

SHORELINE MEDIA

LUDINGTON DAILY NEWS
OCEANA'S HERALD-JOURNAL
WHITE LAKE BEACON

BOOM!

AUGUST

2023

FOOTBALL

PREVIEW



YOUR
FAVORITE HIGH
SCHOOL FOOTBALL
HEROES

SPECIAL EDITION

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On the cover

Longtime cartoonist Larry Lewis, now living in Pentwater, was asked to draw a head-and-shoulders image of our 10 teams. They are Hart's Joseluis Andaverde, Hesperia's Ian Fox, Ludington's Gage Jones, Manistee's Isaiah Davis, Manistee Catholic's Nathan Oleniczak, Mason County Central's Grady Wilson, Montague's Adam Baird, Reeths-Puffer's Caiden Bolduc, Shelby's Lalo Garcia and Whitehall's Kyle Stratton.

Credits

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SECTION COVER DESIGN: Judy Lytle with images by Larry Lewis.



ANDY ROBERTS | WHITE LAKE BEACON FILE

Looking for another big run?

Whitehall's football team rings the Bell after defeating Montague last season. The Vikings — who won the initial West Michigan Conference Lakes Division title — got to the regional championship game last season. This year? They want a whole lot more — and so do each and every other team in 2023.

Welcome to the 2023 football season

BY SHORELINE MEDIA

For the first time, welcome to the 2023 Football Preview for the Ludington Daily News, Oceana's Herald-Journal and White Lake Beacon — collectively known as Shoreline Media.

Within this 28-page section you now hold, football fans of all stripes will find editorial coverage of the schools along our Lake Michigan shoreline, from Manistee to Reeths-Puffer.

This section will preview the schools that we cover in the Ottawa-Kent Conferences's Green Division, both divisions of the West Michigan Conference and the West Michigan D League.

With this preview, there's more than the simple team previews. There's stories in and around the programs we cover, from highlighting stars to new nicknames to new facilities.

This section has a callback to what newspapers did decades ago

— the sports cartoon. Thankfully, one of the greatest of the cartoonists of that era, Larry Lewis. He has a history of drawing professionally of 70 years. So, we're bringing an old-school spin to today's game thanks to his incredible skills.

You're also going to find league schedules in a grid system that will be easy for you to figure out not only where your favorite is week in and week out but also teams within the conferences you follow in case you're looking for something else to

check out.

Our appreciation goes out to the players, the coaches, the athletic directors and our officials that give us a great game to cover. We wish all of you an outstanding and safe season, and look ahead to presenting your stories in the pages of our newspapers and on our websites.

We'd also like to thank the many advertisers and businesses who supported this edition. We could not present this without you.

Reeths-Puffer building on '22 success

BY ANDY ROBERTS
BEACON EDITOR

The 2022 season was a banner debut for Reeths-Puffer coach Cody Kater. A main theme of his was to close the gap on the Muskegon County power programs, and the Rockets did that — they played Muskegon and Mona Shores far closer than in the recent past, and they made the playoffs, going 6-4.

There's plenty of reason for optimism for the Rockets entering this year, too. Despite losing Central Michigan signee Tayte Vanderleest and starting quarterback Brady Ross to graduation, R-P returns a lot of talent.

On the offensive side, Ross was an all-conference player at quarterback, but the Rockets are excited about the potential senior Antrel Jones brings to the position. Jones brings a different dimension, blessed with more height, bulk and a bigger arm than his predecessor.

Grasping the nuances of the position will come with experience, and early returns seem positive on that front; in a July 7-on-7 at Montague, Kater could be heard several times praising Jones for making the right decision on a play. At the same time, Jones can take deep shots and keep opposing secondaries honest.

"I don't even know the analogy



ANDY ROBERTS | WHITE LAKE BEACON FILE

Reeths-Puffer's Brody Johnson (24) reaches out to stiff-arm Mona Shores' Trent Rosenthal during last season's rivalry matchup.

right now, but he is a lot further along this summer than he was last summer," Kater said of his new signal-caller. "He has done nothing

except get coached and take coaching.

"He's playing quarterback on and off the field and that's what

we really need him to do. We'll kind of continue to press upon those things with him. I think he'll really grow."

Jones has the luxury of a star running back to hand the ball to, in senior Brody Johnson. Johnson is a two-time all-conference player

On defense, the Rockets bring back top tackler Caiden Bolduc, a hard-hitting and athletic middle linebacker. He's the centerpiece of the Rocket defense. Kater noted Bolduc has added some bulk this year, getting from the 180-pound range to closer to 200, and credited him with increased leadership compared to a year ago.

"He's one of those players that are 85 percent mental," Kater said. "He is always on. He watches more film than maybe some of our coaches on staff. He's someone that knows where his eyes were supposed to be. Now he's bringing others along, where last year, maybe he wasn't doing that."

Other key defensive Rockets, all in the back seven, include Bryce Ross, Kameron Coleman and Sage Secrest, all returning varsity contributors. Kater expects each to be even better this year.

"Those guys played a lot of football last year and now they're back, and they're in spots where they feel a little bit more comfortable," Kater said. Now they're bringing others along with them. I think that's the piece that we're really excited

SEE REETHS-PUFFER, PAGE 5

Ottawa-Kent Conference - Green Division

	Aug. 24-26	Aug. 31-Sept. 1	Sept. 8-9	Sept. 15-16	Sept. 22-23	Sept. 29-30	Oct. 6-7	Oct. 13-14	Oct. 20-21
Grand Rapids Union	Grand Rapids	at Grand Rapids	Zeeland East	Zeeland West	at Wyoming	Reeths-Puffer	Mona Shores	at Muskegon	at Holland
Holland	Ottawa Hills at Holland Christian	West Catholic Comstock Park	Muskegon	at Reeths-Puffer	Mona Shores	at Zeeland West	Zeeland East	at Wyoming	Grand Rapids Union
Muskegon	Rockford	Warren De La Salle Rockford	Holland	at Mona Shores	at Reeths-Puffer	Zeeland East	at Zeeland West	Grand Rapids Union	at Wyoming
Mona Shores	at Manitowoc (Wis.) Lincoln		Reeths-Puffer	Muskegon	at Holland	Wyoming	at Grand Rapids Union	Zeeland West	at Zeeland East
Reeths-Puffer	at Grand Haven	at Farmington	at Mona Shores	Holland	Muskegon	at Grand Rapids Union	Wyoming	at Zeeland East	Zeeland West
Wyoming	GR Forest Hills Northern	at Grand Rapids Northview	at Zeeland West	at Zeeland East	Grand Rapids Union	at Mona Shores	at Reeths-Puffer	Holland	Muskegon
Zeeland East	Williamston	at Flushing	at Grand Rapids Union	Wyoming	Zeeland West	at Muskegon	at Holland	Reeths-Puffer	Mona Shores
Zeeland West	Stevensville Lakeshore	Cedar Springs	Wyoming	at Grand Rapids Union	at Zeeland East	Holland	Muskegon	at Mona Shores	at Reeths-Puffer

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Rockets' Bolduc fierce on defense

BY ANDY ROBERTS
BEACON EDITOR

Every week the statistics came in from Reeths-Puffer games last fall, it seemed like one name recurred at the top of the tackles list: Caiden Bolduc.

It's not uncommon for a middle linebacker to carry the day on defense, but some of the figures from Bolduc were remarkable even by that standard. There was his 17.5-tackle game in a loss to Zeeland West; his 14-assist effort against Mona Shores; his nine solo tackles and 14 assists in a playoff-clinching win over Lansing Everett.

He was the centerpiece of the defense, and nothing is changing in that respect this year. If anything, because running mate Tyviea Williams graduated, Bolduc should see even more activity.

Coach Cody Kater said the athleticism Bolduc brings to the field makes him a weapon that can be deployed at various spots depending on where the game is going.

"He's one of those guys,

too, where you funnel it maybe even to the outside, because we know he can run," Kater said.

Bolduc has bulked up some from last year; Kater said he played at 175 or 180 pounds in 2022 but is now closer to 200. The senior said he's dropped back a bit from that high but has had no issue carrying the extra muscle.

"I had a little extra fat on there, but shut it right down, and we're lean again," Bolduc said. "My body's handling it well. I've gained speed, if anything."

Where the coaches wanted to see more from Bolduc was in his leadership. Now a senior, the Rocket star has answered that call as well.

"He's been a great leader on and off the field as well," Kater said. "We're starting to talk the talk within our locker room and within the hallways, and he's one of those people that has pushed for that to happen."

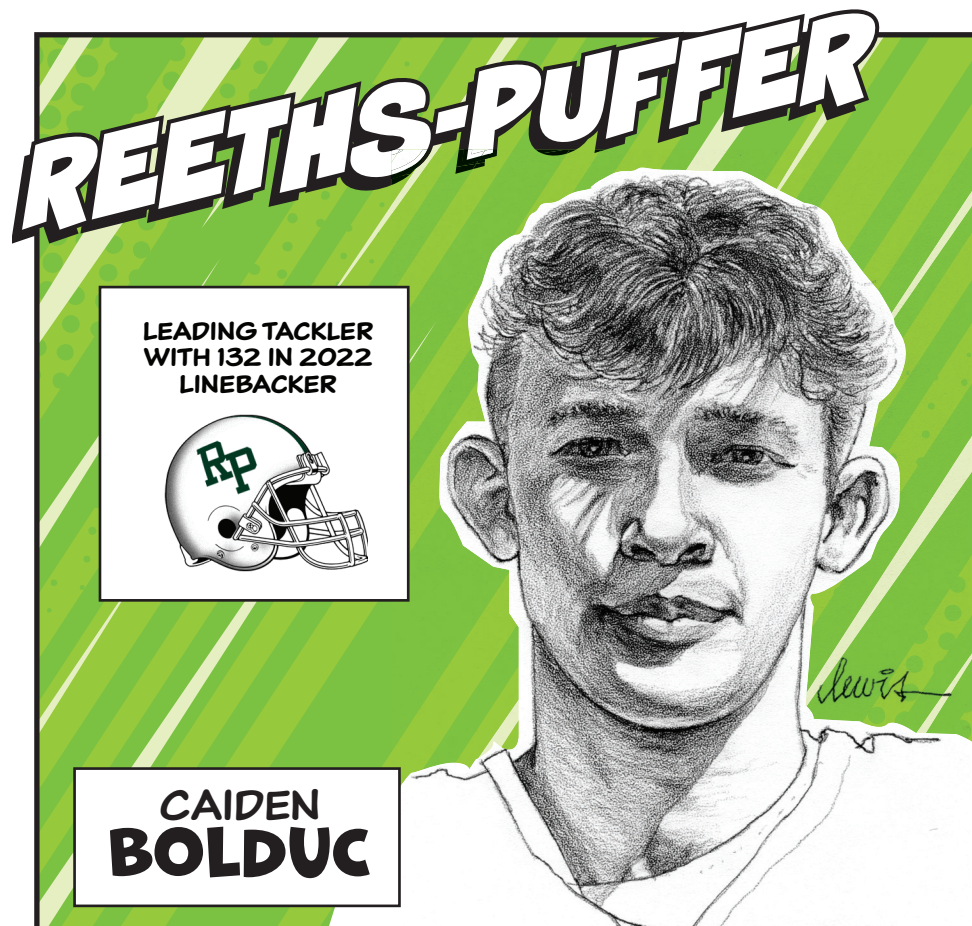
That leadership is helpful off the field, of course, but it may be especially important on the field as the

Rockets work around an inexperienced defensive line. Bolduc and his linebacker teammates, as well as the secondary, are more experienced. He said the defense has explored ways to help out the line as they develop.

"We have a stronger linebacking corps this year, so we're kind of giving different looks to make up for (less experience on the) D-line than last year," Bolduc said. "We're just throwing pressures from the secondary and bringing some different blitzes."

Although R-P is no longer the hunter to the degree it was last year - a playoff bid will do that - the team, including Bolduc, is continuing to embrace the underdog role. It's not hard to do considering Muskegon, Mona Shores and Zeeland West continue to lord over the O-K Green Conference.

"(We're trying to) continue to close, continue to chop," Bolduc said. "We're still trying to hang on to that kind of underdog persona. It's a lot easier to come from behind. We're just still grinding."



REETHS-PUFFER: Rockets want to build off of making playoffs last season in 2023



ANDY ROBERTS | WHITE LAKE BEACON FILE
Reeths-Puffer's football team emerges from the inflatable helmet at one end of the field before last season's opener.

'Our conference is really tough this year.'

Cody Kater
Reeths-Puffer coach

FROM PAGE 3

about to see where we're at by the end of the season."

R-P is less experienced up front, with many top players graduated, including all-conference pick Caleb Zimmerman, but the hope is the Rockets can create some pressure on the quarterback in different ways

2022 Results

Grand Haven	W, 32-20
at St. Johns	W, 38-14
at Muskegon	L, 20-28
Grand Rapids Union	W, 35-29
at Wyoming	W, 55-7
Zeeland East	W, 20-18
at Zeeland West	L, 12-30
Mona Shores	L, 0-15
at Lansing Everett	W, 35-0
MHSAA Div. 2 Playoffs	
at GR Forest Hills Central	L, 6-32

2023 Schedule

Aug. 24	at Grand Haven
Aug. 31	at Farmington
Sept. 8	at Mona Shores
Sept. 15	Holland
Sept. 22	Muskegon
Sept. 29	at Grand Rapids Union
Oct. 6	Wyoming
Oct. 13	at Zeeland East
Oct. 20	Zeeland West

THE FINAL SCORE

Reeths-Puffer	Opponent
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while the defensive line develops.

In 2024, the Rockets will move to a new O-K Conference division, the Black, and trade in the Zeeland schools, Wyoming, Holland and Union for new foes Lowell, Greenville, Northview, Cedar Springs and Kenowa Hills. It's a move the Rockets are excited for, but before then,

it's one more go-round in the Green, which projects as, once again, a very difficult league.

"Our conference is really tough this year," Kater said. "Hearing what the other coaches are saying about the Unions and the Zeeland Easts and the Zeeland Wests and the teams that are in our county, we've got

a really tough conference this year."

The "big three," as Bolduc put it, are Muskegon, Shores and Zeeland West, and he said a secondary goal for the team is to beat at least one of them. He thinks they'll do it.

"Somebody's going down," he said with a chuckle.

Ludington led by nine seniors

BY CHRISTY CHRISTMAS
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

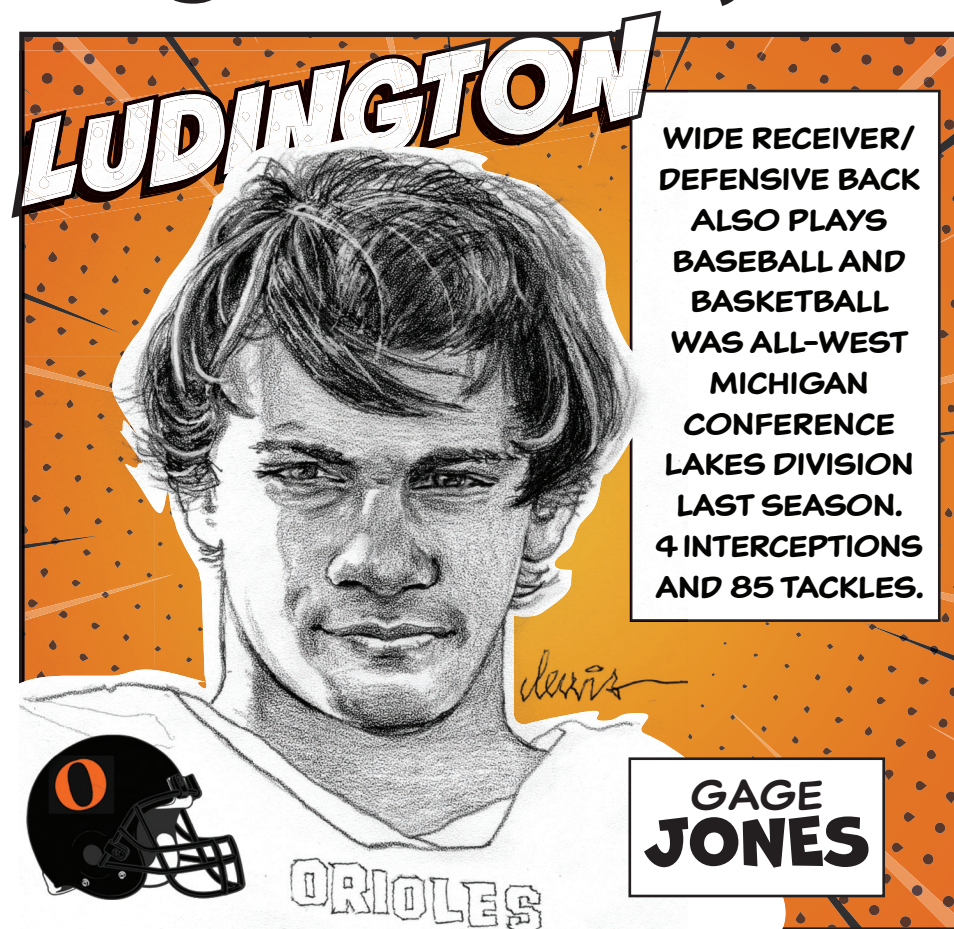
Once again, Charlie Gunsell, in his 20th season coaching Ludington football, is proud of the efforts of his team in the off-season.

"I couldn't be happier," said Gunsell. "I'm thrilled with the numbers and thrilled with the kids."

Gunsell notes he is asking a lot of the kids. The team underwent two practices per day during the first week of practices, and Gunsell said the players were responding with great effort.

The Orioles graduated 13 seniors in 2022, with Trey Forfinski, a West Michigan Conference all-conference selection on offense and defense leading the team and tough-to-replace players like all-conference players Aidan Gilchrist and Levi Laman on offense and Kohlbe Nelson on defense. Adam Keffer, another graduate, was named all-conference honorable mention.

Ludington has 31 players on the varsity squad for the 2023 season and 24 on the junior varsity team. Gunsell has had the same main group of assistant coaches for 20 years and they will return for the 2023 season; Rich Kirby, Brent Gillette, Tom Garrett, Mike Nichols, J.P. Deines, Mick Wilson and Wilson Gunsell. Charlie Gunsell is thankful for his coaching staff.



"These men are loyal to me, loyal to Ludington football and loyal to the Ludington community," Gunsell commented.

The Orioles will have experience on offense this season, but are younger on defense. Gunsell has nine seniors, Gage Jones, Will Luce, Charlie Gamble, Luke Hackert, Derric Duncil, Michael

Nichols, Corbin Wagonmaker, Daniel Rameriz and Joe Benz, who will be a big part of the Orioles' success, particularly on offense.

Of the seniors, Gunsell said Jones is the undeniable leader. His expectations of himself and of others on the team help raise the performance level. Jones was selected all-conference last

season as a defensive back. Gunsell also listed Duncil, Benz, Luce and Rameriz as leaders of the team.

Sophomore Walt Autrey should be a force on defense. Gunsell sees great potential in Autrey.

"He is strong and we see him doing something special," said Gunsell.

Another sophomore, Cam-



DAILY NEWS FILE PHOTO
Ludington's Joe Benz looks for running room against Manistee last season at Oriole Field.

2023 Schedule

		THE FINAL SCORE
	Ludington	Opponent
Aug. 24	Petoskey	
Aug. 31	Shelby	
Sept. 8	Fremont	
Sept. 15	Oakridge	
Sept. 22	at Montague	
Sept. 29	at Manistee	
Oct. 6	Whitehall	
Oct. 13	at Orchard View	
Oct. 20	at Mason County Central	

eron Gunsell, will handle the quarterback position.

Charlie Gunsell, his dad, says, "He is athletic and competes at a higher level."

"We will be playing a lot of juniors," Gunsell commented.

He mentioned Dominic Wheaton, who played

SEE LUDINGTON, PAGE 8

2022 Results

at Petoskey	W, 37-31
at Shelby	W, 55-7
at Fremont	W, 7-0
at Oakridge	L, 18-30
Montague	W, 34-14
Manistee	W, 45-21
at Whitehall	L, 6-56
Orchard View	W, forfeit
Mason County Central	W, 28-8
MHSAA Div. 4 Playoffs	
at Fruitport	L, 28-54

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Makeover of Oriole Field brings artificial turf

BY JEFF KIESSEL
ASST. MANAGING EDITOR

Ludington High School football coach Charlie Gunsell is really excited to see the progress as artificial turf was being installed at Oriole Field prior to the start of the 2023-24 school year.

The work is all part of the 2019 bond that included a new elementary school building, renovation and new construction to the exhibiting secondary complex and improvements to Oriole Field.

"The field is really only one part of what is going on at Oriole Field," Gunsell said.

Gunsell talked about the addition of the new field house which will be built soon.

Superintendent Kyle Corlett said the new locker room building will provide a more comfortable and updated changing space for our student athletes, as well as a training room where they can work with an athletic trainer.

"Oriole Field is rich with history and we are very appreciative of the community's support in keeping it updated."

The rich history of Oriole Field includes being the Mason County Fairgrounds at one point, but it became Oriole Field itself on Saturday, Oct. 5, 1935, with a dedication ceremony in a game against Cadillac. At that time, an advertisement in the Daily News indicated it was going to be "one of the best recreational fields in the entire state."

Gunsell said the new field really will not change what the team does to prepare for the start of the new season when it kicks off its new era at Oriole Field after 78 years of natural grass.

"What it does do is provide a consistent constant surface for us to practice and play on," he said. "It creates excitement for our program. The kids are excited to see

it go in, they are excited to practice and play on it."

Gunsell said it shows the investment of our district and of the football team and that is encouraging.

"There are a lot of things going on down there (Oriole Field) to promote athletics, not just football but soccer, baseball, softball and track. It just feels good to have the district investing in us," he said.

Between the football and soccer programs, both coaches have a planned practice schedule on nights where there is not a game scheduled on the field.

"I have already met with (Ludington soccer) coach (Kris) Anderson, and we have gone through a practice schedule," Gunsell said. "I know when he's going to be on the field, and he knows when we are going to be on it. When you get a nice beautiful surface like this one to practice on you of course you want to take advantage of it. It is nice to have a great relationship with coach Anderson where we both are going to get the amount of time on the field to be able to prepare our teams."

With the new field Gunsell believes it gives the district an opportunity to host events like playoff games in both football and soccer in the future.

"It is going to look like a warzone at Oriole Field this fall, that is not anyone's fault, there is just a lot going on that people have not even seen yet," Gunsell said. "I think we will have one of the top facilities in west Michigan when it is all said and done. The investment at Oriole Field has been tremendous."

Gunsell said his teams in the past have played on artificial turf and he and his players have loved the surface.

"It doesn't matter what the weather is, you know you will have a great surface to play on," he said.



JEFF KIESSEL | DAILY NEWS PHOTOS

An overcast morning greets the work at Oriole Field in early August. A bond issue passed by the voters of Ludington Area Schools brought work to the sports complex in Ludington that included refurbishing a softball diamond and bring artificial turf to the football/soccer field. A team room will start construction in the fall.



Workers pull a portion of the artificial turf into place at Oriole Field in early August.



Two workers look to place the "L" for Ludington in the end zone of Oriole Field in early August in Ludington.

Gunsell said with the grass fields and the use they get from not only football but youth football on Saturdays'

and soccer the grass field gets chewed up throughout the season.

"You eliminate (with turf)



Two employees work to install the artificial turf at Oriole Field in early August.

field conditions as the reason for anything. They will be great field conditions no matter what the weather is,

rain, snow it is not going to affect us," he said.

SEE ORIOLE FIELD, PAGE 8

LUDINGTON: Opens at home

FROM PAGE 6

varsity a year ago and Cole Hackert and Duncil as those who have shown early effort.

In the West Michigan Conference, Gunsell sees Whitehall as the clear favorite, "head and shoulders above the rest. They are the benchmark of football programs in West Michigan. There are a whole bunch of us trying to figure out where we fit in after Whitehall."

In the post season, Gunsell sees the MHSAA moving away from the qualifying system in the future, but this year, the team will still need to qualify, as they have done the past five of seven seasons.

"It is our goal to qualify for the post-season," Gunsell said.

Gunsell said his team is really buying in to the program that goes way beyond the football season. The team has put in the time in the weight room, with Kirby leading the weight program at LHS.

"It is no secret, in football, that bigger, stronger kids produce winners," he said.

'It's no secret, in football, that bigger, stronger kids produce winners.'

Charlie Gunsell
Ludington coach

When folks talk about expectations, Gunsell says, "We don't let our kids talk about expectations unless they are willing to make a commitment. We can't have expectations without commitment, so we ask the kids to make a commitment first."

Ludington opens on Thursday at home against Petoskey and then follows up the next week with another home game against Shelby on the Thursday before Labor Day.

Along with taking in the start of the 2023 football season, anyone at the game will be able to see the new artificial turf installed on the football field over the summer.

"We love the turf," said Gunsell.

ORIOLE FIELD: Artificial turf installed

FROM PAGE 7

"Artificial turf has evolved," he continued. "You are talking about a surface that plays like grass. This is as good as it gets. What you are eliminating now is all of the divots and tears and the things that were causing twisted and or broken ankles. You are eliminating the slipping and the sliding where kids are falling and getting caught off guard."

The district believes the new artificial turf will assist with the safety of its students.

"Having artificial turf installed will make Oriole Field safer for our student athletes. It will have the most advanced cushion system to prevent concussions and will have consistent traction that is difficult to maintain with a natural field, especially during the winter season," Corlett said.

"I know there are concerns

out there with safety but we played in Petoskey (and Muskegon Oakridge). Our kids, our trainer, our staff never felt like our kids were put in a heightened risk of injury," he continued. "These turfs have evolved and there are a tremendous thing."

Gunsell's hope and goal was to be able to work out on the field at least 8 to 10 times before their first game against Petoskey scheduled for Thursday. The first boys soccer game — first varsity event on the artificial turf — was on Aug. 16.

Anderson said that by adding the turf it will change the way the game is played for his team.

"It is a faster surface, there is no doubt about it," he said.

Anderson and Gunsell both agree that the field will be consistent, saying that everytime you play on it you know what the surface will be.

Anderson agreed with Gun-

sell that as much as the grass field was used it was not consistent and sometimes even dangerous to play on.

"The consistency will be a nice thing. The players will go to Oriole Field with an expectation knowing how the ball will play on it," he said.

Anderson likes the speed of the field, playing on this type of surface in the past.

"I think we will see a change in how fast we are going to play," he said. "We do have athletes and we are a pretty fast team."

On sharing the field Anderson said both he and Gunsell work so well together that both programs have worked out a schedule for field time.

Anderson is excited for his players and the team to be able to play the first official high school game on the new field.

"This is something special that the kids will remember for the rest of their lives."



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Manistee seeks another playoff berth

BY GREG GIELCZYK
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — Can they four-peat? That's the question everyone is asking as the Manistee Mariners begin preparations for the 2023 football season.

After a 42-25 loss to Ludington for their second consecutive loss and dropped their record to 3-3, putting their playoff hopes on life support, the Mariners regrouped and reeled off a three-game winning streak to finish the regular season 6-3 and made the post-season for the third straight year.


It was historic in another way, too, as the Mariners notched their first playoff win and earned the right to play for the Division 6 district championship for the first time in program history.

"I felt going into the playoffs last year that we were more than prepared," Bytwork said. "You look at the records and you're going against a 9-1 team (Boyne City in the first round) so you're the underdog basically based on record."

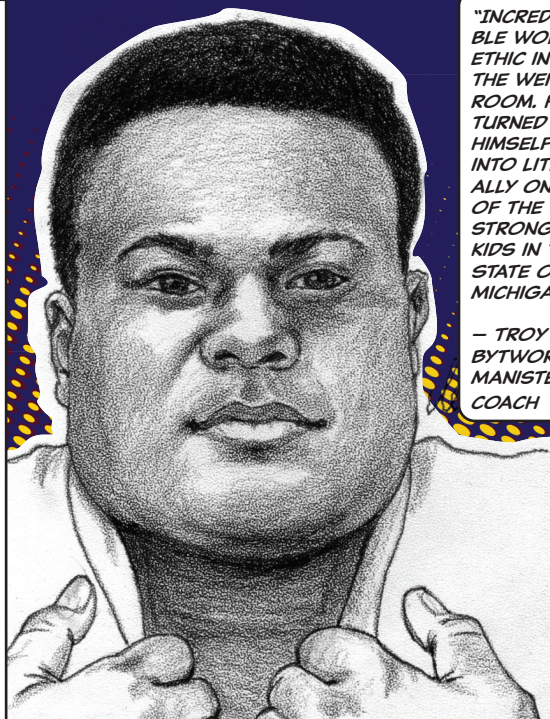
"But I didn't see a huge difference between the two, and we just played such a tough schedule in conference that I thought that we were more than ready physically from a speed stand-

MANISTEE

STATE CHAMPION POWERLIFTER AT 242 POUNDS. RUNNING BACK/LINEBACKER 107 CARRIES, 733 YARDS, 4 TOUCHDOWNS ON OFFENSE. 52 SOLO TACKLES, 81 TOTAL TACKLES, 6 TACKLES FOR LOSS, 1 INTERCEPTION, 2 FUMBLE RECOVERIES



ISIAH DAVIS



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— TROY BYTWORK, MANISTEE COACH

point, and probably most importantly from a mental standpoint."

Some big pieces are missing from the offense, starting with three-year varsity starter Jeffrey Huber at quarterback. One could make the argument that he's

the most successful quarterback overall in Manistee history according to Bytwork.

Manistee's rosters:

SENIORS: Isaiah Davis, Nathan Doremus, Nick Hornkohl, Caius Johns, Brian McNeil, Braydon Sorenson, Kanon Petzak,

Trevor Spencer, Matthew Thies and Gannon Thomas.

JUNIORS: Alexander Aldridge, Malachi Cruz, Liam Edmondson, Elijah Fulton, Trevor Haag, Kaden Kott, Trenton Miller, Elijah Ruiz, Matthew Torney and Chad Whitmore.

SOPHOMORES: Bradon Banicki,

2023 Schedule

		THE FINAL SCORE	
		Manistee	Opponent
Aug. 24	Kalkaska		
Aug. 31	Mason County Central		
Sept. 8	at Oakridge		
Sept. 15	at Orchard View		
Sept. 22	Whitehall		
Sept. 29	Ludington		
Oct. 6	at Shelby		
Oct. 13	at Montague		
Oct. 20	Fremont		

River Blair, Jacon Lee, Aubrey Nickleson, Brayden Schweitzer, Keegan Shannon, Landin Sowa, Kiedis Underwood, Josh Weiss and Brayden Zimmerman.

While leading the Mariners to three district playoff appearances including the district title game last year, Huber holds the record for the most touchdowns over a career and went 2-1 against arch rival Ludington.

Now that he's moved on to continue his career in college, the Mariners need to find a replacement and the two being looked at for the position are Dayvion Neal and junior Haag.

"The nice thing about it from a coaching standpoint and a team standpoint is that whoever wins the job has a lot of tools in the backfield," Bytwork said. "You're not going to be fully reliant on (the quarterback) to carry the load, so to speak."

"You've got some guys that have carried the load,

2022 Results

Holton	W, 54-6
at Mason County Central	W, 27-6
Oakridge	L, 19-46
Orchard View	W, 30-14
at Whitehall	L, 0-56
at Ludington	L, 21-45
Shelby	W, 54-7
Montague	W, 50-20
at Fremont	W, 35-6
MHSAA Div. 6 Playoffs	
at Boyne City	W, 28-27
at Gladstone	L, 14-36

and they want to carry it again. That process is always interesting. I came in as a quarterback coach, and been one in some capacity, so that position holds a special spot for me.

"It's one that you have to manage a particular way. There are intangibles there that are probably more important than some of the skills that you're looking at."

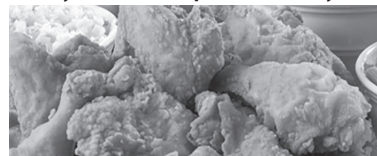
Manistee scored 37 or 38 touchdowns last year and returns the bulk of the scoring, as well as the yardage

SEE MANISTEE, PAGE 10

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Now introducing... Mariners

Manistee rebrands after generations as Chippewas

BY GREG GIELCZYK
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — It became official the moment Manistee's golf team concluded its season at the state finals. Going forward, the athletes will be competing under a new mascot.

Back in 1930, students voted for the logo "Chippewas" in a newspaper contest and has stood for over 90 years, "before we understood the offensive and detrimental nature of the use of Native American imagery," the school wrote.

An effort that was started last fall by a student committee eventually led to the old logo being "retired," and in another vote "Mariners" was chosen as a replacement.

The soccer team will be the first to kick off the 2023 fall athletic season as the Mariners when they hosted Kalkaska on Aug. 18 before the football squad makes its debut under the new logo on Thursday.

One thing will remain the same. According to head coach Troy Bytwork, the players will continue to wear the winged helmets patterned after the Michigan Wolverines.

"You send helmets out in November or December, and they didn't announce the change until (February)," Bytwork explained. "If you don't push your helmets out to be repainted or reconditioned by December, you're not going to get them back by



August.

"So, if there ever was a change, that's something that has to be decided like now for the next year. I haven't heard anybody say they wanted a change from the wings.

"I don't know if the wings have anything to do with the name. I don't really foresee that. But, that's up to the powers that be."

Even if the helmets had changed, Bytwork said it would really make no difference.

Whatever the mascot, it's still representing Manistee High School, and the community.

"It's a name," Bytwork said. "I don't want to speak too much to it, because I didn't grow up here. I know

if you played under a particular mascot, that would be more meaningful to you if you grew up in that.

"Which would be the same for me if I was back in Hudsonville. I would always see myself as an Eagle. The biggest thing (for the team) is how you're going to perform in the summer, and how you're going to perform on a Friday night. That's more important than anything else."

The logistics ... like changing all the signage, particularly the banner adorning the football field and the gym floor ... are beyond the team's control.

All they're focused on is bringing success to the school's athletic front.

Senior fullback Isaiah Davis agreed, saying the mascot name doesn't alter the fact the team still represents the community of Manistee.

"Yes, I think that's the big thing," senior receiver Nick Hornkohl agreed. "We are playing for Manistee. The mascot doesn't change that."

Bytwork revealed there will be another change that will be readily apparent when fans start to file into Mariners Field ... a big 'M' gracing the middle of the field.

He also won't reveal if the new uniforms will have Mariners on the front.

"You'll have to see on a Friday night (or, in this case, Thursday),"



GREG GIELCZYK | DAILY NEWS
Manistee coach Troy Bytwork reviews a play with his players during a 7-on-7 earlier this summer in Manistee.

MANISTEE: Return to playoffs?

FROM PAGE 9

gained in the persons of Kaden Kott, Nick Hornkohl and Kanon Petzak.

Where the Mariners lose some significant parts is on the offensive line as Caden Van-Sickle, Carter Fredericks and Conner Lindeman all graduated. They had size and strength, as well as experience.

But the Mariners have some pretty dynamic athletes in the backfield and on the outside, as well as tight end and senior Braydon Sorenson is back at tight end.

Manistee brings back its secondary as well as all of its linebackers, which should ease the graduation losses on the defensive line which leaves plenty of question marks. Brian McNeil is the only returner, and he was the team's fifth leading scorer last

year.

One change finds linebacker Isaiah Davis moving into the defensive line. Sorenson, Caius Johns, Landin Sowa, Braydon Schweitzer, Landin Sowa and Haag are all back at the linebacker spots.

Hornkohl is back at free safety, while Petzak and Kott lend experience at the corners. Bytwork has liked what he's seen from senior Matthew Thies back there as well, although he didn't start last year and certainly needs work.

Five of the top six tacklers are back, which gives Bytwork confidence the Mariners can make the plays on defense to keep the Mariners in every game.

The Mariners start their drive for a four-peat Thursday, Aug. 24 when they kick off the new season Thursday, Aug. 24 when they host Kalkaska in a non-

West Michigan Conference - Lakes Division

	Aug. 24-26	Aug. 31-Sept. 1	Sept. 8-9	Sept. 15-16	Sept. 22-23	Sept. 29-30	Oct. 6-7	Oct. 13-14	Oct. 20-21
Fremont	Hart	at Beaverton	at Ludington	Grant	Oakridge	Orchard View	Montague	at Whitehall	at Manistee
Ludington	Petoskey	Shelby	Fremont	Oakridge	at Montague	at Manistee	Whitehall	at Orchard View	at Mason County Central
Manistee	Kalkaska	Mason County Central	at Oakridge	at Orchard View	Whitehall	Ludington	at Shelby	at Montague	Fremont
Montague	Spring Lake	Ravenna	at Orchard View	Whitehall	Ludington	at North Muskegon	at Fremont	Manistee	at Oakridge
Oakridge	at Sparta	Hudsonville	Manistee	at Ludington	at Fremont	at Whitehall	Orchard View	at Ravenna	Montague
Orchard View	Holton	at Wyoming	Montague	Manistee	at Muskegon	at Fremont	at Oakridge	Ludington	at Whitehall
Whitehall	Hudsonville	Godwin Heights	Hastings	at Montague	Catholic	Oakridge	at Ludington	Fremont	Orchard View
	Unity Christian	at Tecumseh			at Manistee				

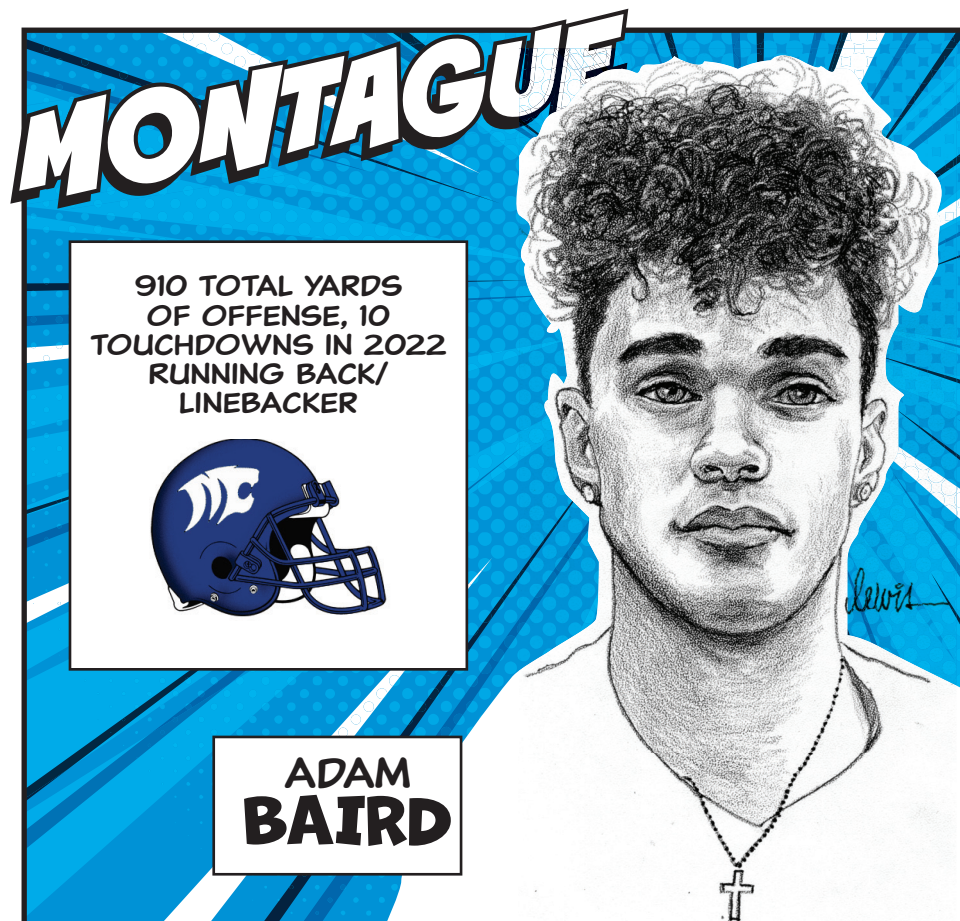
Montague focused on details

BY ANDY ROBERTS
BEACON EDITOR

While Montague's strong schedule ensured it a berth in the playoffs even at 3-6 last year, no one on the Wildcats was content with the season's final result. Now, Montague's job is to make things right in 2023. Coach Justin Dennett has been pleased with the way his team has responded to that disappointment in summer workouts.

"We're just really harping on the little details," Dennett said. "We're trying to get better at all the little details that we probably overlooked last year, little things in the weight room. The whole offseason in general has been much better going into it. We feel like we're in a good spot, but we still have a long way to go. We're pretty young and we're trying to kick those bad habits, which takes time. We'll see where we're at once the season starts, but I feel like we're in better shape than we were at this time last year."

Montague has a pair of great offensive weapons, which is always a good place to start. Running back Adam Baird had a big year last season, with 910 total offensive yards and nine touchdowns. He's slated to again be the featured back in the Wild-



cat attack. Austin Cook ran for 80 yards last year against Oakridge and should get some time this year as well.

Receiver Isaiah Atchison will anchor the passing game. It was Atchison who

made the biggest offseason news in the program, being offered a scholarship at Central Michigan and quickly committing to the Chipewas.

Atchison missed the first

five games of the 2022 season with a knee injury. Dennett said Atchison was physically all the way back from it by the end of the season, but having an entire healthy offseason should make him

2023 Schedule

		THE FINAL SCORE	
		Montague	Opponent
Aug. 24	Spring Lake		
Aug. 31	Ravenna		
Sept. 8	at Orchard View		
Sept. 15	Whitehall		
Sept. 22	Ludington		
Sept. 29	at North Muskegon		
Oct. 6	at Fremont		
Oct. 13	Manistee		
Oct. 20	at Oakridge		

even more of a weapon now.

"You could tell he was a little unsure early (last year)," Dennett said of Atchison. "He definitely looks better and healthier now. He's running really well. It's funny to see how teams are defending him in 7-on-7s, because he's such a tough guy to cover. You see a lot of goofy defenses. Hopefully they do that in the season because it'll open up everybody else."

Joining Atchison in the receiving corps is the team's leading returning pass-catcher, senior Paul Olson. Olson was brought up to the varsity late in the 2021 district title campaign and had 318 receiving yards last fall.

Who will throw Atchison and Olson the ball is not yet determined. Chase Gowell graduated last year, leaving a vacancy at quarterback.

Three players with experience at the position — juniors Kellan Francis and Eli

2022 Results

at Spring Lake	W, 20-7
at Ravenna	L, 7-14
Orchard View	W, 42-6
at Whitehall	L, 6-60
at Ludington	L, 14-34
North Muskegon	L, 7-27
Fremont	W, 20-0
at Manistee	L, 20-50
Oakridge	L, 7-45
MHSAA Div. 6 Playoffs	
at Reed City	L, 15-44

Petersen and sophomore Mason Darke — are competing after sharing the job last year on the JV. Petersen, who attempted six passes last year, including one touchdown, carries the most varsity experience. All are strong, multi-sport athletes, and whoever emerges should be able to be a dual threat.

"We'll make a decision once (we get closer to kick-off), but right now it's truly up in the air," Dennett said of the trio.

SEE MONTAGUE, PAGE 12

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Montague's Adam Baird (center) maneuvers his way past Orchard View defender Alex Tanner to the end zone during a Wildcats' win last season.

ANDY ROBERTS | WHITE LAKE BEACON FILE

MONTAGUE

FROM PAGE 11

Another X factor is junior Ryver Jarka. Jarka had a good 2022 season, with 43 tackles to lead all returning Wildcats, but Dennett said he's made an offseason leap and looks to be ready to make big contributions on both sides of the ball.

"He started as a sophomore last year, but he has really committed himself to the weight room," Dennett said of Jarka. "The attitude and effort he brings every day, he's competing in every drill and he's going to be a weapon for us."

Seniors DaCarri Williams, Joe Winkleman and Brody Dietz also had over 30 tackles each last year on defense, and with the Wildcats having graduated their top four tacklers, they should compile more this year.

The Wildcats play the same schedule they did last season, with Spring Lake to open the season and Ravenna and North Muskegon as cross-division opponents in the West Michigan Conference. All three should provide good tests as the 'Cats ready for WMC Lakes battles with the likes of Oakridge, Ludington and defending league champ Whitehall.



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Vikings not satisfied with results

BY ANDY ROBERTS
BEACON EDITOR

There were many things that struck Whitehall coach Tony Sigmon about the Vikings' 2022 season, probably the program's best ever — 11 wins, district and conference titles, and a classic regional showdown with eventual state champion Grand Rapids South Christian in which Whitehall came up just short.

Maybe the biggest thing he noticed, though, was that when it ended, despite all those amazing accomplishments, there wasn't an ounce of self-satisfaction within the team.

"I don't know how many coaches are walking into the season (after a season like we had) last year, and our kids weren't satisfied," Sigmon said. "I would have never thought in a million years that after 11 wins in a season, never doing that ever, that our kids (would have) felt like they let either themselves down, the community down, their families, whatever they felt."

"What a great motivator. We've been able to get stronger doing that. The kids really took that upon themselves."

While Sigmon does hope his team can "enjoy" this



Whitehall's Malcolm Earvin (1) races downfield on a punt return during a Vikings win over Manistee last season. Teammate Trenton TenBroek helps out with blocking.

season a little more than last, the expectations haven't changed even a bit: The Vikings believe they have a team that can make a deep playoff run, and maybe even finish this one in Detroit at Ford Field. Senior quarterback Kyle Stratton certainly doesn't shy away

from such talk.

"We're hoping to play on Thanksgiving weekend," Stratton said. "That would mean more to me than anything else, really, just to be able to play at Ford (Field). That's what all of us have dreamed of, since we were young."

Stratton is a main reason Whitehall can dream of doing that. The third-year starter had a spectacular 2022, piling up over 2,600 yards of offense, throwing for 26 touchdowns and running for 17 more. He wasn't just spectacular; he was also efficient, completing over

2023 Schedule

		THE FINAL SCORE
	Whitehall	Opponent
Aug. 24	Hudsonville Unity Christian	
Aug. 31	Tecumseh	
Sept. 8	Hastings	
Sept. 15	at Montague	
Sept. 22	at Manistee	
Sept. 29	Oakridge	
Oct. 6	at Ludington	
Oct. 13	Fremont	
Oct. 20	Orchard View	

60 percent of his passes and only turning the ball over five times.

Stratton has such an impressive receiving corps to throw to, even after the graduation loss of multi-talented Nate Bolley, that junior Camden Thompson, holder of a Western Michigan offer, isn't even statistically the Vikings' top returning target. That would be senior Trannon Aylor, who piled up 708 receiving yards — on an incredible 30.8 yards per catch — and 12 touchdowns last year. Thompson added nearly 400 yards and five scores. The duo will again be a nightmare for opposing secondaries. Malcolm Earvin and Ca'Mar Ready, who like Thompson and Aylor are track stars too, bring speed and athleticism to the offense as well.

At running back, Whitehall has had great success

2022 Results

at Hudsonville Unity Chr.	W, 54-26
at Hastings	W, 41-30
Alpena	W, 50-0
Montague	W, 60-6
Manistee	W, 56-0
at Oakridge	W, 42-8
Ludington	W, 56-6
at Fremont	W, 49-8
at Orchard View	W, forfeit
MHSAA Div. 4 Playoffs	
Big Rapids	W, 42-12
Fruitport	W, 51-26
at GR South Christian	L, 21-28

over the years at plugging in whichever wrestling star earns the spot, and that should be no different this year as senior Darnell Mack returns. Mack got some spot duty last season and is capable of following in the footsteps of graduated Jackson Cook.

The front lines, at least entering the season, are the question marks, if only because of the talent that left after last season. Recent

SEE WHITEHALL, PAGE 14

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Stratton unquestioned leader for Vikings

BY ANDY ROBERTS
BEACON EDITOR

When Whitehall installed then-sophomore Kyle Stratton at quarterback going into the 2021 season, no one could know for sure how it would go. However, the Viking coaches were sure of one thing — the position wasn't going to be too big for him.


He's spent two seasons proving them right, first leading the Vikings to a conference co-championship and a road playoff win in 2021, then piloting a school-record 11-win season and a conference and district title last year. Stratton went over 1,500 yards passing and 1,000 yards rushing in 2022, truly a threat every snap of the ball.

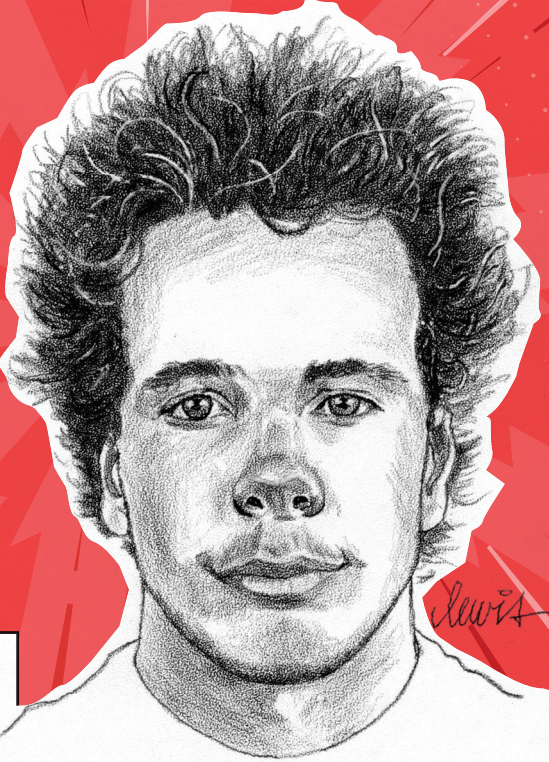
All the while, Stratton, whose linemen dubbed him "Sweetness" when he was a sophomore, has deflected credit to his teammates. Entering 2023, though, there's no doubt the senior quarterback is the lynchpin of the team. He's shown it with work in the weight room; though never slight, Stratton is noticeably more muscular this fall. He's also shown it as a leader, especially in working with an inexperienced offensive line whose job it will be to keep him upright.

"I'm working with them as much as I can, going to some big guy camps, everything

WHITEHALL

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RUSHING YARDS, 42
TOUCHDOWNS, 5
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STRATTON**

we can do so they know the offense so it starts to become (easy)," Stratton said. "Right now, it's not as easy as it was last year. Those guys always knew what to do. It's slower this year, so I've got to keep my patience and just keep helping them as much as I can."

Even if there are hiccups,

though, the signal-caller makes no mistake about how he feels about his front line.

"I have complete confidence in these guys," Stratton said. "I know they're going to block their butts off for me. They've all been in the weight room. When the season comes, I'm going to

trust my guys. They're going to get us right."

Coach Tony Sigmon said Stratton's work with the offensive line has been a key marker in his development.

"He's a kid that always wants to get better," Sigmon said. "We're kind of running out of things for him to get better at, but for him to re-

'They want to know how they respond. **If Kyle is cool and collected and composed, then we're fine.'**

Tony Sigmon
Whitehall coach

ally conceptually understand the offensive line, is really that next step for him, just as being a good football player."

It's no surprise Stratton sometimes sounds like a coach, as his dad Keith has been defensive coordinator for the Vikings for several years. As a third-year starter, he's acting more and more like one, too.

"He's kind of mentioned a time or two, 'What does it look like to be a high school coach or a football coach in general?'" Sigmon said. "(To do that,) he's got to know all the pieces, how all of it works. It's fun, because we'll draw up plays every once in a while. (I'll get a call in) February, 'Hey coach, I've got an idea.' Now, I ask him, 'What about X, Y and Z,' and he's like, 'We'll figure that out.'"

"That's where I'm really excited to see how he grows there...He does a pretty good job with it anyway, but now

for him to be able to do that, what a luxury it would be to have a coach on the field."

That's the sort of thing Stratton brings to the Viking huddle. It's no secret the quarterback, and especially a veteran quarterback, is where players first look when on-field leadership is needed.

"I think there's kind of a trickle-down effect where kids look at coaches, but before they ever look at coaches, when things are going good, bad or indifferent, they're looking at their teammates," Sigmon said. "People look to him. They want to know how they respond. If Kyle is cool and collected and composed, then we're fine."

As good as Whitehall was last year, that was rarely something to worry about. If the Vikings get to where they want to go — Stratton is open about the team pursuing a state championship — that moment will come at some point this fall. No one doubts he'll be ready for it.

"We've got a chip on our shoulder because of how the season ended last year," Stratton said. "We've got a lot to play for. We know we can play in the big games now. That was something we didn't know before then. Now the guys that are coming back from last year know that we can play in a big game, we can compete, and we want to get farther than that."

WHITEHALL: Vikings didn't get satisfaction out of last year's run, craving more in '23

FROM PAGE 13

fixtures like Shane Cook, Camden Rake, Winton Napier and Chase Niezurawski graduated, leaving gaps to fill.

Sigmon didn't know this summer exactly how the front lines will line up when toe meets leather in week one, but he's confident in whoever emerges.

"Our up front (guys), I'll tell you

this, to this date, our offensive linemen have done everything I've asked them to do," Sigmon said. "We have about six or seven guys that are asking me, 'Why not me, Coach?', and to tell you the truth, they've all made a compelling argument so far."

Elsewhere on defense, the Vikings are blessed with some strong two-way players. The big-

gest graduation departures were lineman Graycen Shepherd and linebacker Jaiden Altgilbers, who both moved on to play collegiately. However, senior Everett Napier had 12.5 tackles for loss last year and is back to terrorize opposing backs.

Whitehall has always scheduled aggressively under Sigmon, and it's no different this year. The

Vikings host perennially strong Unity Christian and Hastings out of conference, and they'll also travel to face Tecumseh, a 10-win squad last fall. Whitehall was never tested in league play last season, but Oakridge can never be overlooked, and the rivalry game with Montague always comes with emotion and excitement.

The challenge is ahead for

the Vikings, but they've proven they're ready.

"Our goal is obviously (to go) undefeated," Stratton said. "We want to go as far as we can. We want to play all the way until Thanksgiving, but (we'll take it) one game at a time, one week at a time, and keep building off our success."

Local football players at college

DIVISION 1

Tayte Vanderleest	Reeths-Puffer	Central Michigan	Freshman	DB
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DIVISION 2

*Almarco Fields	Reeths-Puffer	Ferris State	Freshman	DB
Trey Forkinski	Ludington	Michigan Tech	Freshman	LB
Austin Hofmann	Mason County Central	Davenport	Senior	LB
Khole Hofmann	Mason County Central	Davenport	Redshirt Sophomore	LB
Hayden McDonald	Montague	Hillsdale	Redshirt Freshman	DL
*Jake Plamondon	Ludington	Ferris State	Sophomore	TE/HB
*Brennan Schwarz	Montague	Ferris State	Sophomore	LB
Graycen Shepherd	Whitehall	Northern Michigan	Freshman	DL
Caden Vansickle	Manistee	Michigan Tech	Freshman	OL

DIVISION 3

Jeremy Ardshahi	Reeths-Puffer	Kalamazoo	Junior	WR
Luke Booth	Montague	Alma	Junior	OL
Jackson Cook	Whitehall	Calvin	Redshirt	—
Andrew Durbin	Whitehall	Kalamazoo	Junior	TE
*Terrell Harris	Whitehall	Hope	junior	WR
*Austin Luce	Reeths-Puffer	Olivet	Sophomore	DB
*Luke Marsh	Montague	Hope	Junior	OL
Trey Mikkelsen	Montague	Calvin	Redshirt	—
Winton Napier	Whitehall	Calvin	Redshirt	—
*Landon Powers	Manistee	Olivet	Junior	LB
*Eric Smith	Manistee	Olivet	Junior	TE
*Ju'Marcus Watson	Whitehall	Olivet	Sophomore	DB



Reeths-Puffer's Tayte Vanderleest (5) breaks free from Grand Haven's Keagan Hunt on his way to the end zone during a game last season at R-P. Vanderleest is now a freshman at Central Michigan.

ANDY ROBERTS | WHITE LAKE BEACON FILE

NAIA

*Jacob Irelan	Ludington	Madonna	Junior	WR
*Nikolai Kehrer	Ludington	Siena Heights	Sophomore	OL
*Jalen Williams	Reeths-Puffer	Siena Heights	Redshirt Senior	DB

*last year's roster

Calvin University will play football in 2024.

Were we unable to locate a player? Let us know at sports@ludingtondailynews.com

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Hart out to prove last year no fluke

BY MATTHEW SCHEIDEL
HERALD-JOURNAL WRITER

The Hart football team is coming off its first winning season since 1997. Despite a 6-3 record, the Pirates did not qualify for the MHSAA state playoffs.

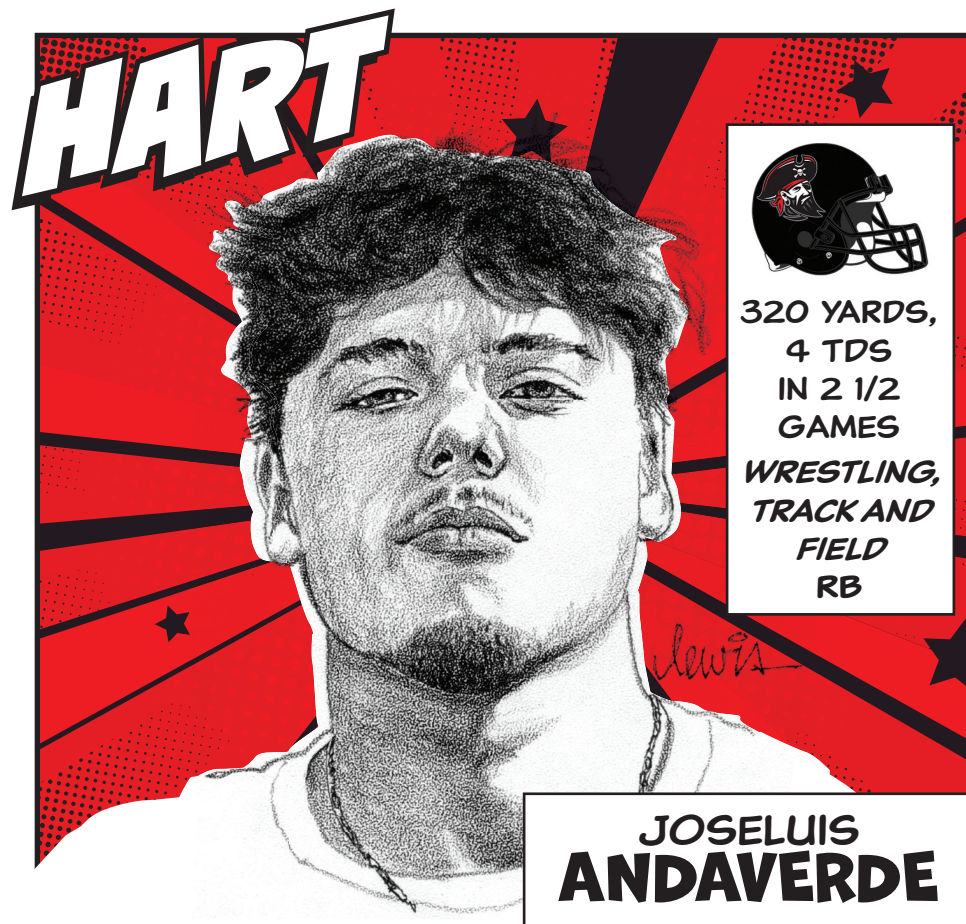
That is something that is still on the back of the team's mind.

"Our kids definitely have an edge going into the year," Hart coach Joe Tanis said. "They feel like they still don't get a lot of respect. They've heard from a lot of people that we lost a ton of guys, and it was kind of a fluke last year. So I think our guys are definitely motivated."

Despite all the talk, Tanis doesn't want that to be the focus for the team.

"That's something I wrestle with as a coach is how much we want to use disrespect and those kinds of things as a motivation," he said. "At the end of last year, we were really happy with the results that we got. Did we want more? Did we want the playoffs? Yes. But again, we're not going to allow other things outside our control define what success looks like for us."

The Pirates have several key returning players from a year ago, including RB Jose-



luis Andaverde, who was off to a great start last year before going down with an injury in the third game of the season. Other key returners include WR Eman Hertzler,

DE Zane Thomas, and line-

man Ivan Lara and Adrian Tice, all four of which were all-conference selections a year ago.

Newcomers expected to contribute include Ty Schlukibir, Alex Hicks, Payden

Stone, and Chris Terhaar.

Tanis said the team is "excited" for the upcoming season and is looking forward to making more progress as a program.

"We're going into year



MATTHEW SCHEIDEL | DAILY NEWS

The Hart defense celebrates during a 7-on-7 with Ludington on July 13 at Hart High School.

2023 Schedule

	Hart	Opponent
Aug. 24	at Fremont	
Aug. 31	White Cloud	
Sept. 8	at Shelby	
Sept. 15	Stockbridge	
Sept. 22	North Muskegon	
Sept. 29	Mason County Central	
Oct. 6	at Holton	
Oct. 13	at Hesperia	
Oct. 20	Ravenna	

2022 Results

	Hart	Opponent
Fremont	L, 8-22	
at White Cloud	W, 38-19	
Shelby	W, 38-6	
at Muskegon Heights	W, 36-14	
at North Muskegon	L, 14-55	
at Mason County Central	W, 22-16	
Holton	W, 53-0	
Hesperia	W, 44-6	
at Ravenna	L, 0-46	

three, and we feel like we've made a lot of progress, but we still have a long ways to go to become the kind of program we want to become," Tanis said. "But as of right now, we feel like this will be our strongest and most talented team we've had with the largest senior class we've had, by far. So we're really excited to combine that three years of ex-

perience in our systems with very little change scheme-wise."

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For Hart, Shelby, Blood, Sweat, and Tears Jug huge source of motivation

BY MATTHEW SCHEIDEL
HERALD-JOURNAL WRITER

Rivalries in sports are always special. The winning team earns bragging rights until the next matchup.

In football, something more is usually at stake. Think of the Paul Bunyan Trophy in the annual Michigan/Michigan State game or the Victory Cannon for Central Michigan/Western Michigan.

For Hart and Shelby, that something is the Blood, Sweat, and Tears Jug.

Since 1989, the football teams for the Pirates and Tigers have duked it out for the jug every single time they've met. Shelby leads series for the Jug by a slim margin, 18-14, and Hart will be going for its fourth straight in the series this season.

Both head coaches take a bit of a different approach the week of the matchup. Hart coach Joe Tanis said the team doesn't talk about it lot, but it's always on their minds.

"We definitely know about it and think about it," Tanis said. "We feel like it's been in Shelby a lot more than Hart in recent years, so we definitely want to keep it at home where it belongs."

In contrast, for Shelby coach Phil Fortier, it's brought up every single day.

"It's mentioned all the time, especially when you've been on the losing end of it," Fortier said. "You talk about getting the jug back home. When you have it, you don't want to give it back up."

Both coaches agreed that the jug adds to the rivalry in a big way.

"I think any time you can have a trophy game, especially in a rivalry between two similar, close-knit communities that are separated by just a few miles, it just makes it that much more



Hart celebrates winning the Blood, Sweat, and Tears Jug last season at Hart.



Hart and Shelby duke it out for the Blood, Sweat, and Tears Jug last season in Hart.

special when you have something to play for," Tanis said.

"Just having that trophy there, I think is meaningful," Fortier added. "And it's something tangible, and any time you can take something

that's a little bit abstract — like victory and defeat — and turn it into something tangible, that players want to have and coaches want to have, it just adds a little bit more motivation to your

week."

The tradition, both of the trophy and of the rivalry as a whole, is something that both programs embrace.

"It's a big rivalry game, and we know it means a lot," Tanis said. "Our records don't matter. We know that we want that jug, and we know that it's a point of pride for our community, our kids, and our program."

"What's great is that last year, I didn't even have to bring it up," Fortier said. "The players brought it up. I'm sure it's going to be the same thing again this year."

With all the focus these two programs put into this rivalry, it can be distracting. After all, it is just one game, and one would think neither team wants to lose sight of a bigger prize, such as making

the MHSAA state playoffs.

That is not the case, at least not for Hart.

"I don't think the jug itself is a distraction," Tanis said. "Anytime you have a rivalry game, and again, you're this close to each other and you've got similar friends and social circles, there's opportunities for distractions."

At Shelby, Fortier thinks a bit differently.

"You can't let it get inside your head," Fortier said. "You still have to have the same preparation that week. It can't be something over the top where you're gonna stay an extra hour every night (to prepare)."

Hart and Shelby will meet for the jug this season on Friday, Sept. 8 in Shelby. Kickoff is at 7 p.m.

HERALD-JOURNAL FILE PHOTOS

For the Jug

Hart vs. Shelby since 1989

2022	Hart 38, Shelby 6
2021	Hart 70, Shelby 12
2020	Hart 46, Shelby 36
2019	Shelby 36, Hart 20
2018	Hart 16, Shelby 14
2017	Hart 14, Shelby 7
2016	Hart 20, Shelby 19
2014	Shelby 57, Hart 0
2013	Shelby 61, Hart 7
2012	Shelby 42, Hart 8
2011	Shelby 46, Hart 26
2010	Shelby 41, Hart 0
2009	Shelby 41, Hart 0
2008	Shelby 25, Hart 12
2007	Shelby 35, Hart 14
2006	Shelby 27, Hart 8
2005	Shelby 49, Hart 12
2004	Hart 38, Shelby 0
2003	Hart 42, Shelby 6
2002	Shelby 28, Hart 0
2001	Shelby 9, Hart 0
2000	Shelby 13, Hart 7
1999	Shelby 22, Hart 3
1998	Shelby 12, Hart 8
1997	Hart 46, Shelby 23
1996	Hart 35, Shelby 0
1995	Shelby 12, Hart 0
1994	Hart 7, Shelby 0
1993	Hart 29, Shelby 26
1992	Hart 19, Shelby 12
1991	Hart 31, Shelby 0
1990	Shelby 28, Hart 8
1989	Shelby 22, Hart 0

Shelby building strong culture

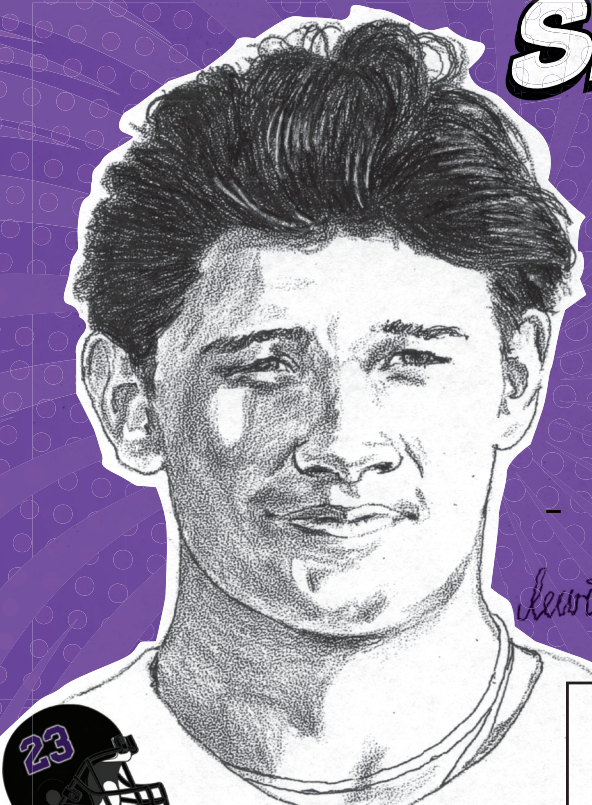
BY MATTHEW SCHEIDEL
HERALD-JOURNAL WRITER

The Shelby football team hasn't seen a lot of winning in recent years, but now under third-year head coach Phil Fortier, they believe the program is headed in the right direction.

"As we establish our culture, and wire guys to not just excel at football, we want to enjoy football," Fortier said. "We don't just want them to be good at football, we want to be good in the classroom, be good people in the hallways of our high school and really influence a positive culture within our high school so that spreads out."

Shelby is coming off a 2-7 season with wins over Hesperia and Holton, the former of which snapped a 21-game losing streak. This season, they have 15 seniors, something Fortier thinks will serve the team well.

"I expect us to be a lot better, a lot more competitive," he said. "...the vast majority of them have played three or four years of football. That's not always been the case the last couple of years. So we expect huge improvement. We expect to play with a lot of enthusiasm and a lot of



SHELBY

210 YARDS RUSHING, 5 TDS; 342 YARDS PASSING, 3 TDS; 608 OFFENSIVE YARDS
BASEBALL QB/DB

LALO GARCIA

energy." Some of the impact players back for the Tigers this season include RB/DB Levi Cooley, QB/DB Lalo Garcia, WR/DB Philip Hayes, and

lineman Ivan Fessenden. RB/LB AJ Melchor and lineman David Purdy are newcomers from the junior varsity squad that are expected to contribute this

season.

Fortier said the connection he's been able to make with his players is his favorite part of this team.



MATTHEW SCHEIDEL | DAILY NEWS
A Shelby defensive back works to cover a Ludington receiver

2023 Schedule		THE FINAL SCORE	
		Shelby	Opponent
Aug. 24	at White Cloud		
Aug. 31	at Ludington		
Sept. 8	Hart		
Sept. 15	Ravenna		
Sept. 22	Hesperia		
Sept. 29	at Holton		
Oct. 6	Manistee		
Oct. 13	at Mason County Central		
Oct. 20	at North Muskegon		

"It's a lot of fun," Fortier said. "To hang out with these guys and watch them progress and coach and watching them interact and connect with each other."

2022 Results	
Fremont	L, 20-40
Ludington	L, 7-55
at Hart	L, 3-38
at Ravenna	L, 13-55
at Hesperia	W, 22-16
Holton	W, 26-6
at Manistee	L, 7-54
Mason County Central	L, 6-58
North Muskegon	L, 6-42

West Michigan Conference - Rivers Division

	Aug. 24-26	Aug. 31-Sept. 1	Sept. 8-9	Sept. 15-16	Sept. 22-23	Sept. 29-30	Oct. 6-7	Oct. 13-14	Oct. 20-21
Hart	at Fremont	White Cloud	at Shelby	Stockbridge	North Muskegon	Mason County Central Ravenna	at Holton	at Hesperia	Ravenna
Hesperia	at Muskegon Heights	at St. Louis	White Cloud	at North Muskegon	at Shelby	Mason County Central Ravenna	Mason County Central Hart	Hart	at Holton
Holton	at Orchard View	at Perry	at Ravenna	at Mason County Central Holton	at White Cloud	Shelby	Hart	at North Muskegon Shelby	Hesperia
Mason County Central	Wyoming Godwin Heights	at Manistee	North Muskegon	Holton	at Ravenna	at Hart	at Hesperia	Shelby	Ludington
North Muskegon	Pewamo-Westphalia	at Muskegon Catholic	at Mason County Central Holton	Hesperia	at Hart	Montague	at Ravenna	Holton	Shelby
Ravenna	Beal City	at Montague	Holton	at Shelby	at Mason County Central Hesperia	at Hesperia	North Muskegon	Oakridge	at Hart
Shelby	at White Cloud	at Ludington	Hart	Ravenna		at Holton	Manistee	at Mason County Central	at North Muskegon

Hesperia plans to be 'in the mix'

BY MATTHEW SCHEIDEL
HERALD-JOURNAL WRITER

The Hesperia football team is a young bunch this season, but that hasn't stopped them from dreaming big.

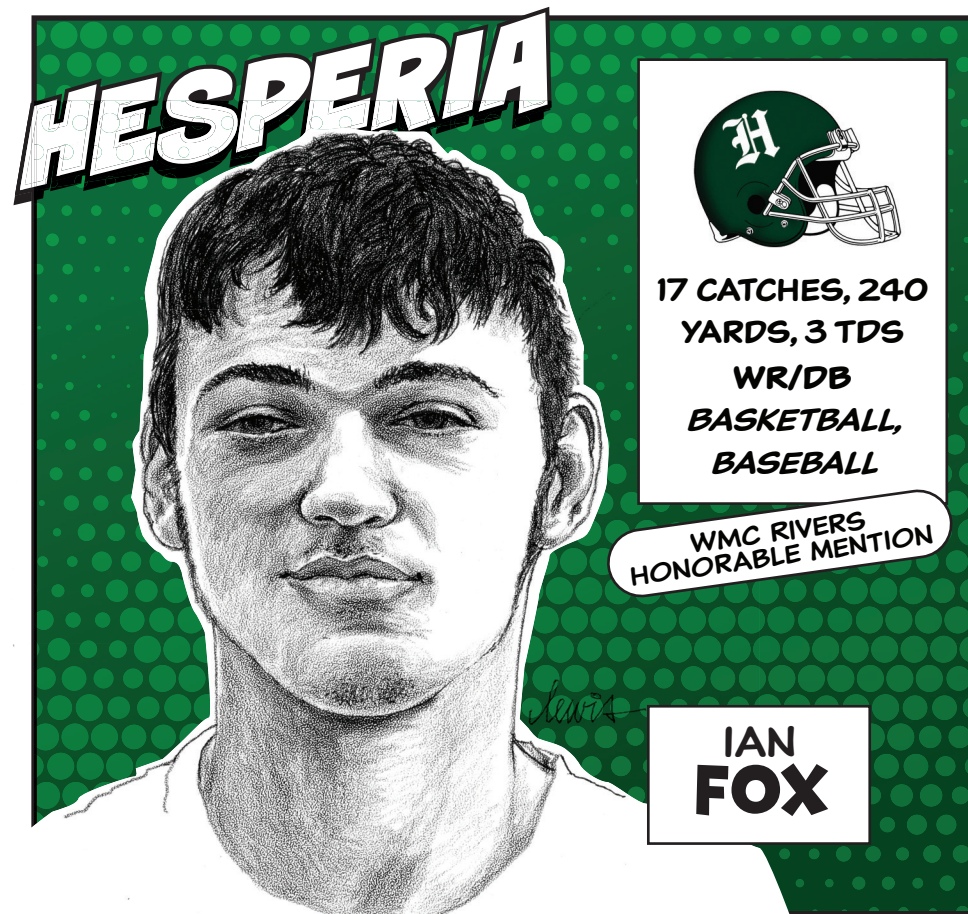
The Panthers are coming off a 2-7 season in 2022. It was a learning experience for now second-year head coach Tyler Fehler, who has since added some more coaches to his staff— Mike Harrigan to coach the offensive line, and Emilio Flores to coach the defensive line.

"That takes a little bit of pressure off me, and then it helps me work a little more with the skill guys," Fehler, a former college quarterback, said. "It helps when I have my linemen that are learning and having their position coach be a guy that looks like them."

Hesperia returns several key members from last year's team including WR/DB Ian Fox, WR/DB Bryce Billings, RB/DB Skylar Stalbaum, and linemen Blake Hernandez and Noah Walker.

As for newcomer, Fisher Spencer is a transfer from Fremont who will play line-backer. At quarterback, sophomore Kohen Witte will call the signals as Brock Bolles recovers from off-season ACL surgery.

Fehler said Bolles will miss about the first half of the sea-



son.

He said that despite their youth, he likes his team's chances.

"I'm feeling pretty confident overall, but at the end of the day, we are pretty young," he said. "But I think

we have some talented guys in our skilled positions and up front. We are going to be a lot bigger than last year so that will help."

Fehler said his team should be "right in the mix" in the WMC Rivers division.



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WMC RIVERS
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Hesperia's Skylar Stalbaum catches a pass during a team workout on July 25 at Hesperia High School. **MATT SCHEIDEL** | OCEANA'S HERALD-JOURNAL

2023 Schedule

		THE FINAL SCORE
	Hesperia	Opponent
Aug. 24	at Muskegon Heights	
Aug. 31	at St. Louis	
Sept. 8	White Cloud	
Sept. 15	at North Muskegon	
Sept. 22	at Shelby	
Sept. 29	Ravenna	
Oct. 6	Mason County Central	
Oct. 13	Hart	
Oct. 20	at Holton	

"I'm feeling pretty confident overall, but at the end of the day, **we are pretty young.**"

Tyler Fehler

2022 Results

Manton	L, 34-37
St. Louis	W, 18-12
at White Cloud	L, 14-26
North Muskegon	L, 0-50
Shelby	L, 16-22
at Ravenna	L, 30-62
at Mason County Central	L, 0-50
at Hart	L, 6-44
Holton	W, 38-0

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Smith brings experience to MCC

BY CHRISTY CHRISTMAS
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

For 26 years the Mason County Central varsity football team was coached by Scott Briggs, but Briggs retired from coaching football after the 2022 season and one of his assistants from a year ago, David Smith, has taken over the important role.

Smith has over 20 years of coaching experience and specifically, was head coach at Ravenna for eight years and helped fill in at Hesperia as the head coach for a year. A year ago Smith was an assistant on Briggs' coaching staff and now takes over with excitement for the future.

The Spartans have a predominately junior-based team, with four seniors, two sophomores and a freshman filling out the roster.


Smith will be assisted on varsity by Mike Patulski, Ryan Graham, Zach Steuck and Paul Harris. Steuck is new to the program and is a special education teacher at elementary level in MCC's system. Harris is retired, having moved to the Ludington area and has coaching experience at Olivet College. The junior varsity team will be led by Tom Blazdick and assisted by Ryan Smith and

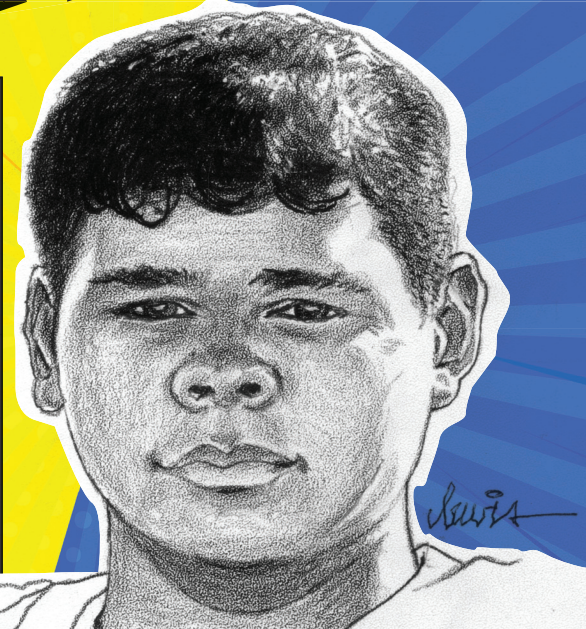
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WRESTLER AND
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*"HE HAS A LOT
OF POTENTIAL...
HE LOOKS REALLY
GOOD. HE LOOKS
REALLY STRONG.
HE'S IN GOOD
SHAPE."*

**— COACH DAVE
SMITH**





**GRADYN
WILSON**

Broc Cameron.

With only four seniors returning and 10 lost to graduation, Smith will rely on his 15 juniors heavily. Smith indicates that youth and learning the system will be the Spartans' weakness to start

the season. But Smith said, "If we can grow up quick, we can be competitive."

While Central may be low in numbers, everyone will all be getting in to the game at various times and in different roles. "The work ethic

has been great," said Smith.

Smith sees Braden Overmyer, Ethan Huffman and Dominick Grecko as the leaders on the team. He also said, "Peyton Merz is a workhorse and one of the better football players. Grayden

2023 Schedule

Aug. 24	Wyoming Godwin Heights
Aug. 31	at Manistee
Sept. 8	North Muskegon
Sept. 15	Holton
Sept. 22	at Ravenna
Sept. 29	at Hart
Oct. 6	at Hesperia
Oct. 13	Shelby
Oct. 20	Ludington

THE FINAL SCORE

MCC Opponent

Wilson is tough on the line and has shown improvement."

Smith sees North Muskegon as the leader in the Rivers Division of the West Michigan Conference.

"I am expecting to be competitive every game," indicated Smith, hoping to change some of those very close loses to wins this season.

The Spartans open the season at home with Wyoming Godwin Heights, a Division 4 school and then come back a week later and play at Manistee.

Smith is hoping some scrimmage time with schools like Spring Lake and Oakridge will bolster the young team and give them good competition.

"I am excited and the kids are excited," said Smith.

Mason County Central's roster:

SENIORS: Colton Sanders,

2022 Results

Frankfort	L, 16-33
Manistee	L, 6-27
at North Muskegon	L, 6-41
at Holton	W, 48-0
Ravenna	L, 14-19
Hart	L, 16-22
Hesperia	W, 50-0
at Shelby	W, 58-6
at Ludington	L, 8-28

Brayden Overmyer, Keenen Kelley, and Ethan Domin.

JUNIORS: Gustav McLouth, Peyton Merz, Marcus Lebrun, Drake McKay, Grady Wilson, Dominick Grecko, Hosea Lopez, Brayden Jefferies, Chase Wood, Quentin Lange, Elijah Gonzales, Mack Henry, Ethan Huffman, Britton Brooks and Colter Kirshner.

SOPHOMORES: Keenan Ruiz and Tyler Norton.

FRESHMAN: Pierce Bladzick.

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Great Season





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How the 2022 playoffs unfolded

11-Player

DIVISION 1

District semifinals
Caledonia 48, Grandville 26
Clarkston 62, Lapeer 41
Davison 27, Grand Blanc 0
Detroit Cass Tech 38, West Bloomfield 13
Detroit Catholic, Dearborn 21
Grand Ledge 38, Brighton 3
Harrison Township L'Anse Creuse 34, Port Huron 16
Holt 14, Hartland 7
Macomb Dakota 28, Utica Eisenhower 0
Northville 26, Novi 14
Rochester 21, Rochester Hills Stoney Creek 20
Rochester Adams 49, Lake Orion 35
Rockford 50, East Kentwood 14
Romeo 22, Clinton Township Chippewa Valley 21
Saline 10, Ann Arbor Huron 7
District finals
Belleville 62, Saline 44
Caledonia 14, Rockford 13, 2OT
Clarkston 49, Davison 40
Detroit Cass Tech 25, Southfield Arts and Technology 14
Detroit Catholic 42, Northville 17
Grand Ledge 21, Holt 20
Macomb Dakota 17, Romeo 0
Rochester Adams 28, Rochester 14
Regional finals
Belleville 33, Detroit Catholic 10
Caledonia 42, Grand Ledge 14
Clarkston 36, Rochester Adams 33
Detroit Cass Tech 35, Macomb Dakota 21
State semifinals
Belleville 29, Detroit Cass Tech 28, OT
Caledonia 21, Clarkston 0
State final
Belleville 35, Caledonia 17

DIVISION 2

District semifinals
Birmingham Seaholm 46, Ferndale 6
Dexter 41, Milford 15
East Lansing 24, Battle Creek Central 0
Grand Rapids Forest Hills Central 33, Muskegon Reeths-Puffer 6
Livonia Franklin 54, Dearborn Heights Crestwood 7
Midland 42, Swartz Creek 15
Muskegon Mona Shores 48, Traverse City Central 20
Portage Northern 44, Byron Center 22
Roseville 49, Warren Cousino 7
South Lyon 30, South Lyon East 27
St. Clair Shores Lakeview 33, Port Huron Northern 27
Temperance Bedford 41, Farmington 28
Warren De La Salle 40, Grosse Pointe South 0
Waterford Mott 77, Saginaw Heritage 63
District finals
Birmingham Groves 26, Birmingham Seaholm 12
Dexter 24, South Lyon 7
Livonia Franklin 27, Temperance Bedford 7
East Lansing 34, Portage Northern 24
Grand Rapids Forest Hills Central 33, Muskegon Mona Shores 21
Midland 41, Waterford Mott 34
Harrison Township L'Anse Creuse 49, St. Clair Shores Lakeview 7
Warren De La Salle 37, Roseville 7
Regional finals
Birmingham Groves 32, Livonia Franklin 25
Dexter 42, Midland 7
Grand Rapids Forest Hills Central 21, East Lansing 17

Warren De La Salle 55, Harrison Township L'Anse Creuse 7
State semifinals
Grand Rapids Forest Hills Central 20, Dexter 17, 2OT
Warren De La Sale 43, Birmingham Groves 15
State finals
Warren De La Salle 52, Grand Rapids Forest Hills Central 13

DIVISION 3

District semifinals
Bloomfield Hills Brother Rice 49, Auburn Hills Avondale 6
Coopersville 28, Cedar Springs 0
Detroit Martin Luther King 41, River Rouge 28
DeWitt 50, Cadillac 20
Fenton 29, Holly 26
Gibraltar Carlson 38, New Boston Huron 14
Jackson 32, Parma Western 25
Linden 35, Haslett 14
Mason 49, Sturgis 12
Mount Pleasant 36, Gaylord 0
Muskegon 64, Sparta 9
St. Joseph 49, East Grand Rapids 10
Trenton 34, Southgate Anderson 27
Walled Lake Western 52, Detroit Renaissance 14
Zeeland West 36, Lowell 28
District finals
Bloomfield Hills Brother Rice 30, Walled Lake Western 22
Detroit Martin Luther King 46, Allen Park 15
Linden 35, Fenton 7
DeWitt 56, Mount Pleasant 49, 3OT
Mason 34, Jackson 12
Muskegon 40, Coopersville 14
Trenton 17, Gibraltar Carlson 7
Zeeland West 36, St. Joseph 18
Regional finals
Detroit Martin Luther King 22, Bloomfield Hills Brother Rice 12
DeWitt 29, Linden 16
Mason 49, Trenton 30
Muskegon 27, Zeeland West 20
State semifinals
Detroit Martin Luther King 52, Mason 17
Muskegon 49, DeWitt 21
State finals
Detroit Martin Luther King 56, Muskegon 27

DIVISION 4

District semifinals
Charlotte 27, Chelsea 15
Dearborn Divine Child 26, Garden City 12
Edwardsburg 36, Paw Paw 0
Freeland 61, North Branch 41
Fruitport 54, Ludington 28
Goodrich 42, Ortonville Brandon 14
Grand Rapids South Christian 42, Grand Rapids Christian 7
Hastings 40, Vicksburg 7
Hudsonville Unity Christian 46, Ada Forest Hills Eastern 20
Livonia Clarenceville 48, Redford Union 46, OT
Madison Heights Lamphere 49, Marysville 13
Niles 56, Three Rivers 32
Orchard Lake St. Mary's 28, Croswell-Lexington 14
Riverview 35, Adrian 14
Tecumseh 52, Carleton Airport 28
Whitehall 42, Big Rapids 12
District finals
Dearborn Divine Child 30, Livonia Clarenceville 24
Edwardsburg 24, Niles 17
Goodrich 10, Freeland 9
Grand Rapids South Christian 35, Hudsonville Unity Christian 20
Hastings 23, Charlotte 13

Orchard Lake St. Mary's 35, Madison Heights Lamphere 0
Riverview 53, Tecumseh 30
Whitehall 51, Fruitport 26
Regional finals
Edwardsburg 24, Hastings 14
Grand Rapids South Christian 28, Whitehall 21
Goodrich 40, Orchard Lake St. Mary's 20
Riverview 45, Dearborn Divine Child 35
State semifinals
Grand Rapids South Christian 26, Edwardsburg 20
Goodrich 51, Riverview 26
State finals
Grand Rapids South Christian 28, Goodrich

DIVISION 5

District semifinals
Belding 56, Howard City Tri-County 30
Berrien Springs 34, Hopkins 27
Corunna 34, Williamston 27
Detroit County Day 28, Detroit Southeastern 8
Frankenmuth 53, Birch Run 6
Flat Rock 27, Dundee 22
Flint Hamady 36, Armada 35
Gladwin 35, West Branch Ogemaw Heights 20
Grand Rapids Catholic 56, Kalamazoo Hackett 14
Kingsford 34, Kingsley 30
Marine City 42, Yale 7
Muskegon Oakridge 32, Shepherd 0
Pontiac Notre Dame Prep 41, St. Clair Shores South Lake 32
Portland 21, Olivet 14
Romulus Summit Academy North 35, Grosse Ile 13
Saginaw Swan Valley 35, Essexville Garber 19
District finals
Detroit Country Day 35, Pontiac Notre Dame Prep 19
Gladwin 59, Kingsford 25
Grand Rapids Catholic 56, Berrien Springs 0
Frankenmuth 31, Saginaw Swan Valley 0
Flint Hamady 33, Marine City 27
Flat Rock 29, Romulus Summit Academy North 28
Muskegon Oakridge 30, Belding 8
Portland 34, Corunna 28
Regional finals
Detroit Country Day 44, Flat Rock 7
Frankenmuth 49, Flint Hamady 7
Gladwin 26, Muskegon Oakridge 8
Grand Rapids Catholic 42, Portland 19
State semifinals
Frankenmuth 38, Detroit Country Day 0
Gladwin 28, Grand Rapids Catholic Central 21
State final
Gladwin 10, Frankenmuth 7

DIVISION 6

District semifinals
Clinton 44, Ida 23
Constantine 54, Buchanan 12
Ecorse 50, Detroit Voyageur College Prep 42
Gladstone 51, Elk Rapids 14
Grand Rapids West Catholic 42, Watervliet 0
Lansing Catholic 28, Durand 21
Manistee 28, Boyne City 27
Menominee 44, Calumet 39
Madison Heights Bishop Foley 49, Clawson 7
Millington 42, Sanford Meridian 13
Muskegon Catholic 42, Kent City 14
Negaunee 48, Houghton 0
Ovid-Elsie 21, Almont 14
Reed City 44, Montague 15
Standish-Sterling 30, Clare 29
Warren Michigan Collegiate 57, Detroit Northwestern 6
District finals

Clinton 52, Ecorse 8
Gladstone 36, Manistee 14
Grand Rapids West Catholic 50, Constantine 24
Lansing Catholic 20, Ovid-Elsie 0
Millington 14, Standish-Sterling 12
Negaunee 44, Menominee 0
Reed City 36, Muskegon Catholic 7
Warren Michigan Collegiate 14, Madison Heights Bishop Foley 0
Regional finals
Clinton 31, Warren Michigan Collegiate 30
Grand Rapids Catholic 37, Lansing Catholic 7
Negaunee 18, Gladstone 12
Reed City 6, Millington 0
State semifinals
Grand Rapids West Catholic 33, Clinton 14
Negaunee 13, Reed City 12
State final
Grand Rapids West Catholic 59, Negaunee 14

DIVISION 7

District semifinals
Benzie Central 21, Charlevoix 14
Detroit Central 50, Southfield Bradford Academy 0
Elkton-Pigeon-Bay Port Laker 21, Bad Axe 14
Hudson 50, Union City 13
Ithaca 48, Lake City 14
Jackson Lumen Christi 41, Homer 7
Lawton 45, Niles Brandywine 23
Manchester 22, Grass Lake 19
Monroe St. Mary 41, Grosse Pointe Woods University Liggett 0
Montrose 28, Cass City 14
Napoleon 49, Erie Mason 0
New Lothrop 47, Burton Bendle 30
Pewamo-Westphalia 47, Bath 12
Ravenna 10, North Muskegon 7
Schoolcraft 49, Delton-Kellogg 6
Traverse City St. Francis 59, L'Anse 8
District finals
Elkton-Pigeon-Bay Port Laker 28, Montrose 14
Ithaca 63, Ravenna 27
Jackson Lumen Christi 35, Hudson 0
Lawton 35, Schoolcraft 21
Monroe St. Mary 36, Detroit Central 28
Napoleon 42, Manchester 13
New Lothrop 28, Pewamo-Westphalia 7
Traverse City St. Francis 34, Benzie Central 18
Regional finals
Jackson Lumen Christi 7, Lawton 6
Napoleon 14, Monroe St. Mary 7
New Lothrop 29, Elton-Pigeon-Bay Port Laker 20
Traverse City St. Francis 63, Ithaca 0
State semifinals
Traverse City St. Francis 53, New Lothrop 8
Jackson Lumen Christi 20, Napoleon 7
State final
Jackson Lumen Christi 15, Traverse City St. Francis 12

DIVISION 8

District semifinals
Bark-River Harris 44, St. Ignace 20
Beal City 63, White Cloud 16
Clarkston Everest Collegiate 71, Flint Beecher 34
Detroit Community 38, Mount Clemens 28
East Jordan 6, Frankfort 0 (OT)
Evert 31, McBain 22
Fowler 35, Carson City-Crystal 7
Iron Mountain 42, Ishpeming 6
Marine City Cardinal Mooney 48, Marlette 24
Ottawa Lake Whiteford 64, Addison 22
Reading 33, Decatur 7
Riverview Gabriel Richard 62, Melvindale Academy for Business and Tech 14
Saginaw Michigan Lutheran Seminary 34,

Harbor Beach 20
Sterling Heights Parkway Christian 15, Detroit Leadership Academy 14
Ubly 49, Saginaw Nouvel 6
White Pigeon 30, Centerville 12
District finals
Clarkston Everest Collegiate 42, Marine City Cardinal Mooney 21
Evert 35, East Jordan 7
Fowler 28, Beal City 27
Iron Mountain 32, Bark-River Harris 16
Ottawa Lake Whiteford 56, Riverview Gabriel Richard 19
Sterling Heights Parkway Christian 35, Detroit Community 8
Ubly 49, Saginaw Michigan Lutheran Seminary 14
White Pigeon 34, Reading 20
Regional finals
Clarkston Everest Collegiate 30, Sterling Heights Parkway Christian 6
Iron Mountain 34, Evert 33
Ottawa Lake Whiteford 38, While Pigeon 26
Ubly 49, Fowler 7
State semifinals
Ottawa Lake Whiteford 44, Clarkston Everest Collegiate 6
Ubly 41, Iron Mountain 14
State final
Ottawa Lake Whiteford 26, Ubly 20

8-Player

DIVISION 1

Regional semifinals
Adrian Lenawee Christian 49, Gobles 7
Brown City 66, Auburn Hills Oakland Christian 38
Martin 68, Tekonsha 6
Merrill 60, Indian River Inland Lakes 28
Munising 58, Norway 12
Breckenridge 36, Fulton 32
Deckerville 14, Kingston 8
Regional finals
Brown City 52, Deckerville 6
Martin 56, Adrian Lenawee Christian 14
Merrill 68, Breckenridge 28
Munising 36, Newberry 22
State semifinals
Martin 42, Brown City 8
Merrill 22, Munising 20
State final
Martin 74, Merrill 24

DIVISION 2

Regional semifinals
Au Gres-Sims 68, Kinde North Huron 26
Colon 62, Camden-Fortier 8
Gaylord St. Mary 47, Central Lake 6
Lake Linden-Hubbell 44, Crystal Falls Forest Park 12
Marion 52, Posen 0
Mendon 44, Climax-Scotts 18
Morrice 62, Peck 6
Newberry 54, Rogers City 6
Powers North Central 54, Stephenson 6
Regional finals
Marion 14, Gaylord St. Mary 0
Mendon 46, Colon 44
Morrice 34, Au Gres-Sims
Powers North Central 45, Lake Linden-Hubbell 6

State semifinals
Mendon 30, Morrice 14
Powers North Central 36, Marion 12
State final
Powers North Central 66, Mendon 26



Ludington's Cameron Gun-sell looks for running room against Mason County Central last season in Ludington.

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Little Caesars®

Manistee Catholic seeks playoff berth

BY GREG GIELCZYK
DAILY NEWS SPORTS WRITER

MANISTEE — Oh, so close. Manistee Catholic's football team went 6-3 last year, it's best season since the Sabers finished 7-3 in 2010.

But it wasn't good enough to get the Sabers into the MHSAA eight-man playoffs, and left them with a sour taste in their mouths they hope to rinse out this year.

"It was a one of those once in a decade teams," head coach Jake Szymanski said. "I think they were able to bring it all together at the right time in the middle of the season."

"We had our lumps with the bigger schools that were senior heavy. But our guys lifted and did everything to-

2023 Schedule		THE FINAL SCORE	
	Manistee Catholic		Opponent
Aug. 24	at Onekama		
Sept. 1	at Mesick		
Sept. 8	at Baldwin		
Sept. 16	Suttons Bay		
Sept. 22	at Grand Rapids Sacred Heart		
Sept. 30	Marion		
Oct. 6	Brethren		
Oct. 13	Bear Lake		
Oct. 21	at Newberry		

gether in the off-season, and my hat's off to them.

"The last couple of years they've started to push us in the right direction. Even with the seniors leaving this season, we've got some pieces we feel we can pluck together and be just as successful as last year."

Just three years ago the Sabers finished 1-6, and the turnaround has been given

them a new impetus.

Going into the season Szymanski's biggest challenge is to find someone who can step in and fill the position vacated by the big bodied Eddie Dutkavich.

Numbers tell the story behind Dutkavich's success on defense, and Szymanski is only too well aware of them. He was a sure tackler who could be relied on in the

2022 Results	
Onekama	W, 38-0
Mesick	L, 30-49
Baldwin	W, 50-14
at Farwell	L, 34-52
at St. Joe Our Lady of Lake	W, 56-48
at Marion	L, 0-68
at Brethren	W, 24-14
at Bear Lake	W, 26-0
Onaway	W, 46-16

middle, where the Sabers knew to direct everything.

"Definitely on the defensive side of the ball we have to move some things around and find a way to put guys where they will help us the most," Szymanski said.

"We also scored a lot of points on defense. Lee Pizana (who also graduated) had five interceptions, and four of them he returned for touchdowns. He had two against Brethren, and one

against Onekama (two inter-county rivals).

"So we definitely will have our work cut out on defense trying to get things squared away. But if teams want to run spread against us, I think we can get to the quarterback."

Other departures included David Kosla, Nick Sturgeon and Pizana and all of them played integral roles in the team's success. Filling their shoes won't be easy.

Manistee Catholic's roster:

SENIORS: Ryker Capling, Nathan Oleniczak.

JUNIORS: Tyler Hallead.

SOPHOMORES: Nathaniel Barnett, Brendan Brindle, Evan Harvey, Landyn Kequom, Andrew Hybza, Andrew Potter.

FRESHMEN: Finn Nicholson, Travis Newenhouse, Josh Rod-

gers, Milo Shoup, Keith Craig, Eli Lapan.

Major rebuilding needs to be done on the defensive and offensive lines, but Szymanski pointed out two players to watch in Landyn Kequom and Travis Newenhouse who could prove to be excellent plug ins.

"Each has their own kind of mindsets," Szymanski said. "Travis is a little bit bigger kid. He has some strength to him, and shows the want to really improve."

"Although he's similar in many ways, Landyn is a bit thinner. But, he's quick and smart. That's something else we are going to need up front. It's going to be a balancing act."

SEE MANISTEE CATHOLIC, PAGE 25



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MANISTEE CATHOLIC: Sabers want to reach MHSAA playoffs after near miss in '22

FROM PAGE 24

The Sabers are returning their entire defensive backfield, and Szymanski feels that another year's experience will improve the pass coverage.

Where the Sabers are looking at holes to fill is up front in addition to the middle, but Szymanski is confident they have the personnel to get the job done.

Szymanski has been encouraged from what he's seen from the underclassmen this summer, especially at the team's camp in June. They showed a lot of promise.

But he was also pleased with the good turnout of returning veterans, which allowed him to get an early feel for what the Sabers have.

Offensively, the Sabers should be dangerous with quarterback Tyler Hallead coming back after a stellar sophomore season when he grew and matured.

He says he's more comfortable now directing the offense, and just wants to lead the team back to the playoffs after the Sabers fell short last year.

Also on the list of Hallead's goals as the Sabers prepare for their season opener is completing another sweep of Brethren and Onkama.

While it's expected Hallead will start at quarterback, Szymanski revealed that he wants to get him the ball on the outside. The coach said he's an excellent receiver, and has outstanding speed to pull away from the defense.

Szymanski feels confident in Andrew Hybza throwing the ball, and he'll get some snaps under center. He made great strides spelling Hallead last year.

"He's probably not as much of a threat to run as Tyler would be," the coach said. "There's some things where the offense changes

MANISTEE CATHOLIC

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DEFENSE

NATHAN OLENICZAK

with him at quarterback, but we still want to get him some snaps, even if it's looking toward the future.

"Last year showed how much we struggle when Hallead is hurt when he went down against St. Joe's. What he brings to the team, and the kind of confidence that the guys have in him can't be measured."

Jackson StarChief is a major presence in the line at either guard or center. The challenge for Szymanski will be finding the pieces to build around him.

The Sabers have some guys who can catch the ball and will be used at the tight end spots. Who will start there is still being evaluated.

Szymanski added that he has about eight guys he can rotate in and out of the line, which will give the Sabers valuable flexibility if they can develop.

'I kind of like to think the rest of the conference is up for grabs. Everybody's switching around. Other than Marion and us, everyone else has a new coach.'

Jake Szymanski
Manistee Catholic coach

Running back is in good hands with Ryker Capling and Nathan Oleniczak coming back. Both are quick and elusive, with the ability to break away once they get into the secondary.

It gives the Sabers an ability to strike for big plays from anywhere on the field.

Some of the receiving targets for Hallead are Andrew Potter who played primarily on the defensive side, and didn't many offensive looks as a freshman last year.

"He's a kid who's got some speed, and we're looking to

give him some opportunities on the outside," Szymanski said. "He's a tall kid. He's probably 6-foot-1 or 6-2, and he can jump."

"We like what he can bring on the outside."

Nathaniel Barnett is another receiver who saw only limited playing time a year ago, but has the elusiveness that is so valuable for gaining yards after the catch.

The Sabers can move Capling to a receiver spot if necessary. Other than that, Szymanski said the Sabers will probably end up switch-



GREG GIELCZYK | DAILY NEWS

Manistee Catholic football coach Jake Szymanski works with two of the Sabers during the first day of practice Monday.

ing an extra lineman to the end.

"It's really going to depend a lot on who we feel are our strongest front three are between center and two guards, and kind of go from there to get us started," Szymanski said.

"Moving one guy over one position can change the whole defense. It'll be a game of chess. We'll have to really focus on other team's strengths and weaknesses, and how we can compete against them."

"That's nothing we haven't done in the past. We have a young core, but I think these guys learned last year. They might have gotten the in-game snaps, but I think they grew enough for them to come in this year and be effective."

In the West Michigan D League, it's still the Marion Eagles who soar above everybody else, Szymanski feels. They lost some key people, including their quarterback, but will still

have a great ability to run the ball.

"I kind of like to think the rest of the conference is up for grabs," said Szymanski. "Everybody's switching around. Other than Marion and us, everyone else has a new coach."

"Baldwin is always a question mark as to whether they'll have a team, or miss the start. But between us Bear Lake, Brethren and Onkama we can very easily be even with them."

"They lost some skill people, but with new coaches they come in with a whole new philosophy, a whole new system that might fit the players better."

If the Sabers can find the right combination on the line their offense is certainly capable of scoring.

Score enough, and they can win enough to get them into the playoffs. and ease some of the pain from last year's heartbreaking denial.

West Michigan D League

	Aug. 24-26	Aug. 31-Sept. 1	Sept. 8-9	Sept. 15-16	Sept. 22-23	Sept. 29-30	Oct. 6-7	Oct. 13-14	Oct. 20-21
Baldwin	Wyoming Lee	at Hale	Manistee Catholic	at Marion	Onekama	at Brethren	at Bear Lake	at Mesick	at Grand Rapids Sacred Heart
Bear Lake	at Bellaire	Marion	at Cedarville	Onekama	at Brethren	Mesick	Baldwin	at Manistee Catholic	at Engadine
Brethren	Central Lake	Whittemore-Prescott	Suttons Bay	Mesick	Bear Lake	at Baldwin	at Manistee Catholic	Marion	at Onekama
Manistee Catholic Marion	at Onekama	at Mesick	at Baldwin	Suttons Bay	at Grand Rapids Sacred Heart	Marion	Brethren	Bear Lake	at Newberry
	—	at Bear Lake	Mesick	Baldwin	at Rudyard	at Manistee Catholic	Suttons Bay	at Brethren	at Bellaire
Mesick	Vermontville Maple Valley	Manistee Catholic	at Marion	at Brethren	at Pellston	at Bear Lake	Onekama	Baldwin	Suttons Bay

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How to make the MHSAA playoffs

11-player

All of the schools sponsoring 11-player football are divided in eight equal divisions before the season.

Victories against other schools earn points based on what division the opponent is in. Those points are:

- 60 points for defeating a Division 1 team;
- 55 points for defeating a Division 2 team;
- 50 points for defeating a Division 3 team;
- 45 points for defeating a Division 4 team;
- 40 points for defeating a Division 5 team;
- 35 points for defeating a Division 6 team;
- 30 points for defeating a Division 7 team;
- 25 points for defeating a Division 8 team;

Bonus points are also earned based on the size of the team

and the number of games played. Those bonus points are 6 points for Division 1 and 2 schools, 5 points for Division 3 and 4 schools, 4 points for Division 5 and 6 schools, and 3 points for Division 7 and 8 schools.

To determine the playoff points, the sum of the playoff points is divided by the number of games played plus the number of bonus points of the opposing team divided by the number of games played by the opponent. Then add those two amounts.

Out-of-state opponents are classified on the basis of Michigan classification.

The top 32 teams in each division based on playoff points will qualify for the football season. There are no automatic qualifiers. Those teams that qualified will be announced on "Selection Sunday."

8-player

The points for 8-player is the

same as Division 8 as each school earns 25 points for each victory.

Bonus points, though, are determined:

- 8 points of each game an opponent you defeated wins;
- 4 points of each game an opponent you defeated ties;
- 4 points of each game an opponent you tied wins;
- 1 point of each game an opponent you tied, ties;
- 1 point of each game an opponent that defeated you wins.

Add the playoff points as a fraction with the sum of the points divided by the number of games played. Do the same with the bonus points. Add those totals for the playoff points.

The 8-player playoffs is in two divisions, and similar to 11-player, the top 32 teams in each division with the highest playoff point average will qualify for the playoffs.

The teams in the playoffs will be announced on "Selection Sunday."



ANDY ROBERTS | WHITE LAKE BEACON FILE

Montague competed against Reed City last season in the first round of the MHSAA playoffs.

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