

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE
KEEPING KIDS IN THE NEWS

555 E Downie St
Alma, MI 48801
(517) 202-1808

www.highschoolsportsscene.com

- Publisher**
Randy Miniard
randy@highschoolsportsscene.com
517-202-1808
- High School Liaison**
Paul Hornak
paul@highschoolsportsscene.com
989-331-1168
- Northern Michigan Sales**
Scott Salowich
ssalowich@yahoo.com
313-408-4410
- Sales**
Patricia A. Rempp
patriciaremp@gmail.com
989-620-4600
Caleb Walden
waldenc24@gmail.com
989-436-3825
- Editorial**
John Raffel, David Cook,
Dan Strickrandt, Butch Harmon,
Scott Salowich, Ben Murphy,
Nate Schneider, Scott Keyes
- Photographers**
Chuck Prikasky, Doug Bargerstock,
Zip Widman, Russ Pierce,
Morgan Taylor, Skip Traynor,
Dana McCann, Bob Campbell,
Gary Williams, Don Goostrey,
Kim Larner, Yolanda Hayward

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HIGH SCHOOL ACTIVITIES BRING COMMUNITIES TOGETHER

By Bob Gardner, Executive Director of the National Federation of State High School Associations and Jack Roberts, Executive Director of the Michigan High School Athletic Association

Tailgates. Pep rallies. Friday night lights. The new school year is here! And that's exciting news for student-athletes and high school sports fans alike.

Research shows that being a student-athlete is about a lot more than fun and games. It teaches important life lessons, too. In fact, high school athletes not only have higher grade point averages and fewer school absences than non-athletes, they also develop the kind of work habits and self-discipline skills that help them become more responsible and productive community members.

Attending high school sporting events teaches important life lessons, too.

Among them, it teaches that we can live in different communities, come from different backgrounds, faiths and cultures, cheer for different teams, and still have a common bond.

That's why attending the activities hosted by your high school this fall is so important. It's not only an opportunity to cheer for your hometown team, it is also an opportunity to celebrate our commonality. And that's something our country needs right now.

The bond we share is mutually supporting the teenagers in our respective communities. We applaud their persistence, tenacity, preparation and hard work, regardless of the color of the uniform they wear. We acknowledge that education-based, high school sports are enhancing their lives, and ours, in ways that few other activities could. And we agree that, regardless of what side of the field we sit on, attending a high school sporting event is an uplifting, enriching, family-friendly experience for all of us.

Many of the high schools in our state lie at the heart of the communities they serve. They not only are educating our next generation of leaders, they also are a place where we congregate, where people from every corner of town and all walks of life come together as one. And at no time is this unity more evident than during a high school athletic event.

This is the beginning of a new school year. Opportunities abound in the classroom and outside it. Let's make the most of them by attending as many athletic events at the high school in our community as possible.

Turn on the lights, and let the games begin!



Bob Gardner
Executive Director of the National Federation of State High School Associations



Jack Roberts
Executive Director of the Michigan High School Athletic Association



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Quite A Story: Kenyon Reflects On Breckenridge's Turnaround Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Kenyon Story is a talented football player at Breckenridge, who had a remarkable season for a remarkable gridiron team in 2016.

What does 2017 have in store? The prospects are intriguing for Story and his teammates and fans.

Story was named to the Associated Press Division 7 and 8 team All-State team. He had 74 tackles and 10 sacks for a team that was 9-0 in 2016, a year after going 0-9. It was the first time in the MHSAA playoff era since 1975 a team went from winless to undefeated during the regular season.

Story has been carrying a 4.0 grade point average but his football stats have been impressive with 6-4, 280 pounds.

He's at defensive line and offensive tackle as a two-way starter. It's his third varsity season.

"My sophomore year, we didn't do very good at 0-9," he said. "Last year we went pretty good and lost in the first round in the playoffs. Everybody worked really hard in the offseason."

The loss was 21-6 to Saginaw Nouvel in the playoffs. The season opened with a 38-29 win over Houghton Lake. There was a big MSAC win over Sacred Heart 40-32 in week three.

All nine wins for the Huskies were memorable, especially a 12-0 rivalry win over Merrill.

Story prides himself on how he pursues the ball as a defensive end. His speed comes in handy.

"Most of my tackles come from pursuit," he said. "Most of my tackles come from the other side of the field."

Despite the loss to Nouvel in the playoffs, Story had an impressive game with 20 tackles.

Story is excited for 2017.

"We'll be pretty good," he said. "We lost a lot

but we have a lot coming up," he said.

His role on defense will be the same, but he hopes to do more for the Huskies.

"I've gotten stronger and faster, and a little bit smarter," he said. "I want to get to the quarterback better."

Beaverton in the season opener, plus Sacred Heart will be tough opponents.

Kris Robinson is Story's coach.

"He had a breakout year," Robinson said. "As a sophomore, he was a very good player. He really took some big strides last year. You look at the Nouvel game and he had those 29 tackles. I can't say enough about him. He's a great leader in the lockerroom. He's a great asset for us. He had a good (offseason) in the weight room. He worked hard. I'm excited about his potential this year."



Kenyon Story play a huge role on both sides of the football this season for Breckenridge. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Ithaca's Logan Hessbrook Hoping To See Field During First Season With Chips

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

Ithaca native Logan Hessbrook had a huge decision to make three years ago and went with his gut instinct, opting to transfer from Saginaw Valley State after his freshman year to play football at Central Michigan University.

After bidding his time and sitting out a season due to NCAA transfer rules, Hessbrook enjoyed spring ball knowing all the time and energy put in was finally going to pay off with an opportunity to play meaningful snaps in the 2017 Maroon and Gold Spring Game.

He certainly made the most of his chance.

Hessbrook hauled in four passes including a touchdown while setting up another late score, nearly helping the Maroon rally back in what ended as a 21-20 loss to the Gold squad.

"It was a lot of fun today," Hessbrook said to The Mount Pleasant

Morning Sun following the scrimmage. "Going through the transfer process at Saginaw Valley and then having to sit out a year, that was really tough on me mentally because I was preparing physically just like all the other guys. So to get out here for the spring game, have a good day and see a great fan turnout was perfect. I had a blast playing football today."

Hessbrook was a standout three-sport athlete at Ithaca High School, memorably filling in at quarterback during the 2012 Division 6 state championship game after starter Travis Smith injured his shoulder.

A usual wide receiver, Hessbrook guided the Yellowjackets to a 41-22 victory over Clinton for what was the third of four straight state championships for the program.

Hessbrook began to excel at Saginaw Valley State as a freshman, but ended up breaking his collarbone midseason and it ended

up being the last he would play for the Cardinals. The avenues opened at Central Michigan and he decided transferring would be best for his future.

"Central Michigan wanted me to greyshirt here out of high school," Hessbrook explained. "I chose to go to Saginaw Valley State instead. I thought it was a better choice. But after the injury and everything, I talked with my family about different things and what I want to do with my future. Central Michigan is 20 minutes away, so having the opportunity to come here and play for [head coach John Bonamego] and [tight ends coach Sherrone Moore] was the best thing that ever happened for me."

The junior Hessbrook was expected to be a backup to All-MAC senior tight end Tyler Conklin (42 catches, 560 yards, 6 TDs), but it was announced a couple weeks into camp the latter underwent surgery for a broken foot and is out indefinitely.

Now it will be Hessbrook along with senior Zach Crouch, fellow

junior Jonathan Carson and converted senior running back Jay Roberson who will pick up the slack in Conklin's absence.

Hessbrook modeled his work ethic after Conklin during the year he sat out.

"I'd say the biggest thing I learned was from Tyler Conklin by watching his practice film and game film," Hessbrook stated. "I did a lot of film studies over the summer and in the winter. Through all that, it really got me ready. By the time I got on the field this spring, everything kind of slowed down a little bit. Last spring, it was moving fast and everything was chaotic for me. Not anymore."

Bonamego spoke admirably to The Morning Sun and other reporters following the spring game about not only Hessbrook's on-field ability, but also his character.

"First of all, he's an unbelievable person," Bonamego said about Hessbrook. "He's ultra-hard working, passionate and a very good student. He is your model student-athlete in a lot of ways. He's always looking to do more and never trying to get out of anything."

Central Michigan opens the season August 31 when it hosts Rhode Island at 7 p.m.



Former Ithaca product Logan Hessbrook is expected to see playing time this season for Central Michigan University at tight end. (Submitted Photo)

He comes from a great program right down the road where they have a great tradition and are used to winning. I'm really happy he's with us and looking forward to it."

Central Michigan opens the season August 31 when it hosts Rhode Island at 7 p.m.

Let's Put In The Work HSSS Bringing You The Best High School Coverage In Michigan

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

Over the last 12 years, I had a comfortable gig as a sportswriter for The Morning Sun in Mount Pleasant.

When I first joined the newspaper's sports team, it was a six-man staff with three full-time writers and three stringers. But in the changing dynamic of the newspaper industry, the number of bodies was eventually trimmed down to three and a couple years ago it became a two-man team along with a budget for stringer help.

Along the way I helped with coverage of our 18 high schools in the area, while I spent many years as the beat writer for Alma College while also helping with Central Michigan athletics. In 2012, I became the beat writer for CMU

football plus men's basketball and baseball in addition to my responsibilities in covering prep sports.

Being the beat writer for a Division I school was an incredible experience, allowing me to travel to bowl games and the MAC Tournament plus covering athletes who had incredible stories to tell. The memories will last forever and I've developed plenty of relationships with student-athletes, coaches and faculty that are cherished.

But in late June, my job was eliminated as Digital First Media opted to cut The Morning Sun Sports team down to a one-man staff. I'm not sure how it will work going forward and it's not my decision, nor am I here to criticize it. The company did what it felt was best for business.

Wanting to stay in the journalism industry, I looked at my op-

tions and it didn't take long before one fell into my lap.

I was asked by Randy Miniard if I had any interest in helping out with High School Sports Scene coverage in mid-Michigan. After explaining I was hoping to relocate to Oakland County, the idea was formulated to expand HSSS into Oakland and Livingston Counties.

After deliberating my future over the next day, I realized this was too good of an offer to turn down. Having the opportunity to cover the caliber of student-athlete down here is a whole new ballgame and an exciting new chapter for my writing career.

Over the last couple weeks, I've had the chance to meet a good number of coaches and athletes who have all been entirely welcoming. It's great to know that a newbie in this area can receive the same respect as more recognizable media who have been covering Oakland and Livingston Counties for many more years.

There are 70 high schools with athletics in Oakland County alone, making this a challenge to try and put the focus on as many athletes and teams as possible each month.



But we're going to do our best.

I'll be teaming with Dan Stickradt for coverage, which is a huge help because he's been a sportswriter in Oakland County for 20 years and knows this area like the back of his hand.

In this publication alone, I've spotlighted a bunch of student-athletes who have already verbally committed to a Division I university or are in the process of deciding on which D-I program best fits their needs.

It's across the board with every sport in southeast Michigan, the big-time talent is not difficult to find. Typically, it is right in front of

your eyes at any given time.

Over the upcoming weeks and months, I'll be at games and practices to get stories plus shooting pictures for photo galleries. I'm looking forward to meeting everyone along the way.

We are committed at High School Sports Scene to 'keeping kids in the news', something that newspaper companies have struggled with over the last decade or so.

I'm glad to be part of a growing product that will continue to serve as the go-to source for high school athletics for many communities in Michigan.

Let's do this.

Life After Mann Begins For Dow

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

The Bruce Mann era is in the past at Midland Dow.

A standout quarterback for the Chargers the last two seasons, Mann helped pave the way to a combined 19-4 record and a 2015 Division 2 district championship.

Mann helped continue the recent

successes Midland Dow football has had, with playoff appearances each of the last four years. Prior to that, the Chargers had qualified for the postseason only eight times during the MHSAA playoff era and never more than two seasons in a row.

To the program's credit, it does own a state championship as the 1976 squad downed Lincoln Park and Farmington Hills Harrison in a pair of close games to win the Class A trophy.

But until recent years, Dow has struggled to keep a consistently good product on the field.

Mann, who is now entering his freshman year as a Saginaw Valley State University quarterback, is a big reason why.

The prolific passing ability of Mann was on display

during his junior year as he threw for 2,934 yards with 37 touchdowns and nine interceptions, while rushing for 680 yards and 10 TDs. Midland Dow finished the year 10-2, defeating Fenton 41-14 to win a second playoff game in the same postseason for the first time since 1999. The Chargers lost 35-14 to Walled Lake Western the following week in regionals.

Mann continued his outstanding play in 2016, with more blowouts lessening his time on the field. He still managed to throw for 1,887 yards during the regular season plus more in two playoff games, tossing 24 TDs against only five interceptions. He also rushed for 594 yards and four scores.

After Dow defeated Bay City Central 55-14 in a D2 pre-district game, Mann's career ended as Fenton got a measure of revenge by topping



the Chargers in a 49-42 shootout to win the district.

While Mann's career is only beginning to blossom as he graduated early from Midland Dow so he could take part in SVSU spring ball, the question for the Chargers is who

replaces him?

The task will not be easy, but finding the correct choice could be the difference between Dow continuing its upward trend or crashing back down to earth.

Only time will tell.



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Corunna Looking To Continue Winning Ways In '17

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

Corunna is hardly known as a football powerhouse.

Sure, there have been a couple 10-win seasons scattered in its football history with those years dating back to 2002 and previously 1994. Both of those seasons ended following one playoff win.

There was another year, 1996, where the Cavaliers finished 9-3 and advanced to the Class B state semifinals before their season ended at the hands of Jackson Lumen Christi.

But overall, Corunna has had a program stuck a rung below excellence. That is not to say it is not a fine

football program, far from it as the overall record dating back to 1950 stands at 366-235-8.

This all leads to the point, which is that the Cavaliers are currently experiencing one of their better stretches in school history as they followed up an 8-2 season in 2015 with a 9-3 mark last year. Corunna won a 2016 Division 4 district championship, embarking on its longest playoff run in 20 years, before falling 28-13 to eventual state runner-up Detroit Country Day in the quarterfinals.

Kyle Robinson, entering his third year as Cavaliers head coach, now has the tall task of molding new talent after his squad is quite a bit short on experience this season following the graduation of many players from

the 2016 roster.

"It may appear that we are down due to graduation but we have a lot of talented players that are stepping up and performing who saw some action last year in some capacity," Robinson said. "We have answers to the losses from graduation and it will be those players getting experience from great preparation on and off the field."

Corunna will employ a new starting quarterback in senior Zach Sawyer, who was 3-for-5 through the air for 51 yards last season in limited action under center. He rushed 42 times for 440 yards and eight touchdowns as a slot back, third on the team in rushing TDs.

Robinson is very confident in Sawyer's abilities to handle the challenge head on.

"He has potential for a big breakout year," Robinson said. "He's very fast and a threat every time he touches the ball in our option attack. His rushing ability supplements the other side of ground game and he also possesses a great arm in the passing game."

The Cavaliers must replace four spots on their offensive line, but early in camp Robinson was already seeing the newcomers "mesh well beyond my expectations."

Senior Johnny Pavka, an offensive lineman, is the only starter back on that side of the ball. Sawyer, also a defensive back, joins senior defensive lineman Jack Thayer as the only



returning starters on defense.

Robinson also says to expect a team that is still very fast despite the graduations, while leadership has also not been an issue in the early going.

"I'm seeing a lot of our seniors leading positively with words and by example as well or better than any class since I have been here," Robinson added.

Winning Breeds Success At New Lothrop

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

Another year, another stacked New Lothrop roster.

The Hornets, coming off a seventh straight season with double-digit victories, return six starters on offense and five on defense to give them a solid foundation as they look to once again be one of the premier Division 7 teams in the state.

Head coach Clint Galvas sees a lot to like in this year's squad.

"With our returning starters and some of our junior newcomers who saw some varsity action last year, we should be pretty good," Galvas said. "I like what I'm seeing out of our offensive line and we have some experience at a lot of key positions except quarterback."

The Hornets will be breaking in a new quarterback in sophomore Avery Moore, who served as the JV signal-caller a year ago and is poised

to perhaps be a three-year varsity starter at the position.

"We worked a lot with him in the offseason and he's really come along," Galvas said about Moore. "He's kind of your prototypical quarterback as far as looks and appearance. He's 6-foot-3 and about 190 pounds. He has good speed and the biggest thing with him is he catches onto things quickly. He's had a really good offseason."

Helping to lead the way for New Lothrop will be three-year starter Mason Ruddy at running back, the team's best offensive skill player who Galvas plans on moving all over the place depending on the play and formation.

Ruddy stepped in at quarterback last year due to injury, but with the emergence of Moore he will be able to go back to his typical position.

Also returning is outside linebacker and wide receiver Ben Bigelow, who led New Lothrop

in tackles a year ago. Leading the squad up front on both sides of the ball is another returning starter in Cameron Dusenbery, a 6-foot-2 and 290-pound behemoth.

The Hornets won a district title last year for a fourth straight year, while they have advanced as far as the state semifinals twice during that stretch. The program also advanced to the state semifinals in 2011, while in 2006 a perfect 14-0 campaign saw New Lothrop win its first football state championship in school history.

"A lot of it is just the commitment from the kids," Galvas added. "When we have a workout, we don't necessarily have a lot of guys on the team but if we have an offseason workout with a roster of 25 I have 25 guys there. So I think it's really the commitment and dedication from our kids that has contributed to our success."

New Lothrop might have bigger

fish to fry, but the fact of the matter is it has dominated the Genesee Area Conference Blue Division to the tune of 54 consecutive wins dating back to 2009.

But Galvas sees an improved conference as of late, which should only help get the Hornets ready for the postseason.

"We've had years where we've been blowing teams out so badly our starters are only playing in first halves," Galvas said. "Then you get into the playoffs and tougher games where they aren't used to going for four quarters. But the last couple of years, you've really seen other programs coming on and making it a lot more difficult for us. It's only helped us prepare for the postseason and it's great to see GAC schools dedicated to building strong football programs."

New Lothrop opens its season at home August 24 as it battles Lake Fenton at 7 p.m.



New Lothrop coach Clint Galvas has built a small school juggernaut during his tenure as the Hornets coach. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)



Lansing Catholic's Jim Ahern ranks among the top 17 coaches in Michigan High School Athletic Association history for career victories. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Ahern's A Staple In Michigan Coaching Fraternity

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

Only 17 football head coaches in MHSAA history have accumulated more wins than Lansing Catholic Central's Jim Ahern.

Ahern spent 32 seasons as head coach at Ithaca High School from 1972 through 2003, racking up a boatload of victories along the way including a stretch from 1992 until departure that did not include a losing season.

After accomplishing so much with the Yellowjackets, Ahern decided to take on a new venture and headed to Florida where he ended up spending two seasons as head coach at Lehigh Acres East Lee County, a pair of forgettable seasons that have become a blip on

the radar.

The move to Florida is something Ahern has been quoted many times since as being "a mistake", one made exponentially worse when he lost his wife Gerri to cancer in November of 2008.

He returned home and quickly found another coaching opportunity, taking over a program at Lansing Catholic Central in 2009 that was coming off a 2-7 season the year before. Making matters more difficult, the Cougars had achieved only one postseason appearance and three total winning seasons since 1991.

"I just sort of fell into it," Ahern admitted. "I knew there was a lot of tradition there and they'd just had some down years. They had a

strong program in the 1980s under Phil Booth, so I knew there was something there and that we could get it going again."

Despite the tall odds, Ahern quickly 'spread' his magic over the program as the shotgun-based offense proved to be a jumping point for more excitement and turnout for LCC football.

Ahern has led the Cougars to the playoffs each year, culminating with a pair of Division 5 state championship game appearances in 2011 and 2014. The 2011 state title game at Ford Field ended in a 56-26 defeat versus Flint Powers Catholic, while three years later Lansing Catholic Central fell in a 24-20 heartbreaker to Grand Rapids West Catholic.

Two future Central Michigan University quarterbacks have been mentored by Ahern during his time at LCC, first Cooper Rush who took the Cougars to the '11 state title game and is now having

a strong preseason for the Dallas Cowboys in the National Football League. Shortly thereafter, 6-foot-7 Tony Poljan used his right arm to help LCC to the D5 title game and is now vying for the starting QB job at Central Michigan as a redshirt freshman.

So what keeps Ahern coming back to the sidelines year after year through all the triumphs and tough losses?

"I like to see the kids develop," Ahern added. "I still like the competition and competitive nature. The part that I like is the game preparation and the games. I'm getting where the offseason stuff isn't as much fun as it used to be. It's getting to be a grind a little bit. But getting ready for the games and then the actual games, that is what I still really enjoy."

Lansing Catholic Central opens the season with an August 25 showdown at Waverly. Kickoff is at 7 p.m.

LCC's Lynn Gearing Up For Big Season

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

Lansing Catholic Central caught lightning in a bottle in 2016 when then-junior quarterback Michael Lynn opted to transfer from nearby Lansing Sexton High School.

There were many reasons Lynn opted to switch schools and it turned out to be a mutually beneficial choice as he began the season as the Cougars starting quarterback and led the way to an 8-2 record.

But the LCC offense Lynn inherited last year largely graduated, leaving him as the only returning offensive starter on this year's roster.

Lynn is not shying away from the challenge of being counted on so heavily by a team so inexperienced around him.

"I played on varsity at Sexton as a sophomore and I had a great senior group around me," Lynn said. "Being a quarterback, you're sort of a leader in a sense no matter how old you are. I always remember that. And being a senior quarterback

and the only returning starter, it's no one else. It has to be me."

The decision to transfer from Sexton was difficult for Lynn, but he knew it in the best interests for his future.

"In football terms, we felt the system we ran at Sexton wasn't meant for me or the quarterback I am," Lynn admitted. "I'm a dual threat and Sexton is more of a pro-style team. They're transitioning now with a young quarterback who I like, but at the time it wasn't what I needed."

"And from a school perspective, it's true when they say going to Lansing Catholic prepares you for college. My ACT scores shot up six points after I transferred here. I couldn't ask for anything better."

Lynn compiled very strong numbers within the spread system, showing his athleticism in rushing for 23 touchdowns in 10 games. He carried the rock 201 times for 1,100 yards and rushed for at least 100 yards nine times.

He also completed 129-of-201 passes through the air for 1,741 yards, throwing eight TDs and nine interceptions.

"In camp this month coaches are noticing and even I'm noticing that I'm making better decisions with the football," Lynn said. "It's a

tough system to come into and learn through one summer. But I played all last year and now they're noticing I have the reads down. I know where I'm going with the ball and I feel a lot more comfortable with everything."

Lynn is under the tutelage of long-time prep head coach Jim Ahern, who previously helped develop former Central Michigan quarterback Cooper Rush and current CMU QB Tony Poljan.

"Keeping in mind how long [Coach Ahern] has been doing this, it's almost like 'wow,' Lynn added. "Because if he says something, he knows what he's talking about. Whether it's about X's & O's or whether it's about character, you know you can trust him."

Ahern is counting on a lot from Lynn in 2017, but he knows he has a quarterback who can shoulder a lot of the load.

"Michael is a lot different than Cooper or Tony," Ahern said. "Both of those guys are quite a bit bigger than Michael is, but he's a lot quicker than both of them. He's probably a better runner, but also a very adequate passer. He's a very good play-action passer. They're all different quarterbacks, but they all have their strengths and try to build it around what they can do best."

Lynn currently has offers from Concordia-Ann Arbor, Northwood and Siena Heights.



Mikey Lynn is back this season to lead the young Lansing Catholic Central offense. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)

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Swan Valley Hopes To Continue Strong Football Tradition

Ben Murphy Sports Scene

With eight playoff appearances in the last nine years, the Swan Valley football team doesn't know what a down season is. With several key contributors returning from last year's 6-4 campaign, don't expect anything but good football this fall as well.



Cam Toth, Swan Valley

"We have a great tradition," second year head coach Kevin Gavinda, who has been in the program over 15 years said. "We play a style of football where we come right at you, we hit you hard. We're not always the biggest, we're not always the fastest but we are extremely hard-nosed and we teach what we do every year. It starts with our youth program, they do a great job getting the kids ready down there and it continues on up to us."

The Vikings return eight starters on defense and five on offense. Offensive returnees include 1500-yard

rusher Emmett Boehler, quarterback Alex Fries and a crop full of other talented ball-carriers.

"We are putting in a few new wrinkles into our system on offense and defense but the kids are definitely buying into it," Gavinda said.

"We are excited as coaches and I know that the kids are really excited too. We are always excited, but to have these guys back it certainly helps us. The kids are extremely focused and they know the potential is there in what we can do this season."

While it might be obvious that big things are expected out of Boehler, Gavinda points out that some other players could be ready to step up as well.

"We have a few that were on the team last year that just weren't ready yet, but they have been working hard and improved too," he said. "We also added a new offensive coordinator



From left to right: Senior Emmett Boehler and juniors Alex Fries and Chase Mendoza are three reasons why Swan Valley's new-look offense should flourish this season for the Vikings. Boehler rushed for over 1,500 yards last season. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)

(Kevin Lawson) and we're excited about that too. He's been working well with our quarterbacks and our receivers."

The Vikings open the season against Zeeland East, a team that topped them 39-21 in both team's season opener last year.

"They're a pretty tough team from the other side of the state," Gavinda said. "Practice has been going well so far though, we have a good group of kids out and that helps. They'll do anything that we ask them. A lot of them leave practice and then they come back later to lift. It makes it

easy because they want to work. Of course we set goals, but we're going to take it one game at a time and hopefully go from there once the playoffs come around. We're just excited to get the season started and we'll go from there."

Saginaw High's Neven Simington Headed To CMU

Ben Murphy Sports Scene

There were other suitors, but Saginaw High senior NeVen Simington, knew exactly where he wanted to go to play college football all along. Simington, a tight end, defensive end and linebacker for the Trojans, announced he's headed for Central Michigan University over the summer.

"I'm excited to play for Central, I've been dreaming about it my whole life," Simington said. "All my hard work on the field and in the classroom has paid off. I'm really excited about it, my dad told me stories about playing college football. I really liked my visit there, it seemed like they all cared about each other. I'm excited to go there and play in that kind of environment."

When Simington says he's been dreaming about playing college football his whole life, he means it. He grew up around the game thanks to his father, Nate Simington playing at CMU as well.

"He's been around the sport his whole life," Nate Simington, who is also the head coach at Saginaw High said. "He told me when he was three or four that he wanted to play football, just like me. When he hit third grade he started playing pop warner football and I was like, this kid can hit; he's not afraid at all. Then we worked with him on catching and other fundamentals and the momentum picked up from there. It became second nature for him, it was built into his DNA because he had been doing it for so long. I knew he was going to be good, I just didn't know when."

His freshman year, NeVen was 5-foot-10" and 220 pounds. By 10th grade he was 6-1

and slimmed down to 190, then 6-3 and 210 as a junior to the 6-4 and 220 that he is now.

On top of his body developing, Neven also put in lots of work. They figure he attended over 30 camps in his high school career.

"It was a lot of work, a lot of long days working out and studying and waking up doing the same thing the next day," NeVen Simington said. "It was a lot of work but it is worth it to me to play college football."

NeVen plans to keep working hard through the season as well.

"I want to go out with a successful season, hopefully we can keep getting better and win some games and do some things that haven't been done at Saginaw in a while," he said. "All the teams in the conference that we play are good and there are a lot of other good players on opposing teams. It's going to help me get ready for the next level."



Neven Simington, a Saginaw High senior has already stated he will continue his football career at Central Michigan University next season. (Submitted Photo)

Freeland's Garhet Metiva Runs With Authority

Ben Murphy Sports Scene

Most high school running backs try to make the defense miss. One look at Freeland senior Garhet Metiva and you'll see he's not like most running backs. At 6-foot-0 and 240 pounds, he seeks out contact from his opponents.

"I have good speed for my size but I like to plow people over," he said. "I like to plow them over because it gets the whole team hyped and it excites the fans. It makes the game a lot easier to play too and makes it a lot more fun. On defense (as a middle line-backer) I like to think I'm one of the main guys and try to stop them from getting into the secondary and breaking away."

Freeland will rely on senior two-way standout Garhet Metiva to play a great deal this season. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Metiva and the Falcons have had plenty of fun in recent years. Last year's team went undefeated through the regular season, including all seven Tri-Valley Conference Central games and the squad made the playoffs for the ninth straight season. Metiva, for his career has ran the ball 148 times for 1054 yards and 14 touchdowns and has made 88 tackles on defense.

"We had a pretty good season last year, we were all confident in each other and knew that anyone could make a play at any time," Metiva said. "I was pretty happy with how I did most of the season too, though I did have some ankle injuries so I think I could have played better if I was fully healthy, like I will be this year."

"We are always so good at Freeland because we don't always have to find people for positions," he added. "We always have people that emerge in each spot and we have some

great coaches here that are good at putting players in the right positions."

Already a big-time factor to last year's undefeated team, Metiva should continue to see a big role for the Falcons this fall.

"He is so fun to coach because he is so big," head coach Kevin Townsend said. "Yet, he has quick feet, great vision on both sides of the ball and a personality that is so infectious. He is always smiling and just fun to be around. He is a great leader on the field, yet quiet and just goes with the flow during practice. He works very hard in the off-season, he plays multiple sports and still makes lifting and speed-training."

Metiva, who has been contacted by a couple of Division II schools, is hoping for a healthy senior campaign.

"I'm fully healthy right now, I think I'll be able to show people that I can be even better than last year and play," he said. "I'll be playing as hard as I can because it's my senior year."

Central's Weathers Eyes Big 2017 Season

Ben Murphy Sports Scene

The 2016 season was a bit of a resurgence for the Bay City Central football team. The Wolves started the year 1-2 but caught fire late in the season, winning their last three games to qualify for the playoffs for the first time since 2007.

A key cog in that resurgence was senior running back Dequez Weathers. Weathers was the work-horse out of the backfield for the team, running for 1596 yards and 13 touchdowns.

"His speed and elusiveness are what makes him a great running back," longtime Bay City Central head coach Morley Fraser said of his all-Saginaw Valley League and first team all-state back. "He is durable, 30-to-40 carries a game is not unusual for him. Plus, he is a very good defensive back.

"He goes hard in practice on every play," Fraser added. "He is a great role model for our younger players, not only how he practices but also being a vocal leader."

For Weathers, being a part of the first Central playoff team in almost a decade was a big deal.

"It was a good feeling, just us having a good season to get over that hump and back into the playoffs after not being there for so long," he said. "That felt good to be on the team that was able to get the school back into the playoffs. It was a great season for myself too, I'm hoping to do better this year though."

Just how good is he expecting to do this year?

"I'm hoping for 2000 yards rushing and 21 touchdowns," he said. "On defense, I hope to get some interceptions and lead the team in tackles. I'm up for it, I'm ready. I like to keep myself motivated and keep getting better. Hopefully that's

something that stands out about me from other players."

If there are any doubters that Weathers can reach the 2000-yard mark, one has to look no further than Central's week six game against Carman-Ainsworth last year, in what turned out to be a wild 43-34 loss.

"That game sticks out to me because it was a good game for us, and especially for me," he said. "It was in the rain but I had 257 yards rushing and two touchdowns. We lost, but Ainsworth is a good team so we really had to play well. The league is looking tough again this year but we're ready. We're hoping to go 9-0. We know it's going to be tough but we feel like we have a really good team and we could go undefeated."

Weathers has drawn some attention from colleges, but for now his only focus is on his final season at Central.

"I've had one offer but I'm not really worried about that right now, I'm just worried about the season," he said. "All that other stuff will come, I just have to be patient."



Bay City Central's Dequez Weathers rushed for nearly 1,600 yards a year ago. (Submitted Photo)

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Rockford's Jason Whittaker Leading Rams

Butch Harmon
Sports Scene

The Rockford football program has had a long history of producing outstanding quarterbacks. In senior Jason Whittaker, this year's version of the Rams has one of its best ever.

At 6-foot-5 and 205 pounds, blessed with a strong arm and good athleticism, Whittaker has everything a coach looks for in a quarterback, not only on the high school level but the college level as well. While Whittaker is primed for a big senior season with one of the premier Division 1 programs in

Rockford's Jason Whittaker is considered the top quarterback prospect in Michigan for the class of 2018. (Butch Harmon, High School Sports Scene Photo)

the state, his college destination is already decided as he committed to Northwestern University of the Big 10 this past January.

A two-year starter for the Rams, Whittaker is coming off a junior season where he passed for over 1,000 yards and led the Rams to the Division 1 district finals. With a full off-season of work put in, Whittaker has set the table for a big senior campaign.

"Jason has significant upside as a quarterback," said veteran Rockford head coach Ralph Munger. "His passion for the position is impres-

sive. Jason's physical attributes and skill level had numerous colleges following his progress. Jason not only has size, but has been blessed with very good speed. Jason is tough, hard nosed and loves to compete and we look for a big senior year from Jason."

A well-spoken student athlete and team leader, Whittaker is looking forward to the season with his teammates.

"We have a pretty solid group of guys," Whittaker said. "We have a tight-knit team this year. The seniors have embraced the juniors and we all get along."

Whittaker pilots a Rockford offense that gets contributions from a number of players. Senior Marcus Remtema is a three-year varsity player with excellent speed while fellow senior Chase Novak is a two-year starter at wide receiver. Novak and speedy sophomore Eli Haddad will also contribute to the passing game along with senior tight end Logan

Lee (6-4, 215) who is a solid blocker and receiver.

Along with Whittaker who can also provide a running option, Rockford has a deep stable of running backs led by senior Malik Thompson and juniors Alex Miller, Austin Klein and junior Ian Rodriguez who saw varsity action at both fullback and halfback last year.

Providing protection for the passing game and opening up holes for the backs is an offensive line led by senior Cody Carone (6-4, 296), a three-year starter that can play any position along the offensive line. Carone is joined up front by seniors Matthew Mateo-Kurzeja (6-0, 315), Alex Anthony (5-11, 235), Brodie Prangley (6-0, 240) and Nolan Brooks (6-2, 225).

"We've been playing together for years," Carone said. "Everybody has bought in and we have a lot of guys who like to grind in the weight room."

QB Kruse Back For Senior Season

David Cook
Sports Scene

Starting his first game as a varsity quarterback last fall, Lowell senior David Kruse had plenty of reason to be nervous. Not only was he taking over the reigns as the starting quarterback for the Red Arrows, but he was leading a team that suffered heavy graduation losses and was opening the 2016 season against Detroit Catholic League powerhouse Warren De La Salle.

Kruse handled his opening start with poise as he led Lowell to a 36-19 win. Kruse and his Red Arrow teammates kept up their winning ways all season long. Lowell went on to win the OK White Conference title and reach the Division 2 state semifinals where they dropped a 37-34 barn-burner to Walled Lake Western, the only loss of the season.

This season Kruse and his fellow seniors are back with an added year of experience under their belts and are poised for another big season. Kruse and the rest of the seniors know a thing or two about winning as they enter the season with a 30-1 record as high school players on the freshman, junior varsity and varsity levels.

In Kruse, the Red Arrows have a quarterback who is not only an improving passer, but is a talented runner giving the team a true dual-threat behind center. Kruse, one of the state's top wrestlers, also brings a calm, steady presence to the field. That presence enabled him to step right in and keep the Red Arrow offense running right from the first snap last fall.

"At first I was a little nervous in that first game," Kruse said. "The seniors really helped me out. I just tried to stay calm, make the right calls and the right plays."

Kruse made plays all season long as he passed for over 1,000 yards. At 6-foot-1 and 190 pounds, Kruse is also a solid runner who used his combination of size and speed to rush for over 1,000 yards.

This season, Kruse comes in ready to take his game to the next level.

"I'm bigger and faster this season," Kruse said. "I'm also throwing the ball a lot better. I'm more confident with my throws and feel like I've improved as a passer."

Kruse improved his quarterbacking skills during 7-on-7 camps during the summer and that improvement as a passer will give Lowell a more diverse look on offense this season.

"Having our quarterback back helps," said Lowell offensive coordinator Mike Curtis. "David is a very competitive kid. He is definitely a runner first, he is very Tim Tebow' ish as a runner. He has made great strides this summer. He understands defenses better and our offense keeps evolving. We do not want to be one-dimensional on offense and we've had a great summer in that regard."

Kruse has plenty of options to work with on offense this season. Senior Ben Lobbezoo is back healthy this year as are senior twins Connor and Brady Douma who impact the game on offense as runners and receivers, as kick returners and as defensive backs. Senior Addison Buckius (6-2, 200) is a matchup problem with his size and speed and can line up in a variety of spots while junior wide receivers Brendan Milligan and Jordan Dent look to make an impact as well.

Up front, the Red Arrows return starters in left tackle Andrew LeFebre (6-0, 220) and right guard Caleb Devereaux (6-0, 270) with seniors Connor Nugent (6-2, 220), Avery Lupton (6-2, 280) and Mitchell O'Gorman (6-5, 240) and junior Tyler Pitcher (6-0, 230) also in the mix up front.

That offensive line has developed outstanding chemistry over the years not only among their linemates but also having Kruse behind center.

"I've played with these guys since elementary school," LeFebre said. "Not many teams can say that. It's great having David back there too. He's calm and he makes the guys feel calm also."



David Kruse and the rest of the Lowell seniors enter this season with a 30-1 record. (Butch Harmon, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Plymouth Girls' Varsity Basketball Team Gives Back to Community with Milk Drive

A semi-annual Michigan Milk Drive, conducted by Busch's Fresh Market, Prairie Farms, and Milk Means More, continues to help Michigan families in need. Milk is the number one requested item at food pantries but is rarely donated. These drives provide milk to Forgotten Harvest, Food Gatherers and local pantries serving the Busch's communities.

The next Milk Drive will be held

September 25 through October 1 at all Busch's locations, including the Plymouth location on Sheldon Road. Since milk is perishable, Busch's shoppers are asked to donate a virtual gallon of milk by making a \$2.50 donation at the register. Milk Means More, supported by Michigan dairy farmers and companies, will match each donation up to \$10,000. Fresh, wholesome milk from Prairie Farms is delivered to the food banks as they need it

for families.

Plymouth's very own girls' varsity basketball team will be teaming up once again to work the Milk Drive. This marks the team's second season of participating in the drive, enriching the community through service.

"Our kids love participating in the Milk Drives, as it gives them an opportunity to serve the community," says varsity head coach, Ryan Ballard. "Servant leadership is one of the core values of our program, and our kids know that you don't have to be great to serve, but you must serve to be great."

Ballard has coached at Plymouth High School for five years, where he has worked as an assistant to the varsity boys' basketball team for three years, and now enters his third season as the head varsity coach of the girls' program. Ballard says he enjoys having his team participate in the Milk Drive because it allows them to "get comfortable being uncomfortable," and teaches the team members communication skills while giving back to the community, life lessons made for on and off the court.

"We want our kids always to ask the question, 'What can I do for others?'" says Ballard. "I also love the team bonding aspect of the Milk Drive. Our kids get to hang out with each other outside of basketball and develop strong friendships, which drives a positive team culture."



To show gratitude to the players for their service, Milk Means More provides a chocolate milk grant to the team in order to help them refuel for the upcoming season. Like many coaches and athletes, Ballard finds chocolate milk as a great refueling option.

"Chocolate milk provides the protein and carbs to replenish muscles after some of our toughest workouts," said Ballard. "Over the past year, we have seen our team get bigger, faster, and stronger from weight training and improved nutrition."

Ballard hopes the team can participate in the Milk Drive for years to come, as this event is a winning situation for all parties involved.

This year the drive comes with a different twist. The school team who helps the store exceed their goal by the highest percentage will receive a \$1,000 bonus to spend as a team, adding an extra motivation to give back to the community.



Mount Pleasant Planning On Better Than 5-4 This Season

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Jason McIntyre is in his 12th season as Mount Pleasant football coach with a sparkling record of 93-31. Last season wasn't a typical one for the Oilers at 5-4 but McIntyre is anxious to get the team back on the championship track this fall.

"We face many challenges in our schedule that includes large schools that have had a great deal of success lately such as Midland Dow, Davison, Midland and Lapeer," McIntyre said. "We return a great deal of experience from last year's team. We are going to need that leadership early in the season as we work to develop younger players in important roles and deal with a very tough schedule.

"I think we are ahead in the implementation of our offensive and defensive schemes; however, the question will be in our ability to physically execute on Friday nights. We should have a strong defensive front seven and it looks

like we are going to be able to be well balanced on offense, which has been key for us in the past in successful seasons."

Returning starters include: Jayden Perry WR (12); Isaiah Schafer OL/DL (12); Justin Hassen OL (12); Cole Smallwood RB/DB (12); Evan Grossnickle OL (11); Trey Wentworth FB/LB (12); Peter Smith LB (12); Mikel Miret LB (12); Wyatt Cook DL (12); Tommy Arends DB/WR (12) and Hunter Norris LB (10).

"The biggest thing about this team is we're well-rounded," McIntyre said. "We don't have a dominant player at one position, but yet I feel like we have a lot of depth across the board. From an offensive standpoint, I'm confident in whomever we want to go to, whether it be the running or passing game. I don't feel like I'm looking for the one player we need to give the ball to.

"We're well balanced. That makes the competition in practice a little more fierce. That makes it fun in camp so far."



Mount Pleasant football coach Jason McIntyre enters his 12th season with a sparkling record of 93-31. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Key newcomers include: Jackson Ostrowsky QB (11); Jordan Davis RB/DB (11); Jo Ostrowsky WR/DB (10); Damian Loya OL (11); Tyler Huennaman TE/DE (12); Caleb Vasquez OL (12); Carter Roestel DB (12) and Kevin Davis RB/QB (11).

"At Mount Pleasant, since I've been head coach, we've always kind of measured our-

selves against Midland High," McIntyre said. "When we joined the conference, they were kind of a measuring stick in the Saginaw Valley. We've had some incredible games with them the last several years. It's usually been one score games. It's a big game for our kids.

"Currently, the teams to beat are Davison and Lapeer."

Expectations Are High For Beal City

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Brad Gross enters his third year as Beal City football coach, with high expectations, which are expected practically every season for the perennial powerhouse program.

The Aggies were 7-4 last season and made the playoffs for their 17th straight season. Since 1990, they've only missed the playoffs one season.

Last year perhaps was not a typical Beal City season. The Aggies only outscored their opponents 235-212. That's in contrast with the 2013 team that had a 737-136 point advantage over its opponents.

"We were a young team," Gross said. "We struggled against Muskegon Catholic Central who pretty much waxed everybody."

The Aggies lost to MCC 42-0 in the district finals.

"I thought we got better last year," Gross said. "I saw improvement on the kids knowing me and what I want to do. I'm starting to see that in the weightroom."

The Aggies have 12 of 15 seniors who have had experience playing in the past.

"The kids have been working hard during the off-season," Gross said. "We're real excited for this year and will see what it brings. I think the strength of this team will be our line. We have some returners coming back and kids who have put in time during the off-season in the weightroom. I think our JVs were good last season and we'll have some of those kids mixed in. Our line could be a strength for us this year."



Beal City enters the season looking to make its 18th straight playoff appearance in 2017. (File Photo)

Top returning players include senior Lucas Schumacher, who was the quarterback last year. Senior Brett Upton played as a running back and outside linebacker. Senior Kollin Sharrar is a returning running back and linebacker. Senior Dale Farrell returns on defense.

"We had a lot of seniors and a lot of good depth as well," Gross said.

The Aggies didn't win the Highland Conference last year with Pine River taking the honors. The Aggies hope to regain the league title.

The key for us always is (cutting down on) turnovers and not giving up the big play. That's the focus for us this year. We measured ourselves against Midland High," McIntyre said. "When we joined the conference, they were kind of a measuring stick in the Saginaw Valley. We've had some incredible games with them the last several years. It's usually been one score games. It's a big game for our kids.

"Currently, the teams to beat are Davison and Lapeer."

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Tim Stout Takes Over CC-C Head Job

John Raffel
Sports Scene

The Carson City-Crystal Eagles are in new hands. Tim Stout has served as Carson City-Crystal's football coach the past five seasons as defensive coordinator and prior to that was JV head coach and varsity assistant.

Ben Brock had been serving as coach. He had come to Carson City-Crystal from Shepherd.

He is back at Shepherd High School for a job opportunity.

"It's a group of kids I've been associated with for awhile," Stout said. "I enjoy the competition and the Friday nights."

CC-Crystal fans will see something old, something new, with Stout as coach.

"Defensively, you'll see a lot of what we've done the last five seasons with myself as the defensive coordinator," Stout said. "Offensively, we've had a year removed from the fullhouse T and the wing T we've ran in years past."

The team was 5-4 last year, using the spread. The Eagles had made the playoffs four straight seasons.

"We're going to get back to the tradition of a power running game," Stout said. "We were young last year. The kids achieved some great things under Coach Brock. We're going to try to build on what they've achieved. We'll go back to what I guess is a Carson City tradition, the Wing T and the full house T."

This year's team "will be fairly young across the board," Stout said. "We'll be junior heavy. A lot of the sophomores that were on the varsity team last year are returning. We do have some good pieces coming back as seniors who were juniors last year."

The Eagles hope to be a strong challenger in the Mid-State Activities Conference.

"We want to be competitive and have an opportunity to win every game we play," Stout said. "We want to focus on controlling the things we can control and take care of the things we can take care of. If you do, we put ourselves in the position to be successful this season."

The Eagles were outscored 278-254 last season in going 5-4. In the four years they made the playoffs, they handily outscored their nine opponents.



Carson City-Crystal will have a new look and new coach entering the 2017 season as Tim Stout takes over the Eagles program. Carson City was 5-4 a year ago. (Don Goostrey, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Big Rapids Senior Rated No. 1 Tight End In Michigan

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Even before his first football game as a Big Rapids High School senior, Braeden Childress was piling up the honors.

The Lake Michigan Football Report has labeled Childress (6-4, 220) as the best tight end prospect in the state of Michigan.

"Childress had an outstanding year for Big Rapids in 2016 and should have a big senior campaign this fall," the report said. "He has all the attributes of a great tight end with good size, soft hands and deceptive speed. Braeden has multiple Division I offers."

As a freshman at Baldwin, Braeden played with his older brother Brandon, the 2014 Division 7-8 player of the year. Brandon is now a redshirt sophomore wide receiver at

Central Michigan University. After transferring to Big Rapids as a sophomore, Childress made the transition from quarterback to tight end as a junior last season.

Childress played his freshman season at Baldwin along with his brother, Brandon, who was a senior quarterback when the Panthers lost to Beal City in the regional finals.

In anticipation of his senior season, Braeden stayed very busy during the summer with various camps. He was down in Detroit for a camp of college prospects where they learned how to deal with media as they continue to pick up attention.

Being ranked as the No. 1 tight end in Michigan "makes me humble and makes me want to work harder," Childress said.

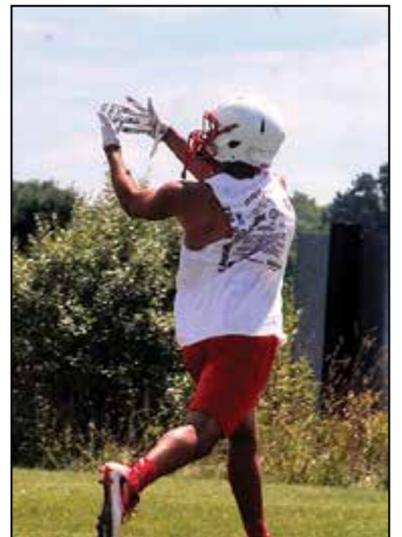
Coming into the season, Childress has received offers from Division 1 schools such

as Central Michigan, Eastern Michigan and Toledo University, plus a preferred walk-on offer to Ohio State. He's received interest from Division II schools such as Ferris State and Wayne State.

"It's still pretty much wide open," he said. Strengths he possesses as a tight end, Childress indicated, are his blocking abilities; and having been a quarterback before, he has the ability to know what the offense needs to do. His height will be an advantage, especially when it comes to catching passes.

The Cardinals are coming off a 3-6 season.

"We have a great group of seniors this year who have bought into the program," Childress said. "We put in the work we needed to during the summer. We can't use youth as an excuse."



Big Rapids Braeden Childress enters the 2017 season as the No. 1 rated tight end in Michigan. (John Raffel, High School Sports Scene Photo)

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Panther Pride...



A Mixture Of Youth, Vets Hoping To Continue Alma's Winning Ways

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The pre-season outlook for the 2017 Alma High School football team certainly includes good news and bad news. The good news is that Alma graduated just six seniors from last year's playoff team. The bad news is that those six seniors filled a total of 11 starting spots on offense and defense.

Senior standouts Ryan Cornejo, Anthony Humm, Konnor Vedrode, Troy Bastien, Tristan Villalobos and CJ Thompson all played key roles on last year's squad and will be missed this fall. That said, a new group of Panthers are primed to step up and carry on Alma's football tradition.

"We have quite a few returning players," said Alma coach Dan Falor. "We have 19 guys returning from last year's team but we lost a lot of experience with the six seniors."

This year's senior class has many players that form a solid core, starting with two-way back Brandon Huff (5-11, 185). Huff impacts the game in a variety of ways.

"Brandon is our best player offensively and defensively," Falor said. "On offense, he can play running back or receiver and is good at coming out of the backfield as a receiver. He is very athletic and is one of the fastest guys on the team. He is pretty elusive and a good tackler on defense."

Senior outside linebacker Chase Albaugh (6-2 180) is another key returnee. Albaugh is a returning all-conference linebacker who also plays wide receiver on offense.

In the trenches, the Panthers have a pair of talented seniors returning. Greg Simmons (6-2, 285) returns to anchor the

defensive line while David Castillo is an athletic, two-way lineman.

Alma's offense also returns a pair of experienced juniors at a pair of key positions. Drew Humm (6-3, 175) returns as the starting quarterback while Brec Alward (5-10, 170) returns at running back.

"Brec rushed for 800 yards last year and he's also a starting defensive back too," Falor said. "Drew improved a lot in the off-season too. We're throwing a lot at him. He has a good command of the offense and we're putting more on his plate this year."

The combination of Humm and Alward give the Panthers the ability to be balanced on offense.

Alma is also looking for two more players to step up and make an impact this year in senior linebacker Brock Milan and junior Colton Schworer who will start on both offense and defense.

"Brock is stepping up at linebacker and filling the role of Ryan Cornejo," Falor said. "Ryan was a three-year starter and that's a tough hole to fill on the defense but Brock is trying hard."

Colton is a junior this year who put in a lot of time in the weight room. He will play center or guard on offense and outside linebacker on defense. He's a real competitive player."

Filling the holes on defense will have a big impact on how successful a season Alma has this fall.

"Our offense has some skill players back and some linemen back," Falor said. "We need to fill the holes on defense. We lost a key player on the defensive line, linebacker and in the defensive backfield. If we have someone step up and fill those positions we should be ok. The key to our season is our defense."

The Alma High School football team lost a great deal of players from last year's squad, including Sports Scene Defensive Player of the Year Ryan Cornejo, who is now at Saginaw Valley State University. However, the Panthers are returning 19 players including juniors Drew Humm and Brec Alward. Humm and Alward are expected to carry the offensive load this season for Alma. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photos)



Fulton will bring a fast new-look offensive scheme to the field this season. (Caleb Walden, High School Sports Scene Photo)



Senior quarterback Bryce Thelen returns this season for defending Division 7 champion Pewamo-Westphalia. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Fulton Football Is Back, Faster Than Ever

Caleb Walden Sports Scene

The Fulton Pirates are finally ready to play football again as they prepare to begin the 2017 campaign.

Fulton returns a great deal of speed and talent this year and hopes its experience can boost it back into the postseason.

Recent Fulton classes have displayed varieties of different talents, but this year the Pirates have a group talent: speed.

The trio of Jon Baker, Adam Dufo, and TJ Johnston all return to the gridiron this season after

winning a state championship in the 4x100 relay last spring. If they're able to get out in space, Fulton's position players have plenty of speed to make up for what the Pirates lack in size up front.

The Pirates also bring back a tough, talented wide receiver and defensive back in senior Evan Barton. Barton's toughness was shown when he played his sophomore basketball season with a torn labrum in his left shoulder, an injury he sustained earlier that fall on the football field. He underwent surgery, which kept him from playing football as a junior, only after finishing the basketball season in

the state semi-finals at the Breslin Center. Finally, Barton has his chance to return to the field. "He's a great athlete, and he has a really high football IQ. He's a great kid to coach, and we're really excited to have him back this year," said head coach Paul Hungerford about his senior wideout. Barton hopes to make a big impact in whatever role his coaches give him.

Barton and the rest of the receiving corps will be catching passes from junior quarterback Zach Andrews. Andrews is young with little experience, but he is a promising athlete with a very capable arm and pinpoint accuracy. Andrews, also a pitcher for the Pirates baseball team and a guard on the basketball squad, has been improving every day according to Barton. "Practice by practice he's getting better and more accurate. I look forward to seeing what he can

do this season," said Barton.

Hungerford thinks that this year's Pirates will run a new kind of offense saying, "We have some good size up front, but we'll definitely get creative and use some different schemes to get our playmakers outside."

He went on to say, "This is a very mature and coachable group, and they've been working hard all offseason. We had guys in the weight room the Monday after our season ended last fall, and that is a testament to their heart and dedication. I'm really excited for this new group. Hopefully we can have some early success, get our guys some confidence, and earn a spot in week ten."

Coach Hungerford and his new look Pirates kick off the season at home, in a matchup against Merrill, on August 28.

Can Pewamo-Westphalia Make Its Third Straight Trip To Ford Field? Pirates' Focusing On '17 With Mix Of Youth, Veterans

David Cook Sports Scene

The 2016 season was one for the ages for Pewamo-Westphalia football. A perfect record capped by a Division 7 state championship will be remembered for years in the community.

Time marches on and a new football season is set to kickoff. While the memory of last season is fresh, this year's group of Pirates has been working hard to prepare to make some more football history.

"We are emphasizing the fact that the 2016 state championship is a memory," said Pewamo-Westphalia coach

Jeremy Miller. "We want to attack another state championship in 2017. It is time for a new group of players to put their mark on our program by stepping up and continuing to play at the highest level. Our very talented seniors have moved on, so it is up to this year's team to fill in and step up."

This year's squad is up for the challenge with its mix of returning veterans and talented newcomers.

"We are excited about the team we have this season," Miller said. "We have a nice mix of experienced seniors and talented underclassmen coming up from a very good junior varsity squad."

Pewamo-Westphalia heads into

the season with many of the qualities of a strong team. The Pirates have some very experienced skill players to go along with a deep and talented group of linemen on both sides of the football.

At quarterback, the Pirates return veteran Jimmy Lehman.

"Jimmy has been with us on the varsity since he was a freshman," Miller said. "He has a very strong arm and all of the qualities of an outstanding quarterback."

Senior Bryce Thelen is also a four-year varsity player and returns to give the team a solid fullback and defensive leader at linebacker.

"Bryce is another player who is on his fourth year playing varsity football," Miller said. "He is a tremendous competitor who is a virtual coach on the field on both sides of the ball."

Up front, senior Isaiiah Schafer anchors the line on both sides of the ball.

"Isaiiah is a three-year starter up front who has worked himself into tremendous shape for us this season,"

Miller said.

Junior place kicker Alec Thelen is another key returnee. Thelen, who hit the game-winning field goal in the regional final, is currently ranked 13th nationally in his class as a kicker by ProKicker.com.

Evan Thelen and sophomore Cameron Wirth are two more key players returning. Wirth started at linebacker as a sophomore last season and is expected to step up as a defensive leader this year. Wirth will also play running back on offense. Thelen, who also plays defensive back, has moved to running back from wide receiver this season and has "looked really good in camp," said Miller.

With Pewamo-Westphalia having reached the state title game the past two years, this year's team knows the bar has been set high but they have been working hard to make their own run.

"This is a very hardworking group," Miller said, "and I am excited to watch their progress as the season goes on."

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Coleman Hopes To Rebound After Rough Two Seasons

Scott Salowich Sports Scene

After making the playoffs three times in four seasons from 2011-14, Coleman has fallen into a rut the past two seasons, posting records of 1-8.

Clearly, it is time for the Comets to get back to orbiting speed.

"We're expecting a better season," said Coleman coach Chad Klopf. "We haven't talked about record or goals, but we have talked about competing. If we compete each and every day we are out there, we should be just fine on Friday night"

Klopf said he has tried to maintain

consistency during the tough times, since it worked when things were better.

"We have stayed the course and are following our process," he said. "It led to us doubling our offensive output last season and we hope to see it translate into more victories this season."

Strength in the trenches will be critical to the success of this year's team.

"We have put a lot of focus on the defensive side of the ball and on our running game," Klopf said. "We'll be looking for our linemen to step up and be aggressive. We have some kids that can dominate in the right positions, so

if we can play tough up front, we have athletes on the edges that can make plays."

Senior Jason Beckner has been a dangerous playmaker for three years on both sides of the ball at wide receiver and free safety. Senior lineman Cody Finney emerged as a team leader during the offseason. Senior Karlos Moiser is slated to play receiver, defensive end and outside linebacker, but has popped up at pretty much every spot on the field during his career. Junior Spencer Pnaeck is heading into his second year as the starting quarterback and he'll be handing it off to seniors Truman Webb and Nick Lovejoy, along with junior Cooper Cozart.

Coleman kicks it off at Farwell and that's the focus for Klopf and Co.

"That is as far as we have looked ahead all season as a team," he said."

We are focused on going out and competing and then looking toward the next one."

As far as the Mid-State Activities Conference campaign goes, Breckenridge went 9-0 in the regular season last year and is the bull's eye bearer again this time around.

"Yes, they graduated a lot of kids," Klopf said, "but most of their returners had a large part in their success last season."

As for everybody else, Klopf sees the potential for some close games.

"It's a great small school league with very competitive football among the eight of us," he said. "Merrill has good skilled guys coming back. Carson City-Crystal has a new head coach, but he's been there and is bringing back their running game. Vestaburg has a good core group. Montabella is a lot



Coleman looks to rebound this season after back-to-back 1-8 seasons. (Skip Traynor, High School Sports Scene Photo)

like us, with a large group of seniors ready to step up and lead. Ashley has a new coach and a big senior-dominated group and low numbers have never slowed down Sacred Heart in the past."

Beaverton Back For More

Scott Salowich Sports Scene

Getting to the playoffs for the first time in 16 years put Beaverton football back on the map last fall.

Now, the trick is to get the cartographers to keep it there.

"The entire community got excited



about what the team was able to accomplish last

season," said Beavers coach Aaron Seiser. "Getting everyone more excited about football is something that is great for us and we continue to have big goals but, at the same time, we have to remember to focus on one week at a time rather than looking ahead to the big picture."

Beaverton must replace three linemen and quarterback Nick Hartner, who Seiser noted, "took about every snap the past couple of years."

There are candidates in place. "I like our kids," he said. "They're showing up and doing what we ask them to do. It's nice to have kids who understand what they're supposed to do to be successful. We've had great leadership and communication."

Leading the way will be third-year seniors Eric Cassidy, who plays fullback and linebacker, and Nate Taylor, a

Beaverton made the playoffs for the first time in 16 seasons a year ago. (Skip Traynor, High School Sports Scene Photo)

slot receiver and defensive back.

Up front will be Dalton Matejka, Seth Martin, Seth Demoinis, Jacob Uhl and D.J. Whitmer.

Senior Dan Breault will see action at running back, linebacker and safety. Junior Kyle Cassidy will see action at fullback and linebacker, with classmate Jack Owens at receiver and linebacker.

"If we compete week in and week out and maintain the attitude we've been showing, we expect to be successful," said Seiser.

The Beavers will host Breckenridge in their opener, a team that went 9-0 last year.

"That's going to be a great challenge," said Seiser. "We're focused on that game for now and we'll approach the rest of our season on a week to week basis."

Eye on Sanford Meridian

In 2015, Meridian went 10-1 with the only loss in the second round of the playoffs to Ithaca, which went on to win the Division 6 state championship.

It was the third straight postseason appearance for the Mustangs.

Graduation hit hard last fall and led to a 3-6 campaign that, while hardly a disaster, was not what Coach Mike Bilina had in mind.

"We knew what it was going in with four sophomores and a freshman starting," Bilina said, "but going 3-6 was a killer.

"Losing is not OK, but it happens and all that matters after that is what you do about it."

In response, Bilina did not chuck everything and start over, but he didn't sit still, either.

"I'm not old and stubborn yet," he said. "I think that, as a head coach, you have to be constantly changing and looking to get better. We're not going to panic, but we certainly need to be ready to make adjustments that put kids in the right spots to be successful.

"I have a great staff. We have intelligent guys who put a lot of time in and I trust them to come up with the right answers."

Team spirit can take a hit when fortunes fade, but this year's Mustangs haven't shown symptoms of bailing out.

"When you go 3-6, it's easy to say, 'screw football,' but it can also be a powerful motivation," Bilina said. "Our kids have put the time in, we're having some fun and I think we're all excited to go out and play some football.

"We've got a talented group and they are bigger, stronger and faster this season, so we expect to put a better product on the field."

Senior Matt Dexter will be the leader on the offensive line and will see action at linebacker. Junior quarterback Brett Barriger will have classmates Kyle Stockford at wide receiver and Gabe Brady at tight end for targets. Stockford will roam the secondary at free safety, with Brady at defensive end.

Meridian opens at Midland Bullock Creek and will host Lake City before embarking on the Jack Pine Conference campaign.

"Clare is the favorite in our league by a lot," Bilina said, "but it should be another competitive season. Our next chapter is still to be determined, but 3-6 is certainly attainable for us again and we hope to improve on that as much as possible."

Don't Count Out Clare As It Prepares For Another Stellar Football Season

Scott Salowich Sports Scene

Even though Clare went 7-0 in the Jack Pine Conference and 8-2 overall last season -- erasing a momentary one-year absence from the playoffs hiccup in the process -- there was still a bit of an asterisk attached to the Pioneers 2016 season.

They played most of it without Brenden Sersaw, a dangerous playmaker who checked out with a broken collarbone in Week 3.

Sersaw is back for his junior campaign and he is going to get the rock

"We'll have him at wide receiv-

er, in the slot and even at quarterback some," said Clare coach Kelly Luplow. "We're going to move him around and try to give the other teams some alignment problems that way. He is at full strength now and he is the money man. We have got to have the ball in his hands."

Fortunately for the Pioneers, Sersaw is not the only weapon in the arsenal.

Senior Tyler Rodenbo took over at slot and in the secondary when Sersaw got hurt and brings, "speed and strength and great things, but you never know."

The Pioneers will find out where they stand quickly as they

Junior Nick Roe and senior Tanner Panches can also punish defenses that focus too much on the "money man,"

Junior Kaden Kelly will run the show at quarterback after a season under center for the junior varsity.

Clare is the popular pick to win the Jack Pine again, but Luplow doesn't want to hear it before a play has even been run.

"The plan is to be good," he said, "but all six of the guys we lost were outstanding players who we have to replace. We have some good ballplayers with a lot of potential, but a lot of them haven't had much game experience at this level. We're hoping for good things, but you never know."

open the season at perennially powerful Ithaca.

"We have to get after it right away," Luplow said. "This is the fourth time we've played them in the opener and, while it hasn't turned out to be a positive in the final score, I think it has been a positive for the rest of our games. We find out really quick how we match up against one of the highest-quality teams in the state."

As for the league, expect a grind.

"A lot of the teams have a lot of kids returning and I see a lot of parity," Luplow said. "Harrison will be tough again, Houghton Lake and Roscommon have been steadily getting better and Beaver-ton has really stepped it up. I think it's going to be one of those 'any given Friday night' kind of seasons."



Clare has all the tools to potentially make a long playoff run in 2017 if they can stay healthy. (Skip Traynor, High School Sports Scene Photo)



Every year the DeWitt High School football team is contending for a league championship and potentially a long playoff run. (Marvin Hall, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Few Prep Football Programs Have Been A Model Of Consistency To The Standard Of DeWitt

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

Year in and year out, you can almost expect the Panthers to reach the double-digit number in victories. Since 2001, there have been only four years where they failed to win at least 10 games and in two of those were nine-win seasons.

DeWitt is coached by Rob Zimmerman, a 2016 Michigan High School Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame inductee who has been at the helm of the program since 1999.

He credits many factors as to why the Panthers are among the top Division 4 teams in almost any given year.

"There are a lot of reasons," Zimmerman said. "It starts off with our youth program. We've had tremendous coaching, organization and our participation of the kids at the youth level. It's been that way for a very long time, even before I was there obviously. We have tremendous support within the community, both financially and also with crowds at DeWitt on Friday nights. And I've had so

much consistency with my coaching staff and that is rare. Guys have been with me a long time and that helps a great deal, not only at the varsity level but also at freshman and JV."

To continue his answer, he certainly did not exclude all the players who have come through the DeWitt system.

"And finally, we've had great kids," Zimmerman remarked. "They are kids who are willing to work. We ask a lot of them and they are willing to put the time in year after year. It's carried on with each new class. There is obviously a great expectation within our program and it's gotten passed on from one group of seniors to the next."

DeWitt finished last year 10-2, including 5-0 in the CAAC Gold which extended its conference winning streak to 43 straight games. Additionally, the Panthers won an 11th consecutive conference championship.

But the goals are much bigger than the conference at DeWitt, which provided profound disappointment last year when a late touchdown by Orchard Lake St. Mary's sunk the Panthers by a 35-28 final in Division 4 regionals.

In the MHSAA playoff era, DeWitt has advanced to a state championship game five times and lost each one. Four of the state title game losses have been during Zimmerman's tenure, while five other defeats have occurred in the state semifinals.

"That's obviously our biggest goal since we haven't achieved it," Zimmerman said. "In any good program, that goal is certainly there and at the top of it. But I think developing quality kids and teaching work ethic, all the life skills that you can give as a coach becomes more and more important. But I am not trying to downplay that we'd love to win a state championship by any means."

Zimmerman says this is the deepest offensive team he has had, struggling to even narrow it down to a couple names to mention at the forefront of it all.

Anthony Joseph will play quarterback for the Panthers and also start on defense, while junior returning starting center and team captain Adam Stone will lead the offensive line and play center.

Junior defensive tackle Michael Joseph, a returning starter, will be one of the leaders on that side of the ball. Senior team captain Alan Smith, a three-year starting free safety, also figures to be a big playmaker.

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West Bloomfield Enters Season With Lofty Goals Lakers Taking On A State Championship Or Bust Mentality

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

A quick look at the West Bloomfield roster and you can figure out quickly why several leaders on the team are using the same phrase: state championship or bust.

The Lakers boast an offense led by three Division I commits at skill positions - quarterback Bryce Veasley plus wideouts Taj Mustapha and A.J. Abbott - which is only the beginning of an ultra-talented roster that has the makings of being one of the better Division 1 squads in 2017.

After back-to-back nine-win seasons in 2014 and 2015, last year saw West Bloomfield dip to a 6-5 record and a 41-6 loss to Southfield in a district title game.

But with a senior-laden roster led by the aforementioned trio of offensive weapons plus a slew of other talented football players scattered all over the field, the Lakers could be poised to make a state championship run.

"We didn't like the way last year ended," West Bloomfield eighth-year head coach Ron Bellamy said. "We were a young ball club and now we're a veteran team with a lot of seniors. We're just excited to strap them up and play football again."

Bellamy, who was a standout wide receiver at the University of Michigan and spent five years in the NFL, has gradually turned around the fortunes of the Lakers as he enters

his eighth season at the helm.

West Bloomfield had previously only qualified for the postseason twice in school history prior to Bellamy taking over and it took a while to find traction, winning a total of seven games over the first three seasons.

Yet in 2017, the Lakers are viewed as a bona fide state title contender and the days of being an also-ran program are a distant memory.

"We started this program from the bottom up," Bellamy said. "We built it the right way and right now we're just trying to get better and better. The kids believe. They believe every season they have an opportunity. It's no longer about having a winning season or making the playoffs. The expectation now is to win championships. That's the culture we've built here and it's what we want to sustain."

One by one when asked their goals for the season, Veasley along with both playmaking wide receivers answered in various terms that the season would be a disappointment if it does not end with them hoisting a state championship trophy.

Lofty expectations for sure, but that is being created at West Bloomfield with future Division I college football players at so many positions.

"This year we're going all the way," Mustapha said without hesitation. "We're getting a ring."

Mustapha and Abbott both verbally committed to the University



Left to right: AJ Abbott (The University of Wisconsin), Bryce Veasley (Bowling Green University) and Taj Mustapha (The University of Wisconsin), are three pieces of the championship puzzle that West Bloomfield High School hopes can carry them to a state championship this season. The Lakers are loaded and expect to potentially give Cass Tech a run for its money in Division 1 this season. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)

of Wisconsin this summer, giving Veasley a pair of future Big Ten Conference wide receivers at his disposal.

It was only a couple years ago when the wide receiver duo met at 7-on-7 scrimmages over the summer. The duo quickly became close friends and while their commitments to Wisconsin may not necessarily have been a package deal, it definitely helped with the decision process.

"The Wisconsin coaching staff really sold me," Mustapha said. "Wisconsin is a top-of-the-line school. My main goal is to go to the NFL, but also to get my degree. Having a meaningful degree from Wisconsin is very important."

Mustapha, a 6-foot-1 and 185-pounder, is Veasley's go-to threat over the middle of the field and capable of turning a minimal gain into a home run in the blink of an eye. He caught 47 passes for 879 yards and nine touchdowns as a junior.

The 6-2 and 180-pound Abbott transfers in from Northville High School, where he played the previous two seasons. He has sub-4.5 speed,

which helped him catch 46 passes for 906 yards and six TDs last year.

His stock rose after flashing the speed at camps hosted by Michigan State, Iowa and Wisconsin. He received offers from all three schools, settling on Wisconsin in June following Mustapha's verbal commitment.

The speed Abbott possesses will loosen defenses and prevent them from focusing in on Mustapha or the run game.

"I stretch teams vertically so Taj can get open underneath," Abbott explained. "Teams won't know how to guard us, to be honest. And that will open up the run game also. So it's going to be good."

Bellamy spoke about the differences in the games of the two Wisconsin commits.

"A.J. is a vertical guy who can stretch the field but he can also run every route," Bellamy said. "Taj is almost like a running back playing wide receiver. He's a thicker kid who runs well and has the ability to catch everything. He has pretty good

hands and the ability to break tackles and make you miss. In our offense and in the scheme of things, that's very significant for us."

Another top senior on the Lakers roster is 6-6 and 300-pound tackle Javon Foster, a Central Michigan commit.

Bellamy has solid advice for all future Division I student-athletes under his tutelage, having plenty of experience in that field himself.

"You get a chance to get a free education because you can throw the football, catch the football, tackle people or block people," Bellamy added. "Make the most of that opportunity. Football is a game and it opens doors for you that it may not for other people. Take full advantage of it. I'm a big believer in football teaching you a lot of life lessons. It teaches you teamwork, leadership, determination, time management, and to be driven. Make the most of that."

West Bloomfield has never advanced past the district final round of the MHSAA postseason.

West Bloomfield's Senior QB Veasley Can Make All The Throws

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

Bryce Veasley checks all the boxes on being a prototype quarterback.

His size, 6-4 and 230 pounds, gives him the ability to see over defense and the strength to avoid pass rushers.

But for a big quarterback, he also has plenty of mobility that he flashed last season when he guided West Bloomfield to a 6-5 record and a Division 1 district final.

Veasley, who committed this summer to Bowling Green, is poised to lead a loaded Lakers offense in 2017 that has the potential to be one of the best in the state.

"I think this is going to be a really exciting season because of the team bond," Veasley said. "We all love to compete and get after it every day to make each other better."

Last year, Veasley threw for 2,515 yards and 22 touchdowns. With all the talent around him including Wisconsin commit wide receivers Taj Mustapha and A.J. Abbott, it seems without question that he will surpass those numbers in 2017.

West Bloomfield head coach Ron Bellamy knows he has a special talent in Veasley, a quarterback bigger in size than anyone he's coached in his eight years at the prep level and someone with the

talent to back up the accolades.

"He has unbelievable leadership qualities," Bellamy said about Veasley. "He has the physical tools. He's a big, strong kid who can stand in the pocket and take command of the team. Bryce is essentially a coach on the field for us."

Field turf was installed at West Bloomfield over the summer, with the players still waiting to step foot on it in the early practice weeks. It should give an added speed burst to a team chocked full of athleticism.

"They haven't let us get out there yet," Veasley stated. "But we're anxious."

After stepping away from football in middle school, Veasley resumed playing in high school at Southfield-Lathrup but once the school closed he wound up in a perfect situation at West Bloomfield.

His outstanding junior season plus time spent at college camps earned him interest from schools around the Midwest, which led to him eventually deciding Bowling Green was the right place to continue his football career.

"The coaching staff is great and the education system there is top of the line," Veasley added. "And another thing is, the offense they run is similar to what we do here so that comfort level of being in the spread and throwing the ball a lot excited me."

But for now, Veasley is focused solely on the prep season and ending his career with an MHSAA state championship title.

"This year we're kind of looking at it as state championship or bust," Veasley remarked. "With all the seniors, that's our main goal. But we're going to take it game-by-game and win each one."



West Bloomfield quarterback Bryce Veasley has already verbally committed to Bowling Green University, but don't be surprised if bigger schools jump on the bandwagon as the season progresses. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)



Farmington Hills Harrison Ovie Oghoufo recently announced he will continue his football career next season at Notre Dame. (Submitted Photo)

Farmington Hills Harrison Ovie Oghoufo Is A Man Among Boys

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

If Farmington Hills Harrison automatically qualifies for the MHSAA playoffs this season, the sixth victory will be a huge milestone for a legendary head coach.

Hawks head coach John Herrington, who has been at the helm since 1970, enters the 2017 campaign with 425 career victories. That ranks him second all-time to former Royal Oak Shrine and Birmingham Brother Rice coach Al Fracassa who retired after the 2013 season with 430 wins.

Following a 5-4 season that ended with the rare occurrence of Harrison missing the postseason, the focus throughout the offseason and into the summer has been to once again get back to the playoffs and compete for a state title.

It was only the fifth time since 1980 that Farmington Hills

Harrison has missed out on the postseason.

"I think they're all disappointed with how last year went," Herrington said. "We lost four games by 19 points. We thought we should have been in the playoffs and didn't make it, so obviously that's a big goal for this team."

Among the leaders on this year's Hawks team will be senior linebacker and tight end Ovie Oghoufo, a Notre Dame commit who has put his focus toward getting Harrison back into the playoffs.

"It was out of the ordinary for us to not make the playoffs," Oghoufo said. "It kind of puts pressure on this year's team so we don't repeat last season. Our defense should still be strong this year, but I believe our offense will be better and that's the key for us to get back into the playoffs."

Playing for such a well-respected head coach is certainly not lost on Oghoufo, who makes

sure to listen intently to someone who has compiled so many life experiences.

"It's great," Oghoufo said of playing for Herrington. "He's really wise and I've learned so much from him, not only through football but also things I can take in life. He's a really cool dude and his experience teaches us a lot about both the game and life."

Listed at 6-foot-3 and 190 pounds, Oghoufo is a menace on the defensive side of the ball and over the offseason has improved as a tight end to make himself a two-way force.

"He's got good toughness and quickness," Herrington said. "He can run and we believe he'll be a big leader on our defense. What people don't know is he's a really good tight end too. He'll be playing both ways. He can really catch the ball now. And he'll play special teams too, so Ovie will be on the field all the time."

Oghoufo has a pair of cousins - Mario and Michael Ojemudia - who have already taken the path to play Division I college football. Mario played at the University

of Michigan through 2015 and is now with the Baltimore Ravens, while Michael will be entering his redshirt sophomore season at Iowa.

The Division I offers for Oghoufo are too extensive to name here, but it was a no-brainer for him to settle on Notre Dame after his visit blew him away. In fact, he verbally committed during the summer of 2016 before his junior season although he says his reasoning for deciding so quickly had nothing to do with putting his focus on prep football.

"I went there and fell in love with it," Oghoufo says. "I felt I would have committed there anyway even if I waited. All the opportunities were laid out for me as soon as I got there. From the highlight video to the academics, it's special. Even if I don't play football, the degree would be crazy for me. It would give me a job and a path in life. Plus on the football side of it, Notre Dame produces linebackers so that also factored in."

Farmington Hills Harrison opens the season with a non-conference matchup at East Grand Rapids Thursday night.

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Another Demens Making A Splash At Country Day

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

Kolin Demens has a last name that is probably familiar to football fans in the state of Michigan.

That's because his older brother, Kenny, starred at Detroit Country Day and the University of Michigan before spending a few seasons with the Arizona Cardinals until he was cut in the 2016 preseason.

Now it is Kolin's turn to grab the spotlight, which he's already done for three years in his Country Day career. Now a senior, the standout outside linebacker has one more prep year to shine before he continues his football career at a university that he has not yet determined.

Demens has no shortage of

possible suitors and has taken trips over the summer to UCLA and Arizona, while Michigan is also among the schools still in play due to his brother's ties.

"It's nice knowing schools are looking at me and my options are wide-open," Demens said. "Before now, I was a young player on the team and I'm playing in a state where there are a lot of great players. It's a good feeling knowing college coaches see you're putting in the work and what you can do on the field."

Although Demens had missed recent practices with an illness and a minor injury, he took part in a usual amount of reps during the August 17 scrimmages versus Ann Arbor Skyline and Plymouth Salem.

He will look to improve on last year's numbers, when he racked up 66 tackles including 16 stops for a loss and 3.5 sacks plus an interception.

Demens also contributed heavily on offense, catching 12 passes for 158 yards and two touchdowns. He also completed his only pass for 59 yards, which went for a touchdown.

His outstanding play helped Country Day to a 13-1 record and the Division 4 state championship game, where the Yellowjackets fell 10-7 in a heartbreaker to Grand Rapids Catholic Central.

Having experienced state semifinals losses as a freshman and sophomore before last year's difficult defeat, it's all acted as a motivating factor entering his senior campaign.

"We've been so close the last three years," Demens said. "We have to get back and we're working on that now."

Demens and Country Day will have a chance to exact a bit of revenge on August 25 when it travels to GRCC to open the 2017 season.

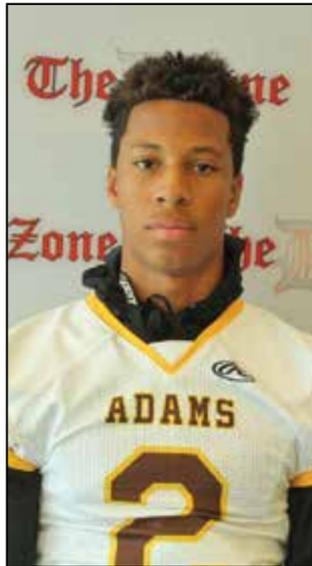
"We're getting right into it in week one," Demens beamed.

Yellowjackets head coach Dan MacLean, in his 20th year as head coach and 33rd total with the program, has certainly seen his fair share of players go on to play at the Division I college level.

MacLean sees Demens as a special talent.

"First of all, Kolin is a great young man," MacLean said. "He's a very nice guy and very approachable no matter if you're a senior or a freshman. But he's also an outstanding football player and has been since the moment he walked onto campus. He's the younger brother of one of the greatest players all-time here at Country Day. He's a different personality, but a tremendous kid to have in your program."

Detroit Country Day's Kolin Demens led the Yellowjackets to a 13-1 record and the Division 4 state championship game a year ago, before losing a heartbreaker to Grand Rapids Catholic Central 10-7. (Submitted Photo)



Missouri-Bound Vincent Gray Looks To Lead Rochester Adams Back To Prominence

Dan Stickrad Sports Scene

When Vincent Gray was in elementary school, he used to attend football games at Rochester Adams with his friends from the Rochester Redskins youth football organization and run around on the hill behind the south goal post. He dreamt about what it would be like one day snaring interceptions and making diving catches on that field.

Now a senior, the Rochester Adams standout is making the most of that dream and hopes to lead the Highlanders to another fine season.

"It seems like just yesterday," smiled Gray, a 6-foot-2, 180-pound defensive back/wide receiver in his third varsity season. "We used to throw the ball around on that hill during halftime at games. I couldn't wait to play high school football."

Gray not only plays but stars for the Highlanders. He excels.

"I think teams don't throw his way very much because he's such a great lockdown DB," said Adams head coach Tony Patriotto. "He only had two interceptions last year, but he knocked down some passes and covers so well. He's very athletic. I think he's going to have a great year as a senior."

Adams, which has made the postseason 17 times over the past 20 years and captured the Division 2 state championship back in 2003, has not advanced past the first round of the postseason since 2013 — Gray's eighth grade year.

"That is something we really want to change this year. There's a lot of pride at Adams and we hope to make a run this year," smiled Gray, who tacked on 15 pounds of muscle in the off-season.

"We have the talent. If we are going to make a run, it's going to be this year."

Plenty of Division I and D-II colleges had offered Gray during the past year. Virginia, Iowa State and Michigan State were among the leaders, but Gray committed to Missouri of the SEC back in July to end his recruitment.

"It felt like the right fit for me — love it (down) there," said Gray. "They are going to have a very good class (of freshmen) next year."

Gray suffered a torn meniscus after last season and that injury did not feature as quick of a recovery as anticipated.

A back-up guard as a sophomore on Adams' varsity basketball team in 2015-16 that reached the Class A Sweet 16, Gray was pitted to be the go-to guy this past winter on the hardwood. He humbly had to sit the pine to

rehab his knee as his teammates suffered through a major rebuilding campaign.

"That was tough. I wanted to be out there, but my knee just didn't heal right," recalled Gray. "It really bothered me not being able to play. But I couldn't risk reinjuring it."

Over the spring and summer, Gray worked out at various camps and combines and with various trainers. He also did some track and field workouts with members of Detroit East English's track team to strengthen his knee.

He is now fully healed and is ready for a fine encore campaign. Adams is back in the OAA-Red Division after a 10-year absence with a tough conference and non-conference schedule looming.

"We're ready for it, the challenges of playing those big schools," noted Gray, who has improved his GPA up to a 3.2. "We don't really have any easy games. We want to make Adams the way it used to be, a team that competes for championships."

Rochester Adams Vincent Gray is expecting to have a big senior season for the Highlanders in 2017. (Submitted Photo)

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Mr. Football candidate Tariq Reid of Davison spinning heads on grid-iron

Dan Stickrad Sports Scene

It's one thing to put up gaudy numbers at a small school. For Tariq Reid, it's a case of been there, done that.

Reid spent his first two prep football campaigns at Class C Burton Ather-ton, where he put up some impressive numbers without gaining much attention outside of the Genesee Area Conference.

After transferring to Class A Davison last season, Reid became the state's leading rusher in 2016. He set a single-season school record with 2,064 rushing yards and 113 receiving yards. Amongst those totals was a state-leading 36 total touchdowns during several dazzling performances.

"I thought I had a very good year, surprised some people," said Reid. "As a team, we had a really good year reaching the district (finals before falling to Clarkston). We want to be even better this year."

Now at 5-foot-11 and a much-stronger 205 pounds, Reid, who had multiple games with four-plus touchdowns last season, earned Associated Press Division 1/2 All-State First Team accolades. He also garnered All-State First Team by the Detroit Free Press, Detroit News and StateChampsNetwork.

After rushing for over 2,000 yards a year ago Davison's Tariq Reid is back for more hoping to lead the Cardinals to a long playoff run. (Submitted Photo)

"(His stats) doesn't even scratch the surface regarding the impact he has had at Davison because of the great kid he is off the field as well," praised Davison coach Kyle Zimmerman.

The Saginaw Valley League MVP was dynamite in every way. His own worst critic, Reid felt there was plenty of room for improvement.

Plenty.

"I ran track in the spring and went to a lot of camps over the summer. I needed to become a more powerful runner, stronger runner," admitted Reid. "I have a lot more work to do."

Reid mainly runs the open 200 meters and on the Cardinals' 400-meter relay and 800-meter relay units. He hopes to make the D-1 state meet as a senior after placing in the top eight at the regional as a junior in all three events.

But for now, he is hoping to have one fine encore campaign for Davison as a Mr. Football candidate.

"Awards are nice, but I just concentrate on what I can do to help my team and work on the things I need to work on," said Reid, who carries a fine 3.68 GPA with his eye on business. "We want to win our league, go undefeated (in the regular season) and go as far as we can in

the postseason. That's what my focus is on right now."

Reid has picked up Division I offers from Air Force, Columbia, Cornell and Morgan State, plus D-II offers from Grand Valley State, Saginaw Valley State and Northern Michigan. Michigan State and Ohio State have shown heavy interest as well, but will wait to see game film and stats from the 2017 season.

"I have had four D-I offers and three D-II offers and a few more said they want to see some game film from this year," said Reid. "The bigger schools are still interested. I am keeping all my options open. I am nowhere near a decision."

Davison lost some of its biggest players from the line to graduation, but brings back some more mobile players to the trenches.

"I think we will be a little different this year, pass a little more to throw teams off," said Reid. "We have a lot of guys that catch."

But opposing coaches should not back too far off the line — the Cardinals still have the state's most dangerous weapon.

"Whenever they call my number, I need to be ready to do my job," beamed Reid. "I am just ready to play again."

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Division 5 Or 6? Ithaca Won't Find Out Until Later

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Before Ithaca football fans get into the mood of Division 6 playoffs after the nine-game regular season concludes, coach Terry Hessbrook wants to put something to rest:

"We are not necessarily back in Division 6. We are Class C again," he said. "The divisions in football will not be decided until after week 9 of regular season."

The Yellowjackets had competed in Division 6 and had made six straight state football title games, winning five of them, until 2016. Higher enrollment moved Ithaca from Class C to B for general status and for sports like volleyball and basketball. For football, Ithaca went to Division 5 where the competition was much tougher. Being in Division 6 could have put Ithaca in the state title game again.

Classes A, B, C and D are determined when all MHSAA schools are divided into four equal groups. Ithaca fell into B and now is C. But

Hessbrook points out that football divisions are determined when the 256 state qualifiers are verified within the regular season ends. They are then grouped into eight divisions depending on enrollment. There's a chance Ithaca could go to 6 rather than 5, but it's too close to call right now, Hessbrook indicated.

Despite not winning a state title in 2016, the Yellowjackets achieved many memorable things. They won their eighth consecutive TVC West Division championship, and completed their seventh consecutive undefeated regular

season at 9-0. They won their eighth consecutive MHSAA District Championship and finished 11-1. Ithaca also set a state record for best 100-game record ever at 98-2.

"We graduated very few starters from last year's team," Hessbrook said, "with Greg Woodcock at linebacker and offensive line (playing at Olivet College), and Kyle Weaver and Dawson Sherman at defensive back and Garrison Pitcher at offensive lineman."

Key returners include seniors Joey Bentley (6-2, 190), a three-year varsity starter at quarterback and defensive back; Nathan Bellinger (6-5, 255) at offensive and defensive line; Adam Culp (6-5, 180) at kicker; Zach Hessbrook (6-1, 210) at linebacker/running; Trey Chapin (5-11, 165) at linebacker/running back; Seth Davis (5-10, 170) at receiver and outside linebacker; Nic Jones (6-1, 210) at two-way lineman; Ethan McCormick (6-2, 190) at offensive lineman/linebacker;

Seth Hessbrook (6-1 260) at lineman; Devin Barnes (5-10, 165) at receiver; Colton Campbell (5-9, 165) at receiver/defensive back (a 3-year varsity starter) and Jacob Allen (5-9, 155) at defensive back.

Chapin, Davis and Jones are three-year varsity players.

Sophomore Brayden Shaw (6-1, 210) at running back-linebacker, was the second-leading rusher as a freshman.

"We all expect our team to be very competitive every game," Hessbrook said. "We have some very high



Ithaca coach Terry Hessbrook guided the Yellowjackets to an 11-1 record and their eighth district title in a row last season. The Yellowjackets return a slew of seniors this season who would love to make a seventh trip in nine seasons to Ford Field in November. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photo)

goals and must keep our focus and play together. We will rely on each other a great deal, and be a Band of Brothers."

Hessbrook likes his team's strength speed and experience.

"We must stay attentive to details," he said. "The TVC is much tougher with additions of Pinconning, Ovid Elsie and Hemlock. I look for all of them to be at the top battling it out with a few familiar favorites, Ithaca and MLS."



Ithaca All-State Lineman Out For Another Banner Season

John Raffel
Sports Scene

The best of Nathan Bellinger may be yet to come.

That's a scary thought for Ithaca football opponents. Bellinger has already proven himself to be a force on the line both ways.

"Nathan Bellinger has made a very strong commitment to improving his strength as well as his agility over the offseason," Hessbrook said. "He has grown as well to 6-foot-5, 250 pounds. He is

someone that can take over a game and really wreaks havoc on offensive line schemes. You have to account for him and hopefully that will allow others to make plays. He will be called upon to also play on the offensive line this year so his conditioning will be a priority."

Bellinger played a key role in reinforcing Ithaca's role last season as a state power. He anchored the offensive and defensive lines and earned All-State honors.

Bellinger had had a busy offseason and is looking to have his best year as a senior.

Last year, he had 12 games under his belt with 56 solo tackles and 51 assists. He had one quarterback sack and two fumble recoveries.

He played a key role in a defense that allowed only 127 points in 12 games last season for the 11-1 Yellowjackets. They had three consecutive shutouts in weeks two through four. Bellinger echoed the sentiment of his teammates on the disappointment of not being able to garner another state title last year. That remains among his priorities this season, although the Jackets will first focus on gaining another TC title.

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Culp A Special Weapon For Ithaca Football

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Ithaca football coach Terry Hessbrook has many extremely talented players at many key positions.

That includes placekickers and the one he has in the Ithaca lineup for 2017 might be as good as it gets.

"Adam Culp is a special talent," Hessbrook said. "It's something that not many Class C schools have the luxury of having. He is 6-4 and can really kick the football. He won three kicking camps this summer at Eastern Michigan, Western Michigan and Central Michigan."

"He's participated in the Best of the Midwest in Chicago. He was also invited to camps at the University of Florida as well as Wisconsin."

So he has had a very busy summer. He has such a strong leg that we are surprised when the ball doesn't sail through the endzone."

Culp is also at wide receiver and defensive back. He's been on the varsity going into his third year and has been a starter. He points to kicking as his best position.

"That's what I'm looking to go to college for," he said.

He's been kicking since the sixth grade.

"I played soccer a lot," he said. "That's when I learned to kick the ball. My first practice in middle school football, I was on the kickoff team. My coach asked me if I wanted to try. That's how I got started. I was good at it."

Culp was one of the top kickers in

the state, finishing the regular season with 40 touchbacks, 33 extra points and seven field goals, with a long of 42 yards.

"I can punt but usually we do a quick kick when the quarterback punts the ball," he said. "I usually don't miss extra points. I don't miss many field goals either. The snap, the hold and the blocking is the most important part of extra points. Other teams like blocking kicks."

Culp takes pride in kicking it out of the end zone.

"Coach Hessbrook likes having other teams forced to go 80 yards," he said. Culp figures this year he'll have 70 to 80 percent chance to kicking it to the end zone, depending on the wind factor.

"The biggest part is having good contact through the ball," he said. "You don't need to swing your leg the hardest. You just need to hit the ball well. I focus on getting the nice approach and hitting ball cleanly. I know it will be touchback if I do

that." He booted two key field goals in the playoff loss last November to Frankenmuth.

"We lost but those field goals were big points," Culp said. "Those kicks helped the team. We almost won."

In 2015, when Ithaca won a state title, in the semi-finals, Culp had a 36-yard field goal. "We had previously missed two extra points on a block and on a bad snap," he said. "That kick got us the lead in the third quarter."

On college offers, "it's still too early for kickers," Culp said. "It will



Ithaca's Adam Culp is a special weapon to have for the Yellowjackets as his leg packs a punch and his clutch in big game situations. (Russ Pierce, High School Sports Scene Photo)

be late in the season before I get an offer, if I get one. Right now, I'm in the process of sending out film and talking."



Yellowjackets In Good Hands With Bentley At QB

John Raffel
Sports Scene

Ithaca is loaded with football talent again this season and the roster is again led by Joey Bentley.

"Joey has worked very hard at his mechanics and improving his arm strength," Ithaca coach Terry Hessbrook said. "He has added about 15 pounds from last year and was really playing well this summer."

It's Bentley's third year on the Ithaca. He was all-state honorable mention and first-team

all-conference at quarterback and safety. In the air, he was 129-of-222 for 2,056 yards and 20 touchdowns.

"My performance last year was good," Bentley said. "The team was 11-1, which is good season for a lot of other schools. We want to improve on that and get better overall."

Bentley passed for more than 300 yards against Muskegon Oakridge in the district title game.

"He is the straw that stirs the drink so to speak in Ithaca," Hessbrook said. "He will be relied upon to lead our team in many areas. He recently received his first offer from Hillsdale so we are all very excited about that."

As a quarterback, "I can be a leader, and

I think I have a strong arm and quick feet," Bentley said. As a safety, "I have good instinct and I love to hit."

It was a busy summer for Bentley in getting ready for the fall season.

On the offensive side, we have lots of starters back, he said. "On the defensive side, we have a lot of starters back."

Bentley is looking at improving his game on both sides of the ball and attended several camps and hit the weight room hard.

The Yellowjackets fell in the regional finals last year after having made the state finals six straight seasons. While it's the one-game-at-a-time approach, it's no secret the Yellowjackets want to return to Ford Field.

"The teams before us left their legacy," Bentley said.

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SPORTS SCENE'S TOP SENIORS TO WATCH



Jason Whittaker
- Rockford



Kenyon Story
- Breckenridge



Braeden Childress
- Big Rapids



Garhet Metiva
- Freeland



Taj Mustapha
- West Bloomfield



AJ Abbott
- West Bloomfield

Jason Whittaker 6'4", 197 QB, Rockford
One of the premier quarterbacks in the Midwest, Whittaker will be playing for Northwestern in the Big Ten next season.

Kolin Demens 6'0", 205 LB, Detroit Country Day
A big-time impact player on defense, Demens led Country Day to the Division 4 state finals last season.

Taj Mustapha 6'2", 175 WR, West Bloomfield
With size and speed, Mustapha is an explosive receiver who will be playing next fall at Wisconsin.

Blake Underwood 6'3", 190 DB, East Lansing
An outstanding ball-hawking safety, Underwood is a big-time get for Miami University of the Mid-American Conference.

Ben VanSumeren 6'3", 225 TE, Essexville-Garber
An outstanding athlete who can play a variety of positions, VanSumeren saw his recruiting blow up last spring after posting some impressive numbers at recruiting combines.

Bryce Veasley 6'4", 230 QB, West Bloomfield
Built like a defensive end, Veasley possesses a rocket for an arm and was a big commit for Bowling Green to get.

Braeden Childress 6'4", 210 TE, Big Rapids
Childress is a match-up nightmare for cornerbacks with his combination of size, strength and athletic ability.

Tariq Reed 5'10", 205 RB, Davison
One of the premier running backs in the state, Reed is being recruited by Michigan State and Western Michigan among other schools.

Cody Carone 6'4", 307 OL, Rockford
A starter for the Rams since his sophomore season, Carone is a big, punishing blocker that can play a number of positions along the line.

Michael Lynn III 6'0", 195 QB, Lansing Catholic
The latest in a long line of talented LCC quarterbacks, Lynn passed for over 1,700 yards and ran for over 1,100 more last fall.

OTHER SENIORS TO WATCH

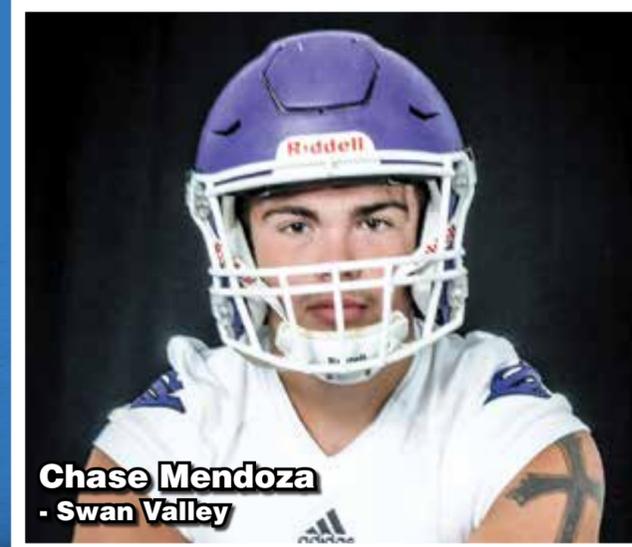
	H	W	P	School
AJ Abbott	6'1"	180	WR	West Bloomfield
Neven Simington	6'3"	210	LB	Saginaw
Dequez Weather	6'0"	185	RB	Bay City Central
Nolan Bird	6'1"	190	QB	Grand Ledge
Garhet Metiva	6'0"	239	LB	Freeland
Bryce Bearss	6'5"	190	QB	Millington
Patrick Nugent	6'3"	225	TE	Okemos
David Kruse	6'0"	185	QB	Lowell

	H	W	P	School
Joey Bentley	6'2"	185	QB	Ithaca
Kenyon Story	6'3"	270	DL	Breckenridge
Briar Bearss	6'1"	207	LB	Millington
Josh Czarnota	6'2"	205	ATH	Fenton
Emmett Boehler	5'8"	195	RB	Swan Valley
Cal Johnston	6'5"	215	DB	Grand Ledge
Nathan Bellinger	6'5"	255	DL	Ithaca

SPORTS SCENE'S TOP JUNIORS TO WATCH



Lance Dixon
- West Bloomfield



Chase Mendoza
- Swan Valley

Spencer Brown 6'6", 295 OL, Walled Lake Western
A dominating offensive lineman, Brown has already committed to Michigan State.

Lance Dixon 6'3", 195 DB West, Bloomfield
Dixon is a big-time safety that will continue West Bloomfield's run of Division 1 talent next season.

Sam Johnson 6'3", 180 QB, Walled Lake Western
Johnson has all the tools to be the premier quarterback in the state in the junior class and already counts 13 college offers.

William Racey 6'4", 280 OL, Flushing
The junior class is loaded with outstanding offensive linemen and Racey is already beginning to receive college offers.

Jacob Dean 6'9", 310 OL, Walled Lake Western
The Walled Lake Western offensive line has the kind of size that would make a small college envious.

OTHER JUNIORS TO WATCH

	H	W	P	School
Noah Smith	5'10"	180	DB	Lansing Everett
Kobe Myers	6'1"	190	WR/DB	Walled Lake Western
Michael Fletcher	6'6"	235	DL	Flint Carman-Ainsworth
Darian Holbrook	5'11"	172	DB	East Lansing
Joey Zorn	6'1"	200	LB	Flint Powers
Bruin French	6'4"	295	OL	Clare
Drew Humm	6'3"	175	QB	Alma
Hunter Norris	6'1"	190	LB	Mt. Pleasant
Hunter Collins	5'10"	180	RB	Breckenridge
Chase Mendoza	5'8"	185	RB	Swan Valley
Cameron White	5'11"	256	DL	Midland
Leonard Henry	6'4"	216	LB	Grand Blanc
Brec Alward	5'10"	170	RB	Alma
Nick Sierocki	5'11"	160	DB	Midland Dow
Hunter Klein	6'6"	280	OL	Portland



Alma Juniors Drew Humm & Brec Alward



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Staff and Submitted Photos

2017 HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE FOOTBALL PREVIEW

CAAC BLUE PREVIEW

GRAND LEDGE COMETS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference Blue
Coach: Matt Bird
2016 Record: 7-3, 6-1 1st
Players lost: Cole Johnson (OL-Hillsdale College), Xavier Farr (DB), Nic Lloyd (OL), Josh Martin (DL), Antonio Rush (RB), Rashad Thompson (LB).
Players returning: Nolan Bird (QB), Addison Cartere (OL), Nathan Eckhardt (DB), Cal Johnston (S), Cal Riggs (LB), Alec Rogers (OL), Carlos Shaffer (RB), Zach Willoughby (WR).
Outlook: The defending conference champions return a solid core of players this season led by senior all-conference quarterback Nolan Bird (6-2, 190). A three-year starter, Bird pilots an offense that also brings back all-conference wide receiver Zach Willoughby (6-1, 187) and veteran running back Carlos Shaffer. Senior Cal Johnston (6-5, 215) is another returning all-conference player. Johnston is a defensive leader at strong safety and an excellent receiver on offense. Senior Alec Rogers (5-11, 230) anchors the defensive line while Nathan Eckhardt is another talented defensive back. Senior linebacker Cal Riggs (5-10, 230) also earned all-conference honors and will see time in the offensive backfield as well.

EAST LANSING TROJANS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference Blue
Coach: Bill Feraco
2016 Record: 6-4, 5-2 2nd
Players lost: Kentree Patterson (WR-Illinois State), Hunter Helmick (QB-Concordia College), Anthony Nguyen (OL).
Players returning: Roy Bellamy-Crawford (LB), Connor Charamella (P), Kobe Hayward (SS), Darian Holbrook (RB), Triston Klusack (OL/DL), Mykel Thornton (DT), Blake Underwood (FS).
Outlook: Fresh off a playoff appearance, the Trojans have plenty of talent returning. Senior defensive back Blake Underwood (6-3, 190) is one of the premier defensive backs in the state and has committed to Miami University

of the Mid-American Conference. Junior running back Darian Holbrook (5-11, 175) is one of the top running backs in mid-Michigan and is also an outstanding defensive back who recorded seven interceptions last season. Senior defensive tackle Mykel Thornton (6-2, 240) is a returning all-conference player. Seniors Roy Bellamy-Crawford (DB) and two-way lineman Triston Klusack (6-0, 210) earned honorable-mention, all-conference honors last season.

LANSING SEXTON BIG REDS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference Blue
Coach: Daniel Boggan
2016 Record: 7-4, 5-2 2nd
Players lost: Jackson Escobar (DT), Jalen Faulkner (DB), Kahari Foy-Walton (TE), Tyron Hart (LB).
Players returning: Jackson Barnes (QB), Cody Blankenburg (RB/DB), Steve Bonham (OL), Karl Brooks (OLB), Byron Pearce (DL), Neal Prince (OLB), Rataavian Rinkines (RB/DB).
Outlook: The Big Reds are coming off a solid season that culminated in a run to the district finals. Senior Cody Blankenburg (5-8, 160) is an impact player on both sides of the ball. Blankenburg rushed for 1,113 yards and 16 touchdowns on offense and intercepted five passes on defense. Junior quarterback Jackson Barnes (6-0, 160) came on strong down the stretch and threw three touchdown passes in the district title game against Lakewood-Lake Odessa. Defense will be a strong point with Byron Pearce (5-9, 245) returning at nose guard and Neal Prince (5-11, 190) and Karl Brooks (6-4, 223) back at outside linebacker after earning honorable-mention, all-conference honors last season.

JACKSON VIKINGS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference Blue
Coach: Scott Farley
2016 Record: 5-4, 4-3 5th
Players lost: Anthony Parker (LB), Jamarr Parris (WR), Shonte Suddath (RB), Sebastian Toland (DB).
Players returning: Ex'zair Edwardas (RB), Isaiah Fleming (DL), Zion Hardrick (OLB), Cyaire Johnson (QB), Cortez Moore (SB/CB), Lance Taylor (QB/OLB),

Taylor Wilson (OG).
Outlook: The Vikings are primed to make some noise in their final year in the CAAC before moving to the Southeastern Conference next season. Jackson has plenty of young talent moving up from an undefeated junior-varsity team that averaged 38 points per game last season. Offensively, senior quarterback Lance Taylor (6-1, 178) and junior quarterback Cyaire Johnson (5-8, 150) give the Vikings a pair of talented options. Returning all-conference lineman Taylor Wilson (6-1, 317) anchors the offensive line while senior slot back Cortez Moore (5-10, 155) is a game-breaker with 4.4 speed.

HOLT RAMS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference Blue
Coach: Chad Fulk
2016 Record: 5-4, 5-2 2nd
Players lost: Josh Adado (OL), Kolin Leyrer (QB), Dylan Reich (OL), Alex Stockwell (OL).
Players returning: Owen Brown (LB), Sean Curry (LB), Anthony Domszalski (OL), Roscoe George (DL), Troy Jordan (RB), Ashton McGuire (DL), Jalen Steele, (RB).
Outlook: After a slow start, the Rams finished the seasons strong winning their final three games including a big upset of rival Grand Ledge in week nine. Developing a new quarterback will be key this season along with rebuilding the offensive line. The Rams will be solid on defense led by junior linebacker Sean Curry (6-2, 215) who earned all-conference honors last season. Up front, senior linemen Roscoe George (6-2, 270) and Ashton McGuire (6-2, 285) bring plenty of bulk to the trenches after both earning honorable-mention, all-conference honors a year ago.

LANSING EVERETT

League: Capital Area Activities Conference Blue
Coach: Chad Foster
2016 Record: 2-5, 2-7 6th
Players lost: DeShawn Lowery (DB-Davenport University), Kenny Schmidt (QB-Davenport University), Diego Martin (LB), Alfonso Reyna (OL), Jeylon Rogers (DL).
Players returning: Leslie Buck (WR), Isaiah Clark (RB/DL), Marcus Gilkie (OL), Luzander Granderson (OL),



Nolan Bird is back to lead the Grand Ledge offense this season. (Marvin Hall, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Keewone Parker (LB), Devon Salam (OLB), Noah Smith (DB).
Outlook: The Vikings will have a new look this season with a new head coach and a new starting quarterback under center. On offense, senior wide receiver Leslie Buck (5-11, 170) is a returning all-conference player while senior guard Luzander Granderson (5-9, 300) earned honorable-mention honors. Junior defensive back Noah Smith (6-0, 170) is an outstanding young player that earned honorable-mention honors as well.

OKEMOS CHIEFTAINS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference Blue
Coach: Jack Wallace
2016 Record: 2-5, 2-7 6th
Players lost: Joe Frangie (DE), Alex Luo (LB), Danny Rhodes (OL), Dalis Williams (RB).
Players returning: Charles Arrington (NG), Brandon Clark (SS), Broderick Jordan (OL), Drew McGaughy (LB), Patrick Nugent (TE/LB), Jason Pridgeon (S).
Outlook: The Chieftains return a number of talented players. Senior Patrick Nugent (6-3, 230) is a returning all-conference

linebacker and a standout tight end. Senior quarterback Dominique Clerkley (5-9, 160) is a dangerous impact player both as a runner and a passer. Defense will be a strong suit for Okemos with senior strong safety Brandon Clark and senior nose guard Charles Arrington (5-7, 210) a pair of returning all-conference defenders.

LANSING EASTERN QUAKERS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference Blue
Coach: Troy Matlock
2016 Record: 0-9, 0-7 8th
Players lost: Adam Rodriguez (OL), Tyrone Trainer (WR/DB), Deandre Wilson (OL).
Players returning: Kyle Lewis (OL), KyAngelo Robinson (FB/LB), Aaron Vallejo (DL).
Outlook: The Quakers have a mix of returning players and promising young athletes to work with as they look for improvement in the rugged CAAC Blue. Eastern has some good size along the lines and will look to take advantage of some talented skill position players.

CAAC WHITE PREVIEW

LANSING CATHOLIC CENTRAL COUGARS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference White
Coach: Jim Ahern
2016 Record: 8-2, 4-1 2nd
Players lost: Nick Baker (DB), Spencer Fox (OL), Konnor Maloney (DB), Eli Whitney (LB).
Players returning: Carson Abbott (DE), Matthew Abdullah (RB), Alex Bres (S), Jack Edwards (OLB), Jacob Fishette (OLB), Gabe Lenneman (DB), Michael Lynn III (QB), Roje Williams (WR).
Outlook: The Cougars have a potent bite



Williamston will need to find a replacement for big-play receiver Sy Barnett this season. (Submitted Photo)

CAAC RED PREVIEW

DEWITT PANTHERS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference Red
Coach: Rob Zimmerman
2016 Record: 10-2, 5-0 1st
Players lost: Cameron Feguer (OL), Will Nagel (QB), Cole Ozbun (DL), JD Ross (RB/DB).
Players returning: Jacob Hood (OL), Jack Horan (K), Noah Koenigsnecht (WR), David Locher (RB), Jack Lovejoy (DB), Alan Smith (WR), Adam Stone (OL), Stephen Walker (DB).
Outlook: The key on offense will be developing a new quarterback. The Panthers return some key impact players in all-conference running back David Locher (5-6, 185) and senior all-conference wide receiver Alan Smith (6-1, 175). Up front, senior center Jacob Hood (6-4, 240) and juniors Michael Joseph (5-9, 230) and Adam Stone lead the blocking. The return of all-conference kicker Jack Horan is another positive. On defense, seniors Stephen Walker and Jack Lovejoy (5-11, 185) head up the secondary with senior Josh Johnson returning at defensive end.

on offense once again thanks to the return of senior quarterback Michael Lynn III (6-0, 195). Last season Lynn passed for over 1,700 yards and rushed for over 1,100 yards while accounting for 31 touchdowns. Senior running back Matthew Abdullah (6-1, 190) and junior fullback Michael Whitney (5-10, 205) key the ground game. Up front, junior tackle Mike McKerr (6-4, 255) is one to watch. Senior safety Alex Bres (5-10, 170) is a returning all-conference player that paces the defense. Seniors Jacob Fishette and Jack Edwards are returning outside linebackers with senior Carson Abbott a returning end.

PORTLAND RED RAIDERS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference White
Coach: John Novara
2016 Record: 10-1, 5-0 1st
Players lost: Trevor Groesser (DL), Logan Lefke (RB), Hayden Maus (DL), Cole McGregor (DB), Gabe Schrauben (RB).
Players returning: Carson Abbott (DE), Matthew Abdullah (RB), Alex Bres (S), Jack Edwards (OLB), Jacob Fishette (OLB), Gabe Lenneman (DB), Michael Lynn III (QB), Roje Williams (WR).
Outlook: The defending conference champions return senior all-conference quarterback Austin Edwards to guide the offense. Senior slot back Gavin Thelen brings experience at receiver. Rebuilding the ground game will be a major project while the offensive line needs to develop some new starters. On defense, all-conference middle linebacker Dean Battle

ST. JOHNS REDWINGS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference Red
Coach: Dave Mariage
2016 Record: 5-4, 3-2 3rd
Players lost: Tanner Motz (LB-Western Michigan), Jack Bouck (RB), Kade Heibek (LB), Tyler Wilson (OL).
Players returning: Jacob Dorn (TE/DE), Joey Kratzer (RB), Konnor Near (RB), Colton Powell (QB), Tyler Secord (OL), Devin Williams (WR), Peyton Workman (FB).
Outlook: The Redwings will hang their hat on a solid defense. Senior defensive lineman Jacob Dorn (6-3, 235) is a returning all-conference player that totaled 10.5 tackles for loss and four sacks last season. Junior linebacker Konnor Near (6-1, 195) also earned all-conference honors as did senior nose guard Tyler Secord (6-1, 215). Near returns at running back where senior fullback Peyton Workman and Joey Kratzer will also play key roles. Secord anchors the offensive line with Dorn returning at tight end.

MASON BULLDOGS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference Red
Coach: Gary Houghton
2016 Record: 9-2, 4-1 2nd
Players lost: Andy Ferguson (RB/DB), Storm Miller (RB), Brandon Showers (WR), Brad Wilton (QB).

(6-0, 190) returns for his senior season. Portland also returns junior kicker Tate Dzewiatkowski.

FLOWERVILLE GLADIATORS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference White
Coach: Jonathon Fletcher
2016 Record: 7-3, 3-2 3rd
Players lost: Bryce Bertl (OL), Josh Nabozny (WR), Nick Semke (QB), Braden Shrader (DB).
Players returning: Mitchell Bishop (DT), Trevor Brock (LB), Alex Brownlee (RB), Zarien Jordan (OL), Marty Menard (WR), Trevor Miller (OL), Patrick Monahan-McLearn (RB), Brady Salter (DB).
Outlook: The Gladiators will rely on their defense early as the offense gets up to speed. Senior middle linebacker Trevor Brock (6-1, 190) is a returning all-conference player as is senior defensive tackle Mitchell Bishop (6-2, 200). Developing the passing game is a major concern entering the season. Senior running back Alex Brownlee (5-9, 175) will be a leader in the running game that is powered by an offensive line led by senior center Trevor Miller (6-2, 250) and senior tackle Zarien Jordan (6-4, 220).

WILLIAMSTON HORNETS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference White
Coach: Steve Kerston
2016 Record: 8-2, 4-1 2nd

Players returning: Forrest Akers (DE), Bobby Camacho (WR), Owen Hiller (DT), Mason Maas (RB), Riley Smith (OL), Ben Surato (OL).
Outlook: Veteran coach Jerry Van Haven has moved on to the collegiate coaching ranks many graduation losses makes this a transition year for the Bulldogs. Senior all-conference offensive tackle Riley Smith (6-3, 250) and senior Ben Surato (6-1, 215) return to anchor a solid offensive line. Senior Forrest Akers (6-1, 215) returns at defensive end while junior Owen Hiller (6-1, 215) is a lineman to watch at defensive tackle.

HASLETT VIKINGS

League: Capital Area Activities Con. Red
Coach: Charlie Otlewski
2016 Record: 4-5, 2-3 4th
Players lost: Evan Block (WR), Nevin Brittain (DL), Zak Hanson (OL/DL), Justin returns at running back where senior fullback Peyton Workman and Joey Kratzer will also play key roles. Secord anchors the offensive line with Dorn returning at tight end.
Outlook: Returning all-conference lineman Dan Keener anchors the Viking offensive line. At quarterback, junior Hyrum Tibbitts is in the mix while junior Ben Brittain looks to contribute at running back and junior Jaden Thelen at wide receiver along with senior slot back Nate Magnuson. Senior middle linebacker Nathan Otlewski (5-10, 200) will be among the leaders on defense.

Players lost: Sy Barnett (WR), Tommy Dutcher (RB), Logan Fenech (DB), John Partridge (OL), Stone Schafer (OL).
Players returning: Drew Bowen (SB), Evan Field (RB), Connor Finn (RB), Carey Haney (WR), Michael Hurlbert (OT), Jackson Pollak (QB).
Outlook: Senior quarterback Jackson Pollak (6-2, 210) returns to lead the Hornet offense. Junior running backs Evan Field and Connor Finn head up the ground game. Senior offensive tackle Michael Hurlbert (6-2, 235) is a returning all-conference player that anchors the offensive line. Developing a solid defense will be a key to the season as Williamston graduated many senior defenders.

EATON RAPIDS GREYHOUNDS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference White
Coach: Mike Smith
2016 Record: 4-5, 1-4 5th
Players lost: Jared Bush (OL), Collin Lewis (OL), Tristen Schultz (FB/LB), Drew Shafer (WR/DB).
Players returning: Darian Eaton (OL), David Herig (DB), Michael Herig (FB), Garrett Morris (QB), Dallas Price (OL), Patrick Roberts (OG), Nick Webb (TE/LB).
Outlook: With many experienced players back, the Greyhounds are looking to make a run at the playoffs. Senior quarterback Garrett Morris returns on offense along with senior fullback Michael Herig (6-1, 180). Senior tight end Nick Webb (6-4, 230) is a returning all-conference player.

LANSING WAVERLY WARRIORS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference Red
Coach: Anthony Walker
2016 Record: 2-7, 1-4 5th
Players lost: Malik Norris (DL), Tyler Rowden (LB), Jaden Sutton (RB), Kyle Tackett (WR).
Players returning: Kenny Brewer (WR), Markel Goins-Ellison (RB), Keshawn Harris (WR), Jalon Payne (QB), David Smith (DE).
Outlook: Waverly has a plethora of talented players that will make an impact on offense. Quarterback Jalon Payne (5-10, 165) is a versatile signal caller that is a threat running or passing. Kenny Brewer and Keshawn Harris are a pair of skilled receivers while junior running back Markel Goins-Ellison (5-6, 165) provides a running threat. Defensive end David Smith (5-11, 215) is one of the leaders of the Waverly defense.

CHARLOTTE ORIOLES

League: Capital Area Activities Conference Red
Coach: Jeff Finney
2016 Record: 2-7 as an independent.
Players lost: Justin Anderson (OL), Jordan Harper (SB), Caleb Johnson (TE/LB).
Players returning: Rhys Carter (TE), Stephen Dotts (WR), Dominic Ghiardi (QB), Dallas Mollette (OT), John O'Brian (OT), Anthony Williams (SB).

Senior guard Patrick Roberts (6-1, 230) also earned all-league honors and returns to anchor a line that includes senior Dallas Price (6-0, 245) and junior tackles Parker Thomas (6-2, 210) and Gabe Best (6-0, 285). Webb also returns on defense along with all-conference defensive back David Herig who will also see action at split end on offense.

IONIA BULLDOGS

League: Capital Area Activities Conference White
Coach: Mike Holes
2016 Record: 4-5, 0-5 6th
Players lost: Griffin Cantu (OL), Andrew Fox (RB), Isaac Mann (LB), Cam Sanicki (WR).
Players returning: Jared Christensen (T/DE), Jack Faulkner (MLB), Matthew Grand-Girard (WR), John Meyer (QB), Shane Nutt (K), Brady Swinehart (WR), Jake Veale (RB), Grant Wiles (RB).
Outlook: The Bulldogs closed out last season in a big way with a 28-point second-half comeback for a 35-30 win in the season finale. Quarterback John Meyer threw for 303 yards and three scores in that game and looks to carry the momentum into this year as wide receiver Matthew Grand-Girard also returns with junior Brady Swinehart looking to contribute at receiver. Junior defensive end/offensive tackle Jared Christensen (6-3, 280) turned in a strong season and it primed to take his game to the next level this season.



DeWitt finished last season 10-2. (Marvin Hall, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Outlook: Charlotte returns to the CAAC after a year in the Interstate-8 Conference and as an independent last season. The Orioles return a seasoned quarterback in junior Dominic Ghiardi (6-0, 180) who passed for over 800 yards last season. Junior Rhys Carter (6-0, 210) at tight end and juniors Stephen Dotts and Anthony Williams at receiver will provide targets in the passing game. Up front, senior offensive tackle John O'Brian (6-5, 250) is a powerful veteran lineman who has committed to Bowling Green. Senior Dallas Mollette (6-1, 285) also returns up front.

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CHSL - INTERSECTIONAL 2 PREVIEW

CLARKSTON EVEREST COLLEGIATE MOUNTAINEERS

LEAGUE: CHSL-Intersectional 2
 HEAD COACH: Mike Pruchnicki, fifth season
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 8-3, 2-2 CHSL-Intersectional 2 (third)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Grant Burgess, sr. QB/DB (All-State); Simon Fenske, sr. RB/DB/K/P; Luke Luttinen, sr. OL/DL; Josh Legg, sr. RB/DB; Nicholas Wilborn, sr. OL/DL; Maximilian Engle, jr. OL/DL; Michael Jones, jr. RB/DB; Nino Mastroratto, jr. RB/LB/KR; Trevor Myers, sr. OL/DB; Nate Emmert-Buck, jr. OL/DL
 OUTLOOK: Four seasons of football and four postseason berths. That's very impressive for a program still in its early stages. The Mountaineers are low in numbers with 15 players, but have one of the state's best small-school QBs and plenty of returning talent. If they stay healthy, there's no reason to see Everett take a step back.

ROYAL OAK SHRINE CATHOLIC KNIGHTS

LEAGUE: CHSL-Intersectional 2
 HEAD COACH: John Goddard, 41st season
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 9-3, 3-1 CHSL-Intersectional 2 (second)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Dan Romano, jr. TB; Josef Mehall, sr. SL; Victor Carpenter, sr. OL; Connor Gum, sr. OL/DT; Jonathan Robinson, sr. C; Brennan Smith, sr. WR
 OUTLOOK: With a college prospect at running back and a beefy front line, the Knights should be able to put points on the board. If Shrine can gel on defense the Knights could be a playoffs-caliber team once again. Shrine has reached the postseason in 16 of the previous campaigns.

WATERFORD OUR LADY OF THE LAKES LAKERS

LEAGUE: CHSL-Intersectional 2
 HEAD COACH: Josh Sawicki, fourth season
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 6-4, 4-0 CHSL-

Intersectional 2 (first)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Noah Robak, jr. WR; David Balent, jr. Te/LB; Vince Oliver, jr. SL/SE; Grant Ross, soph. QB/SE; John Ogurick, sr. OL/DL
 KEY NEWCOMERS: Blake Hollar, sr. SL/CB
 OUTLOOK: Judging by the numbers of making the postseason 25 times in the past 27 seasons WOLL is a state powerhouse. Even a rebuilding season, the Lakers still won a division title and reached the postseason.

MADISON HEIGHTS BISHOP FOLEY CATHOLIC VENTURES

LEAGUE: CHSL-Intersectional 2
 HEAD COACH: Brian Barnes, first season
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 3-6, 1-2 CHSL-Intersectional 2 (third)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Kendal Taylor, sr. RB; Cameron Cope, sr. DB; Franklin Karma, sr. DB; Wyatt Nadozny, sr. LB; Randy Crembi, sr. WR/CB; Braden Mussat, soph. QB
 OUTLOOK: Three straight losing seasons and just six wins in that span, plus a new coach, is plenty of fuel to propel the Ventures into the right direction. There is a solid core of athletes and the hope is to get Bishop Foley back above five-hundred and back into postseason contention.

MARINE CITY CARDINAL MOONEY CATHOLIC CARDINALS

LEAGUE: CHSL-Intersectional 2
 HEAD COACH: Jared Greenia, fourth season
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 1-8, 0-4 CHSL-Intersectional 2 (fifth)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Quincy Green, jr. QB; Dazio Travis, sr. DT/OT; Troy Webster, sr. WB/CB/SE; Collin Smith, sr. OL
 KEY NEWCOMERS: David Troma, jr. LB (transfer from Fraser); Daniel Everhardt, sr. DB
 OUTLOOK: This will be the fourth season since the Cardinals moved back from 8-Man football to 11-Man football and will try to drastically improve from its 1-8 ledger a year ago. There is plenty of talent, plus some key newcomers that may just help the rejuvenation process.

CHSL - INTERSECTIONAL 1 PREVIEW

GROSSE POINTE WOODS UNIVERSITY-LIGGETT KNIGHTS

LEAGUE: CHSL-Intersectional 1
 HEAD COACH: Dan Cimini, ninth season (41-25)
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 10-1, 5-0 MIAC (first)
 KEY RETURNNEES: William Morrison, sr. WR-DB; Brady McCarron, jr. OLB-K; Noah Miller, sr. DB
 OUTLOOK: After years of competing in the MIAC or Metro Conference before that, Liggett makes the leap into the Catholic High School League. That upgrade alone should help the Knights become more competitive. Liggett has been to the postseason seven straight years after not even fielding a team in 2008 and recording just three wins from 2004-09.

RIVERVIEW GABRIEL RICHARD PIONEERS

LEAGUE: CHSL-Intersectional 1
 HEAD COACH: Tom Michalsen (22-26)
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 3-6, 1-2 CHSL-Intersectional 1 (third)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Devin Slaughter, sr. OL/DL/LB; Eric Wigginton, sr. WR/DB; Devin Gleason, sr. QB; Kyle Alonte, jr. QB/DB/WR; Kenny Esquible, soph. DL/OL; Nevin Hughes, jr. RB/DE
 KEY NEWCOMERS: Nathan Palumbo, soph. RB; Evan Orme, jr. OL/DL/P; Ivan Hernandez, soph. K
 OUTLOOK: A mix between experience and youth, plus quality size for a small school, should give the Pioneers the edge to be a contender in the division and perhaps return to the postseason after a one-year hiatus in 2016.

BLOOMFIELD HILLS CRANBROOK KINGSWOOD CRANES

LEAGUE: CHSL-Intersectional 1
 HEAD COACH: Joe D'Angelo (229-87-4)
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 7-3, 3-0 CHSL-Intersectional 1 (first)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Christopher Smith, sr. OG/DE (Harvard commit); Aaron Wiggins, sr. RB (A.P. All-State Honorable Mention); Kobi Russell, jr. WR (A.P. All-State Honorable Mention); Torrell Williams, jr. DB/WR; Trevor McConnell, sr. QB; Pierson Cooke, sr. K/P (A.P. All-State); Marqis Stokes, sr. CB/WR; Tim Hauxwell, sr. OL
 KEY NEWOMERS: Danny Files, jr. OL/DT; Jack Fairman, soph. LB
 OUTLOOK: Three years ago, Coach D'Angelo decided to go young in his lineup. Now it is paying dividends. The defending Intersectional-1 Division and Prep Bowl champions have also



Junior Noah Robak is expected to be a big-play receiver for Waterford Our Lady of the Lakes this season. (Dan Stickrad, High School Sports Scene Photo)

ALLEN PARK CABRINI MONARCHS

LEAGUE: CHSL-Intersectional 1
 HEAD COACH: Ken Briere, second season
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 2-7, 0-3 CHSL-Intersectional 1 (fourth)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Matt Bzura, sr. QB; Sam Solis, sr. OL/DL; Noah Hamid, jr. OL/DL; Jack Freeman, sr. C/LB; Chris Lucas, sr. SS/WR/RB; Dominic Villareal, sr. WR/DB
 OUTLOOK: Coming off four straight losing seasons and just a combined 10 wins in that stretch, the Monarchs and Coach Briere are eager to tighten down defensively and pack more of an offensive punch this season. Cabrini will play home night games for the first time, as lights were recently installed at its field.

MACOMB LUTHERAN NORTH MUSTANGS

LEAGUE: CHSL-Intersectional 1
 HEAD COACH: Dave Daniels, first season
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 4-5, 2-1 CHSL-Intersectional 1 (second)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Joel Vandermeer, sr. WR/DB; William Morrison, jr. WR-DB; Brady McCarron, jr. OLB-K; Noah Miller, sr. DB
 OUTLOOK: In five of the past six years, the Mustangs have finished under five-hundred and have not reached the postseason since 2010. A new head coach is installing his new system with the hopes of a revival. Lutheran North went to the playoffs seven straight times from 2001-2007, but have only qualified one time since that season.

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CHSL - CENTRAL DIVISION PREVIEW

BIRMINGHAM BROTHER RICE WARRIORS

LEAGUE: CHSL-Central Division
 HEAD COACH: Adam Korzeniewski, first season
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 7-4, 1-2 CHSL-Central (third)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Rubin Williams, sr. LB; Caleb Jackson, sr. CB (Air Force); Mac Minara, sr. SE; Nickel Laurenlelle, sr. DT/
 OUTLOOK: For only the third time in more than four decades, Brother Rice has a new coach, as David Sofran is out after going 20-12 in three seasons and Adam Korzeniewski is into the head role. The Warriors have reached the postseason in 17 of the past 18 seasons, including last season where they lost in the pre-district to Birmingham Groves. In 2015, Rice finished below five-hundred for only the fourth time

with the other three losing campaigns coming in the school's infant stages (1962-64). Competing for league titles and postseason berths will again be the norm at Brother Rice.

NOVI DETROIT CATHOLIC CENTRAL SHAMROCKS

LEAGUE: CHSL-Central Division
 HEAD COACH: Dan Anderson, first season
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 13-1, 3-0 CHSL-Central (first)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Carson Kovath, sr. RB/LB; Ryan Cam, sr. RB/LB; Isaac Darkangelo, sr. RB/LB; Matt Young, sr. LB/RB; Joe Natoci, sr. OL/DL; Andrew Paxton, sr. OL/DL; Nick Carrey, sr. OL/DL; Mike Harding, sr. TE/DE
 KEY NEWCOMERS: Marco Gennich, soph. QB; Nate Anderson, jr. WR/DB; Liam Cunningham, sr. RB/DB; Jack Downs, sr. Wr/DB; Jake Hinshaw, sr. QB; Ryan Birney, jr. WR/DB; Parker Bohland, jr. RB/DB; Noah Shanlian, jr. RB/LB; Connor O'Neill, sr. DB/RB; Labor Morgan, sr. LB/RB; Samih Beydoun, jr. LB/RB; Brendan Doyle,

ORCHARD LAKE ST. MARY'S EAGLETS

LEAGUE: CHSL-Central Division
 HEAD COACH: George Porritt, 29th season (268-72)
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 10-4, 2-1 CHSL-Central (second)
 KEY RETURNNEES: RaShawn Allen, sr. QB/RB/WR/DB; Ky'ren Cunningham, sr. LB; Caleb Priekshorn, sr. QB; Donnie Whalen, sr. OG/DT; Nathan Coolidge, sr. DT; Ben Fee, sr. K/P; Nick Gerd, sr. OLB
 OUTLOOK: The defending D-3 state champs are one of the state's premier programs, reaching the postseason

in 12 of the past 14 years and 17 of 20 campaigns. Overall, OLSM has captured seven state titles. With George Porritt at the helm once again, expectations of long postseason runs will remain again in 2017.

WARREN DE LA SALLE PILOTS

LEAGUE: CHSL-Central Division
 HEAD COACH: Mike Giannone, second season
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 4-5, 0-3 CHSL-Central (fourth)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Brendan Madigan, sr. LB/RB; George Tannyhill, sr. RB; Jake Badalamenti, sr. DB/KR/WR; Dan Moudowski, jr. DL/OL; Cam Crosby, sr. TE
 OUTLOOK: Three years removed from a state championship, the Pilots hope to have a resurgence after finishing only 4-5 last season. Former Macomb Dakota coach Mike Giannone has a talented group at his disposal, but also a loaded schedule as De La Salle will try to make the postseason a 10th time in 12 years.



Orchard Lakes St. Mary's enters the season as the defending D3 champion under longtime coach George Porritt. (Submitted Photo)

GREATER THUMB AREA CONFERENCE WEST DIVISION PREVIEW

BAD AXE HATCHETS

LEAGUE: GTAC-West Division
 HEAD COACH: Kelly Durr
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 1-8, 0-5 GTAC-West (sixth)
 OUTLOOK: After going winless in conference play in 2016, the Hatchets are looking to spring a couple of upsets and move up the GTAC ladder.

SCHOOL: Cass City Red Hawks
 LEAGUE: GTAC-West Division
 HEAD COACH: Scott Cuthrell
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 6-4, 3-2 GTAC-West (third)
 OUTLOOK: In a wide-open GTC-West, the Red Hawks will look to soar up the standings and make a run at the conference title.

ELKTON - PIGEON - BAY PORT LAKERS

LEAGUE: GTAC-West Division
 HEAD COACH: Stephen VerBurg
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 7-3, 4-1 GTAC-West (second)
 OUTLOOK: After finishing second in

the GTAC-West, the Lakers are looking to overtake defending champion USA with an experienced squad.

REESE ROCKETS

LEAGUE: GTAC-West Division
 HEAD COACH: Bob Bouvy
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 5-5, 2-3 GTAC-West (fourth)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Bo Schember, sr. C; Luke DuRussel, sr. TB; Mat Nobles, sr. WB; T.J. Rambo, sr. OG; Kyle Stockmeyer, sr. TE
 KEY NEWCOMERS: Mason Hawes, soph. OT/DT; Adam Fisher, jr. QB; Tanoah Troublefield, jr. TE; Jarod Wortman, jr. OT/DT; Gabe Robinson, jr. P
 OUTLOOK: After starting 4-1, the Rockets lost three straight games to end the season. This year's squad features a large offensive line and a lot of team speed. That could spell a winning formula for a team expected to contend in the conference race.

UNIONVILLE - SEBOWING PATRIOTS

LEAGUE: GTAC-West Division
 HEAD COACH: Josh Hahn, first season
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 9-2, 5-0 GTAC-West (first)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Cooper Kauffold, sr. LB/OG; Josh Lang, sr. SE/RB; Hunter Bohn, sr. CB/RB; Miles Geiger, sr. DL/OT; Blake Pierson, sr. DL/OG; Glenn

Shook, sr. DL/OL; Alan Rabun, sr. DL/RB/K
 KEY NEWCOMERS: Brendan Prime, sr. SS/TE; Micah Cramer, jr. S/QB; Chase Suber, jr. CB/RB
 OUTLOOK: The Patriots ventured from a 1-8 squad in 014 to a 9-2 team in 2016. This season, USA counters with an experienced team that is capable of repeating as GTAC-West champs and advancing in the postseason.

VASSAR VULCANS

LEAGUE: GTAC-West Division
 HEAD COACH: Jason Kiss, 11th season (59-38)
 LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 3-6, 1-4 GTAC-West (fifth)
 KEY RETURNNEES: Ricardo Macon, jr. QB/LB Phil Baudoux, sr. RB; Mason Morely, sr. OL/DL; Trevor Bellamy, sr. OL/LB; Steven Hecht, sr. WR; Phil Baudoux, sr. WR; Collin Bowden, sr. LB/WR; Hunter Backer, sr. DB; Trejyn Callahan, sr. DT; Steven Hecht, sr. DT; Hunter Baker, RB/KR; Jackson Noel, sr. WR/DB
 KEY NEWCOMERS: Richardo Vela, jr. RB/LB; Logan Nelson, sr. WR/DB; Kyle Wlaker, jr. OL/DL; Ricardo Macon, jr. QB/LB
 OUTLOOK: With eight players on both side of the ball with experience starting games last season, the Vulcans are one of the more experienced teams in the league. Vassar has as good a shot as anybody to claim the conference crown.

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FLINT METRO LEAGUE PREVIEW

CLIO MUSTANGS

LEAGUE: Flint Metro League
HEAD COACH: Jeffrey Klopf, second season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 1-8, 0-7 FML (eighth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Garrett McGraw, sr. OG; Dylan Davis, sr. RB; Kody Ryan, sr. RB
OUTLOOK: There's ample opportunity at Clio, where only four returning starters are back from a 1-8 team. The Mustangs have had a revolving door of coaches in recent years, and Klopf has the task of rebuilding a program that has not enjoyed a winning seasons since 2001 and recorded only nine total wins in the previous 10 seasons.

FENTON TIGERS

LEAGUE: Flint Metro League
HEAD COACH: Jeffrey Setzke (141-73, 78-38 at Fenton)
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 9-3, 7-0 FML (first)
KEY RETURNNEES: John Czarnota, sr. QB (All-State); Chanse Setzke, sr. WR/DB; Lance Mercord, soph. RB; Josh Mahar, sr. RB/DB; David Pietryga, sr. TE/FS; Tyler MacIntosh, sr. OL/DE; Grady Sonderoth, sr. C/LB; Trevor Edgar, sr. OL/DT; Logan Prater, jr. OT/DT; Devin Fuller, sr. DT; Hunter Chappell, sr. DE.
KEY NEWCOMERS: John Sage, sr. WR/DB; Spencer Rivera, jr. RB/SS; Ethan Fulton, jr. WR/FS; Jaden Lainessee, soph. RB/LB; Austin Henard, fr. DE; Zck Pierson, jr. WR; Logan

Welch, jr. DB.
OUTLOOK: The always tough Tigers are coming off nine straight postseason appearances, including reaching the D-2 regional finals last season. Fenton has captured three straight FML titles and won 21 straight within the conference. Expect the Tigers to contend once again.

FLINT KEARSLEY HORNETS

LEAGUE: Flint Metro League
HEAD COACH: Kaleb Forr, first season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 2-7, 1-6 FML (tied-sixth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Tommy Plunkey, sr. ATH/DB/KR; Bailey Douglas, sr. OG/DE; Gavin Eton, sr. WR/DB/KR; Marcellis Collins, sr. OT/DT; Jacob Kunkel, sr. QB/DB; Teven Thompson-Farrior, sr. OL/DL; Nathan Warren, sr. OL/DT; Malik Davis, sr. FE/DE; Dakotah Doman, sr. K
KEY NEWCOMERS: Braiden Mancour, sr. WR/DB; Mateo Booth, sr. OG/DT; Tavern Harris, sr. ATH/DB; Dylan Bescher, jr. TE/LB; Michael Laura, jr. ATH/OLB.
OUTLOOK: There's a combined 11 returning starters back for the Hornets, who hope to climb into the upper echelon of the FML.

FLUSHING RAIDERS

LEAGUE: Flint Metro League
HEAD COACH: Robert Oginsky, fifth season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 4-5, 3-4 FML (fifth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Cal Endicott, sr. QB/P; Aiden Harrison, jr. WR/

KR; Tyler Morris, jr. WR/KR; Bradley Novess, sr. DL; Antonio Farero, sr. LB; Conner Melancon, sr. OL; Dan Shaheen, sr. OL; Nick Morrison, sr. K
KEY NEWCOMERS: Grayson Makranyi, jr. DB; Raylon Roberts, jr. RB; Joe Jaruzel, soph. DB/KR; Donny Snyder, soph. LB
OUTLOOK: Seven starters are back on offense and six on defense for the Raiders, who hope to crack the top trio of teams in the league.

HOLLY BRONCOS

LEAGUE: Flint Metro League
HEAD COACH: Ryan Culloty, seventh season (74-64)
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 5-4, 4-3 FML (fourth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Cade Dallwitz, jr. QB/LB; Collin Dallwitz, sr. RB/LB; Collin DeGriselles, sr. OL/LB; Paul Eley, sr. OL/DL; Jacob Honstetter, jr. RB/LB; JD Lannon, sr. TE/DB/P; Zack Miller, sr. OL/DL; Wyatt Scribner, sr. RB/DB; DJ Tennis, sr. RB/DL; Grant Tooley, sr. TE/LB; Adam Welch, jr. DE/DB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Marko Bullard, soph. RB/DL; Bennie Dromose, sr. OL/DL; Tanner Graveratte, jr. E/LB; Rico McDonough, soph. RB/DL; Joe O'Connor, jr. RB/LB; Blue Querio, jr. OL/DL; Sam Hild, sr. K
OUTLOOK: There are eight returning starters back on both sides of the football for the Broncos, another team with eyes on cracking the top third of the FML and reaching the postseason. Holly has reached the playoffs four times in the past 11 years after being a cellar dweller for decades. This program is far more competitive in today's arena.

LINDEN EAGLES

LEAGUE: Flint Metro League
HEAD COACH: Nick Douglass and Dennis Hopkins
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 7-4, 5-2 FML (third)
KEY RETURNNEES: Cade Dickson, sr. WR/LB (All-League); Corbin Sines, sr. WR; Seeger DeGayner, soph. WR/DB (All-League); Garrett Durkac, jr. OL; Eddie Grode, sr. OL; Avery Jacobs, sr. WR; Hunter Babcock, sr. WR/LB; Noah Giacomontonio, sr. WR/DB; George Walterhouse, jr. QB; Phoenix Dickson, soph. QB/RB/LB; Tyler Hart, jr. OL; Andrew Armstrong, jr. OL/DL; Travis Klocek, jr. WR; Josh Abernathy, sr. LB; Zck Brown, sr. DT (All-League); Avery

Former Davison standout Kalebb Forr returns to the area to take over the Flint Kearsley football program. (Submitted Photo)



Owosso returns to the Flint Metro League this season under new coach Devin Pringle. (Mike Schutt, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Jacobs, sr. DB (All-League); Easton Giacomontoni, jr. LB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Owen Wagnitz, sr. DL; Luke Kenney, jr. DB
OUTLOOK: Third in the FML last season, Linden brings back seven starters on defense and five on offense and will look to reach the postseason a 16th straight time.

ORTONVILLE BRANDON BLACKHAWKS

LEAGUE: Flint Metro League
HEAD COACH: Brad Zube, second season (8-2)
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 8-2, 6-1 FML (second)
KEY RETURNNEES: Matt Hill, jr. OL; Ryan Beachapp, sr. OL; Ean Thompson, sr. C; Kevin Grigeriett, sr. QB; Bryce Chamberlain, sr. OLB (D-1 recruit); Clay DeBoer, sr. FB; Josh Manfroni, sr. WR/DB; Mike Nica, jr. ILB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Sincere Perkins, sr. WR (transfer from Waterford Mott); Matt Harrison, jr. WR
OUTLOOK: In coach Zube's first season with Brandon, the Blackhaws surged to second on the league and return 14 returning starters this season. Could this be the year Brandon unseats Fenton in the FML? The two meet in Week 1 at U-M.

OWOSSO TROJANS

LEAGUE: Flint Metro League
HEAD COACH: Devin Pringle, first season

LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 0-9, 0-5 CAAC-Red (sixth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Jhakab Hickey, sr. TE/DB; Carson Bornefeld, jr. RB/DB; Damian Andrews, jr. RB/LB; Dakota Garrison, jr. G/LB; Preston Rowilson, jr. OL/DL; Hunter Blaha, soph. QB
OUTLOOK: A former coach at Lansing Waverly and Carson City-Crystal, Coach Pringle has the task of rebuilding the Trojans, who are coming off a 2-34 record the past four seasons.

SWARTZ CREEK DRAGONS

LEAGUE: Flint Metro League
HEAD COACH: Joe Spencer, second season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 1-8, 1-6 FML (tied-sixth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Myles Johnson, sr. LB; Nathan Kelley, sr. LB; Lance Clapp, sr. DL; Brandon Varner, sr. OL; Matt Smith, sr. RB; Justin Schlaack, jr. OL; Max Murphy, jr. DB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Jayln Price-Rose, jr. WR; Taquavius Humphries, jr. WR; Grant Taylor, jr. DB; Carson Gardner, jr. OL; Michael Smith, jr. QB; Thomas Marshall, jr. RB; Michael Vieau, jr. DB; Joe Older, jr. DE
OUTLOOK: After reaching the postseason for the first and only time in 2012, the Dragons have sputtered to a 14-22 record ever since that campaign. Joe Spencer has his system in place and a talented group of underclassmen to ride back to the top half of the league and back into playoff contention.

CMAC PREVIEW

PEWAMO-WESTPHALIA

League: Central Michigan Athletic Conference
Coach: Jeremy Miller
2017 Record: 14-0, 7-0 1st
Players lost: Jared Smith (RB-Michigan Tech), Nolan Hagen (DL), Logan Hengesbach (DB), Nick Jandernoa (DB), Devon Pung (LB), Dominique Spitzley (OL).
Players returning: Jimmy Lehman (QB), Jacob Pung (OL), Isaiah Schafer (OL), Nathan Simon (OL), Jake Spitzley (WR), Alec Thelen (QB/K), Bryce Thelen (RB), Garrett Triewweiler (WR), Cameron Wirth (RB).
Outlook: The defending Division 7 state champions may have took some hits due to graduation but enough solid players return to make the Pirates the team to beat in the league once again. Senior quarterbacks Jimmy Lehman (6-4, 205) and Alec Thelen (5-10, 165) bring diverse skills sets to the field. The lines are in good shape with senior Isaiah Schafer (6-2, 250), Nathan Simon (6-1, 270) and Jacob Pung (6-0, 210) around. Senior Bryce Thelen (5-11, 190) and junior Cameron Wirth (5-10, 190) are a pair of solid running backs.

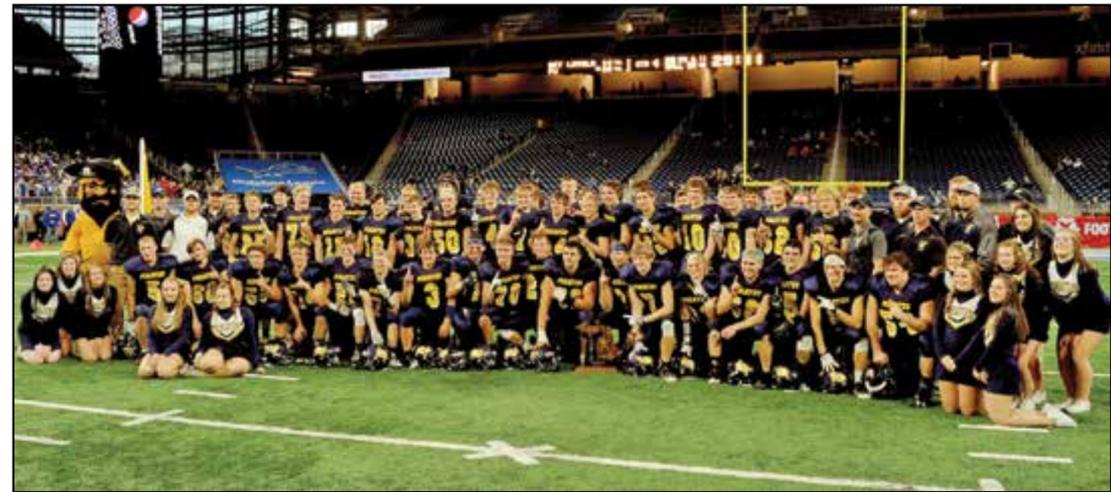
LAINGSBURG WOLFPACK

League: Central Michigan Athletic Conference
Coach: Brian Borgman
2017 Record: 8-2, 6-1 2nd
Players lost: Avery Alana (WR), Austin Elliot (DE), Lucas Fraidenburg (RB), Jordan Jones (WR).
Players returning: Cole Armbruster (DL), Jakob Cecil (OL), Johnny Fortino (C/LB), Nate Mentus (WR/FS), Nick Putnam (QB), Riley Reeves (WR), Aaron Rutila (RB), Jonathan Schlack (DB).
Outlook: After placing second in the league last season, the Wolfpack have their sights set on wrestling the league title away from P-W. The Laingsburg offense will be productive thanks to the return of senior quarterback Nick Putnam who passed for over 1,700

yards en route to earning honorable-mention, all-state honors. Senior Nate Mentus totaled over 500 receiving yards and returns along with Nathan Conklin. Senior linemen Jakob Cecil (6-2, 275) and Johnny Fortino (5-11, 185) anchor what should be a solid offensive line. Fortino is also a defensive leader at linebacker with Mentus back at free safety. Senior defensive end Cole Armbruster (6-2, 222) also returns to what will be a solid defense.

FOWLER EAGLES

League: Central Michigan Athletic Conference
Coach: Kris Ernst
2017 Record: 6-4, 4-3 3rd
Players lost: Logan Feldpausch (FB/DB), Justin Myers (RB), Jeremy Pung (DL), Jared Spears (OL), Dallas Watts (LB).
Players returning: Noah Hamilton (OL/DL), Troy Hufnagel (WR/DB), Scott Pemberton (RB/LB), Mason Pline (TE/DE), Tyler Rademacher (OL/DE), Brand Thelen (RB/CB).
Outlook: Fowler suffered some heavy graduation losses but also returns some very talented players. Senior Scott Pemberton (5-11, 190) is one of the premier running backs in the league with his combination of speed and power and is also a solid linebacker. Brand Thelen (5-8, 165) is a speedster who is a lockdown cornerback on defense while Mason Pline (6-6, 225) is an outstanding all-around athlete that is a matchup nightmare on offense and a playmaker on defense. Developing depth will be a key to success this season.



The Pewamo-Westphalia football team celebrates after winning the Division 7 championship a year ago. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)

DANSVILLE AGGIES

League: Central Michigan Athletic Conference
Coach: Mike Galbreath
2017 Record: 6-4, 4-3 3rd
Players lost: Gordon Bushard (OL/DL), Nikolas Rincon (WR/LB), Clay Soule (QB/DB), Johnathan Stid (RB/LB).
Players returning: John Dell (LB), Carter Frantz (WR), Preston Graf (OL/DL), Cole Minnis (OL/DL), Noah Simon (FB), Hayden Voss (DB).
Outlook: Developing a new quarterback with the graduation of Clay Soule will be key. Junior Hayden Voss, a starter at defensive back last year, may take over under center this season. Senior wide receiver Carter Frantz is an outstanding all-around athlete who is one of the better receivers in the league and an outstanding kick returner. Cole Minnis is a solid two-way lineman. Senior Noah Simon is back at fullback while junior John Dell (6-2, 225) is a leader of the defense at linebacker.

BATH FIGHTING BEES

League: Central Michigan Athletic Conference
Coach: Matthew Stephens
2017 Record: 4-5, 4-3 3rd
Players lost: Matt Anibal (DE), Sam Halfinan (WR), Max Tiraboschi (QB), Sam Weiler (WR).
Players returning: Sam Agler (OL/OLB), Cade Bucht (WR), Chaz Hatt (FB), Jalen Miller (WR), Zach Parry (LB), Jaylen Richardson-Green (RB).
Outlook: The Fighting Bees have the ingredients for a solid running game with the return of senior backs Chaz Hatt (5-9, 170) and Jaylen Richardson-Green (5-9, 155). Up front, senior Sam

Agler (6-3, 205) returns to anchor the offensive line. The defense looks to be solid with Agler returning at linebacker along with senior Zach Parry (6-0, 195). Developing a new quarterback will be key but the Fighting Bees should again be a challenger in the conference.

FULTON PIRATES

League: Central Michigan Athletic Conference
Coach: Paul Hungerford
2017 Record: 3-6, 2-5 6th
Players lost: Zach Cooper (OL/DL), Ben Fischer (RB/DB), Paul Smith (OL/DL), Colton Stipcak (QB), Adam Wiles (OL/DE).
Players returning: Zach Andrews (QB), Jon Baker (RB/DB), Blake Batis (SB/DB), Adam Dufflo (WR), Hudson Friesen (SB/DB), TJ Johnston (RB), Quincee Mahler (OL/DL).
Outlook: Figuring out the quarterback position is a major key as last year's starter Colton Stipcak provided the Pirates with solid play. Standout two-way lineman Adam Wiles will also be missed. Senior Hudson Friesen and junior Zach Andrews are possible answers at quarterback. Fulton does return a pair of talented running backs in seniors TJ Johnston and Jon Baker who both have game-breaking ability. Senior Quincee Mahler (5-9, 220) is a standout on both sides of the line. Senior receiver/defensive back Blake Botis is coming back from injury and junior Adam Duplo will also be in the mix at receiver and in the secondary.

SARANAC REDSKINS

League: Central Michigan Athletic Conference
Coach: Andrew Lytle

2017 Record: 3-6, 1-6 7th
Players lost: Jacob Bruinekool (LB), Justin Davis (WR), Ray Marquez (SB), Michael Wojcik (FB).
Players returning: Tyler Bowen (DB), Tavon Haskins (WR), Brady Jackson (QB/DB), Chase Potter (RB), Robert Pung (OL), Drew Ward (OLB).
Outlook: Saranac will count on juniors Taven Haskins (6-3, 197) and Brady Jackson (6-2, 190) to provide impact plays on offense. Jackson is an athletic quarterback while Haskins is a big receiver with game-breaking skills. Junior running back Chase Potter (6-0, 185) will key the ground game. Jackson and Haskins will also play key roles on defense along with senior defensive back Tyler Bowen and junior linebacker Drew Ward.

POTTERVILLE VIKINGS

League: Central Michigan Athletic Conference
Coach: David Matthews
2017 Record: 0-9, 0-7 8th
Players lost: Cory Masters (LB), Tyler Moulder (OL/DL).
Players returning: Zach Baker (WR/DB), Hunter Geisenhaver (WR), Nick Lett (OL), Dylan McPhee (TE/DE), Miles Murphy (RB/DE), Mike Riley (OL/DL).
Outlook: The Vikings are looking for improvement behind many returning players. Senior Dylan McPhee (6-1, 240) is a three-year veteran that will lead the charge on defense and make an impact at tight end. Junior Zach Baker is also a two-way threat at wide receiver and defensive back. Look for junior Miles Murphy to make an impact at running back and defensive end while senior Mike Riley returns at center and the defensive line.



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FLINT METRO LEAGUE PREVIEW

MILFORD MAVERICKS

LEAGUE: Lakes Valley Association
HEAD COACH: Dan Novak, first season at Milford (95-63 overall)
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 1-8, 0-5 KLA West (sixth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Aiden Warzecha, sr. QB; Carson Jensen, jr. TE/LB; Ryan Kolb, sr. OL/DL; Brian Gorny, sr. DB/WR; Christian Koschke, sr. RB/LB; Harley Williams, jr. OL/DL
OUTLOOK: The Mavericks are coming off four straight losing seasons where they accumulated just five wins in that stretch. Milford will be under new coach Dan Novak and staff, who have been welcomed with open arms. This program has only reached the postseason five times, the last time coming in 2011. A new league, a new coach and a new attitude could be what the doctor ordered.



SOUTH LYON LIONS

LEAGUE: Lakes Valley Association
HEAD COACH: Jeff Henson, third season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 5-5, 3-2 KLA-Central (third)
OUTLOOK: Although the Lions only finished 5-5 last season, they have reached the postseason 18 in 30 years. Last season South Lyon gave eventual state finalist Walled Lake Western quite a scare in the pre-district clash (31-30) and hopes for better fortunes this season

SOUTH LYON EAST COUGARS

LEAGUE: Lakes Valley Association
HEAD COACH: Joe Pesci, third season (2-16)
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 1-8, 0-5 KLA-Central (sixth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Chris Kaminski, jr. Qb; Jon Carter, jr. WR/DB/KR; Jake Waranauckas, sr. OLB/RB; Hunter Williams, jr. P/K

KEY NEWCOMERS: Donovan Wright, soph. FB/LB/KR; Alex Donaldson, sr. WR; Mike McCarthy, jr. OL/DL; Erick Ortiz, jr. OL/DL; Terry Day, jr. FB/LB
OUTLOOK: As by far the smallest school in the old KLA, South Lyon East simply struggled during its first decade. The Cougars' best record was 5-5 in 2012 and they have captured just three wins the past four seasons combined. The program is still seeking a breakout campaign and will look to a roster of experience and quality newcomers to turn the train around.

WALLED LAKE CENTRAL VIKINGS

LEAGUE: Lakes Valley Association
HEAD COACH: Bob Meyer, 12th season (64-59)
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 3-6, 2-3 KLA-North (fourth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Michael Woolridge, sr. QB/DB; Connor Merchant, sr. DE/OL; Mason Clark, sr. OL; Dalen Franklin, sr. RB; Joe Bonnen, sr. OL/DL
KEY NEWCOMERS: Tyler Markray, jr. RB/LB; Cameron Humphrey, jr. RB/DB
OUTLOOK: After reaching the D-1 regional finals in 2014, the Vikings took a step backwards the past two years with a 4-14 record. Does Walled Lake Central have the talent to turn the corner and contend in the LVA?

WALLED LAKE NORTHERN KNIGHTS

LEAGUE: Lakes Valley Association
HEAD COACH: Joe Boulus
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 6-4, 3-2 KLA-North (third)
KEY RETURNNEES: Tommy Larson, sr. OL/DL; Peter Jezdimir, sr. DB; Carson Haslinger, sr. DB; Chandler Holloway, sr. RB; Shane Landino, sr. DL; Reece Moran, sr. RB; Marco Savone, sr. OL; Dominic Yamarino, sr. LB; Ryan Grundy, sr. LB; Phil Grundy, sr. LB; Chad Burton, jr. DB; Tyler Devon, jr. OL/DL; Brenden Shelby, jr. QB; Cam Liebert, jr. RB; Kyle Arnold, soph. OL/DL
KEY NEWCOMERS: Andrew Moran, jr. P/K; Jake Haver, sr. WR; Justin Sweinhart, sr. WR; Anthony Gender, sr.

Only a combined seven returning starters are back for Walled Lake Western, which was stymied by Detroit King (18-0) in last year's D-2 state finals. (Submitted Photo)

OL/LB; Kyle Elbert, sop. LB; Alex Hunt, sop. LB; Grant Smith, soph. OL
OUTLOOK: No longer a new school, the Knights are entering their 15th season of football. Walled Lake Northern has reached the playoffs four of the last five years with 32 wins in that five-year stretch. With one of the more experienced teams in the KLA, could this be a breakout campaign for the Knights with league and district titles a possibility?

WALLED LAKE WESTERN WARRIORS

LEAGUE: Lakes Valley Association
HEAD COACH: Mike Zdebski (157-52)
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 12-2, 5-0 KLA-North (first)
KEY RETURNNEES: Ben Reilly, sr. DB; Jon Moffett, sr. LB (Indiana State); Zak Kempster, sr. LB; Justin Thomas, sr. SE; Kevin Jackson, jr. SL; Joey George, sr. OL; Ryan Dickinson, sr. OL
OUTLOOK: Only a combined seven returning starters are back for Walled Lake Western, which was stymied by Detroit King (18-0) in last year's D-2 state finals. But like most powerhouse programs, the Warriors will likely reload. Walled Lake Western has reached the playoffs 13 times in the last 15 years, including seven straight times and three Final Four appearances in the past six seasons. There are no indications that the Warriors will fall too far from their perch.

WATERFORD KETTERING CAPTAINS

LEAGUE: Lakes Valley Association
HEAD COACH: Kenny Schmidt, first season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 3-6, 2-3 KLA-North (fourth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Ryan Nolan, jr. QB; Tanner Steward, sr. RB/LB; Anthony Fox, sr. WR/DB; Ayden Holley, sr. OL; Casmer Johnson, jr. ATH/OLB; Kyle Sobiecki, jr. OL; Bryce Mojica, sr. WR/DB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Jack Schram, soph. K/P
OUTLOOK: Only in 1994 and 2013 have the Captains sailed into the postseason. With a new league and a new coaching staff, plus six returning

starters back on both sides of the ball, there is some real optimism brewing at Kettering. Only four times in 20 seasons have the Captains finished above five-hundred.

WATERFORD MOTT CORSAIRS

LEAGUE: Lakes Valley Association
HEAD COACH: Chris Fahr, sixth season (53-53)
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 6-5, 2-3 KLA-North (fourth)
KEY RETURNNEES: David McCullum, sr. QB; Marcus Guerrero, jr. RB/KR; Bryce Locke, sr. OL; Matt Bradley, jr. WR/DB/KR; Patrick Bicknell, sr. WR/DB; Keimonnee Fields, jr. WR/DB; Jared Wheeler, sr. LB/RB; Colton Baranowski, sr. LB/RB; Luciano Pedini, jr. LB/RB; Wayne Barnes, sr. OL/DL; James Vaughn, sr. OL/DL
KEY NEWCOMERS: Matt Castillo, jr. P/WR/DB; Ryan Christian, jr. K; Ashton Franklin, sr. WR; Tariq Hardy, sr. WR/DB/KR; Kamariell Manley, jr. WR/RB; Cooper Martin, jr. WR/DB; Nick Harden, jr. OL
OUTLOOK: With the infractions of the coaching staff looming overhead during the 2016 campaign, the Corsairs still thrived. Mott reached the postseason a third straight time and advanced to the D-1 district finals before falling to 2015 state champion Romeo. There are six starters back on both offense and defense, good size and plenty of speed. The Corsairs could be one of the top teams in the LVA.

WHITE LAKE LAKELAND EAGLES

LEAGUE: Lakes Valley Association
HEAD COACH: Joe Woodruff
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 5-4, 1-4 KLA-North (fifth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Rze Zappa, sr. RB/DB; Sean Cullen, sr. RB/DB; Dylan Kutzleh, sr. RB/DB; CJ Davis, sr. RB/LB; Luke Perry, sr. RB/LB; Alex Laverne, sr. OL/DL; Nick Dell, sr. OL/DL; Ryan Allen, sr. OL/DL; Dylan Kubik, sr. OL/DL
KEY NEWCOMERS: Carter Raab, jr. OL/LB; Tracy Robbie, jr. RB/DB
OUTLOOK: For a program that has hovered around the five-hundred mark the past eight years and has not reached the postseason since 2008, there are high expectations for the Eagles, picked to finish as high as second in the new LVA. There are many returning players and a team eager to turn the corner.

MACOMB AREA CONFERENCE PREVIEW

CLAWSON TROJANS

LEAGUE: MAC Silver Division
HEAD COACH: Jim Sparks
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 3-6, 1-4 MAC Silver (fifth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Kamarielle Manley, jr. WR; Mitchell Payne, sr. LB/OL; Max Standzik, sr. LB/OL; Javion Alexander-Lloyd, sr. WR/DB; Omari Johnson, sr. WR/DB; Bryce Blaesing, jr. QB;
OUTLOOK: After three straight postseason berths from 2013-15 and five in seven years, Clawson took a step back in 2016 after moving to the MAC-Silver. A heavy load of new starters are

ready to prove their worth and help the Trojans climb back up the charts. Clawson won MAC-Bronze conference titles in 2014 and 2015.

MADISON HEIGHTS LAMPHERE RAMS

LEAGUE: MAC Bronze Division
HEAD COACH: Jeff Glynn
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 0-9, 0-4 MAC-Bronze
OUTLOOK: The Rams have accumulated eight postseason berths in their school history, but not since 2010 has Lamphere made the cut. On the tail end of six straight losing campaigns, the Rams only tallied 52 total points during last year's winless campaign. The only way for Lamphere to head is up.

MADISON HEIGHTS MADISON EAGLES

LEAGUE: MAC Silver Division
HEAD COACH: James Rogers, second season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 6-4, 4-1 MAC-Silver (second)
KEY RETURNNEES: DeRon Hood, sr. DL/OL
OUTLOOK: Former Lamphere multi-sport standout James Rogers took the reins last season, but not much changed for the Eagles, who have appeared in 12 straight postseasons. Winners of its final four division games last season, Madison will look to engage in the MAC-Silver race this season. The Eagles won league titles from 2013-15.



Madison Heights Madison and Ithaca have gone to battle on various occasions in Division 6 in recent years. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photo)

MICHIGAN INDEPENDENT ATHLETIC CONFERENCE PREVIEW

WESTLAND LUTHERAN WARRIORS

LEAGUE: Michigan Independent Athletic Conference
HEAD COACH: Paul Guse
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 4-5, 1-4 MIAC (fifth)
OUTLOOK: The Warriors have reached the postseason three times in six seasons after never making the cut before that stretch. An improvement to 4-5 and back-to-back wins to close the 2016 season could help Westland back over the hump and into the upper echelon of the conference

AUBURN HILLS OAKLAND CHRISTIAN LANCERS

LEAGUE: Michigan Independent Athletic Conference
HEAD COACH: Rob Novy, third season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 4-4, 2-3 MIAC (fourth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Reece McConnell, sr. OL/DL; Josh Siminski, sr. QB;

Hunter Washington, sr. RB; Seth Williams, sr. RB/DB; Ryder Patterson, sr. WR/DB; Luke McConnell, jr. RB/OLB
OUTLOOK: This is the 10th season of football at Oakland Christian. The Lancers have always battled a numbers game, but will compete this season with six returning starters on both sides of the football. The conference has three newcomers and is wide open. Perhaps Oakland Christian can shine and contend for a conference title.

ROCHESTER HILLS LUTHERAN NORTHWEST CRUSADERS

LEAGUE: Michigan Independent Athletic Conference
HEAD COACH: Rich Alkire, first season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 6-4, 3-2 MIC (third)
KEY RETURNNEES: Zackary Alkire, sr. QB/SE (3,100 all-purpose career yards); Daniel Macs, sr. RB/LB (All-State Honorable Mention); Rylan Reithmeier, sr. OT/DL
KEY NEWCOMERS: Zachary Ponder, sr. WR
OUTLOOK: After 13 seasons, Don Justice has departed and Rich Alkire fills the void. The Crusaders have a fine core of returning athletes and

should be one of the top teams in the MIAC, which now boasts eight football programs. Northwest has also reached the postseason seven times in the past nine years.

SOUTHFIELD CHRISTIAN EAGLES

LEAGUE: Michigan Independent Athletic Conference
HEAD COACH: Larry Weiss, sixth season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 1-8, 0-5 MIAC (sixth)
OUTLOOK: After going 10-2 in 2013, the Eagles have finished 5-22 the past three years. This program has only reached the postseason twice since its inception in 2006.

STERLING HEIGHTS PARKWAY CHRISTIAN EAGLES

LEAGUE: Michigan Independent Athletic Conference
HEAD COACH: Joe Beck, second season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 4-5, 4-1 MIAC (second)
KEY RETURNNEES: Alex Challangoe, sr. OG; Maurice Hutchinson, jr. FB/TE; Julian Davis, jr. RB/WR/OLB/KR; Jacob Couture, sr. OT/DT; Bryce

Perko, jr. OT/ILB; Brandon Challangoe, jr. C/D/T; Kyle Pettipren, jr. OG/OLB; John Bowling Jr., sr. OG; Maurice Hutchinson, jr. MLB; Alfred Carra, sr. K/P
OUTLOOK: In a rebuilding season, the Eagles still finished second to GPW University-Liggett. With Liggett now in the CHSL-Intersectional 2, that leaves the door wide open for a new champ in the MIAC. Can Parkway Christian respond with a league title?

DETROIT PUBLIC SAFETY ACADEMY EAGLES

LEAGUE: Michigan Independent Athletic Conference (new)
HEAD COACH: Jenorris Jackson, second season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 2-7, Independent
OUTLOOK: This is the second season of football for the Eagles, who are one of three new members to the MIAC. This team is young, but far more talented than last season and should be competitive.

DETROIT CESAR CHAVEZ AZTEC EAGLES

LEAGUE: Michigan Independent Athletic Conference
HEAD COACH: Allen Schmidt
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 4-5, Independent
OUTLOOK: This is Cesar Chavez's eighth season of football and first in the league. With a mix of youth and experience, there's no telling how the Driving Eagles will finish in the expanded MIAC.

DEARBORN HEIGHTS STAR INTERNATIONAL FALCONS

LEAGUE: Michigan Independent Athletic Conference
HEAD COACH: Nick Margo, first season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 0-9, Independent
OUTLOOK: For a program entering its 13th season, Star International academy is starved for wins. The Falcons only scored 48 points last season and have generated only nine total wins since its inception. Star International will play in the MIAC for the first time. Could this be the year the Falcons win more than three games in a season?

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OAKLAND ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATION PREVIEW

AUBURN HILLS AVONDALE YELLOWJACKETS

LEAGUE: OAA Blue Division
HEAD COACH: Ed Couturier second season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 3-6, 2-4 OAA-Blue (fifth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Adam Mather, sr. QB/FB/OLB; Josh Mosier, sr. OG/MLB; Ryan Grosz, sr. SE/OLB; Trevor Groz, sr. SE/OLB; Joey Hawkins, sr. OT/DE; Isiah Lane, sr. FB/SB/OLB; Anthony Moran, sr. FB/NG; Kyle Strong, sr. SB/CB; Nick Whiteside, sr. SE/DB; Kobe Anthony, jr. SB/DB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Catlin Coleman, jr. OT/DL; Baba Conate, jr. RB/TE/OLB; Derrick Hinton, jr. SS/SE/KR; Ethan Jewell, jr. QB/RB; Vincent Johns, jr. SB/DB; Zeke Ringstff, jr. SB/CB; Chris Sawyers, jr. C/MLB
OUTLOOK: Coach Couturier inherited a team just three weeks before practices began last August and the inexperienced Yellowjackets struggled to a 3-6 record. Now there are eight starters back on both sides of the football and ample experience that are accustomed to Couturier's system. This team should move up in a wide-open OAA-Blue race this season.

BERKLEY BEARS

LEAGUE: OAA White Division
HEAD COACH: Billy Keenist, first season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 6-4, 4-2 OAA-Blue (tie-second)
KEY RETURNNEES: Kedder Browning, sr. LB/RB/WR; Riko Cunningham, r. DB/WR; David Long, r. DB/QB; Marquel Dalton, sr. DB/WR



season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 3-6, 2-4 OAA-White (fifth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Max Schumaker, jr. WR/DB; Ben Rinkbeiner, sr. OG; Chase Mantag, jr. FB; Ben Barton, sr. TE/OLB; James Allen, sr. NT; Scott Simon, sr. OLB; Joel Mitchell, jr. MLB; Charlie Nummer, sr. FS; Paul Jokisch, jr. DE; Vaishnav Siddapureddy, sr. WR; Nick Lang, sr. SL/DB; Carter Stagner, sr. OT/DE
KEY NEWCOMERS: Joel Mitchell, jr. QB; Nick Winkler, jr. OG; Will McBridge, jr. FB/LB; Alex Camncea, jr. OT/DT; Shane Guenther, jr. QB/DB; Matt O'Connor, jr. FB/LB; Max Loyd, jr. C
OUTLOOK: Coming off back-to-back 3-6 campaigns, the Maples are looking to a balanced offense and a beefy line play in the trenches to carry Seaholm back above the five-hundred mark and into postseason contention. The Maples should be one of the more improved teams in the entire OAA.

BIRMINGHAM GROVES FALCONS

LEAGUE: OAA White Division
HEAD COACH: Brendan Flaherty
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 11-2, 6-0 OAA White (first)
KEY RETURNNEES: Dan Llopre, sr. OT/DE; Griffen Best, sr. OL/DL; Christian Zeltvoegel, sr. C; Ryan Salter, sr. FB; James Henry, sr. G; DaMonte McCurdy, jr. DB; Chaise Ford, sr. SS/RB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Khalil Dawsey, jr. WR; Colton Tinley, sr. QB; Josh Siter, jr. RB; Zak Abdulwasi, sr. WR
OUTLOOK: The Falcons are coming off their most successful season in school history, spending the season ranked in the D-2 Top 10 and making a trip to the Final Four before falling to eventual state champion Detroit King (14-7). Groves lost some key components from that squad, but should have enough to be one of the top teams in the OAA-White this season and return to the postseason. The Falcons have reached the playoffs four straight times and 5-of-6.

BIRMINGHAM SEAHOLM MAPLES

LEAGUE: OAA White Division
HEAD COACH: Jim DeWald, sixth

BLOOMFIELD HILLS BLACKHAWKS

LEAGUE: OAA Red Division
HEAD COACH: Dan Loria, fifth season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 9-1, 6-0 OAA-Blue (first)
KEY RETURNNEES: John Paddock, sr. QB (committed to Ball State); Eli McCourt, sr. LB; Jordan Bailey, sr. OLB/RB; Ty Slazinski, sr. WR; Jack Sape, sr. DE (Ball State); Edham Mackie, sr. C/DE; Paul Much, sr. LB; Grant Ellis, sr. OL; Matt Borck, sr. OL
KEY NEWCOMERS: Darren Mack, jr. WR; Duggan Fife, sr. WR; Alec Ward, sop. WR/CB; Seth Wilson, jr. OL/DL; Michael Kreymier, jr. OL/DL; Colin Stewart, sr. WR/CB
OUTLOOK: A year down in the OAA-Blue help transform the Blackhaws from an 1-8 team to a 9-1 squad and a league champion. Bloomfield Hills has returned to the OAA-Red with a much more seasoned ball club and won't be a pushover like in 2014 and 2015.

CLARKSTON WOLVES

LEAGUE: OAA Red Division
HEAD COACH: Kurt Richardson, 31st season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 9-3, 5-1 OAA Red (tied-first)
KEY RETURNNEES: Michael Fluegel, jr. RB/DB; Gino Paese, jr. OL/LB; Noah Hicklin, sr. OL/DL; Stewart Newblatt, sr. OL/DL; Conner Heaton, sr. WR; Zack Scott, sr. LB/RB; Tyler Houston, sr. DB; Josh Cantu, sr. RB; Nathan Ladd, sr. LB; Anthony Simmons, sr. LB; Brendan Barker, jr. LB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Javiar Suggs, jr.

Long time Farmington Hills Harrison coach John Herrington ranks second on the all-time Michigan High School Athletic Association's win list. (Submitted Photo)

LB; Maxx Hicklin, jr. LB/WR; Rocky Spinder, fr. OL; Garrett Dellinger, fr. OL; Nate Uballo, sr. QB
OUTLOOK: Coming off 14 straight postseason berths, including the D-1 regional finals in 2012 and 2016 and state championships in 2013 and 2014, nothing much will change for the Wolves. Clarkston is expected to again contend for another OAA-Red Division title with a mammoth offensive line, deep running game and a hard-hitting unit of linebackers.

FARMINGTON FALCONS

LEAGUE: OAA Blue Division
HEAD COACH: Kory Cioroch, first season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 2-7, 1-6 OAA-White (sixth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Calvin Withlow, sr. DL/LB; Oscar Glenn, sr. RB/DB; Kendall Williams, jr. RB/DB; Donovan King, jr. OL/DL; Chandler Coultrip, sr. QB; Roger Motley, jr. WR/DB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Delman Sewell, jr. FB/DE; Jared Anderson, jr. WR/DB; Jordan Turner, soph. TE/LB
OUTLOOK: After reaching the postseason in eight of the previous 10 seasons, Farmington dropped to 2-7 last year and down to the OAA-Blue this season. A new coaching staff will have the task of righting the ship quickly.

FARMINGTON HILLS HARRISON HAWKS

LEAGUE: OAA White Division
HEAD COACH: John Herrington
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 5-4, 3-3 OAA White Division (fourth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Ovie Oghoufo, sr. LB/TE; Divine Filemu, sr. LB/FB; John O'Connor, sr. LB/C; Noah Hendricks, sr. QB/SE; Roo Hearo, sr. QB/TB; Caleb Sparks, sr. OG; Chris Rexroth, sr. OT/DT; Jerrin Harvey, sr. TE/OLB; Maverick Hanson, sr. DB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Joe Stevens, jr. CB; Nick Cotton, jr. WR; Moet Andrews, jr. DB; Ben Williams, jr. QB/CB
OUTLOOK: Only four times over the past 31 years have the Hawks missed the postseason, including last year's 5-4 mark. Harrison and legendary coach John Herrington are approaching the end, as the Hawks will compete for only two more seasons before shuttering their doors in the summer of 2019. Herrington is second in all-time wins.

FERDALE EAGLES

LEAGUE: OAA Blue Division
HEAD COACH: Eric Royal

LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 7-3, 4-2 OAA-Blue (tied-second)
KEY RETURNNEES: Keshawn Smith, sr. QB; Zoser Little, sr. RB/LB (1,541 yards, 21 TDs); Torian Belton, jr. OT/DT; Trey Merian, sr. WR/SE; Delrice Davis, sr. HB/LB-Ethan Simpson, sr. P; John Stellers, sr. K
KEY NEWCOMERS: Donovan Pitts, jr. OL/DL; John Thompson, sr. RB/WR/SE; Angel Defay-Marrero, jr. OI/DL; James Darby, sr. WR/CB (transfer from Detroit King)
OUTLOOK: With the OAA realigning and with the Eagles returning a quality amount of talent from a playoffs team, expect Ferndale to be one of the better teams in the OAA-Blue this season.

HAZEL PARK VIKINGS

LEAGUE: OAA Blue Division
HEAD COACH: Kyle Rowley, fourth season (3-24)
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 2-7, 2-4 OAA-Blue (tied-fifth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Damien Ewald, sr. QB; Logan Hamilton-Mathy, sr. DB/WR; Mason young, sr. DL/FB; Caleb Roggenbuck, sr. OL/DL; Isaac Manier, sr. WR/OLB; Cameron Wyatt, jr. WR/S
OUTLOOK: Kyle Rowley has done an admirable job building back numbers at Hazel Park over the past three years. With a large senior class, perhaps the labor will pay off with a winning record and a postseason-caliber squad. This could be Hazel Park's best team since the Vikings last made the postseason in 2010. There are several third- and fourth-year varsity veterans on the roster.

LAKE ORION DRAGONS

LEAGUE: OAA Red Division
HEAD COACH: John Blackstock, first season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 5-5, 4-2 OAA Red (third)
KEY RETURNNEES: Dylan Frank, sr. RB/FB; Jon Haggitt, sr. WR/DB; Pierce Burke, sr. WR; Austin Findlay, sr. OL; Sebastian Marku, sr. OL; John Marshall, sr. QB; Tyler Vestrand, sr. LB/RB; Sam Kinne, sr. LB (D-1 recruit); Chad Dolland, sr. DB; Hunter Lagerquist, sr. DL; Jordan Lewis, sr. DT; Dustin Sokolowski, sr. DT; Parker Blust, sr. K/P
KEY NEWCOMERS: Blaze Lauer, soph. QB; Matt Freeman, jr. WR; Chris Vernon, jr. OL; Hunter Chambers, jr. OL; Drew VanHeck soph. WR
OUTLOOK: After finishing 4-5 in both 2014 and 2015, the Dragons made a return trip to the postseason in 2016. Longtime assistant John Blackstock takes over the reins but the same expectations of competing for a league title and making a run in the postseason are still there. The Dragons have reached the playoffs in 16 of the past 20 seasons under Chris Bell, now the school's athletics director.

NORTH FARMINGTON RAIDERS

LEAGUE: OAA Blue Division
HEAD COACH: Robert Chiesa first season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 0-9, 0-6 OAA-White (seventh)
KEY RETURNNEES: Dylan Gordon, sr. RB; Lamar Pope, sr. LB; Justin Mayes, sr. OL; Ivory Fuller, jr. OLB; Matt Coleman, jr. FS
KEY NEWCOMERS: Myles Gresham, soph. TB; Taj Cheatham, soph. DB; Clark Crockett, sop. OLB/WR; Jon Brunette, soph. OLB
OUTLOOK: The Raiders suffered through only their second winless season in their 56-year history. North Farmington ended last season with only 22 players on varsity, but have already climbed up to 50 to start under new coach Robert Chiesa.

OAK PARK KNIGHTS

LEAGUE: OAA White Division
HEAD COACH: Greg Carter, seventh season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 7-4, 5-1 OAA-White (second)
KEY RETURNNEES: Dwan Mathis, jr. QB; Kevin Bradley, sr. RB/WR; Malik Carr, soph. WR/TE/DE; Casual Goldsmith, sr. RB; Toriano Richardson, jr. RB; Marquan McCall, sr. OG (Kentucky commit); Robert Daniel, sr. DB; Enzo Jennings, jr. DB; Jalen Robinson, jr. DB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Justin Rogers, soph. OG
OUTLOOK: Since Coach Carter came over form Inkster seven years ago, he has established the Knights as one of the better teams in the OAA with five straight postseason berths and a 35-20 record over that span. Expect Oak Park to again contend in the OAA-White this season and for a postseason berth. A bulk of the Knights' roster returns.

OXFORD WILDCATS

LEAGUE: OAA Red Division
HEAD COACH: Bud Rowley, 37th season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 4-5, 2-4 (fifth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Ryan Miller, sr. RB/DB; Matt Mielnicki, sr. K/P/WR/KR; Parker Fleming, sr. QB; Dakota Birr, sr. TE/LB; Sergio Borg, sr. WR/DB; Ben Nuss, sr. DB/WR; Evan Brunning, jr. TE/DL; Jason Green, sr. OL/DL; Andrew Richardson, sr. OL/DL
KEY NEWCOMERS: Marcus Urnagle, jr. RB
OUTLOOK: Back-to-back sub-five hundred campaigns are unheard of at Oxford, which has only three losing campaigns dating back to 1981. With a seasoned squad in 2017 and better leadership, the Wildcats look to climb back into a postseason-caliber team

PONTIAC PHOENIX

LEAGUE: OAA Blue Division
HEAD COACH: Alan Margrif, first season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 0-9, 0-6 OAA-Blue (eighth)
OUTLOOK: Since Pontiac Northern and Pontiac Central merged in 2009, the city has seen a steady decline in enrollment and the school's athletics teams have taken a massive hit. A postseason team six years ago, Pontiac is just 2-42 over the past six years with a different coaching staff each season. Alan Margrif takes over and hopes to build not only the football program, but try to work with others to rejuvenate the entire athletics department.

ROCHESTER FALCONS

LEAGUE: OAA White Division
HEAD COACH: Erik Vernon, ninth season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 5-4, 4-2 OAA-Blue (tied-second)
KEY RETURNNEES: Brent Burtraw, sr. QB; Lucas VanderMeulen, sr. OL/DL; Drake Reid, jr. WR/DB; Gabe Safran, jr. WR/DB; Ryan Noble, jr. TE/LB; David Robinson, jr. OL; Anthony Smiles, sr. RB
KEY NEWCOMERS: David Karwaski, sr. WR/DB (transfer from Berkley; fourth-year varsity veteran); Noah Stout, soph. RB/DB
OUTLOOK: The Falcons dropped their final game of the regular season last year which dashed their playoffs hopes. But with a new stadium, an all-league QB and a very deep junior class, Rochester could be one of the surprise teams in the entire OAA. The Falcons, who have only claimed four winning seasons in 20 years, could reach the postseason for the first time since 2010.

ROCHESTER STONEY CREEK COUGARS

LEAGUE: OAA White Division
HEAD COACH: Robert Lantzy, second season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 2-7, 1-5 OAA-Red (sixth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Adam Hilton, sr. RB/WR; Athletic Jones, sr. DE (D-I recruit); Frank Potenza III, jr. QB (third-year starter); Griffin Green, sr. LB; Jericho Barr-Redmond, sr. CB; Cole LaFave, sr. C; Nate Davis, sr. WR
OUTLOOK: Legendary Utica Eisenhower coach Bob Lantzy took over Stoney Creek, which suffered through a 2-7 rebuilding year. The Cougars started to gel at season's end, stealing Rochester's postseason bid in Week 9 with a 40-14 win. Can Stoney Creek build on that win with a better understanding of Lantzy's system? A solid core returns and the squad drops down to the OAA-White.

ROCHESTER ADAMS HIGHLANDERS

LEAGUE: OAA White Division
HEAD COACH: Tony Patriitto, 15th season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 6-4, 4-2 (third)
KEY RETURNNEES: Vincent Gray, sr. DB/WR; Stephen Roncelli, sr. RB/LB; Chase Karletta, sr. RB/DB; Cole Patriitto, sr. RB/DB; Leonard, jr. OT/DL; Hunter Drobnick, sr. OT/DL; Reed Vogt, jr. DL/OL
KEY NEWCOMERS: Zach Soldan, jr. QB; Cole Mitchell, jr. OG/DL
OUTLOOK: Adams must replace a four-year starting QB, but if history lends a hint, Adams will remain competitive. The Highlanders have reached the postseason 17 times in the past 20 years and finished below the five-hundred mark only once (2015) over two decades.

ROYAL OAK RAVENS

LEAGUE: OAA Blue Division
HEAD COACH: Ray McMann, third season (6-12)
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 2-7, 2-4 OAA-Blue (sixth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Patrick Tesho, sr. RB/DB; Carter Ellis, sr. QB/DB; Dane Collins, sr. C; Joe Binkowski, jr. WR/DB; Cody Remick, jr. OI/DL
KEY NEWCOMERS: Bryan DeGroot, sr. WR/DB
OUTLOOK: Since the merger of Dondero and Kimball in 2006, the Ravens have struggled as a program. After going 8-3 in 2006 and 5-4 in 2007, Royal Oak has suffered through nine straight losing campaigns and only a combined 12 wins in that span. Six of those wins have come the past two seasons and in a year where there will be a wide-open OAA-Blue race, perhaps Coach McMann can quickly change a culture and bring Royal Oak back to prominence.

SOUTHFIELD A&T WARRIORS

LEAGUE: OAA Red Division
HEAD COACH: Tim Conley, second season at A&T, 13th overall in Southfield schools.
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 8-4, 5-1 OAA-Red (tied-first)
KEY RETURNNEES: John Darby, sr. QB; Justin Meeks, sr. WR; Kevon Walker, sr. OL; Kevin Smitherman, sr. DL; Mathew Gilbert, sr. WR/DB; Marcus Fuqua, jr. DB; Juan Walker, jr. OL; Christian Rush, sr. LB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Jevontae Van Buren, sr. LB; Anwar Jackson, jr. RB; Blake Grice-Brunson, sr. RB/LB; Devon Baldwin, jr. DT/TE
OUTLOOK: In its first season since the merger, Southfield A&T shared the OAA-Red crown and reached the



From top to bottom: Seniors Bryce Veasley, AJ Abbott and Taj Mustapha have West Bloomfield believing that this is the year the Lakers make a run at a state championship. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)

D-1 regional finals. Now with a bevy of talent, the Warriors should remain one of the OAA's better teams and be a team capable of making a deep postseason run.

TROY COLTS

LEAGUE: OAA White Division
HEAD COACH: Chris Frasier, first season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 3-6, 3-3 OAA-Blue (fifth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Max Guitar, sr. DE/TE/OLB; Alex Samson, sr. OT/DT; Alex Vecchioni, sr. OLB/FB/SS; Givon Cinque, sr. SS/WR; Teron Kinnard, sr. RB; Mike Abitheira, sr. FB; Mattias Johansson, sr. C; Cole Hayden, jr. OG; Andrew Habib, jr. OG; Will Flynn, jr. OLB; Reggie Lemmons, jr. OLB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Noah Wagberg, sr. QB; Matt Johansson, jr. WR; Jon LaFave, soph. OT; EJ Douglas, jr. FB; Ben Alexander, sr. DE; Tre Harewood, sr. ILB; Jake Volek, jr. ILB; Quest Bigelow, jr. CB
OUTLOOK: After a Final Four appearance back in 2007, Troy has ventured through some lean years, including five losing seasons in the past nine years and only seven wins the past four years combined. Coach Frasier takes over the reins and will try to rejuvenate this once-program and return it to a postseason-caliber squad.

TROY ATHENS RED HAWKS

LEAGUE: OAA Red Division
HEAD COACH: Josh Heppner, ninth season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 2-7, 0-6 OAA-Red (seventh)
KEY RETURNNEES: Patrick Graham, sr. MLB/TE; Andrew Yan, sr. LB/

FB; Jake Cavazos, sr. QB/DB; Nathan Oprnica, TE/DE; Josh Eckerle, sr. DL; Brody Fitzpatrick, sr. SS/RB/WR; Christian Aurand, sr. WR; David Deman, jr. OT
OUTLOOK: With eight returning starters on defense and six on offense, Athens will look to rebound after a down year in 2016. Athens will look to bring some physically to the field this season with some much-improved weapons on offense.

WEST BLOOMFIELD LAKERS

LEAGUE: OAA Red Division
HEAD COACH: Ron Bellamy, seventh season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 6-5, 4-2 OAA-Red (third)
KEY RETURNNEES: Bryce Veasley, sr. QB (committed to Bowling Green); Nick Seidel, sr. FS/RB; Niko Mosley, sr. SS/LB; Tre Mosley, jr. WR; Nick O'Shea, sr. K/P; Taj Mustafa, sr. WR (committed to Wisconsin); James Faulkner, sr. TE/DE; Corell Wheeler, soph. LB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Desmond Simpson, jr. OLB; AJ Abbott, sr. WR (Wisconsin); Collin Heard, sr. CB/RB (transfer; committed to Howard); Jordan Rush, sr. WR (committed to Wisconsin); James Faulkner, sr. TE/DE; Corell Wheeler, soph. LB
OUTLOOK: Four straight winning campaigns and 29 wins in four years has brought the Lakers to the forefront and this year's team could be the best of them all. With a bevy of talent, four Division I recruits, plenty of experience and a very talented cast of newcomers, could this be the year the Lakers sail away with a deep postseason run. West Bloomfield is only 2-5 all-time in the postseason and has never advanced beyond the district finals.

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CSAA - GOLD PREVIEW

BIG RAPIDS CARDINALS

2016 RECORD: 3-6
HEAD COACH: Mike Selzer (third season 10-10)
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY LOSSES: Avery Montgomery, Erik Rehkopf
KEY PLAYERS: Braeden Childress (Sr., TE); Jaiven Holmes Powell (Sr., Sr., WR); Deion Jones (Sr., WR.)
OUTLOOK: Childress is ranked by one recruiting service as the No. 1 tight end prospect in Michigan. Big Rapids hopes to get back to the playoffs.

REED CITY COYOTES

2016 RECORD: 11-1
HEAD COACH: Monty Price
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 2-1, lost in regional finals
KEY LOSSES: Logan Straub, Derrick Rasor, Trent Sturgell
KEY PLAYERS: Jeffery Phenix (Sr., LB), Jackson Miller (Sr., OT/DT), Phillip Jones (Sr., RB), Jackson Price



(Jr., QB).
OUTLOOK: Reed City will be going for its seventh straight CSAA title. The Coyotes are 52-2 in the last six regular seasons, including five 9-0 records.

CHIPPEWA HILLS WARRIORS

2016 RECORD: 9-2
HEAD COACH: Larry Jose
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 1-1
KEY LOSSES: Spencer Mackenzie, Kurt Ray, DJ Lowery
KEY PLAYERS: David Spedowski, Cade Schafer, Jaycob Sharp
OUTLOOK: The Warriors lost narrowly to Reed City for both the CSAA title and district crown.

TRI COUNTY VIKINGS

2016 RECORD: 3-6
HEAD COACH: Phil Butler
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Wil McClurken (Sr., WR) Cayden Luchies (QB).
OUTLOOK: Tri County has not had a winning season since 2005 and continues to struggle.

GRANT TIGERS

2016 RECORD: 6-4
HEAD COACH: Darren Geraghty
POSTSEASON IN 2016: Lost in the first round
KEY LOSSES: Rylee Schultz, Kyle Lowry, Casey Geers, Ian Francisco, Danny Atwood, Marco Alvarez
KEY PLAYERS: Chaise Konicki 12th OL/LB, Brendan Atwood 12th OL/DL, Tom Langan 12th OL/DL, Gabe Castro 12th OL/DL, Cody Cunningham 12th OL/DL, Mason Lesley 12th OL/DL, Benny Gonzales 12th TE/DL, TJ Railing 12th TE/LB, Jared Evans 12th RB/LB, Alex Longcore 12th WR/DB, Jimmy

Big Rapids looks to improve on its 3-6 record for a year ago. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photo)

HIGHLAND CONFERENCE PREVIEW

PINE RIVER BUCKS

2016 RECORD: 9-4
HEAD COACH: Terry Nelson
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 3-1, state semifinals
KEY PLAYERS LOST: Mason Powell, Tyler Wing
KEY PLAYERS: Elijah Lewis, Bryan McCurry
OUTLOOK: Elijah Lewis is an all-state track athlete who will lead the Pine River offense.

BEAL CITY AGGIES

2016 RECORD: 7-4
HEAD COACH: Brad Gross

POSTSEASON IN 2016: 1-1
KEY PLAYERS LOST: Lucas Schumacher, Sr., QB; Brett Upton, Sr. RB; Kolin Sharrar, Sr., RB/LB.
OUTLOOK: The Aggies will be bidding to make the playoffs for their 18th straight season.=

MANTON RANGERS

2016 RECORD: 3-6
HEAD COACH: Travis Waddell
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Jaden Perry, Sr RB; Hunter Ruel, Sr., WR; Ethan Ancick, Sr., TE
OUTLOOK: The Rangers have had one winning season in five years.

EVART WILDCATS

2016 RECORD: 6-4
HEAD COACH: Pat Craven

Montney 12th WR/LB, Josh Wright 12th WR/DB, Trent Throop QB/ DB.
OUTLOOK: The Tigers are hoping to compete for a league title.

CENTRAL MONTCALM HORNETS

2016 RECORD: 1-8
HEAD COACH: David Clay
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY LOSSES: Bo Studley, Kyle Tissue, Hunter Veltkamp.
KEY PLAYERS: Blake Ryan, FB/DB; Aiden Train, Center/DT; Brian Cooper, QB/DB; CJ Denman, HB/LB; Mason Grossbauer, DT/OT; Tyler Giles, OL/LB; Zach Bigelow- RB/DB; Dakota Weston- RB/DB
OUTLOOK: Team speed and conditioning is what the Hornets are building around.

NEWAYGO LIONS

2016 RECORD: 3-6
HEAD COACH: Scott VanEssen
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Cooper Heinzman, Sr., RB/DB; Anthony Hudson Sr., WR; Dalton Jones Sr., LB; Nick Simitingon, Sr., OL; Corey Crotser Sr., OL/DT.
OUTLOOK: "This a totally new system. Our goals are to get better at each practice and to take it one day at a time," coach Van Essen said.

FREMONT PACKERS

2016 RECORD: 0-9
HEAD COACH: Rick Tank
POSTSEASON IN 2016: none
KEY PLAYERS LOST: Cooper Kuka
KEY PLAYERS: Caleb Kooman QB, Riley Krim S/WR, Michael Groenke S/RB.
OUTLOOK: Fremont was outscored 361-25 last season.

POSTSEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS LOST: Danny Griffin, Trevin Ladd, Cody Pritchard
KEY PLAYERS: Carter Pritchard, Jr., QB; Josh Dorn, Sr., OL; Karsten Allen, Sr. OL.
OUTLOOK: Evart will bank on the quarterback efforts of second-year starter Carter Pritchard.

LAKE CITY TROJANS

2016 RECORD: 2-7
HEAD COACH: Kyle Smith
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Jimmy Young, Sr., FS; Wyatt Bisballe, Sr., WR; Jacob Ball, Sr., WR; Kalob Bellows, Sr., RB.
OUTLOOK: The Trojans ended the regular season with a six-game losing streak.

CSAA - SILVER PREVIEW

MORLEY STANWOOD MOHAWKS

2016 RECORD: 7-4
HEAD COACH: Clark Huntley
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 1-1
KEY PLAYERS LOST: Nic Huntley
KEY PLAYERS: Aiden Nelson, Sr., FB; Tyler Dard, Sr. LB
OUTLOOK: Morley Stanwood won't have a quarterback, but is instead employing the single wing.



Morley Stanwood's Aiden Nelson

KEY PLAYERS: Dolan Blair So., LB; Jace Dailey Sr., MLB; Dakota Stevens, Jr., OL/B; Michael Feliciano, Sr., CB, WR.
OUTLOOK: The Eagles went from 1-8 to 8-3 in one season and hope to be a playoff team again.

WHITE CLOUD INDIANS

2016 RECORD: 3-6
HEAD COACH: Richard Hance
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS LOST: Gabe Becker
KEY PLAYERS: Derek Moore, Sr., QB; Buchanan Seabrook, Sr. QB.
OUTLOOK: White Cloud has nine 3-year seniors and two 3-year juniors on the roster that should help the Indians be more competitive.

LAKEVIEW WILDCATS

2016 RECORD: 6-4
HEAD COACH: Sean Rinehart
POST SEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS: Mike Zerka, Sr, QB; Andrew Heady, Jr., C.
OUTLOOK: Lakeview outscored its opponents 269-190, and has made the playoffs three of the last four seasons.

HOLTON RED DEVILS

2016 RECORD: 2-7
HEAD COACH: Jack Nummerdor
POST SEASON IN 2016: none
KEY PLAYERS LOST: Blake Fialek, Brandon Epplett Mason Butchart
KEY PLAYERS: Brent McLaughlin, Sr., QB; Hunter Younts, Sr, OL/DE; Dalton Giddings, Sr., OL; Travis Allison, OL, DL.
OUTLOOK: Holton's strength will be its line.

HESPERIA PANTHERS

2016 RECORD: 5-5
HEAD COACH: Doug Bolles
POST SEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS: Kanin Witte, Sr. RB; Jake Klemundt, Jr, LB; Delany Hussey, Sr., K.
OUTLOOK: Hesperia outscored its 10 opponents 269-190 last season but still had to settle for a 5-5 record.

KENT CITY EAGLES

2016 RECORD: 8-3
HEAD COACH: Bill Crane
POST SEASON IN 2016: 1-1



Beal City will look to make it 18 straight playoff appearances in 2017. (Submitted Photo)

MCBAIN RAMBLERS

2016 RECORD: 4-5
HEAD COACH: Pat Maloney
POSTSEASON 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Keante Grays, Sr., TE; Alex Utecht, Sr., QB; Barrett

Verbkmoes, Jr., WR; Caleb Strickland, Sr., WR.
OUTLOOK: The Ramblers have made the playoffs five times since 2009, and are looking to return this season.

GENESEE AREA CONFERENCE RED DIVISION PREVIEW

BYRON EAGLES

2016 RECORD: 7-3
HEAD COACH: David Richardson
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS: Connor Raymond, Sr, WR; Kyle Hulet, Jr. QB; Neal Ambrose, Sr., CB; Jerry Hall, FB, Fr.
OUTLOOK: Defense was sharp for Byron last season in allowing only 131 points.

CORUNNA CAVALIERS

2016 RECORD: 9-3
HEAD COACH: Kyle Robinson
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 2-1
KEY PLAYERS: Zach Sawyer, Sr., SB; Johnny Pavka, Sr., OL; Jack Thayer, Sr., SL; Logan Gruff, Sr., OL/DL.
OUTLOOK: Offensive line continuity and overall team speed will work in Corunna's favor.

DURAND RAILROADERS

2016 RECORD: 5-4
HEAD COACH: Jeremy Ferman
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None

GENESEE AREA CONFERENCE BLUE DIVISION PREVIEW

BURTON ATHERTON WOLVERINES

2016 RECORD: 5-4
HEAD COACH: Edward Stermer
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
OUTLOOK: The Wolverines have scored exactly 286 points in each of the past two seasons.

BURTON BENDLE TIGERS

2016 RECORD: 3-6
HEAD COACH: Jason Beverly
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Chase Arnett, Sr., OG, DE; Zach Murphy, Sr., MLB
OUTLOOK: Bendle has made the playoffs five of the last seven seasons.

KEY PLAYERS: Devin Spencer Sr., CB; Brett Miller, Sr., FB; Zack Rowell, Sr., WR.
OUTLOOK: Prior to the winning record in 2016, Durand was 4-5 the previous seven seasons.

GOODRICH MARTIANS

2016 RECORD: 0-9
HEAD COACH: Tom Alward
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Joe Toporek, Sr., QB; Carrington Wiggins, Sr., WR; Zachary Bearden, Sr., WR; Terry Baut, Sr., RB; Dante Tigue, Sr. WR.
NOTABLES: After two back-to-back 7-3 seasons, the Martians struggled in 2016.

LAKE FENTON BLUE DEVILS

2016 RECORD: 8-2
HEAD COACH: Eric Doyle
POSTSEASON IN 2016:
KEY PLAYERS: Jackson Nevadomski, Sr., QB, Dillon Byers, Sr., RB ; Matt Tomczyk, Sr., WR, Elan Hagenstein, Sr., WR.
OUTLOOK: Offense got the job done last season with the Blue Devils outscoring its opponents 376-169.

BURTON BENTLEY BULLDOGS

2016 RECORD: 1-8
HEAD COACH: Andre Weathers
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
OUTLOOK: Bentley hasn't been in the playoffs since 2008.

NEW LOTHROP HORNETS

2016 RECORD: 10-2
HEAD COACH: Clint Galvas
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 2-1
KEY LOSSES: Erik Birchmeier; Luke Krupp, Ryley Hafner
KEY PLAYERS: Mason Ruddy, Sr., RB; Ben Bigelow, Sr., WR/LB; Collin Mulcahy, Sr., RB.
OUTLOOK: New Lothrop has had 10-win seasons or more for seven years in a row.

GENESEE WOLVES

2016 RECORD: 1-8
HEAD COACH: Anthony Merlo

MONTROSE HILL MCCLOY RAMS

2016 RECORD: 7-4
HEAD COACH: Dennis Reinhart
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 1-1
KEY PLAYERS: Jon Ducham, Sr, WR Tristan Rogers, Sr., CB/ Griffin Bannette, So., OG., Devin Quast, Sr., WR
NOTABLES: The Rams have made the playoffs eight straight seasons.

MOUNT MORRIS PANTHERS

2016 RECORD: 3-6
HEAD COACH: Benjamin Almasy
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Jaylen Ware, So., TE; Quinshawn Malone, Sr., TE.
NOTABLES: The Panthers are looking for their playoff spot since 2008.

OTISVILLE LAKEVILLE FALCONS

2016 RECORD: 36
HEAD COACH: Joe Beckwith
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Devan Egan, Nathan Athey
NOTABLES: The Falcons are still looking for their first trip to the playoffs.

POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Mike Merrill, Sr., RB
OUTLOOK: Genesee has only won one game the past two years.

HAMADY HAWKS

2016 RECORD: 8-3
HEAD COACH: Gary Lee
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 1-1
KEY PLAYERS: Roswan Brewster, Sr., WR; Billy Williams, (Sr., OG)
OUTLOOK: Hamaday has scored more than 340 points the last two seasons

FLINT BEECHER

2016 RECORD: 4-5
HEAD COACH: Courtney Hawkins
POSTSEASON IN 2016: none
KEY PLAYERS: Terence Jenkins, Sr., RB; Corey Short, Sr., CB
OUTLOOK: Beecher had made the playoffs nine straight years prior to last season.

New Lothrop has had 10-win seasons or more for seven years in a row under coach Clint Galvas. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)



Durand and Byron hope to build off last season's success entering their 2017 campaign. (Mike Schutt, High School Sports Scene Photo)



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TRI-VALLEY CONFERENCE CENTRAL PREVIEW

ALMA PANTHERS

2016 RECORD: 9-2
OUTLOOK: Dan Falor
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 1-1
KEY PLAYERS: Brandon Huff, Sr., WR; Drew Humm, Jr., QB; Jacob Carl, Sr., WR; Tomas Davis, Sr., DE
OUTLOOK: Last year's record gave Alma its best winning percentage since 2007 when it was 11-1.

CARROLLTON CAVALIERS

2016 RECORD: 5-4
HEAD COACH: Nathan Wotta

POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Luis Hernandez, OE, Sr.; Jalen Myles, Sr., RB; AJ Thomas, Jr., WR; Santrell Watts, Sr., FB.
OUTLOOK: The Cavaliers have either been 5-4 or 4-5 the past four seasons.

CHESANING INDIANS

2016 RECORD: 2-7
HEAD COACH: John Mimranek
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Gabe Luce, Sr., OC; Kohl Qualis, Sr., OG.
OUTLOOK: The Indians were outscored last season by a margin of 306-148.

MIDLAND BULLOCK CREEK LANCERS

2016 RECORD: 0-9
HEAD COACH: Will Luzar
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None

KEY PLAYERS: Peyton Kobel, Sr., MLB; Josh Zastrow, Sr., WR; Brad Pinet, Jr., TE
OUTLOOK: The Lancers were outscored last season 385-61.

FREELAND FALCONS

2016 RECORD: 10-1
HEAD COACH: Kevin Townsend
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 1-1
KEY PLAYERS: Tanner Hare, Sr., RB; Jeffery Barreau, Sr., DB; Xavier Magyar, Sr., OL; Coburn Lynch, Sr., RB.
OUTLOOK: The Falcons have made the playoffs the last nine years in a row.

SWAN VALLEY VIKINGS

2016 RECORD: 6-4
HEAD COACH: Kevin Gavenda
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS: Brayden Kessler, Sr.,

MLB; Emmett Boehler, Sr., RB; Carson Berenyl, Sr., DE
OUTLOOK: The Vikings have made the playoffs 14 of the past 17 seasons.

SHEPHERD BLUEJAYS

2016 RECORD: 5-4
HEAD COACH: Nathan Ferency
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Johnny Lynch, Sr., WR; Chance Himebaugh, Sr., QB; Kadin Cook, Sr., TE.
OUTLOOK: Shepherd hasn't made the playoffs since 2005.

STANDISH STERLING PANTHERS

2016 RECORD: 3-6
HEAD COACH: Kenton Kraatz
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
OUTLOOK: The Panthers were outscored 245-179 last season.



Swan Valley's Emmett Boehler is back this season after rushing for over 1,500 yards as a junior. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)

TRI-VALLEY CONFERENCE EAST PREVIEW

BIRCH RUN PANTHERS

2016 RECORD: 3-6
HEAD COACH: Chris Gilliam
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Jordan Nowicki, Kevin Harris, Mark Niedecken.
OUTLOOK: The Panthers were outscored last season 315-163.

BRIDGEPORT BEARCATS

2016 RECORD: 2-7
HEAD COACH: Kevin Marshall Sr.
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None

KEY PLAYERS: Charles Garrett, Sr., QB.
OUTLOOK: Bridgeport has not had a winning record since 1999.

CARO TIGERS

2016 RECORD: 2-7
HEAD COACH: Mark Brimmer
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Key Returners: DJ Daniels, Jr., RB/LB; Grant Goodchild, Sr. QB/SS; Trenten Petri, Sr., RB/LB; Lance Boyce (6'1 180) RB/LB.
OUTLOOK: The Tigers have not made the playoffs since 2003.

GARBER DUKES

2016 RECORD: 7-3
HEAD COACH: Jake Coquillard
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None

KEY PLAYERS: Manny Joppich, Jr., RB; Hunter Bridenbaugh, QB, Jr.; Ethan Worden, Sr., WR., Ben VanSummerlen, TE
OUTLOOK: The Dukes have made the playoffs 14 of the last 16 years

FRANKENMUTH EAGLES

2016 RECORD: 11-2
HEAD COACH: Phillip Martin
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 3-1
KEY PLAYERS: Stanley Trombley, Sr., WR; Zach Jacobs, Sr., QB;
OUTLOOK: The Eagles defeated Ithaca in the regional finals to end the Yellowjackets hopes of a seventh straight trip to the state title game.

MILLINGTON CARDINALS

2016 RECORD: 11-2
HEAD COACH: Roger Bearss
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 3-1
OUTLOOK: Bradyn Henderson, Jr., DE; Dakota Moran, Sr.
NOTABLES: The Cardinals lost 27-7 to Lumen Christi in the state semifinals.

NORTH BRANCH

2016 RECORD: 3-6
HEAD COACH: Jeremy Ferman
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Hayden Mabery, Sr., WR; Kaden Mayhard, Sr., Hunter Asaro, Sr., WR.
OUTLOOK: North Branch was outscored by a count of 265-162 last season.



Frankenmuth made it all the way to the Division 5 semifinals a year ago, but are forced to reload this season because of graduation losses. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photo)

TRI-VALLEY CONFERENCE WEST PREVIEW

HEMLOCK HUSKIES

2016 RECORD: 5-5
HEAD COACH: Adam Clark
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS: Kade Peters, Sr. QB; Eethan McGregor, Sr. SB, WR
OUTLOOK: Hemlock had two shutout wins in 2016.

ITHACA YELLOWJACKETS

2016 RECORD: 11-1
HEAD COACH: Terry Hessbrook
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 2-1
KEY PLAYERS: Joey Bentley, Sr., QB; Adam Culp, Sr., PK; Nate Bellingier, Sr., OL.
OUTLOOK: Ithaca's string of six

straight appearances in a state title game was snapped last season.

OVID-ELSIE MAURAUDERS

2016 RECORD: 4-5
HEAD COACH: Travis Long
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Karscen Sutliff, Sr., LB, TE; Jericho Herblet, Sr., QB; Cole Wittenberg, Sr., NG; Justin Houska, Sr., OT/DT
OUTLOOK: In a win vs. Pinconning, Evan Morris kicked a school record 50-yard FG.

PICONNING SPARTANS

2016 RECORD: 6-4
HEAD COACH: Ben Tomke
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS: Ross Gromanski, Sr., OLB; Zackery Backus, Sr., CB., Hampton Steelman, LB

OUTLOOK: Pinconning had its first winning record since 2009 last year.

SAGINAW MICHIGAN LUTHERAN SEMINARY

2016 RECORD: 10-3
HEAD COACH: Karl Schmugge
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 3-1
KEY PLAYERS: Jordan Hornbacher, Sr. DT; Adam Arrowsmith, Sr. TE
OUTLOOK: Seminary has a 38-10 record from the past four seasons.

SAGINAW VALLEY LUTHERAN CHARGERS

2016 RECORD: 1-8
HEAD COACH: Randy Finney
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Josh Darling, Sr., K; Luke Bushey, Sr., QB
OUTLOOK: Valley Lutheran has only had one winning record since 1994.

ST. CHARLES BULLDOGS

2016 RECORD: 2-7
HEAD COACH: N / A
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Kaleb Himler, Sr., RB; Austin Kelly, Sr., CB.
OUTLOOK: St Charles was outscored 258-110 last season.

ST. LOUIS SHARKS

2016 RECORD: 3-6
HEAD COACH: Aaron Munderloh
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Michael Munderloh, Sr. WR/DE; Jayce Kuehnlein, Sr., HB/OLB; Travis Courter, Sr. QB/DB; Dylan Weller, Sr. RB/DE
OUTLOOK: Three of the Sharks' losses last season were by six points or less.



Ithaca comes into the season haven't lost a conference game in eight years. (Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photo)

JACK PINE CONFERENCE PREVIEW

CLARE PIONEERS

2016 RECORD: 8-2
HEAD COACH: Kelly Luplow
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS: Marty Marshall, Sr., OG; Ryan Pummell, Sr., MLB; Kaden Kelly, Jr., QB; Jeff Allen, Sr., T; Tyler Rodenbo, Sr., SB.
OUTLOOK: Clare narrowly lost to Ithaca 31-28 to open the 2016 season. The two teams meet again on Aug. 25.

BEAVERTON BEAVERS

2016 RECORD: 6-4
HEAD COACH: Aaron Seiser
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS: Nate Taylor (Sr., CB), David Krohn (So., SB), Eric Cassidy (Sr., MLB), Cole Krockner (Sr., DT).

OUTLOOK: The Beavers had the most wins in 2016 since the 2000 campaign.

FARWELL EAGLES

2016 RECORD: 1-8
HEAD COACH: Benjamin Bryant
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Gabe Luster, Sr., WR; Hunter Turner, Sr., QB; Bret Archbold, Sr., WR.; Zach Carpenter, Jr., DT; AJ Davis, S., DT; Cassandra Yonts, Sr., OG
OUTLOOK: The Eagles have won two games in the last three seasons, and need to have a much stingier defense.

GLADWIN FLYING G'S

2016 RECORD: 1-8
HEAD COACH: Tyler Foor
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Dylan Berlanga, Sr., RB; Austin Pahl, Jr., QB; Morgan Courneya, CB, Sr.; Steve Good, Sr., DE.
OUTLOOK: The Flying G's were outscored 344-125 last season.

GREATER LANSING ATHLETIC CONFERENCE PREVIEW

LAKEWOOD VIKINGS

2016 RECORD: 10-2
HEAD COACH: Nick Boucher
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 2-1
KEY PLAYERS: Kaden Heins, Sr., WR; Thomas Houghton, Sr., RB Chandler Adams, Sr. WR; Blake Munsel, Jr., QB.
OUTLOOK: The 10-2 record in 2016 was the most recorded wins in Lakewood football history.

LESLIE BLACK HAWKS

2016 RECORD: 1-8
HEAD COACH: Tom Johns
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Cullen Cox, Sr., QB/ RB/DB; Clay Shroufe, Sr., WR/LB; Kellen Frohriep, Sr., WR/DB; Jake Chmiel, Sr., WR/DB; Thomas Coltrain, Jr., RB/DB; Anthony Smieska, Jr., QB/DB; Mitch Seavolt, Sr., RB/LB; Ethan Schuen, Sr., RB/LB; Parker Schiller, Sr., OL/DL; Haeden Heibel, Sr., OL/DL.
OUTLOOK: Leslie went 0-8 before winning its final game.

HARRISON HORNETS

2016 RECORD: 5-5
HEAD COACH: Dick Harris
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS: Joel Coughlin, Sr., QB; Tyler Head, Sr., RB; Kaylub Pepper, Jr., RB; Camron Ashcroft, Soph, RB; Zack Taylor, Sr., RB.
OUTLOOK: The Hornets had not made the playoffs since 1999 until they started a three-string in 2014

HOUGHTON LAKE BOBCATS

2016 RECORD: 5-5
HEAD COACH: Joe Holloway
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS: Cam Sidelo, WR, Sr., Seth Brandel, Sr., WR; Robert Press, Jr.CB.; Shawn Mckinley, Sr., DT.
OUTLOOK: The Bobcats outscored their opponents 362-234 in 2016.

OLIVET EAGLES

2016 RECORD: 5-5
HEAD COACH: Gabe Priddy
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Maison Crippen, Sr., WR; Colin Grady, Sr., WR; Daycota Dragon, Sr., RB; James Steon, Sr., QB.
OUTLOOK: Olivet has made the playoffs the past nine seasons.

PERRY RAMBLERS

2016 RECORD: 5-4
HEAD COACH: Jeff Pott
POSTSEASON IN 2016: none
KEY LOSSES: Brad Cronk, Colton

ROSCOMMON BUCKS

2016 RECORD: 9-2
HEAD COACH: Steve Clements
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 1-1
KEY PLAYERS: Carson Crabtree (Sr., WR); Dane Smitz (Jr., QB), James Bannon (Jr., CB); Drac Josts (So., WR).
OUTLOOK: Last season, the Bucks had their best record in 10 years

MERIDIAN MUSTANGS

2016 RECORD: 3-6
HEAD COACH: Calvin Hampton
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Eli Stringfellow, Sr, WR; Jaquaris Dean, Sr., RB, Demorian Harris, Sr., CB.
OUTLOOK: The Mustangs sustained their first losing season since 2006 when they were 3-6 in 2016.



Beaverton made the playoffs a year ago finishing the season with a 6-4 record. (Skip Traynor, High School Sports Scene Photo)

Leykauf
KEY PLAYERS: CJ King, So., DB; Brodie Crim. so. WR; Justin Hammond, jr., WB; Ethan, Kidd, DL
OUTLOOK: Perry had its first winning season since 2006, but has yet to make the state playoffs.

STOCKBRIDGE PANTHERS

2016 RECORD: 5-5
HEAD COACH: Jeremy Killingier (68-77)
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS: Jacob Sutton, Sr., WR;

Miguel Media, Sr., RB; Hunter Winnie, Sr., TE; Arce Fravier, Sr., OL
OUTLOOK: The team will be sparked by 14 seniors.

MAPLE VALLEY LIONS

2016 RECORD: 2-7
HEAD COACH: Marty Martin
POSTSEASON IN 2016: none
KEY PLAYERS: Dillon Terpening, Sr., OL, Will Hammond, Sr., OL, Ryan Bennett, Sr., FB.
OUTLOOK: Maple Valley allowed 32 points a game last season and wants to cut down on that

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SAGINAW VALLEY LEAGUE RED PREVIEW

BAY CITY CENTRAL WOLVES

Head coach: Morley Fraser, 32nd year, 162-135
2016 record: 6-4 overall, 3-3 SVL
Postseason in 2016: 0-1, lost to Midland Dow 55-14 in pre-district
Key Players: Dequez Weathers, sr, RB, Brian Elder, jr, QB, Judson Morse,,WR, Garrett Glyszyr, WR, Eric Lehmann,sr, DE, Austin Welter, sr, K
Notables: After making the playoffs last year for the first time since 2007, the Wolves are expecting an even better campaign this fall. Dequez Weathers should be one of the best backs in the SVL again, and the tall Elder is expected to be improved as well.

BAY CITY JOHN GLENN BOBCATS

Head coach: Jeremy Werner, 8th year, 36-31
2016 record: 7-3 overall - independent
Postseason in 2016: 0-1, lost to Orchard Lake St. Mary's 49-14 in pre-district

SAGINAW VALLEY LEAGUE BLUE PREVIEW

BAY CITY WESTERN WARRIORS

Head coach: Jeff Rahl, 4th year, 8-19
2016 record: 2-7 overall, 2-4 SVL
Key Players: Ryan Miller sr., WR, Brendan Bellingier, sr., WR Carter Bacigalupo, so, QB, Parker Rivard, sr, WR, Logan LaCourse, sr, RB, Trevor



Key Players: Jobe Long, so, QB, Branden Valliere, sr, RB,Noah DeShano, sr, RB, Hunter Peterson, sr, LB
Notables: How will the John Glenn football team fare in its first season in the SVL? We're about to find out. Jobe Long will have to have a big season if the Bobcats are going to find the playoffs for a fourth straight season, though the sophomore signal-caller is expected to be up to the challenge. John Glenn will feature the spread offense to highlight Long's skill level.

CARMEN-AINSWORTH CAVALIERS

Head coach: Jerry Parker, third year, 10-9
2016 record: 6-4 overall, 6-0
Postseason in 2016: 0-1, lost to Fenton 49-49 in pre-district
Key Players: Dustin Fletcher, so, QB, Dewayne Gurley, jr, WR
Notables: Last year's SVL-Red champion had a rough time with Fenton in the Division 2 pre-district game last fall. Nonetheless the Cavaliers hope for a repeat performance in the regular season and claim its first playoff win since 2014. Fletcher broke onto the scene as a freshman last year and should have an even bigger role this fall.

Neumeyer, jr, RB
Notables: The Warriors look to rebound after a tough two-win campaign from a season ago. To find success and its first playoff berth since 2012, Western may need to rely on sophomore quarterback Carter Bacigalupo to carry some of the load. Logan LaCourse and Trevor Neumeyer are expected to see most of the carries in the backfield.

MIDLAND CHEMICS

Head coach: Eric Methner 10th year, 72-25
2016 record: 4-5 overall, 4-2 SVL
Key Players: RJ Allen, Cade Methner, Martin Money, Ben Gordon, Cam Graves, Carter Grove, Cameron White, Josh Campbell
Notables: After decades of dominance, the Chemics have hit a rough patch by their standards in recent years, only making the playoffs once in the last three seasons. Last year, a loss to cross-town rival Dow in week nine kept if from having a winning record and a chance at an at-large playoff berth.

Saginaw High is hoping to build off its 2-7 season from a year ago. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)

FLINT POWERS CATHOLIC CHARGERS

Head coach: Jerry Todd 2nd year, 6-5
2016 record: 6-5 overall, 4-2 SVL
Postseason in 2016: 1-1, lost to Corunna 20-14 in district final
Key Players: Joe Blade, Zach Talovich,
Notables: The Chargers snuck into the post-season with five wins last fall, a season after reaching all the way to the state finals in 2014. Powers has made the playoffs the last three seasons and five out of the last six years, including a Division 5 state championship in 2011.

MIDLAND DOW CHARGERS

Head coach: Jason Watkins, 9th year, 70-25
2016 record: 9-2 overall, 5-1 SVL
Postseason in 2016: 1-1, lost to Fenton 49-42 in district final
Key Players: N / A
Notables: Watkins and the Chargers hope to keep the train rolling. The program is coming off its fourth straight playoff berth, the first time in team history it has done that. Dow has also beat arch-rival Midland High five straight times, including a 2015 playoff game. To make things more difficult will be having to replace graduated talented quarterback Bruce Mann.

DAVISON CARDINALS

Head coach: Kyle Zimmerman, 4th year, 19-11
2016 record: 10-1 overall, 6-0 SVL
Postseason in 2016: 1-1, lost to Clarkston 31-14 in district final.
Key Players: Tariq Reid
Notables: Since joining the SVL in 2012, Davison has been a force to be reckoned with. The Cardinals have made the playoffs three times since that year, and were SVL-Blue champions last year.

FLINT SOUTHWESTERN KNIGHTS

Head coach: Chane Clingman, 6th year, 10-35
2016 record: 1-8 overall, 1-5 SVL
Key Players: N / A
Notables: The bad news is that the Knights are coming off back-to-back 1-8 seasons. The good news is that the Knights should have some help as their athletics have merged with former rival



Saginaw Heritage hopes this is the year it can break through and make the playoffs under third-year coach Joe Willey. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)

ARTHUR HILL LUMBERJACKS

Head coach: Jim Comer, 2nd year, 1-8
2016 record: 1-8 overall, 1-5 SVL
Key Players: Zamarian Foster, TJ Farrell, Alan Lane, Daiuan Jones, Malique Foster
Notables: With an enrollment that continues to decline, the Lumberjacks have found life harder and harder in the SVL. Arthur Hill has two wins in the last three seasons, one of which was against Flint Northwestern, which no longer has a team.

HERITAGE HAWKS

Head coach: Joe Willey, 3rd year, 5-13
2016 record: 3-6 overall, 2-4 SVL
Key Players: Majestic Dudley, Justin McMurren
Notables: The Hawks will continue to run the spread offense under third-year head coach Joe Willey. The Hawks expect to have a focus on the running game, while Keegan Robertson, a sophomore and Blaine Byam, a junior battle for the starting nod at quarterback.

Flint Northwestern. Neither program has ever made the post-season.

LAPEER LIGHTNING

Head coach: Mike Smith, 19th year, 130-57 (Lapeer West and Lapeer High combined)
2016 record: 7-3 overall, 5-1 SVL
Postseason in 2016: 0-1, lost to Clarkston 45-21 in pre-district
Key Players: Jalen Kirkland, Isaac Kinne, Sam Kinne, Drew Johnston, Owen Ruddock
Notables: Since joining the SVL in 2014 the Lightning have arguably its toughest team year in and year out. After running through its first two seasons unblemished in league play, the Lightning did drop a conference game last year. Lapeer hopes to get back on top this fall.

MT. PLEASANT OILERS

Head coach: Jason McIntyre, 12th season, 93-32
2016 record: 5-4 overall, 3-3 SVL
Key Players: Jayden Perry, sr, WR, Cole Smallwood, Cade Wischmeyer, Jackson Ostrowsky, Kevin Davis, Jordna Davis,

Justin Hassen, Tyler Huenemann, Trey Wentworth, Isaiah Schafer, Mikel Meret.
Notables: The Oilers narrowly missed out on the playoffs last year and lost three college-level players from that squad to graduation. If they can survive a brutal start to the schedule they finish with winnable games against Flint Southwestern, Bay City Western, Arthur Hill and Heritage.

SAGINAW TROJANS

Head coach: Nate Simington, 4th season, 5-22
2016 record: 2-7 overall, 0-6 SVL
Key Players: NeVen Simington, sr, LB, TE, Delmichale Jeffries, sr, QB, Tony Martin, Dimetri Wells, Anthony Sanders, Wildren Dawson
Notables: Neven Simington verbally announced to play college football at Central Michigan, though the Trojans will need to get more production than from only him if they are to get back to the playoffs for the first time since 2002. The Trojans have a young roster.

MID STATE ACTIVITIES CONFERENCE PREVIEW

BRECKENRIDGE HUSKIES

2016 RECORD: 9-1
HEAD COACH: Kris Robinson
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS: Kenyon Story, Sr. OT; Spencer Flemming, Sr. OT; Lukas Ebright, Jr, SB
OUTLOOK: The Huskies went from 0-9 in 2015 to 9-0 in 2016. It was a Cinderella story of major proportions and the defending champs are the team to beat again. Breckenridge was outscored by its nine opponents 386-68 in 2015, but out-pointed its opponents 357-112 a year later.



VESTABURG WOLVERINES

2016 RECORD: 5-5
HEAD COACH: Dan Ryckman
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS: Ethan Davis, Jr, RB; Kegan Crooks, Jr, QB; Dakota Bennett, So., RB; Will Korhase, Jr., G, DE; Christian Sytsma, Jr, DT.
OUTLOOK: Vestaburg has gone 5-5 while making the playoffs in each of the last two seasons.

MONTABELLA MUSTANGS

2016 RECORD: 2-7
HEAD COACH: Shaun Balhorn
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None.

KEY PLAYERS: Gavin Gatehouse, Sop, WR; Marshall Wright, Jr., WR; Zach Wright, Sr, WR; David Shattuck, So., RB/CB
OUTLOOK: The Mustangs were 3-16 the past two seasons, but are looking for playoffs this year.

CARSON CITY - CRYSTAL EAGLES

2016 RECORD: 5-4
HEAD COACH: Tim Stout
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS LOST: Jake Smith, Avery Earles
KEY PLAYERS: Drew Stout, Jr.; Noah Heckman, Sr.; Braxton Seida, Jr.; Daniel Smith, Jr.; Zac Norton, Sr.; Caleb Collins, Jr.; Jeremiah Eller, Sr.
OUTLOOK: The Eagles return nine offensive and nine defensive starters.

MOUNT PLEASANT SACRED HEART

2016 RECORD: 5-5
HEAD COACH: Jamie Slate
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 0-1 in playoffs
KEY PLAYERS LOST: Christian Maloney, Ian Ruggles, Ryan Ervin.
KEY PLAYERS: Colton Hyble, Sr., MLB, Carter Lowe, Sr., QB; Andy Gruss; Keaton Sheffert, Sr., OT; Elliot Yun, Sr., OC.
OUTLOOK: The Irish, in 2016, scored 54 more points than they did in 2015.

Top: Vestaburg finished the season 5-5 after making the Division 8 playoffs a year ago. Left: Breckenridge finished a perfect 9-0 for the first time in school history inn 2016. (Skip Traynor and Randy Miniard, High School Sports Scene Photos)

They also allowed 117 more points. Those are figures they need to amend this year. The offense threw for nearly 2,300 yards last year.

MERRILL VANDALS

2016 RECORD: 6-4
HEAD COACH: Christian Wiley
POSTSEASON IN 2016: 0-1
KEY PLAYERS: Rique Hernandez, Sr., WR; Adam Engel, Jr, SS; Logan Heaeth, Fr., L; Brady Siler, Sopo, RB
OUTLOOK: The Vandals defense allowed 80 less points in the 2016 season than it did in 2015.

ASHLEY BEARS

2016 RECORD: 0-9
HEAD COACH: Fred Peacock
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS: Tyler Johnson, Sr, WR; Kegan Welch, Jr, R; Jerry Good, Jr., RB; Dyan Commer, S,r, RB
OUTLOOK: Ashley only once scored more than 20 points, a stat the Bears want to change this season.

COLEMAN COMETS

2016 RECORD: 1-8
HEAD COACH: Chad Klopff
POSTSEASON IN 2016: None
KEY PLAYERS LOST: Ben Kemp
KEY PLAYERS: Jason Beckner Sr. WR/ FS; Cody Finney Sr. OT/DL; Spencer Pnacek Jr, QB; Karlos Moiser



Sr. WR/OLB; Truman Webb Sr. RB/CB; Tyler Stambesky, Sr. WR/CB; Hunter Wood, Sr. OL/DL; Cooper Cozart, Jr. 5-10, 218; Logan Kleinhardt, Jr. OL/DL; Nick Sysak, Sr. 5-10, 275; Nick Lovejoy, Sr., RB/LB/DB.
OUTLOOK: Coleman was 1-8 for the straight season. But the Comets more than doubled their offensive output in 2016 from 2015

Advertisement for The Laurels of Fulton, a Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation Center. Includes logo, photos of the facility, and contact information for three locations: Alma, Carson City, and Mount Pleasant.

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Advertisement for Downtown Auto Services Inc., featuring Scott Nevins, President, and a Certified Service Center.

Advertisement for True Value hardware stores, listing locations in Alma, Carson City, and Edmore.

OTTAWA-KENT RED PREVIEW

ROCKFORD RAMS
League: Ottawa-Kent Red Conference
Coach: Ralph Munger
2016 Record: 7-4, 5-1 11th
Players lost: Matt Baker (OL), Sam Corey (P), Nick Isley (FB), Tate Radaz (DL), Cole VanSetters (OLB).
Players returning: Cody Carone (OL), Logan Lee (TE), Marcus Remtema (WR/DB), Ian Rodriguez (FB), Khale

Showers (LB), Jason Whittaker (QB).
Outlook: The Rams have a loaded roster once again. Northwestern recruit Jason Whittaker (6-5, 205) is one of the premier quarterbacks in the state. Cody Carone (6-4, 300), a three-year starter, anchors the line of scrimmage along with junior center Matthew Mateo-Kkurzaja (5-11, 315). Senior speedster Marcus Remtema (6-1, 180) is an impact player on both offense and defense. Senior tight end Logan Lee (6-4, 215) is a strong blocker and receiver while senior Khale Showers (5-11, 190) is a hard-hitting linebacker.

OTTAWA-KENT SILVER PREVIEW

BELDING BLACK KNIGHTS
League: Ottawa-Kent Silver Conference
Coach: Joe Schwander
2016 Record: 5-5, 4-2 3rd
Players lost: Damion Ball (OL), Dalton Richards (OL/LB).
Players returning: Nolan Barker (RB/DB), Trent Collins (QB/LB), James Daniel (RB/LB), Brandon Powers (OL/DL), David Ross (OL/DL), Tyler Smith (WR/LB), Mitchell

Ward (OL/LB).
Outlook: Belding has a new nickname this season but plenty of familiar names return to the field for a team that fell to Ithaca in the opening round of the playoffs last fall. Belding has plenty of speed and experience at the skill positions where veteran quarterback Trent Collins returns along with speedy running backs Nolan Barker and James Daniel. Senior David Ross (6-1, 210) and sophomore Jonathan Ross (6-1, 240) will be impact players on both lines along with senior Brandon Powers (6-1, 210).

OTTAWA-KENT WHITE PREVIEW

LOWELL RED ARROWS
League: Ottawa-Kent White Conference
Coach: Noel Dean
2016 Record: 12-1, 6-0 1st
Players lost: Michael Doyle (DT), Nathan Stephens (RB/LB), John Rogalke (DL), Logan VanderMeulen (DT).
Players returning: Addison Buckius (WR), Caleb Devereaux (OL), Brady Douma (WR/DB), Connor Douma (WR/DB), David Kruse (QB), Andrew LaFebre (OL), Ben Lobbezoo (SB), Connor Nugent (OL).
Outlook: While the Red Arrows

suffered heavy graduation losses once again, they do return veteran quarterback David Kruse, a two-year starter with outstanding running skills and an improving passer. Senior Addison Buckius (6-2, 200) is a matchup problem at receiver while senior twins Brady and Connor Douma are impact players at runners, receivers, kick returners and defensive backs. Lowell also has a strong offensive line anchored by seniors Andrew LaFebre (6-0, 220) and Caleb Devereaux (6-0, 270).

GREENVILLE YELLOWJACKETS

League: Ottawa-Kent White Conference
Coach: Eddie Ostipow

INDEPENDENTS / OTHERS PREVIEW

PINCKNEY PIRATES

LEAGUE: SEC White Division
HEAD COACH: Rod Beaton, first season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 8-3, 4-1 KLA-A-West (second)
KEY RETURNNEES: Derek Crowley, sr. OL/DL; Jack Wurzer, sr. QB; Cauty Hendece, sr. OI/ILB; Nick Cain, sr. DB/WR; Alex Wasyl, sr. DB/WR/RB; Nolan Houghteling, sr. WR/OLB; Levi Collins, sr. ILB/RB; Michael Antal, sr. OLB/WR
KEY NEWCOMERS: Jacob Price, jr. DE/OT
OUTLOOK: The Pirates recorded eight wins for the first time since 1989 and reached the second round of the postseason for only the second time in school history. Pinckney reached the postseason for only the fifth time in 2016. This season, the Pirates will compete in the SEC-White Division with the likes of Ypsilanti Lincoln, Chelsea, Ypsilanti, Dexter, Tecumseh and Adrian.

BIRMINGHAM DETROIT COUNTRY DAY YELLOW JACKETS

LEAGUE: Independent
HEAD COACH: Dan MacLean
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 13-1, Independent
KEY RETURNNEES: Isaiah Johnson, sr. RB/DB; Kolin Demens, sr. NB/LB (D-1 offers from Michigan, Michigan State) Christian Love, sr. DL/OL; Alex McKeen, sr. WR/DB; Alex Skakits, sr.

OL/DL; Connor Coffman, sr. HB/LB; Connor Matthews, sr. OL/DL; Shane Miller, sr. OL/LB; Omar Kazziha, sr. OL/DL; Terrell Payne, sr. WR/DB; Rethink Aggarwal, sr. OL/DL
KEY NEWCOMERS: Jack Pulte, jr. WR; Robert Pousac, sr. OL/DL (transfer); Darrin King, jr. WR/DB; Demetrious Champion, jr. TE/DE; Anthony Toma, jr. QB; Josh Winowich, jr. RB/LB; Ahlon Mitchell, soph. DB/QB; Nick Jackson, jr. OL/DL; Max Zimmerman, jr. K/LB; Ryan Luft, jr. DB; Anthony Ammori, soph. RB/DB
OUTLOOK: With a high-powered offense, the Yellow Jackets soared to the D-4 title game only to be stymied by Grand Rapids Catholic Central (10-7). With a bevy of talent back and a large and talented cast of newcomers, DCD will again be a force to be reckoned with and a threat to win a state title.

PONTIAC NOTRE DAME PREP

LEAGUE: Independent
HEAD COACH: Pat Fox, second season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 4-5, Independent
KEY RETURNNEES: Joe Depillo, sr. TE; Eli McLean, sr. DB; Bryce Baringer, sr. K/P
OUTLOOK: In its first year as an independent, the Fighting Irish started 4-1 but lost their final four contests. Part of that was playing an unfamiliar schedule and part was playing schools mostly larger than Notre Dame Prep. The Irish will again play eight new opponents with the only repeat being Detroit Public Safety Academy.

2016 Record: 5-5, 3-3 14th
Players lost: Keegan Cossou (Central Michigan-TE), Evan Plate (Central Michigan-LB), Luke Newhouse (RB/LB), Cal Syrjala (QB).
Players returning: Trent Bitner (OL), Robert Blackledge (WR/DB), Brock Kohler (WR/DB), Kyle Lorenz (RB/DB), Brandon Parris (DL), Bryce Priebe (RB/DB).
Outlook: In his first season as head coach Eddie Ostipow led the Yellowjackets to a playoff berth. While Greenville has graduated some highly-talented players, the second year in the system should pay benefits. Greenville also has plenty of promising young players to watch including sophomore quarterback Zane Bigelow (6-0, 160), junior tight end Gavin Cossou (6-5, 205), sophomore linebacker

Matt Laudenslanger (5-10, 205) and sophomore linebacker Sam Plate. Senior linemen Trent Bitner (5-10, 220), Brandon Parris (5-9, 250) and Casey Rigney (6-4, 210) anchor the trenches with seniors Kyle Lorenz (5-7, 190) and Bryce Priebe (5-10, 170) leading the way at running back.

CEDAR SPRINGS RED HAWKS

League: Ottawa-Kent White Conference
Coach: Gus Kapolka
2016 Record: 4-5, 3-3 14th
Players lost: Collin Alvesteffer (Ferris State-QB/DB), Austin Ellis (OL), Jacob Hooker (RB/DB), Jaron Spencer (OL/DL), Noah VanKampen (OL).
Players returning: Nick Campione



Saginaw Nouvel's Tate Hausbeck returns to quarterback the Panthers this season. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)

SAGINAW NOUVEL CATHOLIC PANTHERS

LEAGUE: Independent
HEAD COACH: Mike Boyd Jr., 18th season.
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 8-3, Independent
KEY RETURNNEES: Tate Hausbeck, sr. QB; Alex Wrobel, sr. TB/LB; Kyle Allen, sr. OL/DL; Kenny Kujawa, sr. WR/DB; Pete Snyder, sr. WR/DB; Justin Kuligowski, sr. LB; Tom Sapak, sr. DE; KEY NEWCOMERS: Colin Schultz, sr. OL-DL
OUTLOOK: District finalists last season, the Panthers return plenty of experience and a large senior class as they hope to advance deeper into the postseason this fall. Novel is very deep with receivers and hard-hitting linebackers and will expect to wreak havoc on opponents.

(LB), Paul Duran (OL), Jacob Galinas (NG), Nick Patin (LB), Lucas Pionton (DB), Ryan Ringler (LB), Dylan Tanis (OL).
Outlook: Defense will be a strong point for the Red Hawks led by junior linebacker Ryan Ringler (5-9, 180) who has led the team in tackles the last two years. Senior Nick Patin also returns at linebacker. Senior nose guard Jacob Galinas is a quick, active defender while senior John Todd and junior Lucas Pionton are experienced defensive backs. The offense is built around senior linemen Paul Duran (6-3, 255) and Dylan Tanis (6-0, 215) along with sophomore Kaleb Colby (6-1, 310). Todd returns at fullback where he was second on the team in rushing last year.

KENSINGTON LAKES ATHLETIC ASSOCIATION PREVIEW

BRIGHTON BULLDOGS

LEAGUE: KLA-A Black Division
HEAD COACH: Brian Lemons, third season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 7-3, 5-0 KLA-A-West (first)
KEY RETURNNEES: Andrew Meyer, sr. LB; Rudy Ramirez, sr. WR/K/P; Matt Buschman, sr. LB; Kyle Hook, sr. SS; Jack Johnson, sr. LB; Shane Miciek, sr. TE; Luke Helming, sr. LB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Jack Krause, jr. FS; Chris Seguin, jr. RB; Will Jontz, jr. QB
OUTLOOK: With nine returning starters on offense, Brighton will again be a high-powered offensive engine. Defensively, the Bulldogs must replace eight starters. This program has been to the postseason six of the past eight years and 22 times overall but has not advanced beyond the district finals since 2005, the year they reached the D-1 Final Four. Brighton should contend with Canton and Livonia Stevenson for top honors in the KLA-A-Black.

GRAND BLANC BOBCATS

LEAGUE: KLA-A Gold Division
HEAD COACH: Clint Alexander, first season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 5-5, 1-4 KLA-A-West (fifth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Jayson Haralson, sr. RB/DB; Chase Depars, sr. DB; Timmy Hayden, sr. K; Joel Linden, sr. C; Aidan Martini, sr. OL/LB; Leonard Henry, jr. ILB;
KEY NEWCOMERS: Colton Alexander, jr. QB/P (transfer); Ryder Broteback, jr. LB/QB; Jace Parrish, sr. DB; Carter Merrill, sr. WR; Alex Zaliagiris, sr. WR; Nick Flores, sr. ILB
OUTLOOK: Clint Alexander comes from a prep school on the east coast and one of his first missions was to recreate the link from the football team to the basketball, wrestling, track,



Clint Alexander takes over the Grand Blanc program this season. (Submitted Photo)

baseball and lacrosse teams to find more athletes. The preseason numbers on varsity were up to 88. As one of the state's top 10 largest schools, Alexander believes in multiple-sport athletes and that helps create a winning atmosphere in football. Grand Blanc has qualified for the postseason seven times in the past nine seasons and nine of the previous 13 campaigns. If his unit adapts to Alexander's coaching style, then this could be a dangerous team this fall.

HARTLAND EAGLES

LEAGUE: KLA-A Black Division
HEAD COACH: Brian Savage, third season
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 3-6, 2-3 KLA-A-West (fourth)
KEY RETURNNEES: Tommy Lappin, sr. DL/RB; Andrew Singer, sr. DL/RB; Ethan Martin, sr. DL; David Garascia, sr. OL; Reese Potter, jr. WR/P/K; Evan Metz, jr. WR
KEY NEWCOMERS: Collin Arnold, jr. QB; Zach Trainor, fr. QB/DB; Logan Tobel, soph. WR
OUTLOOK: The Eagles return seven starters on defense and will look to that side to carry the weight as eight new starters will be groomed over on offense. Hartland missed the postseason in 2016 after going 13-7 the previous two seasons. Could a swing back to the direction of the postseason be a possibility this season? If the offense develops, then the Eagles could soar.

LIVONIA STEVENSON SPARTANS

LEAGUE: KLA-A Black Division
HEAD COACH: Randy Mcallef
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 5-5, 2-3 KLA-A-Central (fourth)
OUTLOOK: In 11 of the previous 15 seasons, Stevenson reached the D-1 postseason, including the Final Four in 2008 and finishing as the state runner-up in 2007. This program is used to winning and has finished above five-hundred 17 times in 20 years. Expect that to continue this season, as the Spartans are expected to contend in the KLA-A-Black.

HOWELL HIGHLANDERS

LEAGUE: KLA-A Black Division
HEAD COACH: Aaron Metz (54-37)
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 5-5, 3-2 KLA-A-West (third)
KEY RETURNNEES: Michael Pelic, sr. OG; Nick Tholen, sr. C; Hunter Klaassen, sr. LB; Logan Warn, sr. LB; Michael Brauer, jr. DB; Gage Chandler, sr. P; Aaron Stearn-Raskins, sr. K
KEY NEWCOMERS: Zac Perron, sr. WR; Josh Lynch, sr. LB; Gage Daugard,
 Clint Alexander takes over the Grand Blanc program this season. (Submitted Photo)

jr. DL; Matt Hornyak, jr. QB; Zac Perron, sr. RB/KR; Adam Palazzolo, jr. RB/KR
OUTLOOK: Only four returning starters on both sides of the ball leaves plenty of opportunity for players within Howell's program. It also leaves uncertainty with that many starting positions to fill. Historically, the Highlanders have been to the postseason in nine of the past 13 seasons, including two straight years. But Howell will have its work cut out for it playing in the KLA-A-Black

LIVONIA CHURCHILL CHARGERS

LEAGUE: KLA-A Gold Division
HEAD COACH: Bill DeFillippo
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 5-4, 3-2 KLA-A-South (third)
OUTLOOK: The Chargers just missed the postseason last year but have made the cut four of the last six seasons.

LIVONIA FRANKLIN PATRIOTS

LEAGUE: KLA-A Gold Division
HEAD COACH: Bill DeFillippo
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 7-4, 4-1 KLA-A-South (second)
KEY RETURNNEES: Jacob Mass, sr. TE/LB; Issac Moore, sr. RB; Brad Gibson, sr. DB/SL/K/P; John Diponio, sr. DB; Marcus Martin, sr. LB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Matt Elnod, sr. TE; Keion Harris, sr. DB (seven offers); Manee Wille, sr. OL/DL; Cal Fournier, jr. DB; Julius Simmons, jr. RB; Ariel Weary, jr. DE
OUTLOOK: A total of 16 wins the past two seasons has the Patriots heading in the right direction. Franklin is 4-2 in the postseason the past two years and reached the D-2 state semifinals in 2015. This year's team should be in the mix in the KLA-A-Gold.

NORTHVILLE MUSTANGS

LEAGUE: KLA-A Gold Division
HEAD COACH: Matt Ladach
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 7-3, 5-0 KLA-A-Central (first)
KEY RETURNNEES: Ryan Doroudian, sr. DT; Chase Cooney, sr. OL; Jordan Grew, sr. OL; Abe Houry, sr. RB/DB; Nick Prystash, jr. WR; Jackson Weaver, jr. OL; Jake Moody, sr. K/P
KEY NEWCOMERS: Jaquan Crawford, sr. DL; Patrick Long, sr. DL; Jonathan Michalak, sr. QB; Christian Williams, soph. DB/QB
OUTLOOK: Although there are 60 players on varsity, the Mustangs return only five starters on offense and just one on defense. But as most quality

programs do, they reload. At least that's the way Northville hopes to do with mostly new starters this season. In recent years, the Mustangs have reached the postseason in seven of the past eight years, including four straight seasons. That pathway seems somewhat cloudy unless a bevy of first-year starters can gel in a flash.

NOVI WILDCATS

LEAGUE: KLA-A-Black Division
HEAD COACH: Jeff Burnside, fifth season (20-20)
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 6-5, 3-2 KLA-A-Central (third)
KEY RETURNNEES: Tray Maddox, sr. WR/DB; Nik Williams, sr. WR/TB; Kyle Kloosterman, sr. TB; Chad Howell, sr. OL/DL; DeShaun Clayton, sr. OL/DL; Jordan Castleberry, sr. LB; Drew O'Connor, jr. SE; Tyler VanKirk, sr. DB
KEY NEWCOMERS: Sean Gilliam, sr. QB (transfer)
OUTLOOK: After a rough six-year stretch, Novi turned the tables the past two years by winning a postseason game each year and reaching the D-1 district finals. With plenty of talented players, although several first-year starters, on both sides of the football, plus a quality transfer at QB, and the Wildcats will look to make some noise in the KLA-A-Black.

PLYMOUTH WILDCATS

LEAGUE: KLA-A Gold Division
HEAD COACH: Mike Sawchuk
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 3-6, 2-3 KLA-A-South (fourth)
KEY RETURNNEES: A.J. Neal, sr. RB; Zack Beadle, sr. QB; Carson Miller, jr. RB; Jayden Dunham, sr. WR/RB; Chuckie Dulin, sr. OL; Craig Barker, sr. OL
OUTLOOK: Entering its 15th season as a program, the Wildcats have performed reasonably well, making the postseason nine times in 14 campaigns. Plymouth finished as the 2010 D-1 state runner-up and have played in the postseason eight of the past 10 years. Plymouth suffered through a rebuilding campaign in 2016 but will look to return to contention with a host of returnees this season.

PLYMOUTH CANTON CHIEFS

LEAGUE: KLA-A Black Division
HEAD COACH: Tim Baechler
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 8-3, 5-0 KLA-A-South (first)
KEY RETURNNEES: Max Mulvaney, sr. OL; Lou Baechler, sr. OL/LB; Chase Meredith, sr. OL/LB; Noah Brown, sr. TE/LB; Colin Troup, sr. RB/DB; Steven Walker, jr. RB/DB; Gabe Teichman, sr. DL
OUTLOOK: Dating back to 2000, the Chiefs have proven to be a model of

consistency, reaching the postseason in 16 of the past 17 years, including nine straight seasons. Prior to that, Canton made the postseason cut only one time (1990) from 1973 to 1999. The Chiefs finished as the 2005 D-1 state runner-up and also reached the Final Four in 2006 and 2015. There's no reason to believe the Chiefs won't be one of the best teams in all of Wayne County once again and a squad capable of another deep run.

PLYMOUTH SALEM ROCKS

LEAGUE: KLA-A Black Division
HEAD COACH: Kurt Britnell
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 4-5, 2-3 KLA-A-Central (tied-fourth)
OUTLOOK: Salem is another program that has struggled in recent years, but improved to 4-5 last season with many returning players back in uniform this year. The Rocks have only qualified for the playoffs in 1977 and 1991 — a 26-year drought, longest in the KLA-A. In fact, only twice in two decades has Salem finished above five-hundred. Could this be the year Salem defeats the curse and discover some new-found winning ways?

WAYNE MEMORIAL ZEBRAS

LEAGUE: KLA-A Gold Division
HEAD COACH: Donald Anderson
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 1-8, 0-5 KLA-A-South (sixth)
OUTLOOK: The Zebras last made the postseason in 2003 and just two times overall. The current coaching staff has its work cut out for them, as Wayne has only won four games over the past seven seasons and has suffered through 10 straight losing seasons overall with 12 wins within that span. The athletes are there, but the staff is trying to institute a culture change and make football a priority for the Zebras again.

WESTLAND JOHN GLENN ROCKETS

LEAGUE: KLA-A Gold Division
HEAD COACH: Steve Waller
LAST SEASON'S RECORD: 2-7, 1-4 KLA-A-South (fifth)
OUTLOOK: The once-proud Rockets made the postseason 11 times from 1992 to 2004 but have only qualified three times in the past decade and finished 3-15 the past two years combined. The staff is hoping that a quality junior class and move to the KLA-A-Gold will help kickstart a rejuvenation period at John Glenn, which has not won a postseason game since 2003. Remember, the Rockets had several quality teams in the 80s, 90s and early 2000s and finished as the 1993 Class AA state runner-up.

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2017 College Football Preview



MICHIGAN WOLVERINES

2016 Record: 10-3, 7-2 Big 10

Offense: Quarterback was the big question mark heading into last season but the play of Wilton Speight turned the position into

an asset. While the Wolverines suffered some big graduation losses, plenty of young talent is ready to step up. Michigan has a deep stable of running backs that adds redshirt freshman Kareem Walker to the mix this year. The receivers are young but sophomores Eddie McDoom and Kekoa Crawford showed promise last year and super-freshman Donovan Peoples-Jones is primed to make an impact. The Wolverines also have many fullbacks and tight ends that offer versatility. Up front, senior tackle Mason Cole and sophomore guard Ben Bredeson anchor a line that should develop into a strength.

Defense: The Michigan defense was one of the nation's best last year but 10 starters have graduated. The cupboard, however, is far from bare and defensive coordinator Don Brown has plenty of young talent to work with. Look for super-sophomore defensive end Rashan Gary to bust out this season. Maurice Hurst and Bryan Mone are more than solid in the middle while senior outside linebacker Mike McCray was second on the team in tackles last year. Sophomore middle linebacker Devin Bush is poised for a breakout year. Michigan's secondary is very young but also highly talented. By season's end, this could be a very strong defense.

Local angle: Former Rockford super recruit Quinn Nordin is taking over the kicking duties after red-shirting last year. Nordin has an NFL leg and was rated the number one high school kicker in the country in the 2016 class.

Our take: Although hit hard by graduation, the Wolverines have been stockpiling talent with some outstanding recruiting classes the last two years. This year's young and talented squad will be fun to watch develop on both sides of the ball. If they Wolverines can get by Florida in the opener they could be 6-0 heading into an Oct. 21 showdown at Penn State. By that time many of the youngsters will have plenty of experience under their belt. The final weeks of the season will be grueling with road trips to Maryland and Wisconsin before the showdown with Ohio State in Ann Arbor Nov. 25.

MICHIGAN STATE SPARTANS

2016 Record: 3-9, 1-8 Big 10

Offense: Establishing a quarterback is job one for the Spartan offense. Brian Lewerke started a pair of games as a redshirt freshman last year and showed promise before going down for the year

with a broken leg. Senior Damion Terry is an option as is redshirt freshman Messiah deWeaver. Establishing the receiving corps is job number two. Sophomore Trishton Jackson has flashed potential and junior Felton Davis has some experience. Freshman Hunter Rison could be a wild card if he adjusts quickly to the college game. Until the passing game develops, the Spartans can rely on the ground game as junior LJ Scott

is back after rushing for close to 1,000 yards last season as is senior Gerald Holmes who gained over 400 yards. The offensive line is a work in process. Senior Brian Allen anchors the line at center with the guards being rather inexperienced. Experience is also in short supply at the tackles although sophomore Cole Chewins and redshirt freshman Luke Campbell show promise. With so many question marks, the offense will surely have its ups and downs this season and developing consistency is crucial.

Defense: The Spartan defense fell off big time last fall as they surrendered 27.8 points per game, the most since the John Smith era in 2006. Major rebuilding must take place along the defensive line where experience is in short supply. Sophomore tackles Raequan Williams and Mike Panasiuk flashed potential late in the season; however, the end positions are as green as the Spartan uniforms. Senior linebacker Chris Frey anchors the linebacking crew along with junior Star linebacker Andrew Dowell who has big-play ability. Keep an eye on sophomore middle linebacker Joe Bachie who brings an old-school game to the field. The secondary is also in a state of flux. A healthy Vayante Copeland would help a lot at cornerback where sophomore Justin Layne played well as a freshman. The Spartans also have a group of safeties with some experience that can be rotated in and out.

Local Angle: While Brian Allen is a two-time, second-team all-Big 10 performer at center, Belding grad Bryce Wilker is apprenticing behind him. A 6-foot-5, 293 pound red-shirt sophomore, Wilker is a walk-on that has been developing into a player that may soon contribute up front.

Our take: What a difference a year makes. Coming off an appearance in the College Football Playoff the year before, Michigan State had high hopes entering last season. After starting the year with a pair of wins, the Spartans then lost nine of their next 10 games. Michigan State suffered heavy personnel losses during the offseason and faces a crossroads season this year in a Big 10 East Division that includes super-powers Ohio State, Michigan and Penn State and a Maryland program on the upswing.



CENTRAL MICHIGAN CHIPPEWAS

2016 Record: 6-7, 3-5 MAC

Offense: For the first time in four years the Chippewas will take the field without quarterback Cooper Rush leading the way. This



Donovan Peoples Jones, who was ranked No. 1 at wide receiver for the Class of 2017 should make an impact on the University of Michigan offense as a freshman this season. (Scott Keyes, High School Sports Scene Photo)

year, red-shirt freshman Tony Poljan, like Rush, a Lansing Catholic Central grad, looks to carry on the LCC quarterback legacy at CMU. Also in the mix at quarterback is former Michigan quarterback Shane Morris who is a graduate transfer. With their top four receivers back, whoever wins the job will have some talented and experienced targets to throw to. Senior Devon Spalding rushed for over 700 yards last year and the Chips also add Minnesota transfer Berkley Edwards at running back. Up front, the Chippewas have plenty of experienced blockers returning.

Defense: With six starters back, the Chippewa defense should be improved. Junior middle linebacker Malik Fountain and senior cornerback Amari Coleman were first-team, all-MAC picks while senior defensive end Joe Ostman earned second-team, all-MAC honors.

Local Angle: Coleman, who was CMU's co-Defensive Player of the Year last year, is a New Lothrop grad. Sophomore kicker Kaden Keon from St. Louis made an impact on kickoffs last season and will handle field goals this season. Look for former Ithaca standout Logan Hessbrook to make an impact at tight end while Greenville grad Steve Eipper and Essexville-Garber grad Alex Neering are backups along the offensive line.

Our take: The big key to the season will be quarterback play. With a veteran receiving corps, a solid line and talented backs, the ingredients for a productive offense are there. CMU's defense will be improved but with a schedule that includes road trips to Kansas, Syracuse and Boston College making it to six wins will be tall task.



WESTERN MICHIGAN BRONCOS

2016 Record: 13-1, 8-0 MAC

Offense: Not only did PJ Fleck row the boat to Minnesota, but quarterback Zach Terrell and an outstanding group of receivers

set sail as well. Inexperienced sophomore Jon Wassink is talented and steps in as the new quarterback. The Broncos do return a pair of outstanding veteran running backs in Jarvion Franklin and Jamauri Bogan who combined for close to 2,300 yards rushing last year. Up front, all-MAC tackle Chukwuma Okorafor and second-team, all-MAC center John Keenoy anchor a solid offensive line for a tea that will rely on the run even more this season.

Defense: With seven starters back including some highly talented linebackers, defense will again be a strong point for the Broncos. Outside linebackers Robert Spillane and Asantay Brown both earned second-team, all-MAC honors last year while senior middle linebacker Caleb Bailey totaled 71 tackles. The secondary is paced by all-MAC cornerback Darius Phillips.

Local Angle: Former Alma standout Curtis Doyle is slated to take over as the starting left guard after seeing action in three games last season. Former Swan Valley standout Alex Grace, a red-shirt sophomore, is the backup at strong-side linebacker and totaled 12 tackles in 12 games last year.

Our take: It will be impossible to top last year's dream season, especially with the season opener at USC, but the Broncos have enough talent on hand to challenge for the MAC West title and earn another bowl bid. The program is also in solid hands under former Bronco star quarterback Tim Lester, who was Purdue's offensive coordinator last year.

EASTERN MICHIGAN EAGLES

2016 Record: 7-6, 4-4 MAC

Offense: Quarterback Brogan Roback is back for his senior season after passing for over 5,000 yards combined the past two seasons. Roback will have plenty of familiar faces to throw to and the ground game returns everyone. The offensive line took some graduation hits and rebuilding the line will be key to how productive the offense is this season.

Defense: Eastern Michigan's defense showed improvement last year and look for that improvement to continue this season with eight starters returning. The Eagles have plenty of experience in all areas of the defense and have an impact player in defensive end Jeremiah Harris that has all-MAC potential.

Local Angle: Former Grand Blanc standout Luke MacLean is back for his senior year. Projected to start at defensive tackle, MacLean started eight games last year as he recorded three pass breakups and two tackles for loss.

Our take: The Eagles experienced a huge turnaround last year as their seven wins equaled the total of the previous four seasons combined and resulted in the first bowl game since 1987. With plenty of experience back, the Eagles are primed to build on that success this fall.

FERRIS STATE BULLDOGS

2016 Record: 12-3, 9-2 GLIAC

Offense: Graduate two-time Harlon Hill Trophy winning quarterback Jason Vander Laan, no problem for the Bulldogs as Reggie Bell stepped in and put up all-American numbers of his own

with 2,085 yards passing and 1,217 yards rushing as he led the Bulldogs to the D2 national semifinals. Ferris also returns four starters along the offensive line, a host of playmakers at receiver and veteran running back Jahaan Brown. Pencil this offense down as one of the best in NCAA Division 2.

Defense: Ferris returns a pair of all-American defenders in cornerback Tavierre Thomas and junior defensive end Zach Stieler. The NCAA D2 National Defensive Player of the Year, Stieler (6-6, 275) is a dynamic playmaker who totaled 29 ½ tackles for loss and 19 ½ sacks last season. Even more, 14 seniors also return on defense.

Local Angle: Hometown center Jack Daugherty, a Big Rapids High School grad, is back for his third year as FSU's starting center. One of the premier centers in the country, Daugherty earned honorable-mention, all-American honors last year.

Our take: Head coach Tony Annese has built a national power in Big Rapids. This year's team, ranked No. 1 in the nation by College Football America, is built to win a national championship. Football Saturday's are big events in Big Rapids and will be again this season, especially when Grand Valley State comes to town for the Anchor-Bone Classic Oct. 21.

GRAND VALLEY STATE LAKERS

2016 Record: 12-1, 10-0 GLIAC

Offense: After passing for 45 touchdowns as a freshman, Laker quarterback Bart Williams threw 33 touchdowns last fall along with 3,334

yards passing. With three veteran receivers back along with four starting offensive linemen, the passing game is poised to take off once again. Grand Valley is no one-dimensional offense either, a junior running back Marty Carter rushed for 1,908 yards and scored 20 touchdowns on his way to finishing fifth in the Harlon Hill voting.

Defense: The Laker defense is led by senior linebacker Collin Schlosser who topped the team with 108 tackles last season. Senior safety Garrett Pougnet is the ringleader of the secondary while the defensive line is deep and experienced.

Local Angle: Portland High School grad Dylan Carroll is one of the Laker's top impact players on defense. A junior defensive end, Carroll led the Lakers with 14 ½ tackles for loss last season.

Our take: Ranked No. 2 in the country in NCAA Division 2 by Street & Smith's College Football, Grand Valley is again geared up for a run at the national title. Mega-battles with Ferris State will decide not only the GLIAC title but playoff runs as well.

SAGINAW VALLEY STATE CARDINALS

2016 record: 5-5, 5-5 GLIAC

Offense: Plenty of experience returns on offense for the Cardinals. A pair of experienced quarterbacks return including

sophomore Ryan Conklin who started the last four games a year ago. SVSU is also deep at running back and has a host of offensive linemen to work with.

Defense: The Cardinal defense has a veteran look to it led by senior linebacker Bryan Jones. A four-year starter, Jones led the GLIAC in tackles last year with 111. The secondary has plenty of veterans back and what was a young defensive line last year is back with more experience.

Local Angle: Senior tight end Will Farr, a Grand Ledge grad, gives the passing game a reliable target over the middle. On defense, junior linebacker Michael Alexander from Midland has plenty of experience and is part of a solid group of linebackers.

Our take: Saginaw Valley turned in a .500 record last season and with plenty of veterans back the Cardinals are looking to build on that success. Improved quarterback play will be a big key to increased success this season.

NORTHWOOD TIMBERWOLVES

2016 record: 3-8, 3-8 GLIAC

Offense: The Timberwolves will be more experienced on the offensive side of the ball. Sophomore quarterback Joe Garbarino gained plenty of experience as a freshman while sophomore running back Abdul Levy showed plenty of promise as well. Northwood also returns a number of experienced receivers and linemen.

Defense: Defensive end Charles Williams is a returning impact player that totaled six tackles for loss and 3 ½ sacks last year. Strong safety Nick Tripp is the top returning tackler and also intercepted a pair of passes last year.

Local Angle: Senior running back/kick returner Andre Carter, a Grand Ledge grad, led Northwood with 819 all-purpose yards last season. Junior defensive end Zach Gustafson, a Portland grad, is back after totaled 4 ½ tackles for loss and three sacks last year while sophomore linebacker Chase Harrington from Greenville totaled 11 tackles in nine games a year ago.

Our take: With better experience at quarterback and the backfield, Northwood's offense looks to be improved. With continued improvement on defense the Timberwolves will make a strong run at a .500 record.

ALMA SCOTS

2016 record: 7-3, 4-2 MIAA

Offense: The Scots return 10 starters on offense led by senior quarterback Dylan Zaborowski. A dual-threat quarterback, Zaborowski passed for 2,148 yards and 14 touchdowns and rushed for 648 yards

and 11 scores. At receiver, senior Daniel Hagan is back after catching 70 passes for 1,123 yards. Senior tight end Nick Cozart and senior lineman Ian Hickerson are a pair of first-team, all-MIAA selection that return.

Defense: Seven starters return on defense led by senior linebacker Zac Peterson. Peterson totaled over 100 tackles for the second straight season as fall and led the MIAA with 102 tackles. Senior linebacker Colton Tyson was second on the team in tackles with 66 including 8 ½ tackles for loss and senior defensive lineman Dustin Tripp added 13 ½ tackles for loss and nine quarterback sacks.

Local Angle: Former Ithaca standout Dallas Reeser made a major impact at linebacker as a sophomore last year. Reeser recorded three games of 10 or more tackles and finished the season with 50 tackles along with 6 ½ tackles for loss.

Our take: The Scots won seven games last season, the most since 2004. With 17 starters returning this year including a senior quarterback, Alma is poised to take the next step this season and should contend for the MIAA title.

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Poljan, Newcomer Morris Battling For CMU's QB Job

Nate Schneider Sports Scene

When Central Michigan football head coach John Bonamego had his introductory press conference in February of 2015, he spoke of the importance of bringing Mid-American Conference championships to his alma mater.

Bonamego guided the Chippewas to a 7-6 record in his inaugural season, finishing in a four-way tie for the MAC West Division title plus a 21-14 loss to Minnesota in the Quick Lane Bowl.

Central Michigan did qualify for another bowl game in 2016, a 55-10 blowout against Tulsa in the now-defunct Miami Beach Bowl, but a 6-7 record including a 3-5 MAC mark left most people feeling as though it was a disappointment.

Now the Chippewas are tasked with replacing their reliable four-year starting quarterback in Cooper Rush, now turning heads as he's put together a couple strong preseason games in a row for the Dallas Cowboys.

The two candidates to replace Rush and lead the charge in the brand-new spread offense could not be much more different.

First you have redshirt freshman Tony Poljan, a graduate of the same Lansing Catholic Central High School that produced Rush. Poljan is 6-foot-7 and blessed with all the physical tools to the point where Big Ten Conference schools such as Minnesota and Michigan State were recruiting him as a tight end. Poljan originally committed to Michigan, but flipped his decision when he knew he would have an opportunity to compete for the starting QB job with the Chippewas.

Poljan wowed coaches many times during spring practice, lead-

ing many to believe the job would be his in the fall. But in the annual Maroon and Gold Spring Game in May, he showed some struggles indicative of an inexperienced quarterback still becoming comfortable in a new spread system and collegiate football in general.

The other prime candidate is a familiar name in Michigan football, graduate transfer Shane Morris who played his previous four years at the University of Michigan before opting to finish his career at Central Michigan.

Morris starred at Warren De La Salle until he developed mononucleosis which ended his senior season. As one of the top recruits in the nation, he signed with Michigan on National Signing Day in 2013.

Instead of a dream career at U of M, it instead turned into a situation where Morris struggled to ever see the field. He did start for the Wolverines in the Buffalo Wild Wings Bowl as a true freshman due to an injury to Devin Gardner, completing 24-of-38 passes for 196 yards.

As a sophomore, the infamous concussion incident happened when Morris started versus Minnesota and continued playing despite suffering a head injury during the game. It was a controversial incident that led to national debate and an on-campus protest.

Morris rarely saw the field over the next two-and-a-half years, finishing his Michigan career with 434 passing yards and no touchdown passes plus five interceptions.

But the transfer to Central Michigan provides Morris a chance at redemption with a new system in which he says he already feels comfortable.

Morris arrived on campus in

June and worked throughout the summer learning the schemes of the new Central Michigan spread offense under the direction of first-year offensive coordinator Chris Ostrowsky. He has a stable of weapons around him with top receivers Corey Willis, Mark Chapman and Brandon Childress all returning. Although a broken foot suffered by standout senior tight end Tyler Conklin will keep him out for much if not all the season, there is depth at the position.

But first, Morris must win the starting position and that is a big if because he is a one-year stopgap whereas Poljan is the clear-cut quarterback of the future.

When does the future start is the biggest question Central Michigan coaches have to answer? If they feel Morris gives them the best chance to win a MAC title right now, he will be under center at the outset of the season.

The Chippewas were picked to finish fifth out of six teams in the MAC West when the preseason poll was released in late July, but this is a team that could defy the odds.

Not only is the MAC West a little more wide-open this year with Western Michigan not feeling quite as much like an overwhelming favorite, but CMU does return a lot of talent scattered around the field.

Already mentioned are the contingent of wideouts, but there is also a very deep stable of running backs that is bolstered by the return of redshirt sophomore Romello Ross. As a true freshman in 2015, he burst onto the scene late in the year with a four-TD game versus Eastern Michigan and a 100-yard rushing performance against Minnesota in the bowl game.

Ross tore his ACL during an



Former Lansing Catholic quarterback Tony Poljan is battling with graduate-transfer Shane Morris on who will be the next quarterback at Central Michigan University. Poljan redshirted a year ago. Former CMU quarterback Cooper Rush is currently on the Dallas Cowboys 90-man roster.

August practice last year and was lost for the season, a huge blow for the Chippewas. But now he's back and healthy, while fellow running backs such as senior Devon Spalding and Minnesota transfer Berkley Edwards give the Chippewas a lot of strong options.

Central Michigan has a chance to be very special on offense if the quarterback position and offensive line click into place.

Defensively, six starters return

including All-MAC first team performers Malik Fountain at middle linebacker and Amari Coleman (New Lothrop) at cornerback. The Chippewas have had one of the stronger defenses in the MAC dating back to 2012 and there is no reason this year should be any different.

Bonamego wants to bring MAC titles to Mount Pleasant and while it would be very surprising if it happened this fall, it also wouldn't be an outright shocker.

2017 DETROIT LIONS PREVIEW

Can Matthew Stafford lead Lions to a playoff victory in '17

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Key Veteran Additions: Darren Fells (TE, Cardinals), D.J. Hayden (CB, Raiders), T.J. Lang (OG, Packers), Greg Robinson (OT, Rams), Akeem Spence (DT, Bucs), Rick Wagner (OT, Ravens), Paul Worrlow (LB, Falcons).

Key Offseason Losses: Anquan Boldin (WR, Bills), Rafael Bush (S, Saints), Josh Byrnes (LB, Cardinals), DeAndre Levy (LB), Riley Reiff (OT, Vikings), Larry Warford (OG, Saints).

Key Draft picks: 1. Jarrad Davis (LB), 2. Teez Tabor (CB), 3. Kenny Golladay (WR), 4. Jalen Reeves-Maybin (LB), 4. Michael Roberts (TE), 6. Brad Kaaya (QB).

2017 Detroit Lions Offense:

Veteran quarterback Matthew Stafford turned in a productive year last season as he passed for 4,327 yards and 24 touchdowns, this despite losing all-pro wide receiver Calvin Johnson prior to the start of the season. Stafford started the season strong but a finger injury late in the season cut into his effectiveness.

This is a crossroads season for the 29-year old Stafford who will become a free agent after the season. Stafford's quarterback rating of 93.3 last season placed him eighth among NFC starting quarterbacks. With the market price for NFL quarterback continuing to climb, it may well require a five-year contract worth over \$25 million a year to keep

Stafford. Stafford is at the top of his game and if healthy, he should post similar or even better numbers this season.

The loss of Johnson was felt by the Lions last season but the trio of wide receivers Golden Tate, Marvin Jones and Anquan Boldin, along with tight end Eric Ebron and running back Theo Riddick coming out of the backfield on third down gave Stafford plenty of quality options.

Boldin has moved on this year but rookie wide receiver Kenny Golladay could be a third-round steal and make up for some of the production (67 receptions, 584 yards, eight touchdowns) Boldin provided. Golladay has good size (6-4, 218) and hands and could fit in well with Tate and Jones. Tate caught 91 balls for over 1,000 yards last season while Jones came in and added 55 receptions for 930 yards.

Like Stafford, Ebron is entering a contract year and must prove he has what it takes to be a productive red-zone target.

Running back is again a major question mark for the Lions. When healthy, third-year pro Ameer Abdullah provides the big-play threat the Lion offense craves. Staying on the field and holding on to the football are the big issues with Abdullah. A healthy and effective Abdullah would provide major dividends on offense. Fifth-year pro Theo Riddick excels at coming out of the backfield as a receiver and can give the team some carries as a change of pace back. Zach Zenner proved to be a tough



between the tackles runner when Abdullah went down but is not a source of big plays. Second-year pro Dwayne Washington (6-1, 223) could prove to be a wild card with his blend of size and speed.

The Lions offensive line is in a state of flux. Veteran right tackle and former first-rounder Riley Reiff was let go in free agency. Taking over for Reiff is free-agent acquisition Rick Wagner. Wagner

Detroit Lions quarterback Matthew Stafford is hoping to lead the Lions to a playoff victory in 2017. (Submitted Photo)

was a dependable starter for the Ravens at right tackle the past three years and could be a slight upgrade over Reiff.

At left tackle, Taylor Decker earned NFL all-rookie honors last year and the Lions appeared to have solidified the important blind-side tackle spot. Decker, however, tore the labrum in his right shoulder during OTAs and will not be back until October or possibly even November. The Lions picked up former Rams first rounder Greg Robinson to fill in for Decker. Robinson, drafted second overall in the 2014 NFL Draft, proved to be a bust for the Rams. The hope is that a change in scenery could bring out some of that first-round potential.

At right guard, Larry Warford moved on to the Saints. In his place the Lions signed Pro Bowler and former Eastern Michigan standout T.J. Lang from the Packers. Left guard is manned by Graham Glasgow who turned in a big rookie season. Glasgow also stepped in at center when needed. Travis Swanson cemented his hold on the center position before an injury ended his season early. Laken Tomlinson and second-year man Joe Dahl provide the Lions with options up front.

2017 Detroit Lions Defense:

Under the guidance of defensive coordinator Teryl Austin, the Lion defense allowed 22.4 points per game, second to the Vikings in the NFC North. Austin is one of the premier defensive coordinators in the NFL and excels at getting the most out of the talent on hand.

The Lions, who play a 4-3 defense, continue to build the talent and depth along the defensive line. Veteran Haloti Ngata is still strong against the run at age 32 and provides valuable leadership. A'Shawn Robinson turned in a solid rookie season and should continue to develop this season. Adding depth at tackles are free-agent pickups Akeem Spence (Bucs), Cornelius Washington (Bears) and Jordan Hill (Jaguars) who are all solid run pluggers.

Defensive end is shaping up as a major question mark for the Lions. Ziggy Ansah, a Pro Bowler two years ago when he totaled 14.5 sacks, struggled with injuries last season and saw his sack total drop to two. Ansah started training camp on the Physically Unable to Perform (PUP) list as he continues to rehab and hopefully will be good to go when the regular season starts. Kerry Hyder, who turned in a breakout year with a team-leading eight sacks would've made a nice

bookend pass rusher to pair with Ansah. Those plans, however, ended when Hyder tore his achilles tendon in the pre-season opener. Penn State grad and West Branch native Anthony Zettel has been one of the most improved players in training camp. In his second year, Zettel has the size (6-4, 270) and strength to make an impact at defensive end. Armoty Bryant and seventh-round draft pick Pat O'Connor will also look to be in the rotation at defensive end.

At linebacker, the Lions addressed their vacancy in the middle by picking Jarrad Davis of Florida with their first round draft pick. Davis (6-1, 238) is a physical thumper who the Lions hope will take the job and run with it. Tahir Whitehead, who totaled 132 tackles at middle backer last year, is sliding over to the strong side this season. Free agent pickup Paul Worrlow, a former Atlanta Falcon, is slated to step in on the weak side where rookie fourth-round pick Jalen Reeves-Maybin from Tennessee will be groomed for the job long term.

The secondary may be the strongest and most stable unit on defense. Darius Slay has developed into a solid No. 1 cornerback. Nevin Lawson started all 16 games at the other cornerback spot. The Lions furthered strengthened the position by signing former Oakland Raiders first-rounder D.J. Hayden and selecting Teez Tabor, a big, physical cornerback from the University of Florida in the second round of this year's NFL Draft.

Special Teams:

Veteran kicker Matt Prater is back after turning in a solid season. The Lions also have a solid punter in Sam Martin who is among the best in the NFC.

Our take:

Staying away from injuries would be a key to the season if it hadn't been for injuries already rearing their ugly head. With Kerry Hyder and linebacker/defensive end Brandon Copeland already lost for the season and starting offensive tackle Taylor Decker out until at least midseason, the Lions are already starting out at a disadvantage. The Lions desperately need to stay healthy, especially at running back where impact plays are needed from Ameer Abdullah. Keeping Matt Stafford upright and healthy is also vital. The Lions open the season with six very tough assignments and entering the bye week with no worse than a .500 record is imperative. As it stands, the best-case scenario for the Lions would be a repeat 9-7 record. An 8-8 record is more likely and if things go south a 5-11 mark looks to be the floor.

Tim McCormick
Sales
749 W. Main
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