





# Alma Football Has New Look At The Top And Is Eager To Get Season Going

David Cook  
Sports Scene

The Alma football team has a new coach this season and plenty of enthusiasm is building around the program.

John Mimranek comes over from Chesaning where he was the head coach the last six years and is building on the tradition that is in place.

“We have really strong Alma roots in our coaching staff,” Mimranek said. “We are building on the tradition that the previous coaches built here at Alma.”

The players at Alma are excited about the new head coach and how the program is looking.

“I’m beyond excited about the coaching staff,” said Alma senior offensive and defensive tackle Darwyn Anderson. “We saw improvement in every 7-on-7 we played in this summer and we are trying to get better every day. We

have a good group of guys and we are putting the pieces together.”

The Panthers have been putting in the work all offseason and are itching to get the season going.

“We’ve been working our tails off,” said senior wide receiver and cornerback Will Polloff. “We have a lot of good leadership on the team and we are really excited for game one. We have a new coaching staff and new plays and a fresh system and there is a lot of energy in the program.”

Offensively, the Panthers are led by senior quarterback Sam Rosales (6-1, 170). Seniors Carlos Martinez-Medina (5-7, 205) and Gianni Tripp return at running back. Delvon Pascoe-Ward is back at a wide receiver position along with Dolloff. Keep an eye on senior receiver Sam Couch. Couch has shown the most improvement this summer and is poised to make a big impact this

season.

Up front, the offensive line is built around Anderson (5-10, 226) and senior Isaiah Hudecz along with seniors Remington Smith and Devin Dennison.

On the defensive side of the ball, Hudecz returns at nose guard with Anderson at a tackle. Smith and Dennison will also see time along the defensive front with Pascoe-Ward primed for an impact season at defensive end.

Martinez-Medina returns at inside linebacker. Dolloff is back at cornerback while the secondary also returns Rosales and Tripp.

While the Panthers turned in a winning record at 5-4 last season, they missed the playoffs, something the entire team is looking to change this year.

“Our main goal is the playoffs,” Anderson said. “That is what we are looking for.”



Senior Sam Rosales will set the Alma offense in motion from his quarterback position as the Panthers look to return to the playoffs.

With the senior class leading the way, the Panthers have the pieces in place for a solid season.

“Our strong point is our senior class,” Mimranek said. “We went 5-4 last year but were disappointed in missing the playoffs. Not making the playoffs last year will hopefully fuel us this year.”

Alma opens the season with a non-league game against Shepherd and then opens conference play in week two against Freeland.

Alma has a new coach in 2022 as John Mimranek comes over from Chesaning where he was the head coach the last six years.

# Mt. Pleasant Gearing Up For Difficult Challenge Of Defending League Title

David Cook  
Sports Scene

The Mt. Pleasant Oilers won the Saginaw Valley North Division with a perfect record last year. Accomplishing that feat this year, however, got a whole lot more difficult during the offseason.

Already one of the tougher leagues in the state with teams like Midland, Midland Dow and Bay City Western, the conference became even more difficult with the addition for football of football powerhouses Traverse City Central and Traverse City Western.

“It will be an interesting year for us,” said Mt. Pleasant coach Jason McIntyre. “The league just got a whole lot tougher with the two Traverse City schools coming in and we graduated a talented senior class. We have some holes to fill especially up front on defense.”

While the Oilers graduated a lot of talent, they still have some talented players returning on both sides of the line.

“Our whole secondary is back on defense and most of our wide receiver corps is back

on offense,” McIntyre said. “We also have a first-team, all-state running back returning. I feel like we should be able to score points on offense.”

At quarterback, the Oilers have a new starter in junior Logan Borodychuk. At 6-foot-3 and 205 pounds, Borodychuk is a three-sport athlete who saw some varsity action last fall and is poised to make a big impact this season.

Senior running back Max Humphrey is a returning all-state player that will give opposing defenses plenty to think about. Senior Blake Moore returns at fullback while the Oilers have plenty of playmakers at receiver in seniors Kaden Benaske, Aidan Klein and Scooter Polk along with junior Ty Hutchins.

“I think we should have a pretty good offense,” Klein said. “Most of our skill position player are back and our younger guys learned a lot in the offseason. We did lose a lot of linemen.”

Polk also likes what he sees in the offense.

“I think we can do it all on offense,” Polk



Mt. Pleasant enters the 2022 season with a veteran group of players and has high hopes entering the season.

said. “We can run and throw. We can do whatever we need to do to get the job done.”

While the Oilers must replace a number of starting offensive linemen, they do have a talented tackle to build around in junior standout Andrew Dennis (6-foot-5, 250 pounds). Senior Bailey Recker is another veteran lineman that will step up while junior Kal Kowlic will step into a guard position.

On defense, the secondary that includes Polk and Klein at cornerback and Benaske

at safety along with Hutchins leads the way. Humphrey and Moore give the Oilers a solid pair of linebackers to build around. Up front, Dennis and Kowlic lead the charge for the defensive line.

“We should be solid on defense,” Moore said. “Our secondary is strong and we have some lockdown guys back there.”

Mt. Pleasant opens the season against Kalamazoo Central in week one and then gets into the thick of conference play in week two against Midland.

# Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart Football Team To Have New Look This Season

David Cook  
Sports Scene

The Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart football team will have a new look this season but with some familiar faces still around the Irish are looking to keep their winning ways going.

Josh Wheaton takes over as the new head coach for Sacred Heart this season. Formerly an assistant coach at Mt. Pleasant High School, Wheaton is looking to keep the Irish rolling. Sacred Heart has qualified for the eight-man football playoffs the past two seasons and turned in a 7-3 overall record last season.

Along with a new coach, the Irish will have a new look at quarterback with sophomore Jason Boge looking to step in under

center.

The Irish do have some familiar faces back led by junior Aidan Halliday who will play running back on offense and linebacker on defense.

“We have some real big offensive linemen and some pretty good speed this year,” Halliday said. “I think our wide receivers are pretty good also.”

Heading up the list at wide receiver is junior Kadenn Rose. Rose is also a cornerback on defense.

“We have a new coach and a new system so we’ve been learning stuff pretty fast,” Rose said. “I think we will have a real good offense this year. We have a lot of guys at running back and wide receiver

and I think we have good team chemistry. I think our team speed will be a strength. We have a lot of good athletes this year. We also have a lot of aggressive players.”



Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart has a new look this season as former Mt. Pleasant assistant coach Josh Wheaton takes over the program as former coach John Ruggles moved to Florida.



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# DeWitt Reloading As It Looks To Remain Among The Elite In The State

## David Cook Sports Scene

The last two seasons have been memorable for the DeWitt football team. The Panthers won a first-ever state championship in 2020 and came back last season to reach the Division 3 state championship game before falling short to Detroit King.

While several outstanding players graduated from last year's squad, a solid core of returnees are back along with a promising group of newcomers that are determined to keep the wins flowing in Panther country.

A pair of sizable players return to the offensive line that will be a strong point of this year's squad. Senior Matthew Nehf (6-foot-4, 270-pounds) is a returning starting center who will play college football at Central Michigan University next season. Also back is senior tackle Broden Schafer who stands 6-foot-7 and weighs 290 pounds. Junior Linkin Stine (5-10, 245) is another Panther

lineman to keep an eye on.

"I think we will be pretty good up front," Schafer said. "We are pretty solid up front and we will be relying on our returning linemen this year."

The Panther linemen will pave the way for a running game led by senior standout Blake Haller (6-0, 190) and promising junior Robert Lillie. Haller was a key part of the Panther defense last year and is ready to step into an expanded role on offense this season.

"We are going to rely on our big guys up front," Haller said. "We had some good running backs last year and I learned a lot from them. I feel ready to go this year and I think we are going to keep it rolling."

While a number of key receivers have graduated including all-stater Tommy McIntosh who is playing for the University of Wisconsin, the Panthers do welcome back senior Bryce Kurncz who caught 10 touchdown passes last season.

"I think we will have a strong corps of receivers," Kurncz said. "We've been doing stuff all summer and I think we are developing good chemistry between us and our quarterbacks."

DeWitt will have a new face starting at quarterback as two-time, all-state Ty Holtz is now playing at Brown University. The Panthers have a pair of promising sophomores in the mix at quarterback in Aspen Keyes (6-2, 190) and Elliott Larnier. Both quarterbacks have strong arms and can run giving DeWitt fans plenty to look forward to the next three seasons.

DeWitt also brings back a talented and experienced kicker in senior Brandon Soltis who will handle both the kicking and punting.

On defense, the Panthers return senior linebacker Landen Taber (6-0, 195). Kurncz is a returning starter at cornerback while Haller also started on defense last season. Senior lineman Jesus Arriaga is



also a returning starter.

"I think we will be strong, fast and tough on defense," Taber said. "We are very disciplined on defense and we are looking good up front. I think early on in the season our defense will lead us."

The Panthers also have a host of talented players coming up from the junior varsity that are poised to make an impact.

"We have some guys up from the junior varsity that are really good," Kurncz said.

A pair of sophomore quarterbacks are set to see time at quarterback for DeWitt as all-stater Tyler Holtz has moved on to college football.

DeWitt will need to hit the ground running as they open the season playing in the 'Big House' at the University of Michigan when they face Haslett. The Panthers then host Portland in week two and travel to Detroit Catholic Central in week three before starting conference play.

Blake Haller (Left) returns to a solid DeWitt team this season as the Panthers are hoping to make a return trip to Ford Field and the Division 3 finals. DeWitt opens the season against Hastlett at the University of Michigan.



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# Pewamo-Westphalia Poised For Another State Title Run

## John Raffel Sports Scene

It's not for sure if Pewamo-Westphalia will be able to get its third 14-0 season in the last four years.

But it's apparent the Pirates, who were 14-0 and state champs in 2019 and 2021, will have a voice in the matter before all is said and done this season, and this could mean winning another state crown.

P-W bounced back from a 7-2 season in 2020 to outscore its nine opponents 506-98 in 2021 and come home with another state trophy.

It was the fourth state title since 2016 for coach Jeremy Miller.

First on the agenda is focusing on the Central Michigan Athletic Conference title and opponents Laingsburg, Dansville, Potterville, Fowler, Saranac and Bath.

Lineman Corey Schafer and

linebacker Landon Nurenberg of Pewamo-Westphalia, were among the key graduates from the state title team. Both were first team All-Staters.

All-State punter Troy Wertman returns for his senior season.

Key seniors for the Pirates are wide receiver-cornback Nate Arens (5-8, 150), Wertman at quarterback and outside linebacker, Trent Channell (6-0, 170) at wide receiver and outside linebacker, Connor Pohl (5-9, 165) at running back and Christopher Ghee (5-10, 185) at offensive tackle and defensive tackle/cornerback.

Key juniors are Michael Pung at wide receiver and strong safety,

Ethan McFarland (5-10, 180), Cayden Spitzley (5-4, 155) and Trevor Spitzley (6-4 225) at offensive and defensive tackle, Will Bengel (5-9, 165) at running back and outside linebacker; Blake Birchmeier (5-10, 170) at guard and middle linebacker, Ethan Miles at wide receiver and outside linebacker (6-1, 190), Gabe Miller at (6-1, 190) at wide receiver and defensive end, Dylan May (6-0) at quarterback and free safety, Dalton Brown (6-0, 200) at tackle and defensive end, Kyle



Thelen (5-11, 165) at wide receive and corner, and Gavin Nurenberg (5-9, 210) and Brayden Harr (5-10, 160) at wide receiver and cornerback.

# Beaverton Poised To Have A Bounceback Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Beaverton's football team is confident of improving from last season's 2-6 team and hopes to make somw noise in the Jack Pine Conference.

"We need to have the intensity again," senior Logan Love said. "We need to have the same intensity on the field."

Key players for Beaverton will be slotback and outside linebacker Chris Schertz, quarterback and cornerback William Warner,

quarterback and defensive tackle Noah Coffey, slotbacks and cornerbacks Davd Krohn and Cameron Mishler, running back Joseph Coutu, noseguard and offensive tackle Kade Tripp, wide receiver Addam, Irish, defensive end and running back Chandler Peterson, middle linebacker Logan Love, and Mason Ptak, guard and defensive end Brando Hipkins and lineman AJ Camp.

Other standouts for Beaverton should be linemen Justin Uhl and Skyler Sabat, wide receiver and outside lindebacker Daniel Beiers,



A solid group of returning players are ready to lead the Beaverton football team this season as the Beavers look to improve on last season's 2-6 record.

wide receiver and defensive ned Colton Walters and wide receiver Lucas Schweinsberg.

Head coach is Aaron Seiser.

Beaverton had made the playoffs five straight seasons prior to last year and were 10-1 in 2019. Ghey play Evart, Fremont and Morley

Stanwood in nonleague games and face Clare, Shepherd, Pinconning, Meridian, Harrison and Gladwin in the Jack Pine Conference.

# Gladwin Set For Another Huge Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Last year's Gladwin football season was a good one as the Flying G's won a share of the Jack Pine Conference title.

But they lost in the first round of the playoffs to Clare after being undefeated.

Gladwin outscored opponents

477-67 in the regular season.

Running back Logan Kokotovich is expected to lead their offense after snapping Gladwin's 70-year-old record for touchdowns in a season last year.

Most of the players are back this season.

"We just need to have the same intensity on the field and get it

done," junior linebacker Earl Esiline said. "That's what got us going."

"I liked our intensity and our focus," Kokotovich said. "We need to be focus when we needed to, keep our heads in the game, not worry about anything else and just worry about winning."

Other key players will include junior wide receiver/free safety

Kaden McDonald, sophomore quarterback/cornerback Jhace Massey; junior wide receiver/cornerback Lucas Mead; junior cornerback/slotback Tyler Yott-Goodwin, junior kicker Anna Seebeck, senior wide receiver and cornerback Richard Woodford, junior cornerback and strong safety Nick Wheeler; senior quarterback and slotback Aaron Kozlow, junior wide receiver and cornerback Ethan Breault; sophomore punter and kicker Treyton Siegert; junior slotback and free safety Brady

Gehrett; sophomore linebacker Josh Leinenge; senior runing back and outside linebacker Cole Rodabaugh; and senior lineman Randy Pyrzewski.



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# New Coach, Veteran Players Have Shepherd Looking Forward To Season

## David Cook Sports Scene

With a host of veteran players back and a new coach with plenty of experience coaching throughout the state, the Shepherd football team brings plenty of optimism into the new season.

The Bluejays are led this year by Irv Sigler Jr. who has over 30 years of coaching experience in the state. Sigler Jr. was a head coach at Cadillac, Grandville, Jenison and Wyoming during his career why also serving as a head coach in Marietta, Georgia and as a college offensive coordinator at Hope College in Holland, MI.

Sigler Jr. takes over a Shepherd

team that went 4-5 last year with a 4-2 conference record. A large group of veterans return from that team and those players are excited about the direction the program is headed.

“We have a new coach and a new system,” said Shepherd quarterback Jude Moeggenborg. “We have a lot more balance on offense and we will pass more than last year. We also have an abundance of running back. We are hoping with better balance it will open up the passing game.”

Senior Isaiah Reihl is one of the talented running backs that will key the ground game.

“We have three good running

backs,” Reihl said. “I think our ground game will really be a strong point. We also have a strong line. We should have a lot of diversity in our play calling this year.”

The Bluejays will operate out of the wing-T formation with a log of faking and misdirection. The team will also pass the ball out of the formation providing the offense with balance.

Senior wide receiver Tate Ross and senior tight end Zyan Powell will be part of the Bluejay passing game.

“This year we have a way different mentality,” Powell said. “Last year we went into a few games expecting to lose. This year



Irv Sigler Jr. takes over a Shepherd program that finished 4-5 last season. Sigler brings nearly 30 years of coaching experience to the Bluejays.

we are going into games expecting to win. We are going to go into games giving everything we got.”

Up front, the Shepherd offensive line is led by right tackle Maddox Woods. Woods is also a returning middle linebacker on defense.

“I’m looking forward to this

season,” Woods said. “I can see a change in our guys. Guys are a lot stronger. Our defensive line is also stronger and quicker and I think we will do a lot better job stopping the run.”

Shepherd opens the season against Alma in week one.

# Ovid-Elsie Gearing Up To Make Another Run At Top Spot In Rugged MMAC

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

With a solid nucleus back on defense and some promising young talent poised to make an impact on offense, the Ovid-Elsie football team has the ingredients in place to make another run at the top spot in the Mid-Michigan Athletic Conference.

The Marauders turned in a 6-1 conference mark last season and shared the MMAC title with New Lothrop. The Marauders finished the season with a 6-4 overall record and qualified for the playoffs for the seventh time in the past nine years.

While a number of talented seniors graduated from last year’s team, the cupboard is far from empty especially on the defensive side of the football. A total of four returning all-conference players

headline what should be a solid defense this season. Returning in the secondary is senior Logan Thompson who earned first-team, all-conference honors last season.

Linebacker is a position of strength on the defense with a pair of all-conference performers back. Senior Clay Wittenberg earned second-team, all-conference honors last season while senior outside linebacker Landon Stoneman was an honorable-mention, all-conference linebacker.

“I think our defense will definitely be a strong point for us this season,” Wittenberg said. “Our front seven is pretty solid and the young defensive backs we have coming up are doing a real nice job. Overall, our defense is going to be strong.”

Leading the charge up front is senior Kevin Ley who earned second-team, all-conference

honors last year.

“I think we are coming together as a team very well,” Ley said. “All the guys were in the weight room all summer. Our new guys are starting to fit in and get comfortable and are getting up to speed.”

Ley is the lone starter returning along the offense line. Wittenberg is back at tight end on offense while Thompson returns at running back.

At quarterback, sophomore Axel Newell (6-foot-4, 180 pounds) is a talented passer that is already attracting interest from Division 1 college programs. Newell split snaps as a starter during his freshman season and is back bigger, stronger and more experienced this season.

“I think things are looking pretty good,” Thompson said. “We have



Ovid-Elsie finished the 2021 season with a 6-4 overall record and qualified for the playoffs for the seventh time in the past nine years.

a lot of new guys, especially along the offensive line, so we don’t have a lot of experience. In our skill positions we have a lot of returning seniors so I think that will be a strong point. We also have a quarterback who is getting looked at by colleges. We had a really good summer in 7-on-7 and we’re hoping to be a better passing team this season.”

Getting back to the top of the league standings will be no easy task with New Lothrop looking strong again and Montrose bringing back another strong team. Ovid-Elsie also starts the season with a difficult non-league game against Portland and ends the regular season against a Corunna team that qualified for the playoffs last year.

# St. Louis Looking For More After Turning In Winning Record Last Season

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Last season the St. Louis football team turned in its first winning season since 2017. This year, the young Sharks are looking for even more success.

St. Louis turned in a 5-4 record last season but were disappointed in not reaching the playoffs. Something it wants to change this season.

“We are a young team again with very talented skills,” said St. Louis coach Julian Paksi. “We have a never full mentality, so from last year, with a 5-4 record, we are looking to be better than that.”

The Sharks feature plenty

of speed in the skill positions this season. Senior quarterback Thomas Zacharko is taking over at quarterback and was an all-conference defensive back two years ago.

“We will have a balanced offense,” Zacharko said. “I really like our wide receiver corps and our running backs. I think we will be very good on offense this year.”

Senior captain Wisdom Zanquo returns at wide receiver and defensive back. A speedster and great route runner, Zanquo provided the team with plenty of highlight plays before an injury in week six cut his season short.

“I think our passing game is going to be great,” Zanquo said.

“We have to get the reps in and get things working smoothly. I think we can be even better than last year.”

Junior running back and linebacker Josh Dew is a team captain and another key returnee who earned all-conference honors at defensive back last year.

“I feel like we have a lot of great options this year,” Dew said. “We have a lot of versatility on this team and a lot of weapons to use.”

Up front, the Shark offensive and defensive lines are anchored by senior captain RJ Macias who earned all-conference honors as an offensive lineman last year.

“The strong point of this team

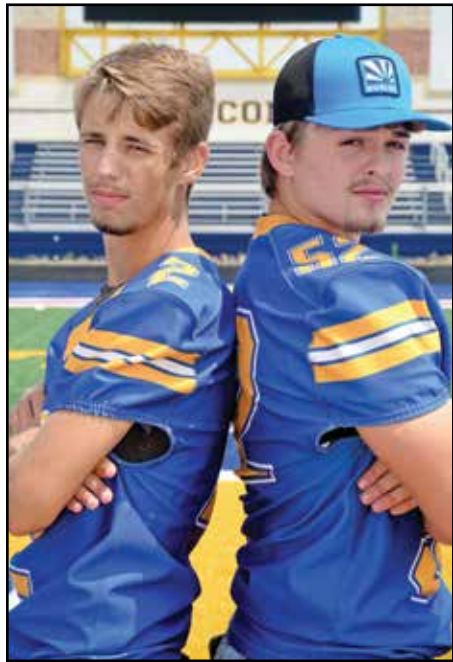


St. Louis will bring a young squad to the field in 2022. The Sharks finished last season 5-4.

is that we are hungry,” Paksi said. “We’ve had the best off-season since I started back in 2019. We had great numbers in the weight room and four player to one coach work outs. We have a deep backfield which could end up being a four-headed monster. We

have an excited group of new and young coaches and a hungry group of athletes.”

St. Louis opens the season with a home game against Grandville Calvin Christian and then travels to Hesperia in week two.



Carson-City play will all its games on the road this season as its home field is closed due to construction.

# Carson City-Crystal To Log Plenty Of Miles This Football Season

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

It’s too bad the Carson City-Crystal football team is not flying to their games this season because if they did, they’d be racking up some impressive frequent flyer miles.

Due to the reconstruction going on at their football field, the Eagles will play all their games on the road this season. Being without a conference this season and playing an independent schedule, Carson City will be traveling to all corners of the state playing games in the Detroit area in Riverview and Sterling Heights, heading to Muskegon Heights in West Michigan and heading north to Johannesburg and Morley-Stanwood.

That said, the rest of the state

will get a look at a strong Division 8 team that turned in a 10-2 record last season before falling to eventual state finalist Beal City in the regional title game.

While the Eagles lost several key players from last year’s squad, enough talent returns to fashion another successful season.

“We have a chance to make another playoff run,” said Carson City-Crystal coach Tim Swore. “Our kids have had another solid off season and if we get better every day and put our teammates before ourselves we will have a chance.”

The Eagles also have the luxury of a talented starting quarterback returning. Senior quarterback Mason Smith threw 24 touchdown passes last season. Senior Daegan Sain will be a

prime target for Smith as he lines up at wide receiver or tight end.

“We have some big linemen so the running game is going to be there,” Smith said. “That will open up the passing game a lot. The key for us is everyone has to know the plays and know what they have to do on each play. Doing the little things will be the difference.”

Carson City also returns a pair of solid linemen to anchor the front line. Senior Chris Avery (6-foot-3, 280 pounds) is a three-year varsity player that plays on both offense and defense. Senior center Logan Hopkins is a three-year starter returning to the offensive line.

“Our offensive line is the biggest it’s been in a long time,” Hopkins said. “Our wideouts and slots can catch the ball and

are pretty fast and Mason is a really good leader. Defensively I like what we have. We have a very strong defensive line and some good cornerbacks and linebackers. Once we get people knowing what they have to do position-wise we will be solid.”

The Eagles will be young at running back and wide receiver but the talent is there.

“Our skill players are young but learning every day,” Swore said. “We have had a solid summer and our guys are coming together and understanding what it takes to work hard and earn the right to have a chance to win. We are also defending our back-to-back district titles.”

Carson City-Crystal opens the season with a trip to Fowler in week one.

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# 10 Storylines To Pay Attention To During The 2022 Football Season

## Scott Keyes Sports Scene

If you are avid football fan like most of America is, once the end of August comes around we hang up our baseball cleats in exchange for shoulder pads and helmets.

What a rush it is.

Football season is back.

Are you ready?

I know Sports Scene sure is. Here are 10 stories to pay attention when teams take the field Thursday evening to kickoff the 2022 football season.

**1.** Ithaca's Bronson Bupp has bulked up this season and he will hit the field at around 205 pounds. So why is this so significant? Not since Alex Niznak in 2010 has Ithaca had a quarterback over 200 pounds. In 2010 Niznak led Ithaca to a 45-35 win over Monroe St. Mary in the Division 6 state championship game, beginning a string of four consecutive state titles and 69 consecutive wins. This is saying a lot considering the likes of Travis Smith, Jake Smith, Peyton Smith, Joey Bentley and Brady Hessbrook all went on to play quarterback at the next level. Bupp could be the next big thing coming out of Gratiot County.

**2.** Alma's Panther pride project for its state of the art turf field got a huge boost over the past few weeks receiving two huge donations that have exceeded close to \$150,000 towards its goal. With schools like Ithaca, Corunna, Ovid Elsie and DeWitt putting in new turf fields this season Alma could very well be the next school in the area to get turf in the coming year. It's definitely a story to keep a close on eye in the coming months.

**3.** DeWitt's quarterback situation is a great position to be in as the Panthers have two legit sophomores in Aspen Keyes (6-2, 190) and Elliott Lerner. Who ever wins the job takes over for

Ty Holtz , who is now attending Brown University. It is going to be interesting to see what direction DeWitt goes in the quarterback battle.

**4.** Freeland is in a position to make another trip back to the Division 5 semis again this season and maybe even a trip to Ford Field if everything lines up correctly. However, the Falcons need to find a way to replace four-year starter Bryson Huckleby, who is now attending college in Anderson Indiana, where he is currently playing basketball. If junior Sam Talaga can come in and play mistake free football for the Falcons this season, coach Kevin Townsends group should be a tough game for anyone on Freeland's schedule this season.



Crosswell Lexington coach Mike LeGrow talks to his team after a recent scrimmage at Durand High School. Crosswell opens its season against Saginaw Swan Valley.

**5.** Is Mt. Pleasant running back Scooter Polk the best player in the Saginaw Valley League North Division. Midland Dow's Jack Backus and Midland's Jason Davenport might have something to say about that. However Polk has all the tools to be considered in the talk as one of the top players

Bay City John Glenn Coach John Horton and Crosswell - Lexington coach Mike Legrow converse after a recent scrimmage at Durand High School. John Glenn could be one of the sleeper teams in the area this season.

in the league this season. His teammate Max Humphrey might have something to say about that. With a name like Scooter you know he has to be good on some level.

**6.** So who is the top player in the Sports Scene coverage area. There are so many talented lineman to choose from the likes of DeWitt's Matthew Nehf and Bay City Central's Luke Zanotti, but if I were to go out on a limb Lansing Catholic's Brandon Lewis, a Michigan State University commit, has all the tools to be a legitimate shot at being the areas top player. If there is a sleeper candidate to watch this season pay close attention to Grand Blanc's Tae Boyd. Boyd is a standout two-sport athlete and is dynamic in both sports.

**7.** A fun fact that we came across during our Football Media Days this month is that Saginaw United Phoenix player Tank Johnson is the only player left over from the Saginaw High regime that hasn't won a varsity game. The Saginaw United Phoenix was formed a year ago when Saginaw High and Saginaw Arthur Hill combined. However it doesn't matter a whole if the team goes winless again in the Saginaw Valley League South. Johnson went winless as a freshman and sophomore and last season under coach Lee Arthur United went 0-9 . Lets hope this season Johnson finally gets a win under his belt.

**8.** East Lansing's Evan Boyd has already committed to Central Michigan University and he enters the season as one of the top receivers in the entire state. He finished last season with 375 yards and three touchdowns before missing the last five games with a broken collarbone. The Trojans were 7-4 a year ago and



Bay City John Glenn finished the 2021 season 3-6 but the Bobcats have high hopes entering the 2022 campaign under second-year coach John Horton.

have big expectations entering the season. Boyd's older brother Ethan is a redshirt freshman at Michigan State University.

**9.** If I had a sleeper team in the area that could make a deep run in the playoffs after not making it a year ago would be Bay City John Glenn. Coach John Horton has his kids believing and working hard in the weight room and during the off season. It's those kind of turnarounds that people

take notice of and the Bobcats are definitely on the radars of a lot of teams this season.

**10.** Detroit King's Donte Moore is considered by some to be the second best player in the country just behind Peyton and Eli's Mannings nephew Archie. The Oregon commit is about as good as they come and if you have a chance to see him in person this season. It's a must. He's that good.



# Mid-Michigan A Fertile Area For Growing Talented Prep Quarterbacks

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Over the years, the Mid-Michigan area has been home to some outstanding quarterbacks. Year in and year out it seems area teams produce some outstanding quarterbacks and this year the trend continues as skilled signal callers can be found up and down the US 127 corridor.

Over the past 15 years Ithaca has been home to some standout quarterbacks. From Alex Niznak to the Smith brothers and Brady Hessbrook, Ithaca has been blessed with some multi-purpose

quarterbacks that can pile up yards with their feet or their arm. That is the case against this year as Bronson Bupp is poised to cap his prep career in a big way for a Yellowjacket team that is primed for another deep playoff run.

Bupp is one of a number of talented senior quarterbacks that are poised for big seasons. Jack Bakus of Midland and Seneca Moore of Holt are among the premier quarterbacks in the state in the large school divisions. Alex Petersburg of Williamston and Isaac Pavona of Haslett are returning all-conference quarterbacks ready to lead their

teams to big seasons. In the smaller divisions Evan Wakefield of Michigan Lutheran Seminary and Mason Smith of Carson City Crystal put up some huge numbers last season and are set to pick up where they left off.

The area also exports talented quarterbacks out of state as former Alma standout Pauly Seeley is wrapping up his high school career down in Georgia and will be playing college football at Wofford College.

DeWitt is another school that has enjoyed fine quarterback play. The last couple of years the Panthers ended the season playing

for a state championship in Ford Field and it was no surprise that a standout quarterback was a big key to that success. Tyler Holtz was one of the premier quarterbacks in the state the past couple years and is now at Brown University in the Ivy League. DeWitt, however, has a pair of talented quarterbacks in the pipeline poised to carry on the Panther quarterback tradition in sophomores Aspen Keyes and Elliott Lerner.

Keyes and Lerner are not the only talented sophomores on the horizon as the sophomore class is stocked with talented signal callers. Swan Valley sophomore Colton Klein already began making his mark as a freshman last year when he passed for over 1,000 yards. Cason Carswell of Mason turned in some big moments during Mason's thrilling playoff run last

fall. Axel Newell of Ovid-Elsie gained some experience last year and has already been offered by the University of Toledo while Chad Brown of Hemlock is poised to make a big statement this season.

The junior class also has its share of talented quarterbacks. Logan Borodchuk of Mt. Pleasant is a talented all-around athlete set to become a household name this season. Nick Wells of Mason and Wyatt Bower of Corunna showcase outstanding running skills at the position while Kyler Peters and Preston Otter of Saginaw Nouvel are two more promising quarterbacks to watch for.

In era of high school football where the passing game is more important than ever, the Mid-Michigan area is well positioned to stay at the forefront of developing outstanding quarterbacks.

# Young Chippewa Hills Team Eyes Vast Improvement

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Mark PeLong enters his second season as Chippewa Hills head football coach with hopes of improving from a 2-7 season a year ago.

But the Warriors will be challenged by having just one senior on the roster in Jaeson Aldrich.

But PeLong is confident of having talented players to pick up in other areas. It starts with junior Tyler Geer, who will be at quarterback and defensive back.

He'll be quarterback this season. He was quarterback on the junior

varsity and then was pulled up to play free safety on the varsity. It was a busy summer for the Warrior junior.

"I was in the weight room pretty much every day in the summer," Geer said.

As a quarterback, "I'll just try to get good at everything," he said. "Right now, a lot of it is just reading the defense and what not. I'm coming out of baseball so my mechanics were in a baseball mode instead of football."

Other key juniors are Hunter Sellers on the line, Cooper Bonham, Ryland Carson, Xander Fall, Trent Hostnik, Brayden Hunt, Isaiah Lake, Adrionn Lucas, Rico

Martinez, Dominick Naim, Brock PeLong, Gage Saathoff and Tyler Saxton.

Sellers will especially play a key role for the Warriors.

"This season he will again be starting at middle linebacker and also may see some time at running back," Pelong said. "He will be looked to as a team leader."

"Football is looking pretty good," Sellers said. "We have a good group, not many seniors, but a good group of juniors and sophomores and freshmen."

Leading the sophomores is Austin Humphrey.

Humphrey, as a freshman, had



Chippewa Hills coach Mark PeLong talks to his team during a recent practice.

plenty of chances to carry the football and was among the team's leading ball carriers.

As a tailback, Humphrey usually stayed busy when he was in a game. The most carries he had in a

contest was 14.

When he had the ball in his hands "I'm better at being shifty outside," Humphrey said.



# Fowler Expects To Be Strong Again

## John Raffel Sports Scene

John Spicer is coaching a Fowler team which was 7-4 last year and made the second round of the playoffs.

Quarterback Chase Pung graduated and was a major part of the team the last two years.

Key players will be junior Evan Curtiss (OL/DL), junior Zach Halfman (Slot/LB), senior Nate Halfman (OL/DL), senior

said, adding a strength of the team is "the offensive line with three starters returning. We are looking to improve our defense this year.

The CMAC "is always strong, with Pewamo Westphalia being the favorite, and Laingsburg returning a number of starters. We are just looking to compete every week."

"We want to get better every week, and help the youth get better as the season progresses," Spicer

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# AREA PLAYERS TO WATCH

## Class of 2023

### 1. Matthew Nehf

6-4, 275, OL, DeWitt: Big, physical offensive lineman that will play in college at Central Michigan.

### 2. Luke Zanotti

6-4, 285, OL, Bay City Central: One of the best offensive linemen to come out of Bay City in several years. Will play in college at Western Michigan.

### 3. Evan Boyd

6-3, 190, WR, East Lansing: Tall, talented pass catcher will take his talents to Central Michigan next season.

### 4. Teddy Williams

6-6, 215, TE, Grand Ledge: Athletic pass catcher has committed to Grand Valley State University.

### 5. Brandon Lewis

5-11, 170, WR, Lansing Catholic: Talented multi-positional athlete will be a preferred walk-on next season at Michigan State.

### 6. Max Humphrey

6-1, 190, RB, Mt. Pleasant: Returning all-state running back is poised for another big season.

### 7. Blake Haller

RB/DB, DeWitt: Versatile athlete can contribute at multiple positions on both sides of the football.

### 8. Shawn Foster

6-0, 170, WR/DB Grand Ledge: Explosive athlete headed to Grand Valley State is back bigger, stronger and faster this season.

### 9. Bronson Bupp

6-2, 200, QB, Ithaca: Multi-dimensional quarterback can gash teams on the road or through the air.

### 10. Nathan Rivard

6-5, 250, OL/DL, Bullock Creek: Big, physical lineman is an impact player on both sides of the line.

### Class of 2023 Continued

11. Jack Bakus, 6-5, 225, QB, Midland Dow
12. Hayden Healey, 6-3, 300, OL, East Lansing
13. Broden Schafer, 6-6, 290, OL, DeWitt
14. Mar'Tavion Robinson, 5-11, 165, WR, Lansing Waverly
15. Alex McLean, 5-7, 165, WR, Rockford
16. Scooter Polk, 6-0, 180, WR/DB, Mt. Pleasant
17. Carlos Harris, 6-0, 200, RB/LB, Bay City Central
18. Matt Watkins, 6-4, 240, OL, Lansing Catholic
19. Jayden Curry, 6-4, 285, OL, New Lothrop
20. Seneca Moore, 6-2, 175, QB, Holt
21. Dorijan Jackson, WR, East Lansing
22. Rick Beison, 6-1, 210, LB, Rockford
23. Michael Stevenson, 6-1, 200, DE, Montrose
24. Jason Davenport, 5-11, 180, ATH, Midland
25. Gabe Blanchard, 6-4, 220, DE/TE, Freeland
26. Evan Wakefield, QB, Michigan Lutheran Seminary
27. Dylan McDonald, 6-6, 350, DT, Durand
28. Mike Franko, 6-3, 245, OL/DL, Clare
29. Ethan Hull, 6-3, 185, WR, Ithaca
30. Alex Petersburg, 6-3, 200, QB, Williamston
31. Andrew Konieczny, 6-4, 200, TE/DB, Grand Ledge
32. Kade McDonald, 6-1, 170, DB/WR, Gladwin
33. Ian George, 6-7, 270, OT, Lowell
34. Bryce Kurncz, 6-2, 175, WR/DB, DeWitt
35. Colin Coffey, 6-0, 225, DL, Midland
36. Seanpaul Johns, 6-2, 280, OL, East Lansing
37. Anthony Zechmeister, 6-2, 225, DL, Hemlock
38. Thys Segard, 6-2, 210, LB, Rockford
39. Mason VanCamp, 5-11, 265, OL, Ithaca

40. Landen Taber, 6-0, 195, LB, DeWitt
41. Grayson Orr, 6-3, 230, OL/DE, New Lothrop
42. Kanye Jackson, 5-11, 185, RB, East Lansing
43. Joey Mahaney, 6-4, 190, WR/S, Williamston
44. Isaac Pavona, 6-2, 185, QB, Haslett
45. Xavier Anderson, 5-11, 175, RB, Corunna
46. Logan Costello, 6-2, 320, OL, Grand Ledge
47. Kahleel Brown, RB, Birch Run
48. Zalyn Martin, 6-3, 215, WR/DE, Bridgeport
49. Owen Emmendorfer, RB, Montrose
50. Hayden Simerson, OL, Saginaw Nouvel
51. Brian Ingram, 6-7, 280, OL, Mason
52. Nick Gruber, FB/NG, Lansing Catholic
53. Chris Smith, 6-1, 265, OL/DL, Ionia
54. Carson Crace, 6-0, 200, LB, Lowell
55. Adam Brenske, OL, Midland Dow
56. Drew Miller, RB, Portland
57. Mason Smith, QB, Carson City-Crystal
58. Darwyn Anderson, 5-10, 226, OL/DL, Alma
59. Liam Zastrow, RB/LB, Hemlock
60. Kameron Cooper, RB/LB, Greenville

### Class of 2024

1. Andrew Dennis, 6-5, 230, OL, Mt. Pleasant
2. Sam Talaga, 6-3, 230, OLB, Freeland
3. Braylon Isom, 6-2, 180, WR/CB, Saginaw Heritage
4. AJ Martel, 5-9, 165, RB, Mason
5. Donovan Patterson, 6-1, 175, WR/DB, East Lansing
6. Nakai Amachree, 5-11, 185, RB, Haslett
7. Jalen Brown, 5-9, 170, WR, Midland
8. Jason Casey, 6-1, 240, DL, Midland Dow
9. Linkin Stine, 5-10, 245, OL, DeWitt
10. Logan Borodychuk, 6-3, 205, QB, Mt. Pleasant

11. Noah Dunckel, 6-0, 195, RB/LB, Williamston
12. Logan Klein, 6-3, 255, OL, Gladwin
13. Jamario Harris, RB/LB, Bay City Central
14. Gavin Nurenberg, 5-9, 210, FB, Pewamo-Westphalia
15. Robert Lillie, 5-11, 180, RB, DeWitt
16. Noah Risner, RB/LB, Ithaca
17. Trevor Spitzley, 6-4, 225, OL, Pewamo-Westphalia
18. Kai Kowlic, OL, Mt. Pleasant
19. Nick Wells, QB, Mason
20. Ryan Ahern, 6-0, 190, RB, Rockford
21. Jaden Eddington, RB, Corunna
22. Josh Dew, RB/LB, St. Louis
23. Kyler Peters, QB, Saginaw Nouvel
24. Logan Allen, 6-1, 260, OL, Grand Ledge
25. Tyler Hutchins, DB, Mt. Pleasant
26. Luke Chambers, OL, Williamston
27. Tarick Bower, DB/WR, Corunna
28. Wyatt Bower, DB/QB, Corunna
29. Travis Tucker, ATH, Ionia
30. Conner Langdon, 6-1, 235, OL, Greenville
31. Preston Otter, QB, Saginaw Nouvel
32. Aidan Halliday, LB, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart
33. Isaac Casey, 6-2, 235, TE, Belding

### Class of 2025

1. Aspen Keyes, 6-2, 185, QB, DeWitt
2. Axel Newell, 6-4, 190, QB, Ovid-Elsie
3. Cason Carswell, QB, Mason
4. Colton Klein, QB, Swan Valley
5. Chad Brown, 6-5, 195, QB, Hemlock
6. Broden Peska, OL, Ithaca
7. Brayton Thelen, QB, Pewamo-Westphalia
8. Jace Clarizio, 5-11, 175, RB/DB, East Lansing
9. Gregory Myles, 6-2, 280, OL, Haslett
10. Case Johnson, 5-10, 190, RB, Greenville
11. Logan Zahn, WR, Swan Valley



Nouvel's Hayden Simerson



Mt. Pleasant's Scooter Polk



Grand Ledge's Teddy Williams



Carrollton's Dre Gissendanner



Freeland's Gabe Blanchard



Grand Ledge's Shawn Foster

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# Clare Bids For Another Playoff Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Clare had a 7-4 season last year and took second in the Jack Pine Conference before losing to Kingsley in the district finals.

Coach Steve Spranger points out many top notch players graduated from that team.

“Al Warner was one of the most dynamic players that we’ve ever had at Clare,” Spranger said. “Beau Weldon was an extremely hard runner who could get tough yards.”

Top players for Clare will be Jake Punches (RB/LB, Junior), Mike Franko OL/DL, senior), Miles Haggart QB/DL, junior), Carter Smedley (slot/DB, junior) Westyn Bryant (RB/LB), junior.

They are all entering their third year on varsity

“We will be young grade wise, but still have a lot of varsity experience,” Spranger said. “We hope to compete in the Jack Pine. Our front seven on defense could be pretty good. If we can control the line of scrimmage, that will help us elsewhere. We need to continue to come together and play with energy and enthusiasm.”

Clare hopes to be a factor in the Jack Pine Conference. But it won't be easy.

“Gladwin will be extremely loaded as they return everyone from their conference championship team,” Spranger said. “Shepherd is extremely athletic. Meridian has returners and closed the year strong.”

Graduation hit the Clare football team hard but a host of young players are ready to step up and carry on the winning tradition for the Pioneers.

# Vestaburg Eyes Another Winning Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Vestaburg’s football team is coming off a season in which the Wolverines were 6-4 overall and made the playoffs.

Cooper Kelley is coaching the Wolverines and is hoping to field a competitive team.

“We’re continuing to focus on this year’s team,” Kelley said. “We are still finding out our key players for the 2022 season. The expectation is to continually grow.”

The Wolverines are in the Central Michigan 8-man Conference.

Vestaburg was able to find out something about its team with a preseason scrimmage on Aug. 19.

The season consists of nine regular-season games which are all in conference play. It starts out on Aug. 26 with a home game at Portland St. Patrick. That’s followed by a home game with Morrice on Sept. 21, road game at Mount Pleasant Sacred Heart on Sept. 9, a home game with Fulton on Sept. 16, away games on Sept. 24 with Coleman and Sept. 30 with Webberville, a home game on Oct. 7 with Breckenridge, a road game on Oct. 14 at Merrill and a home contest on Oct. 21 with Montabella. This will be followed with the playoffs.



“It is a good athletic conference,” Kelley said. “We’re going to play the games and find out.”

This will mark Vestaburg’s fourth season of eight-man

football. Last year, the Wolverines won their first five games and had point totals of 72. 60 and 64 in three of them. They lost 47-0 to Adrian Lenawee Christian in the playoffs.

Vestaburg’s football team expects to have an extremely competitive season in 8-player football.

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Pauly Seeley, who played his freshman season at Alma, is finishing his high school career at New Hampstead high school in Savannah, Georgia and will play his college football at Wofford College in South Carolina.

# Former Alma Standout Pauly Seeley Looking For Big Senior Season In Georgia

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Former Alma high school quarterback Pauly Seeley is putting the finishing touches on an impressive high school football career this season at New Hampstead high school in Savannah, Georgia and soon after the season ends, he will be starting the next chapter of his football career at Wofford College.

Seeley, who moved with his family to Georgia in 2020 to make sure he did not miss a season of high school football due to the Covid-19 pandemic uncertainties in Michigan, has fashioned an impressive high school career in Georgia. After splitting time with a senior quarterback his sophomore season at New Hampstead, Seeley was the full-time starter last year as a junior and put together an impressive season. Seeley helped lead his team to the Georgia playoffs and a 6-4 overall record while passing for 1,925 yards and 22 touchdown passes.

“Last year ended up being a pretty good season,” Seeley said. “We ended up going to the playoffs and while it didn’t end the way I wanted it to it was a fun year.”

The numbers Seeley posted last year were even more impressive considering he suffered a broken hand in week four of the season and played the remainder of the season with the broken hand. Seeley had surgery on the hand after the season causing him to miss the basketball season but the hand is totally healed and ready to go. Seeley was in mid-season form in New Hampstead’s season-opening game August 18 when he passed for 238 yards and four touchdowns in a win over May River.

Seeley feels like he has taken his game to another level after a full offseason of work.

“I feel like I’ve improved a lot since last season,” Seeley said. “I’ve gotten bigger and faster and stronger. I think the biggest improvement is in the mental side of the game. I’ve watched a lot of film and done

a lot of board work and I feel the game has slowed down for me.”

Seeley’s skills and production raised the interest of college recruiters the past few years and earlier this summer he made his college choice. Seeley chose Wofford College over Elon and Bowling Green along with offers from Western Kentucky, Elon and some Ivy League schools.

“It was a little bit of everything,” Seeley said about his decision. “The coaches, the campus, the school. Mostly the coaches. I fell in love with the coaching staff and feel like it is a real good fit for me.”

Wofford plays NCAA Division 1 FCS football in the Southern Conference.

A multi-sport athlete who also plays basketball, Seeley’s basketball career is coming to an end as he plays on graduating from high school in December and enrolling early at Wofford to get his career going and be able to participate in spring football practice.



# St. Johns Confident Of A Winning Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Andy Schmitt is coaching a St. John team hoping to play a key role this season in the Capital Area Activities Conference.

Last season, the Red Wings were 2-7 and were 2-5 the year before. They had previously been 7-4 and 5-5 in a couple of playoff seasons.

This year, St. Johns is confident despite facing a rough schedule which includes the likes of Jackson County Western, Muskegon Reeths Puffer, Haslett, Fowlerville, Lansing Eastern, Williamston, Mason, Ionia and Alpena.

Fowlerville, Eastern, Williamston, Mason and Haslett are CAAC opponents. Standouts include running back-cornerback

Bailey Nobach, tight end-middle linebacker Michael Berkousen, defensive tackle and tight end Adam Waszak, cornerback Gabe Cleland, strong safety and slot back Bryce Stoddard, quarterback and strong safety Brody Fush, wide receiver and free safety Sebastian Ybarra, quarterback and cornerback Carter Nobis, running back Brayden Struble,

wide receiver and cornerback John Kinkema, running back Evan Sanborn, linebacker Jason Stevens and wide receiver Justin Goodman.

Other standouts are free safety Ayden L’Connor, wide receiver JJ Jolly, running back Murray Palmaiter, ans linemen Collin Simon, Colby Munger, Lorenzo Karsten, Jude Williams, Erik Oliveros, Reece Mellenberger, Andy Fortin, Jarrert Grandy, Braden Ball, Braylon Thelen and Coloe Christoson.

# Central Montcalm Confident Of Being CSAA Contenders

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Scott Cripe is coaching a Central Montcalm football team which hopes to be a contender for the Central State Activities Association crown.

The Green Hornets had a solid team last year.

“Our team made the playoffs with a 5-4 regular season record,” Cripe said. “We won some close

games as the season wore on. We had a tough group of players.”

Several key Hornets graduate. This includes and at center and defensive tackle Jared Schultz and in the backfield and at linebacker Mitchell Herald.

“They had standout senior seasons,” Cripe said.

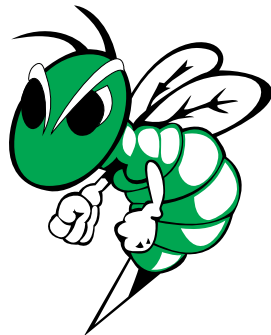
Central has several outstanding players including captain and three-year starter Isaac Johnson,

who plays running back and defensive back.

“We have a young football team,” Cripe said. “We want to continue to improve as the season progresses. There are a lot of unknowns but players have practiced hard and prepared well for the season. We have a lot of potential with our younger players. Once they gain some experience they should afford us the opportunity to compete hard against most teams.

“I think we will get better with experience and just making sure everyone gets up to speed with doing their job on the field and how it fits into our system.

As for the CSAA race, “We have a very strong league and every week represents a unique challenge,” Cripe said. “Reed City has either won the league or been near the top consistently for a while and it has been like that for many years. Our goal is to compete every year for a championship.



“I am looking forward to seeing how quickly our younger players can adapt and how far our leadership with our older players can go.”

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# Coleman Makes Switch To 8-Player

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Chad Knopf is coaching a Coleman football 8-man football team which hopes to be extremely competitive.

“Last season we finish 5-4 and missed out on the playoffs by a tenths of a point,” Knopf said. “We were a senior dominated team and knew we needed to win the final three games of the regular season to have a chance at the playoffs. The team made drastic improvements and finish the season winning those three games. Over the course of the season we had some really good performances. Senior Ty Klopf threw for 1,083 yards and 13 touchdowns. Senior Conner Schrank rushed for 1,319 yards and 17 touchdowns. Senior Ayden Ruhle caught 27 passes for 398 yards and six touchdowns.”

Knopf recalls the key players he lost.

“Konner Carbeno became a starter at linebacker as a freshman

and continued to play there and lead our defense,” he said.

“Conner Schrank was our workhorse out of the backfield the past two seasons. I will remember Conner for his work ethic and his hard nose running in traffic, then pulling away when he was in the open. Graduates Richard Sapp and Max Marovich led us upfront for many years at guard and center. Our offense started with these two on the o-line. Ayden Ruhle and Jaden Bovee gave us two receiving threats to balance with our run game. We had many great memories over the past three or four years with the two of them.”

Quarterback Ty Klopf also graduated.

“I will always cherish the past four years we had together on the field not just as coach and player, but as father and son,” Klopf said. “I won’t coach him anymore, but I will continue to follow his football career as he has moved on to play at Northwood University.”

Key players include Isaiah



Marlon Garcia is an offensive-defensive lineman for Coleman.

Biers, a senior, WR/DB. “Isaiah will be called on to be a leader on both sides of the ball as our top returning receiver and our best cover corner,” Klopf said, adding senior RB/DB Ty Murray “is our most veteran returner, having started since his freshman season. A natural leader, Ty will be looked upon to bring our younger teammates up to speed quickly.”

Shane Cole is senior, two-way lineman. “Shane’s size and ability will be needed as we transition to the 8-man style of football,” Klopf said adding senior TE/LB Dawson Haller “has a few years of varsity experience under his belt, but with the move to 8-man comes position



Shane Cole is another offensive-defensive lineman for Coleman.

moves for him on both sides of the ball from tackle to tight end and from a defensive lineman to an outside linebacker.”

Junior Vance Sysak, “will be our new starter at quarterback this fall,” Klopf said. “He had a good summer and has matured as a leader along the way.”

Jared DeVrieze is sophomore, RB/WR, LB/DB. “Jared is our wildcard now that we are playing the 8-man game,” Klopf said. “Jared will be called on to move around and play multiple positions on both sides of the ball depending on what the team needs that week.”



Mason Tucker is a two-way lineman for Coleman.

Sam Bovee, a junior, wide receiver/linebacker “is our sparkplug. He is a tough nose kid and a good coverage guy,” Klopf said, adding junior two-way lineman Mason Tucker “has size and will help us keep our run game going this year. This summer Mason did show us that he has some good hands and might find a few footballs being thrown in his direction.”

Junior two-way lineman Marlon Garcia “is in his second year with us since moving up from Miami, Fla.,” Klopf said. “Marlon will continue to be a good addition to our team and will help move our offense forward.

# Central Michigan 8-Man League Will Have 10 Teams

## John Raffel Sports Scene

The Mid-State Athletic Conference has most of the teams in the new Central Michigan 8-man League.

“With 10 teams in total, this will be a highly competitive league with tough games week in and week out,” Coleman coach Chad Klopf said. “Many of the teams are our brothers from the MSAC, but we have added a few others as well. Portland St. Patrick makes a deep run in the playoffs year in and year out, so they have to be near the top this year again.

“Merrill has had a few years in the 8-man game and they are loaded with seniors and juniors, so I would say they will be battling at the top as well. Fulton is senior loaded and will be up there. Breckenridge was the top of the MSAC for the past few years, so I would not count them out. Sacred Heart Academy always tends to rise toward to top. Morrice has made a few deep playoff runs of late as well. Montabella, Vestaburg and Webberville will all be competitive and have 8-man experience.”

Some observers think Coleman could be a contender.



Vance Sysak is a quarterback/linebacker for Coleman.

“At this time, I couldn’t say where we will fit in,” Klopf said. “We will play hard and be competitive, but everything is an unknown going into this season. I’ve told the team that we graduated a large number of starters and we are moving into



Travis Murray (top) is a tight end/linebacker for Coleman.

a somewhat unknown with the move from 11 to 8-man football. So, this year’s team will be setting the table for expectations moving forward. Our expectations now are to be quick learners, have fun, and be competitive week in and week out.



Dawson Haller (bottom) is a linebacker/tight end for Coleman.

“Our strength will be our returning players. We will only go as far as that group takes us. This team will need to work every day to learn the 8-man game, to understand the differences from 11-man and how to adapt.”

# Breckenridge Looking To Make A Big Splash In First Season Of Eight-Man Football

## David Cook Sports Scene

One of the most successful area programs in 11-man, Division 8 football the past several seasons, the Breckenridge Huskies are looking to carry on their winning tradition as they make the transition to eight-man football this season.

Breckenridge enters eight-man football with a winning tradition. The Huskies qualified for the playoffs and posted winning records the past six seasons including a berth in the 2018 Division 8 state championship game. Last year’s squad turned in a 9-3 overall record winning a district championship before falling in the regional title game to Ubly.

While several key players have graduated including standout quarterback Luke Saunders and big-play receiver Derek Mayle, Breckenridge has a strong core of

players to build around.

Junior quarter back Jaxon Laubscher, who backed up Saunders last season, is slated to take over as the starting quarterback this season.

While the Huskies are breaking in a new starting quarterback, they have some skill position athletes returning to help with the transition. Senior Collin Sitts is a returning running back who was a key contributor to the running game last season while seniors Ondray Thornton and Ryan Wolfgang are a pair of skilled wide receivers.

Sitts is one of many Huskies who are excited about the switch to eight-man football and the more wide-open style of play it brings.

“There is a lot more open space on the field,” Sitts said. “There are less people out there and it gives you more room to run.”

Thornton is looking forward to contributing in a style of football that promotes the passing game.

“There is a lot more opportunities for more passing,” Thornton said. “Executing will be a big thing so we have to make sure we execute our plays and be precise in running our passing routes.”

The Huskies will have solid play along both the offensive and defensive lines. Junior nose tackle Xzavior Garcia is a returning all-conference defensive lineman who will play center on the offensive line while senior Gabe Ramirez also returns.

Like the backs and receivers, the linemen are also looking forward to showcasing their skills in the eight-man game.

“I’m kind of excited for it,” Ramirez said. “It is a faster-paced



Breckenridge begins its first season of 8-man football under new coach Issac Gregory. Breckenridge finished last season 9-3.

game and I’m the type of player who doesn’t like a slow-paced game.”

“It will be easier in a sense that there are a lot less players on the field,” Garcia said. “I also think our line is going to be a strong point for our team as well.”

On defense, look for the Huskies to play fast and aggressive. Garcia and Ramirez anchor the line while Sitts is a returning all-conference linebacker. Thornton will be a cornerback while Wolfgang is a returning all-conference defensive back.

Breckenridge is playing in the ten-team Central Michigan 8-Man Football Conference this season and all nine games are conference games. The middle of the schedule will be crucial as the Huskies play Morrice on Sept. 23 and Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart the following week. Morrice has qualified for the eight-man playoffs seven out of the last eight seasons while Sacred Heart has qualified for the eight-man playoffs in each of its two years playing eight-man football.

# Fulton-Middleton Football Team Looking To Continue Last Year’s Late Success

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

It took a while for the Fulton-Middlton football team to get the hang of eight-man football last season, but once they did the Pirates showed they could score points in bunches.

After dropping their first four games last season, Fulton closed the season strong winning four of its last five games including three wins in a row to end the season. The Pirates put up some impressive numbers in three of those wins scoring 50 or more points three in three games including two games with over 60 points.

Quarterback Bruce Thelen returns to lead the Pirate offense this season

and is looking forward to what the offense can accomplish with a pair of eight-man football experience under their belts.

“It took a little getting use to,” Thelen said. “We played some of the top teams in eight-man football at the beginning of the season so we had a rough start but then we finished strong. We are going to be a better team this year. We looked better in seven-on-seven this summer. Our running game is definitely going to be better. We have a lot of big linemen and some good running backs.”

Senior Ryder Hetherington is among the running backs to watch this season. Hetherington brings good speed and quickness to the field and can also run with power.

Seniors Dezmond Blair and Jadon Podolak are a pair of talented pass catchers that will be key in the passing game. Senior Cameron Summer returns to anchor the offensive line.

On defense, Summer returns to lead the defensive line. Blair is back at a defensive end position while Thelen is a leader of the secondary at a safety position.

“We are looking pretty good right now,” Summer said. “We lost a couple of seniors but we have some players returning also. I think our strong point will be our pass coverage. We have some good

Fulton has a veteran group returning in 2022 that saw the Pirates offense score over 50 points in six games last season.

defensive backs. I think we will also be able to put pressure on the quarterback.”

While the Pirates have some good athletes on the squad, Thelen points to the intangibles as being a key to having a successful season this year.

“We have to trust each other,” Thelen said. “A lot of the offense and defense runs on trust. You have to trust your teammates that they will be where they need to be on each play both on offense and defense.”



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# Western County Schools Loading Up For Big Seasons On The Gridiron

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Last year saw a number of schools from west of US 127 turn in big seasons highlighted by Pewamo-Westphalia winning the Division 7 state championship. Portland reached the state semifinals in Division 5 while Rockford reached the regional finals. All three teams are gearing up for more success this season.

Following is a look at some of the teams to watch from the western counties.

### PEWAMO-WESTPHALIA HAS SIGHTS ON REPEAT

Pewamo-Westphalia has won four out of the past six Division 7 state titles and may have won a fifth if not for the Covid-19 virus. The Pirates are coming off a perfect season last year but have a number

of holes to fill in the starting lineup.

One position that is filled is the quarterback spot where senior Troy Wertman (6-2, 200) is back to lead the way. The Pirates also bring back punishing junior fullback Gavin Nurenberg (5-9, 210) who is also a leader of the defense at his linebacker position. Sophomore Brayton Thelen is a promising young player to keep an eye on.

Up front, junior offensive tackle Trevor Spitzley (6-4, 225) is back to anchor the line. Senior Chris Ghee (5-10, 185) is a returning lineman on defense.

### PORTLAND SET UP FOR SOLID SEASON

While the Raiders of Portland graduated several key players from last year's state semifinalist team, enough talent returns to set the team up for success this season.

Taking over at quarterback is senior Marc Nobis who has plenty of varsity experience on his resume. The Portland ground game is in solid shape with the return of senior running back Drew Miller. Small in stature, Miller is a quick, tough runner who can pile up yards. Junior running backs Caden Thelen and Conner Kazamer are also in the mix.

Up front, the Portland offensive line

Pewamo-Westphalia returns a veteran quarterback and has the ingredients for a solid defense as the Pirates begin the journey to defend the Division 7 state championship.

is led by veterans Carson Martin at center and Evan Bower (6-2, 225) at guard.

The Portland defense is also looking solid this season. Nobis and Thelen will be among the contributors in the secondary. The linebacking corps is solid with the return of senior Noah Simpson (6-2, 210) and Markey Meyers along with Brady Krause (5-8, 182). Branson Goodman is back to lead the charge from the defensive line.

### ROCKFORD RELOADING IN DIVISION 1

The graduation losses were heavy for Rockford but in a program with huge numbers replacements are poised to step up.

On offense, senior quarterback Mac VandenHout (5-11, 190) gained plenty of experience last year as a backup. The return of versatile wide receiver Alex McLean (5-7, 165) will help. The Rams have a deep corps of running backs led by junior standout Ryan Ahern (6-0, 190) who brings good quickness and power-running skills to the field.

The Rockford defense will be strong again. Senior linebackers Rick Beison (6-1, 210) and Thys Segard (6-2, 210) are a pair of rugged tackling machines. The Rams are deep along the defensive line and in the secondary. Look for Rockford to make another deep playoff run this season.

### LOWELL LOOKS TO REBOUND

Lowell is looking for improvement after turning in a 4-6

mark last season. The Red Arrows did qualify for the playoffs where they fell to Muskegon in the first round.

Defense and line play are strong points of the Red Arrows this season. Massive senior Ian George (6-7, 270) anchors the offensive line.

On the defensive side of the ball, Gus McDonald (6-2, 207) and Easton Rich lead the defensive line. Carson Crace (6-0, 200) is back to lead the linebacking corps with senior Conor Lixie back at cornerback.

### IONIA LOOKING TO BUILD ON SUCCESS

Ionia posted its first winning regular season since 2013 as they turned in a 5-4 regular-season record before falling to eventual Division 3 state runner-up DeWitt in the first round of the playoffs.

Several key players have graduated from last year's team but enough talent returns to keep the success going in Ionia. Junior running back Travis Tucker is coming off a big season and is a major part of the offense. Chris Smith (6-1, 265) is a key returning lineman that will anchor both the offensive and defensive lines. The Bulldog defense also brings back linebacker Nathan Clute.

### BELDING SET FOR ANOTHER BIG SEASON

A solid group of returning players has Belding primed to make another run at the state playoffs this season. The Black Knights turned in a 5-5 overall record last season and qualified for the playoffs for a second straight season where they fell to eventual Division 5 state champion Grand

Rapids Catholic Central in the opening round.

Senior Anthony Szubinski returns at quarterback for Belding with Kaden McNeil, Bryce Flynn and Jack Ward back at the running back spots. Junior tight end Isaac Casey (6-2, 235) will help with blocking and in the passing game.

Senior Keagan Deters and junior Alex Sherman will anchor the offensive line.

A large group of defenders also return. Drew Donovan will head up the linebacking brigade with Own Meinke back at safety to head up the secondary.

### LAKEWOOD-LAKE ODESSA LOOKS TO REBOUND

Lakewood-Lake Odessa is looking to rebound after turning in a 4-2 record last season. The Vikings are led by senior standout Nathan Willette who quarterbacks the offense and heads up the defense from his linebacking position. Montreal Reid and Ethan Weller are a pair of promising running backs that will key the ground game.

### GREENVILLE LOOKING FOR IMPROEMENT

Greenville is looking for improvement after going winless last season. The Yellowjackets are led by senior running back/linebacker Kameron Cooper who earned all-conference honors last season. Senior Isaac Dailey also returns at running back while sophomore Case Johnson (5-10, 190) is a talented young runner set to make a big impact. Up front, the Yellowjacket line is led by senior Asher VanHaren (6-3, 190) and junior Conner Langdon (6-1, 235).

# Shiawassee, Genesee Area Schools Reloading To Chase League Titles

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Several schools from the Shiawassee/Genesee county area turned in big seasons last year and the trend looks to continue this year. Traditional powerhouses New Lothrop and Montrose are reloading while Corunna and Durand have been coming on strong the past several seasons.

Following is a look at some of the teams to watch from the Shiawassee/Genesee area.

### NEW LOTHROP LOOKING TO REBOUND

After winning the Division 7 state title in 2020, New Lothrop was defeated by last year's Division 7 state champion Pewamo-Westphalia in the district finals. With a strong core of veterans back, the Hornets are primed to make another run at the title.

New Lothrop will feature strong play in the trenches with the return of senior linemen Jaden Curry (6-4, 285) and Grayson Orr (6-3, 230). Junior defensive end Cooper Symons (6-2, 185) also returns to the defensive front.

At the quarterback spot junior Jack Kulhanek will give the Hornets solid leadership. Dominic Casciano and Nick Barnette also return to the backfield.

New Lothrop will be battling it out with Montrose, Ovid-Elsie and Durand for the title in the Mid-Michigan Activities Conference.

### SENIOR CORE TO LEAD MONTROSE

Montrose has reached the playoffs the past 12 years. With a solid core of veterans to build around, the Rams will be in the thick of the playoff hunt again and challenge for the Mid-Michigan Activities Conference title.

Senior running back Owen Emmendorfer (5-8, 165) is back after rushing for over 1,000 yards and 15 touchdowns last season. Zach O'Neal (5-10, 160) pilots the Montrose offense.

The Rams will have a solid group of linemen paving the way led by senior Jerrold Atwell (5-11, 280), a four-year, varsity player and junior Preston Haddock (5-11, 205).

Defense will also be a strong point this season. Senior defensive end Michael Stevenson (6-1, 200), a returning all-state player, is a major impact player on defense. Stevenson totaled 25 tackles for loss and 12 quarterback sacks last year. Emmendorfer returns as the ringleader of the secondary.

### DURAND LOOKING TO TAKE NEXT STEP

Durand earned a trip to the state playoffs for a third straight season last fall and finished the season with a 6-4 overall record, the most wins since 2009. This year the Railroaders will be looking to take things even a step farther after falling to eventual Division 6 state champion Lansing Catholic in the first round of the playoffs.

Durand has a host of starters back from last year's squad led by massive offensive tackle Dylan McDonald (6-foot-6, 350 pounds). Tyler Cesar (6-0, 265) brings even more bulk to the line.

Quarterback Austin Kelley ignites the offense that includes running back Gabe Lynn (6-0, 170).

The Railroad defense is equally as talented and experienced. Wyatt Campbell and Darrin Alword head up the linebacking brigade. Evan Sampson (6-5, 200) and Ty Fielder lead the charge up front while Alex Bruni returns at safety for a squad that will battle it out with New Lothrop, Montrose and Ovid-Elsie for the league title.

### CORUNNA PRIMED FOR BIG SEASON

With a large group of veterans back, the Corunna Cavalier bring plenty of optimism into the new season. Those veterans were part of a Corunna team that posted a 7-5 overall record last year. The Cavaliers also won a district title and reached the regional title game before falling to eventual Division 5 state runner-up Marine City.

Senior Xavier Anderson (5-11, 175) is an impact player on both sides of the ball at running back on offense and linebacker on defense. Senior Collin Thompson returns at a linebacker spot. Junior twins Wyatt and Tarick Bower are also dual threats. Wyatt is the Cavalier quarterback on offense while Tarick lines up in the slot. Both brothers start in the secondary on defense. Junior Jaden Edgington (6-0, 205) is another standout running back and also plays linebacker on defense while senior Peyton Termeer (6-2, 185) returns at safety on defense. Sophomores AJ Brieger (6-2, 220) and Alan Mrva (6-1, 190) are a pair of talented linemen set to contribute.

### CHESANING LOOKING TO POST WINNING SEASON

Chesaning turned in a 4-5 record last season. This year the Indians are working to go above the .500 mark.

A strong core of veterans returns for Chesaning. Up front, Carson Hetfield (5-10, 250) is back at center while junior Ben Fowler (5-7, 230) also returns along the offensive front. Reese Greenfelder (6-2, 180) is back at tight end and will also play

linebacker on defense. Cal Frasier is returning at fullback and also linebacker on defense. Senior Vito Maniaci is also a returning linebacker. Sophomore Max Volk looks to step in at quarterback. Alex Fowler will be a wide receiver and defensive back with Lucas Powell back at safety.

### OWOSSO LOOKS TO CONTINUE IMPROVEMENT

Owosso recorded its most wins since 2012 and the Trojans look to continue that improvement this season.

The Trojan offense is led quarterback Hugh Doyle while Zach Evon returns at running back. Juniors Daniel Wittum and Justin Johnson look to make an impact at running back and wide receiver. Leading the way up front are lineman Alex Krawczyk and Tegan Passinault.

### PERRY TAKING AIM AT WINNING SEASON

After turning in a 4-5 mark last season the Perry Ramblers have the

course set for a winning mark this year.

The Ramblers return some talented skill position players led by senior wide receiver Rease Teel and junior running back Aiden Brooks. Ethan Hardy is a returning lineman while senior Nic Barber returns at defensive end. Juniors looking to contribute include safety Tim Hall, offensive guard Cameron Doody and wide receiver Austin Poirier.



Durand's Dylan McDonald takes part in an early season scrimmage against Bath High School



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## Area Schools Continue Upgrades Of Stadiums And Football Fields

**John Raffel & David Cook Sports Scene**

A shining star just got brighter as the Ithaca Veterans Memorial Field continued its expansion and upgrades. The improvements at Ithaca were just one of several projects that took place to football field across Mid-Michigan.

Veterans Memorial Field in Ithaca, already a crown jewel of area football fields, added a new playing surface this past summer. The state-of-the-art field gives the stadium an even more impressive look and honors veterans and Gold Star families of all wars and conflicts. The Ithaca stadium project is also in the midst of adding monuments around the stadium to honor veterans of Gratiot County and all of Michigan who served the country.

On the field itself the words ‘Veterans Memorial Field’ face both the home and visitor stands. In addition, in both end-zones the word ‘Service’ stands out in golf. The words serve as a reminder that we may not be supporting the same team on the field, but we are all on the same team as American, honoring our heroes, and also reminding us of the importance of service.

Improvements were also made to Memorial Stadium in DeWitt. A new field drainage was built along with the installation of field turf and resurfacing. Next year a new press box and lighting will be installed giving one of the premier Division 3 teams in the state an up-to-date facility to show off their skills in.

Several other area schools also have brand new turf fields to play on this fall. Corunna just

completed a new turf field as did Ovid-Elsie, Bay City John Glenn and Mt. Morris.

Chris Deines recently became Corunna’s athletic director. Corunna passed a bond issue, part of which was a facilities upgrade.

“The turf field will also be for soccer,” Deines said. “Boys and girls soccer will be able to play on it as well. They are telling us we’re on schedule to have our first game on Thursday. We’re keeping our fingers crossed and hope everything goes on as planned.”

Deines said Corunna officials broke ground on the new turf field in the spring to replace the former grass field.

Jason Tokar is the principal at Ovid-Elsie, and said the turf field was part of a facilities upgrade project.

“The turf is done and the track will be getting down next week,” he said. “We don’t have a home game until week three. We didn’t schedule anything the first two weeks.”

O-E will also used the field along with youth football and the band.

“We enjoy being able to include more people on the field and not having to tell people no if they wanted to use the field,” Tokar said. “The band didn’t practice on it regularly because you didn’t want to take the grass out before a football Friday. Our youth football team can now use it.

“We also like the durability of the artificial turf.”



Ithaca is among six area schools that will unveil new turf during the 2022 season.

Improvements are also taking place at Carson City-Crystal and with the ongoing construction the Eagles will be playing all of their football games on the road this season.

## Lansing Area Football Teams Primed For Big Seasons This Fall

**David Cook Sports Scene**

The 2021 season was a productive one for Lansing area football teams. Lansing Catholic won the Division 6 state title while DeWitt reached the Division 3 title game. This year, despite some heavy graduation losses, several Lansing-area teams are primed for more success.

Following is a look at some of the teams to watch in the greater Lansing area.

### LANSING CATHOLIC PRIMED FOR MORE SUCCESS

Graduation did hit the Lansing Catholic football team hard a several key players moved on from last year’s Division 6 state championship team.

While the losses were substantial, a talented core of players return this season. Leading the way on offense is versatile senior Brandon Lewis. Lewis possesses game-breaking skills and can hurt teams from the running back or wide receiver positions. Lewis will be playing his college football at Michigan State University as a preferred walk on.

The Cougars also bring back all-conference running back Nick Gruber while senior Dan Shipman will also see action at running back. A big key for the Cougars is the development of a new quarterback.

Up front, the Cougars will build the offensive line around senior tackle Matt Watkins (6-4, 240) along with center Issac Iocco.

The Cougars have a tradition of playing strong defense and this year will be no different. Gruber returns at nose guard with Jack Jacobs returning at a linebacker spot. Lansing Catholic will have a solid secondary led by Lewis and Shipman.

### HASLETT BUILDING OFF BIG YEAR

Haslett turned in an 8-3 record last year for its first winning record since 2017. With several key players returning, Haslett is poised for more success this season.

The Haslett offense is led by returning all-conference quarterback Isaac Pavona. Junior running back Nakai Amachree (5-11, 185) is another key returnee. Amachree is capable of breaking big plays as both a runner and a pass receiver and is poised for a big year. Keep an eye on Nakai’s younger brother, freshman Kory Amachree, who will also be on the varsity this season and will provide the offense with another big-play option.

### GRAND LEDGE LOOKS FOR PLAYOFF RETURN

Grand Ledge compiled a 6-4 overall record last year and reached the playoffs where it fell to Rockford in round one. With several key players back, the Comets have their sights set on a return to post-season action.

A big key for the Comets will be developing a new starting quarterback as several big-time pass catchers return. Senior tight end Teddy Williams (6-6, 215) is a matchup nightmare for opposing defenses. Shawn Foster is an electric playmaker who can score in an instant while Andrew Konieczny (6-4, 200\_ is another tall and athletic receiver that flashes playmaking ability. Up front, the Grand Ledge offensive line is anchored by senior Logan Costello (6-2, 320) who is an experienced road grader.

### MASON LOOKING TO TAKE NEXT STEP

The Mason football team is coming off one of its most successful post-seasons in years as it reached the Division 3 state semifinals before falling to eventual state champion Detroit King.

With a host of veterans back this season, Mason is poised to take things even farther come playoff time.

The Bulldogs have nine starters back on offense led by junior running back AJ Martel. Mason has a pair of promising young quarterbacks in junior Nick Wells who is a crafty runner and sophomore Cason Carswell who has a strong and accurate arm. Colin Page, Derek Badgley and

Kaleb Parrish provide excellent targets in the passing game. Up front, massive senior tackle Brian Ingram leads the charge.

### RETURNING VETS TO KEY EAST LANSING

East Lansing has produced seven consecutive winning seasons and with several talented players returning the Trojans are primed to make it eight in a row this season.

Playmakers abound on offense for East Lansing this year. Senior wide receiver Evan Boyd is a big-time talent that has committed to Central Michigan University. Fellow senior wideout Dorijan Jackson is another exciting playmaker that will give opposing secondaries headaches on a Friday night.

Opposing defenses will also need to keep defenders close to the line to defend Trojan senior running back Kanye Jackson who is a threat to take it to the house anytime he gets the ball.

Breaking in a new quarterback will be key for East Lansing with Dalen Adams and Joey Pizzo in the mix to run the show.

### WILLIAMSTON TO CONTINUE WINNING WAYS

Williamston has not had a losing season since 2015 and the Hornets have the talent to keep the winning going this season.

The Hornets are paced by a veteran quarterback in senior Alex Petersburg (6-3, 200) who has a strong and accurate arm. Lanky senior receiver Joey Mahaney (6-4, 190) is an excellent target in the passing game. Junior running back Noah Dunckel (6-0, 195) heads up the ground game and is a sure-tackling linebacker on defense. The Hornets also bring back some strong linemen in Travis Genske and junior Luke Chambers.

### HOLT TO RELY ON STRONG QUARTERBACK PLAY

The Holt Rams have qualified for the playoffs the last three seasons and with one of the top quarterbacks in the Lansing area returning they are looking to continue that streak.



Bath took part in a four-team scrimmage August 18 at Durand High School. Crosswell Lexington, Bay City John Glenn and Durand were the other schools that participated.

Senior Seneca Moore is a talented quarterback that can hurt opposing defenses in a variety of ways.

A big key for success this season will be retooling a defense that graduated nine starters from last year’s squad.

### LAINGSBURG FOCUSED ON PLAYOFF

Last season the Wolfpack of Laingsburg turned in a 5-4 overall record but missed out on a playoff berth. With a host of starters returning on both side of the ball this season, Laingsburg is focused on taking the next step and reaching the playoffs.

On offense, junior quarterback Ty Randall (6-2, 195) is back after passing for over 700 yards and rushing for over 200 last season. Eli Woodruff and Connor Hulliberger return as reliable targets for Randall in the passing game. Senior Mike Brooks and junior Jack Borgman return at running back. Seniors Thomas Gousetis (5-10, 200), James Nixon (6-2, 265) and Sean Divine (5-7, 205) and

junior Wyatt Stanfield are among the returning blockers along the offensive line.

Defense is also a strong point for the Wolfpack. Hulliberger and Gousetis are among the defenders returning along with senior defensive end Hayden Johnston (6-3, 185). Brooks is also a standout on the defensive side of the ball along with junior Elliott Wilsey.

### BATH LOOKS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Bath Bees are looking to improve after turning in a 2-7 record last season.

The Bees return a large group of veterans on both sides of the ball. On offense, junior Brayden Bennett is looking to take over at quarterback with senior Chase Vane (6-2, 175) and junior Bradlee Uhlmann in the mix at running back. Senior Devondre Chandler is a veteran receiver while junior Max Parry (6-2, 190) is at tight end. Senior Blake VanNorman (6-2, 275) returns to anchor the offensive line.

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# Saginaw, Midland, Bay Area Teams Primed For More Success

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Several Midland, Saginaw, Bay area football teams enjoyed productive seasons in 2021 and with a host of talented players returning to area schools, local teams are primed for more success this season.

Following is a look at some of the teams to watch in the greater Lansing area.

### FREELAND SET FOR ANOTHER BIG SEASON

Freeland is coming off a big season that saw the Falcons win 11 games for the third time in the past 26 years as they reached the Division 4 state semifinals before falling three points shokrt against eventual state champion Chelsea.

While a number of key players have graduated from that squad, several talented players return. Junior Sam Talaga (6-3, 230), who has already been offered by Central Michigan University, packs a punch at linebacker and is slated to step in at quarterback. Senior lineman Gabe Blanchard (6-4, 240) will pave the way up front and is also an impact player at defensive end.

Sophomore wide receiver Brayden Petre will be a playmaker on offense. Senior Chris Morgan and junior Max Cade also return to the offensive line.

Talaga and Blanchard lead the charge for



Freeland's Brenden Vigue is a returning defensive starter for the Falcons this season.

what should be a solid defense along with senior linebacker Tommy Meizo and junior defensive back Ty Fournier.

### MIDLAND DOW AIMS TO CONTINUE PLAYOFF RUN

Midland Dow qualified for the playoffs for a ninth straight season last fall and the Chargers have the talent to make it 10 this season after going 6-4 a year ago.

Leading the way for the Dow offense is senior quarterback Jack Bakus (6-5, 225) who passed for over 1,300 yards last season. The Chargers will have a solid line in front of Bakus led by senior Adam Brenske (6-0, 217).

Landon Miller will be in the mix at running back and will see time on defense at linebacker.

### BAY CITY WESTERN LOOKS TO REPEAT SUCCESS

The Bay City Western football team turned in its best record since 2012 when it compiled an 8-3 record last year. Western also won a playoff game before falling to Traverse City Central in the district finals.

The Warriors must replace a number of key players. Austin Foerster is looking to step in at quarterback. The offensive line is built around seniors Jake Coppess (6-1, 245) and Peyton McNeese (6-1, 265). Sophomore linebacker Nick Doran is a young player to watch for on defense.

### SWAN VALLEY AIMS TO CONTINUE PLAYOFF RUN

The Swan Valley football team has qualified for the playoffs the last 10 years in a row and with a host of talented players returning that streak is likely to continue this season.

Look for the Vikings to feature a potent passing game led by sophomore quarterback Colton Klein who passed for over 1,000 yards as a freshman. Klein has a pair of sizable targets to throw to in Drew Kaeckmeister and Sam Wickham who are both 6-foot-3. Sophomore Logan Zahn is also a key part of the receiving corps. The Vikings also have a deep and talented offensive line.

### HEMLOCK RETOOLING FOR A WINNING SEASON

The Hemlock Huskies suffered heavy graduation losses from a team that turned in a 6-5 overall record last year and reached the



Sophomore quarterback Chad Brown (No. 6) is a 6-foot-5 prospect with a strong arm. Brown and the Huskies hope to improve on last year's 6-5 record.

district finals. The playoff appearance was the sixth year in a row the Huskies made the playoffs.

Defense will be a strong point this year with senior defensive lineman Anthony Zechmeister (6-2, 225) leading the way. Zechmeister is a big-play defender who recorded over 100 tackles last season.

On offense, sophomore quarterback Chad Brown is a 6-foot-5 prospect with a strong and accurate arm. Liam Zastrow will see action at running back while Luke Zastrow and Michael Murphy will see time at receiver and defensive back. Senior guard Luke McGregor will be among the leaders of the

offensive line.

### MIDLAND LOOKS TO REBOUND

The Chemics of Midland are looking to bounce back after a surprising down year that saw them finish 2-7.

Versatile senior Jason Davenport will be a playmaker to watch on the offensive side of the ball. Senior running back Mason Weaver will also look to make an impact.

The Midland defense is led by senior defensive lineman Colin Coffey (6-0, 225) and promising sophomore linebacker Zach Buschler.



The Heritage football team moves to the Saginaw Valley League South Division this season.



Bridgeport senior Zalyn Martin holds many Division 1 offers heading into the season.

### HERITAGE TO FACE NEW SLATE

Saginaw Heritage will have some new opponents on the schedule this year as it leaves the Saginaw Valley North division to head to the South division.

Heritage is led this year by one of the top juniors in the area in Braylon Isom. Isom is an explosive athlete who has been offered by Central Michigan University and will line up at receiver on offense and cornerback on defense. The Hawks will have



a new quarterback running the show in either senior Ashton Rubio or junior Ethan Mason. Sophomore tackle Ethan Kraatz (6-3, 230) is a young lineman to watch while seniors Carrington Pryor and Charles Cork will bolster the receiving corps and the secondary on defense

### BRIDGEPORT TURNING THINGS AROUND

Improvement is the name of the game at Bridgeport where a talented cast of veterans players are ready to turn things around for the Bobcats who went 0-9 last season.

Senior Zalyn Martin (6-3, 215) has excellent speed and quickness and will be a playmaker at wide receiver and at defensive end. Senior linebacker Will Harris also returns to the defense along with junior defensive tackle Jayden Garza. Khalil Cliff is another playmaker that will impact the offense at running back and line up at defensive back. Senior tackle Aashir Borwn (6-4, 275) brings size to the offensive line while junior Taybren Baldwin is stepping in at quarterback.

### CUPBOARD FAR FROM BARE AT GARBER

While graduation hit Essexville-Garber hard, the cupboard is anything but bare as the Dukes return a large group of veterans from a team that went 5-5 overall last season.

Defense will be a strong point for the Dukes as standout linebacker Cade Coquillard returns after a big junior year. Garber features a deep and talented secondary that includes senior Ethan Burrows and Elijah Theisen along with



Birch Run returns many talented players on both sides of the ball and along the line and at the skill positions.

junior standout Max Fellows. Senior linebacker Tanner Szczepanski (5-11, 190) also returns while sophomore Jayden Brenay (6-2, 220) is a young player to watch along the defensive front.

On offense, the Dukes have the makings of a solid line with the return of senior center Dan Lazarowicz and tackle Austin Bokhart (6-1, 205) along with senior tackle Adam Petro and senior guard Justin Mueller. Coquillard was the backup quarterback last season while Fellows is a talented wide receiver. Burrows returns at tight end while Brayden Tracy is a returning receiver.

### BIRCH RUN POISED FOR BREAKTHROUGH YEAR

With a deep and talented group of returning players, Birch Run is poised for a breakout season. The Panthers return talented players on both sides of the ball and along the line and at the skill positions.

Senior running back Kahleel Brown (5-8, 170) leads the list of returnees. Brown rushed for close to 1,300 yards last season and scored 16 touchdowns. David Lopez will quarterback the Panthers while Aiden

Merrill's offensive line will be a strong point heading into this season.

Thornberg will also help at running back. Birch Run has a deep corps of receivers that includes Dawson Gielda, Tyler Lasky and Gage and Jaxon Martinus.

Birch Run also has a deep group of linemen. Frank Stevens (6-3, 250) and Isaac Roznowski (5-10, 230) lead the line group on both sides of the football along with Landon Roe, Daymeon Held-Evans who will play at tight end, Owen Natzel and Casen Haggart.

### MERRILL PRIMED FOR BIG YEAR

The Vandals of Merrill are primed for a big year in eight-man football. The Vandals have posted winning records in their first two seasons of eight-man football and this year could be the best yet.

Merrill features a sizable offensive line led by Lukas Fischer (6-5, 270), Caden Fleming (6-1, 265) and Mason Ordway (6-1, 265).

The Vandals have experience at the skill positions with quarterback Joel Tack, running back Carter Feith and receivers Denver Coty and Kaleb Whitaker. On defense, middle linebacker Cameron Raftery (5-11, 190) will make his mark.



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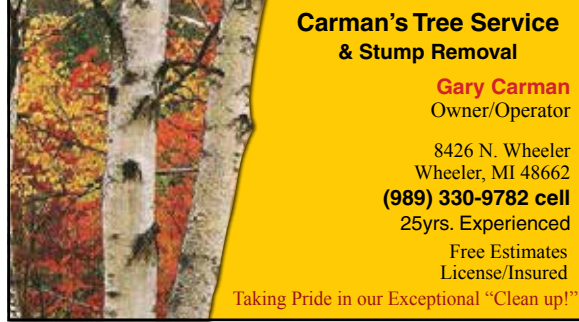
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