

Lake Michigan coaches favor Gladiators

St. Francis is unanimous pick to reclaim title; Ramblers, Rayders should also contend for crown

By **LANCE-MICHAEL CORREIA**
Record-Eagle staff writer

It's been two seasons since **TRAVERSE CITY ST. FRANCIS** (see TCSF preview on Page 6) sat atop the Lake Michigan, and the theme of this year's team is "Return to Glory".

Longtime head coach Larry Sellers is back at the helm after a year away to attend to personal issues, and has a renewed vigor heading into the 2002 campaign.



LAKE MICHIGAN PREVIEW

"The batteries are recharged," Sellers said. "The last game I coached, we got our fannies cracked (56-13 to Kingsley in 2000 playoff opener), so that has stuck in my craw for two years now. We'll play Gladiators football this fall."

The league coaches have taken note, unanimously voting St. Francis as the team to beat in 2002. The last two champions — Charlevoix and Boyne City — finished 2-3 in the coaches poll.

After a Lake Michigan title and deep playoff run in 2001, the bar is high at **BOYNE CITY**, where coach Dave Hills returns nine starters on a team of 29.

"There are different expectations now," he said. "We graduated a lot of kids, but we didn't graduate any expectations."

Senior Bo Detcher takes over at quarterback, and with good size (6-2, 205 lbs.), Hills says he's "a good drop-back passer."

Senior halfback Ben Hausler, who also plays defensive back, and senior fullback Chris Grice will handle much of the ball-carrying duties, while senior split ends Nate Burks and Anthony Denike will be on the receiving end of many of Detcher's passes.

"Our offense is going to be a little different this year," Hills explained.

"We don't have the speed at the halfback position that we've had, but we're confident that with the guys we have, our receivers and being a little bit bigger up front, we can be a power-type offense and do well with that."

The "bigger" in Hill's "bigger up front" starts with tackle Dusty Marquardt, a 6-4, 225-pound two-way lineman. Brenton Rozycki will start at guard and linebacker, while Paul Simeri, a junior guard, is also penciled into Hill's starting rotation. Simeri, also a starting linebacker, was second on the team in tackles a year ago.

"I'm not worried about winning the conference yet," Hills said. "The first thing is to try and get off to a good start and see where that takes us. The kids are focused and I think we can have a good sea-

COACHES POLL

| school (1st place votes) | PTS |
|--------------------------|-----|
| TC St. Francis (6) | 42 |
| Boyne City | 34 |
| Charlevoix | 30 |
| Kalkaska | 23 |
| East Jordan | 19 |
| Harbor Springs | 12 |
| Elk Rapids | 8 |

PLAYERS TO WATCH

| |
|-----------------------------|
| Jeff Urban, Charlevoix |
| Colin Quinn, TC St. Francis |
| Ty Lietow, Kalkaska |
| Robert Grover, East Jordan |
| Ben Hausler, Boyne City |

2001 STANDINGS

LAKE MICHIGAN CONFERENCE

| school | Conference | | | All | |
|----------------|------------|---|----|-----|---|
| | W | L | GB | | W |
| Boyne City | 6 | 0 | — | 12 | 1 |
| Charlevoix | 5 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 4 |
| TC St. Francis | 4 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 5 |
| Kalkaska | 3 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 4 |
| Harbor Springs | 2 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 |
| Elk Rapids | 1 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| East Jordan | 0 | 6 | 6 | 1 | 8 |

son."

The chances for a second Lake Michigan title in three years took a hit last week at **CHARLEVOIX** when incumbent starting quarterback Nate Teuscher broke his ankle during practice. Sophomore Will Kautz, a transfer from Punta Gorda, Fla., will assume Teuscher's spot for at least the next 4-to-6 weeks.

"It was just one of those freak things," said Red Rayders coach Todd Klinger, whose team posted a 5-4 mark with a near-perfect 5-1 league mark last year. "It was a one-on-one tackling drill and he got his leg twisted and the (other) guy kind of rolled up on it. One of the coaches checked it out and it was a little bit high for a sprain.

"Luckily it was a fibula and not a weight-bearing bone and it was a clean break. (Teuscher) feels pretty good about being able to come back before the end of the year."

Four experienced running backs will have to carry even more of the offensive load as a result of the injury — junior Jeff Urban, who started as a sophomore, senior Todd Carey, and senior fullbacks Matt Kilkenny and Nick Pizzurro.

"We're going to have to run the ball to set up the pass," Klinger said. "We'll be more of a grind-it-out team. We just don't have the firepower we have in the past."

Carey is expected to catch the

ball plenty out of the backfield, while junior split end Taylor Fisher and tight end Donnie Swanson should also catch their share of passes.

Up front, guard Matt Kochanny and tackle Nick Potter return to the starting lineup on both offense and defense, along with defensive stalwart Marshall Bakker. Swanson, a linebacker, and Carey, a safety, also return from a year ago.

"It's a pretty good group coming back," Klinger said. "Even though we lost Tate, I feel pretty good about the team in general.

"For us, we'll have to play real strong defense. We won't score as much, so we'll have to hold people down."

KALKASKA finished 5-4 overall a year ago, just one victory from a playoff berth. Coach Kevin Taylor, however, isn't ready to anoint his squad as a postseason contender just yet heading into 2002.

"It's one of those deals where we could play better than we did a year ago and not have as good a record," he said. "The level of competition is better than it was. St. Francis will be better, East Jordan has stepped up and so has Harbor Springs. Plus there's Boyne (City) and Charlevoix to deal with."

Senior Ty Lietow and junior Drew Gillespie will lug the ball in Taylor's run-heavy Wing-T offensive attack, which will be directed by either senior Adam Jenkins and/or junior Chris Vandergriff.

The strength of the offense, according to Taylor, is an experienced front that includes six seniors: tackles Matt Smith and Jordan Ickes, guards Jon England and Ryan Kelly center Travis Vandenbosch and end Josh Ellis.

Seniors dominate the Blue Blazers' defensive unit as well, with Smith and Jamie Gilbert anchoring the linebacking corps, and Adam Jenkins and Jay Stanula in the backfield.

"I think we can be competitive," Taylor said. "Our numbers a certainly up, and that's a good sign going into the season."

Greg Bowden takes over as the head coach at **EAST JORDAN**, where the Red Devils are coming off a 1-8 season and an 0-6 mark in the Lake Michigan.

Senior Robert Grover will likely assume the feature back role, while junior Alan Arnott is also expected to get plenty of carries. Senior Scott Murray will get the nod as the starting quarterback and he'll throw the ball to senior tight end Jon Reese. Bryan Diller, a senior

offensive lineman, will anchor the front that'll protect Murray and open holes for Grover and Arnott.

Diller is also a starter on the defensive side of the ball, leading the linebacking unit, while junior Kevin Whiteford and Greg Grose are expected to start on the defensive front. Junior Matt Haven headlines the Devils' defensive backfield.

ELK RAPIDS had one of the league's most productive freshman last year in Keegan Galbraith, and will again rely on the multi-talented sophomore as the Elks look to improve on a 2-7 overall record and 1-5 conference mark.

Galbraith, who started nine games at linebacker a year ago, will also see time at fullback and offensive guard in 2002.

Galbraith will open holes and take handoffs from another versatile athlete in junior Pablo Bocardo, who is slated to see time at both quarterback and halfback. Senior

Steve Dix is a returning starter at guard, and Buck Pollister is penciled in at one of the Elks' starting wideout spots.

On defense, senior linebacker Preston Meints, last year's team MVP, will try to build on an All-Conference campaign when he finished second on the team in total tackles.

After going 2-4 in the league and 4-5 overall in 2001, Steve Smith takes over as the new head coach in **HARBOR SPRINGS**.

Smith, who did not vote in the coaches poll, takes over for former Rams coach Dave Brines, who is now an assistant at St. Ignace.

Harbor Springs must travel to play two of its toughest opponents, TC St. Francis and Charlevoix, but gets a visit from defending league champion Boyne City. A pair of Ski Valley foes, Pellston and Inland Lakes — plus U.P. rival Pickford — are the Rams' non-conference games.



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