

Mt. Pleasant Primed For Bounce-Back This Year After Reloading Last Season

David Cook Sports Scene

Last season was a reloading campaign for the Mt. Pleasant football team that was making adjustments after graduating 24 seniors. With a large crew of veterans back this season, the Oilers are primed to move up the Saginaw Valley League standings.

Mt. Pleasant turned in a 6-5 overall record last fall, reaching the second round of the playoffs and finishing conference play with a .500 record. A roster peppered with starters returning has the outlook positive.

“We’ve been working hard all summer and I think we have a good core of returners who gained a lot of experience last year,” said

Mt. Pleasant coach Jason McIntyre. “Last year, by our standards, was an average year. We won three straight conference championships in the three years prior to that and then last year we went 5-4 and got a playoff win. A lot of these guys that are coming back had to contribute and that is some good experience to have, and we have some good young players also.”

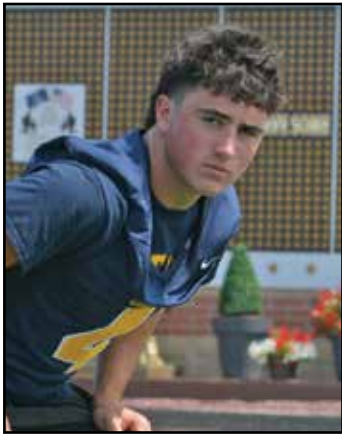
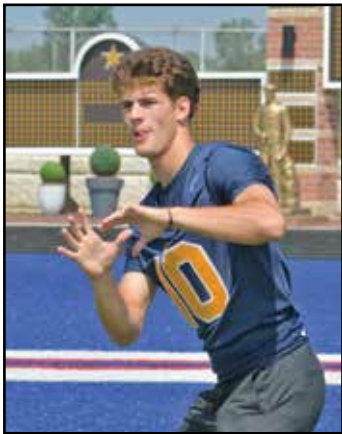
One of those veterans is senior wide receiver and safety Riley Olson (6-2, 175). A three-year varsity starter and two-time all-conference player, Olson believes a punishing brand of football will pay off for the Oilers.

“Our goal is to We want to win as many games as possible,” Olson said, “and we want to be the most physical team. We’re not always

the biggest, fastest, strongest team out there so we just want to be the team that is going to dominate you and over-physical you and drain you mentally throughout the game. We are going to run the ball right down their throat. We are going to run the ball, go get a couple of yards and then take a deep shot and get a touchdown on you because our receivers have so much speed.”

Fellow senior Graham Phillips (5-11, 200), a fullback and linebacker, echoed those remarks.

“We are going to be as physical as possible,” Phillips said. “We want to intimidate other teams with our physicality. On defense, we will be a really fast team which is trouble for opposing offenses. We have some dudes this year and I’m really



excited.”

Senior running back/safety Will Garcia also stressed how physical the Oilers are going to be on both sides of the line.

“We are going to come at you on every play and we are just going to wear teams down physically,” Garcia said. “It’s going to get to a point where guys are just going to be on the ground and we are going to keep going.”

Senior tight end/linebacker Jack Mozurkewich (6-1, 195) also points to team chemistry as a strong point.

“We have a great a great group of guys,” Mozurkewich said. “I love the chemistry that we have. I see everywhere on the field as strong points for this team.”

Offensively, the Oilers have a pair of junior quarterbacks challenging for the starting job in Xavier Cregeur and Freddie Makinen.

The Oilers are deep at running back with Garcia leading the way along with Brady Johnston and junior Prosper Enehiroana with Phillips paving the way at fullback.

The offensive line is built

around center Kort French, tackle Kyle Wallace, Jacob Dale and sophomore Tyler Schell (6-2, 230).

Olson leads a talented group of receivers that includes Mozurkewich at tight end.

On defense seven veterans return with starting experience. Kurt Freling, Levi Hoffman and Taylor Holp return along the defensive front.

Linebacker is a position of strength with the return of Mozurkewich and Phillips along with junior Adrian Castellon who started as a sophomore.

The secondary is solid with Garcia and Olson at the safety positions. Working in at the cornerback spots are Isaiah Rodriguez, junior Eassays McGinnis and sophomore Noel Helm.

“I like our depth,” McIntyre said.

“I really think we can get close to having a completely different set of starters on offense than we have on defense. We can get pretty close to that and that will be huge for our depth.”

Freeland Football Team Poised To Take The Next Step This Season

Butch Harmon Sports Scene

To say the Freeland football team is poised for a breakout post-season run this season is a bit of an understatement.

If any team in the state is due for a breakout come playoff time it’s the Falcons. A host of talented players return this season for Freeland from a team that went 9-2 overall last season. Freeland went 8-1 in the regular season and 5-1 in the conference with the lone loss coming by one point against eventual Division 5 state finalist Frankenmuth.

In the playoffs, Freeland reached the second round where it dropped a 27-21 struggle to eventual Division 4 state champion Goodrich. The loss marked the third straight season the Falcons fell to Goodrich in the second round of the playoffs and the three losses came by a combined total of just eight points leaving the Falcons determined to break through this season with a power-packed roster to work with.

“We have 28 seniors coming back so I’m pretty excited about the group we have,” said Freeland coach Kevin Townsend. “Our JV team was 7-2 so we have a nice junior class that is going to come in and complement those kids as well.”

Offensively, Freeland will feature what can be a dominant running game mixed in with an effective passing option.

Taking over at quarterback is senior Max Heyn (6-1, 200). A running back last year who led the team in rushing, Heyn played quarterback his freshman and sophomore seasons. Heyn gives the team an explosive look at the position as he set the school record in the 100-meter dash last spring with a time of 11.01.

“We have a new offense this year and that’s exciting,” Heyn said. “We have some great receivers and backs and a great line so I think we will do a lot on offense this season.”

A trio of seniors will handle the bulk of the duties at running back. Keenan Cooper (5-9, 180), Kellen East (5-7, 180) and Parker Lentner (5-8 190) give the team plenty of versatility and depth at running back.

The Falcons also feature some talented receivers and tight ends. Senior Wilson Huckleby (6-4, 192) will be playing basketball in college at Saginaw Valley while Zander Wheatley (6-3, 175) set the school record in the 110 hurdles last spring and placed second at state in the 300 hurdles. At tight end Mason Kozumplik (6-1, 205) and Ross Farrell (6-1, 200) are strong blockers and sure-handed receivers.

Paving the way for the offense is

a big, talented and deep offensive line. Senior Tristan Comer (6-7, 280), a Michigan State recruit, anchors the line at left tackle. Senior Nevan Malacara (6-2, 205) will be a right tackle with Bryon Lynch back at center. Brody Geth (6-0, 230) is back at a guard after starting as a sophomore with Gage Somers looking to step in at the other guard spot. Zack Clark and Brigham Smith are a pair of veteran linemen back after missing last year with injuries.

“As always our goal is a state championship,” Comer said. “I think our defense will be a strong point. I think our offense will be nothing to shy at this year either.”

Many of the offensive contributors will also be logging extensive minutes on the defensive side of the ball. Comer and Kozumplik are back at defensive end spots. Clark and Smith will see plenty of snaps along the defensive front along with junior Garrett



Kain (6-3, 250) who started up front as a freshman.

Freeland is replacing both starting inside linebackers but senior Keenan Cooper is ready to step up as is junior Ryan Watkins who started on both sides of the ball on the junior varsity last season.

“We are looking good on both sides of the ball,” Cooper said, “both offense and defense. I’m very confident with our defense this season because we performed



really well on defense last season.”

At cornerback, the Falcons return Wheatley who has offers from Cornell, Saginaw Valley and Northwood. Senior Karson Worth also returns at cornerback where he earned all-conference honors last season. Huckleby returns as a starter at safety.

“We have a lot of next-level kids all over the place,” Townsend said. “Not necessarily football kids but they are just talented athletes that we can move all over the field.”





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Ovid-Elsie Determined To Take Things To The Next Level This Season

David Cook Sports Scene

The Ovid-Elsie football team has been on a roll for over ten years, but the way last season ended left a bitter taste in the mouths of the Marauders who come into this season with plenty of determination.

Last season Ovid-Elsie qualified for the playoffs for the 10th time in the past 12 seasons. After finishing the regular season with a 7-2 record and placing second in the Mid-Michigan Athletic Conference, the Marauders opened the playoffs with a win against Almont. The next week, the season came to an abrupt end as the squad dropped a 31-28 decision to a Lansing Catholic team that reached the Division 6 state championship game.

With a solid core of players returning from that team, Ovid-

Elsie is determined to accomplish even more this season.

"I think we are going to be solid," said senior Daniel Topping a 6-foot-3, 240-pound offensive tackle and defensive end. "We bring back some explosive players and I think we are going to have a solid season. We just have to buy into our team motto, 'run it again! We are striving for perfection. We are always looking for perfection."

That sentiment is shared by senior Brock Spitzley, a 5-foot-10, 205-pound fullback.

"We want to go undefeated," Spitzley said. "That is one of our goals. We want a state championship too."

Spitzley is part of a strong group of running backs that include junior speedster Chase Fabus (5-11, 175) and sophomore Bryce Krueer (5-9, 200).

Up front, the Marauders have

a big, strong and experienced offensive line paving the way. Along with Topping at right tackle, the line is paced by right guard Logan Mason (6-2, 270) and senior left tackle Braxton O'Bryant (6-3, 275), a four-year starter. Senior Daniel Olger (6-0, 270) and junior Dylan Henning (6-0, 180) round out the offensive line.

"We're definitely very explosive," Mason said. "We are going to be able to move some people. We have some big boys for sure."

Balancing the offense for the Marauders is a potent passing game led by senior quarterback Owen Long (5-10, 175).

"Our offense is looking pretty good," Long said. "I think we will have a pretty explosive passing game and a very aggressive running game. We passed a lot more than we usually do last season and I think we will keep



throwing it this year but we can always rely on our running game also."

The passing game welcomes back some experienced receivers in senior Michael Bancroft (6-1, 185) and junior Brody Howard (5-10, 170).

"We still have some receivers back from last year and we threw the ball around pretty good last season," Howard said. "I think we are looking pretty solid on both sides of the ball."

Bancroft pointed out team chemistry was a key to success last season and sees that being a strong point this year as well.

"Last year we had great



chemistry," Bancroft said. "We need to build up the young guys and get everybody on the same page."

Junior Julian Medina (6-1, 160) and sophomore Joie Fabus (6-0, 170) are a pair of wide receivers that add even more options to the passing attack.

On defense, Mason, O'Bryant and Olger clog up the middle while Robert Kebler, Henning and Topping are at the defensive end spots. Spitzley leads a strong group of linebackers that includes Bancroft, Chase Fabus and Krueger.

The secondary returns Long at free safety, Howard at strong safety and Joie Fabus, Medina and Wyatt Lover at cornerback.

"I think that last couple years our success has kind of built our team to were we have a good foundation and culture," said Ovid-Elsie coach Travis Long. "It seems like have things rolling and we are going to keep things going. We lost some really good seniors so we have some younger guys who need to step up in some key roles but we do feel like we have a really talented squad."



Swan Valley Football Team Looking To Continue Playoff Streak This Season

David Cook Sports Scene

Consistency has been a trademark of the Swan Valley football team. For the past 13 seasons the Vikings have qualified for the state playoffs and this year's squad is primed to add to that streak.

A strong group of veterans returnees are back from a team that went 6-4 overall last season. Swan Valley started slow a year ago, dropping its first three games, before closing out the regular season with three consecutive wins before falling to Belding in the first round of the playoffs.

"We're excited," said Swan Valley coach Kevin Gavenda. "We have a lot of seniors. We've got probably five kids that are going to be three-years starters for us and that is always a good sign."

One spot that is shy on experience is at quarterback where Colton Klein has graduated after spending the past four seasons as Swan Valley's starting quarterback. Sophomore Keller Bedford, who started on the junior varsity last year as a freshman, is poised to carry on the quarterback tradition for the Vikings.

"He has a full year of jv football under his belt," Gavenda said. "We brought up to the jv to get those extra reps. We're looking forward to seeing what he can do. He had a good summer for us. It's just going to be a case of time, just getting those reps and connections with our receivers. We have two receivers who are among the best receivers in the area and a running back who can absolutely fly. Keller's job is to get the ball to those guys and see what we can do."

One of those receivers is senior Jamison Pelt (6-0, 160) who is committed to Grand Valley State. Pelt has been one of the premier receivers in mid-Michigan the past few seasons.

"I feel our offense will be pretty much as productive as last season," Pelt said. "I also feel like we will be able to run the ball better. I feel that if they are going to start bracketing me we are going to have Kam (Reynolds) on the other side and once they figure that out we are going to be able to run the ball pretty

good."

Pelt is not the only impact player Swan Valley has at receiver as junior Kamdyn Reynolds is also a big-play threat on the perimeter.

"Things are looking good," Reynolds said. "We have our new quarterback and we've been practicing all offseason. We go to the field two to three times a week and we have a really good connection."

The Vikings also have a home-run hitter at running back in Boston Beougher who set a pair of school records as a sprinter on the track team this past spring.

"I think he broke the 200 and the 100 school record this past spring," Gavenda said.

Beougher is ready for the Viking running game to step up and make an impact this season.

"I think we are going to be pretty good," Beougher said. "We have a good line. Obviously we have good wide receivers so I think we have a good all-around team this year."

The offensive line is a work in progress for the Vikings. The team is building around veteran linemen Gavin Grandy and Mikey Gerard who both started along the line last season.

"We have a couple of other guys who we are counting on to do the job," Gavenda said. "We also hoping we have a sophomore come up and fill a spot. It's a work in progress. We have enough guys who we are comfortable in, it's just who takes that step to be the guy this year."

Swan Valley also returns several key impact players on defense. Reynolds led the squad in tackles last season from his safety position and also intercepted six passes.

"We have a lot of guys back on defense," Gavenda said. "I have all sorts of confidence in our defense to cover the pass. We have to get tougher, we have to get meaner in the trenches and stop the run because when you play in the Tri-Valley that's what teams are going to look to do."

The defense will also count on a pair of linebackers who are going to be three-year

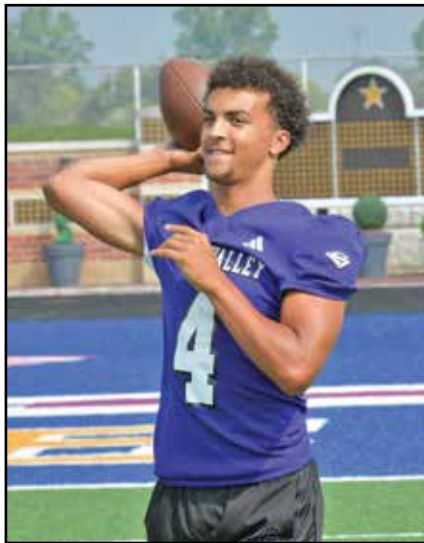


starters in Gavin Grandy and Jack Lagan.

"I think we are looking pretty good," Grandy said. "We have a lot of third-year returning seniors this year. We've all been here we've all played a lot so I think we'll be pretty good."

Up front, the Vikings are looking to Hayden Taylor to help set the edge at defensive end. Along the interior of the defensive line, the Vikings are counting on Mikey Gerard along with junior Liam Buckley (6-2, 235) who played some as a sophomore last year.

"I think we are going to be a lot smarter



and a lot more sound on defense," said Gerard. "We are pretty much all seniors on both sides of the ball and the people who aren't seniors they are pretty good athletes."

Gavenda also believes that experience will be a key for the Vikings along with the overall athletic skills of the players.

"We have a lot of older guys we can count on," Gavenda said. "It just comes down to can our physicality catch up this year to where are speed and athleticism is. We have the athletes who can make plays on both sides of the ball, we just have to be able to be more physical and set the tone up front."



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St. Louis To Lean On Size And Strength To Make An Impact On The Football This Season

David Cook Sports Scene

With the type of size along the offensive and defensive lines typically found at Division 1 and 2 schools, there is no doubt that the St. Louis Sharks will be looking to muscle their way to some wins this fall.

The Sharks, who went 3-6 overall last season and 2-3 in the league, not only have plenty of size and strength this season, but they also bring back plenty of experience.

St. Louis also brings in a new coach this season in Ben Brock who brings with him over 20 years of coaching experience in the mid-Michigan area at Shepherd, Grayling and Carson City-Crystal.

“We have some great kids and they have been learning a lot,” Brock said. “It’s really a band of brothers. It’s really a group of kids who have been very successful at wrestling and other sports when they’ve been disciplined and had

consistency in working in that sport. That’s what we’ve seen with football as these kids have come in. We’ve got nearly everyone coming in for the weight room sessions and the learning and skill sessions. Took a team camp up north to Kingsley and everybody came.”

On the offensive side of the ball, the Sharks feature a large, veteran offensive line anchored by Xander Brock (6-3, 310), a four-year varsity starter at offensive tackle who will be playing college football next year.

“We definitely at tackles we have two pretty big kids,” said Xander Brock. “We’ve got some big dudes. I’m looking forward to it. Defensively, our defensive line is about five times better than our offensive line and our offensive line is pretty good. We want to win the JPC 2 (Jack Pine Conference 2) and make a run in the playoffs. We haven’t made the playoffs in a minute.”

Fellow senior Tiger Russell (6-4, 265) is another four-year varsity

player who is primed for a big season. Russell will also be playing college football at Alma College. Senior Ryder Siefka (6-0, 205) also returns up front.

“Our offensive line will be a strength,” said coach Brock. “Normally we don’t have this kind of size at St. Louis so this is unique.”

The St. Louis backfield also boasts big-school size starting with 6-foot-6, 195-pound senior quarterback Drew Challenger who brings plenty of experience to the position.”

“I see us looking really good on offense,” Challenger said. “We’re going to be pretty dominant on the offensive side of the ball unlike past years. A lot of things have changed on offense and we should be pretty good this year. We should have a good mix of running and passing.”

Lining up behind Challenger at fullback is freshman Merrick Brock who is 5-foot-11 and 250 pounds.

“I’m excited, I’m ready,” said



Merrick Brock. “We just want to go in positive and do what we haven’t done in the past.”

At the wide receiver spots the Sharks return even more experience in seniors Michael Borie (5-11, 185), Parker Wonch (5-9, 170) and Laythan Hayworth (5-8, 160). Borie is in his fourth year of starting for the Sharks and is also looking to play college football.

“We have a completely different system this year,” said Borie. “Last year, basically, all we did was run the ball. We ran a double-wing set, so it was all just running the ball down the field. This year we are going to have a mix. We’re still going to run the ball but we will also have a lot of play action and we also have spread which we can run as well.”

Playing Division 8 football, most of the Sharks play on both offense and defense. Along the defensive line the team is looking for Xander Brock and Russell to anchor the line at the tackle spots with Merrick Brock and Challenger walling things off at the defensive end positions.

“As a team our first goal is week one,” said Russell. “We start out with Ithaca, the biggest game right there. That will be the test that we are here to play.”

The linebacking crew is led by Borie and Siefka.

“Our goal is perfection,” Siefka said. “I’m not saying we are going to be perfect, but our goals are that we are going to go farther than anybody knows. We’ve been working for the past six seven moths for this. I don’t think



anybody sees us coming. I can’t wait. It’s going to be fun.”

In the secondary, the Sharks return Hayworth and Wonch.

A senior, Hayworth likes the way the team is coming together this season.

“The chemistry of our team has come up a lot,” Hayworth said. “The timing between all of us has gotten a lot better. I feel like in previous years when adversity came up, we didn’t adapt to that well and I feel like now we’re mixing things up and adapting well and we are going to push ourselves to the next level.”

Like Hayworth, Wonch is also looking forward to hitting the field with his teammates and making some history.

“I’m feeling pretty good,” Wonch said. “I think this is the most impressive our team has ever looked with 7-on-7s and stuff. I’m really excited to get into the season. I think our defense is pretty strong too.”

Vestaburg Making The Move Back To 11-Man Football This Season

David Cook Sports Scene

Change is the name of the game at Vestaburg this season. Not only do the Wolverines have a new coach this season, but the Vestaburg program is making the transition back to 11-man football and plenty of excitement surrounds the program.

Vestaburg turned in a 3-6 record last year playing 8-man football. The Wolverines will be playing the traditional 11-man football variety for the first time since 2019 and Vestaburg head coach Julian Paksi likes what he is seeing of the squad this season.

“I think we are doing pretty well,” said Paksi, who was an assistant coach with the team last season and was also a head coach at St. Louis for three seasons. “We’ve had pretty great numbers in the weight room. I’d say we average 25 to 30 kids. There is a positive atmosphere. I’m a new coach bringing new standards and new values and bringing back old traditions. We have a huge freshman group so we are excited to have a junior varsity squad and we are moving up to 11-man football so that is even more exciting too.”

The Wolverines have the numbers to make the move to 11-man football as between 35 and 40 players opened fall camp with the squad.

Offensively, the team has been busy in the offseason putting the new system in place.

“We’ve had a real good summer offseason,” Paksi said. “I’d say we have most of our formations and plays at hand doing different camps with different teams helped. We bring back a more mobile quarterback this year and that is going to help us. We have a pretty good line that has been together for the last couple years with one freshman that is going to help us.”

Putting the Vestaburg offense in motion is junior Brehm Warczinsky. A standout, all-around athlete, Warczinsky took the year off from football last season but is back ready

to lead the offense with his blend of running skills and passing ability.

In front of Warczinsky is a veteran offensive line. Logan Griffin (6-1, 180) is a senior and four-year varsity player who is stationed at left tackle. Vic Cross is a senior lineman and returning starter at guard. Juniors Michael Caudill and Kofee Arntz also return and bring experience to the offensive line. Freshman Trent Hilding (6-0, 205) is a promising young player that will also make an impact at the center position or possibly tackle. Paksi also likes the strength gains the linemen have made in the weight room during the offseason.

Hilding is looking forward to his first year of varsity football and doing what he can to help the offensive line make the transition to 11-man football.

“I’m a little bit nervous but I hope I can fit in,” Hilding said. “I just want to help improve the offensive line the best I can. I think we can have a winning season this year if we keep working at it and keep progressing.”

At the running back positions, the Wolverines return Drew Johnston (5-6, 180) who will line up at fullback and provide the team with power running between the tackles. Freshman Lucas Warczinsky will also see action at running back where he will showcase his playmaking skills.

While Johnston feels like the team will be solid running the ball, he is also looking forward to what Warczinsky brings to the offense with his ability to keep opposing defenses off balance with his playmaking skills as a runner and a passer.

“I feel a very good strong point will be our quarterback Brehm,” Johnston said. “He’s a lefthanded quarterback and nobody really knows what he is going to do. That’s kind of nice because he is unpredictable.”

Defensively, the team has been picking up the new concepts well. A number of talented linebackers return to headline the defense.

Junior Brady Stratton (5-8, 175) is back at an outside linebacker with Griffin and Johnston also returning at linebacker.

Making the transition to 11-man football has required plenty of preparation and Griffin sees the team making progress in preparing for the season.

“We really just want to get everything down going into 11-man this year,” Griffin said. “Working together will be a key for us to be successful this year and we’ve been really coming together.”

Stratton is also excited about the move back to 11-man football.

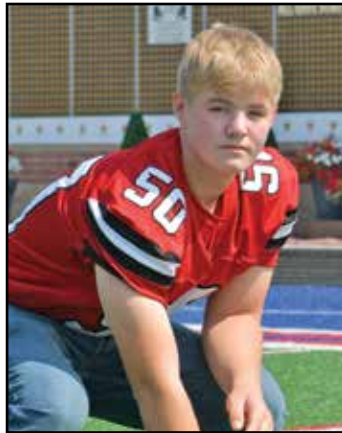
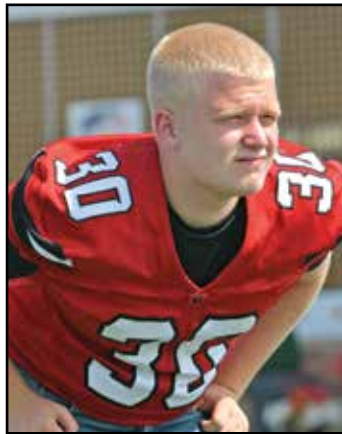
“It feels really nice being part of this team,” Stratton said, “that’s the first group since my cousin played for us to be in 11-man football. It’s a great group of kids to be moving back up with. Great teammates and really good attitudes.”

In the secondary, Brehm Warczinsky is stationed at free safety.

The Wolverines also have some solid building blocks along the front line led by sophomore Blake Rasmussen who saw extensive playing time last year as a freshman. Caudill returns to anchor the line at a defensive end position.

The Wolverines also have a pair of freshmen who will make an impact on defense in cornerback Lucas Genowski and Lucas Warczinsky who will be at outside linebacker.

“One thing that was great about moving up to 11 man is that we got to pick and choose our schedule,” Paski said. “We got a good even-



playing for us. We are not playing anyone who has been dominant but teams that are fair for us to compete with. It’s going to be a nice first year getting back into 11-man.”

The home fans will also get plenty of opportunities to see the team this year as Vestaburg has six home games on the schedule kicked

off with the home opener against Manton on Aug. 29. The three road games on the schedule are at Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart, which is also making the move up to 11-man football this season, at Dansville and at Detroit University Prep Science and Math.





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Central Montcalm Looking To Build Off Memorable Football Season

David Cook Sports Scene

The Central Montcalm football team turned in one of its best seasons in school history last fall and the Hornets have been putting in the work for a repeat performance.

Central Montcalm turned in an 8-1 record during the regular season last year and were 4-0 in the conference. The Hornets then won their first playoff game since 2007 before falling 35-34 to Newaygo in round two. While a number of key players have graduated, the Hornets have a solid core of veterans returning.

“We have a lot of potential,” said Central Montcalm coach Scott Cripe. “I think as much if not more potential than we’ve ever had. We’ve got returning players from last year which was the most successful season we’ve had in the past 25 years or so. We just have to

make sure the guys coming up will fill the gaps we need to fill.”

Overall, a total of 14 seniors graduated from last year’s squad.

On offense, the Hornets feature senior running back McCoy Wernholm (5-10, 200) who rushed for over 800 yards last season.

“Hopefully I can rush for over 1,000 yards,” Wernholm said. “I definitely put in a lot more conditioning than last year and I did a lot of weight training. It will be a learning experience for a lot of our offensive linemen but I think they will do pretty good this year.

At quarterback, senior Zayne Cooper (6-0, 180) and junior Haiden MacLaren are in the mix. A pair of excellent all-around athletes, the pair will be on the field at both times as whoever is not taking snaps at quarterback will be seeing playing time at wide receiver. Both quarterbacks are strong dual-threat athletes with

their passing and running skills.

“I think things are looking pretty good,” Cooper said. “Our offensive line is going to have to step up and we have most of our receivers back. I’m at quarterback and I’m going to have to step up too. I think I can lead the team and get everybody the ball and get them involved in the game. I think we are going to be good this year.”

The receiving corps also brings back senior Brayden Peak (5-11, 145) along with senior Jamison Johns (6-0, 170).

The offensive line is anchored by imposing senior Colton Kahler (6-4, 300) who brings plenty of power to the line. Look for seniors Chris Campbell-Boire (6-4, 275) and Reed DeLamater (6-0, 250) to also fill key roles along the front line.

“It will definitely be different,” Kahler said. “We are a lot younger than we have been in the past. We’ve always had a lot of upper



classmen and this year we only have one upperclassman starter returning. It will be interesting to see where we all get put and how we all impact the team. I think my role will definitely be to be the leader between the offensive and defensive lines.”

On the defensive side of the ledger, McCoy is back to head up the linebacking crew.

The secondary will be a strong point with the return of Peak and Cooper who are a pair of all-regional defensive backs. Johns is a returning all-conference player at safety.

“We just have to work hard for sure,” Peak said. “We have to make sure we play some good defense. We will have to provide some good leadership on defense. We’re looking pretty good. I think offense will be a strong point and I think we can do even more on offense this year.”

Up front, look for Kahler to anchor the defensive line along with help from DeLamater.

Central Montcalm suffered the bulk of its graduation losses on the defensive side of the ball.

“We are going to have to have guys step up,” Cripe said. “Pretty much every other position is going to be open on defense. We’re going to have to have people step it up another level, another notch. We are going to have to have our senior returners lead the way with

their experience last year. We need to have that success from last year carry over. Senior leadership is going to be big.”

Cripe looks for his Hornets to be among the teams contending for the league title in what should be a close conference title chase.

“I think it is going to be wide open,” Cripe said. “Kent City has a lot of guys coming back. Lakeview is going to be a lot better. Beyond that it’s going to be pretty wide open.”

Central Montcalm faces a challenging schedule this season as it opens up with four consecutive road games before coming home for five straight homes games. The Hornets open the regular season at Houghton Lake on August 28 and then travels to Newaygo for a rematch of their playoff defeat on September 5.

Alma Football To Have A New Look This Season As New Coach Steps In

David Cook Sports Scene

The Alma football team will have a new look this season as Mike Allison takes over the reigns for the Panthers.

Allison, who was a defensive backs coach at Alma College last season, is familiar with the Panther program as he previously coached the offensive line at Alma. Allison has also been an offensive coordinator at Montabella and had head coaching experience at Newaygo.

One of the first things Allison is looking to establish at Alma is the right attitude.

“We want the guys to be playing for each other,” Allison said. “We want them to sacrifice for their teammates and do things

the right way. We want great effort and we want our kids believing in each other.”

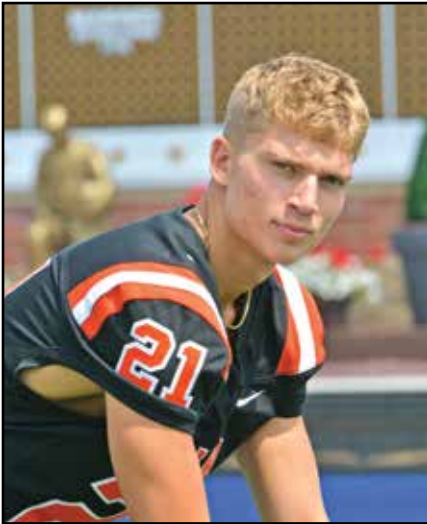
A trio of senior veterans return to help the new coaching staff get established this season.

Senior Cameron Ryckman (6-1, 165) returns at right tackle on offense and defensive end.

“I feel like we have a lot of potential,” Ryckman said. “If we keep doing what we are doing we will make a lot of progress.”

Senior RJ Bielaga (5-8, 155) returns at wide receiver on offense and heads up the defensive secondary at safety.

“I see so much more progress this season,” Bielaga said. “We just have to stay together and play as a team. I think this year we have



great teamwork and togetherness.”

Senior Mateo Castillo (5-7, 155) will be a focal point of the offense at his running back position and plays defensive back on defense.

“We are heading in the right direction for sure,” Castillo said. “It’s exciting to see how the coaching staff pushes us to become better.”

The Panthers also welcome back starters Gavin McConnell, a junior, at wide receiver and defensive back, Matt Reihel and AJ Stone at both offensive and defensive line, Canyon Godfrey at offensive line and junior Kias Martin at defensive back.





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Returning Veterans Have Breckenridge Football Set For Strong Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Last year, with a young squad, the Breckenridge Huskies started the season slow but came on strong during the second half. This year, with a strong core of veterans to build around, the Huskies are poised for improvement.

Breckenridge opened the season with an 0-5 mark last fall before winning three of their final four games. That veteran core is set to continue that momentum to start this season.

"2024 saw the likes of a three-game winning streak for us," said Breckenridge coach Isaac Gregory. "We played a state semifinalist team in Onekama to end the

season, and were in a one-score game right until the end. We are hoping to finish those games on the other side of the ledger this fall."

The Huskies will miss a pair of key graduated seniors this year in Maddax McCaw and Zander Mapes.

"Maddax McCaw played for us for four years and will be greatly missed," Gregory said. "He was extremely coachable and worked hard. Zander Mapes played for three years. He came back to us for his senior year, and he contributed mightily to our improvement last year."

This season, the squad is led by senior Trey Most who will line

up at wide receiver and defensive back.

"Trey is a returning all-stater whom has been all-region on both sides of the football," said Gregory. "He is hungry and will see lots of time with the football."

Most is excited to get the season going and see how the team builds on the success of the second half of last season.

"I'm feeling pretty good this year," Most said. "I'm feeling the most confident I've been since my freshman year. That year we went 7-2 and made the playoffs and we are trying to get back to that."

Up front, senior Braxton Clapp anchors the offensive line and is a linebacker on defense.

"Braxton is a returning two-time all-conference lineman," Gregory said. "He hopes to show off his abilities this year as he has worked to become one of the most dominant 8-man linemen in the area."

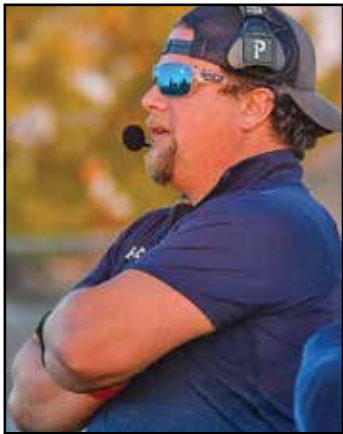
Clapp also has high expectations for this season and likes the look of the offensive line.

"Every single one of our offensive linemen is back so our run game should be ever better than last year," Clapp said. "Definitely running the ball with be a strong point on offense. Our defense really didn't lose much so we should be pretty good on defense."

Putting the Breckenridge offense in motion is sophomore quarterback Gavin Corbat who plays defensive end on defense.

"Gavin is a three-sport star," Gregory said. "He leads the team with swagger and composure, and we are fortunate to have him."

Corbat started at quarterback



last year and the year of experience will pay dividends this season.

"I think going into last year all around we were a pretty inexperienced team not having much varsity experience," Corbat said. "I think this year returning almost all of our starters and a really good wide receiver corps, a really good running game and offensive line we should be better in that aspect."

Several more starters also return for Breckenridge including Braiden Long at guard and Christian Dutton at center. Long will also play along the defensive line. Noah Barr and Blaze Snyder will see action at tight end on offense. Barr and Snyder are also linebackers on defense. Isaac Bush will be a key part of the ground game at running back. Bush will also see action at defensive end while Jadon DeLong is back at linebacker on defense.

With the talent it has on hand, Breckenridge is aiming for a winning season and a spot in the state playoffs.

"We expect to compete for a playoff spot," Gregory said. "While the road there is difficult, if we stay healthy, we will be in the conversation to be playing football past week 9."

Although small in number with 11 players on the team, Gregory likes the makeup of the squad.

"We have great leadership," Gregory said. "We are fortunate to have a lot of continuity built up the past couple years. We need to



make that leap into the next tier of team chemistry if we want to be successful."

Gregory expects the chase for the league title to be a competitive one.

"Montabella will be rich with talent for the foreseeable future, and their staff does an incredible job with tapping into that," Gregory said. "Merrill combining with Ashley certainly makes for a tough team to face as well. That group combined has a lot of team speed. Coleman brings back some talent at every position group, and they've really found their identity the past couple of years. St. Charles and Carson City both bring in new coaches, and those groups of kids will be tough outs, both have some very solid athletes. We hope to compete with everyone in our division, and whoever wins this championship will surely have earned it."

Large Group Of Returning Players Has Hemlock Football Poised For Improvement

David Cook Sports Scene

While the Hemlock football team graduated some key players from last year's squad, a large group of returning players has the Huskies determined to increase the win total this season.

Hemlock turned in a 2-7 overall record last season and were 1-4 in conference play. The Huskies were led by all-state players in quarterback Chad Brown and running back Landon Zastrow. While those two standouts are gone, the Huskies have a large group of veterans back.

"We've had an excellent offseason," said Hemlock coach Jamie Slate. "We did an entire leadership speaker series. We've had over 2,000 workouts attended, we are far and beyond what we've been doing in terms of offseason workout attendance. This group is really a football group."

While Zastrow will be missed at running back, the Huskies have plenty of backs ready to step up and the team is looking to run the ball more.

"We have a stable full of ballcarriers," Slate said. "We are getting away from the spread and starting to look at more option-based football. It will completely change the way we attack games and this group is excited about it and ready to go."

Leading the group of running backs are senior Steven Katzenberger (6-0, 180) along with juniors Drew Genow (5-6, 160) and Kayden Kapka (6-1, 190). The Huskies also have a pair of promising sophomore backs ready to contribute in Markus Plowdon and Braden Stanard (5-9, 175).

"I feel like we are looking good," Katzenberg said. "We've had a good offseason and we've been working hard at practice getting down the new offense and working on new

things."

At quarterback, the Huskies have the luxury of two players capable of handling the starting duties. Juniors Gavin Schmidt and Wyatt Launstein are both challenging for the starting duties. Schmidt was set to be the junior varsity quarterback last season before breaking his leg in a scrimmage and missing the season. Launstein then stepped in and quarterbacked the team turning in a big season.

Paving the way for the running backs is a veteran group of linemen. Senior Tim Reid (5-7, 160) returns along with junior Sean Grove (6-1, 215) and seniors Nathan Gohr (6-1, 190), Trevan Swanson (5-10, 170) and Wyatt Scales (5-10, 240).

"We have yet to determine who are top five are on the offensive line," Slate said. "We've got a pretty good group of eight or nine guys competing for those spots. With our new scheme I think it fits are size as we are not overwhelmingly large, but we are very athletic and move well."

Grove also likes how he sees the offensive line coming together.

"I think we will be good," Grove said. "I've worked out with the entire offensive line all summer and I think there has been only one or two who have missed a couple. We know what were doing and we are showing up and doing the work we need."

Reid believes that the Huskie offensive line will really excel at run blocking.

"I think we will be a lot better at running the ball and moving the ball down the field," Reid said. "With the coaches, new strategy of using the triple option I feel more confident this year. I think it will do well and I enjoy the change."

Defensively, the Huskies are looking to utilize their speed and athleticism.



Katzenberger returns to head up the defense from his linebacker position where he earned honorable-mention, all-state honors last season.

"We're going to be really fast on defense," Katzenberger said. "We have a lot of linebackers so I think we can really control the middle of the field. We have some safeties and corners that can really play defense."

Genow also earned all-region honors for his play at defensive back last season. Launstein, an all-around athlete, will also play a key role in the secondary.

"This season will be a lot better than last season," Genow said. "I think coaches have put a lot into this offseason getting us better, getting us right. There's been a lot of dudes who have shown up and have put that work in so we are going to be a lot better as a team."

Up front, the defensive line is looking for Reid, Grove, Scales and Swanson to contribute. Kapka and Gohr will also see time at linebacker.


"I think our defense for sure will be a strong point," Kapka said. "I

think our linebacking corps and defensive line will be really good against the run. I'm excited for that. We want to control the ball on offense and put points on the board and on defense stopping the run."


The defense will be put to the test early as Hemlock opens the season with Essexville-Garber

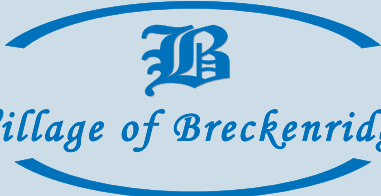
and Cass City before getting into conference play were the powerful ground games of Ithaca and Michigan Lutheran Seminary loom along with the prolific passing attack of Saginaw Nouvel. The Huskies wrap up the regular season with non-league games against Lakeview and Mt. Morris as they look to earn a playoff berth.







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Coleman Bids For Another Winning Season

John Raffel Sports Scene

Coleman High School coach Chad Klopff's team had a 5-4 record last season.

Highlights were week 2, "retaining the Tractor Trophy in our rivalry game against Vestaburg (60-34). Defeating Breckenridge on the road week four, which started a stretch of 4 straight victories and gave us a chance to compete for a conference championship. Top Moment: 36-28 victory over Merrill. Merrill scored to tie the game with less than 2 minutes to go in the 4th quarter. We moved down the field with great composure, overcame a holding call, and took the lead with about a minute left in the game. OnMerrill's first play from scrimmage on the next series Colin

Stockero intercepted a pass to seal the victory."

Key players:

Jared DeVrieze (Trine Commit) "Jared was a hard-nosed player for us. He was injured in the



scrimmage, but battled back in week 2. Jared rarely came off the field playing running back and receiver on offense and linebacker on defense. Jared made many big plays for us on both sides of the ball, leading the team in rushing, receiving, scoring and tackles.

Colin Stockero (Olivet Commit) "Colin was one of our top targets in our passing game, a key in our return game and also lead the team in interceptions. His steady improvement over the past few years and commitment to make himself better are everything coaches look for in a student-athlete.

Zach MacPhee "was a multiple year starter at center. One of the most if not most important position on the field for us. He improved himself as a blocker each year and was key in our offense running smoothly and correctly."

Travis Murray (Cleary Baseball Commit) "Travis has been a mainstay at middle linebacker for us for many years. His leadership and effort on the field stood out among the rest. At fullback or tight end, his blocking was important to our team's success."

Logan Glazier, SR., QB/DB: "I have high expectations for Logan on both sides of the ball for us this year. He had a few seniors that he could look to last year, but this year, he is that senior that others will be looking at for leadership and guidance on and off the field. He has done a tremendous job with our passing game in the past, and I

look for him to add to that as well as increase his production in our running game. Logan is our main returner in the back end of our defense and he will be called on to shut down other teams passing attacks as well."

Aden Aultman, SR. TE/OLB/P: Aden has been a key contributor in all three phases of the game. He is a big target that can play with his hand in the dirt or can split out and be a match up nightmare for many defenses. On defense he plays our outside linebacker/defensive end hybrid spot and will be in charge of containing the other teams running game and getting to the quarterback. Aden is also a tremendous punter and has helped us win games by flipping the field often over the past few years. Expectation are high for Aden this season.

Dakota Lattimer, Sr. G/DT: "Dakota will be expected to do everything he has been doing the past three seasons. Getting across the line of scrimmage and causing issues for the other team's offense. Dakota also will start on the offensive line and will be a big part of our offenses success."

Brayden Schrank, Sr. WR/LB: "Brayden has been a two-way starter for us at receiver and outside linebacker in the past, he will be looked at to move to the inside on defense and help lock down other team's run games."

Dominic Lawrence, JR. RB/DB: "Dominic has been part of the two man run game in the past with Jared DeVrieze, and now will be called on to carry the full load. He is more than capable as we have seen it when Jared was out with injury. Dom will also be looked at on the defensive side playing as a DB or LB."

Adam Muddiman, SR. OL/DL: "Adam will be a major part in how well the offense goes this year, as well as being called on to take some reps on the defensive line as well.

Parker Klopff, SO. WR/DB: "Parker contributed nicely at receiver last year during his two to three quarters of work on varsity. Logan trusts him as a route runner and ask for him to have time with the varsity last year as a freshman. With that time under his belt now, he has high expectations for filling the shoes of our top receivers from last season."

Kendon Bock, JR. RB/OLB: "Kendon has proven on JV and his time last year on varsity that he can be a handful for other team's offenses off the edge. He will be expected to continue to hold his ground and be a large contributor on the defensive side of the ball."

"We also have a nice group of players who were role players or moving up from the JV team that will be major contributors as well: Jair Martinez, SR. RB/DB, Joaquin Campbell, SR. OL/DL, Brayden Wright, SO. RB/LB, Donovan Potter, JR. OL/DL, Haydn Naylor, JR. OL/DL, Asher Hess, JR. OL/DL, Carson Hall, JR. LB, Cael Waterman, JR. WR/K.

"Despite having to replace some major pieces due to graduations, the expectations with this team are still very high. We put ourselves in a position to play for a conference championship a year ago, so anything short of that this year would be lowering our expectations," Klopff said.]

"Our team's strength will one be in our experience. The transition and learning curves of moving to the 8-man game are well behind



Parker Klopff hopes to have a strong season for Coleman.

us now, and many of our players have years of experience. We will have strong play at quarterback and on both sides the line, as well as from our receivers and defensive backs. We will need to get back to a focus on running the football successfully and solidifying our linebacker play."

In the league:

"I would put the overall MSAC conference up there with one of the toughest in the state top to bottom. Montabella is the top of the Blue Division until they get knocked off, but teams like Merrill and Breckenridge are always tough and competing to be at the top. With Carson City-Crystal and St. Charles always tough games the MSAC Blue is stacked. Plus, having to play cross over games against some of the

best in the state in Morrice, St. Patrick and Fulton doesn't make for much slow down. I feel that our team can compete week in and week out and we will push to compete for a conference championship," Klopff said.

Laingsburg Hopes To Be CMAC Contender

John Raffel Sports Scene

Brian Borgman has been head football coach at Laingsburg since 2002 and is expecting another strong season

He has a career record of 125-96 and is a science teacher at Laingsburg High School

•Assistant coaches: Jon Cecil, Dan Blemaster, Jacob Chambers, Cedric Ford and Julio Caceres.

He has seven returning starters on offense and seven on defense.

Seniors on offense are linemen Joe DeShone, Adam Kazor

and Dylan Koenig, wide receivers Leandro-Dolega Caceres and Liam Esch;and running

back Waylon Rowley and junior halfback Collin Logghe.

On defense are senior defensive end Joe Deshone, defensive lineman Adam Kazor, senior linebacker Dylan Koenig and defensive backs Leandro-Dolega Cacereski and Liam Esch and senior defensive back Waylon Rowley. Junior defensive end is

Collin Logghe.

There's also juniors Landon Freeman and Harrison Dorman, junior offensive and defensive lineman Cooper Moor and sophomore quarter Cooper Morr.

"It's an extremely tight group of guys who care and play for one another. We have been lifting extremely hard in the offseason

and all returners have made significant gains in the weight room," Borgman said.

"We have to stay healthy with lower numbers this season than last. Early games with PW andvFowler will determine our chances of repeating as CMAC champions like we did in 2022, Borgman said.



Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart Excited For Move Back To 11-Man Football

David Cook Sports Scene

Over the past few football seasons, Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart experienced plenty of success playing 8-man football. This year, the clock is turned back as the Irish are returning to 11-man football and are excited about the move.

"We're excited," said Sacred Heart coach Josh Wheaton. "It's always been the goal ever since I took over the job three years ago. We had a five-year plan to bring back 11-man football. We needed to be at a certain number to be able to play 11-man and once we reached that number we decided to do it. We are a little bit below where we'd like to be but with the type of kids that we have we knew we were ready to make the move."

The Irish have a solid core of veterans to lean on as they make

the move to 11-man football.

Sacred Heart is especially solid in the trenches led by senior two-way lineman Brendan Ervin (6-3, 305) who is stationed at left tackle on offense and defensive tackle on defense.

"I think that our offensive line is one of the best in Division 8," Ervin said. "We have a lot of experience and a lot of size."

Senior Caleb Strauch (6-1, 270) also returns to the lines and likes what he sees on the offensive side of the ball.

"We have a lot of strength up front," Strauch said. "We like to run a lot of power on offense and I think we have one of the best running backs around."

That running back is senior Teegan Duffy (5-9, 150). Duffy rushed for over 650 yards last season and with a big, powerful

and experienced line paving the way an even more productive season is in the cards.

"I'm so confident in our guys up front," Duffy said. "With the offensive line we have I can run for days. I'm hoping to get over 1,000 yards this season."

Sacred Heart has a new face at quarterback but it's a player familiar with the position. Junior Nathan Siler (6-3, 180) played tight end last season but played quarterback in the past and is looking forward to running the offense this season. Siler will also play cornerback on defense.

"Moving to quarterback will be an easy switch," Siler said. "We have some nice athletes on offense and that will make it a smooth transition. With Teegan at running back and the line we have that will help out a lot."



The Irish also have plenty of veterans returning at the receiver positions. Senior Brody Collin (5-9, 150) will be at wide receiver and cornerback. Sophomore Jacob Morrison (5-10, 155) is also at receiver and safety while freshman Leelynd Martinez (6-4, 190) is a wide receiver and linebacker.

The Irish also return starters in senior Nico Vasquez and juniors Levi Lynch and Marin Ite.

Newcomers looking to step up include juniors Hank MacDonald and Joey Endres, sophomore Zack Simon and freshmen Maxin Lynch and Walt MacDonald.



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John Raffel Sports Scene

Exciting QB Leads Way For Evart

Evart will have one of the top Division 3 quarterbacks in the state this season with Aidan Anderson.

The 2024 record was 6-4. Big win came in week 9 against Harrison with a game winning field goal as time expired.

Key graduates: Kaleb McKay, Lucas Johnson, Noah Vanderlinde, Gabe Mitchell, Dryson Derscheid, Joseph Mosher-Kunin, "really all of that senior class was a great group of leaders. They worked hard and were great role models for our younger athletes," coach Ben Bryant said.

"Aidan Anderson will be leading our offense at the quarterback position again. Heading into his senior season, he is one of the best QBs in the state,Kaleb Maxfield and Teijin Wing are key returning starters on the offensive line. Kade Morgan, Brendan Magnusson, and Kam Swales were all key contributors who are returning for their junior year.

"We aim to get better everyday and put ourselves in a good position come the end of the year. We should be able to move the ball offensively again. With AA returning at quarterback it allows us to be very creative on that side of the ball. Obviously we need to improve on the defensive side of the ball. Kayleb Maxfield had a great off season, look for him to anchor us defensively."

As for the Highland Conference, "Our conference is strong as usual. Beal City returns a load of players from their state championship team, McBain returns a load of really good players on both the offensive and defensive lines, Pine River will be much improved, and the rest of the league has new coaches who have stirred some excitement up in their



Aidan Anderson will be one of the top quarterbacks in the state.

communities. The league should be fun and I see is pushing to be in the top echelon."

Bryant added: "We are happy to have Anthony Vindel back with us after having to take last season off due to an injury. He will fill vital roles on both sides of the ball for us."

Harrison Hopes To Improve From 7-3 Record

It was a fun season for the Harrison Hornets in 2024 when they went to the state playoffs, finished with a 7-3 record and won the smaller division of the Jack Pine Conference.

During the summer, coach Jamie Lipovskh was getting his team ready for the 2025 campaign.

Harrison football coach Jamie Lipovsky was able to use 7-on-7 passing camps over the summer to his advantage.

"It's been busy," Lipovsky said in mid-July as summer football was coming to a close. "We met 15 times for lifting and some 7-on-7 stuff. It's been busy. It's been a good turnout with the kids so far."

Harrison opens the season at Pine River. "Some of our underclassmen will be leading our team and we'll expect them to pick up, Lipovsky said. "We lost some really good seniors and we need (the underclassmen) to play good ball."

That factor makes summer even more important, Lipovsky agreed, rather than relying on 2 1/2 weeks of practice prior to the first game. "You can't miss it, you have to be ready to go."

Key players for Harrison include quarterback Matt Latunski.

As a sophomore quarterback, "I threw the ball well when I needed to," Latunski said. "We had a good run game"

Latunski said he's improved "a lot" this year. "I've gotten faster, too, so I can run the ball too."

Latunski feels he is also a good passing quarterback.

"The key is your feet and how you move your feet," he said.

Latunski has a lot of confidence in Harrison's receivers.

Senior Hunter LaFevé earned all-state honorable mention honors for Harrison's football team and is eager to be on the field for the 2025 season, which starts at LeRoy Pine River on Aug. 28.

LaFevé usually plays tackle on offensive and defense.

"This year I might play some tight end and linebacker," he said after a summer 7-on-7 pass camp. "On run offense, I'm pretty good with the run blocking. I have a lot of power beyond

what I can do."

Chippewa Hills Returns Key Players

Hunter McGuire, senior, quarterback "returns to lead our team as a returning All-Region/Pioneer," Chippewa Hills coach Mark PeLong said. "He will also see extensive time at defensive back for us this season too.

Clay Farrell- Junior RB/LB. "Clay was a 2-way starter for us last year and will be the same this season," PeLong said.

Jase McArthur-JuniorSlot/Safety. "Jase will be a 2-way starter for us this season."

Kyle Dagley-JuniorTE. "Started every game at TE for us last season.

Roger Bowman-Senior LB. "Roger will be a key factor in our defense."

"We look to improve on last season's win/loss record and compete in the

CSAA," PeLong said. "Senior leadership will be a strength for this year's team. We have a number of starters on both sides of the ball returning."

In the CSAA, "Big Rapids, Tri-County and Reed City are the favorites."

Clare Football Team Looking Strong Again

Clare's football team is hoping to be a factor in the football Jack Pine Conference again this fall.

Coach Steve Spranger's team will make its debut on Aug. 28 at Grayling in a non conference game.

For the first week "we've done our normal camp," Spranger said. "We try to schedule it where we feel we can avoid the heat as best we can. It's nice not worrying about the weather because we also have the Turf room. We just concluded our first week with an intrasquad scrimmage and are ready to go this week."

Jacob Halicek will be a two-way returner at wide receiver and cornerback.

"He's done a great job for us," Spranger said. "Brendan Burton (nose guard/tight end) is back to his natural position at linebacker. We expect him to improve as far as defense goes and be a vocal leader. Dane Alexander has done a great job of manning the snaps at quarterback so far this summer. Those are the main ones on guys coming back and guys who will be contributors"

Grayling "is a new coach and new team," Spranger said. "We're just focusing now on what we've got. When we get the scrimmage tape we'll dive in on Grayling."

Ogmewa Heights is the returning division champs.

"They probably bring the most back so I would consider them the favorite," Spranger

said. "Gladwin is always tough. Standish will be physical. Shepherd returns a lot of young guys and Bullock Creek is massive. Every single week will be a tough outing for us."

Farwell Football Making Progress

Farwell's football program continues to fight its way back to respectability.

"We went 2-7 in the 2024 season. It was our first season back in 11-man football since the 2020 season," coach Travis Waddell said. "Many of our players had either never played 11-man football or had not played since they were in the youth. This transition for the players was evident, however we began playing some of our best football later on in the season.

"Week 2 we had a great win up in Harbor Springs. Week 9 we also had a good victory over Detroit Osborn scoring 54 points in the win. Our JV team also played really well on the season compiling a 7-2 record."



Farwell coach Travis Waddell has his team competing in 11-player football the second straight season.

Key Farwell players this year will be Captains Asher Yarhouse (Senior TE) and Zane Hanna (Senior RB).

In addition, players like Shane Campbell (Senior G), Evan Lease (Senior G) Vince Osborn (Senior T) and Michael Frasure (Senior T) will anchor the offensive line.

Newcomers on the offensive line such as Juniors Cooper Stover, Devin Doty, Hunter Miller, Gage Crockett, Blake Larson and Chase Armstrong will be huge contributors on both sides of the ball.

"On the outside joining Yarhouse we have returning wide receiver Dylan Mitchell (Senior) and Gabe Hale

(Senior) along with newcomers Triston Szott (Senior) Rylee Sprague (Senior) Blake Sholes (Junior) and Nolan Jarczyński (Junior)," Waddell said. "In the backfield joining Hanna we have returners Marcus Hunzinker (Junior) and Haiden Robinson (Senior) and newcomers

(Juniors) Hunter Edlin, and Ayden Barkley. Starting at QB will be Sophomore Mason Esterline

Tri County Eyes Another Playoff Season

Making the playoffs for the sixth time in seventh year was a highlight. Big wins were Comstock Park, Grant, Chip Hills and Kent City.

From last season, according to coach Phil Butler:

"Preston Piefer-DE for us and was a vocal part of our Defense. He will be missed big time."

"Byrce Reed-RB was all conference and all region RB. He was big play guy for us"

Key players for Tri County comments from Butler:

Jayden Button-WR/DB. "He is a big piece for us this year. He will play WR and DB and is our leader on both sides of the ball. He will be very physical."

Vaughn Veltman-QB/DB.."we are going to go as he goes. He plays with a chip on his shoulder and has a great IQ of the game."

Micah Halstead-OL/DL. "He is our left tackle and we will run our offense through him. He is big 6 ft 4 and 280 pounds."

Jordan Riva-OL/DL-"Jordan is going to be a big piece for us on both sides of the ball."

Chase Keller-RB/DB. "He is a scat back that runs with power and Quickness. He is a big play guy for us."

Grayson Butler-WR/DB "he has very good ball skills and makes plays around the ball."

Wilson Sixbury-"Emotional leader and playmaker. Good things happen when he is around the ball on both sides."

Brendan Carson-OL/DL "Very physical and tough. He gets to the ball defense and is a very good Oline for us."

Butler likes what he sees of his team.

"If we stay healthy we should be very competitive this year. We have a lot of leadership and veteran players. We will focus on one game at a time," Butler said.

"OLine and Dline all have a ton of experience. We don't have a ton of players so depth may be an issue."

In the CSAA, "Big Rapids and Reed City are the top dogs to knock off. They have great coaches and players," Butler said.

Merrill Coach In His 11th Season

Christian Wiley is head varsity football coach in his 11th Year and 29th year of Coaching Football at Merrill. He has a 62-36 record.

Key returning athletes:

Grant Marlow, OL, DL, Senior - "Has a great motor. Hard working player. Very selfless."

Harry Ayotte, QB, LB, Junior - "Harry is our team leader and has all the intangibles that you want in a football player. He is a ferocious hitter on defense and has a cannon for an arm on offense. He is 6'1 and 195 lbs and has been

clocked at 4.7 in the 40 yard dash multiple times. We have had many great All-State Quarterbacks at Merrill and we believe Harry is the next in line to step and lead the Vandals to success."

Jaxson Garchow, RB, DB, Junior - "Jaxson is moving from WR to the RB position this year. He is a natural fit for the backfield. He hits the whole hard, has great speed, and can cut on a dime. He is poised to have a big year as our lead back."

Xavier Aguado, OL, DL, Junior - "Xavier plays low and isn't afraid to battle it out in the trenches. We are looking for big things out of him as our nose tackle."

Lincoln Ordway, OL, DE, Junior - "At 6'3 and 235 lbs he has the frame of a College Lineman. He also has great speed for a player this big. He will be a key component to our offensive line."

Hunter Wiley, WR, DB, Sophomore - "Hunter has some of the best hands on the team and runs great routes. He is also one of the hardest working players on the team. He will take on a much bigger role in our offense for his sophomore season."

Key New athletes:

Collin Buckley, WR, DB, Junior - "Collin has great hands and is shifty. When he plants he can change direction on a dime. We expect big things out of him in our offense."

Will Long, WR, DB, Senior - "Will is new to the team but is expected to make big contributions immediately. He will be our #1 WR and we will look to him often for big plays."

Robert Kral, S, LB, TE, WR, RB, Backup QB, Senior - "Robert is one of the most versatile players you can get in the game of football. If you had a team of 8 Robert's, you would win a lot of football games. We will use him all over the field and expect big things from him this season."

Gibby Jason, OL, LB, Senior - "Gibby is our big guy in the middle. At 6' 1 and 245 lbs he gives us some size and strength up front. He will be a leader for us on both sides of the ball."

Jacob Mattilla-Gonzales, DE, RB, Sophomore - "Jacob is one of two sophomores on the team. Despite being young, he is the 2nd strongest player on our team. He has a relentless motor and will give opposing linemen fits as he pursues the QB for us from the defensive end position this year."

Tristan Ringle, TE, DE, Junior - "Tristan is another high motor player. He chases plays down constantly and never seems to get tired. On the offensive side of the ball he will anchor the edge of our offensive line from the TE position. We look forward to using him in our passing game as well as he is sneaky fast and has good hands.

"We fully expect to compete for a league championship and make a run in the playoffs. Losing three one touchdown games last year left a bad taste in our mouths and our kids are hungry to get back on the field and compete. We have had a great summer of preparation and our ready to start the season.

"We have size, speed, strength, experience and a great hard working attitude. I think we will be able to run the ball consistently and take advantage of one on one matchups in the passing game. We also have just enough depth to give players breaks at each position which will help us stay fresh as the game wears on.

"The biggest thing we will need to focus on is the mental side of the game. Staying focused on our goals and not getting down when things don't go our way. Football is an emotional game, we have to be able to handle the ups and downs of the game as it wears on.

"Our conference is one of the best in the state. It is extremely competitive every year and this year is no different. Montabella won the conference last year and returns many really good players. Coleman also has some good players coming back. With that being said, we fully expect to compete for the league title this season. It is our #1 goal and we believe we have the team to do it.

"This season we have 5 players from Ashley that have joined the Merrill Vandal Football team. Will Long, Robert Kral, Gibby Jason, Tristan Ringle, and Brady Nierescher. Back in the Spring the Ashley AD approached us about them playing football with us. They were not going to have enough players to field a team and had 3 seniors that were going to lose out on playing football their senior year. We were not going to allow that to happen.

"Our players and school have welcomed them from the start and it has been a very smooth transition. They have been practicing with us all summer and are fluent with the Vandal Football program. Since we had 5 home games this year we decided that we would play one game over at Ashley so the seniors would get one more chance to play at a homecoming game for their fans.

"In addition to the players, all three Ashley Coaches have joined our staff. Kevin Saylor, Jake Schmidt and Rick Weisbarth have been with us all summer adding even more experience to our Coaching Staff. We have never had so much experience and knowledge on one staff at one time. With 7 full time coaches and 3 part time coaches our kids are getting a ton of one on one attention. We are extremely excited about this partnership and look forward to them taking the field with us this season."

Fowler Expected To Contend Again

Fowler High School football coach John Spicer expects to have a team ready to contend for titles again this season.

The team last season was 12-1, state semifinalist, and league titlists/

Key graduates were Jacob Halfmann, 3-year QB. Alex Halfman 3-year starter on defensive line, K position.

Key players are:

Sr LB/H Back Trevor Spicer, Sr OL/DL Joe Epkey, Sr OL/DL Ethan Humphrey. Sr QB/OLB Dylan Pline, Sr WR/DB Levi Travis, Sr RB/DB Colt Nobach.

"Trevor, Joe, Ethan, and Levi started for us

last year so we will need

them to be leaders for us. With graduating so many starters from a year ago, we want to get better everyday and continue to gain experience," Spicer said. "With our size on the offensive line I would say

that's our strength.With so many new faces we need to work on learning the techniques and fundamentals of our positions, and continue to put it all together."

In the CMAC, "PW will be the favorite this year, We want to compete each week." Spicer said.

Belding Confident Of Another Huge Season

For Monty Price at the Reed City Coyotes, highlights of 2024 were winning a third straight conference championship, qualifying for playoffs, and winning first round playoff game.

Graduates: Hunter Conrad, Codey Manley, TJ Smith, Blake Peasley - all key contributors who will be playing college football.

"We have 27 kids on our roster that will need to contribute. Many of these kids played significant minutes last season or were a part of a very successful JV team that went 7-1-1. Colton Hummel OL/DL, SR., Jonah Hummel WR/DB, SR., Dawson Donovan QB/DB, SR. Hayden Nielsen WR/DB, SR., Kzavier Strickland OL/DL, SR., Antonio Smith OL/DL, SR., Drew Shearer OL/DL, SR., Joe Coles TE/DL, SR., Jameson VanOcker OL/DL, SR., Skylar Miller RB/DB, SR.,

Teegan VanDyken RB/LB, SR., Ryan Woods RB/LB, SR., Mario Guerro WR/DB, SR., Sylas Holbrook OL/DL, SR., Brayden Herrington OL/DL, SR., Talon Calvo WR/DB, SR., Jesse Holyfield OL/DL, SR., Martin Holyfield RB/LB, JR., Noah Ritenburgh RB/LB, JR., Nate Andersen OL/LB, JR., Tyler Simon QB/DB, JR., Nick Wright RB/DB, JR., Cam Reynolds OL/LB, JR., Brock Linebaugh OL/DL, JR., Ethan King RB/LB, JR., Camden Holt WR/DB, JR., Karter Coles TE/DL, JR.,

"The OK Silver is always competitive," Price said."Hopkins will be the favorite."



Monty Price hopes to have another huge season at Belding.

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Mason Eyes Another Huge Season

David Cook Sports Scene

Mason, under coach Gary Houghton, is looking to have another huge season.

Last year’s team won a sixth consecutive CAAC Red championship, 4th consecutive District and Regional championship and was 10-3.

“Cason Carswell holds almost every passing record in Mason history.

Logan Doerr was a great leader and ended his career as No. 2 all time leading tackler in

Mason history. Sam Corey was an outstanding DE and TE/WR. Collin Winters graduated as No. 1 in made extra points in school history.

Top prospects:



Gary Houghton Mason Football Head Coach

Troy Peters (So) FS/WR. “Troy is expected to be a big part of our offense and defense after an outstanding freshman season of varsity experience.”

Luke Goss (Jr) CB/WR. “Luke is expected to be one of our leading receivers after an all conference sophomore season.”

Hayden Hendrickson (Sr) CB/WR. “Hayden had an outstanding junior season and should be a key player on both sides of the ball.”

Joey Schild (Sr) LB/FB. “Joey was our leading tackler last season and will be a great leader on defense this year.”

Frankie Trigo (So) WR/SS. “Frankie is returning after a varsity season and is expected to have a breakout season.”

Carson Chapin (Sr) TB/LB. “Carson was our leading rusher and is expected to carry a significant load at TB again this year.”

Gerrit Koot (Jr) QB. “Gerrit is stepping up to take the QB position. He has had a great off season and is expected to lead the offense this season.”

Isaac Branton (Jr) OT. “Isaac was an all-conference OL and is expected to take a bigger role this season.”

Joe Price (Jr) C. “After a sophomore

all-conference varsity season, Joe is ready to take a larger leadership role.”

Zeb James (Jr) OL/DT. “Zeb is coming off an all-conference sophomore season and is expected to take on a larger role on both sides of the ball.”

Drew Lator (So) OL/DE. “Drew has a year of varsity experience and has had a remarkable off season. He is expected to step up on both sides of the ball.”

Brennan West (Jr) OL/DE. “Brennan has had an outstanding off season and is expected to be a key player on both sides of the ball.”

Darien Williams (Sr) WR/ CB. “Darien has made significant improvement as a receiver in the off season.”

Jacob Ackley (Jr) K. “Jacob has made significant improvement in his distance and accuracy in the off season.”

“Our expectations are always high. Our players are very aware of the tradition and expectations. We have many experienced returning players, we will lean on them while our newer players get up to speed.

“Our conference is one of the strongest in the area. League favorites are Haslett, Williamston, and Mason.”



DeWitt Expects To Be State Contender Again

David Cook Sports Scene

Coach Rob Zimmerman’s football team was 12-1 last season and hopes to win a state title this season.

Top returners are:

Traverse Moore - senior QB; Jadon Bender - senior Rec/DB; Jacob Schorffhaar - senior TE/DE; Drew Rumsey - senior OL/DL; Jackson Hidebrant - senior OL; Luke Nolen - senior - OL/DL; Andrew Nehf - senior OL/DL; Miller Wing - senior DB; Ian Sosebee - senior DB; Lucas Brandell - senior DB; Tyler Bashore - junior RB/LB; Max Holtz - senior LB; Cooper Chambers - senior RB/LB; Braylon Wright-Moore - senior OLB; Brendan

Mensing - senior TE/DL; Everett Cooper - senior TE/DE; Caleb Haman - senior TE; Vincent Rose - junior Kicker; Greg Seybert - senior - long snapper; Noah DeNeen - senior DB; Sam VanZee - senior OL; Landon Fitzpatrick - senior OL

Top newcomers are:

Justin Barkman - junior LB; Channing Ridley - sophomore RB; Caleb Nolen - sophomore REC; Landon Kurncz - junior REC/DB; mLanden Braska - junior OL/DL; Cam Chrisman - junior OL/DL; Conner Hamilton - junior TE/LB; Donovan Hillard - junior RB/OLB; Evan Thorne - junior OL/DL Griffin Braman - junior QB/DB

“We return 16 starters off from a 12-1 team. 3 players are 4 year starters and 3

more are 3 year starters,” Zimmerman said. “Expectations are very high with hopes of competing for a league championship, deep playoff run, and possible state championship. We have 62 players on varsity which is the largest team in DeWitt history and 132 in the high school program.Trav Moore, Jacob Schorffhaar, and Jadon Bender are all 4 year starters. The only other one since 2000 was kicker Brandon Soltis.

“DeWitt is now the winningest large school program (D1-D4) since 2000 passing Muskegon for the top spot after last season. Coach Zimmerman is the second winningest active coach in Michigan with 268 wins.”

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David Cook Sports Scene

BEAL CITY LOOKING TO REPEAT

Beal City went on a thrilling playoff run last season that was capped by winning the Division 8 state title. With plenty of talent returning this season, the Aggies are setting their sights on defending the title.

Beal City returns plenty of talent on the offensive side of the ball. Junior quarterback Cuyler Smith (5-7, 150) passed for over 1,200 yards last season. Senior Aaron Locke (5-8, 160) returns to provide a steady target in the passing game. Senior Drake Gatrell (5-10, 170) returns at tight end. Look for senior Garrison Zuker (6-11, 165) to make an impact at running back.

The Aggies have the makings for a strong line with the return of junior guards Wyatt Wilson (5-7, 185) and Drew Gross (5-10, 190). Junior tackle Gavin Connors (6-2, 235) and sophomore Matt Johnston (5-9, 205) are also in the mix.

The Aggie defense is also looking solid. Locke and Gross return at defensive end. Senior Nick Ervin (5-10, 215) and junior Hunter McDonald (5-10, 210) return along the interior of the defensive front. Ervin and McDonald are also in the mix along the offensive line. The linebacker corps is solid with the return of junior Eric Elias (5-9, 175) and Wilson. In the secondary Smith and Zuker will be among the leaders.

Beal City opens the season with a difficult trip to Ravenna and closes out the regular season at Ithaca.

MONTABELLA BUILDING ON SUCCESS

Last season was a landmark season for Blanchard Montabella as the Mustangs won a conference championship for the first time in over 50 years. Montabella finished the season with a 6-4 record after falling in the first round of the playoffs.

Plenty of talent returns this season and the Mustangs are primed for even more success. On offense, all-conference quarterback Gabe Kauffman returns. Junior Ethan Greene (5-11, 160) returns at running back with Austin Jensen back at wide receiver. Junior Mason Bogart also returns at fullback.

Montabella is solid along the offensive line with the return of all-stater Cody Omo along with senior Haden McCarthy (6-2, 245).

The defensive side of the ball also looks solid. Gavin Simmons returns to the defensive front along with Omo. Bogart is a returning all-conference linebacker while Jensen and Greene both earned all-conference honors at defensive back.

CHESANING LOOKS TO CONTINUE SUCCESS

Chesaning is coming off a big season where the Indians went a perfect 9-0 in the regular season before falling by a touchdown to eventual state finalist Lansing Catholic in the first round of the playoffs.

While several key players have graduated, the team still has a solid nucleus to build around. Senior offensive tackle Braden Burtch (6-0, 250) is a returning all-conference player who will also see action at defensive tackle. Senior Blake Hoerner leads the defense where he is an all-conference linebacker. Hoerner will also play tight end on offense. Senior Jayden Howard will be at wide receiver and cornerback. Junior Nito Escamilla looks to take over at quarterback. Junior Andrew Reiber (5-10, 200) is another returning all-conference player and will be at center and defensive htackle. At running back, junior Griffen Sulen (5-10, 190) and sophomore Chase Lopez (5-9, 180) will be in the mix. Junior Braydyn Dilts (6-0, 190) will be at tight end and linebacker while senior Cam Smeltzer will see action at wide receiver and cornerback.

PEWAMO-WESTPHALIA SET FOR SUCCESS

One of the premier D7 schools in the state, Pewamo-Westphalia is poised for another big season after going 9-3 overall last year and falling to eventual state champs Millington in the regional final.

The Pirates have a solid core of veterans back led by quarterback Ty Thelen. Junior wide receiver Caleb Blyth (6-3, 200) also returns on offense along with lineman Hayden Sith (6-0, 220). Sophomore Kevin Hafner is a returning all-conference receiver as is senior tight end Trent Piggott (6-5, 210). Senior Isaac McCarthy (5-11, 240) also returns to the line.

The Pirate defense is also stocked. Luke Paxton is an all-state linebacker who will also see time at fullback. Blyth and Thelen return at safety and Smith is back at middle linebacker. McCarthy and Piggott return along the defensive front.

MONTROSE PRIMED FOR BIG YEAR

Montrose returns a solid foundation from a team that went 6-4 overall last season.

The Rams are led by a core of returning all-state players led by senior offensive tackle Conner Thompson (6-1, 260) who will also play defensive end. Defensive lineman MJ Dailey (6-6, 215) is a big-play performer who also plays wide receiver on offense. Junior linebacker Kallen Perior is another playmaker on defense and will see action at running back. Griffin O'Neal heads up the secondary and will step in at quarterback.

FULTON RESTOCKING AFTER BIG YEAR

Fulton-Middleton will be doing some rebuilding this year after going 8-1 in the regular season before falling in the opening round of the playoffs.

The Pirates do have plenty of talent to build around so another big year is in the

cards. Senior Parker Billings (6-3, 245) returns to anchor the defensive line. Billings will also make an impact on the offensive side of the ball. Senior Conner Cunningham returns at cornerback and will be at wide receiver. Senior Kaiden Oliver (5-8, 170) is another versatile performer. Oliver is back at outside linebacker and is a running back on offense. Senior Coltin Kus is a returning starter at defensive back and will look to contribute at running back. Senior Dustin Antes will see time at tight end while junior Jake Childers is in the mix at defensive tackle. Junior Zach Litwiller will also see playing time on offense.

CARSON CITY-CRYSTAL REBUILDING

Carson City-Crystal is in rebuilding mode this season with a new staff and a team light on experience and seniors. The Eagles will build around juniors Noah Staff and Skyler Vanwyk (6-3, 248). Sophomores Andreo Fernandez and Colton Parmenter (6-1, 210) are also looking to make an impact along with senior Landon Sternhagen (6-4, 220). The Eagles open the season at Webberville then go to Montabella for a difficult road game in week two.



Beal City won the Division 8 state championship last season and is gearing up to defend the title this season.

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SOUTHEAST AREA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SEASON PREVIEWS

David Cook
Sports Scene

GRAND LEDGE STOCKED
FOR STRONG SEASON

With a solid core of players back from a team that posted a 5-5 record and qualified for the playoffs for a fifth straight season, the Grand Ledge Comets are in position for another big campaign.

Leading the way for Grand Ledge is junior running back standout Anthony Baker (6-0, 200) who is entering his third season on the varsity. A big-play performer, Baker operates behind a big, physical offensive line led by juniors Lucas Caldwell (6-2, 250) and Will Richardson (6-3, 305) along with senior JJ Mauze (6-3, 260). The Comets have a solid core of receivers that includes Caleb Aldrich and Kingston Nixon while Cooper Parks is also in the mix at running back.

The defense is led by standout junior linebacker Ashton Delaney (5-11, 195) who earned all-conference honors as a sophomore. Mauze and Richardson anchor the interior of the defense with Caldwell back at an end. Brandt Underhill and Nixon will be at safety positions.

HASLETT PRIMED
FOR REPEAT SUCCESS

The Haslett Vikings turned in a big season last fall as they went 8-4 and reached the regional title game. With plenty of talent back a repeat performance or better is the goal this year.

Leading the way for Haslett is senior running back Kory Amachree (6-0, 195). The premier running back in the state, Amachree

will take his talents to the University of Kansas next season.

Another college-level talent is junior tight end/defensive end Asher Newman (6-4, 240) who is an impact player on both sides of the line.

The Vikings also return several more all-conference players. Senior Dawson Dabler (6-0, 195) heads up the defense at middle linebacker. Robert Smith (6-0, 175) is the ringleader of the secondary while Derris Dennis is a playmaker at outside linebacker. Drew Maloney is an all-conference safety and wide receiver. Senior Zach Curtis (6-2, 215) is a big-play performer at defensive end.

PORTLAND AIMS TO
CONTINUE PLAYOFF RUN

When it comes playoff time expect Portland to be in the middle of the action. The Raiders have qualified for the playoffs for 10 straight seasons. Last year was a big one for Portland as the squad turned in an 11-1 record.

This season the Raiders are paced by senior fullback/defensive end Kayden Dickerson (6-2, 195) who is a returning all-conference player. Up front, senior Carter White (6-3, 215) is a returning all-conference lineman. Senior running back Brad Meyers is poised to be among the top running backs for the team.

WILLIAMSTON PRIMED
FOR STRONG SEASON

With the return of a large core of talented veterans, Williamston is primed for a solid season.

The senior class is solid for the Hornets.

Senior Miles Keener (5-11, 205) is a defensive leader at middle linebacker and is a slotback on offense. Senior wide receiver Tommy Pratt (6-5, 180) is a game-breaker who earned all-conference honors last season and is also a defensive back. Senior wideout Hunter VanSickler (6-1, 160) also earned all-conference honors. The running game is led by all-conference running back Joe Smith (5-11, 205) who provides big plays and is also a standout defender at outside linebacker. Putting the offense in motion is senior quarterback Kaleb Nielson. Senior Steven Bush returns at slot back and free safety. The line is looking for contributions from senior Anthony Heinritz (6-2, 280) and junior Carter Dalrymple (6-1, 265).

ST. JOHNS SET TO CONTEND

With a strong core of veterans back, St. Johns is looking to make some noise in the CAAC Red. Senior running back/linebacker Brady Heibeck leads the way after earning all-conference honors last season. Fellow senior running back Ian Smith also earned all-conference honors and will also play strong safety on defense. Heading up the offense is senior quarterback Bryce Pratt. Senior Brody Abendroth anchors the offensive line after earning all-league honors last season as did fellow senior lineman Jackson Armstrong (6-2, 270) who provides plenty of size up front.

LANSING CATHOLIC
RESTOCKS AFTER BIG YEAR

Last season was a memorable one for the Cougars of Lansing Catholic as the team went on a thrilling tournament run that ended in the Division 6 state championship game.

The Cougars suffered heavy graduation losses. One player who does return is all-conference senior Leland VanAlstine who is back at wide receiver and defensive back. Senior Jayce Campbell (5-11, 185) is back to anchor the line at center while talented junior Conor Gallagher (6-2, 195) is back at tight end. Joining VanAlstine on defense is starting linebacker Noah Jungwirth (5-10, 180) and starting free safety Gary Tackett (6-1, 165).

HOLT LOOKING FOR
IMPROVEMENT

Holt is aiming to improve in the rugged CAAC Blue. The Rams return several all-conference players led by game-breaking running back LaDon Hatcher. At tight end

Williamston looks to be one of several teams that will be in the mix for the CAAC Red title this season.

senior Manollo Williams (6-3, 210) is a big-play target in the passing game. Bryson DeSmith is a returning all-conference player who is a standout at defensive end and also tight end on offense. Carl Flinton (6-2, 175) also earned all-conference honors and is at defensive end and wide receiver.

OKEMOS CONTINUES
BUILDING PROCESS

Okemos showed solid improvement last season and the Wolves are working to keep the progress moving upward this season.

Junior tight end Atticus Joy is drawing interest from college recruiters and continue to raise his stock. Senior Xavier Ford is a talented wide receiver and defensive back who is also getting college looks. On defense, senior defensive end Nathan Precise (6-1, 220) earned first-team, all-conference honors. Strong safety Julian Allaire (6-1, 185) and senior Jamaris Graham (6-2, 180) also earned all-conference honors. Sophomore Jashon Starks (ol/dl) is a young lineman to watch for.

LANSING EVERETT
AIMS FOR BIG YEAR

Lansing Everett is looking for a big year led by the return of all-state lineman Mujtba Al-Rabiah. Fellow lineman Emmett Leidi earned all-conference honors last season. Senior running back/middle linebacker Javari Funches is an all-conference talent who is getting plenty of college looks.

CHARLOTTE LOOKING
FOR BOUNCE BACK YEAR

The Charlotte Orioles are looking for a bounce back year. The Orioles are building the offense around senior quarterback Evan Colosky (6-1, 175). The offensive line is looking like a strength with the return of all-conference lineman Tayshon Whitfield (5-10, 235) along with junior tackle Chas Rockafellow (6-3, 265). All-conference tight end Colton Carey also returns. The defense is built around Rockafellow at tackle and Carey at outside linebacker.

EATON RAPIDS AIMING FOR IM-
PROVEMENT

Improvement is the name of the game at Eaton Rapids. The Greyhounds are building the defense around returning all-conference defensive tackle Kaleb Gochenour (5-9, 235) and Donald Hoyt (5-9, 210) who will line up at offensive guard and defensive end.

David Cook
Sports Scene

DAVISON AMONG TOP
D1 TEAMS IN STATE

Davison has been among the premier Division 1 teams in the state the past several years and this year will be no different as the Cardinals are loaded with talent from a team that went 7-3 overall a year ago.

Offensively, the Cardinals are led by one of the premier offensive linemen in the state in Notre Dame recruit Ben Nichols (6-5, 315). Joining Nichols up front is all-conference tackle Cole Rogers (6-3, 277) giving the team a pair of road graders at the tackle spots.

Benefitting from that line play is a versatile group of playmakers led by senior quarterback Jaxson Dosh. A Western Michigan recruit, Dosh passed for over 1,700 yards last year and 22 touchdown passes.

The Cardinals have a variety of receivers and backs returning headlined by junior TyAnthony Lewis (5-10, 185) who can line up at receiver or running back. Senior wide receivers Robbie Martin and Cortez Porter are a pair of big-play performers while sophomore Jaxson Czerny (6-2, 170) is a newcomer to watch. Senior Jacob Garris is a running back to watch.

Plenty of talent returns on defense led by defensive end Willie McQueen (6-4, 220). Lewis and Porter return at the cornerback spots while Martin is back at safety. Senior

Brayden Bundy heads up the linebacker corps.

GRAND BLANC IN
MIX IN SVL SOUTH

Grand Blanc will battle it out for supremacy with Davison in the Saginaw Valley South Division.

The Bobcats have some big-time players on the offensive side of the ball led by senior quarterback Jake Morrow (6-1, 180), a first-team, all-conference selection. Grand Blanc has a big-time performer at running back as well as junior Jeremiah Coleman (5-9, 185) earned all-conference honors as a sophomore. At receiver the Bobcats welcome back senior speedster Caseton Sendry (6-0, 155) who also earned all-conference honors.

OWOSSO LOOKING
TO TAKE NEXT STEP

It was a landmark season for the Owosso football team last fall as the Trojans turned in their first winning season since 2012. The Trojans turned in a 5-4 overall record but the season ended on a down note as Owosso was unable to qualify for the playoffs.

With some key players back in the fold this year, Owosso is primed to take the next step.

One key returnee is senior quarterback Liam Patrick (6-2, 185). A four-year starter, Patrick passed for nearly 1,000 yards and 20 touchdowns last season while rushing for over 700 yards and scoring six touchdowns.

Giving Patrick plenty of time to throw the ball is a big and talented offensive line. Senior Carter Miculka anchors that line. A 6-foot-6, 270-pounder, Miculka will be playing college football at Eastern Michigan University. Senior Ben Neese (6-1, 305) is a returning all-conference player as is junior linemen Joe Dawes (6-3, 265) and Diesel Palmer (6-4, 200).

CORUNNA LOOKS TO
CONTINUE WINNING WAYS

The Corunna football team has been on a roll the past several years and this year's squad is determined to carry on that winning tradition.

The Cavaliers suffered some heavy graduation losses from a squad that went 8-3 overall last season and reached the district title game where they fell to eventual state champion Pontiac Notre Dame.

Returning to lead the defense this season is junior linebacker Ruger Zeeman (6-2, 195) who earned all-conference honors last season.

On the offensive side of the ball, the Cavaliers have a pair of all-conference players returning that will provide some big-play pop. Senior wide receiver Isaac Jacobs can stretch defenses deep while senior running back Ota Wilkerson (5-8, 155) is capable of breaking off long runs.

A number of juniors are looking to step up this season. Among the juniors poised to

make an impact are tight end Calvin Dalton (6-1, 175), lineman Kyhis Malone (5-11, 190), running back/linebacker Blake Cesar (5-10, 190) and guard/defensive end Devon Slocum (6-2, 265).

NEW LOTHROP EYING
BOUNCE BACK SEASON

New Lothrop is looking for a bounce-back season after turning in a 2-5 league mark and 3-6 overall record last season.

The Hornets are building around sophomore quarterback Karson Agnew who passed for 1,100 yards and 14 touchdowns a year ago. Agnew has some talented young targets to throw to including junior Mason Cowan, sophomore Aaron Wenzlick and freshman Marcellus Childress. Providing big plays in the ground game is sophomore running back Evan Ostrander.

The New Lothrop defense is led by junior lineman Anthony Lindner and junior linebacker Jude Galvas.

MORRICE POISED FOR
BIG SEASON IN 8-MAN

Morrice has been a powerhouse in 8-man football the past several seasons and that trend looks to continue this season as well.

The Orioles return a wealth of talent from a team that turned in an 11-2 overall record last season and reached the 8-man, Division 2 state championship game.

A trio of all-state returnees lead the way for Morrice. Senior Oliver Long (6-3, 215) totaled 12 sacks last year at defensive end and also plays tight end on offense. Senior linebacker Austin Gutting (5-11, 200) led the team in tackles a year ago and started at fullback. Junior Wyatt Valentine (5-10, 163) intercepted 10 passes at defensive back. The Orioles also bring back junior Joe Galloway (6-0, 195) who started at center and middle linebacker and junior Braden Hart (6-0, 325) who started at offensive guard and nose tackle on defense. Junior Tyler Ash (5-10, 170) returns at a tight end where he saw playing time last season.

Grand Blanc is poised for a big season after winning a district title last season.



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WEST AREA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SEASON PREVIEWS

David Cook Sports Scene ROCKFORD RELOADING TO FACE TOUGH SLATE

The playoff run was a short one for the Rockford football team last season and the graduation losses were as typical heavy for the Rams who are perennially one of the premier Division 1 teams in the state.

Rockford turned in a 7-2 overall mark last year including a 5-2 record in the loaded Ottawa Kent Red Conference. The Rams then fell to Grandville in the first round of the state playoffs.

This year, the Rams have a veteran quarterback to build around. Senior Brayden Daniels (5-11, 195) turned in a solid season in his second season on the varsity and is poised for a big senior season.

Daniels has several talented targets to throw to this season including seniors Jax Eichbauer (6-2, 185), Warner Korytkowski (5-8, 185) and Jayce VandenHout (5-7, 170) who provides the team with a dangerous deep-ball threat.

The Rams will need to replenish the offensive line although senior center Aaron Papes (6-0, 260) to provide the line with a solid anchor.

On the defensive side of the ball, the Rams

are paced by a solid group of linebackers. Senior playmaker Sam Cummings (5-9, 200) started as a sophomore but suffered a season-ending injury early last season. Seniors Nick Mannor (6-3, 220) and Carter VanderTuig (6-3, 210) are a pair of big hitters while junior Ryan Kerry (6-1, 205) is a sideline-to-sideline tackler.

The Rams are strong in the secondary led by senior Luke Ahern (5-10, 190) who is a Ferris State recruit. Senior PJ LeBlanc (6-1, 190) is another veteran returning to the secondary.

Rockford again faces a gauntlet of a schedule as it opens by hosting powerhouse Saline and then Muskegon before beginning league play with games against powerhouses Grand Haven, East Kentwood, Grandville and Hudsonville.

GREENVILLE LOOKING FOR IMPROVEMENT

Greenville turned in a 2-7 record last season and were 2-4 in the River Cities Conference. With several key returning players on hand the Yellowjackets are on a course for improvement.

On offense, all-conference wide receiver Kyle Graber is making the switch to quarterback where the team with showcase his athleticism. Senior running back Blake Schmitt (5-10, 160) is a big-play performer.

Up front, senior lineman Isaiah Dimet earned all-conference honors last season. On defense, Jagger Roberts is a returning honorable-mention, all-conference performer.

LOWELL TO BUILD ON SOLID SEASON

Lowell is coming off a solid season that saw it post a 7-2 regular-season record and 5-1 mark in its first year as part of the River Cities Alliance Conference. The Red Arrows also opened the playoffs with a win before falling to DeWitt in round two.

The Red Arrows welcome back a solid group of veterans led by senior quarterback Logan Dawson who earned all-conference honors last season.

Senior Colten Barney (5-10, 165) is back at running back while fellow senior Nathen Raison (6-0, 195) is a versatile athlete who can play tight end, wide receiver or running back.

Senior Jack Iakiri (6-1, 265) is a punishing blocker that will anchor the offensive line. Senior Oliver Sobie (6-0, 195) returns at center. The Red Arrows also welcome back an all-conference tight end in Brady Smith.

The defense will also be solid. Iakiri is back at defensive tackle with Smith at defensive end. Sobie returns at defensive tackle while Raison is a returning all-

conference linebacker.

The Red Arrows are strong in the defensive backfield with Barney heading up the secondary.

CEDAR SPRINGS RELOADING FOR TITLE CHASE

Cedar Springs made a run at the top spot in the new River Cities Alliance Conference last season and the Red Hawks are gearing up for another run at the top spot.

On offense, a pair of quarterbacks are in the mix to start in juniors Nick Robinson (6-0, 160) and Luke Egan. Junior running back Spencer Schoenborn (5-10, 180) heads up the running attack with help from senior Kaiden Dreyer.

Junior wide receiver Spencer Rosenberger and junior tight end Ty Lawson provide sure-handed targets in the passing game.

The Red Hawks have the ingredients for a strong offensive line. Seniors Doug Hardie and Beau Savage return up front with help from junior center Nolan Myers and junior offensive tackle Keegan Clark.

On the defensive side of the ball, keep an eye out for junior Kayleb Mance who will be a disruptor along the defensive front. Rosenberger returns at a linebacker position with Schoenborn also seeing playing time at linebacker.



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.

SAGINAW BAY AREA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SEASON PREVIEWS

David Cook Sports Scene DOW SET TO CLIMB SVL NORTH STANDINGS

With a large core of players returning from a team that made a run at the Saginaw Valley North title last season, Midland Dow is aiming to move up even more in the standings this season.

The Chargers welcome back a large group of players this year led by all-conference junior quarterback Wynn Diegel (6-2, 160). An outstanding group of receivers return led by all-conference receiver Ben Marinik (6-1, 165) and seniors Hattan Zimmer and Nate Schultz.

The ground game as led by junior running back Jameson Zimmer (6-1, 200) who earned all-conference honors.

Senior all-conference tackle Zander Halliwell (6-3, 275) and returning starting guard Justin Corle anchor the line.

On defense, senior linebacker Jay Stevens (6-1, 170) is a returning all-conference player as is senior defensive back Max Brandt (6-0, 180). All-conference defensive lineman Will Cresswell (6-0, 190) is back along with Cayden Stefanich (db) and s Cooper Ostyn (dl). Dow also boasts a returning all-conference kicker in Boston Diamond.

MIDLAND LOOKING TO DEFEND LEAGUE TITLE

Midland captured the Saginaw Valley

North title last year with a perfect 6-0 record. While the Chemics suffered some heavy graduation losses, enough talent returns to make the team a threat to win the title once again.

Junior LJ Gallihugh (5-9, 170) is an impact player on offense at running back or receiver and is an all-conference defensive back.

Defense will be a strength for the Chemics as senior defensive back A.J. McVittie (6-0, 185) also earned all-conference honors. Senior Jon Hines (6-1, 210) returns at linebacker.

The defensive line will look for contributions from seniors Gabe Newkirk (6-2, 205) and Kyle Potter (5-10, 200) along with junior Tysen Kienbaum (6-3, 245).

On offense, the line will be built around seniors Eamon Murray (6-2, 235) and Elijah Davis (6-2, 265) along with juniors Ethan Troup (6-1, 235) and Jake Faccio (6-4, 250).

MILLINGTON SET FOR ENCORE AFTER TITLE

Millington won its first state title last year after years of numerous playoff runs. While several key players have graduated from that squad, the Cardinals can be counted on to field a solid team and be ready for a deep playoff run.

On offense, senior linemen Logan Riley (5-10, 180) and Barry Wascher (6-2, 180) return to anchor the line. Junior lineman Eli Thompson (6-2, 285) may also make an impact. At quarterback, junior Noah Steward



is in the mix while junior Drake Terwilliger (5-9, 185) and sophomores Cade Ward and Hudson Myers are among the candidates vying for playing time at running back. Sophomore wide receiver Collin Milostan is among the ends in the mix.

On the defensive side of the ball, senior defensive linemen Logan Myers (5-11, 190) and Chase Milostan (5-11, 187) return to create havoc for opposing offenses. Logan Myers will also be in the mix at running back. Senior defensive back Garrett Woodward (6-0, 170) returns and is also in the mix at quarterback. Ward and Hudson Myers will also contribute at linebacker while Thompson is another option along the defensive line.

FRANKENMUTH GEARING UP FOR BIG SEASON

For the third time in the past five years the Frankenmuth Eagles finished the season by playing for a state title.

While several key players have graduated, plenty of talent is back for the Eagles. All-conference tackle Luke Purves (6-2, 235) is back to anchor the offensive line. Cash Tedford (5-8, 165) is a returning all-conference running back while senior linebacker Brady Lipka (6-0, 180) also earned all-conference honors. Junior Carson Bouvy (5-10, 205) returns to the defensive front while senior Lleyton Hoard (6-4, 200) looks to step in at quarterback.

SAGINAW HERITAGE TO CONTENT IN SVL

Saginaw Heritage is poised to make some waves in the Saginaw Valley North this season. The Hawks have a solid group of returning players led by senior defensive tackle Jeremiah Walker (6-0, 265), a Ferris State recruit. Heritage also returns senior quarterback Connor Greif (6-0, 190) who passed for over 1,400 yards last season. Seniors Jakobey Neal (rb/ss), Antonio Johnson (lb), Kingston Ware (dl) and Willie Hillman (ol) will also be key contributors along with junior defensive back Anthony Fries.

BAY CITY GLENN LOOKING TO SURPRISE

After posting a winning regular season last year, Bay City Glenn is ready for even more success this season. On offense, juniors Bradley Boyk (wr) and Garrett Hilborn (rb) are a pair of impact players who earned

all-conference honors. The Bobcats have a solid offensive line built around seniors Isaac Espinoza (6-1, 255) and Mic Maier (6-1, 225).

On defense, Maier is back at defensive end while Hilborn is an all-conference linebacker.

MLS SET TO CONTINUE SUCCESS

Michigan Lutheran Seminary turned in a 7-4 overall record last season and reached the second round of the playoffs and with a solid core of veterans back the Cardinals are poised for more success.

Senior Noah Reif (6-3, 235) returns as one of the premier players in the area. Reif totaled close to 100 tackles at linebacker last season while on offense he rushed for over 600 yards. Senior Andrew Miller 6-1, 185) returns at quarterback and will play free safety on defense. Joey Craig is back to anchor the line from his guard position.

NOUVEL ON TRACK TO CONTINUE WINNING WAYS

Saginaw Nouvel turned in an 8-2 record last season and the Panthers are primed for more of the same this season.

On offense, senior Ian Ziegelmann (5-8, 163) and junior Owen Vance (5-7, 160) provide the team with a strong ground game. Junior Parker Kingsbury (6-2, 190) is a returning all-conference receiver. Senior Sean Foley also returns at receiver.

The defense looks strong led by senior middle linebacker Christian Lopez (5-11, 225) who totaled close to 100 tackles last s season. Kingsburg returns to head up the secondary along with Foley. Senior John Carlson (5-11, 205) is a returning all-conference linebacker who will also play some running back.

BAY CITY WESTERN LOOKING TO IMPROVE

Bay City Western is looking to improve in the rugged Saginaw Valley North. The Warriors have some solid senior veterans to build around led by senior center Carson Doan (6-0, 220) who anchors the offensive line. The defensive line is anchored by standout senior Andy Robbins (6-5, 220). Brody Andrus (6-2, 220) is also an all-conference punter while senior Jack Gillis (5-10, 185) earned all-conference honors at linebacker.

Millington is looking for another big season after winning its first-ever state title last season.

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