

# Big North conference

## 2004 Standings

| Team       | League |   | Overall |   |
|------------|--------|---|---------|---|
|            | W      | L | W       | L |
| TC West    | 5      | 0 | 10      | 1 |
| Alpena     | 4      | 1 | 7       | 3 |
| Gaylord    | 2      | 3 | 5       | 4 |
| TC Central | 2      | 3 | 5       | 4 |
| Petoskey   | 2      | 3 | 4       | 5 |
| Cadillac   | 0      | 5 | 1       | 8 |

## Coaches' Poll

No. 1 votes in parenthesis

| Team              | Points |
|-------------------|--------|
| 1. TC West (4)    | 34     |
| 2. TC Central (1) | 28     |
| 3. Gaylord        | 21     |
| 4. Petoskey (1)   | 18     |
| 5. Alpena         | 13     |
| 6. Cadillac       | 12     |

## Players to watch

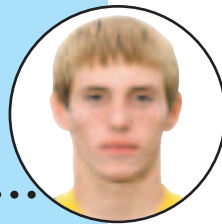
Traverse City Central's Robbie Harman could be everywhere on the field this season. To opponents, it certainly may seem like it.

Harman, a returning all-state selection for the Trojans, will play up to four different positions on offense at times, lining up mainly at wide receiver, but also seeing time at quarterback, running back and split end.

Last year, Harman was a terror on both sides of the ball, catching 24 passes for 440 yards and rushing for 98 more on reverses and coming up with six interceptions and a fumble recovery for a TD on defense.

"(Coach) calls me the Reggie Bush of TC Central," Harman said. "I'll be all over the field."

Eric Gordon, RB/LB, TC West  
 Tony Thompson, QB, TC West  
 Dan Dipzinski, TE, Gaylord  
 Andrew Strobel, DB/RB, Petoskey  
 Billy Kanitz, TE/LB, Cadillac  
 Vince Khoury, FB/LB, TC Central  
 Jordan Chopp, QB, Petoskey  
 Elliss Raatz, QB, Gaylord



### 1. TC WEST

**Coach:** Matt Prisk  
**2004:** 5-0 in the Big North, 10-1 overall.

**Key Players Returning:** LB/RB Eric Gordon (6-0, 225, Sr.); QB Tony Thompson (5-10, 170, Sr.); RB/CB Ben Sleder (5-11, 215, Sr.); WR Kyle Centilli (6-2, 175, Sr.); OT Jake Stinson (5-10, 245, Sr.); OG Josh Haselton (6-2, 220, Sr.); LB Eric Smith (5-9, 190, Sr.); OT Russ Carew (6-1, 240, Sr.); TE/DE Adam Root (6-3, 190, Sr.); OG/DE Nick Stull (5-10, 190, Sr.).

**Top Newcomers:** DT Chad Braun (6-1, 205, Jr.); LB/TE Eric Wehr (5-11, 220, Jr.); LB Gordy Rozga (6-2, 220, Jr.); T/C Sam Shipman (Jr.); CB/P/K Will Conklin (So.).

**Outlook:** See preview story

### 2. TC CENTRAL

**Coach:** Kelly Clark  
**2004:** 2-3 in the Big North, 5-4 overall.

**Key Players Returning:** OT Derek Drelles (6-3, 290, Sr.); C Kyle Gorence (6-0, 205, Sr.); OT/DT Nick Rademaker (6-1, 255, Sr.); TE/OLB Bill Lazar (6-0, 215, Sr.); QB/P Andy Pascoe (6-2, 205, Sr.); FB/ILB Vince Khoury (5-11, 217, Sr.); RB Ben Amon (5-8, 205, Sr.); OLB/RB Rudy Prokes (5-11, 185, Sr.); DT Nick Fowler (5-10, 150, Sr.); ILB Matt Ohlert (5-11, 210, Sr.); WR/FS Robbie Harman (5-11, 150, Sr.); TE/LB Dan Alpers (6-0, 200, Sr.); DE Chris Becker (5-10, 170, Sr.); OG/LB Josh Tooker (5-11, 185, Sr.); CB Pat Fancy (5-10, 190, Sr.); CB Tyler Cook (5-7, 150, Sr.); CB Dan Shepler (5-10, 150, Sr.); WR Marcus Martin (5-11, 150, Sr.).

**Top Newcomers:** OG Rocco Khoury (6-4, 250, So.), K/WR/DB Brooks Bunbury (5-9, 180, Sr.); DE/TE Jared Wolf (6-4, 205, Jr.); CB Alex Gage; WR Bailor Bell (6-2, 185, Jr.).

**Outlook:** See preview story

### 3. GAYLORD

**Coach:** William Cleaver  
**2004:** 2-3 in the Big North, 5-4 overall.

**Key Players Returning:** RB/DL Nick Forrest (5-10, 200, Sr.); TE/DL Dan Dipzinski (6-2, 230, Sr.); ILB/TE Robbie Eisen (6-3, 230, Sr.); OLB/WR George Wilson (6-1, 195, Sr.); QB Elliss Raatz (6-0, 175, Jr.); DB Shane Kwapis (5-10, 185, Jr.); DB Troy Hart (5-8, 165, Sr.); OLB Mark Bliss (5-11, 170, Sr.).

**Top Newcomers:** OL Curtis Vaden (6-1, 200, Jr.); WR Bernie Kirt (6-2, 185, Jr.).

**Outlook:** The Blue Devils have to replace their top three running backs, although stability at the quarterback position could ease the transition for the Gaylord offense.

Last year's starter in the offensive backfield, Phil Dandy, graduated. Backup Brett Belvin transferred to

Shepherd, and reserve Joe St. John is now in Traverse City playing junior hockey for the Traverse City North Stars, leaving the Blue Devils without their top three rushers from last season.

"We've got to find out who our tail-back is," Cleaver said.

Senior Nick Forrest could step into that role.

Elliss Raatz started the final four games last year at quarterback as a sophomore and is entrenched as the team's signal-caller this year with a shot at Calvin McNamara's school record for passing yardage. Raatz threw for 700 yards as a sophomore, whereas McNamara had less than 100 in his sophomore campaign.

The Blue Devils lost both starting receivers and three linemen in what will be a recast offense.

However, the defense has a good core back, with three of last year's top four defensive backs returning, as well as a pair of defensive linemen and two linebackers.

Gaylord has a promising group of players coming up from a junior varsity team that was 8-1, with its only loss coming to Cadillac's undefeated JV squad.

### 4. PETOSKEY

**Coach:** Kerry VanOrman  
**2004:** 2-3 in the Big North, 4-5 overall.

**Key Players Returning:** QB Jordan Chopp (Jr.), RB/WR/FS Andrew Strobel (Sr.); LB/OL Nick Kear (Sr.); OL/DL Josh Zoerhof (Sr.); OL/DL Bob Baldwin (Sr.), RB/WR Matt Weston (Jr.); TE/DB Chad Ellis (Sr.); FB/ILB Jeremy Brownie (Sr.).

**Top Newcomers:** Tyler Munson (Sr.).

**Outlook:** With a pair of experienced runners, speed and a young star quarterback, Petoskey looks to improve on consecutive 4-5 seasons.

Jordan Chopp completed 58 of 111 passes (52 percent) for 637 yards and 4 TDs, and also ran for 220 yards and a pair of scores to earn second-team all-conference as just a sophomore.

Coach Kerry VanOrman thought the decision to play a sophomore at perhaps the most crucial position on the field was an easy one.

"He had the tools and ability," VanOrman said. "Secondly, he's very mature for his age. Those are things you look for in a quarterback."

Andy Strobel was first-team all-conference at both receiver and defensive back last year after combining for 1,273 yards and 8 TDs rushing and receiving and grabbing 8 interceptions.

Honorable mention all-league linebacker Nick Kear returns for his senior year after off-season knee surgery. Fullback/linebacker Jeremy Brownie and speedy Tyler Munson missed all of last year with knee injuries.

Seniors Josh Zoerhof and Bob Baldwin return on the defensive line.

"We're going to rely on our defense to keep us in games," VanOrman said.

"Word is Petoskey is kind of the dark horse," Gaylord coach William Cleaver said. "I remember watching them on tape and their defensive linemen grabbed our offensive linemen, threw them to the side and made the tackle."

The Northmen open the season at home against Marquette (2-7), then travel to Ogemaw Heights (4-5). Cheboygan (9-2) and Sault Ste. Marie (5-4) round out their non-conference slate.

### 5. ALPENA

**Coach:** Jack Gebauer  
**2004:** 4-1 in the Big North, 7-3 overall.

**Key Players Returning:** RB/DL Nathan Gleason (6-2, 240); RB Josh Gloria (5-11, 180); DB Matt LaCross (5-11, 175); OL/DL Casey Smith (5-11, 250); OT Ken Lamarre (6-6, 230); DB Colin Berry (5-10, 150); DL/OL Aaron Birmingham (6-1, 220); K James Storey (Sr.).

**Top Newcomers:** QB Jared Phillips (So.); QB Cameron Augustine (Jr.).

**Outlook:** Oh, how the mighty have fallen.

The Wildcats, who went 7-2 in the regular season last year and were the only team other than TC West in the Big North with a winning conference record, are picked at or near the bottom by most of the league's coaches.

"They don't expect us to win a game," sixth-year coach Jack Gebauer said. "That's what people tell me."

Losing over 20 seniors and bringing back just seven players who were starters last year will do that.

The young Alpena team does have a large group of player to work with, however. The team has 60 players on varsity — more than either TC Central or TC West — and 150 from the freshman level on up.

"I worked hard to get us up in number to get competitive at all the positions," Gebauer said. "We're about the same size school as Central and West, so we should have about the same amount of players."

The Wildcats return running backs Nathan Gleason and Josh Gloria and three offensive linemen in seniors Ken Lamarre and Casey Smith and junior Aaron Birmingham, who started as a sophomore.

Junior Cameron Augustine and sophomore Jared Phillips are vying for the starting quarterback spot.

"We're going to be young, but our kids are going to have to work to keep their spot," Gebauer said. "I don't know if that will translate into wins and losses, but we'll be better at the end of the year. I feel our progress is coming along."

On defense, seniors Colin Berry and Matt LaCross are back in the secondary, with Gleason, Birmingham and Smith returning in

the trenches.

Alpena's schedule doesn't make matters any easier.

The Wildcats hit the road for the first two weeks, opening with a five-hour drive south to Walled Lake Northern and then a five-hour drive north to Escanaba the following weekend.

Alpena lost to Bay City Western in the first round of the playoffs, a team which it faces in week four of this campaign.

### 6. CADILLAC

**Coach:** Jim Webb  
**2004:** 0-5 in the Big North, 1-8 overall.

**Key Players Returning:** WR/DB Chazz Masten (Sr.); TE/MLB Billy Kanitz (Sr.); DB Matt McDonald (Sr.); OL/DL Elijah Keller (Sr.); P Bob Yonkman (Sr.); OLB/QB/RB Kayl Mattson (Sr.); QB Kam Selleck (Sr.); OL Rob Milkiewicz (Sr.); DL Craig Kennard (Sr.); DL Adam Leathermen (Sr.); DL Nick Marinelli (Sr.); K Tyler Hamilton (Sr.).

**Top Newcomers:** DB/QB Kyle McDonald (Jr.); WR/DB Kyle Hinkle (Jr.); OLB Steve Thompson (Jr.).

**Outlook:** The Vikings struggled to a 1-8 mark and went winless in the Big North, but a crop of 24 seniors has coach Jim Webb excited.

"I think we have the capability of being in the top three," he said. "We'll surprise some people."

An unsettled quarterback position may be a worry for Cadillac, but the team's offense can rely on the strength of its offensive line and all-conference tight end Billy Kanitz (9 catches for 128 yards). All-conference receiver Chazz Masten also returns after missing several games last year due to injury.

Seniors Kayl Mattson, Matt McDonald and Kam Selleck all saw time behind center last year, and newcomer Kyle McDonald is also in the fray. Mattson was an all-Big North linebacker and ran for 170 yards in limited time at running back.

The offensive line is led by honorable mention all-conference pick Elijah Keller and senior Rob Milkiewicz. "They have the potential to be one of our better offensive lines as a unit," Webb said.

Special teams should be a strength for the Vikings, with honorable mention all-league punter Bob Yonkman back, as well as senior kicker Tyler Hamilton.

On defense, defensive line starters Craig Kennard, Adam Leathermen and Nick Marinelli are all back and Mattson (34 tackles last year) and Kanitz (60 tackles) form a potent duo at linebacker, joined by junior Steve Thompson. Kennard, Leathermen and Marinelli started every game last season.

The Vikings start the season on the road for a pair of non-conference games against Bay City John Glenn and Wyoming Godwin Heights. They also play Benzie Central and Hopkins in non-league play.