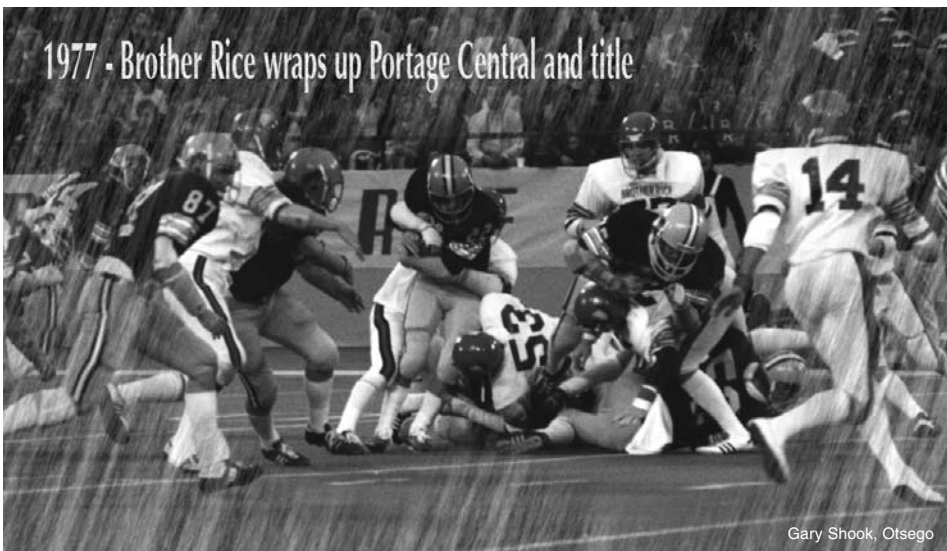


# FINALS FLASHBACKS



Gary Shook, Otsego

## 1977

Matt O'Connor racked up 124 yards including a 13-yard touchdown run as Birmingham Brother Rice defeated Portage Central for the **Class A** crown, 17-7 at the Pontiac Silverdome. Portage Central struck first when quarterback Pete Metzelaars connected with Pat Marek for a 74-yard TD play on the Mustangs' first possession. The Mustangs shut down the Warriors on the next series, however, O'Connor took the snap on the fake punt attempt, and rambled 35-yards to Portage 13-yard line for the first down. The senior back scored on the next play, and following Brian Swanson's PAT, the game was tied 7-7. Swanson made it 10-7 with a 27-yard field goal in the second quarter following a Gary Zatkoff fumble recovery. Midway through the fourth quarter, Joe Fontanesi wrapped things up for Rice with a 6-yard TD run on a draw play.

Trailing 16-3 late in the third quarter, Jackson Lumen Christi stormed back with a pair of fourth-quarter Kip Parker touchdowns to defeat Saginaw MacArthur, 17-16 in **Class B**. Christi opened the scoring with a 27-yard Kip Conway field goal in the first. MacArthur marched 67-yards, capped by quarterback Mark Gerald's second-quarter touchdown run from 2 yards out. Generals struck again in the third, adding two points with a blocked punt that rolled out of the end zone for a safety, and a 50-yard scoring dash by Rich Martin three minutes later, and MacArthur was up 16-3.

But then Titan quarterback Tom O'Dowd went to work. Early in the fourth, O'Dowd completed three passes in a 13-play, 61-yard drive. Parker's 2-yard plunge for the score pulled Christi to within a touchdown. Gaining possession on their own 25-yard line following a quick kick by the Generals, O'Dowd hit a pair of clutch passes, then picked up 15-yards on a roughing the passer call. A 1-yard run by Parker tied the game at 16-16. Conway's kick was perfect, and the Titans led by a single point. However, MacArthur gained possession of the football with a minute left when Dick Lafontaine recovered a Titan fumble. The Generals drove to the Lumen Christi 11-yard line with 22 seconds to play, but a 28-yard field goal attempt on fourth down sailed wide.

In **Class C**, the powerful backfield of Jim Paciorek, Barry Riddeck and Tom Sikora for Orchard Lake St. Mary's ran roughshod over Iron River West Iron County, 48-12. Coached by gridiron veteran Art Paddy, the Eaglets rolled up 216 yard on the ground in the first half and 391 on the day. Riddeck ended with 163 yards on 15 carried and three touchdowns, while teammate Dave Kay racked up 130 yards on 13 totes, including TD runs of 40 and 31 yards. Mike Thunander's 66-yard pass interception for a touchdown was a highlight for the Wykons.

A rematch of the 1975 and 1976 **Class D** finals, Flint Holy Rosary notched 21 second-quarter points, including a pair of touchdown passes from Ron Fray to brother Jeff, en route to a thrilling 21-20

victory over Upper Peninsula powerhouse Crystal Falls Forest Park. Dan Lato, who notched his 33rd touchdown of the year in the contest, established a Finals record with 40 rushing attempts for previously unbeaten Crystal Falls. The Trojans defeated Rosary 50-0 in their 1975 meeting, and again in 1976 by a 14-6 margin.

## 1987

Chris Moore's 35-yard field goal in the second quarter capped a 63-yard 13-play drive that ran 7:51 off the clock, the only points needed as Ann Arbor Pioneer grabbed its second MHSAA title in four years, a 3-0 defeat of Detroit Catholic Central in the **Class A** Final. The game remains the lowest scoring contest in Finals history.

Second-half touchdown receptions by Dan Tietema, Brad Mathis and Darby Spielmaker broke open a scoreless contest as the Cougars of Grand Rapids Catholic Central downed Farmington Hills Harrison, 19-7 in the **Class B** title game. Catholic Central limited the Harrison offense to seven yards rushing for the evening. The Cougars contained Harrison's Mill Coleman, holding the quarterback to 8-of-16 passing for 138 yards and two interceptions, and sacking the sophomore sensation on four occasions.



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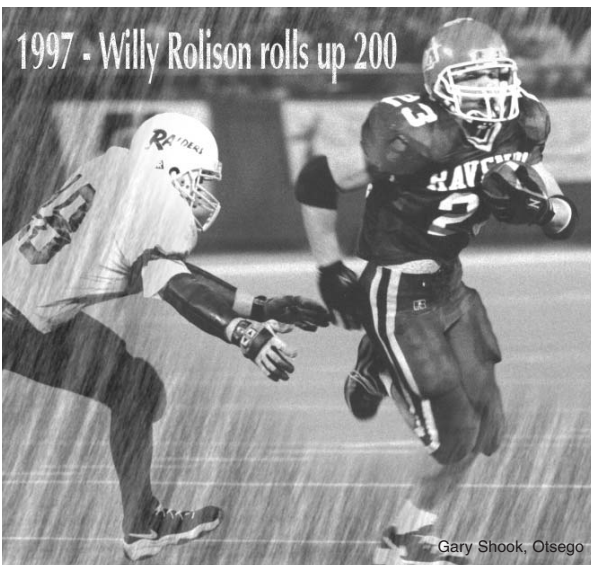


In **Class C**, Erie-Mason slipped past Saginaw Nouvel, 14-7. Eagle quarterback Darin Bowman opened the scoring with a 21-yard touchdown in the third quarter. Nouvel rebounded, tying the game on a Dan Bourcier-to-James Debardelaben 42-yard touchdown pass with 8:59 left. Derek Bowman, Darin's brother, carried 11 times for 79 yards, including a 38-yard gain late in the fourth quarter to set up Ed St. Bernard's winning TD from a yard out. Bernard ended the day with 93 yards. Panther tailback Tony Jackson finished with 57 yards rushing in 16 attempts.

Tight end Jeff Crosby scored on pass plays covering 55 and 65 yards, while teammate Randy Hunt broke a 67-yard touchdown run as Martin shocked Beal City, 21-0. It was the start of a stellar year for the Martin athletic program. The Clipper wrestling team also won a Class D championship, while the girls basketball team advanced to the Class D Final, and the boys basketball squad reached the Semifinals.

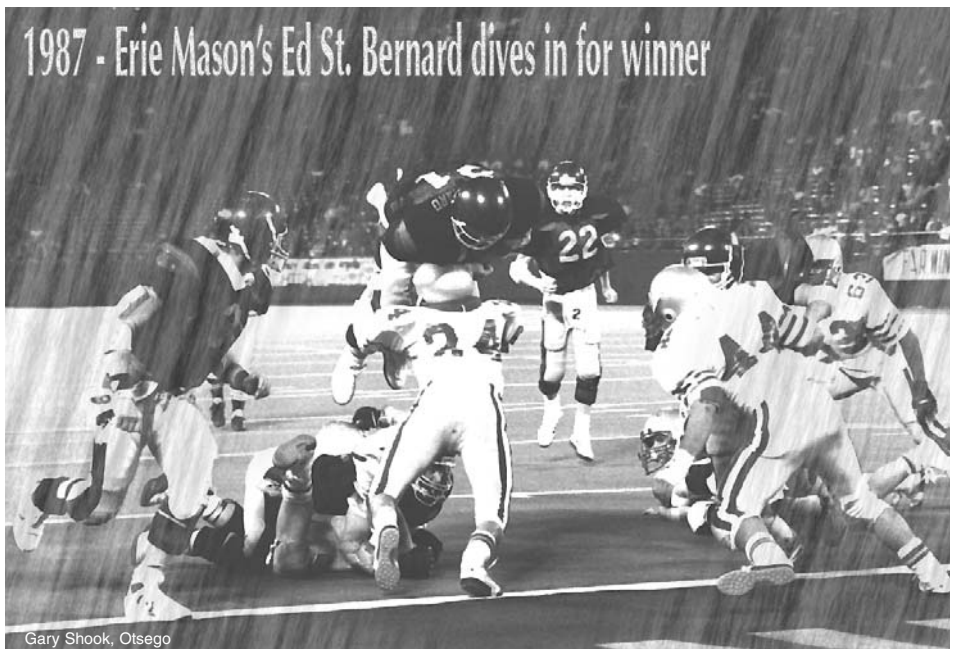
## 1997

Redford Detroit Catholic Central used its quickness to secure the school's second MHSAA football crown in three years and overall with a 23-7 win over first-time finalist Ann Arbor Huron. The **Class AA** Final was played on Saturday at the Pontiac Silverdome. Nose-guard Chuck Spolsky picked off a Huron pass at the River Rats' 14-yard line to set up the Shamrock's first score. Josh Christenson rumbled in from 4 yards out with 9:18 to play in the second quarter for a 7-0 lead.



1997 - Willy Rolison rolls up 200

Gary Shook, Otsego



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Huron knotted the game at 7-7 with 41 seconds left in the half. Nate Hurst intercepted Catholic Central quarterback Adam Tubaro's pass at CC's 32-yard line with 1:07 remaining, and River Rat QB Joel Przygodski connected with a diving Nate Johns on fourth-and-four for the score.

The Shamrocks drove 69 yards on five plays, capped by Turabo's 34-yard TD pass to Nick Brzezinski on the opening drive of the second half to take control of the contest. Turabo also rolled out to score from 4 yards out late in the fourth quarter to give CC a 21-7 lead. The Shamrock defense held Huron to three second-half first downs and a total of 133 yards of net offense in the contest.

Leading 7-0 with 10 seconds to play in the first quarter of its title contest with Midland Dow, Farmington Hills Harrison set the tone of the game with a 13-play, 99-yard scoring drive that chewed up 9:00 and propelled the Hawks to their eighth MHSAA crown, 21-6 over the Chemics in **Class A** action on Friday.

Running back Chris Ghannam tallied the opening score on a 2-yard run with 4:01 remaining in the opening period. Quarterback Jared Hopkins connected with junior Ricky Bryant, who followed a great lead block by right tackle

Mike Fisher, to take it in from 26-yards out for the Hawks' second TD.

In the third quarter, Harrison padded the lead to 21 points capitalizing on a fumble forced by Brian Lewis, who advanced the ball to the Dow 13-yard line. Five plays later, Zack Cornwell scored on a 1-yard run.

Ogemaw Heights senior fullback Klint Marshall racked up 118 yards on 20 carries and teammate Jason Buhlman notched two touchdowns, but defense was the true key in the Falcons' 19-12 **Class BB** victory over the defending champs from Marshall.

Marshall quarterback Ryan VanDyke connected with Seth Shubert for a 62-yard reception on the second play from scrimmage, setting up a six-yard TD run by Jeremy Brown with 1:13 elapsed in the game.

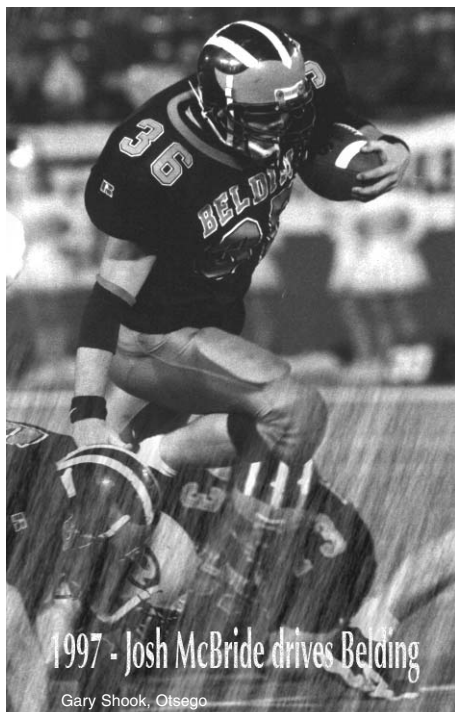
Buhlman responded with an electrifying 87-yard scoring return on the ensuing kickoff, and the teams were tied, 6-6.

The teams remained tied until just before the half when VanDyke connected with Doug Searles for a 60-yard TD strike as Marshall entered the locker room with a 12-6 lead.

A Todd Bennett interception gave the Falcons the ball at the Marshall 5 early in the third, and Klint Marshall scored on the next play. Bennett's extra point gave the Falcons a 13-12.

Marshall bounced back, driving to the Ogemaw Heights 8-yard line before VanDyke was again intercepted, this time





1997 - Josh McBride drives Belding

Gary Shook, Otsego

by Ryan Wangler in the end zone to kill a possible scoring drive with 20 seconds left in the third quarter.

The Falcons scored again late in the fourth on a 9-yard TD pass from Brock Fagen to Buhlman to extend their lead to 19-12. A late Buhlman interception then sealed the win and an undefeated season for Ogemaw Heights.

Working out of the wing-T, Belding backs Josh McBride and Brent Cummings ground out 270 yards and combined for five touchdowns as Belding defeated Riverview, 42-13, in **Class B**. The Redskins grabbed a 14-0 halftime lead on a pair of Cummings scores. Riverview opened the third quarter with an 89-yard kickoff return by Nick Strok to close the gap to 14-6, but the score was quickly negated when McBride scored from 7 yards out on the ensuing drive.

Three touchdowns in the final quarter sealed the win for Belding and coach Irv Sigler, a 1961 graduate of Riverview High School. McBride ended with 183 yards and two TDs on 22 carries.

It was the lone Finals appearance for Riverview coach Don Lessner, who would guide the Pirates to 29 winning seasons, over 200 varsity victories, and eight play-off appearances in 35 years.

Defense was again the name of the game as Muskegon Oakridge came up with a number of big stops en route to a 6-0 win over Vermontville Maple Valley in **Class CC**. The Oakridge defense established itself early, with a red-zone stance

on Maple Valley's first possession of the contest. After Lions' running back Jason Thompson broke loose for a 50-yard pickup to the Oakridge 13, the Eagles buckled down to stop the drive at the 9. Oakridge then drove 91 yards in 17 plays, including four third-down conversions, to score the contest's only points. Fullback Ben Mills punched it over from 1 yard out on the opening play of the second quarter for the game's only points. It was the first MHSAA crown for the Eagles and veteran coach Jack Schugars.

Ravenna grabbed its second consecutive title and third in four seasons in **Class C** on the wheels of junior tailback Willy Rolison with a 48-26 win over Decatur. Rolison posted Class C Final records with four touchdowns and 236 yards on 44 carries. Both marks were previously held by former Ravenna back Benny Clark. Following Rolison's first TD in the opening frame, Ravenna jumped to a 14-0 lead in the second quarter with a Jason Helsen-to-Neil Sladick pass from 5 yards out.

Scooping up a fumble on a Ravenna punt return, Steve Athey put Decatur on the board with a 56-yard dash to the end zone to narrow the margin to 14-6. Following Sladick's second TD for the Bulldogs, the Raiders struck twice to pull within a point, 21-20 on a 6-yard toss from quarterback Matt Groh to Tim Warner late in the second quarter, followed by a 60-yard dash by Groh on a QB sneak 38 seconds into the second half. Rolison countered with scoring runs of 5, 2 and 33 yards to pull away.

Flashing Barry Sanders-like moves on the artificial surface at the Pontiac

Silverdome, 5-7, 150-pound tailback Ernie Diaz rolled up 241 rushing yards, including highlight-reel runs of 56 and 47 yards to lead Lawrence to a 28-6 victory over Mio-AuSable in the **Class DD** title contest.

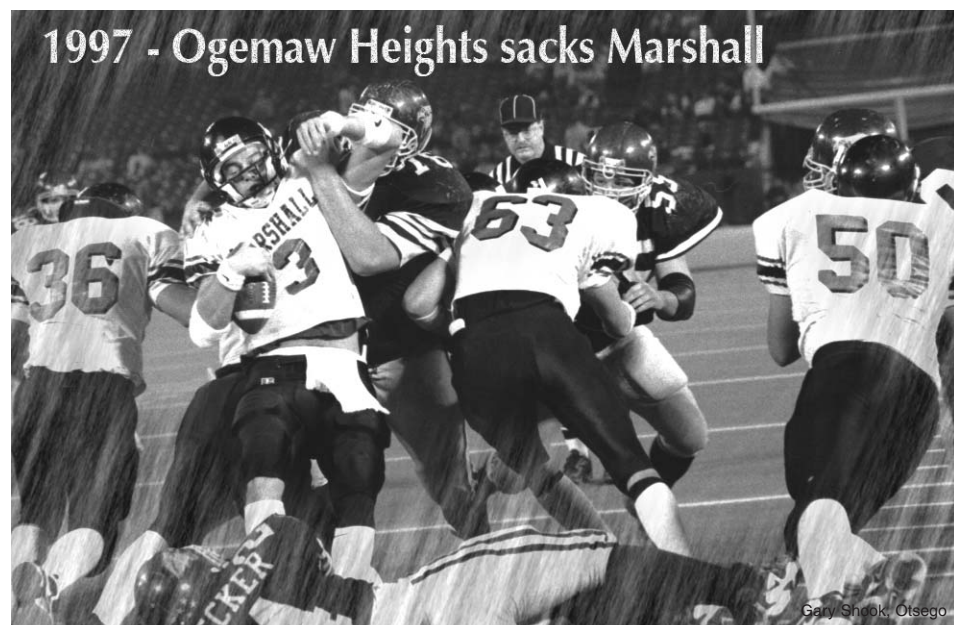
Lawrence QB Steve Blum scored the first of two 1-yard touchdown runs midway through the second quarter, then connected with Jon Pobuda on the two-point conversion to put the Tigers up 8-0. Diaz tallied his lone touchdown immediately following the 56-yard dash, scoring from 4 yards out to up the score to 16-0 with 2:46 to play in the first half. Blum's second touchdown run with 4:30 left in the third put the game out of reach.

Making its third consecutive appearance in the Finals, Lake Linden-Hubbell capped a perfect season with the **Class D** crown, downing Portland St. Patrick, 30-8. Chris Zablocki ripped off a Class D record run of 77 yards on the team's first possession from scrimmage to open the scoring. The senior ran for 189 yards and two TDs to lead the Lakes to their second MHSAA football title in five appearances.

Hubbell marched 81 yards on their second possession, sealed by a two-yard run from quarterback Josh Hendrickson. Adam Marcotte's two-point conversion gave the Lakes a 16-0 lead with two minutes to play in the opening quarter. Zablocki added a 26-yard TD rush and LLH had a 24-0 lead at the break. Marcotte's, who finished with 105 yards on 14 carries, added a 58-yard TD run late in the contest.

*Ron Pesch*

*Ron Pesch is historian for the MHSAA.*



1997 - Ogemaw Heights sacks Marshall

Gary Shook, Otsego