

St. Francis

2004 Results

Kingsley 36, St. Francis 23
St. Francis 12, Musk. CC 7
St. Francis 19, Boyne City 0
St. Francis 26, Kalkaska 0
St. Francis 55, Harbor Spr. 6
St. Francis 31, Grayling 18
St. Francis 36, Elk Rapids 0
St. Francis 30, East Jordan 13
St. Francis 27, Charlevoix 13
McBain 27, St. Francis 24*
* = playoffs

2005 Schedule

8/27	H	Kingsley
9/2	H	Sag. Nouvel
9/9	A	Boyne City
9/16	H	Kalkaska
9/23	A	Harbor Springs
10/1	H	Grayling
10/8	H	Elk Rapids
10/15	H	East Jordan
10/21	A	Charlevoix

St. Francis Trivia

Since the MHSAA football playoffs began in 1975, a total of 567 active schools have qualified for the playoffs — 90 percent of the schools that sponsor the sport. While some have qualified only once, eight teams have made it at least 19 times, including two teams from the Grand Traverse area — St. Francis and Frankfort.

What sets the Gladiators apart is that, since missing the playoffs in 1988 and '89, they have qualified 15 years in a row.

“Woulda coulda shoulda”

Last year’s disappointing loss to McBain has inspired the Gladiators

BY JEFF PEEK
Record-Eagle staff writer

TRAVERSE CITY — First impression, last impression.

When they’re both bad, it doesn’t matter how great the middle was.

So it goes for Traverse City St. Francis, which posted an 8-2 season a year ago — and won another Lake Michigan Conference football championship — but walked away feeling disappointed.

“It always stinks when the season ends, but losing in the first round of the playoffs — that was a little sooner than we expected,” said St. Francis senior Chad Biggar, whose team opened the 2004 campaign with a loss at Kingsley, then put together an eight-game win streak before being eliminated by McBain in the Division 6 district opener.

“The thing is, there wasn’t a doubt in my mind that we would win (against McBain). That’s what made it so hard.

“Woulda, coulda, shoulda.”

Gladiators head coach Josh Sellers said last year’s discouraging finish — which came on the heels of a state championship in 2003 — has actually inspired this season’s squad.

“Last year was disappointing. Our expectations are always so high that 8-2 felt like we fell short, espe-

cially after going 14-0 the year before,” Sellers said. “I know the kids weren’t expecting to be finished so soon. It was strange being done that early.

“But having gone through that experience, the kids are really motivated to get ready for the season.”

The Gladiators are not only motivated, they’re talented — again.

Among an experienced and athletic senior class are three difference makers — Biggar, a 6-foot, 205-pound running back/linebacker; Patrick Rigan, a 6-6, 235-pound tackle; and Hunter Nostrant, a 6-4, 190-pound do-everything who may only see the sidelines during timeouts.

“We have a great nucleus,” said Sellers, who has a 22-2 career record at St. Francis. “Those three are really athletic, and they’re just the tip of the iceberg for that (senior) class.

“We don’t have a big seniors class, but they’re all athletes. We’re ahead of the teaching curve because we have so many kids back — up front, especially.”

Biggar led the Gladiators in rushing a year ago, racking up 817 yards and averaging 7.4 yards per carry despite battling injuries. He sat out the final regular season game with a sore ankle, but still paced St. Francis with 14 touchdowns.

Defensively, Biggar plays middle

linebacker and is the Gladiators’ captain. He was the team’s second-leading tackler a year ago.

And here’s some troubling news for opposing players — Biggar has added more than 20 pounds in the last seven months.

“He’s big. He busted his rear end during the off-season,” Sellers said. “He’s injury prone, so we have to keep him healthy. That’s the biggest thing.”

Biggar said he lifted weights

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— Chad Biggar, St. Francis senior

throughout the basketball and baseball seasons and into the summer.

“I was sick for awhile in January and my weight dropped to about 185. I think I’m close to 210 now,” Biggar said. “I really focused on gaining weight. I want to play college ball. I’d like to get up to 220 by the end of the year.”



Special to the Record-Eagle/Gary Howe

Looking to make a difference for TC St. Francis are (from front) Chad Biggar, Hunter Nostrant and Patrick Rigan.