



**HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS SCENE**  
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# CONTENTS

- 3** | Veteran, Talented Ithaca Squad Looking To Take The Next Step In Playoffs
- 4** | Mt. Pleasant Reloading After Talented Senior Class Moves On
- 5** | Carson City-Crystal Aiming To Continue Success In Year Two Of 8-Man Football
- 6** | Fulton-Middleton Looking To Continue Success In 8-Man Football
- 7** | St. Louis Looks For Bounce Back Season Under New Head Coach
- 8** | Clare Hoping For Another Playoff Season
- 9** | Pewamo-Westphalia Expected To Be Title Contender
- 10** | Lansing Area Football Teams Preparing For Big Seasons
- 13** | Area Players To Watch
- 14** | Talented Group Of Players Have Optimism Soaring At DeWitt
- 15** | Farwell Eyes Success In New Jack Pine Conference
- 16** | Ashley Bears Look To Rebound After 4-5 Season
- 17** | Midland Area Teams Gearing Up For Success This Season
- 18** | Area High School Football Teams 2024 Season Previews
- 19** | Bridgeport Looking To Improve On 1-8 Football Campaign
- 20** | Matthews Takes Over Essexville Garber Football
- 21** | Potterville Looking Forward To Full Season With Improved Numbers
- 22** | Breckenridge Football Looking For Bounce Back Season
- 23** | Shiawassee, Genesee Area Teams Looking For Football Success

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### PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Hello sports fans, it's another great day here at High School Sports Scene Magazine.

Are you ready for some football!!!!!!

While we had a beautiful Michigan summer, there air has a bit of coolness in it so football season in Michigan is just around the corner and what a season it promises to be.

Last year was a great one for area football teams. What memorable seasons were turned in by Corunna and Mason!!!!!! The two teams made it all the way to Ford Field and brought legions of fans with them that turned the stands at the home of the Lions to a sea of black and gold and red and blue.

Who will be this year's edition of Corunna and Mason???

The greater Mid-Michigan area is home to some outstanding high school football programs. From Rockford to DeWitt to Ithaca, Pewamo-Westphalia, Lansing, Midland and points in between, you don't have to go far on a Friday night to see some great high school football.

Close to home, the excitement is sky high in Ithaca where the Yellowjackets have another outstanding team. In DeWitt, Panther supporters are sky high over this group. Over in Rockford, the Rams have another team capable of a long post-season run. East Lansing made it to the state semifinals last season and the Trojans have the talent to make it that far and even more this season.

The football season kicked off early here at Sports Scene Magazine with our second high school football media day the first week of August and what a smashing success it was!!!! A big shout out to the coaching staffs and players from all the schools that descended on Ithaca on a chilly, rainy day.

Another big shoutout to Ithaca athletic director Terry Hessbrook who organized what was an outstanding event. It's no surprise why the Ithaca football team is annually one of the best in Division 7 or 8 with the way events are handled at Ithaca.

Check out this year's High School Sports Scene football preview edition to catch up on all the teams and players getting ready to kick off another exciting football season and keep an eye out for our previews of the sports that are taking place this fall across the middle of Michigan.

A big thank you to all our advertisers and sponsors, without you there would be no High School Sports Scene Magazine.

See you at the games!



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# Veteran, Talented Ithaca Squad Looking To Take The Next Step In Playoffs

## David Cook Sports Scene

The Ithaca football team has been among the gold standard for small school football in the state of Michigan the past few decades and this year's edition of the Yellowjackets is primed to add another chapter to the legacy.

Ithaca welcomes back a talented core of veteran players from a team that compiled an 11-1 record last season and advanced to the regional title game before falling to eventual Division 8 state champion Ubyly.

Ithaca featured a high-powered offense last season that averaged 43.6 points per game. Several of the key contributors of that offense return this season headlined by quarterback Jackson Conn. The strong-armed senior passed for 1,936 yards and 28 touchdowns passes last season and is poised for an even bigger season this year.

"I feel pretty good about the season," Conn said. "A lot of our kids are hungry. We're amped up and

ready to go for week one. We have a couple guys spread around between our offense and defense that are going to be our leaders. We have a lot of young guys coming up but I think the spread of our leadership through our guys will help out all the other positions with our younger guys."

Ithaca graduated some key pass catchers from last year's squad but it does return standout wide receiver Rylee White. White caught 26 passes for 681 yards and eight touchdowns a year ago and should be among the top receivers in mid-Michigan this fall.

"I think we should be pretty good this year," said White. "Obviously we had quite a few kids leave last year. We had five seniors graduate, two of our starting receivers who helped us out a lot, but I think we have some kids coming into positions that will help us out a lot and be productive for us."

Along with a potent passing game, the Yellowjackets will also have a running threat. Nathan Mikesell is



back after rushing for 700 yards and 11 touchdowns last season. Paving the way for the offense is an offensive line anchored by a trio of talented seniors in Nicholas Mikesell, Broden Peska (5-11, 230) and Lloyd Stoneman.

Many of the same standouts on offense will also be playing defense for the Yellowjackets who allowed 11.8 points per game. Linebacker Nathan Mikesell led the team with 121 tackles last season along with five quarterback sacks.

"I feel pretty good about our team," Mikesell said. "We still have things to work on but that's pretty normal for every team." Nicholas Mikesell returns up front along the defensive line along with defensive tackle Karter Araujo. Peska also returns to the defensive line.

The defensive backfield is led by

White and Conn. "We're excited about the season," said Ithaca coach Jordan Hessbrook. "We have six or seven guys back on both sides of the ball. We had a lot of kids gain valuable experience as juniors last year. We're also excited about some of the younger kids we have coming up."

Ithaca has reached the regional title game the last two years and this season the Yellowjackets are focused on taking the next step.

"After losing in the regional title game the last two years everyone is hungry to get back to that game and win the regional," said Conn.

Ithaca kicks off the season in week one against St. Louis and then takes on a rugged Standish-Sterling team in week two before starting conference play in week three. The Yellowjackets close out the regular

season with non-conference tests against Tecumseh and Shepherd.

To reach their goals, it will take a total team effort.

"I think for the older guys it's going to be taking the younger guys under their wing and getting those guys up to speed in what it takes to play football at a high level," said Hessbrook. "For those guys also, it's going to be fighting complacency. We didn't reach our ultimate goal last year but they did a lot of good things last season so it's going to be not satisfied with that and continue to push to move up to the next level and play deeper in November. For the young guys, I think it's going to be trusting their coaches, trusting in those older players who have been there and done that and it's going to be trying to get them up to speed as fast as possible."

# The Pride Is Back In Alma High School Football

## Jeff Steers MHSAA Special Writer

The pride is back in Alma High School football for 2024.

Spurred by the Panther Pride Project, the Panthers open the season with a home game against Shepherd with a new turf field.

Alma supporters Doug Yarnell, John Morgan, Kyle Lark, and Sherri Downing - along with numerous Panther Pride Project members - raised money and in-kind donations to make the project a reality.

"Our school board supported the project as Panther Pride Project

brought it nearly to the end," AHS Coach John Mimranek said. "That game will be the first competitive event on the new turf."

A year after going 2-7, Alma is hoping the new turf means more wins in 2024 on the field.

"We have been impressed with kids showing up in the weight room and for agility drills," Mimranek said. "We have a huge freshman class coming in."

The league will look different as Birch Run exits and each of the conference schools have picked up Flint Powers Catholic for their 2024 calendar.

The Panthers will be anchored

by Caylibe Thompson and Brighton Conn - two three-year starters on the offensive and defensive lines for Alma.

Senior lineman Aidan Perdue (OL/DL) and junior Gavin McConnell (QB) are two players the Panthers will count on this season.

"We were close in a lot of games last year, but mistakes made the difference between winning and losing," Perdue said.

McConnell believes Alma can win enough games to make it back to the playoffs.

Alma opens with Shepherd on Aug. 30, plays conference games weeks 2-5, faces Flint Powers



Catholic on Oct. 4, battle for two more conference games, and closes on Oct. 25 against Big Rapids.


"Frankenmuth and Freeland are the teams to beat in our conference," Mimranek said. "We have to get better at blocking and tackling."

Tyler Brecht will serve as the offensive coordinator for Alma in 2024. The 2013 AHS

graduate believes the Panthers are getting closer to being extremely competitive.

"We were close in a lot of games last year ... we could not finish games," Brecht said.

Alma expects approximately 60 kids in its high school football program in 2024.




**B4 you give up, stop and reach out!**

The B#4 Foundation honors the life and achievements of Brady Hessbrook, who tragically took his own life on January 27, 2023. The B#4 Foundation strives to promote mental health awareness and suicide prevention through education, outreach initiatives, advocacy, and community service.

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If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, help is available. Call or text 988 or visit the Lifeline Chat (<https://988lifeline.org/chat/>) to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

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# Mt. Pleasant Reloading After Talented Senior Class Moves On

## David Cook Sports Scene

Thanks to a talented group of seniors, the past three seasons have been special for the Mt. Pleasant football team. This year, with many of those graduated seniors playing football in college, a reloading process is taking place for the Oilers.

Over the past three seasons, Mt. Pleasant turned in a combined record of 28-5. Last year the Oilers turned in a 9-2 record. Mt. Pleasant won league title and reached the district finals in the playoffs where it fell to eventual Division 3 state champion Forest Hills Central.

The senior class which was a big part of the success the past three seasons is gone, however, a promising group of young players are determined to carry on the legacy of success the players from the class of 2024 established.

"We lost 24 seniors and a lot of them were three-year starters," said Mt. Pleasant coach Jason McIntyre. "There will be a lot of fresh faces

on both sides of the ball."

Among the players stepping into starting roles this year is quarterback Ian Deromedi. The grandson of legendary Central Michigan University football coach Herb Deromedi, Ian steps into the starting quarterback role with plenty of football knowledge.

Deromedi is a versatile quarterback who gives the Oilers plenty of versatility with his passing and running abilities. Deromedi is an adept scrambler who is good at throwing on the run and throws a good deep ball.

"I feel like I'm ready," said Deromedi, when asked about stepping into the starting quarterback role. "I've trained for this position for a long time and now it's my time. I just want to prove that I'm a good quarterback and I can play here."

When the Oilers take to the air, Riley Olson provides a talented target to throw to at wide receiver. Olson and fellow receiver Easton Day both earned all-conference

honors last year and return to head up what looks to be an outstanding group of pass catchers. Sophomore Torry Gagne is a speedy receiver with good hands that will also impact the passing game.

"I think is the best group we've ever had," Olson said. "I think this is the best group without a doubt we've ever had a receiver. We've got Deromedi ready to throw us the ball so I think we are going to be pretty good."

Mt. Pleasant also has a pair of solid fullbacks to build the running game around. Tyler McGee and Brogan Parks (6-0, 210) will give the team power running and strong blocking. Both McGee and Parks will also be leaders of the defense from their linebacking positions.

"We're looking pretty good this year," McGee said. "We have a lot

of work ethic on our team right now. A lot of guys from last year are stepping in and working a lot harder, especially our seniors. We have some juniors that are stepping up and getting in those positions that we lost a lot last year so those guys are stepping up and becoming bigger roles in our program."

Like his teammate at linebacker, Parks likes what he sees in this year's squad.

"It's going to be good," Parks said. "We definitely have a lot of shoes to fill. We have a standard in our program. Every time we try to live up to it. We've lived up to it the last three years. It's going to be interesting with a lot of new

positions to be filled if we can do that same but I'm pretty confident with the squad we have this year."

Anchoring the new-look offensive line is Tyler Methner (6-4, 255) who should be a standout run and pass blocker. Methner moved into a starting line position for the final five games of the season last fall.

"We are looking pretty good on our offensive line," Methner said. "Obviously a lot of young guys coming up. We graduated our entire starting line last year. Obviously, we have some room to work but I think we will definitely make the strides that we need to make."



# Ovid-Elsie Hopes To Continue Playoff Run

## Jeff Steers MHSAA Special Writer

When Ovid-Elsie made the playoffs with a 5-4 record last year, not much was expected of them.

But three wins over higher seeded teams took the Marauders into the Michigan High School Athletic Association's D-6 state semifinal.

The team hopes to start off quicker and make another deep run into the playoffs - which has been the norm for the program.

Ovid-Elsie has made the playoffs

nine of the last 11 years under veteran Coach Travis Long.

"Our goals are to finish with a winning record, win the conference, and go to the playoffs," Long said. "The off-season participation has been good, and we have a lot of great senior leadership."

The Marauders expect to have 25 in its varsity program and 35 at the junior varsity level.

Ovid-Elsie finished 3-3 in the Mid-Michigan Activities Conference in 2023.

Key players for the Marauders starts with first-team all-state

lineman Jake Bowen.

"We have an amazing coaching staff and really work together as a family," Bowen said of OEHS.

Others who will help lead the Marauders are Dawson Taylor (OL), Clayton Fruchey (RB/WR), Brock Spitzley (FB), Braxton O'Bryant (OL), Javen Belill (WR), Joe Bancroft (C), Michael Bancroft (WR), Owen Long (WR/S), and Tryce Tokar (QB).

Ovid-Elsie starts the season with



a non-conference game against Powers Catholic, seven weeks of MMAC play, and a non-conference matchup with Standish-Sterling to end the season.

The Marauders were 2-3 to start the 2023 season before winning five consecutive games advancing

to the state semifinal.

"At the end of the year we made a run ... everything just meshed together," Joe Bancroft said. "We have built a tradition of making the MHSAA playoffs nearly every year.

"We have to hold these standards up again this season."

# Carson City-Crystal Aiming To Continue Success In Year Two Of 8-Man Football

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The Carson City-Crystal football team enjoyed the move to 8-man football last season and the Eagles are primed to keep the momentum going this fall as they enter year two of 8-man football.

The Eagles are coming off a big season that saw the team open the season by reeling off eight straight wins before falling in the regular-season finale to Fulton-Middleton and then getting tripped up in the first round of the 8-man playoffs by Brown City.

Several key players graduated from last year's squad. Along with having some new players this season, the Eagles also have a new head coach at Nate Lindloff takes

over as head coach. Lindloff likes what he sees in this year's team with the combination of some returning starters from last year and some promising newcomers.

"We will be young but we have some pretty good senior leadership," Lindloff said. "That senior leadership will be the driving force for us. We lost a lot of players from last year but we are looking to get a lot of the younger guys on board. We also have some guys coming back that played several positions last year so we will be a talented team."

A trio of veterans provide the Eagles with a solid core to build around. Hunter Doolittle is back at running back on offense and is a defensive mainstay at linebacker.

"I think we're pretty solid,"

Doolittle said. "We have a little bit smaller group than we had previously. We're younger but I think we will do pretty good."

Rylee Strawn provides a playmaking threat at wide receiver on offense and is a solid cornerback on defense. Strawn also likes the look of this year's team despite its youth.

"We have a younger group this year," Strawn said. "It's looking good so far but we have still got to figure a couple of things out."

Up front, Ethan Boden anchors the offensive line and is also a solid run stopper along the defensive line. Boden is also optimistic of how the Eagles look entering the



new season.

"I think it's going to be a lot of fun," Boden said. "I think we will do pretty good. It will be fun to get going. It's going to be fun on defense. Our defensive backs look pretty good, so do our linebackers, we fill out each role on the field pretty well."

Carson City-Crystal also won a conference title last year and the team is looking to recapture that winning feeling again this season.

"Last year was only the second

time in school history that we won a conference title so we're looking to do that again this year," Lindloff said. "It's something that we haven't been use to so we're kind of building that as something that is expected of our kids. To be at the top of the league every year is something we are trying to work on."

Carson City-Crystal opens the season on the road when it travels to Byron in week one and then travel to St. Charles in week two.

# Klein To Start At QB For Swan Valley For Fourth Consecutive Season

## Jeff Steers MHSAA Special Writer

Swan Valley High School quarterback Colton Klein begins his fourth season at the helm of the team's offense.

With the "best set of weapons" offensively, the senior should have a big season.

Swan Valley finished 5-5 a year ago losing in the Division 5 playoffs in the opening round. But Klein put up some impressive numbers last year.

"It is crazy that this is my last year ... but I am excited," he said during media day at Ithaca High School. "I was nervous going into most games as a freshman ... but it has gotten a lot better."

MaxPreps statistics has Klein with 1,344 passing yards, 1,650 total yards, and 23 touchdown passes in 2023.

He was 83-for-146 passing making him the fifth-ranked quarterback in Division 5 based on passing numbers.

Coach Kevin Gavenda said his receivers - "the best set of weapons

he has had" - will make opponents cover the whole field.

"I am sure Colton is sick of me at this point," Gavenda said of his four-year quarterback. "We are close to being on the same page now ... we have been through it all together."

Some of the weapons Klein will enjoy will be receivers Boston Beougher, Cal Delisle, Logan Zahn, and Jamison Pelt.

Senior Walker Murphy is expected to be a top lineman for



Swan Valley on both sides of the football.

Other players expected to make an impact are Michael Gerard, Gavin Grandy, and Jack Lagan.

The Vikings play in the Tri-Valley Conference Red Division.

"If this is not the toughest Division-5 leagues in the state, it is close," Gavenda said.

Swan Valley opens with Crosswell-Lexington, plays five conference foes before facing Powers Catholic in week 7. They close out the regular season with games against Alma and Bullock Creek.

The Vikings have only missed the Michigan High School Athletic Association three times since 2000.

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# Fulton-Middleton Looking To Continue Success In 8-Man Football

## David Cook Sports Scene

Since moving to 8-man football four years ago, the Fulton-Middleton football team has been experiencing some success. With a solid group of players returning from last year's team, the Pirates are poised to build on that success.

Fulton turned in a 6-4 overall record last season. The Pirates also made the 8-man playoffs for a second straight season.

"We as a staff and us as a program feel like we have our footing underneath of us," said Fulton-Middleton coach Jason Baker. "Last year we returned three seniors and it was my first year coaching the eight man, so it was a little bit of uneasiness going into it, but we had a lot of buy in and we had a good year. This year we return a lot of upperclassmen from last year's team so they know what to expect from us and we know what to expect from this league

that we play in."

This season, the squad returns plenty of talented players on both sides of the line. Peyton Reynolds is back at quarterback and also lines up at defensive end. Fulton featured a strong ground game last season and the Pirates look to be solid running the ball again this year.

"I definitely think our run game is a strong point," Reynolds said, "but don't count our passing game out either. We've been working on our passing game in 5-on-5s this summer and we have some great running backs."

Tanner Villalobos returns at running back and defensive back. Villalobos has seen the team make progress the past couple seasons and sees more improvement this season.

"We had a real good build back season last year," Villalobos said. "The last couple years we've been building back. Every year we've



been making steps in the right direction and this offseason we've definitely made some right steps in the right direction. I'm excited, we've just got to keep on working at it."

Trevor Brown and Parker Billings are a pair of returning tight ends. Brown will also play linebacker on defense while Billings will line up at defensive end.

Jared Akin lines up at offensive guard and defensive end while Connor Cunningham can line up at multiple positions on offense and is a defensive back.

While Fulton made the playoffs last season, they fell in the opening round against Portland St. Patrick. This year the goal is to make an even longer run in the playoffs.

"We want to make a bigger run in the playoffs," Cunningham said. "We had a first-round exit last year and we want to go farther than that. Our goal is to have everyone buying into what we are doing."

Working together as a team will be key to having a successful season.

"What we need is to work together," Akin said. "We did that

very well last year. We worked together a lot this summer, we had 30 people out to our camp and it's great to see the team work together and I think we will have a great season ahead of us."

Making a deep playoff run will definitely make the season special.

"We want to win a playoff game," Baker said. "It hasn't been done since 2011. Fulton is a very prideful community when it comes to football. Getting in the playoffs is something we strive for, but making deep runs in late October and November is something these kids are wanting to do."

# Ionia Football Hoping For Another Successful Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Chad Rhynard and the Ionia football Bulldogs had quite a season in the CAAC White and are looking forward to finer fortunes in 2024.

"Last year was a successful year making the playoffs for the second time in three seasons," Rhynard said. "Highlights were defeating Lansing Catholic and St. Johns in awful weather." There were key players who graduated:

Aden Wenzel OL/DL. Was an All-Region offensive lineman.

Hunter Barker NT Was a two time All-Conference player

Travis Tucker Jr QB Was All-Region last year.

Brennan Brownell: Two time All-Conference player.

Returning starters include: Henry Castle (TE/DE), Seth Woods (OL/DL), Kellan Ferguson (OL/DL), Kaden Leonard (OL/DL), Jonathan Rico (OL/DL), Carter Starks (TE), John Erridge

(OL/LB), Parker Seidleman (OL/LB), Wolton Sandborn (RB/DL), Tyson Brownell (RB/S), Spencer Tooker (WR/S), Tristan Ciganick (WR/DB) and Braylon Granger (WR/DB).

"For all these players we'd expect all of them to take a step forward," Rhynard said. "Henry Castle, Carter Starks, John Erridge, Tyson Brownell, Spencer Tooker, and Braylon Granger are all three-year starters. We feel like this year our program is ready to take another step forward and compete for

a league title and compete for a district title.



"Having 15 starters returning gives us a wealth of experience. Replacing our

quarterback with junior Nolan Hart will be the key to our success this year. Hart will need to be able to spread the ball around to a wealth of playmakers." It will be an interesting league race.

"Portland might be the Division 4 favorites for the state title this year so they will be at the team to beat," Rhynard said. "After that there are about four or five teams that you could make an argument are behind Portland, and we feel like we are one of those teams."

# St. Louis Looks For Bounce Back Season Under New Head Coach

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

With a new coach and a host of players eager to make their mark, the St. Louis football is looking for a rebound season.

St. Louis turned in a 1-8 record last season. The Sharks have a new head coach in Rob McDaniel and with a solid core of players returning, improvement is in the cards.

"Things are looking pretty good," McDaniel said. "We had great participation this summer. A lot of the workouts had 25 kids or more. We also have a lot skilled athletes but we are a little thin on the offensive line as far as numbers go."

McDaniel is a coaching veteran in Michigan and comes from Peck

High School where he coached for 12 years. McDaniel also coached at Caro. McDaniel also led Peck to a state championship in 2013.

One area where the Sharks have a lot of talent is at running back as the team goes six deep with running backs.

Junior Michael Borie (5-11, 170) is among the players to watch at running back while senior Justin Rodriguez (5-11, 205) is returning at fullback. Junior running back Laythan Haworth will also see plenty of carries and is a returner on defense at safety. Sophomore Karsar Tweh is also in the mix at running back and will see snaps on defense.

"We're going to be a lot more dominant on the ground this year," Borie said. "We've got a whole

different type of system. I think it's going to work really well."

Junior Drew Challenger (6-4, 160) is a promising young quarterback that directs the offense. Challenger also likes the new offense that McDaniel has brought to St. Louis and thinks it will be productive.

"I think it's going to work as long as everyone does their job," Challenger said. "If we get the plays down I think we will be all right."

The offensive line is anchored by junior Xander Brock (6-2, 280) who brings plenty of size and strength to the line. Fellow junior Tiger Russell (6-2, 250) has spent plenty of time in the weight room and is an anchor at the center position.

Many of the St. Louis players are



also wrestlers who were part of the Shark wrestling team that reached the team state championship match last year. Having a large group of wrestlers on the team is something McDaniel counts as a bonus.

"The nice part, a lot of these kids wrestle," McDaniel said. "They've been successful in wrestling. They are tough kids. I try to utilize their wrestling skills. I try to make what we do make sense to them. They are wrestlers playing football so I try to relate it to what they do wrestling

wise and the type of techniques they do wrestling wise."

The St. Louis defense has talent at all three levels. Senior Trenton Farkas is a returner at defensive end. Russell returns at noseguard where he provides strength against the run. Senior Dillon Downs (5-6, 155) is an aggressive and physical defensive lineman who plays with a high motor.

Rodriguez returns at linebacker while Haworth is the ringleader of the secondary at his safety position.

# Bath Looking To Build On Recent Trend Of Success

## David Cook Sports Scene

The Bees of Bath have been experiencing football success the past few years and a promising group of players are looking to continue that trend this fall.

Last fall, the Bees made the playoffs for the second consecutive season and the third time in the past four years. Bath also finished with a 7-4 record and totaled the most wins in a season since the 2000 team went 8-3. Bath also won a playoff game and reached the district title game before falling to Pewamo-Westphalia.

This season, the Bees are primed to build on that success.

"Everything is looking good," said Bath coach Shane Lorenz. "We've had really good numbers at

weightlifting this year. We're really progressing there and we did our full schedule of 7-on-7s. We got to see a lot of good and a lot of things that we need to work on. We're progressing."

Bath is building around a strong core with six or seven starters returning on each side of the line. Most of the returning players can be found in the trenches. A total of four offensive linemen return this year while a pair of defensive linemen return along with another returning defensive lineman is moving to linebacker.

"We do have a strength here with our senior class here," Lorenz said. "Our senior class is really good. Our junior class is fairly athletic, we're just trying to pull the strength out of them at this point because they are going to have to be plug and

plays."

The Bees are led by their senior core that includes Jay Kreisler. An all-conference defensive back last season who intercepted five passes, Kreisler is stepping in at quarterback this season as well.

"I'm pretty excited about taking over at quarterback," Kreisler said. "I'm definitely looking forward to passing. We've got five or six good receivers who are going to be catching balls. I think we will be more balanced this year also."

Senior Brayden Teachworth (6-5, 210) is a returning starter on both sides of the line. Teachworth is a defensive anchor at defensive end and is a starter at offensive tackle. Teachworth also earned honorable-mention, all-conference honors last season.

Like his coach and teammates, Teachworth has big goals for the season.

"The ceiling is always to try and make it to state," Teachworth said. "Everybody is practicing hard.



Everybody just had to pay attention throughout the season."

Senior Jacob Kuhn (6-4, 220) is another veteran lineman returning. A four-year starter and three-time, honorable-mention, all-conference performer, Kuhn is an anchor of the offensive line and starter at defensive end.

Senior James Gossett (5-10, 190) is a returning starter at guard. A defensive tackle last season, Gossett is moving to middle linebacker on defense this season.

Also back is senior Nolan Rowley

(5-11, 180). Rowley will be Bath's primary running back this season and is a starter at outside linebacker on defense.

Playing strong defense has been a staple for Bath the past few seasons and that will be the case against this season.

"Our defense has been our bread and butter," Lorenz said. "We keep getting better and better so we can build on other things. This year we are going to have more calls for pass rush. I feel like now we are really comfortable with our defense so we are growing with that."

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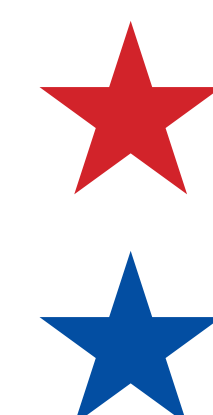
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# Clare Hoping For Another Playoff Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Clare's football team was 7-3 last season and lost in the first-round of the playoffs. The team plays home against Grayling on Aug. 29 to open the season.

"I'm happy with the amount of retention from this summer," Pioneer coach Steve Spranger said. "We only have so many days that we can install our offense and defense over the summer, and thankfully the guys capitalized on those and allowed us to hit the ground running so far."

Right now we are expecting 70 plus athletes in our program and 42 on varsity."

Jayden Arthur (8) is a returning Jack Pine all-conference quarterback.

Top players for the 2024 season are expected to be:

Jayden Arthur - Senior: Returning All-JPC QB, 3-Year Starter.

Ryan Louch - Senior: Returning 2nd Team All-State Specialist, All JPC WR and DB.

Aiden Van bonn - Senior: Returning All-JPC LB.

Chase Randall - Senior: Returning All-JPC DE.

"We expect them to compete," Spranger said.

He said team athleticism and team speed are expected to be strengths. He said the team needs to continue to get better up

front.

"With the changes in the Jack Pine Conference, our division is one of the best D5/D6 leagues in the state. Each and every week will be a tremendous challenge for all teams. Favorites are Gladwin and Ogemaw," Spranger said.

Among the graduates from last year's 7-3 team were players now on the college level playing NCAA Division III football.

Miles Haggart is now playing at Alma College.

Jake Panches is at Hope College.

Camden Babcock is now at Olivet University.



# Harrison Set To Be Contender In Jack Pine's Smaller Division

## John Raffel Sports Scene

The Jack Pine Conference has split into a larger and smaller school division with Harrison hopeful of being a contender in the smaller circuit.

Coach Jamie Lipovsky is encouraged by what he's seen of his Harrison football team so far.

The first day of practice was Aug. 12 and Lipovsky said he has 40 players out in the whole program.

"We expected to have lower numbers," he said. "We have 316

Harrison football players participated in several camps this summer.

kids in the high school. We figured we should have lower numbers in our freshman classes. With the 40 kids we have, 37 of them we've seen 90 percent of the time during the summer."

The key for the Hornets and virtually every team is to stay healthy.

Logan Williams is at running back. He was a first-team all-conference player last year at running back and second-team linebacker. "He's faster and stronger," Lipovsky said. "We're expecting big things from him."

Wayne Baehr is another

returning back.

"With the two of them we have a strong one-two punch," Lipovsky said. "We're expecting big things from both of them."

Offensive lineman Javier Beavers will be a two-way starter, along with Talon Hamilton.

"We have some sophomores up that are going to be key contributors and a few juniors as well," Lipovsky said. "Gavin VanBuren is back and he started as a sophomore on the offensive line. Our quarterback will be a sophomore, Matthew Latunski."

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# Saginaw Heritage Bids For Another Banner Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Saginaw Heritage coach Justin Thelen enjoyed an outstanding 2023 football season and is looking for more of the same in 2024.

Heritage plays in the Saginaw Valley League (South).

Heritage was 9-3 last season for the first District Championship at Heritage since 2001, and school record in point differential, and tied the school record for wins.

Key players who graduated from a year ago include Braylon Isom - WR - MHSAA career record holder in receiving yards, receiving TD's, and single season receiving TDs.

Key players this season will be:

Ethan Kraatz - SR - OL/DL: Returning All-State OL. 4-year starter, committed to Bowling Green

DJ Burns - SR - WR/DB: Returning 1st Team All-SVL Defensive Back who will contribute tremendously at WR this year, as well.

Rhett Klopff - SR - WR/DB: Returning All-SVL WR who will contribute on both sides of the ball in multiple positions.

Grayson Byam - SR - TE/LB: Returning starter at LB and TE who will be a vital piece on both sides of the ball.

The expectations are high this season.

"We expect to build on last season's district title in pursuit of a conference championship, district championship and beyond,"

Thelen said adding strengths would be leadership, depth and experience. We return a lot of guys who were important contributors to last year's team, including a junior class with a high level of depth.

"We will need to stay present and take the season one rep, day, and week at a time."

Heritage is hoping to be league contenders.

"SVL South is one of the best leagues in the state," Thelen said. "Davison has won the conference the last two years and along with Grand Blanc, Lapeer, and ourselves, make it an extremely competitive challenge every week."

# Pewamo-Westphalia Expected To Be Title Contender

## John Raffel Sports Scene

It's no surprise that Jeremy Miller is coaching another Pewamo-Westphalia football team which is loaded with talent.

Last year, P-W was 10-2, and CMAC and district champions.

Key graduates left the program including:

Gavin Nurenberg FB/LB was a four year starter.

Gabe Miller TE/DE All Conference both ways.

Trevor Spitzley OL/DL All Conference both ways.

Dylan May QB dual threat who will be missed.

Key players on this year's team include:

Brayton Thelen, RB - returning leading rusher who has All State potential.

Kieffer Trimmer OL/DL three year starter who will anchor both lines.

Hayden Smith LB/OL started last year as a Freshman.

Brandt Beech OL/DL returning starter who had a good year last season.

Carter Wirth TE/LB has great hands and made some big catches for the team last season.

Miller said the team expects "to compete for a league and district title. To be peaking at

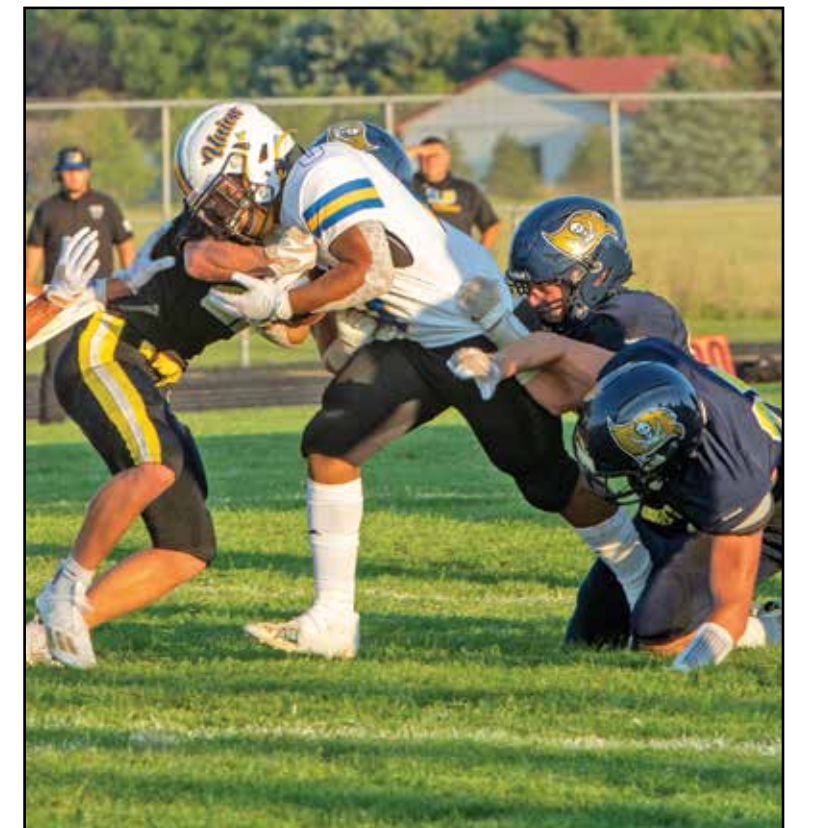
Playoff time and make a run in the playoffs."

Miller said the team's strength will be: the offensive Line. Big and experienced. We are hoping to run the ball effectively. On defense, our front seven have good size and experience."

Miller said the team needs to work on "our passing game is a work in progress with a new quarterback."

P-W hopes to win the CMAC title.

"The conference will be strong," Miller said. "P-W, Fowler and Laingsburg should be the favorites and we expect to be in contention for a title."



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# Lansing Area Football Teams Preparing For Big Seasons

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

### EAST LANSING LOADED WITH TALENT

East Lansing turned in a big season last fall and with a wealth of talent returning from that squad, the Trojans are looking to take things as step farther this year.

East Lansing turned in a 10-3 mark last season. The Trojans reached the Division 2 state semifinals where they fell to Muskegon.

Plenty of talent returns on both sides of the ball this season. On offense, the Trojans return the premier running back in the state in senior Jace Clarizio who is a Michigan State commit. The Trojans have a dynamic one-two combination at running back as senior Dwataye Sams (5-11, 175) earned all-conference honors as he rushed for 1,197 yards (10.1 avg.) and scored 14 touchdowns.

East Lansing can also strike through the air as senior quarterback Ben Fletcher (6-2, 175) returns. Fletcher is an all-conference quarterback.

East Lansing also boasts talent at wide receiver with the return of senior all-conference receiver Nik Fortman (6-3, 180).

Paving the way for the offense is a big, experienced offensive line. Senior all-conference tackle Gus Greenwalt (6-3, 240) totaled 39 pancake blocks last season. Senior Tommy Stout (6-2, 235) is another all-conference blocker with Juston Aljaari (6-2, 270) returning at guard.

The Trojans defense is also peppered with standouts at all three levels. Aljaari is a returning all-conference defensive lineman who totaled eight tackles for loss and five quarterback sacks last season. Senior defensive tackle Jay Carnegie (5-8, 210) also earned all-conference honors.

At linebacker, senior Isaiah Sams (5-10, 170) is a speedy playmaker who earned all-conference honors.

East Lansing is also loaded in the secondary. Darryle Geter (5-11, 150) is a returning all-conference player headed to Grand Valley State. Senior BJ Windham (6-0, 165) is another all-conference defensive back.

For good measure, the Trojans also have an all-conference kicker returning in Isaiah Armstrong who will also contribute at linebacker.

### MASON RELOADING AFTER MEMORABLE 2023

Last season was one to remember for the Mason football team. The Bulldogs reeled off 13 consecutive wins and didn't stop winning until they reached Ford Field and the Division 3 state title game.

A host of talented seniors graduated from that squad but the cupboard is far from bare. One of the most important returning players is senior quarterback Cason Carswell (6-3, 190). A returning all-state player, Carswell is primed for one more big season before heading off to college at Western Illinois.

Carswell is joined this year by a solid nucleus of returning all-conference players. Logan Doerr (5-11, 195) is back at fullback and heads up the defense at linebacker. Sam Corey (6-1, 190) will provide Carswell with a solid target at wide receiver and will be at defensive end. Collin Winters is also a returning all-league kicker.

Caleb Vaughn (5-10, 185) earned honorable-mention, all-conference honors and will be a primary ball carrier at running back and play linebacker on defense. Rory Wendt (6-5, 250) will anchor the offensive line and provide strength along the defensive front.

### GRAND LEDGE BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Grand Ledge is coming off a solid season that saw the Comets finish with a 6-4 record.

Expectations are even loftier this season with the return of several talented



East Lansing returns a wealth of talent from last year's squad that reached the Division 2 state semifinals.

playmaker. On offense, sophomore running back Anthony Baker (6-0, 200) is coming off a big freshman season where he rushed for 750 yards and 11 touchdowns.

All-conference wide receiver Zechariah Jones (5-8, 170) has plenty of speed and is a game changer. Preston Bohnet (6-2, 190) is another talented receiver in what should be a potent passing game.

At quarterback, sophomore Kingston Nixon (5-10, 160) saw varsity action last season.

The Comets also have the makings of a

strong offensive line. Senior Tyler Konieczny (6-0, 230) is a returning all-conference performer. Henry Millbrook (6-3, 240) is another big, strong blocker.

The Comets also look stout on defense. Senior Jaylxon McAlister (6-3, 230) is a returning all-conference player who will also see time along the offensive front. Max Bernard (6-3, 335) is a force on both sides and can squat 520 pounds. Konieczny will also log minutes on defense.

Grand Ledge has a talented secondary that includes Jones and Bohnet who will be playing his college football at Ferris State.

### PORTLAND LOOKING TO CONTINUE ROLL

The Portland football team has been on a roll the past several seasons and the good times should continue again this season.

The Raiders turned in a 12-1 season last fall and reached the Division 4 state semifinals. It was the third straight year Portland reached double figures in wins and the ninth straight playoff appearance.

While several key players from that team have graduated, the talent pool is far from dry. Senior Christopher Battley (6-1, 200) is a returning all-conference player who plays wide receiver and defensive end. Dominic Novara (6-1, 150) is also an all-conference player who will play quarterback and strong safety on defense.

The Portland defense is anchored by returning all-conference middle linebacker AJ Weber (5-10, 180). Kayden Dickerson (6-2, 195) is another returning all-conference player who will play fullback and defensive end.

The Raiders also return a trio of seniors who earned honorable-mention, all-conference honors. Barrett Brennan (5-10, 185) will be at slotback and cornerback while Bryce Fullet (6-2, 215) and Thomas Perrin (6-0, 285) will be anchors along both the offensive and defensive lines.

Also looking to contribute are seniors Barrett Spitzley (6-1, 215) at defensive tackle/linebacker, Cody Hengesbach (6-3, 260) at offensive tackle and Evan Gross and Jayden Miller at wide receiver and defensive back along with juniors Brad Meyers at running back and Ashton Telschow (6-2, 230) at offensive guard and defensive end.

### HASLETT POISED FOR BIG YEAR

Haslett turned in a solid season last fall as it compiled an 8-4 overall record and reached the regional championship game before falling to Goodrich.

With a host of talented players returning from that team, another big season is in the forecast.

On offense, the Vikings return big-play junior Kory Amachree (6-0, 195) who is poised to be the main man at running back after the graduation of his brother Nakai.

The Vikings will also strike in the air with the return of all-conference quarterback Erik Lardie (6-6, 215).

Paving the way for the backs is a big, rugged offensive line. Senior offensive tackle Gregory Myles (6-3, 290) is a Michigan Tech recruit who anchors the line along with fellow all-conference pick Greyson Romey (5-11, 240) at center. Senior Adam Green (5-11, 220) and sophomore Asher Newman (6-3, 220) also look to help up front.

On defense, Haslett is led by returning junior middle linebacker Dawson Dabler (6-0, 195) who earned all-conference honors last season. Senior Dontrell Dennis is a returning all-conference cornerback. Junior Cornelius Walker (5-10, 180) will see time at linebacker and is a running back on offense.

Up front, junior Zach Curtis (6-2, 215) is an all-conference defensive end. Senior Jeremy Muthee (6-0, 200) is a defensive end and tight end on offense.

### LANSING CATHOLIC TO AIR IT OUT

Lansing Catholic has a history of producing outstanding quarterbacks and productive passing games and that tradition is poised to continue.

Senior quarterback Alex Fernandez (6-3, 220) is back after an all-conference season where he passed for 1,685 yards and 23 touchdowns. A versatile, mobile quarterback, Fernandez finished the season with 2,142 total yards and 32 total touchdowns.

The future also looks bright for the Cougars at the quarterback position as sophomore Sam Eyde (6-3, 190) is a talented young player who gained some varsity experience last season.

Fernandez has an impact player returning to throw to in senior Braden Rabideau (5-10, 170). A speedy receiver with excellent hands, Rabideau totaled 734 yards receiving (18.4 per catch) and scored 12 touchdowns in seven games last season and is poised for even bigger numbers this season. Also looking to contribute at the receiver spots are senior Jack Grill, junior Gary Tackett (6-0, 160) and talented sophomore Conor Gallagher (6-1, 190) along with junior tight end Joseph Gurlock (6-5, 205).

Fernandez will have plenty of protection



With a plethora of talented skill position athletes returning Lansing Everett is poised to rack up the wins in the Lansing area this season.

in front of him with the return of all-conference linemen Jash Pritzlaff (6-4, 280) and David Magaway. Also looking to help out up front are seniors Anthony Edwards (6-1, 220) and Delco Rowley (6-2, 190) and junior Jayce Campbell (5-11, 180).

Edwards lines up at nose guard on defense where Richy Burchfield (6-2, 235) looks to help at defensive end. Sophomore Ryan Pritzlaff (5-11, 170) is a linebacker to watch as are Gurlock and Campbell. Senior Tyler Rakan is also in the mix at linebacker and at running back on offense.

Rabideau is back to be a leader in the secondary with Tackett.

### LANSING SEXTON ON A ROLL

Lansing Sexton is coming off a big year that saw the J-Dubs go 8-2 before losing in the opening round of the playoffs to Portland. The winning season was the first for Sexton since the 2017 season.

Sexton returns a large nucleus of all-conference players to build around. Senior Dequarius Jones is a versatile athlete who can play tight end or quarterback and is an impact player along the defensive line. Tyler Thomas (5-11, 205) is another versatile athlete who can play running back or quarterback and is a playmaker at outside linebacker.

The J-Dubs also have a pair of wrecking balls at running back. Senior DeAmoor Andrews (5-10, 223) is a power runner and

thumper at linebacker as is senior Jaelyn Stone (5-10, 225).

Senior Jeffrey Hudson (5-8, 160) is a returning all-conference player who can play receiver or running back. Kyrese Smith (6-0, 160) will be at wide receiver and defensive back. Damien Brown (6-2, 217) is another talented running back and middle linebacker. Junior Josiah Stewart (5-10, 160) is an all-conference player who will be at receiver and defensive back.

### CHARLOTTE SET TO CHALLENGE

Charlotte turned in a 6-4 record last season and qualified for the playoffs for a fourth straight season.

The Orioles were hit hard by graduation but still have a solid nucleus to build around.

Senior Tim Bensinger is a returning all-conference player who is a running back on offense and a leader on defense at middle linebacker. Senior Carter Moore is another returning running back who earned all-conference honors.

At quarterback, the Orioles return Christian Powers who earned all-league honors last season.

Charlotte also has a pair of returning all-conference linemen. Senior Reid Blasius will be at guard or center while senior Van Reed is an offensive tackle and defensive end.

Andy Buzzard is a talented sophomore to watch for at offensive tackle and defensive end.

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**WILLIAMSTON SET TO RELOAD**

Graduation hit a Williamston team hard after the Hornets turned in a 6-4 mark last season and qualified for the playoffs for an eight straight season.

The Hornets do return a pair of all-conference players to build around. Senior Jonny Eiferf (6-4, 215) anchors the offensive line at tackle and is a defensive end. Talented junior Mile Keener (5-11, 205) is a slot back on offense and a linebacker on defense.

At quarterback, sophomore Kaleb Nielson (5-11, 155) had a big summer and is poised to make an impact. Another young player to watch is junior wide receiver Tommy Pratt (6-5, 180) who has excellent size, athletic ability and hands. Sophomore Parker Friess is another receiver to watch for who will also play defensive back. Junior Hunter VanSickler (6-0, 155) also looks to help at receiver.

Up front, junior Malachi Smith (6-5, 330) has impressive size. Senior Isaac Webb (5-10, 195) and junior Anthony Heinritz (6-2, 265) will also contribute along the offensive and defensive lines.

Junior Jamisen Nickolopoulos (5-10, 185) is in the mix at linebacker with Steven Bush back at defensive back.

**ST. JOHNS LOOKING TO IMPROVE**

Improvement is the name of the game at St. Johns where the Redwings are coming off a 4-5 season. The Redwings will build the offense around a pair of returning all-conference players. Brandon Schomisch is back at running back while the offensive line is anchored by Kyle Lockwood. Senior Michael Oberlin is another returning running back with experience that will play a role in the ground game.

**EVERETT SETS BAR HIGHER**

Lansing Everett turned in a breakout season last fall. The Vikings went 5-5 overall and made the playoffs for the first time since 2014.

With a wealth of talented players back, the Vikings are looking for even more success this season.

Everett has a host of talented all-conference players returning. Senior Kharon Turnley (6-0, 205) is a punishing running back who plays linebacker or end on defense.

Senior Mason Chadwell (6-0, 187) is a fleet-footed receiver who has committed to Saginaw Valley State.

Senior Nizjai Davidson (6-0, 190) is a versatile, all-around athlete. A quarterback, Davidson can play a variety of positions on both sides of the ball as well.



Grand Ledge is making plans for another strong season after turning in a 6-4 record last fall.

Eugene Allen Jr. is a dynamic defender. Allen totaled 72 tackles last season along with 21 tackles for loss and two quarterback sacks.

Junior Javari Funches (6-0, 210) is a returning all-conference player who can play running back or tight end on offense and linebacker and defensive end on defense.

Two more juniors to keep an eye on are Logick Lykoya (6-1, 205) who earned all-conference honors last season and can play running back and defensive end. Emmett Leidl (6-0, 265) is a solid lineman on both sides of the ball.

**HOLT EYING BOUNCE BACK SEASON**

Holt is looking for a bounce back season after going 2-7 last fall.

The Rams look to have a solid running game built around junior LaDon Hatcher who earned all-conference honors last season.

On the defensive side of the ball, senior linebacker Aaron Czewski is back after earning all-conference honors.

At quarterback, the Rams have a promising junior in Ethan Melville (6-4, 195) who is poised for a breakout season.

Senior Justin Harris (6-5, 305) is an improving lineman on both sides of the line that is set for a big year. Senior Jamel Eiland (6-0, 160) will see time at defensive back and receiver with senior Santana Trainer (6-2, 207) at defensive end.

A host of juniors will also look to contribute including Austin Mathews (6-0, 210) and Weston Walker (5-11, 245) in the trenches, Kobe Hudson (6-1, 160) at linebacker, Carl Flinton (6-2, 175) at wide receiver and defensive end and Mikah Williams and Laterion Perkins at defensive back and receiver.

**WAVERLY BUILDING AROUND SENIORS**

Waverly turned in a 2-7 record last season and is building around a pair of returning all-conference seniors.

Cayden Bell (5-11, 210) is an impact player at running back and linebacker on defense. Cedric Jackson is a returning all-conference linebacker and will also see action at running back.

Senior Dominic Stone is looking to see playing time at quarterback. Fellow senior DeMartre Burton (5-10, 200) returns at defensive end.

Junior lineman Hadyn Martin (6-4, 285) is set to make an impact. Sophomore Diing Chol (6-2, 245) is a name to watch at defensive end and offensive tackle.

**IMPROVEMENT IN THE WORKS AT EATON RAPIDS**

Eaton Rapids is working on improvement after turning in a 1-8 record last season.

The Greyhounds have a pair of talented juniors back who earned all-conference honors last season. Keegan Gochenour is back at quarterback and free safety on defense. Jackson White is a skilled wide

receiver and outside linebacker.

Senior lineman Dominique Monroe is back after earning honorable-mention, all-league honors.

Senior Glenn Steien (5-8, 190) will be in the middle of the action at offensive center and middle linebacker as will junior Kaleb Gochenour (5-9, 235) at offensive guard and defensive tackle.

**OPTIMISM UP AT OKEMOS**

Optimism is up at Okemos where the Wolves have some talented veteran players to work with.

The Wolves have not won a game since 2019 but with players like sophomore tight end Atticus Joy (6-4, 210) on the squad improvement is close. An honorable-mention, all-conference player as a freshman, Joy is a talented pass catcher with good size and skill.

Senior lineman Cameron Wardell (6-0, 220) is another solid returnee. Wardell is an all-conference defensive lineman who will also help anchor the offensive line.

Junior Nathan Precise (6-1, 215) is another returning all-conference player. Precise is a linebacker that will help lead the defense.

Sam Carr is another lineman that returns along the offensive front. Carr was an honorable-mention, all-conference player last season. Senior Alejandro Urrea (5-10, 165) is a versatile athlete that will see time at wide receiver.

# Sports Scene's AREA PLAYERS TO WATCH

By Butch Harmon And Davis Cook

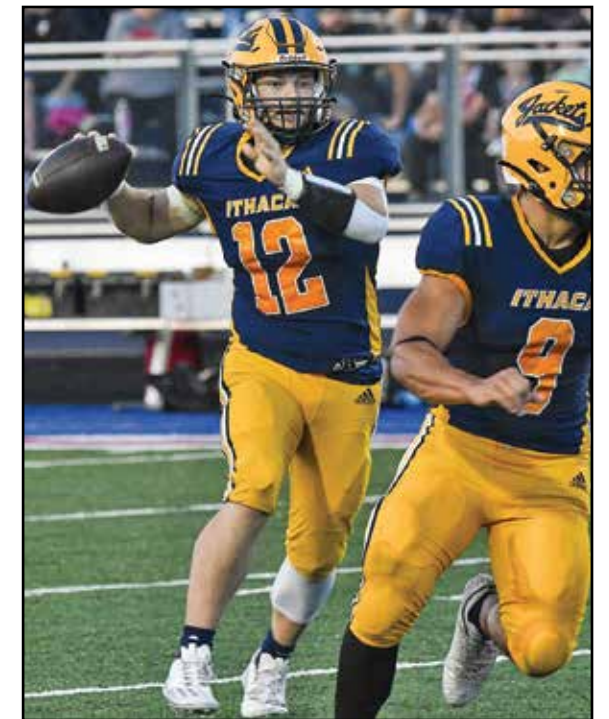
**Class of 2025**

- 1) Jace Clarizio, 6-0, 190, RB, East Lansing: Big back with plenty of speed and quickness is poised for a big year before suiting up in college at Michigan State.
- 2) Derrick Simmons, 6-3, 270, DL, Frankenmuth: The Eagles have had plenty of outstanding linemen over the years and Derrick may be the best yet. Will play in college at Michigan State.
- 3) Ethan Kraatz, 6-4, 280, OL, Saginaw Heritage: A big, dominating blocker who can move, Kraatz will anchor the Heritage line before heading to college at Bowling Green.
- 4) Cason Carswell, 6-3, 185, QB, Mason: Tall, talented quarterback who can really sling it, Carswell is primed for a big senior season before heading to Western Illinois for his college football.
- 5) Payton Kokaly, 6-3, 210, TE, Davison: Versatile tight end with playmaking skills has offers from Mid-American Conference teams.
- 6) Warren Cain, 6-4, 220, DE, Davison: Cain can bring the heat from his defensive end position and has already committed to Western Michigan University.
- 7) AJ Hill, 5-10, 175, RB, Davison: Hill has been a standout at running back the past couple years and was a big commitment for Ferris State to pick up.
- 8) Braylen Naves, 6-2, 180, WR Davison: Tall, explosive athlete who presents matchup problems for opposing secondaries, Naves is a Central Michigan University recruit.
- 9) Greg Myles, 6-3, 290, OL, Haslett: Punishing blocker who leads the way for the Haslett ground game, Myles will be playing his college ball at Michigan Tech.
- 10) Mason Chadwell, 6-1, 183, WR, Lansing Everett: With good size, speed and hands, Chadwell is a big pickup for the Saginaw Valley State program.
- 11) Jayden Lockhart, 6-2, 300, DL, Davison
- 12) Preston Bohnet, 6-2, 190, DB, Grand Ledge
- 13) Abram Larner, 6-0, 180, DB, DeWitt
- 14) Elliott Larner, 6-0, 180, QB, DeWitt
- 15) Donovan Hamlin, 6-5, 185, WR, Flint Carman-Ainsworth
- 16) Darryle Geter, 5-11, 160, DB, East Lansing
- 17) BJ Windham, 6-0, 165, DB, East Lansing
- 18) Tray Haido, 6-2, 195, S, Davison
- 19) Braden Rabideau, 5-10, 170, WR, Lansing Catholic
- 20) Nolan Miller, 6-4, 300, OL, Rockford
- 21) Isaac Poot, 6-1, 190, DB, Rockford
- 22) Blake Linsley, 6-5, 230, TE, Rockford
- 23) Kade Friesen, 6-2, 245, DE, Rockford
- 24) DJ Burns, 6-1, 170, DB, Saginaw Heritage
- 25) Zane Panchula, 6-5, 287, OL, Rockford
- 26) Juston Aljaari, 6-2, 270, DL, East Lansing

- 27) Tyler Methner, 6-4, 255, OL, Mt. Pleasant
- 28) Brayden Florian, 6-0, 200, RB, Chesaning
- 29) Caden Lickfeldt, 6-4, 310, OL, Bullock Creek
- 30) Donald Corlew III, 6-0, 175, WR, Gladwin
- 31) Tyler White, 6-5, 275, OL, Lowell
- 32) Zechariah Jones, 5-8, 170, WR, Grand Ledge
- 33) Dequarius Jones, 6-3, 210, TE, Lansing Sexton
- 34) Jonny Eiferf, 6-4, 215, DE, Williamston
- 35) Max Stoecker, 6-2, 250, OL, Midland
- 36) Josh Pritzlaff, 6-4, 280, OL, Lansing Catholic
- 37) Alan Mrva, 6-2, 260, OL, Corunna
- 38) Colton Klein, 5-9, 200, QB, Swan Valley
- 39) Ben Fletcher, 6-2, 175, QB, East Lansing
- 40) Jackson Conn, 5-10, 195, QB, Ithaca
- 41) Alex Fernandez, 6-3, 220, QB, Lansing Catholic
- 42) Tommy Stout, 6-2, 235, OL, East Lansing
- 43) Case Johnson, 5-11, 220, LB, Greenville
- 44) Nik Fortman, 6-3, 180, WR, East Lansing
- 45) Kharon Turnley, 6-0, 205, LB, Lansing Everett
- 46) Zach Buschlen, 5-11, 205, LB, Midland
- 47) Erik Lardie, 6-6, 215, QB, Haslett
- 48) Dawson LaPlante, 6-2, 270, OL, Rockford
- 49) Noah Long, 6-4, 215, QB, Greenville
- 50) Jayden Arthur, 5-11, 180, QB, Clare
- 51) Jaylxon McAlister, 6-3, 230, DL, Grand Ledge
- 52) Brogan Parks, 6-0, 210, LB, Mt. Pleasant
- 53) Christopher Battley, 6-1, 200, WR, Portland
- 54) Hunter Conrad, 5-9, 225, LB, Belding
- 55) Gus Greenwall, 6-3, 240, OL, East Lansing
- 56) Evan Woodruff, 6-0, 240, DL, Midland
- 57) Cayden Bell, 5-11, 210, LB, Lansing Waverly
- 58) Zach Rye, 6-2, 210, LB, Owosso
- 59) Ryley White, 6-0, 155, WR, Ithaca
- 60) Brayton Thelen, 6-10, 170, RB, Pewamo-Westphalia
- 61) Noah Reif, 6-1, 230, LB, Mich. Lutheran Seminary
- 62) Ryan Louch, 6-1, 185, WR, Clare
- 63) Nathan Mikesell, 5-11, 210, LB, Ithaca
- 64) Dalton Birchmeier, 6-0, 180, RB, New Lothrop
- 65) Max Bernard, 6-3, 335, OL, Grand Ledge
- 66) Ashton Luckhardt, 5-7, 165, WR, Shepherd
- 67) Jake Bowen, 6-2, 230, DL, Ovid-Elsie
- 68) Austin Humphrey, 5-10, 190, LB, Chippewa Hills
- 69) Codey Manley, 6-2, 200, LB, Belding
- 70) Zeke Robinet, 6-1, 200, LB, Greenville

**Class of 2026**

- 1) Ben Nichols, 6-5, 315, OL, Davison
- 2) Kory Amachree, 6-0, 195, RB, Haslett
- 3) Traverse Moore, 6-0, 175, WR/DB, DeWitt
- 4) Tristan Comer, 6-6, 240, TE, Freeland
- 5) Jacob Schorhaar, 6-5, 235, TE, DeWitt
- 6) Jadon Bender, 6-0, 170, DB, DeWitt
- 7) Brayden Daniels, 5-11, 195, QB, Rockford
- 8) Tommy Pratt, 6-5, 180, WR, Williamston
- 9) Riley Olson, 6-2, 175, WR, Mt. Pleasant
- 10) Andrew Nehf, 6-1, 315, OL, DeWitt
- 11) Damien Brown, 6-2, 217, RB, Lansing Sexton



- 12) MJ Dailey, 6-6, 205, DE, Montrose
- 13) Zach Curtis, 6-2, 215, DE, Haslett
- 14) Carter Miculka, 6-6, 270, OL, Owosso
- 15) Miles Keener, 5-11, 205, LB, Williamston
- 16) LaDon Hatcher, 5-6, 170, RB, Holt
- 17) Willia Kawika-Solomon, 6-3, 300, OL, DeWitt
- 18) Garland Randolph, 5-6, 170, RB, Midland Dow
- 19) Logick Lyoya, 6-1, 205, DE, Lansing Everett
- 20) Kayden Dickerson, 6-2, 195, DE, Portland
- 21) Conner Thompson, 6-1, 235, DE, Montrose
- 22) Zander Halliwill, 6-4, 270, OL, Midland Dow
- 23) Javari Funches, 6-0, 210, LB, Lansing Everett
- 24) Dawson Dabler, 6-0, 195, LB, Haslett
- 25) Luke Ahern, 5-10, 190, DB, Rockford
- 26) Josiah Stewart, 5-10, 160, DB, Lansing Sexton
- 27) Sam Cummings, 5-9, 200, LB, Rockford
- 28) Liam Patrick, 6-2, 185, QB, Owosso
- 29) Kaleb Nielson, 5-11, 155, QB, Williamston
- 30) Nathan Precise, 6-1, 215, LB, Okemos
- 31) Christian Lopez, 5-10, 220, LB, Saginaw Nouvel
- 32) Michael Oaks, 6-3, 260, LB, Rockford
- 33) Brody Lehman, 6-3, 200, QB, Lowell
- 34) Hadyn Martin, 6-4, 285, OL, Lansing Waverly
- 35) Tiger Russell, 6-2, 250, NG, St. Louis

**Class of 2027**

- 1) Anthony Baker, 6-0, 200, RB, Grand Ledge
- 2) Atticus Joy, 6-4, 210, TE, Okemos
- 3) CJ Tetloff, 6-2, 280, OL, Bullock Creek
- 4) Torry Gagne, 5-11, 165, WR, Mt. Pleasant
- 5) Hayden Smith, 6-0, 220, LB, Pewamo-Westphalia
- 6) Sam Eyde, 6-3, 190, QB, Lansing Catholic
- 7) Wynn Diegal, 6-1, 160, QB, Midland Dow
- 8) Diing Chol, 6-2, 245, DE, Lansing Waverly
- 9) Kingston Nixon, 5-10, 160, QB, Grand Ledge
- 10) Ryan Kerry, 6-1, 205, LB, Rockford
- 11) Tyler Bashore, 5-10, 170, RB, DeWitt
- 12) Asher Neuman, 6-3, 220, DE, Haslett
- 13) Conor Gallagher, 6-1, 190, WR, Lansing Catholic
- 14) Parker Friess, 5-11, 185, WR, Williamston
- 15) Michael Schlachter, 6-3, 175, QB, New Lothrop

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# Talented Group Of Players Have Optimism Soaring At DeWitt

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

Year in and year out, the DeWitt football team is one of the best in mid-Michigan. This year, with a talented group of players on hand, the Panthers are poised for an even bigger season.

The Panthers have turned in some solid seasons the past couple years, but this year's squad is aiming for a finish similar to the 2020 and 2021 seasons. DeWitt won a state championship in 2020 and reached the state title game in 2021.

"We haven't had this much talent since the 2020 team," said veteran DeWitt head coach Rob Zimmerman. "We have several players who have already committed to playing football in college."

One of those players is senior quarterback Elliott Lerner who will be playing college football at Michigan Tech. Lerner is a versatile quarterback who can make big plays with his arm or legs.

A quick quarterback, Lerner points to overall team speed as one of several strong points of this

year's team.

"Definitely our speed," Elliott Lerner said. "Our speed is going to be very effective for us this year. And then up front we've got some guys that are pretty big that will help us lead the way."

Lerner will be teaming up with a familiar face on many of those big plays with the return of Abram Lerner to the slotback position. Abram will also be playing defensive back along with Elliott. Both Elliott and Abram were first-team, all-conference players last season.

"We are a really, really close team this year," Abram Lerner said. "I think we bond together really well. This year is going to be really special for us and I think we will make a good run in the playoffs."

The passing game is loaded with playmakers across the field. Junior wide receiver Jadon Bender is a big-play receiver while junior tight end Jacob Schorffhaar (6-foot-4, 235 pounds) is a mismatch problem for opposing defenses with his combination of size and speed. Both Bender and Schorffhaar earned first-team, all-conference

honors last season.

Along with having plenty of talent up and down the roster, the Panthers have strong leadership that will also be key to success this season.

"Obviously leadership is the most important part of this," Bender said. "We have great leaders here. Teamwork. We haven't had a close team like this since our state championship team and I think that is most important."

The Panthers can also strike on the ground with running back Travis Moore (6-0, 170) who brings good speed and quickness to the backfield. Moore is a returning first-team, all-conference player.

"I think our offense will be a definite strong point," Moore said. "We have a lot of returners. All of us are returning on offense so I think our offense is going to be a strong point this year."



Paving the way for the backs and the passing game is an offensive line anchored by junior Luke Nolen (5-8, 235) who earned first-team, all-conference honors last season. Also looking to make an impact up front are junior linemen William Kawika-Solomon (6-3, 303), Andrew Nehf (6-1, 315) and Drew Rumsey (6-2, 270).

Defensively, the Panthers boast a strong secondary led by the Larners and Moore. Junior linebacker Cooper Chambers (5-11, 195) is a returning first-team, all-conference selection. Senior Gavin Dusseau (6-1, 210) is also in the mix at defensive end along with Tyler Dusseau. Bender lines up at outside linebacker while

Schorffhaar is at defensive end.

DeWitt turned in a 7-3 record last season with two of the three losses coming against Division 3 state finalist Mason. The Mason game in week two is one the Panthers have circled on the schedule. As usual, DeWitt faces a rugged schedule. Along with playing against the top competition in the Capital Area Athletic Conference Blue Division, DeWitt opens the season with a non-league game against Haslett and also has a difficult test in week four when it plays host to West Virginia powerhouse Hurricane High School.

Joe Epkey OL/DL, Sr/

"We expect to compete and work hard every day to get better," Spicer said. "Our skills guys will be our strength this year."

He said the team needs to work on "developing the young guys on the offensive line, and developing leadership."

Fowler hopes to be a factor in the CMAC.

"The CMAC is always a tough conference with Pewamo-Westphalia being the front runner again," Spicer said.

# Fowler Looking For Another Huge Season

## John Raffel Sports Scene

John Spicer and his Fowler football team had a nice season with an 8-2 record and are hopeful of being competitive in the CMAC.

Key players who have graduated are Evan Curtiss, now at GVSU, and Zach Halfman a three-year leading

receiver.

Top prospects for the team this season are:

Jacob Halfmann, QB/DB, SR.

Alex Halfmann OL/DL, Sr, Trevor Spicer H Back/LB, Jr

Asher Koenigsknect Slot/DB, Sr, Nate Spicer Slot/LB, Sr



# Farwell Eyes Success In New Jack Pine Conference

## John Raffel Sports Scene

The Jack Pine Conference has split into the big-team and the small team divisions and Farwell hopes to have success in the little team league this football season.

"This is the first season that the Jack Pine has went to a small and big division," Farwell coach Travis Waddell said. "I really think that we have the opportunity to compete against any team within the league. Teams like Beaverton, Meridian and Harrison always have strong teams and are well coached. Pinconning is a team that does some things really well and their staff is building a culture there to have success."

"St. Louis is in the league for the first time this year, I don't know much about them but I know they have some good athletes there."

Overall, I think this is a very good league and we look forward to having the ability to compete in it."

Farwell hopes bounce back from a disappointing 2023 season.

"In 2022 Farwell had its best season in 12 years posting a 7-2 record and scoring over 400 points in 8-man football. In 2023 after graduating 12 seniors, one of which was Michael Nunn who amassed over 2000 yards and 32 touchdowns in 2022, the Eagles went 1-8 highlighted by a season-ending victory over Breckenridge."

Waddell expects to have many contributors in 2024.

"Brent Ellul and Wyatt VanBuskirk will both be senior leaders offensively this season," Waddell said. "Defensively senior Ethan Morford, sophomore Marcus Hunzinker will both be a



presence inside at linebacker.

"With this being our first season back to 11-man in four years I expect us to compete in every

Farwell players hope to have a competitive season.

game we play. I believe in building a culture of family and toughness within our program. I believe every year you will go as far as your

senior leadership takes you, and I believe this season we have some pretty special seniors," Waddell said.

# Lakewood Has New Football Coach

## John Raffel Sports Scene

Tim Swore is the new first year coach at Lakewood after 17 years as head coach with a 110-52 career record. He coached at Carson City Crystal from 2020-to-2023

Lakewood plays in the Capital Area Athletics Conference.

"Not many highlights for 2023," Swore said. "The varsity was 1-8 and I took over the program in February so this will be my first season as head coach. We will be very young returning only one starter on the offensive line and two skill players on offense."

Senior running back, Ethan

Goodmoot, senior wide receiver and defensive back Seth Willette, senior offensive lineman Loggan Murray and running back-defensive back and Christian Harton.

"Our 2024 football team will be playing the foundation for rebuilding and bringing back pride to Lakewood football," Swore said. "The kids have been working hard all off-season and summer and we will be fundamentally sound in what we do on offense and defense."

"We have a saying 'We Over Me' and our guys are buying into it and understanding that the TEAM is more important than any individual. Our culture is based on

Character, Integrity and Passion. I expect our kids to play fast, play hard and play smart football."

Swore added: "We have worked hard on having positive energy and celebrating when we do good things. Body language is so important and we are working on breaking some bad habits and the kids are buying in and doing great."

"We know our conference is a tough one and that pushes us to get better and compete. When I started



Tim Swore is Lakewood's new football coach.

here in February we recognized the challenges we have and the kids have put in the work. We talk everyday about closing the gap and

getting better and we will find out where we are at when we open up with Battle Creek Pennfield on the road in week 1."

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# Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart Loaded Up For Big Season In 8-Man Football

David Cook Sports Scene

Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart turned in a big season in 8-man football last season and the Irish have a large group of returning players from that team that are setting their sights. On another big season this fall.

Sacred Heart turned in a 9-2 overall record last season including a 5-1 mark in the Central Michigan 8-man Football Conference as the Irish finished in a tie for the conference championship.

A host of starters return from that squad including several key parts of an offense that averaged 41 points per game a year ago. Jason Boge returns at quarterback for the Irish. A versatile signal caller, Boge is a strong runner and accurate passer.

"Things are looking pretty good so far," said Boge. "We lost a lot last

year, but I think we are going to be faster and more athletic than last year as well. I think our speed on defense is way better this year as far as getting to the ball quickly."

Sacred Heart graduated some key players including a four-year starter at middle linebacker, a starting wide receiver and a starting running back.

Sacred Heart does welcome back a veteran running back in Jackson Verleger.

"We have a lot of guys coming back this year and I see a lot of guys that want to win," Verleger said. "We have a lot of guys who are getting a lot better and we've seen even throughout the summer a lot of improvements. We've got a lot to look forward to this year."

The squad is also strong at wide receiver with the return of Joe McDonald and Luke Hacker. A



newcomer that is primed to make an impact is sophomore wide receiver Nathan Siler who has outstanding hands.

The Irish are solid up front with the return of offensive linemen Caleb Strauch, Brendan Ervin and Jim McDonald.

"I'm excited about the season," McDonald said. "Most of us are seniors and probably all agree with me that we have one more season and we want to make the best of it. Our goal is, 8-man plays (the final) up at the Yoooper Dome and of course

that's our goal to get up there."

Several of the Irish will start on both sides of the line. The Sacred Heart defensive line is led by Ervin, Jim McDonald and Strauch. Joe McDonald and Verleger return at linebacker with Hacker returning in the secondary at cornerback.

"We're excited," said Sacred Heart coach Josh Wheaton. "We lost three real good football players to graduation. Probably the best three as a group that that might have ever been at Sacred Heart, but we feel like we might be as good or better as a

team even without those three guys. We're different. We are a lot faster. We swarm the football. We had guys that played the third level of our defense that are not playing on the second level and that just changes everything. Everything is going to come down to one thing and one thing only, and that is our offensive line, and if our offensive line rises to the occasion and plays the way they should play and the way we expect them to play, we are going to be really, really difficult to beat."

# Ashley Bears Look To Rebound After 4-5 Season

Jeff Steers MHSAA Special Writer

The Ashley High School Bears won three of its four games to start the 2023 season, but injuries curtailed that momentum.

The Bears are learning that it is next man up theory when it comes to the game of football.

Ashley finished the season with a 4-5 record.

"We don't have the luxury of having 25 kids on the team," Coach Kevin Saylor said. "Our kids are learning to be resilient and becoming the next man up whether you are ready or not."

Ashley will compete in the Big

Thumb 8-Man Conference in the Red Division in 2024.

With only 74 students in the high school, staying healthy and being ready will be required for Ashley.

"It is hard to keep kids because we have been struggling in the seventh and eighth grade football programs," Saylor said. "Football is all about having bonds with your players and teammates."

Three seniors expect to enjoy bonds on the football field in 2024.

All-state and all-region senior linebacker Gavin Malek (OL/LB), Seth Stahr (WR/CB), and Zander Schneider expect to lead the Bears.

"We have to develop a lot of grit and play all four quarters," Malek



said. "This is our year to go, go go!"

Juniors Robert Kral is expected to be the starting quarterback on offense and cornerback on defense for Ashley and Gibby Jason will be a fullback on offense and a nose guard on defense.

Others expected to contribute in 2024 are juniors Will Long and Trent

Byslma, sophomores Tristan Ringle, Nierescher, and freshman Ryder Yelsik.

Saylor believes the Bears will be in the top two in the league.

"Bay City will be the favorites in the league," Saylor said. "I look for us to be one or two in the league."

Ashley starts the season with an

Aug. 30 game against Webberville, seven weeks of BTC action, then a non-conference game against Bear Lake to close out the 2024 regular season.

They have not made the 8-man playoffs since 2020 and before that in 2009 and 2010 playoffs in 11-man football.

# Midland Area Teams Gearing Up For Success This Season

David Cook Sports Scene

GROUND GAME TO BE KEY FOR DOW

Look for the running game to be a big part of the offense for Midland Dow this season. Not only do the Chargers return one of the top running backs in mid-Michigan, but they also welcome back a host of offensive linemen that are poised to pave the way.

Junior running back Garlands Randolph (5-6, 170) returns after turning in a standout sophomore season for Dow. A blend of excellent speed (4.4, 40-yard dash), strength and elusiveness, Randolph rushed for 761 yards and 11 touchdown last season. Randolph is establishing himself as one of the top junior running backs in the state and is poised for a big year.

Opening up running lanes for Randolph is a veteran offensive line that returns everyone from last season. Senior Garrett Tolles is a versatile lineman who earned second-team, all-conference honors last season. A lacrosse player in the spring, Tolles possesses outstanding footwork. Junior Zander Halliwill (6-4, 270) is a punishing blocker who earned honorable-mention, all-conference honors last season. Also returning up front are seniors Dylan Miner (6-4, 275), Max Reed (6-2, 215) and Scott Kuper (6-1, 280) along with juniors Aidan Burridge (5-11, 215) and Eian Chinery (6-1, 260).

At quarterback, sophomore Wynn Diegal (6-1, 160) is a talented young player to watch for. A versatile, all-around athlete who plays point guard in basketball, Diegal possesses a strong arm to go with good quickness and agility.

At wide receiver, the Chargers have a host of candidates including seniors Andrew Little (6-1, 170) and Wyatt Aultman (5-9, 160) along with juniors Ben Marinik and Cayden Stefanich who offer good speed and quickness along with sure hands.

On the defensive side of the football, the Chargers return a second-team, all-

conference linebacker in Lukus Studebaker. A tough, athletic linebacker, Studebaker was one of the top tacklers on the team last season.

Senior Landen Gotts (6-1, 175) is a returning defensive end while Chinery, Kuper and Reed will be among the players looking for playing time along the defensive line.

Dow turned in a 6-5 record last season and placed second in the Saginaw Valley North. Dow reached the district title game where it fell to Saginaw Heritage. The Chargers have reached the playoffs 10 out of the past 11 years.

MIDLAND TO COUNT ON STRONG DEFENSE

With a number of key returnees back on defense, the Chemics of Midland will be counting at their defense to play a key role in the team's success this season.

Last season Midland turned in a 5-5 overall record after falling to Midland Dow 14-7 in the opening round of the playoffs. With a strong core of defenders to build around, Midland will again be a team to deal with come playoff time. Midland has also qualified for the playoffs seven times out of the past nine years.

Senior linebacker Zach Buschlen (5-11, 205) returns to anchor the defense this season. Buschlen is a returning, first-team, all-conference linebacker. Buschlen possesses outstanding strength (315-pound bench press and 440-pound squat) to go with good quickness and agility. Buschlen also helps the defense with his kicking leg as he was also an all-conference punter last season.

Midland returns another thumper at linebacker in senior middle linebacker Colter Mahabir (6-0, 220). A second-team, all-conference linebacker, Mahabir is also a weight room standout (325 bench press, 525-pound squat).

Up front, the Chemic defensive line is anchored by senior Evan Woodruff (6-0, 240). A second-team, all-conference



Midland Dow is looking for another big season after placing second in the Saginaw Valley North last season.

lineman, Woodruff sports a 315-pound bench press and 475-pound squat. Senior Colton VanHorn (6-1, 220) is also at defensive end.

Senior Max Stoecker (6-2, 250) is a standout lineman who lines up on both sides of the ball. Stoecker was a first-team, all-conference offensive lineman last year.

The Midland offense has some graduation holes to fill but the pieces are in place to develop a potent offense. Senior Eli Kell (6-0, 180) is looking to step in at quarterback.

Senior Noah Wall (5-10, 170) and junior Alijah Campbell (5-6, 165) return at running back. Wall turned in some solid efforts last season including a 100-yard rushing game against Bay City Central while Campbell also got snaps at running back.

Senior fullback Zack Steger (6-1, 205) is also in the mix along with senior running back Tre Costanza (5-10, 185). Senior Aiden Weaver (5-9, 180) is also an option at running back and plays along the defensive line.

At receiver, junior Jordan Acosta and junior tight end Gaber Newkirk (6-2, 190) are a pair of watch for along with talented sophomore LJ Gallihugh who a solid all-around athlete.

More linemen looking to contribute include seniors Cayden Nieto (6-0, 210) and Charlie Sabin (6-2, 205) and juniors Elijah Davis (6-2, 275) and Eamon Murray (6-2, 215).

BULLOCK CREEK SET FOR ENCORE

The 2023 season was a special one for the Bullock Creek football team. The Lancers finished the season with an 8-4 record, finishing with the most wins since 2007 when that Bullock Creek squad went 8-2.

Midland returns several starters as it looks to qualify for the playoffs for the eighth time in the past 10 years.

Bullock Creek capped off the season with a memorable playoff run. The Lancers opened the playoffs with a 22-19 win against Clare and then won a district title with a 49-22 win against Chesaning before falling to Reed City in the regional title game.

While several key players have graduated from that squad, the cupboard is far from bare.

Leading the list of returning players is senior offensive lineman Caden Lickfeldt (6-4, 310). A first-team, all-conference player, Lickfeldt is a dominant blocker who has committed to Northwood University. Sophomore CJ Tetloff (6-2, 280) is another powerful lineman who returns up front. All-state in the shot put last spring, Tetloff benched pressed 225 pounds an amazing 18 times at a workout this offseason.

The Bullock Creek defense also returns some key players. Senior defensive lineman Kuper Wiklanski (5-8, 225) is a first-team, all-conference player while Caden Tate (5-9, 190) is an all-conference defensive back who will also see time at running back.

Matt Griese and Brandon Porcaro also saw extensive snaps last season. Griese is a back and receiver on offense and an outside linebacker on defense while Porcaro saw extensive playing time on defense.

The Lancers also have some young players ready for expanded roles including junior middle linebacker Chet Schwartz, sophomore Brayden Suderman (6-0, 180), sophomore receiver/defensive end Lincoln Tetloff and sophomore running back/linebacker Grayson Dean (5-7, 190).

Bullock Creek also has a new home this season as it moves from the Tri-Valley Conference to the Jack Pine Conference where it will play in Division 1.

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# Area High School Football Teams 2024 Season Previews

David Cook  
Sports Scene

## ROCKFORD LED BY STANDOUT LINEMEN

If football games are won in the trenches then the Rockford Rams are set up nicely for success this season.

Few teams in the state can match the size and depth that the Rams boast in the trenches. Senior captain Dawson LaPlante (6-2, 270) leads a line that includes standouts like seniors Zane Panchula (6-5, 287), Grand Valley State commit Nolan Miller (6-4, 300) and juniors Michael Oaks (6-3, 260), Sam Shelton (6-0, 250) and Krystian Fedorowych (6-2, 255).

The Rams also boast a talented tight end in senior Blake Linsley (6-5, 230).

At receiver, senior captain Michael DeKuiper (6-1, 170) leads the way along with Lucas Pitsch (6-6, 185) and Rowan Haddad (5-8, 165).

At quarterback, junior Brayden Daniels (5-11, 195) started a playoff game and made big strides during the offseason and is poised for a breakout.

The Rams have several talented players on defense led by senior defensive back Isaac Poot (6-1, 198), a Grand Valley State recruit. Kade Friesen (6-2, 245) is a standout edge rusher while Riley Wells (6-3, 195) is a speedy linebacker. Junior linebacker Sam Cummings (5-9, 200) and junior free safety Luke Ahern (5-10, 190) also play key roles on defense.

## BELDING PRIMED FOR STRONG SEASON

With a number of key returnees back from a team that went 8-2 last season, the Black Knights of Belding are poised for a big season. Senior linebacker/running back Hunter Conrad (5-9, 225) leads the way. An all-state linebacker, Conrad totaled 127 tackles and five tackles for loss last season.

Senior TJ Smith (6-0, 200) returns at fullback and is a standout linebacker. Senior Codey Manley (6-2, 200) also returns at running back and cornerback. Up front, senior Riley Powers (5-10, 195) anchors the line at center and at defensive tackle.

## GREENVILLE ON PATH TO IMPROVEMENT

With a talented core of seniors leading the way, the Greenville Yellowjackets are poised for improvement.

Greenville is led by senior linebacker/running back Case Johnson (5-11, 220) who is a powerful impact player. Senior quarterback Noah Long (6-4, 215) has a big-time arm. Senior Zeke Robinet (6-1, 200) is back at fullback and defensive end. Seniors Sullivan Witt and Aaron Enbody head up the receiving corps. Senior Nicholas Lobbezoo (5-11, 235) anchors the offensive and defensive lines.

## LOWELL PART OF NEW CONFERENCE

Lowell, along with Greenville, are members of the new River Cities Alliance Conference this season.

The Red Arrows, who went 6-4 last season, feature a strong group of linemen led by seniors Tyler White (6-5, 275), Dylan Polczak and Deakon Roth (6-0, 225). Christopher Wigger is a speedy impact player on offense. Nolan Compton is also a playmaker at wide receiver.

Junior Brody Lehman (6-3, 200) is looking to step in at quarterback. Senior Casey Engle (6-1, 200) is at linebacker and running back while junior Jack Iakiri (6-0, 245) and sophomore Nash Darling (5-10, 235) look to contribute up front.

## GLADWIN PREPPED FOR BIG YEAR

Gladwin turned in a 7-3 mark last season and the Flying G's have the talent on hand for another strong season.

Senior wide receiver Donald Corlew III (6-0, 175) is one of the top receivers in mid-Michigan. Junior Preston Willert (5-10, 180) is a returning all-conference player at running back and linebacker.

At quarterback, junior Colton Pfenninger (6-0, 185) earned all-conference honors last season. Pfenninger also plays in the defensive backfield. Senior Brady Dickinson is a all-conference defensive back and a slotback on offense. Senior Matthew Lechner (6-2, 230) is a all-conference linebacker and



Rockford has been one of the premier Division 1 teams in the state the past several years and the Rams are again among the teams leading the way in Division 1.

returns at offensive guard. Sophomore Harry Grove (6-1, 212) is a standout at outside linebacker and is a tight end. Senior Jayden Mieske (6-1, 190) also earned all-conference honors last season and is at wide receiver on offense and defensive back.

## TALENTED NUCLEUS LEADS MLS

A talented nucleus of returning all-conference players lead the way at Michigan Lutheran Seminary which finished last season with a 6-4 record.

Junior running back/linebacker Noah Reif (6-1, 230) is a load carrying the ball and is a sure tackler on defense. Senior Logan Broekhuizen (6-1, 225) anchors the offensive line at tackle. Senior Ethan Wakefield (6-1, 190) is a standout at defensive end and tight end on offense. Senior William Salgat (6-0, 180) is a returning honorable-mention, all-conference player at quarterback and outside linebacker.

The Cardinals are also looking for contributions from senior Brock Ochoa (wr/cb) and juniors Braylin Zieroff (wr/cb) and Joey Cain (6-2, 220) at guard.

## SHEPHERD AIMS FOR BOUNCEBACK

The Bluejays of Shepherd are looking for a bounce-back season after going 3-6 last season.

Ashton Luckhardt is a returning all-conference player at both wide receiver and defensive back. Jon Bailey is a returning all-conference punter.

The Bluejays also return a trio of players who earned honorable-mention, all-conference honors. Anderson Sickles is at defensive end, junior Braddock Payne (6-4, 255) is at center and junior Sam King (5-10, 190) is at linebacker.

**VALLEY LUTHERAN TO RESTOCK** Saginaw Valley Lutheran graduated a number of key players from a team that turned in a 5-4 record last season.

One player that is back is junior Colt Jolin

(6-0, 180) who earned honorable-mention, all-conference honors as a wide receiver and safety.

Valley Lutheran is also looking for contributions from senior tackle Anthokny Wojtowicz (5-10, 195), juniors Brandon Larson (lb/rb), Dylan Pugh (te/ss), Hayden Duclos (fb/mlb), Jack Holzhei (ol) and Michael Smith (wr) along with sophomore linemen Luke Schember (6-3, 235), Zaire Martin (5-9, 265) and Saynt Brandow (6-3, 250) and Zac Sharon (rb/lb). Look for Aiden Herzberger to be in the mix at quarterback.

## NOUVEL SETTING SIGHTS ON WINNING SEASON

Saginaw Nouvel is looking for a winning season after going 4-5 last year.

The Panthers are led by a pair of returning all-conference players. Junior Christian Lopez (5-10, 220) returns at middle linebacker and guard while senior Jack Wilson (6-6, 225) is back at defensive end and offensive tackle. Nouvel also brings back a pair of honorable-mention, all-league players. Junior John Carlson (5-11, 205) is at outside linebacker while junior Alex Kamano is at defensive tackle and offensive guard.

Also looking to contribute are senior Zeke Boyd (wr/db), juniors Isaiah Garcia (mlb) and Frank Gorzela (ol) and sophomore quarterback Matthew Kusowski.

## LINEMEN LEAD THE WAY AT LAINGSBURG

Laingsburg will have a new look this season as several players graduated off last year's squad that turned in a 4-6 record.

The Wolfpack are led by senior Jay Montgomery (5-10, 200) who lines up at defensive end and offensive tackle. Joe Deshone (6-5, 235) and Shaun Mills (5-9, 210) return up front.

Also looking to make an impact are Liam Esch, Dylan Koenig, Max Powers and Wyatt Wagner.

# Bridgeport Looking To Improve On 1-8 Football Campaign

Jeff Steers  
MHSAA  
Special Writer

With only two wins in the last four years, Bridgeport is looking to improve on those numbers in 2024.

Second-year coach Ryan Love believes the Bearcats may be turning the corner as a football team.

"We have about 40 in the (high school) football program which is better numbers compared to other years," Love said during media days. "We had much better leadership this summer."

Bridgeport plays in the Tri-Valley Conference Red Division with its last contested win being in 2019.

"We have improved this summer ... and hopefully learned that when you don't do summer workouts, you are three months behind everyone else," Love said.

"It takes a while to learn a new system and we are only 14 months into it."

The Bearcats expect to run a gun-wing offense trying to get playmakers into good positions.

Some of the key players include all-league defensive back and wide receiver Germontae Buckner, offensive and defensive lineman Antwane Sanders, and receiver and cornerback Jakob Taylor.

Buckner earned Tri-Valley Conference honors for his defensive work in 2023 for the

Bearcats.

"We learned to go hard in practice so you can go hard in the games," Buckner said.

Sanders said the biggest thing he learned in 2023 is to "give it all you got and do your assignment."

"We need to come together as a team to be successful," Sanders said.

Other players expected to make major impacts are all-league defensive end Chris Collins and all-league lineman Elijah Bowes.



Lamarion Moore expects to be a hybrid back and linebacker for the Bearcats in 2024.

Love said the 15 summer practices and work in the weight room will pay off for Bridgeport.

"We accomplished some baseline stuff during the summer,"

Love said. "Now we can work on plays and formations."

Bridgeport kicks off the season with a non-conference game against Gwinn, plays TVC games week two and fourth through eight, and battles Madison and Yale in non-conference contests.

# Slate Promoted To Head Coach For Hemlock Football

Jeff Steers  
MHSAA  
Special Writer

Jamie Slate was promoted to coach his alma mater at Hemlock High School after serving three seasons as the defensive coordinator at the school.

The 2007 graduate of HHS has experience of coaching at Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart and Bay City Western.

Slate is a physics and computer science teacher in the district who believes football is a key cog in the small-town community.

His players put that to the test completing more than 300 community service hours this summer.

"The football program is the heartbeat of small towns like

Hemlock," Slate said during media day. "The more we give in the community, the more support we get on Friday nights."

Team members helped a local teacher battling cancer wash windows earlier in the summer.

On the field, Hemlock should look a little different according to Slate. The team was forced to throw the ball nearly 60 times per game in 2023.

"Throwing the ball 60 times per game made us a scoring threat," Slate said. "We need more balance and will be refocusing on running the football."

Chad Brown – a CMU baseball signee – will use his 6-foot 6-inch frame to run and throw the ball for Hemlock. He threw for more than 2,000 yards in 2023 – ranked as the

No. 10 throwing quarterback in Michigan by MaxPreps.

Five-sport athlete Dawson Doan was the recipient of a number of those passes with nearly 1,100 receiving yards and more than 1,200 all-purpose yards in 2023. Doan was a D-7 all-state receiver and an all-region and all-conference football honors as a receiver.

Landon Zastrow played a number of positions for Hemlock in 2023 including running back and receiver on offense. He should be one of the team's key players in 2024.

Steven Katzenberger was an all-region and all-conference linebacker in the Tri-Valley last year.

Others who are expected to



make major contributions for the Huskies are sophomore William Foss (OL/DL) – a bull in a China shop according to Slate, D.J. Lyscas (RB/LB), and Trevor Hare (DE).

Hemlock has nearly been a lock for the Michigan High School Athletic Association playoffs. A 1-8 season two years ago stopped a streak of six consecutive seasons in the playoffs.

"The expectations over the years are to make the playoffs every year," student-athlete Doan said.

Katzenberger believes the Huskies will make the playoffs for the community.

The Huskies will kick off the season against non-conference opponents Garber and Cass City before beginning play in the Tri-Valley Conference White Division.

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# Central Montcalm Football Hopes To Finish On Top

**Jeff Steers**  
MHSAA  
Special Writer

Players on the Stanton Central Montcalm football team felt like they let a few games get away in 2023.

With a solid group of seniors, the Hornets feel that a league title and a deep playoff run is possible in 2024.

The Hornets finished 5-4 during the regular season but lost to Chesaning in the Michigan High School Athletic Association Division 6 district opening game.

"We had a lot of turnovers earlier in the season," Coach Scott Cripe said. "A lot of our games were closer than the score.

"Last year was a good learning experience for a number of our players."

Lineman Asher Johnson said the Hornet players learned something from 2023.

"We need to be better conditioned in order to pace ourselves this season," Johnson said. "It is a relief to get into the playoffs, but we need to take the next steps."

Johnson, a senior, is expected to help anchor the offensive and defensive lines for Central Montcalm.

Other players who will make solid impacts for the Hornets are quarterback Emmett Lingeman, running back Anthony Schultz,



and linemen Kyle Scharaswak and Waylon Lingeman.

At 6-feet 4 inches, Waylon Lingeman expects to be a force for the Hornets on the line.

Junior running back McCoy Wernholm expects to be one of the top offensive threats for Central Montcalm.

Central Montcalm will compete

again in the Central State Athletic Conference Silver Division. The five team league includes Morley-Stanwood, Kent City, Lakeview, and White Cloud.

The Hornets will have non-conference battles with Houghton Lake, Newaygo, Chippewa Hills, Berrien Springs, and Hart.

Cripe believes the senior

leadership will lead the Hornets to great things this season.

"The great part about these guys are they are all upperclassmen and feed off one another," Cripe said. "I want them to take ownership of the team ... and your team is only as good as your leaders.

"The players have high expectations."

# Matthews Takes Over Essexville Garber Football

**Jeff Steers**  
MHSAA  
Special Writer

First-year Coach David Matthews does not like to put numbers on the amount of wins Essexville Garber expects to win in 2024.

It is all about being physical and prepared to play every week.

The 2002 EGHS graduate takes over the program after the Dukes posted a 5-5 record in 2023. The team has been to the Michigan High School Athletic Association for five consecutive seasons.

"Summer workouts have been great with a good turnout of

players," Matthews said. "One of our goals is to be more physical."

Matthews coached in the state of Maryland for nine seasons and then at Pottersville from 2017 to 2022.

Matthews expects to run a pro-style offense with spread formations. Essexville Garber will line up in a 5-2 defense and mix up coverages in 2024.

Key players for the Dukes are Tristan Westphal (OL/DL), Lukas Neering (OL/LB), Isaac Theisen (WR/CB), and quarterback and free safety Ethan Pett.

All four earned conference honors in the Tri-Valley Conference Red Division in 2023.



"It is our senior year, and we are ready to get started," Theisen said. "After all of these years we are the biggest and best players (in the school) ... its our last go around."

Pett has a couple of goals for 2024 with his biggest being beating the team across the river - John Glenn.

"We need to come together as a team and keep good team chemistry this season," Pett said.

Other players who are expected to make a difference for the Dukes in 2024 include junior Ryan Brey (OT/DT), and senior Jack Pestrue (RB/LB), Charley Fellows (H-Back), and Cade Wallaker

(WR/DB).

The Dukes will kick off the season against Hemlock and Powers Catholic in non-conference games, have six weeks of Tri-Valley Conference games, and finish with Laingsburg on Oct. 25.

# Pottersville Looking Forward To Full Season With Improved Numbers

**David Cook**  
Sports Scene

Numbers are up for Pottersville football this season. Not only do the Vikings have a good turnout of players, but they will be playing a full nine-game schedule this season after playing a partial varsity schedule last fall.

A large group of players returned from last year's squad including quarterback Ezariah Taylor. Taylor, who plays defensive back on defense, is looking forward to the season.

"We are looking good," Taylor said. "We have been practicing really hard and putting in the work in the offseason. I think we will be strong in all areas. Running, passing, I think everything."

Keegan Bennett is another

returning veteran who likes how the team is shaping up. Bennett is a wing back on offense and plays linebacker on defense.

"I think our running game will be a strength," Bennett said. "We have a lot of versatility between fast running back and hard-hitting, power runners."

Isaiah Woloscyn will also see playing time at wingback on offense and at linebacker on defense. Woloscyn sees playing with a high level of intensity throughout the season as being a key to success for the Vikings.

"The key will be our intensity" Woloscyn said. "We have to keep that up through the whole game and not letting off the gas at all."

Pottersville also brings back a solid group of linemen on both

sides of the line. Left offensive tackle Keaton Bush is one of the leaders along the line along with Andrew Morales who also plays linebacker on defense. Bush also sees time along the Viking defensive front.

"Our defensive line is good," Bush said. "We will get a whole lot of penetration right up the middle."

One area the team is concentrating on during pre-season practice is developing the secondary.

Pottersville also returns running back Markeil White who is the fastest player on the team. Cam Wood is a returning defensive end who is one of the leaders on the



defense. Returning at the other starting tackle for the Vikings is Luke Ward (6-foot-4, 260 pounds).

With improved numbers the Vikings are poised to make gains on the field this fall and are looking forward to the season.

"We have about 30 kids out for the team which is great for Pottersville," said Viking coach Jason Baker, who is going into his second season as head coach. "The guys have been working hard in

the offseason. We've been focusing on conditioning and getting the boys physically ready to play the game. We only lost one senior from last year so we have the core coming back. We're also young, everyone but Ezzy and Keaton are juniors or sophomores or freshmen so we have a good couple years ahead of us for this program. We are going to be competitive this year. We have a tough schedule but I feel like we stack up well against it."

# Wayne Dismuke To Lead Dansville In 2024 Football Campaign

**Jeff Steers**  
MHSAA  
Special Writer

Dansville High School football player Kane Romano said when players make mistakes on the field, first-year coach Wayne Dismuke does not dwell on it.

It is on to the next play.

The Aggies could use a little bit of positive encouragement after posting an 0-9 record a year ago.

Dansville struggled offensively in 2023 scoring only 42 points in nine games.

Previously Dismuke led Eaton Rapids since 2020 - first as a wide

receivers coach, then a skills coach, and stepped in as an interim coach his second season.

Dismuke was hired as the permanent head coach and led ERHS for two more seasons. He has worked as a coach in San Antonio, Las Vegas, and Anchorage.

Dismuke graduated from Lansing Sexton High School and joined the United States Air Force where he served for 10 years, deploying to the Middle East as well as South Korea. He received both the achievement medal and commendation medal.

Dismuke believes the Aggies can

get better every day.

"We need better attitudes and have to be locked in every day," Dismuke said. "I am here to change the culture."

Players say the new coach is already working players harder during practices.

"Last year we would work out only one time per week," player Mayson Burgett said. "Now we are lifting three or four times per week."

Some of the key players for the



Aggies include Burgett, Haydon Tomlin (RB/LB), Quinnton Burgett (WR/S), and Kane Romano (LB).

Other players expected to make contributions include Evan Sykes (TE/CB), Alex Baker (RB/DE/CB), and Noah Starkey (OL/DL).

Dansville kicks off the season with a non-conference game against Springport, plays seven weeks of Central Michigan Athletic Conference competition, then faces Stockbridge to close out the regular season.

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# Breckenridge Football Looking For Bounce Back Season

## David Cook Sports Scene

Year number two in 8-man football was more of a challenge for the Breckenridge Huskies last fall. This year, with some promising young players on hand, the Huskies are poised to bounce back.

Breckenridge turned in a 1-8 record last season. That record came after the team turned in an 8-3 record in 2022 in its first season of playing 8-man football.

"We're going to be young," said third-year Breckenridge head coach Isaac Gregory. "We have two, maybe three seniors on the whole roster, but that's not unfamiliar to us. After last year we had to deal with quite a few injuries and quite a few of those guys got

called up and got some experience. So it's youth, but hopefully it's experienced youth."

With some talented athletes leading the way, the Huskies are poised for a bounce back this season.

Offensively, Breckenridge has a pair of quarterbacks challenging for playing time in Noah Barr and Gavin Corbat.

"Offensively, it's probably going to be a lot of options," Barr said. "Running the ball and taking advantage of any mismatches we can find. We also have a stronger receiving corps this year so I feel like we are going to find a lot of mismatches where we can just throw it over the top. An air raid kind of offense style."

Whoever is taking the snaps for the Huskies will have some skilled pass catchers to throw to. Maddax McCaw, Trey Most and Blaze Snyder all have good speed and quickness and are sure-handed receivers.

Injuries took their toll on the Huskies last year with a number of freshmen and sophomores being forced to fill in during the season. That experience the young players gained, however, will pay off this season.

"We're looking good," Snyder said. "We're making progress."

One area of the team that is

showing plenty of progress is at quarterback where the team has a pair of options.

"Our quarterbacks are looking way better than they did last year," said McCaw. "We are getting a lot better and everyone is coming to practice. It feels like we are going to be way better than last year."

The team is forming a good chemistry and that togetherness will be a strong point for the Huskies.



"I think just together as a team," Corbat said. "We're not the oldest team. There are a lot of younger players, but we just have to work together and make sure things are as smooth as possible in what we do."

Defensively, the Huskies are led by Barr, Corbat and Snyder at linebacker. McCaw and Most are a pair of veterans returning to the defensive secondary.

# Freeland Football Team Gearing Up For Another Big Season

## Butch Harmon Sports Scene

The last time the Freeland football was not able to post a winning record was back in 2006. Things don't look to change any this season as the Falcons bring back a team with plenty of size and experience.

Since 2020 the Falcons have taken their football program to another level. The Falcons made back-to-back appearances in the state semifinals in both 2020 and 2021. Last year Freeland reached the district finals. Led by an offense that put up 42.1 points per game, Freeland turned in a 9-2 overall record last season.

This season the Falcons have plenty of talent returning on both sides of the line. On offense, the

Falcons return a pair of talented running backs in Keegan Whelton and Parker Lentner. Having more than one option at different positions is a strong point for the Falcons.

"We're really heavy in our skill positions," Lentner said. "We have a lot of depth."

At the receiver positions, Freeland will feature Zander Wheatley along with tight ends Tristan Comer (6-6, 240), Scott Reno and Mason Kozumplik. Junior wideout Wilson Huckleby is a 6-foot-3 athlete who also provides mismatches at wide receiver.

"I think we have a lot of weapons to use," Wheatley said. "We have a lot of versatility. A lot of people to go around."

A question mark for Freeland entering the season is at quarterback where the position is up for grabs. Jake Metiva gained plenty of experience last season and looks to have the edge coming into the season.

Freeland is also implementing a new offense this year. The offense will feature elements of a pro style offense with the double wing. The Falcons will feature versatility and may even run some T-formation at times.

Leading the way up front will be offensive guard Garrett Gilman.

Most of the Freeland veterans will also contribute on the

defensive side of the football. Gilman returns to the defensive line while Comer and Kozumplik are back at defensive end spots.

Freeland has a veteran corps of linebackers back in Lentner, Reno and Whelton.

For the Falcons, who have been regulars in the playoffs every year since 2008, making a deep playoff run is a main priority.

"We want to make noise in the

playoffs," Whelton said. "

The secondary will be led by Wheatley.

Freeland opens the season against the new look Saginaw United and then opens conference play in week two against Bridgeport. The Falcons have a big conference showdown with Frankenmuth in week eight and then wrap up the regular season with a non-league game against Cadillac.



# Shiawassee, Genesee Area Teams Looking For Football Success

## David Cook Sports Scene

### CORUNNA RELOADING AFTER MEMORABLE YEAR

It was a season for the ages for the Corunna football team. The Cavaliers went on a season that will live on for years as they reeled off 13 straight wins and played for the Division 6 state championship at Ford Field last fall.

A large group of last year's team has graduated but enough talent returns to give Cavalier fans optimism heading into the new season.

Corunna is especially deep and strong in the trenches. Along the offensive line, the Cavaliers return senior guards AJ Brieger (6-3, 240) and Alan Mrva (6-2, 260) and senior tackle Evan Cody (6-0, 250). Senior Colton Bila (5-11, 200) will be at center.

Senior Lucas Kuran (6-0, 165) is back at receiver with senior Dayne Zeeman (6-0, 190) returning at a wing.

In the backfield, senior Bryce Edington (5-9, 160) is a returning running back.

Looking to step in at quarterback is senior Kaden Crowdry (6-2, 170) who saw extensive playing time in blowout wins for the Cavaliers last season.

Corunna is loaded up front on the defensive side as well. Brieger, Cody and Edington return along the defensive interior while Mrva and Kuran at back at the defensive end spots. Zeeman returns at middle linebacker.

While the Cavaliers may have lost some playmakers from last year's squad, enough veterans return to make the team dangerous again this season.

### SENIOR CLASS LEADS THE WAY FOR CHESANING

Led by a strong core of seniors, Chesaning heads into the season looking to build on a strong showing by last year's team.

Chesaning turned in a 9-2 record last season. After an opening-night loss to Bath, the Indians reeled off eight straight wins to finish the regular season with an 8-1 record. Chesaning then advanced to the district final before falling to Bullock Creek.

Chesaning is led this year on offense by senior running back Brayden Florian (6-0, 200). One of the most productive running backs in the state last year, Florian rushed for over 2,000 yards and is poised for another big season.

Teams will not be able to just key on Florian as senior quarterback Max Volk (6-1, 175) also returns. An excellent passer and all-around athlete, Volk helps give the team a versatile offense.

When Chesaning goes to the air senior wide receiver Adam Woodcock (5-5, 140) will be a primary target.

Chesaning also returns senior Cal Frasier (5-11, 190) to the backfield. A hard-charging running back, Frasier is also an excellent blocker. Frasier is also a defensive ringleader from his linebacker spot.

Up front, the Indian offensive line is led by junior lineman Braden Burtch.

The team is also looking for contributions from several more veterans. Brayden Wendling (6-2, 186) is a senior who plays offensive tackle and defensive end. Senior Jackson Hill (5-10, 175) is also a running back and a linebacker.

The lines is further strengthened by senior Seth Schlicht (6-2, 280) and sophomore Porter Greenfelder (6-2, 260). Schlicht and Greenfelder play both offensive and defensive tackle.

### NEW LOTHROP GEARED UP FOR BIG SEASON

New Lothrop was one of the premier teams in the state in Division 8 last season and the Hornets are set to make another run at the top spot. New Lothrop went 9-2 last year with the season ending in the district finals when it fell to Ithaca in a 29-28 thriller.

The Hornets return plenty of talent this season led by senior Dalton Birchmeier (6-0, 180) who lines up at running back on offense and linebacker on defense. Kaven Unangst (5-10, 150) is a playmaker at slotback and a cornerback on defense. Up front, Collin Williams (6-2, 185) is a leader on both the offensive and defensive lines. Stone Elkins (5-10, 180) also returns to the offensive line along with Ian Godin and junior Tyler Ingersoll (6-0, 220). Gage Callahan is another running back in the mix.

Along with Birchmeier and Unangst, the New Lothrop defense will be led by linebackers Justin Neubecker and Hayden Hopkins and Jorey Galloup (5-11, 170).

At quarterback, versatile sophomore Michael Schlachter (6-3, 175) is a talented athlete to watch for.

### YOUNG MONTROSE SQUAD LOOKING STRONG

Although young with just four seniors on the roster, the Montrose Rams are talented with plenty of players returning from a team that went 8-4 last season.

Montrose is solid along the lines, especially the offensive line where four starters return. Junior offensive tackle/defensive end Conner Thompson (6-1, 235) is one of the leaders. A returning all-regional player, Thompson is a strong force on offense and defense. Junior defensive end/tight end MJ Dailey (6-6, 205) is another returning all-

regional player who is a playmaker on both sides of the ball.

Junior lineman Owen Perior (6-2, 215) also returns along with senior offensive lineman Charlie McNeil (5-10, 240).

Junior Griffin Oneal (6-0, 170) is a returning quarterback and defensive back. Senior Jack Viar is back at running back and defensive back. Junior Jesse Coomer (5-8, 175) is also at running back and linebacker while sophomore Kallen Perior (5-8, 180) is at running back and linebacker. Sophomore Anquawn Burt (6-3, 150) is a promising wide receiver and cornerback.

### OWOSSO PREPARED FOR SUCCESS

After a few down seasons, the Owosso football team is ripe to make a move forward.

A large core of veterans return from a team that turned in a 3-6 record last season. On the offensive side of the ball, the Trojans return senior running back Hoyt Patrick (5-10, 180) who is back for his fourth season as a starting ball carrier.

The Trojans also have a veteran quarterback, junior Liam Patrick (6-2, 185) is beginning his third year as a starter and has the skill to go with his experience.

Senior Weston Yoho is a senior wide receiver who returns. Seniors Carson Moore and Austin Blaha are also looking to contribute at receiver.

Senior Zach Rye (6-2, 210) is another key returning player. A returning all-conference player, Rye lines up at tight end on offense and is a linebacker on defense.

Returning to anchor the offensive line is sizable junior Carter Miculka (6-6, 270). Fellow junior Ben Neese (6-1, 305) offers more size up front while junior Levi Archer (5-11, 185) and sophomore Joe Dawes (6-3, 265) also look to contribute up front.



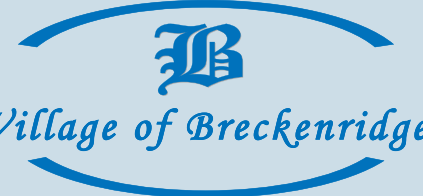


On defense, Rye leads the charge from his linebacker spot along with Hoyt Patrick. Liam Patrick is back at safety while Yoho is a cornerback. Dawes and Archer are at defensive end along with Miculka.

### REBUILDING TAKING PLACE AT DURAND

Rebuilding is taking place at Durand where the Railroaders turned in a 3-6 record last season. After making the playoffs for four consecutive seasons, the Railroaders came up short of the playoffs last fall. This year looks like a rebuilding season for the team as it competes in the rugged Mid-Michigan Activities Conference.



Corunna is looking to pick up where it left off last season as it reached the Division 5 state title game at Ford Field last year.

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Evert has a new coach with Ben Bryant.

## Evert Hopes To Be Highland Contender

### John Raffel Sports Scene

Evert has a new coach Ben Bryant, but hopes to make some noise in the Highland Conference with Beal City.

Last season we went 7-3 and lost in the first round of the playoffs to Muskegon Catholic Central.

The Wildcats are coming off a 7-3 season when they were playoff team but weren't able to overtake Beal City for the title

"We return several great players. Noah Vanderlinde (senior WR and LB) and Lucas Johnson (senior WR and DB) are both tall, long, and sure handed receivers that will get a lot of targets," Bryant said. "Sean Jackson (senior, RB and LB) has a great nose for the football defensively and is a hard tackle with the ball in his hands. Aidan Anderson ( Junior, QB and DB) will take over at quarterback for Preston. He has all of the sought after skills you would want in a

high school quarterback. Up front on our line, we return starters Kayleb Maxfield (junior, OL/DL), Gabe Mitchell (senior, OL/ LB), Kaleb McKay (Senior, OL/DL), and Cole Staats (senior, OL/DL)."

The goal in Wildcat Country is very high.

"We are looking forward to making a run at a conference championship and putting ourselves in a good spot for the MHSAA playoffs," Bryant said.

"It's early to predict our exact strengths, but I believe our experience of returning players will have a big impact on our season.

"Our conference continues to be one of the toughest, if not the toughest, small school conferences in Northern Michigan. Beal City is nearly always the face of the league and we want to continue to compete with them and take the crown they have held for a long time."

## Humphrey Leads Chippewa Hills Football Attack

### John Raffel Sports Scene

Austin Humphrey was an All-State baseball player and is set to earn similar honors on the gridiron this fall at Chippewa Hills.

But Humphrey is one of only five seniors on coach Mark PeLong's football squad.

The Warriors were 4-5 last year

and are hoping to improve on that this season.

"Senior Austin Humphrey-RB/ OLB is a returning Dream Team player leader rusher and receiver. He will be our go to player on offense and will play the star linebacker on defense.

"He has to have a big year on both sides of the ball," PeLong said. "Senior Jon Koepf (OL/ DL) will anchor both lines for

us. Senior Gage Perkins (WR/ DB) returning Dream Team and D-6 All Region wide receiver. Big play potential have to get the ball to him and let him work. Junior Hunter McGuire (QB) takes over for two second-year quarterbacks Tyler Geer and Gage Saatoff. He will be the leader of the offense and we expect big things.

"We have to replace our entire offensive and defensive lines from

a year ago. I look for this team to improve as the season goes on and finish strong. Skill position depth will be our strength."

Chippewa Hills hopes to win the CSAA Red title.

"Reed City and Big Rapids are the two teams to beat. Tri County will be another team that factors into the race as well," PeLong said.



Chippewa Hills Austin Humphrey will be among the best players in the state.

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