

No place like home

TC West will get very acquainted with Thirlby

By **JEFF PEEK**
Record-Eagle staff writer

TRAVERSE CITY — There's no place like home for Traverse City West.

For the first time since 1997, the Titans will open their football season at Thirlby Field/Harry Running Stadium, on Friday night versus Grand Haven. Better yet, they will play there six times this fall, their most ever.

"Running out under the lights at Thirlby Field is a big thing," said senior Nick Carlson. "There's nothing like it. It gives you a big boost."

Head coach Matt Prisk agrees.

"Thirlby is a great place to play football, a great place to watch football," Prisk said. "You ask any kid who's played there. It's pretty special."

West actually plays five official home games this fall, but the Titans' season finale — a "road game" against TC Central — is also at Thirlby. Five of West's final six games will be played in Traverse City.

"Playing at home that many times is certainly helpful," Prisk said. "Our JV coaches don't like it much (because they play road games every time the varsity is at home), but we hope it's something we can use to our advantage."

"Maybe it makes up for the last couple of years when we've had to open at Detroit CC."

The previous two seasons, the Titans' opener has been at the Pontiac Silverdome against perennial Class A power Detroit Catholic Central. They lost both games by a combined score of 78-17.

But the bad taste of those losses isn't quite as bitter as the final three games of last season. West jumped out to a 5-1 start and needed just one more victory to qualify for the state football playoffs for the first time since the school opened in the fall of 1996.

That win never came. The Titans lost all three games by a touchdown or less, including 31-28 to Central in the finale, and finished 5-4 (4-3 in the Big North Conference). There was talk, confirmed by several sources, that the administration was considering a coaching change. Prisk didn't appreciate the situation, and it didn't

sit well with his staff or players, either. A group of soon-to-be seniors even discussed sitting out if Prisk left. Cooler heads prevailed and Prisk is still at West.

Now the Titans may be more motivated than ever before.

"No one really liked the way we finished the season," Carlson said. "And after what happened to coach, we're not holding anything back."



Record-Eagle/Elizabeth Conley

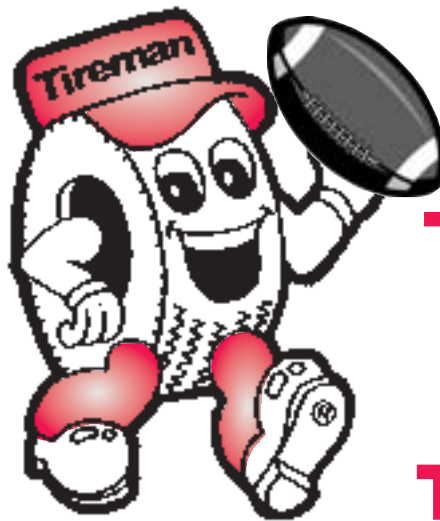
See **WEST**, Page 14 ► TC West plays six games this season at Thirlby Field/Harry T. Running Stadium.



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