

GOAL LINE

THE WEEKLY AREA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PREVIEW SECTION



Mark Pummell/The Daily Standard File Photo

Coldwater's Brody Hoying is a favorite to be the MAC Offensive Player of the Year after winning it last season. Could Hoying be a contender for the state's top honor, Mr. Football?

Questions as the season begins

By GARY R. RASBERRY
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As we have crept toward the start of the 2014 high school football season, the questions I have usually been asked by fans, patrons of establishments I duck into on occasion and even area football coaches have begun to pop up.

Other than the obvious answers that Coldwater and Marion Local should be the favorites to making a trip to Columbus (where state title games will be the next two seasons), I usually play my cards close to the vest.

There are a few questions that should be asked as we are at Opening Night Eve:

1. Can the MAC get its second Mr. Football?

After seeing what Brody Hoying can do on the football field, there will likely be a very boisterous campaign from the Coldwater area to drum up support for him being named the state's top player.

Last year, I put up Brody for the Northwest District Offensive Player of the Year in Division V and pushed him for the state honor that he received. If he has a season like last season, he should be a contender.

The only problem is that his stats, albeit stellar, might not be as impressive with other media members. Every year at our district meeting, I have to remind the other panelists that when MAC teams get out to a big lead in the second half, coaches pull the starters to get the younger players a chance to play. If Hoying can put up Madden-esque numbers in 2 ½ or three quarters, the buzz could be very loud by the end of the season.

The only MAC player to win the honor was St. Henry's Bob Hoying, a cousin to Brody) in 1990.

Marion Local could also have a contender for state player of the year or Mr. Football honors as well. A healthy Jacy Goette-moeller or Hunter Wilker could get buzz for them as the Flyers

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MARIA STEIN — Expect to see a lot of familiar players out on the field for the Marion Local football team when it opens the season Friday at home against Shawnee.

The Flyers lost a few key pieces from last year's Midwest Athletic Conference championship and Division VII state title team, but they have 18 letter-winners back and are expecting to have another great season. Of course, they've got to start somewhere and it begins this week with an opponent the Flyers have beaten four out of the last five seasons, a few of those games being decided by close margins.

Shawnee, like Marion, has a boatload of returning players, with 14 letterwinners and 12 starters back. Offensively, junior quarterback Griffin Hites is expected to lead the way. As a sophomore, Hites ran for 758 yards on 195 carries and added 10 touchdowns, while passing for 639 yards. With him in the backfield is running mate Angelo Fox, who tallied 61 carries for 469 yards and four TDs last year. On defense, Shawnee returns a pair of linebackers in seniors Zac Kaplan and Jake Lepela, who combined for more than 150 tackles last season.

"Shawnee appears to be big, strong, physical," Marion Local coach Tim Goodwin said. "It looks like they've got a good running game with a couple of really strong backs."

"Their physicality (is an area of concern) ... They've got a big line. They only play one back at a time but they have several that they rotate through and several of them are real physical kids. It's going to be a test to stop their run game."

The Flyers will bank on an experienced defense to



Goodwin



Mark Pummell/The Daily Standard File Photo

Marion Local's Dustin Rathman will look to get the Flyers off to a strong start in 2014 as they host Shawnee in the season opener.

shutdown Shawnee's rushing attack, with more than half of its starters returning from a defense that allowed 7.4 points per game in 2013.

Starting, and finishing, for that matter, strong was not a problem at all for the Flyers in 2013. Marion Local ran the table to a 15-0 record and its defense allowed just 20 points through the first five weeks, which included three shutouts against a playoff team in West Jefferson, Fort Recovery and Versailles. Meanwhile, the Flyer offense put up more than 30 points in three out of their first five games and ended the year with an offensive average of just over 37 points per game.

The Flyers were 42-7 winners over Shawnee in Week 1 of last year in coach Steve Owen's first year with the program. The Indians went on to finish

2-8, with their only wins coming in Week 2 and 3 against St. Marys (14-13) and Van Wert (35-20), teams which combined for just one victory on the season. Shawnee, however, played close games against near .500 teams in Defiance (6-5) and Elida (5-5) but ultimately came up short. Last season, however, is in the history books, and Goodwin doesn't want his team to overlook any opponent this year.

"Typically, we've had an advantage in the skill department (in past games with Shawnee)," Goodwin explained. "We've had a better passing attack, maybe some big special team plays against them, but we've always had our hands full up front with them."

"In that first game, you want to survive. You want to find a way to win," he added. "Then after that, you really start honing down on the areas that need the work. I think most of all, we're just excited to play."

Capsule Previews for rest of the area games, page 11A

SHAWNEE

Vs.

MARION LOCAL

Booster Stadium,
Maria Stein,
7:30 p.m.

All-Time Series:
Marion Local 4-1

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Questions

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try for a fourth straight state title.

2. Who's going to make Week 11 from the MAC?

For a stretch in the mid-2000s, the MAC was getting four and even five teams in the playoffs. Last year, there were just three, with Marion and Coldwater bringing back titles.

The first two weeks are important. If the MAC can dominate the two weeks of non-conference play, picking up vital computer points, the number of conference playoff teams could rise. A bad week, like last year's 3-7 record in Week One, could make things interesting towards the end of the season.

3. Can Celina return to the playoffs this season?

After two 7-3 campaigns, and missing the playoffs last year after a rough Week 10 shutout loss to Elida, excitement is in the air at Celina as the team tries to make the postseason for the first time since 1998.

Trent Temple earned the right to remove the "interim" tag from his coaching job after taking over just a month before last season and coming up with a big effort.

Now, Celina looks to take the next step and make the playoffs. The WBL seems to be a bit down throughout, so a challenge for the WBL title also looms.

4. Can the Roughriders get back to .500 this season?

The first win for St. Marys this season will be a big one, as it will exorcise the specter of the last two seasons of 0-10.

The return of Doug Frye immediately improves the team, as he instills the system that made him a winner in his first run in Ridertown. The talent is there, and they know, just by reputation, what Frye expects from them.

Barring injuries, 5-5 is not out of the realm of possibility.

5. Will Columbus mean more fans?

The OHSAA state finals move to Columbus and Ohio Stadium for a two-year cycle after over 25 years in the Stark County towns of Akron and Massillon.

While I never had any issues with Fawcett Stadium or Paul Brown Tiger Stadium, the thought of halving our trip by going to Central Ohio is nice, since there would be no need to leave at 6 a.m. for the 11 a.m. game in Stark County. The extra sleep will help.

The only concern is that the games will be at the Horseshoe, a 100,000-plus venue that will seem a bit echo-ish when 6-8,000 fans come to watch games.

I would think that it's the OHSAA's hope that moving it to Columbus and having it roughly a 1 1/2 to two-hour trip from most parts of the state will bring the causal fans that do not have a rooting interest in high school football.

One thing that might change in 2015 from this year is moving the Thursday night game to Sunday afternoon, giving Division I its tradition final game of the finals spot. Last year, they moved the Division I game to the Saturday afternoon so fans could watch Ohio State in the Big Ten title game. While that meant Marion Local got a prime-time spot, it made for a cold, long night.

All Games Kick Off at 7:30 p.m.

VERSAILLES AT CELINA
Celina Stadium

Last Year: Celina, 25-19. Caleb Hoyng threw for 302 yards and one touchdown, a 17-yard strike to Mason Ross with just over a minute left in the third quarter for the game-winner

About the Tigers: After graduating the bulk of their offense from last year's 3-7 squad, Versailles coach Adam Miller is putting in the Power-I formation to compliment his deep running back depth chart. Miller, a former Delphos St. John's fullback, will look to boost the 100.7 yards per game on the ground Versailles had last season. ... Junior Jared Niekamp takes over at quarterback for 2012 All-Ohioan Nick Campbell, now playing at the University of Findlay.

About The Bulldogs: Hoyng had over 1,600 yards and 13 touchdowns in his first season at quarterback, but will have to find new targets as a number of his top receivers graduated in the spring. ... The Bulldog defense gave up an average of 20.2 points per game last season, fourth-best in the WBL. ... Grant Bader, who backed up Hoyng last season and filled in when Hoyng injured his wrist late in the season, should see time at receiver, setting up some possible trickeration plays.

COLDWATER AT KENTON
Robinson Field

Last Year: Kenton, 22-2. The Cavaliers struggled as Grant Sherman threw for two touchdowns and the Wildcat defense pitched a shutout (Coldwater's only score being a safety).

About the Cavaliers: The loss to Kenton proved to be an anomaly as the Cavaliers scored 540 points over the next 14 games en route to a second straight Division V state title. ... Junior RB Chris (Petey) Post averaged 4.8 yards per carry last season in backup playing time, but should be a threat to catch some passes from Brody Hoyng as the quarterback will look for new outlets after the bulk of his receiving corps graduated.

About the Wildcats: Major changes took place after Kenton's 13-1 state semifinalist campaign, most notably head coach Mike Mauk stepping down to take a high school coaching position in Missouri closer to son Maty, who will start for Mizzou this season. Longtime defensive coordinator Brent Fackler takes over the program. While the Wildcats will miss All-Ohioan Noah Furbush (Michigan) on defense, Tristan Reichelderfer returns after recording 180 tackles last season. ... WR's Kolin Stollar (1,206 yards receiving, 20 TDs) and Colyn Blackford (1,105 yards receiving, 10 TDs) are back and will likely take passes from Trent Hites, who was 17-of-31 for 240 yards and two TDs in relief of Grant Sherman last season.

NORTH UNION AT FORT RECOVERY
Barrenbrugge Park

First Meeting (Fort Recovery beat Edgerton 24-21 last season)

About the Wildcats: North Union went 10-2 last season, losing to West Jefferson in the Division V, Region 18 semifinals. The team lost the bulk of its offense after graduating 19 seniors and will look to senior Jake Blevins to run the offense at quarterback. ... The Wildcats will be without RB Isiah Mason, who will miss the first half of the season after transferring from Marion Elgin. Mason rushed for 1,070 and 11 touchdowns last season. ... With over 60 players on the roster, the Wildcats will have few players going both ways.



Post



Area Preview Capsules

About the Indians: Fort Recovery has the bulk of their offense and defense back from last season. ... The Indians could have three QBs working the offense as returning starter Darien Sheffer split snaps with sophomore Caleb Martin and Mitch Stammen could also takesnaps while playing wideout and running back as well. ... Fort Recovery has won its last four season openers, last losing in Week One in 2009 to Ansonia 52-48.

MINSTER AT FORT LORAMIE
Fort Loramie High School

Last Year: Fort Loramie, 21-18. Delaunte Thorton scored from one yard out with 15 seconds left to hand Minster coach Geron Stokes a loss in his Wildcat debut.

About the Wildcats: Minster missed a chance at the playoffs by a touchdown in falling to St. John's in Week 10 last season. The good news is that with quarterback Josh Nixon (over 2,100 yards passing) and top receiver Eli Wolf (nearly 1,000 yards receiving) back, along with running back Sam Dues and receiver Jacob Dues, the Wildcats shouldn't skip a beat this season. ... The Wildcats have a blistering first four weeks of the season, facing four teams that made the playoffs right off the bat in Fort Loramie and Lehman in non-conference and then opening the MAC slate against state champs Coldwater and Marion Local in back-to-back weeks.

About the Redskins: Loramie made their fifth straight playoff trip last season, losing to a MAC team in the opening round for the fourth straight year and to Marion Local for the third time in that span. ... Graduation hit the Redskins hard, especially at running back as 1,900-yard rusher Delaunte Thorton graduated. ... The Redskins also will look to replace quarterback Tyler Kazmaier (1,241 passing yards, 19 TDs) and top receiver Craig Fullenkamp (833 yards, 10 TDs).

NEW BREMEN AT ALLEN EAST
Goodwin Field

Last Year: Allen East, 28-13. Ross Stewart rushed for 175 yards and three touchdowns as the Mustangs held off a Cardinals' comeback.

About the Cardinals: New Bremen will look to get not only their first win since September 2012, but also their first opening game win since beating Covington in 2009. ... The Cardinals rushed for 229 yards against Allen East last season. The rest of the season, they averaged 121.1 yards per contest.

About the Mustangs: With Stewart graduated, Allen East will look to rebuild after a 4-6 season in 2013 with just two wins in the Northwest Conference. ...The Mustangs play four 2013 playoff teams this season, three from the NWC as well as former conference member LCC.

PARKWAY AT CRESTVIEW
Crestview High School

Last Year: Crestview, 21-0. Malcolm Oliver rushed for two touchdowns and quarter-

back Preston Zaleski ran for 92 yards and scored the other touchdown in the shutout at Panther Stadium. Parkway was outrushed 255-81.

About the Panthers: The Panthers will hope to avoid the injury bug that has hampered the team the past several seasons. ... QB Justin Barna had to take over for Austin Dennison midway through last season. Seniors Hayden Abromavich, Caleb Heindel and Kris Gangwer look to be the main offensive weapons in the lineup.

About the Knights: Zaleski and Oliver return this season after the Knights made their second-ever playoff appearance, the other coming in 2005. ... Crestview shared the NWC title with Delphos Jefferson and Ada, the two other NWC teams to make the playoffs. The tri-championship marked the first time since 2009 that LCC, which left the conference after the 2012 season, did not win the title.

ST. HENRY AT COVINGTON
Smith Field

Last Year: Covington, 35-21. A.J. Ouellette ran for two touchdowns and kicked four extra points. The Buccs outrushed the Redskins 311-134.

About the Redskins: Brad Luthman's squad ended 2013 on a positive with a three-game win streak to finish 4-6 and 4-4 in the MAC. ... QB Mitchell A. Stammen will have to find two new go-to receivers after Jeff Paul and Tyler Schwieterman (combined 1,173 yards and 8 TD) graduated. A.J. Niekamp should step into the role of lead receiver this season. ... Before last year's loss, St. Henry had lost its opener only twice since 2002 (Lehman in 2002, Marion Pleasant in 2011).

About the Buccs: Covington will not have All-Ohioan Ouellette, who recently earned a full scholarship at Ohio University after initially walking on. ... QB Jared Williams returns to the run-based lineup as does halfback Nathan Blei, who saw significant playing time as a freshman last year. ... The Buccs only have 34 players on their roster this season.

SIDNEY AT ST. MARYS
Skip Baughman Stadium

Last Year: Sidney, 19-16. Jordan Fox's 11-yard touchdown run with less than 30 seconds left in the third quarter put the Yellow Jackets up for good and extended the Roughriders' losing skid to 12 straight games.

About the Yellow Jackets: Sidney may switch things up offensively after graduating quarterback Jordan Fox, who threw for over 1,600 yards last season. ... RB Eric Barnes returns after leading the team with 663 yards rushing. ... The Yellow Jackets gave up an average of 218 rushing yards per game, something that could bode well for the freshly-stocked Wing-T of the Roughriders.

About the Roughriders: St. Marys enters having lost 21 straight, although Sidney was one of the teams the 'Riders played well against but could not put away. ... FB Isaac Fitzgerald should see a lot of rushes since moving from quarterback over the offseason. ... Doug Frye is 8-1 lifetime against Sidney during his first stint as coach. Only two of those wins were by a margin of less than 10 points (14-10 in 2003, 21-15 in 2005). ... The all-time series goes to St. Marys 31-24-4, but it has lost three of the last five meetings.



M.A. Stammen



Fitzgerald

This Week's Games

Friday Non-League	Anna at Sidney Lehman
Versailles at Celina	Wapakoneta at Bellefontaine
Sidney at St. Marys	Defiance at Napoleon
Coldwater at Kenton	Elida at Delphos St.
Shawnee at Marion	John's's
Local	Ottawa-Glandorf at Oak Harbor
North Union at Fort Recovery	Bryan at Van Wert
Minster at Fort Loramie	
New Bremen at Allen	
East	Saturday
Parkway at Crestview	Non-League
St. Henry at Covington	Bath at LCC

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