

High hopes



Lions dream big after a nightmare of a season

DETROIT (AP) — Yes, the Detroit Lions are talking about winning the Super Bowl this season.

One year after being the butt of jokes and receiving national attention because they had a chance to be the first 0-16 team — with an 0-12 start — they are dreaming big.

Real big. Team president Matt Millen, a former NFL line-backer who won an unprecedented four Super Bowl rings with three

teams, says he won't be shocked if the Lions pull off a remarkable turnaround like the defending champion New England Patriots.

"We need some things to go our way and if they do, it could all come together this year and we could do what New England did," said Millen, who is entering his second year with Detroit. "If it doesn't come together, it's going to be another frustrating year."

Both new and old Lions agree.

Receiver Bill Schroeder, one of the numerous new faces in Detroit, knows a lot of people think he was crazy to leave the Green Bay Packers to pursue another Super Bowl ring with the Lions.

"People always say, 'Why did you leave Green Bay?' Well, I tell them I left because I think this team can do it," Schroeder said.

The Lions were 8-8 and 9-7 in Chris Claiborne's first two seasons before plummeting to a 2-14 record last year. Just reaching .500 wouldn't be enough this year.

"Bouncing back with an 8-8 record wouldn't make me happy. We need to make the playoffs," Claiborne said. "I know we can do it because there are a lot of hungry guys here with a lot to prove. And once we get in the playoffs, who knows?"

Although the Lions might seem overly optimistic, they have some reasons:

They have been practicing in a sparkling new \$36 million facility just outside of Detroit and will return downtown — from the Pontiac

Silverdome — for the first time since 1974 to play in Ford Field, an impressive \$500 million stadium.

"I think those two facilities will be worth a win or two," cornerback Todd Lyght said. "Seriously."

Besides the new stadium, they also have a lot of new players, including a pair of young and talented quarterbacks.

Detroit let a lot of longtime Lions go in the off-season, including: quarterback Charlie Batch, receivers Johnnie Morton and Herman Moore, tight end David Sloan, defensive end Tracy Scroggins, linebacker Allen Aldridge and safeties Ron Rice and Kurt Schultz.

The Lions drafted Joey Harrington with the third pick in the draft to compete with Mike McMahon, last year's fifth-round pick, for the starting job.

Detroit hasn't had a quarterback play in the Pro Bowl since Greg Landry in 1971, and hasn't had long-term stability at the position since Bobby Layne started from 1951 until the Lions won the NFL title in 1957.

Since then, Detroit has used more than 20 starting quarterbacks — and has won only one playoff game.

McMahon is slated as the starter in the opener at Miami, but Harrington likely will get his share of starts this season.

"We may have some problems, but having two quarterbacks like we have is a good problem to have," Millen said.

Detroit filled holes by drafting defensive end Kalimba Edwards in the second round and signing safeties Brian Walker, who started 29 games in Miami the past two years, and Corey Harris, a 16-game starter for Baltimore last season.

In addition to Schroeder, who caught 53 passes for 918 yards and nine touchdowns last year, the Lions signed receiver Az-Zahir Hakim, one of St. Louis' many playmakers, and tight end Mikhael Ricks, who has the ability to turn short passes into long gains.

"A lot of guys are gone and a lot of new people are in," Schroeder said. "When I look around this locker room, guys are not moping around because they were 2-14 last year.



The Associated Press

A lot of hopes are riding on the Lions' first draft pick Joey Harrington, above, a former Oregon signal-caller. Harrington is slated to come off the bench to open the season, say the Lions' brass (at left) GM Matt Millen (right) and coach Marty Mornhinweg.

2002 SCHEDULE

Date	Opponent	Time
Sept. 8	at Miami	1 p.m.
Sept. 15	at Carolina	1 p.m.
Sept. 22	vs. Green Bay	4 p.m.
Sept. 29	vs. New Orleans	1 p.m.
Oct. 5	BYE	
Oct. 13	at Minnesota	1 p.m.
Oct. 20	vs. Chicago	1 p.m.
Oct. 27	at Buffalo	1 p.m.
Nov. 3	vs. Dallas	1 p.m.
Nov. 10	at Green Bay	1 p.m.
Nov. 17	vs. N.Y. Jets	4:15
Nov. 24	at Chicago*	1 p.m.
Nov. 28	vs. New England#	12:30
Dec. 8	at Arizona	4:05
Dec. 15	vs. Tampa Bay	1 p.m.
Dec. 22	at Atlanta	1 p.m.
Dec. 29	vs. Minnesota	1 p.m.

* = at Champaign, Ill.
= Thanksgiving Day game

"When I was in Green Bay, I felt horrible every time I would see how these guys were losing It won't happen again this year."

After losing their first three games by an average of 22.3 points, they have set an NFL record by losing nine straight games by eight points or less and by an average of 4.2.

"We had an awful record, but we weren't an awful team," Millen said.

Detroit found essentially every way imaginable to lose, sometimes with a fourth-quarter lead, sometimes in a come-from-behind effort.

If it wasn't a physical mistake, such as Jason Hanson's three missed field goals in a 13-10 loss at Chicago, a mental mistake got in the way, such as receiver Germane Crowell allowing the clock to expire by not getting out of bounds with 10 seconds left in a 31-26 loss to Minnesota.

"It was an absolute nightmare," Lyght said.

Coach Marty Mornhinweg said in a few years, he may look back on his first season as a head coach and think he did a good job.

"When I had to come in on Mondays to talk to the team, I had to pull out every lecture I had to keep things positive," he said. "Although

LIONS 2001 STATS

	PASSING					
	ATT-COMP	PCT	YDS	TD	INT	RTG
Charlie Batch	341-198	.581	2392	12	12	78.6
Mike McMahon	115-53	.461	671	3	1	69.9
Ty Detmer	151-92	.609	906	3	10	56.9
TEAM TOTALS	514-312	.607	3752	18	24	69.6

	RUSHING				
	ATT	YDS	AVG	Long	TD
James Stewart	143	685	4.8	38	1
Lamont Warren	61	191	3.1	34	3
Corey Schlesinger	47	154	3.3	26	3
Mike McMahon	27	145	5.4	22	1
Ruben Droughns	30	72	2.4	15	0
Charlie Batch	12	45	3.8	12	0
TEAM TOTALS	351	1398	4.0	38	8

	RECEIVING				
	REC	YDS	AVG	Long	TD
Johnnie Morton	77	1154	15.0	76	4
Corey Schlesinger	60	466	7.8	38	0
Lamont Warren	40	336	8.4	36	1
David Sloan	37	409	11.1	27	7
James Stewart	23	242	10.5	56	1
Germane Crowell	22	289	13.1	46	2
Larry Foster	22	283	12.9	36	0
TEAM TOTALS	343	3969	11.6	76	18

	SCORING			
	TD	FGA-FGM	XPA-XPM	PTS
Jason Hanson	0	21-30	23-23	86
David Sloan	7	0-0	0-0	42
Lamont Warren	4	0-0	0-0	24
Johnnie Morton	4	0-0	0-0	24
Corey Schlesinger	3	0-0	0-0	18
TEAM TOTALS	30	21-30	23-23	270

	INTERCEPTIONS				
	NO	YDS	AVG	Long	TD
Todd Lyght	4	72	18.0	59	1
Terry Fair	2	29	14.5	26	1
Robert Bailey	2	74	37.0	74	1
Chris Claiborne	2	11	5.5	6	0
Ron Rice	2	9	4.5	8	0
Kurt Schultz	2	22	11.0	19	0
TEAM TOTALS	16	217	13.6	74	3

there were obviously negative things that happened last year, there were some positive things too. We didn't cry or whine and we hung in there

well enough to win our last two home games.

"Our last one makes us 1-0 in 2002."