BNC

League scrambling with six teams

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ing Newberry, Rogers City, St. Ignace, Rudyard and Lincoln Alcona.

Last season, Big North teams struggled mightily out of the league, compiling a 6-14 mark in non-conference action. Two of those six wins came from Cheboygan and the Sault, who each went 1-1. Gaylord had half of the league's non-league victories.

The loss of the pair takes away two teams that frequently lagged behind in the BNC because of having fewer students to draw upon for athletes.

The result could be more pressure on teams in the bottom half of the conference.

"They'll do what they have to do to get better," TC West coach Matt Prisk said.

As the reigning league champ, everyone will be gunning for **TRAVERSE CITY WEST**.

"We have a target on our back," Prisk said. "I'm sure they'll be coming after us, and that's to be expected. If you run a good program, and win some games that's going to happen. That's a compliment."

The Titans have eight starters back on defense and seven on offense from a team that went undefeated in BNC play, racking up over 34 points per game while giving up only 10 a contest.

West lost its first two games in 2003, rebounding with seven consecutive wins, including close contests against fellow BNC powers Gaylord and TC Central.

TRAVERSE CITY CENTRAL will have a large turnover, returning six starters on defense and four on offense.

Despite a low number of returning starters, the Trojans are relatively experienced due to several sophomores starting on varsity last season. Just five of the team's 22 starters on offense and defense will be seniors this season.

Central reeled off a six-game winning streak after an 0-2 start to force a regular-season finale showdown with West for the league crown. The Trojans went on to lose the closely-contested game 29-21, but made the playoffs for the first time since 1991.

Central's high-octane offense scored a league-best 245 points last season, averaging 35 a game. It was also third in the league in team defense, giving up just over 15 points a game.

Last year's top defensive team — **GAYLORD** — has four starters back on that side of the ball.

Defensive backs Eric Miller, Phil Dandy and George Wilson join linebacker Nick Respecki as returners on a defense that surrendered just 8.7 points a game in BNC play last season.

Coach William Cleaver says the team isn't as big as in recent seasons, but is possibly the fastest team he's had in his five years as head of the Blue Devil program.

Without Sault Ste. Marie around, Gaylord will be the only Blue Devils squad in the league for the first time since the Big North was formed in 1997.

Gaylord, whose only regular-season losses last season came to the two Traverse City programs, will play Cheboygan Sept. 3 in the two schools' first non-conference meeting since 1967. Both schools were in the now-defunct Michigan Huron Shores Conference from 1968-1996.

Central's Clark picked **CADILLAC** as an up-and-coming team in the league.

"I think Cadillac will surprise people," Clark said. "They were also a young team like us last year, starting five or six sophomores."

The Vikings have five starters back on offense and six on defense.

Tackles Zack Hoekwater and Elija Keller figure to anchor a strong line, along with junior tight end Billy Kanitz.

Junior Matt McDonald started part of last season, throwing for 620 yards and five touchdowns and rushing for another 300 yards and a TD. He has junior split end Chazz Masten returning as a target.

On defense, three spots on the D-line return in junior end Nick Marinelli, junior tackle Craig Kennard and Hoekwater, a senior end. Kennard was a second-team all-Big North selection last season.

Kanitz, the team's leading returning tackler with 54 stops, and Ryan Heray are back at linebacker, while Masten will start again at cornerback.

"We're young, but quite a few played a lot because we had a bunch of kids up last year," Webb said.

The Vikings were 1-6 in the league last year (1-8 overall), with its lone win coming against Cheboygan.

PETOSKEY is coming off its first winning Big North season since a 17-3 streak in the first two seasons of the league in 1997-98, and a senior-laden team gives the squad hopes of improving on that mark.

Twenty-two seniors should help offset a low total of returning starters for the Northmen.

Senior running back Matt Hewson ran for over 600 yards on his way to honorable mention all-conference honors. Senior linemen Joe Spuller and Bill White provide experienced blockers for Hewson and the double wing attack.

On defense, White was an all-conference inside linebacker last season and is joined by returning starter Dylan Burns at outside linebacker. Spuller and senior strong safety Scott Chellis also return in Petoskey's 50 front defense.

ALPENA was off to a 2-1 start last season — scoring 62 points twice in that span — before a 29-28 loss to Petoskey kicked off a 1-4 tailspin.

"Alpena really started pretty strong last year," Petoskey coach Kerry Van Orman said. "They had some young players there, so they should only get better."

STATE FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS 1975-2003

DIVISION 1

Year Champion (Coach)
1999 Walled Lake Western (Mike Zdebski)
2000 Grand Ledge (Pat O'Keefe)
2001 Detroit Catholic Central (Tom Mach)
2002 Detroit Catholic Central (Tom Mach)
2003 Detroit Catholic Central (Tom Mach)

DIVISION 2

1999 Saginaw (Donald Durrett)
2000 Birmingham Brother Rice (Al Fracassa)
2001 Clinton Twp. Chippewa Valley (Mike Carr)
2002 Lowell (Noel Dean)
2003 Rochester Adams (Tony Patritto)

DIVISION 3

1999 Farmington Hills Harrison (John Herrington)
2000 Farmington Hills Harrison (John Herrington)
2001 Farmington Hills Harrison (John Herrington)
2002 East Grand Rapids (Peter Stuursma)
2003 East Grand Rapids (Peter Stuursma)

DIVISION 4

1999 Orchard Lake St. Mary's (George Porritt)
2000 Orchard Lake St. Mary's (George Porritt)
2001 Chesaning (Jim Szappan)
2002 Grand Rapids South Christian (Bob Blacquiere)
2003 Three Rivers (Scott Shaw)

DIVISION 5

1999 Detroit County Day (Dan MacLean)
2000 Jackson Lumen Christi (Herb Brogan)
2001 Jackson Lumen Christi (Herb Brogan)
2002 Montrose (Dennis Reinhart)
2003 Jackson Lumen Christi (Herb Brogan)

DIVISION 6

1999 St. Charles (Robert Weizein)
2000 Whittemore-Prescott (Kyle Tobin)
2001 Schoolcraft (Larry Ledlow)
2002 Negaunee (Paul Jacobson)
2003 Ravenna (Dusty Fairfield)

DIVISION 7

1999 TC ST. FRANCIS (Larry Sellers)
2000 Iron Mountain (Tom Wender)
2001 Detroit St. Martin dePorres (Greg Carter)
2002 Mendon (John Schwartz)
2003 TC ST. FRANCIS (Josh Sellers)

DIVISION 8

1999 Mendon (John Schwartz)
2000 Muskegon Catholic Central (Mike Holmes)
2001 Mendon (John Schwartz)
2002 Waterford Our Lady (Mike Boyd)
2003 Detroit St. Martin dePorres (Greg Carter)

CLASS AA

1990 Detroit Catholic Central (Tom Mach)
1991 Saginaw Arthur Hill (Jim Eurick)
1992 Detroit Catholic Central (Tom Mach)
1993 Dearborn Fordson (Jeff Stergalas)
1994 Troy (Gary Griffith)
1995 Detroit Catholic Central (Tom Mach)
1996 Walled Lake Western (Chuck Apap)
1997 Detroit Catholic Central (Tom Mach)
1998 Detroit Catholic Central (Tom Mach)

CLASS A

1975 Livonia Franklin (Armand Vigna)
1976 Midland Dow (Al Quick)
1977 Birmingham Brother Rice (Al Fracassa)
1978 TC CENTRAL (Jim Ooley)
1979 Detroit Catholic Central (Tom Mach)
1980 Birmingham Brother Rice (Al Fracassa)
1981 Escanaba (Jerry Cvengros)
1982 Farmington Hills Harrison (John Herrington)
1983 Birmingham Brother Rice (Al Fracassa)
1984 Ann Arbor Pioneer (Charles Lori)
1985 TC CENTRAL (Jim Ooley)
1986 Muskegon (Dave Taylor)
1987 Ann Arbor Pioneer (Charles Lori)
1988 TC CENTRAL (Jim Ooley)
1989 Muskegon (Dave Taylor)
1990 Birmingham Brother Rice (Al Fracassa)
1991 East Lansing (Jeff Smith)
1992 Muskegon Reeths-Puffer (Pete Kutches(
1993 Farmington Hills Harrison (John Herrington)
1994 Farmington Hills Harrison (John Herrington)
1995 Lapeer West (Jeff Putnam)
1996 Grandville (Doug Throop)
1997 Farmington Hills Harrison (John Herrington)
1998 Farmington Hills Harrison (John Herrington)

CLASS BB

1990 Dowagiac Union (Bernard Thomas)
1991 Farmington Hills Harrison (John Herrington)
1992 Oxford (Bud Rowley)
1993 East Grand Rapids (George Barcheski)
1994 Monroe Jefferson (Marc Cisco)
1995 East Grand Rapids (George Barcheski)
1996 Marshall (Rich Hulkow)
1997 Ogemaw Heights (Larry Bellor)
1998 Menominee (Ken Hofer)

CLASS B

1975 Dearborn Divine Child (Robert LaPointe)
1976 East Grand Rapids (George Barcheski)
1977 Jackson Lumen Christi (Jim Crowley)
1978 Warren Woods (Dennis Zbozen)
1979 Jackson Lumen Christi (Jim Crowley)
1980 Muskegon Catholic Central (Pete Kutches)
1981 Farmington Hills Harrison (John Herrington)
1982 Muskegon Catholic Central (Pete Kutches)
1983 East Grand Rapids (George Barcheski)
1984 Wyoming Park (Jack VerDuin)
1985 Dearborn Divine Child (Wes Wishart)
1986 Marysville (Walt Braun)
1987 Grand Rapids Catholic Central (James Galvin)
1988 Farmington Hills Harrison (John Herrington)
1989 Farmington Hills Harrison (John Herrington)
1990 Dearborn Heights Robichaud (Robert Yauck)
1991 Monroe St. Mary Catholic (Joseph Sanderson)
1992 Marysville (Walt Braun)
1993 Kingsford (Chris Hofer)
1994 Belding (Irv Sigler)
1995 Detroit Country Day (Joe D'Angelo)
1996 Jackson Lumen Christi (Herb Brogan)
1997 Belding (Irv Sigler)
1998 Chesaning (Jim Szappan)

CLASS CC

1990 Detroit St. Martin dePorres (Ron Thompson)
1991 Battle Creek Pennfield (Dave Hudson)
1992 Detroit St. Martin dePorres (Ron Thompson)
1993 Hartford (James Webb)
1994 Orchard Lake St. Mary (George Porritt)
1995 Detroit St. Martin dePorres (Gregory Carter)
1996 Detroit St. Martin dePorres (Gregory Carter)
1997 Muskegon Oakridge (Jack Schugars)
1998 Montrose (Dennis Reinhart)

CLASS C

1975 Ishpeming (Mike Mileski)
1976 Flat Rock (Lawrence Dugan)
1977 Orchard Lake St. Mary (Art Paddy)
1978 Gr. Rapids Forest Hills Northern (Tim McGee)
1979 Ishpeming (John Croze)
1980 Munising (Terry Sayen)
1981 Elkton-Pigeon-Bay Port (Bill McLellan)
1982 Detroit St. Martin dePorres (Ron Thompson)
1983 Detroit St. Martin dePorres (Ron Thompson)
1984 Detroit St. Martin dePorres (Ron Thompson)
1985 Lansing Catholic Central (Phil Booth)
1986 Detroit Country Day (Joe D'Angelo)
1987 Erie-Mason (Al Romano)
1988 Detroit St. Martin dePorres (Ron Thompson)
1989 Schoolcraft (Larry Ledlow)
1990 Muskegon Catholic Central (Mike Holmes)
1991 Muskegon Catholic Central (Mike Holmes)
1992 TC ST. FRANCIS (Larry Sellars)
1993 Iron Mountain (Tom Wender)
1994 Ravenna (Dusty Fairfield)
1995 Muskegon Catholic Central (Mike Holmes)
1996 Ravenna (Dusty Fairfield)
1997 Ravenna (Dusty Fairfield)
1998 Unionville-Sebewaing (Tim Travis)

CLASS DD

1990 Marion (Thomas Cutler)
1991 Mendon (John Schwartz)
1992 Lake Linden-Hubbell (Ronald Warner)
1993 Mendon (John Schwartz)
1994 GLEN LAKE (Bill Hollenbeck)
1995 Mendon (John Schwartz)
1996 Pittsford (Bob Clement)
1997 Lawrence (Jim Coady)
1998 Fulton-Middleton (Ed Lark)

CLASS D

1975 Crystal Falls-Forest Park (Richard Mettlach)
1976 Crystal Falls-Forest Park (Richard Mettlach)
1977 Flint Holy Rosary (Bill Hermann)
1978 Detroit St. Martin dePorres (Ron Thompson)
1979 Norway (Robert Giannunzio)
1980 Norway (Robert Giannunzio)
1981 Detroit St. Martin dePorres (Ron Thompson)
1982 Mendon (Roger Smith)
1983 St. Ignace (Barry Pierson)
1984 Gobles (Daniel Armstrong)
1985 Battle Creek St. Philip (Michael Hume)
1986 Saginaw Mich. Luth. Seminary (Loren Dietrich)
1987 Martin (Bob Kubiak)
1988 Schoolcraft (Larry Ledlow)
1989 Mendon (John Schwartz)
1990 FRANKFORT (Tim Klein)
1991 FRANKFORT (Tim Klein)
1992 Portland St. Patrick (Chris Schrauben)
1993 Fowler (Steve Spicer)
1994 Beal City (Ben Steele)
1995 Fowler (Steve Spicer)
1996 Fowler (Neal Hoffman)
1997 Lake Linden-Hubbell (Ronald Warner)
1998 Fowler (Neal Hoffman)