

# Northwest territory

Conference playoff coaches are right at home

By **MARK URBAN**  
Record-Eagle staff writer

TRAVERSE CITY — They came, they played, they went off to college and they returned.

The Northwest Conference put three of its six teams into the playoffs this season and all three of those coaches played football at area high schools.

Kingsley's Tim Wooser and Suttons Bay's Joe Trudeau are both graduates of Kingsley; Wooser in 1988 and Trudeau in 1986. Frankfort's Matt Stapleton is a 1990 graduate of Benzie Central.

"What it does is it really puts you in touch with your players and you can really relate to your players," the 30-year-old Stapleton said. "That's immeasurable."

"No. 1, you know what school life is like for them. No. 2, you know what home life is like for them and No. 3, you know how important extra-curriculars are to them."

All three teams — Kingsley, Suttons Bay and Frankfort — also have tradition on their side. Kingsley (8-1) and Suttons Bay

**WHO:** Kingsley (8-1) vs. McBain (8-1)

**WHAT:** Div. VI playoff opener

**WHEN:** Friday, 7:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** McBain High School

**UP NEXT:** Winner of Lake City/Whittemore-Prescott

**WHO:** Inland Lakes (6-3) vs. Suttons Bay (8-0)

**WHAT:** Div. VI playoff opener

**WHEN:** Friday, 7:30 p.m.

**WHERE:** Suttons Bay

**UP NEXT:** Winner of Ishpeming/Negaunee

**WHO:** Beal City (6-3) vs. Frankfort (7-2)

**WHAT:** Div. VIII playoff opener

**WHEN:** Saturday, 1 p.m.

**WHERE:** Lockhart Field - Frankfort

**UP NEXT:** Winner of Mt. Pleasant Sacred Heart/Manistee Catholic

(8-1) are both in Division VI for the playoffs, albeit in different districts. Frankfort (7-2) plays in Division VIII in the postseason. The Stags will be on the road in the opening week at McBain (8-1). The Ramblers downed Kingsley 38-8 on Oct. 18.

Suttons Bay and Frankfort will be at home for the first round. The Norsemen host Inland Lakes (6-3) while the Panthers welcome old playoff foe Beal City (6-3) to Lockhart Field.

At Frankfort, playoff games and appearances in the Pontiac Silverdome are common occurrences. The last time the Panthers failed to qualify for the postseason was in 1994.

"Tradition is a powerful thing," Stapleton said. "Tradition means expectations. It's one thing for coaches to have them, it's another for kids to have them ... Our kids certainly have them."

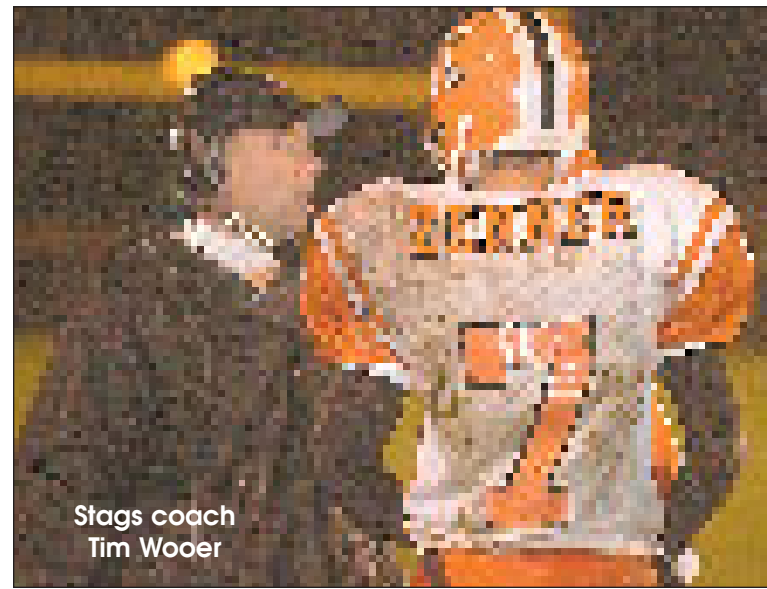
Being in the playoffs is also not a new experience at Kingsley and Suttons Bay, which finished first and second in the Northwest Conference respectively.

It's just the tradition doesn't run as deep.

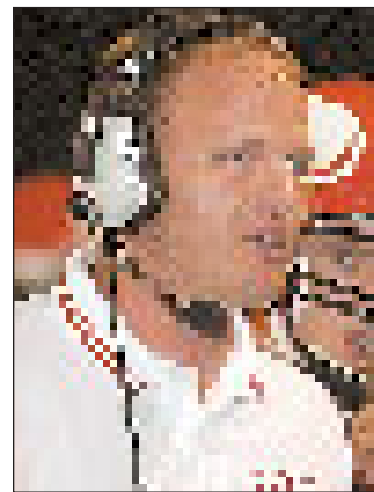
Kingsley is in the postseason for the third time in the past four years. The Norse have qualified for the second season three straight years.

It's a clear case of success breeding success.

"It goes back to hard work and See **NORTHWEST**, Page 7 ▶



Stags coach Tim Wooser



Norse coach Joe Trudeau



Panthers coach Matt Stapleton

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