champion Grand Haven in the OK Red last season. The Rams have seven veterans back from a team that went 15-6. Junior Logan McCane (5'9") is an outstanding guard, while Megan Datema (5'10") makes big plays on both ends of the floor. Senior Lauren Imhoff (5'11") is a force in the post.

Top area players: Cori Crocker, jr., Grand Ledge; Tara Lierman, jr., Holt; Logan McCane, jr., Rockford; Hannah Orwat, sr., Grand Ledge; Lindsay Orwat, sr., Grand Ledge; Kamrin Reed, so., Holt; Claudia Reid, jr., DeWitt; Leah Somerfield, sr., Greenville; Hannah Stoll, sr., DeWitt; Jessica Walter, sr., Midland

**CLASS B**

Top teams statewide: Benton Harbor, Grand Rapids South Christian, Three Rivers, Wayland Union

Benton Harbor has one of the top one-two scoring punches in the state in the Gondreck sisters. Junior Kalabrya averaged over 17 points per game last year, while sophomore Kysre averaged over 29 points per game as a freshman. It adds another talented freshman this year in Kaniya Washington (6'3").

South Christian has an athletic squad that reached the final four last year. Senior Cassie Vredevoogd (6'0") is an athletic post player. Senior Rene Broekhuizen (5'11") is a versatile forward who can do a number of things.

Three Rivers center Teagan Reeves (6'2") is another Miss Basketball candidate. The Western Michigan University recruit averaged 21 points and 11 boards last year. Wayland Union junior Presley Hudson (5'5") is a talented point guard with unlimited range on her shot. She has already committed to Central Michigan University.

Team area teams: John Glenn, Clare, Corunna, Eaton Rapids, Powers Catholic, Goodrich, Haslett, Ionia, Bullock Creek, Portland, John Glenn has one of the most talented young teams in the area. The Bobcats reached the district finals last year, where they fell to Bullock Creek. Sophomore Jenai LaPorte is one of the top sophomores in the state and is joined by fellow sophomore Jamie Brisson.

Clare suffered heavy graduation losses last year, but with all-everything guard Lindsay Winter (5'7") back for her senior year, the Pioneers will still be a force. Last year, Winter averaged 22 points, five rebounds, and four assists per game. Senior center Corinne Wezensky (5'11") and senior forward Alex Stark (5'8") also return.

Corunna turned in a 14-7 record last year and finished second in the CAAC White. Senior center/forward Payton Birchmeier (6'1") is a multi-dimensional player and a force in the paint. The Cavaliers have plenty of experience returning. Senior guard Lauren Ruess (5'7") heads up the backcourt along with

talented sophomore guard Skylar Napier (5'5"). With nine seniors back from a team that turned in an 18-3 mark last year, Eaton Rapids has big aspirations heading into the season. Senior post Allie Dittmer (6'1") is a dominating center who averaged 18 points and 11 rebounds last year will play at Hillsdale College. The Greyhounds have plenty of size with Bailey Baker (5'10") back up front along with point guard Emily Reinecke (5'11") and Kathryn Mills (5'11") on a wing.

Powers Catholic returns a trio of starters from a team that went on a sizzling tournament run and reached the Class B state final. Senior point guard Sarah Ruhstorfer (5'5") is a talented floor general who can also drain the three-point shot. Ally Haran is an athletic player who can play any of the five positions on the court. Michela Coury (6'1") gives the Chargers a low-post threat. She averaged 10 points and 14 rebounds per game last year.

Defending Class B state champion Goodrich suffered heavy graduation losses but still has plenty of talent. Junior guard Tania Davis (5'5") is one of the top juniors in the state and averaged 17 points per game last year. Junior Isabella O'Brien (6'1") gives the Martians good size in the post, while sophomore Lexi Sevillian is an outstanding all-around player.

Haslett has a wealth of talent returning from a team that went 19-4 last season before falling to eventual state champion Goodrich in the regional semifinal. All five starters return, led by athletic junior post Makenna Ott (5'10"). Sophomore Karson Tripp (6'0") adds more size up front. Junior point guard Kenzie DeCooK runs the offense, while junior Adrianna Stolicker (5'8") is an outstanding three-point shooter.

Ionia turned in a 15-9 record last year and returns a talented senior core. Senior guards Taylor Bovee (5'8") and Sarah Swartz (5'9") both earned all-state honors last season. Up front, junior post Anna Riccius (5'11") earned all-league honors and gives the Bulldogs a potent inside-outside game.

There may not be a more talented young team in the area than Bullock Creek. Last year, it turned in a 23-4 record and reached the state semifinals. Four starters return from that team, and this year's starting lineup will have three juniors and two sophomores. Junior guard Ellie Juengel (5'8") is the top returning scorer at 14 points per game. Fellow junior guard Hannah Heldt added 10 points per game. Up front, junior forward Hallee Nieman (5'10") averaged 13 points and six rebounds. Sophomores Alyssa Mudd at forward and Madison Hill at guard add even more talent.

Portland captured the CAAC White with a perfect 10-0 record last year and finished 17-4 overall. The Raiders return a pair of all-conference players in senior forward Allison Russell (5'9") and senior guard Madison Adams. Senior forward Allie Grys (5'9") is another returning veteran.

Top area players: Payton Birchmeier, sr., Corunna; Taylor Bovee, sr., Ionia; Michela Coury, sr., Powers; Tania Davis, jr., Goodrich; Allie Dittmer, sr., Eaton Rapids; Allison Haran, sr., Powers; Hannah Heldt, jr., Bullock Creek; Ellie Juengel, jr., Bullock Creek; Jenai

LaPorte, so., John Glenn; Hallee Nieman, jr., Bullock Creek; Makenna Ott, jr., Haslett; Adrianna Stolicker, jr., Haslett; Sarah Swartz, sr., Ionia; Lindsay Winter, sr., Clare

**CLASS C**

Top teams statewide: Reese, St. Ignace, Arbor Preparatory

Reese has turned in back-to-back perfect regular seasons. The Rockets went 23-1 last year before losing to Nouvel Catholic Central in the regionals. Junior center Reyna Frost (6'0") is a dominating post player who averaged 15 points, 12 rebounds, and two blocks per game last year. The team also has a standout senior point guard in Paige Gotham.

St. Ignace turned in a perfect 27-0 record enroute to the Class D state title last March. This year it moves up to Class C but has plenty of talent back. Senior Kelley Wright (5'10") is one of the top players in the state in Class C, while sophomore Abbey Ostman (5'9") averaged 10 points and 10 rebounds a game last year.

Arbor Preparatory in Ypsilanti has a dynamic one-two combination in junior Zakiya Wells and sophomore Nastassja Chambers.

Team area teams: Beal City, Carson City-Crystal, Montabella, Hemlock, Pewamo-Westphalia, Nouvel Catholic Central

Beal City is gearing up for a big season. The Aggies welcome back a trio of all-state players, led by senior center Addie Schumacher (5'11"). Junior Jordan Schneider (5'11") is another returning all-state player as is senior guard Melanie Schafer (5'5"). They also return senior guard Anna Reihl.

Carson City-Crystal has won back-to-back district titles, and it is looking to add another this year. Junior guard Mikayla Duflo (5'5") is a returning all-state player. The Eagles are solid up front with returning all-conference forwards Tori Christiansen (5'9") and Mackenzie Gesiter (5'9").

Montabella also has a veteran team led by a pair of all-state players. Seniors Taylor Smith (5'6") and Sarah Miller (5'5") give the Mustangs a pair of talented players around whom to build.

Senior Karli Herrington (6'2") leads the way for Hemlock. One of the top centers in the state, Herrington is a Miss Basketball candidate who is headed to Central Michigan University next year. She averaged 19 points and 15 rebounds per game last season.

Pewamo-Westphalia won the CMAC last year with a 15-1 record and finished 18-5 overall. The Pirates suffered heavy graduation losses but do return senior forward Marlana Klein (5'11"), who earned all-state honors last season.

Nouvel Catholic Central made it all the way to the Class C state final last year before falling to Manchester. Plenty of talent returns from that team, led by senior Rachel McInerney (6'2"). The Ferris State University commitment averaged 16 points and 10 rebounds per game last year and gives Nouvel a

dominating player in the paint. Junior forward Nicole Buckingham (5'10") added nine points and six rebounds, while sophomore guard Laurel Jacquemain added eight points per game.

Top area players: Mikayla Duflo, jr., Carson City-Crystal; Karli Herrington, sr., Hemlock; Marlana Klein, sr., Pewamo-Westphalia; Rachel McInerney, sr., Nouvel; Sarah Miller, sr., Montabella; Melanie Schafer, sr., Beal City; Jordan Schneider, jr., Beal City; Addie Schuacher, sr., Beal City; Emily Severn, sr., New Lothrop; Taylor Smith, sr., Montabella; Reyna Frost, jr., Reese;

**CLASS D**

Top teams statewide: Forest Park, Gaylord St. Mary Cathedral, Our Lady of the Lakes

Crystal Falls returns all five starters from a team that reached the state quarterfinals before falling to St. Ignace. Included in the group is perhaps the premier player in the entire state in senior Lexi Gussert (6'0"). One of the most highly recruited players in the state, Gussert finally selected Michigan State University. Last year, she averaged 32.5 points per game. Forward Kendra Campbell averaged 10 points per game, while point guard Maria Stanekewicz also returns.

Top area teams: Fowler, Fulton, Lansing Christian, Sacred Heart Academy, Portland St. Patrick Catholic

Fowler turned in a 13-8 record last year and is primed for another strong season. Senior center Kelsie Feldpausch (5'8") is a two-time all-conference player. The Eagles also return junior guard Kara Schafer.

Fulton enjoyed success last year. It won a district title and advanced to the regional final while going 13-10. Senior forward Gabi Seida (5'9") leads the returnees along with senior guard Amanda Madden.

Lansing Christian went 22-2 last year and reached the regional final. While the Pilgrims graduated a number of key players, they do return senior Mikayla Terry (5'10"), who gives the team a strong presence in the post.

Sacred Heart Academy captured a regional championship last year and has plenty of talent on hand for a similar run this year. Junior point guard Sara Hansen (5'8") is a returning all-state player who averaged 13 points per game. Junior guard Riley Terwilliger (5'6") is another all-around athlete returning in the backcourt. The Irish also have plenty of size up front. Junior Lexie Methner (6'0") is a strong rebounder and defender, while sophomore Averi Gamble (6'3") has outstanding size and is a potential impact player.

Portland St. Patrick went 15-1 in the CMAC last year and 20-2 overall. The Shamrocks graduated a number of talented players but do return senior Danielle Simon (5'8"), who is one of the top players in the area.

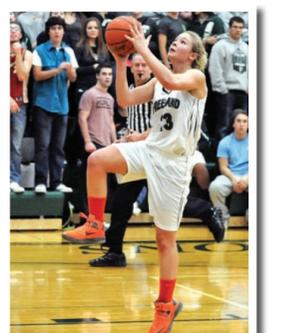
Top area players: Malory Carlson, sr., Crossroads Charter Academy; Kelsie Feldpausch, sr., Fowler; Sara Hansen, sr., Sacred Heart Academy; Gabi Seida, sr., Fulton; Danielle Simon, sr., Portland St. Patrick Catholic; Mikayla Terry, sr., Lansing Christian; Courtney Wolf, jr., Morrice



Hemlock senior Karli Herrington is averaging close to 20 points and 20 rebounds at the start of the 2013-14 season. Herrington will play her college basketball at Central Michigan University. (Scott Keyes Photo)



Midland High's Jess. Walter is one of the top players in Michigan heading into the 2013-14 season. Walter will play her college basketball at Indiana University. (Scott Keyes Photo)



Freeland's Taryn Taugher will look to fill the void left by the graduation of last year's Ms. Basketball Tori Jankoska. Freeland got off to a fast start this season with an opening night win over Saginaw Valley Lutheran. (Scott Keyes Photo)

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# New coach, fresh start for Heritage

A year ago the Heritage girls basketball team made it all the way to the Class A quarterfinals. The Hawks' Jayde Abneth (No.52) is one of two seniors on the Heritage team that is coached by Vonnie DeLong, who took over the job from longtime coach Tim Conley. Bottom Right: Junior Aubree Snow dribbles the ball upcourt against Saginaw High during the Hawks victory over the Trojans earlier this month. (Scott Keyes Photos)



Geoff Mott  
Sports Scene

**S**AGINAW TWP. – The Heritage girls basketball team has many familiar faces back from last year's state quarterfinal team, including four of five starters.

And while first-year coach Vonnie DeLong is unfamiliar to the Hawks' bench, she is quite familiar to the Saginaw Valley League.

DeLong, 47, coached Arthur Hill for 11 seasons, finishing with a 142-65 record before stepping down in 2003 to take the head coaching job at Saginaw Valley State University. She posted a 35-72 record in four seasons with the Cardinals, stepping down in 2008. The former Carrollton prep star has returned after a five-year hiatus.

She takes over for Tim Conley, who retired after 22 seasons as Heritage's coach with a 291-205 record.

"The kids don't change," DeLong said after the Hawks defeated Saginaw 61-48 in both teams' SVL North opener. "Basketball doesn't change."

Center Jayde Abneth is one of three seniors on the team. She's a three-year starter and was a little surprised when Conley left the program. "I was upset at first because I had been playing for three years for him," she said. "But change is good.

"[DeLong] is a really good coach, and she knows what she's talking about. We're just starting to click."

After a season-opening loss on the road to Brighton, the Hawks responded strongly with a 54-29 win over host Grand Blanc and a road win against the Trojans. Four of Heritage's first five games are on the road, and the Hawks are learning on the fly.

"It's a process right now, and the girls aren't used to everything right now," DeLong said. "We've got a good base and tough schedule to start. We work on things in the games and see how we fare.

"We've been working in the gym since the summer, but you can't put your offense in then. I'm hoping after the Christmas break, when we are really re-teaching the offense, that we'll see a bigger improvement by mid-January."

Abneth is joined in the starting lineup by versatile senior guard Taylor Thompson. Junior guards Allie Miller and Aubree Snow push the pace for the Hawks and provide outside shooting, while new starter Alli Pape at forward is one of three talented freshmen on the varsity level.

Freshman forward Courtney McNerny grabbed a team-high 11 rebounds off the bench against a tough, veteran Saginaw front court, while freshman guard Haley Brefka plays with poise. Senior Joelle Schuknecht and juniors Haley Goodell, Carlee Coughlin, Jordyn Brefka, and Indigo Dudley provide depth off the bench.

"We have people back, but we are still fairly young, with the three freshmen," DeLong said. "There's not a whole lot of experience there, and we've been able to win early. We make mistakes, but they stay in there and try to correct them.

"It's hard to improve much until you play a few games and learn from them." The Hawks finished 16-10 last season and surprised Midland Dow in districts before winning the regional title. The season ended in heartbreaking fashion, with a 34-33 loss to Dexter in the Class A state quarterfinal game.

"Our expectations are still really high," Abneth said. "We're not going to let down. We keep working. I love playing with these girls."

DeLong said the girls are working hard on a lot of new material but are talented enough to take another step forward this year.

"The expectations are high, and the kids want to get back to where they were," she said. "It's not that basketball has changed, but this is a different offense. We have different out-of-bounds plays, and it takes a little time to not revert back to some of the things you did last year.

"We'll get there."

# BC back for more

Geoff Mott  
Sports Scene

MIDLAND – Bullock Creek's girls basketball coach Justin Freeland didn't have to provide motivation to get his players to the gym for summer workouts and fall conditioning.

A 48-45 overtime loss to Powers Catholic in the Class B state semifinal game is all that the Lancers needed to make them hungry. And with four starters back this winter, that hunger in their bellies is starting to grow.

"Everything that I asked these ladies to do, they did," said Freeland, who enters his 12th season as head coach and 20th season overall with the Bullock Creek girls basketball program. "That's one of the reasons this team is so successful."

Freeland boosted his team's non-conference schedule, and it is already paying dividends. The Lancers opened the season on the road with a 43-33 win over 2013 Class C state runner-up Nouvel Catholic Central and then knocked off Frankenmuth, 44-32.

"Nouvel returned a lot of ladies from last year, and we were able to grind out the win," Freeland said. "And Frankenmuth, I personally think, has its best team out there in five years. They have size, a little bit of speed, and are always well-coached by Tom Keller. We have just enough offense, and our defense really carried us through those two games."

Bullock Creek also has a tough conference schedule in the Tri-Valley Central, with Freeland and Hemlock on the schedule.

The Lancers travel to state powerhouse Ludington in January and will see talented teams in a pair of Tri-Valley Conference crossover games.

"Obviously Freeland had Miss Basketball [Tori Jankoska], who now is a Big Ten player, and I think Karli Harrington is a top-10 player in the state now," Coach Freeland said.

"Hemlock is a real tough game, and Freeland might have lost Jankoska, but they have so many players who are good and successful coming



The Bullock Creek girls basketball team would love nothing more than to make a return trip to the Breslin Center this year, after losing a heartbreaker to Flint Powers in the Class B semis a year ago. (Scott Keyes Photo)

back.

"The schedule will help us." While small forward Kendra Shankel graduated, the Lancers return a versatile lineup led by junior Ellie Juengel. Juengel started at point guard but has made the move to shooting guard after last year's top reserve, sophomore Madison Hill, made the move from small forward to point guard.

"Hill's development has been a huge leap," Freeland said. "She is our best on-ball defender, and she really frees up Juengel to be a shooter. And when Hill goes out, Juengel can swing over. That versatility really allows them to play off each other."

Bullock Creek has the quickness and skill to run three or four guards on the floor at the same time, and they have a strong inside presence in junior power forward Halee Nieman, a first team all-TVC Central selection last year. Sophomore center Alyssa Mudd is "very talented," while Hannah Heldt is a defensive stalwart at small forward.

"Hannah is the best off-ball defender I've ever coached,"

Freeland said.

"She has a great basketball IQ and a high motor. She is very valuable on the defensive end. We've got a lot of things going good for us at the moment."

Madalyn Waldmann has played four seasons of varsity basketball and gives the Lancers a veteran leader off the bench, while Lexi Shaver, the only other senior on the team's roster, is "the best teammate on the team," Freeland said.

Freeland said the expectations are high, and the team knows how little margin of error there is come playoff time.

"You can never expect to make it or not make it [back to the Breslin Center for the Final Four]" Freeland said.

"One year we were 23-0 going in to the regional and were 24-0 heading into a regional final, and both times had tight losses. Last year we won the quarterfinal by a point.

"But last year was a valuable experience and a motivator for us to give it our best shot. A loss in overtime in the semifinals has driven us to work even harder."

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**SPORTS SCENE'S**

# Boys Basketball Preview

## Area Teams Ready To Make Return Trip To Breslin

### Saginaw High, AH, Laingsburg Primed For Big Seasons

**Butch Harmon**  
Sports Scene

**CLASS A**

**Top teams statewide:** Clarkston, Detroit Pershing, Muskegon, Ypsilanti  
Clarkston won the D1 state title in football and has the athletes to do it in basketball, as well. Senior point guard Press Kampe is a coach on the floor, and Michael Nicholson (6'8") is a talented post player.

Pershing is again a power in the Detroit Public School League. Senior Justin Tillman (6'7") is a talented front court player, while Mory Diane (6'3") is an explosive guard.

Muskegon is not just a football school, and quarterback Deshaun Throner is one of the leaders of the hoops squad at a guard spot. Junior Deyonta Davis (6'8") is a national top-100 recruit and may be the second-best junior in the state.

Ypsilanti has an excellent big man in University of Louisville recruit Jaylin Johnson. Sophomore point guard Corey Allen is another high-profile recruit in the making.

Top area teams: Holt, Lansing Eastern, Mt. Pleasant, Rockford, Saginaw, Saginaw Arthur Hill

Holt is one of the top teams in the Lansing area this year. Senior point guard Don'Quall Jackson (5'10") is a talented floor general. Senior forward Colin Jones (6'3") is a steady offensive threat, while freshman Jaron Faulds (6'8") has potential and gives the Rams a presence in the post.

Lansing Eastern will give Holt a challenge. The Quakers have an experienced team, led by the inside-outside duo of senior guard Tameron

Williams-Baker (6'4") and senior forward DeQuandre Dentmond (6'8").

Mt. Pleasant is another senior-dominated team and will be the best non-Saginaw team in the valley. Senior Jaleel Hogan (6'7") is a load in the post and is a University of Detroit commitment. Anton Cotton, Aaron Leasher, and TJ Johnson add more talent to the Oiler lineup.

Rockford has a veteran squad, with seven seniors back. The Rams are solid up front, led by senior Chris Sunday (6'6"), who is a load in the post.

Saginaw captured the Class A state title in 2012, reached the state semifinal last year, and has the talent for another deep tournament run this year. Senior Keyon Addison is one of the best point guards in the state. Sophomore Algevon Eichelberger (6'7") is a talented young big man who will team up with senior Jerry Smith (6'4") up front. The backcourt is deep, with Malik Jordan (6'1") returning and with promising freshman Ronquavious Southward (5'10").

Arthur Hill is led by Eric Davis (6'3"), who is the premier junior in the state and who is being recruited by the likes of Michigan, Michigan State, and Kentucky. A host of veterans return along with Davis, and newcomers like 6'9" center Josh Jones and explosive freshman Brian "Tuggs" Bowen (6'6") promise to make this a memorable season for the defending league champions, who will battle it out with Saginaw High once more in the league and at the district.

Top area players: Keyon Addison, sr., Saginaw; Brad Brechting, jr., Cedar Springs; Brian Bowen, fr., Saginaw Arthur Hill; Eric Davis, jr., Saginaw Arthur Hill; Algevon Eichelberger, soph., Saginaw; Jaleel Hogan, sr., Mt. Pleasant; Don'Quall Jackson, sr., Holt; Tameron Williams-Baker, sr., Lansing Eastern

**CLASS B**

**Top teams statewide:** Detroit Country Day, Detroit Douglass, Milan, Wayland Union  
Country Day won the Class B state title last year, but change has come to the program. New coach Mark Bray is on the bench, and four starters are gone from last year. The Yellowjackets do return Edmond Sumner (6'4"), who is headed to Xavier University and is one of the top players in the state.

Detroit Douglass has a dynamic backcourt, with Darrell Davis (6'4") and Terrell Hales (6'2").

Milan has one of the top young teams in Class B. Junior guard Latin Davis (5'10") is a talented point guard, while Nick Perkins (6'7") is a dominating front court player.

Wayland Union has a talented one-two punch, with junior point guard Dillon Aten and junior power forward LJ James (6'7").

Team area teams: Alma, Big Rapids, Corunna, Flint Southwestern, Lansing Catholic, Millington, Portland, Williamston

Alma captured a district title last year, and plenty of talent returns this year. It has a deep team with good all-around athletic talent.

Big Rapids reached the Class B state quarterfinals last season before falling to Cadillac. The Cardinals return a number of key players this year, led by sharp-shooting senior guard Quinn Tyson, who can fill it up from three-point land. Senior guard Nick Baldwin also returns to the backcourt.

Corunna turned in a 17-4 record last year and, with the bulk of its key players back, is primed for another big season. Senior MJ Myles and junior Mikhail Myles (6'3") give the Cavaliers a dynamic one-two punch. Senior guard Josh Fattal is another talented backcourt player.

Flint Southwestern returns a talented squad this winter. Senior point guard Malik Young is a four-year veteran, while junior Jaire Grayer (6'5") is an explosive wing who can fill it up in a hurry.

Lansing Catholic returns a veteran crew with plenty of size. Senior David Poljan (6'8") is a force in the middle, while sophomore Tony Poljan (6'7") is a multi-talented forward who can hit from outside. Junior Matthew Fata (6'0") is a talented guard with experience.

Millington has the most talented team in the TV East and is poised for a breakout year. The Cardinals have a solid senior class, and junior guard Austin Levan (6'2") is one of the premier junior guards in the area. Levan averaged 20 points per game last year and is an outstanding all-around athlete.

Portland has a sizable lineup, led by 6'7" guard Brodie VanRyper. The Raiders also feature a sizable front line, with senior Zac Gustafson (6'6") and senior Jacob Pohl (6'5").

Williamston may have the top big man in the CAAC White in senior Tom Cotter (6'7"). Sophomore guard Riley Lewis is a talented backcourt player who gives the Hornets a productive one-two, inside-outside game.

Top area players: Tom Cotter, sr., Williamston; Tommie Henderson, sr., Carrollton; Austin LeVan, jr., Millington; Mikhail Myles, jr., Corunna; MJ Myles, sr., Corunna; Tony Poljan, soph., Lansing Catholic; Corey Townsend, soph., Powers Catholic; Quinn Tyson, sr., Big Rapids; Malik Young, sr., Flint Southwestern

**CLASS C**

**Top teams statewide:** Consortium College Preparatory, NorthPointe Christian, Mt. Clemens, Negaunee  
Consortium College Preparatory returns the premier sophomore in the state, Josh Jackson (6'6"). Jackson is a multi-dimensional player with big-time skills, who is considered one of

the top two sophomores in the entire nation.

NorthPointe Christian is a deep squad that is led by sharp-shooting senior guard Drew Zuidema. Senior Zach Baker (6'5") is a proven scorer in the paint, and the Mustangs will get a big lift from transfer Khadim Dieng (6'11"), who is coming from Oak Hill Academy in January.

Mt. Clemens is coming off a big season and has a dynamic backcourt in junior Josh McFolley and sensational freshman guard Jermaine Jackson, Jr.

Team area teams: Carson City-Crystal, Beecher, Hamady, Ithaca, Laingsburg, Merrill, Pewamo-Westphalia, Nouvel Catholic Central

Senior point guard Arron Haines leads the way for Carson City-Crystal this year.

Beecher has captured the last two Class C state titles, but adding a third will be difficult. Graduation hit the Buccaneers hard and includes the loss of Mr. Basketball, Monte Morris, who is now at Iowa State University. However, sophomore Aquavius Burks (6'3") is a good player around whom to build, as he made a big impact last year.

Hamady has another athletic team that will make a charge from the Flint area. Jamil Demps and Jalen Fykes lead the way for the Hawks.

The good times in Ithaca don't end when football season concludes. The Yellowjacket boys basketball team went 13-1 and won the Tri-Valley Conference West last year. With plenty of talent back, another big year is in the cards. A trio of starters return, led by all-conference forward Logan Hessbrook (6'4"). Senior guard Eli Villalobos (5'9") also returns, as does athletic senior forward Travis Smith (6'2"). Add transfer Josh Hafner and sophomore Jacob Smith, and the ingredients for a big season of Ithaca basketball are in place.

Laingsburg suffered heavy graduation losses from a squad that came within a point of winning the state title last year. The Wolfpack have some talented juniors to rebuild around this year, led by junior guard Ryan Wade.

Merrill is looking for a big season, thanks to some tall front court players. Hunter DeBeau (6'7") gives the Vandals a big presence in the post, while Tyler Aldrich (6'4") and Austin Glazier (6'3") add more size at forward.

Pewamo-Westphalia suffered some heavy graduation losses, but an outstanding senior trio will keep it among the state's elite Class C teams. Senior guard Nitck Spitzley averaged 19 points per game and is being heavily recruited by a number of GLIAC schools. Senior guard Adam Wesley is another outstanding backcourt player. The Pirates also have an outstanding big man in senior Lane Simon (6'5"), who is a strong rebounder who can score in the paint.

Nouvel Catholic Central returns all five starters from last year's squad. It is a deep squad with plenty of versatility and is led by Garrett Graham, Nate Grapiel, Chris Rybinski, and Tyler Jacqmain.

Top area players: Aquavius Burks, soph., Beecher; Arron Haines, sr., Carson City-Crystal; Logan Hessbrook, sr., Ithaca; Lane Simon, sr., Pewamo-Westphalia; Nick Spitzley, sr., Pewamo-Westphalia; Ryan Wade, jr., Laingsburg; Adam Wesley, sr., Pewamo-Westphalia

**CLASS D**

**Top teams statewide:** Inter-City Baptist, North Central, Southfield Christian, Tri-Unity Christian

Inter-City Baptist from Allen Park has been a Class D power for years and has another solid squad led by senior guard Evan Kraatz.

North Central looks to be the power out of the Upper Peninsula this season.

Southfield Christian has won the past two Class D state titles. With a talented backcourt led by Lindsay Hunter (6'0") and Bakari Evelyn (6'1") and a talented front court, it will be the favorite to make it three in a row.

Tri-Unity Christian suffered some heavy graduation losses but will develop into another solid outfit by the end of the season.

Top area teams: Fowler, Fulton, Lansing Christian, Sacred Heart Academy, New Lothrop  
Fowler was hit hard by graduation, but with junior guard Austin Cook (5'11"), the Eagles will still be dangerous. Senior forward Joe Smith also returns.

Fulton turned in a 17-5 mark last season. With four all-conference players back, another strong season is in the cards. Senior guard Dalton Trefil (5'9") earned all-state honors last year, while sophomore guard Colton Antes (5'10") is an outstanding all-around player. Senior Nathan Davis (6'2") and junior Gregg Jones (6'2") bring talent to the front court.

Lansing Christian is paced by standout senior guard Jordan Terry (5'10") but will have to find replacements for key players who graduated.

Sacred Heart Academy has a dominating front line. Seniors Brooks Hyble (6'6") and Kevin Gamble (6'6") are a dominating pair of forwards.

New Lothrop will have another talented, athletic squad. Kyle White is an accurate outside shooter, while Brandon Green can also score points.

Top area players: Colton Antes, soph., Fulton; Austin Cook, sr., Fowler; Kevin Gamble, sr., Sacred Heart Academy; Brooks Hyble, sr., Sacred Heart Academy; Griffin Lewis, sr., Morrice; Jordan Terry, sr., Lansing Christian; Dalton Trefil, sr., Fulton; Kyle White, sr., New Lothrop.



The Saginaw High boys basketball team will look to make its third consecutive trip to the Breslin Center, but will have to go through a very tough Saginaw Arthur Hill team if it plans to make it back to the Class A state finals. Arthur Hill is loaded this season with numerous D1 players returning. (Tom Reynolds Photo)



After winning its fourth consecutive Division 6 football championship the Ithaca boys basketball team has all the tools and athletes to make a run at a possible Class C basketball title this season. (Randy Miniard Photos)

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**Boys swimming preview**



Alma's Broderic Bender celebrates his third place finish in the butterfly during the Division 3 state finals a year ago. Bender has graduated, but Alma sees growth heading into the season. (Staff Photo)

**Alma seeks progress**

Butch Harmon  
Sports Scene

It will be a learning experience for the Alma boys swimming team this year. With a roster loaded with freshmen and sophomores, the Panthers will be looking for growth and improvement as the season progresses.

"I think we will have some fun this year," veteran Alma coach Jeff Huxley said. "We have a lot of kids who are early into their swimming careers, which is also where they tend to enjoy their biggest improvement. All of them have been training pretty hard."

When it comes to experience, the Panthers are on the low end of the scale at this time. "Our average experience level is .7 years," Huxley said. "We have two junior/senior level kids right now, and one of those kids is new. The rest of the team is freshmen and sophomores, and most of them do not have an age-group swimming background."

Sophomore Brevan Bender leads the way for the Panthers this year. He specializes in the butterfly and backstroke. The Panthers also return junior Mason Molesky and sophomores Rees Wimmer, Kolton Kovac, and Todd Lovas.

"We have a lot of potential," Huxley said, "but you don't turn potential into production overnight. We are going to be a work in progress."

Alma finished 20th at the Division 3 state meet last year.

Ionia finished 12th at last year's D3 meet and returns a pair of state placers off that team. Senior Skyler Fish was second in the backstroke and fourth in the 100 freestyle. The Bulldogs also return senior Patrick Wood and sophomore diver Riese Penn.

Mason returns a pair of state placers in senior Corbin Shuler (50 free and 100 butterfly) and senior Brandon Stetler (breaststroke/IM).

DeWitt placed third in the CAAC Blue last year and returns senior Dan Schroeder (IM/freestyle) and junior diver Arthur Hill.

Corunna will be looking for improvement this season behind senior distance swimmer Caleb Barnes and senior backstroke Christian Bitterman.

**DIVISION 1**

Rockford finished fourth at last year's Division 1 state meet. While the Rams graduated a number of key swimmers,

the cupboard is never bare, and plenty of talent returns this year. Senior Craig Wasberg earned all-state honors in a pair of events last year, as he took eighth place in both the 100 butterfly and the 100 backstroke. The Rams also return a pair of divers who placed in the top ten at the state meet in senior Shane Phillips (4th) and sophomore Jake Herremans (9th). Senior Jacob Davis (100 fly and relays) also returns. Juniors Timmer Hoffmeister (100 fly and backstroke) and David Newberger (200 IM and 100 breaststroke) also return as do sophomores Jacob Fase (200 free and 500 free) and Corbin Bremmyr (50 free).

Grand Ledge placed second in the CAAC Blue last year and will be challenging for the league title once again. The Comets will be paced by senior Zinghao Wang, who placed fourth in the 200 IM and sixth in the 100 breaststroke at last year's state meet. Senior Tommy Sereseroz (200 and 500 free) is a key distance swimmer returning.

**DIVISION 2**

Midland Dow placed fifth as a team at the Division 2 meet last year. It returns a number of solid swimmers from that squad. Sophomores Nehemiah Mork (100 free), Zach Hoffman (200 IM), Nick Pixton (100 back), and Kevin White (500 free) will be among the team leaders this season.

Heritage has a strong nucleus of swimmers back. Junior Logan Yearham placed sixth in the 100 breaststroke at the state meet. The Hawks also return senior Elliott Plummer (100 and 200 freestyle).

Fenton will be a factor in Division 2 this year. The Tigers return seniors Brad Cassidy (50 and 100 free) and Mike Banner (500 free).

Okemos won the CAAC Blue last year and placed eighth at the D2 state meet. The Chieftains return senior Ian Poland, who finished fifth in the state in the 100 butterfly and 15th in the 200 freestyle. Seniors Jake Seeterlin (100 fly and 200 free) and Mitch Fountain (100 backstroke) also return.

St. Johns placed 14th as a team at last year's state meet. The Red Wings welcome back senior diver Jared Gregory, who placed eighth at state a year ago. Junior Brad Garmyr (100 breaststroke and 200 IM) is another key returnee.

**Boys & Girls bowling preview**

**Area teams look to return to state finals**

Winter means plenty of activity at bowling lanes across the state, with high school keglers working to be at their best for the state finals.

**DIVISION 1**

**Teams to watch statewide:** boys—Jackson, Mona Shores, Salem, Heritage; girls—Davison, Macomb Dakota, Walled Lake Central

**Top local teams:** boys—Heritage; girls—Davison

**Preview:** boys—Todd Hare of Heritage would like to think that his team, which was state runner-up last year, can go all the way this season. "We always set two goals every season, and that is to win our conference (SVL) and to qualify for states," he said. "I know we can have a great team, but it will take hard work and dedication by every member of our team to achieve our goals."

**Top players in state:** boys—Brad Wozniak, Traverse City Central; Alex Zarbaugh, Belleville; girls—Barbara Lawson, Grand Ledge

**Top local players:** Tyler Scott, Ben Kastros, Derrick Norman, Morris Pruitt, Heritage

**State finals prediction:** boys—Heritage over Jackson; girls—Walled Lake Central over Macomb Dakota

**DIVISION 2**

**Teams to watch statewide:** boys—John Glenn, Lapeer West, Sturgis; girls—Ionia, Northwest, Charlotte, Bay City Western

**Top local teams:** boys—John Glenn, Charlotte, Bay City Western; girls—Ionia, Charlotte, Bay City Western

**Preview:** Lapeer West looks strong for the boys, but John Glenn will have something to



Ithaca's Joe Whitaker and Chelsea MacLennan are two returning bowlers that are expected to continue the Yellowjackets success on the lanes this season. Meanwhile Portland St. Pats will try to duplicate its semifinals appearance from a year ago in the Division 4 finals. (Scott Keyes and Kevin Gregory Photos)

say about it. Ionia and Bay City Western are two strong teams for the girls.

**Top players in state:** boys—Alex Ouelette, John Glenn; Collin Fox, Charlotte

**Top local players:** boys—Alex Ouelette, John Glenn; Collin Fox, Charlotte; girls—Claudia Gielda, Bay City Western

**State finals prediction:** boys—Lapeer West over John Glenn; girls—Ionia over Bay City Western

**DIVISION 3**

**Teams to watch statewide:** boys—Corunna, South Haven, Fremont; girls—Pennfield, Flat Rock, Ishpeming

**Top local teams:** boys—Birch Run, Freeland; girls—Ovid-Elsie, Swan Valley, Belding

**Preview:** It should be a competitive division for both boys and girls. Corunna, Fremont, and South Haven hope to go for the top boys' spot, and Pennfield and Flat



We have three seniors back for a strong team and should do well in conference, regionals, and states, plus tournaments.

**Top players in state:** boys—Sam Brandt, Fremont; girls—Adrianna Jackson, Caro

**Top local players:** boys—Cody Bodrie, Garber; girls—Hannah Chase, Alma

**State finals prediction:** boys—Fremont over South Haven; girls—Flat Rock over Pennfield

**DIVISION 4**

**Teams to watch statewide:** boys—Jonesville, Rogers City, Sandusky; girls—Ithaca, Calvin Christian, Vandercook Lake, Sandusky

**Top local teams:** boys—Alma, Ithaca, St. Louis; girls—Ithaca, Sandusky

**Top players in state:** boys—Bailey Budnik, Rogers City; girls—Rebecca Bannasch, Rogers City

**Top local players:** boys—Zach Fenby, St. Louis; girls—Meghan Ludu, Hemlock

**State finals prediction:** boys—Rogers City over Sandusky; girls—Sandusky over Ithaca

Rock could take home the honor for girls.

Matt Fabus coaches both boys' and girls' Ovid-Elsie teams and likes their prospects. For the boys, "we should place first or second in the conference, do well in regionals, to make it to states," he said. "We have three seniors back and should have a strong season."

"The girls were 9-1 for first in the conference, second in regionals, 10th in team state.

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# Title hopes up for grabs for area cheer teams

The goal for all teams is to get a shot to compete in March at the state finals at Grand Rapids' Delta Plex. Michigan Center should win another Division 4 title. The other three are up for grabs.

## Cheer Preview

**Teams to watch statewide:** Hartland, Rochester Hills, Southgate Anderson  
**Top local team:** Rockford  
**Preview:** Renee Dengler's Rockford team nearly went to the state finals last winter. "This team is back to win," she said. "They are working really hard to continue where we left off last year, and I am looking forward to watching this team improve every time we take the mat."

**Top local players:** Katlin Castor and Kelsea Buchanan of Rockford.

### DIVISION 2

**Teams to watch statewide:** Allen Park, Gibraltar Carlson, Divine Child, Mount Pleasant

**Top local teams:** DeWitt, Mount Pleasant

**Preview:** Divine Child's coach Amber

Genevich is confident that this will be her team's season. "I have several key athletes this year... I have some athletes who have been on the team all four years, Emily Penny and Emily Kiefer. They are in all three rounds. We have a different mindset this year and are ready to achieve that title we've been striving for year after year."

**Coach Danielle Jokela** has had five state title winners and one runner-up in her eight years of coaching at Gibraltar Carlson, which took first at all regular season meets last season.

**Alicia Rudoni** has coached three years at Mount Pleasant, and her team was third in the state last season. She said a goal for this season is "to surpass the success that we had last year and to meet all of our team goals. The returning girls from last season are a strong foundation for our team with great leadership from our captains."

**Top players in state:** Emily Kiefer and Emily Penny of Divine Child

### DIVISION 3

**Teams to watch statewide:** Richmond, Notre Dame Preparatory, Comstock Park



Swan Valley senior Kiersten Mead is a key member of the Vikings team that will look to find success in Division 3. (Scott Keyes Photo)

**Top local teams:** Lakewood, Ovid-Elsie

**Preview:** Heritage coach Christa Klosterman is looking for her team to be improved in tumbling this season. "Madeline Drake is a junior leading

the team this year. She works hard at every practice and is very committed to making herself a better team member," Klosterman said.

**Top local players:** Madeline Drake, Heritage

### DIVISION 4

**Teams to watch statewide:** Hudson, Michigan Center

**Top local teams:** Merrill, Pewamo-Westphalia

**Preview:** Jessica Trefry is expected to have another state championship contender at Michigan Center. "The teams in and around Jackson are getting stronger every year, and they will produce more state contenders in the very near future," Trefry said. "My team has been very successful, and I would love to recognize my athletes more for the successes they have. I have three seniors that are three-time state champions and now in their senior year are contending for one more. What an amazing story these girls have with the possibility of ending their career as four-time state champions. There are very few out there that get to say that. Yet that is their goal, and they are determined to achieve it."

# Area skiers looking forward to strong seasons

The state ski finals will be held February 24 at Schuss Mountain (Division 1) and Nub's Nob (Division 2). (Alan Holben Photo)



### DIVISION 1

**Teams to watch statewide:** boys--Clarkston, Marquette, Traverse City Central; girls-- Traverse City Central, Traverse City West

**Top local teams:** boys--Rockford, Heritage; girls--Rockford, Heritage

**Preview:** Heritage will be the top local team in this division for both boys and girls. It looks to compete for the Central Alpine ski conference title. Tom Yura is the team's top prospect. He ran cross country in the fall to get in shape for skiing.

**State finals prediction:** boys--Marquette over Traverse City Central; girls--Traverse City Central, Traverse City West, Walled Lake Central

### DIVISION 2

**Teams to watch statewide:** boys--Petoskey,

Cranbrook; girls--Harbor Springs, Petoskey  
**Top local teams:** boys--Clare, Greenville, Mount Pleasant, Okemos; girls--Mount Pleasant, Okemos

**Preview:** Petoskey coach Erik Lundteigen is confident that his team can again compete for a state title with all-staters like Garret Lundteigen and Trever Kingsbury returning. The boys' and girls' teams both won state crowns last year

Clare's boys have been Central Alpine Ski Conference champions in the past and should be strong again.

**Top skiers in state:** boys--Grant Lundteigen, Trever Kingsburg of Petoskey; girls--Mia Ciccoretta of Petoskey

**State finals prediction:** boys--Petoskey over Cranbrook; girls--Harbor Springs over Petoskey

## Skiing Preview



The Saginaw High boys basketball team has aspirations of making it back to the Breslin Center for the third year in a row in Class A. Led by sophomore Algevon Eichelberger (No. 42) and seniors Keyon Addison and Jerry Smith the Trojans are loaded with depth and talent and should compete with Arthur Hill for the Saginaw Valley League championship this season. (Scott Keyes Photo)

# Saginaw High back for more in Class A

Butch Harmon  
Sports Scene

The Saginaw High School boys basketball team is on a mission.

After winning the Class A state title in 2012, the Trojans fell to Detroit Southeastern in the state semifinals last year. Not only does Saginaw want to get back to the Breslin Center this March, but it also wants to take home the grand prize again.

"Oh yes, we want to get back," senior point guard Keyon Addison said. "Our goal is always to get to the Breslin, and not just get there, but make it to the second day and win it all. That is always our goal."

Winning a Class A state basketball title in Michigan is never easy, but the Trojans have the players that can make it happen, starting with Addison.

"Keyon is real focused," head coach Julian Taylor said. "He is a real vocal leader, and he also leads by example. He understands what the team needs to be

successful, and that is to play in attack mode. Both on offense and on defense."

Utilizing their speed and quickness on both ends of the floor is a key to success for the Trojans. "Our strong point is our tempo," Addison said. "We want to push the ball and create more opportunity to score."

Addison is joined in the backcourt by freshman guard Ronquavious Southward.

"We expect big things out of Ronquavious," Taylor said. "He's pretty explosive with the ball."

Saginaw also has outstanding players in the front court. Senior Jerry Smith (6'4") returns along with sophomore Algevon Eichelberger (6'7").

"Jerry is real solid for us," Taylor said. "Algevon is also a lot stronger this year. He has been finishing real strong around the basket, and he continues to block shots on defense. His strength also allows him to keep his balance more. He's staying on his feet and is able to get the offensive rebounds if he does miss a shot."

As always, Saginaw will be battling it out with

crosstown rival Arthur Hill for the Saginaw Valley Conference championship and then in the district tournament.

"We always have great games with them, but our focus is on one game at a time," Taylor said. "We have a tough schedule with a lot of tough non-league games that will get us prepared for the tournament. We play Detroit Douglass, Detroit Consortium, Gary Bowan, Romulus, and Detroit Henry Ford. It's a real tough schedule, and we need to take it one game at a time."

If the Trojans take care of business, they certainly have the squad capable of reaching their ultimate goal. "Our potential is sky high," Addison said. "All we have to do is come to practice and work hard and listen to coach, and that will take us all the way."

Taylor also believes that is possible. "I feel we have the team to make a successful tournament run," he said. "Our goal is to get back to the Breslin. We need to play and practice hard and continue to work and stay humble, and things will fall into place."

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# Laingsburg seeks encore performance



The Laingsburg boys basketball team nearly pulled off one of the biggest upsets in the history of the MHSAA tournament a year ago losing to Mr. Basketball Monte Morris and Flint Beecher 40-39. Right: Back for Laingsburg is junior Cole Franks (No. 42) who is expected to be a key contributor for the Wolfpack this season. (Alan Holben and Scott Keyes Photos)

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

After turning in a season to remember last winter, what will the Laingsburg basketball team do for an encore this season?

Last year, the Wolfpack turned in a thrilling tournament run that culminated in a spot in the Class C state championship game, where they dropped a 40-39 thriller to Beecher. Laingsburg finished the season with a 24-3 overall record and placed second in the CMAC with a 15-1 mark.

While a number of key players from that team have graduated, veteran coach Greg Mitchell has plenty of talent returning and is excited to build on last year's success. "Last year was certainly rewarding and exciting," he said. "Obviously, ending the year in the State Final game, with a chance to win it on the final possession, was a monumental accomplishment for our team and our program. Even though we lack experience and size this year, I'm hopeful we will dig down and find a way to reach our potential and make this a rewarding year. We have a long way to go, but I believe if we commit to playing the right way, we have a chance at getting there."

Four players return from last year's team, led by junior guard Ryan Wade (5'9"). A second-team all-CMAC selection as a sophomore, Wade started on last year's team, including in the state title game.

Laingsburg was solid in the backcourt, and it again looks to have a collection of strong guards. Senior guard/forward Matt Cyrus (6'1") is an excellent three-point shooter. Senior Adam Wickham (6'0") is a solid defensive guard.

Junior Cole Franks (6'0") is another talented guard who is returning. Franks, who was moved up to varsity during the tournament run, was the top player on the junior varsity team last year. He is an excellent scorer, who had a season-high 43 points against Fowler on the junior

varsity level.

"We should get very solid guard play out of Wade, Cyrus, and Franks," Mitchell said. "I think our young guys will be able to step up and give us very good contributions both defensively and offensively. It just may take time."

Franks is just one of several talented players up from the junior varsity who are poised to make an impact this season.

Junior Grant Young (6'3") is an athletic forward with very good rebounding skills. Junior forward Jagger Richard (6'2") is another strong rebounder.

The Wolfpack also have a pair of sophomores up from junior varsity who will be key additions up front. Forward Jake Rouse (6'3") is a heady player who is very active and is a good offensive rebounder. Josiah Hayes (6'2") is an athletic guard/forward who offers versatility. He is a good shooter and is also effective slashing to the basket.

A lack of size and overall experience are a couple hurdles that need to be overcome this season.

"Our biggest concerns are our lack of quality varsity experience and depth as well as a lack of size," Mitchell said. "Bigger teams could give us some challenging matchups, however, I still think our guard play, if it reaches its potential, could cause a lot of problems for our opponents."

Mitchell anticipates another interesting season in the CMAC and believes that the Wolfpack can be in the thick of the title hunt. "Pewamo-Westphalia will be a very strong favorite, and then the league will be pretty wide open after that," he said. "For us, we are trying to survive several injuries as we bring along a very inexperienced, young team. I expect us to be extremely competitive and to collectively reach our potential as the season progresses. I'm excited about how committed our young players are and how hard they are working to fill the void following the graduation of an outstanding senior class last year."



# Franks, junior class strong

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

While the Laingsburg football team just missed qualifying for the playoffs this year, the future looks bright for the Wolfpack, with players like junior Cole Franks coming back next season.

Franks, a 6'1", 160-pound wide receiver/defensive back, was voted Laingsburg's team MVP this season and was also a first-team all-CMAC wide receiver. He led the Wolfpack in receiving, as he caught 33 passes for 754 yards (22.8 yards/reception average) and six touchdowns. Franks had 873 all-purpose yards this year and scored eight total touchdowns. Defensively, he totaled 27 tackles and intercepted three passes.

"Cole is a very talented athlete," Laingsburg coach Brian Borgman said. "He has tremendous speed and agility. We test our players on their speed in the 40-, pro-agility, and L-drills, and Cole had the fastest time out of anyone in the program."

Cole helped the Wolfpack to a 4-5 overall record this year. Laingsburg improved as the season went on and finished the campaign with three wins in a row.

"Our passing game improved as the season went on, and

we look at the last three wins we had to close the season as leading into next year," Franks said. "We have a lot of juniors coming back, and the sophomores coming up have been successful. These classes have been successful in the past. We lost some close games this year, and that kept us out of the playoffs, and our goal next year is to make the playoffs."

Franks knows what it takes to have a successful team, as he was part of Laingsburg's basketball team that made it to the Class C state championship game last season. The leading scorer on the junior varsity team, Franks was called up to the varsity last year for the final quarter of the regular season and for the state tournament. "It was an unbelievable experience," he said. "We were all like brothers last year, and we played as one. It was something I will never forget."

Franks is part of a strong junior class that is teaming up with some talented sophomores to keep the Wolfpack basketball team rolling this year.

"Cole is a very skilled and talented basketball player as well as football player," Borgman said. "As good of an athlete as he is, he is an even better person. He is charming and well-respected by his teachers. He is a well-rounded, humble, and great young man."

# DeWitt girls start season with win over Comets

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

While many teams usually need a few games at the beginning of a new season to get into the flow, the DeWitt girls basketball team hit the floor running.

Playing two of their biggest rivals in the first three games of the new season, the Panthers sent the message that they can play with anyone.

After an opening-game win against Lansing Everett, DeWitt faced non-league rival Grand Ledge, the No.-1 ranked team in the state in Class A and a team that defeated the Panthers last season. DeWitt came ready to play and not only defeated the Comets but also claimed a double-digit, 62-51, win.

"For us, we put all the rankings aside," DeWitt coach Bill McCullen said. "This was a game we lost last year, and they beat us pretty handily. The kids were pretty motivated during the off-

season to want to get back at a couple of people who thumped us last year."

The Panthers utilized a balanced attack to defeat Grand Ledge, with senior Hannah Stoll leading the way with 19 points and 10 rebounds, while junior guard Claudia Reid added 13 points, and senior point guard Natalie Knauf added 12 points.

"We hit the boards hard and out-rebounded them" McCullen said. "We also shot the ball well and made our free throws down the stretch."

DeWitt followed up the Grand Ledge win by defeating East Lansing, a team that has been a thorn in DeWitt's side the past several years, 73-39.

"That was another big win," McCullen said. "They have had our number for a while. The last time we beat them was 2005, so it was a nice win for us. Last year, they beat us by 20 points at our place, so it was a nice road win for us."

Junior Abby Nakfoor led the Panthers with 15 points.

In the opening win against Everett, senior Lexi Banaszak led the team in scoring and finished with a double-double in points and rebounds.

"We have a lot of kids who can step up on any given night," McCullen said. "A lot of it depends on the matchups and situations of the team we are playing."

The tough games continue to come for the Panthers, who have games against Eaton Rapids, one of the higher-ranked teams in Class B, and league rival Ionia coming up.

"We have our work cut out for us this year," McCullen said. "Not just in our non-league games, but our league is real competitive, too. Haslett has everyone back and is one of the top teams in the area, and St. Johns and Ionia are very competitive as well. You can't afford to have a letdown in our league on any night."

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