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GRAND LEDGE FOOTBALL (2000)

 **Year:** 2000

 **Inducted:** 2018

Record 13-1. Lost the second game of the season to Grand Rapids East Kentwood 30-39. Won 12 straight games. Offense averaged – 31.0 points per game, defense gave up 7.3 points per game. Grand Ledge had to defeat the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th ranked teams in the state to win the championship. They won the district, regional, semi-final and finals by a total of 12 combined points. With less than 4 minutes remaining, Grand Ledge went for 2 points. They recovered the onside kick. Two plays later Grand Ledge scored and took the lead at 19-14. With 1:46 minutes left, Grand Ledge held on to defeat Utica Eisenhower to win the State Championship.

FRONT ROW: Joe Wohlscheid, Ryan Mitchell, Aaron Hubbard, Patrick Kleinfelt, Tim George, Derick Hall, Matt Bohnet, Chad Esper, Matt Cook

SECOND ROW: Brian Christiansen, Clint Deatsman, Victor Preston, Steve Dick, Joe McLean, Patrick Bartlett, Bryan O'Donnell, Dan Sawdy, Collin O'Keefe

THIRD ROW: Matt McKenzie, Mike Lasher, Mike Holben, Dan Maurer, Bobby Adcock, Chuck Mclean, Luke Mullins, Mike Wohlscheid

FOURTH ROW: Jay Miller, Nick Jensen, Mike Deyo, Andy Shults, Brad Krause, David Blandford, Kyle Robinson, Vince Riggs, Jon Hawkins

BACK ROW: Dustin Ditsworth, Mark Ditsworth, John Ellsworth, Blake Wegenke, Head Coach Pat O'Keefe, Matt Bird, Andy Henderson

Missing are Nick Sandy, Brandon Caswell, Chris Gentry, Ken Bohnet, Ben Coleman, Dan Barnes, Drew Mooney.

No. 4: Grand Ledge Comets shine brightest in biggest moment

Grand Ledge 19, Utica Eisenhower 14

2000 Division 1 final

Grand Ledge's 2000 team did not back down from any challenge, so when the Comets trailed Eisenhower 14-7 in the final minute, hope was not lost. The Comets pulled off one of the most stunning late rallies in state finals history in capturing their school's first football championship.

Senior quarterback Matt Bohnet scored on a 5-yard touchdown run with 53 seconds remaining, but his two-point conversion run was denied and left Grand Ledge trailing by a point. On the ensuing kickoff, Collin O'Keefe recovered a well-executed onside kick at the 48. Two plays later, scrambling southpaw Bohnet found Tim George along the sideline at the 16, where George shed a tackler. George stayed inbounds, dashed up the sideline and dove for the pylon with 22 seconds left to give his team a 19-14 lead and send the crowd at the Pontiac Silverdome into a frenzy.

Grand Ledge's 2000 squad, which was [inducted into the Greater Lansing Area Sports Hall of Fame](#), ended the season with 12 straight victories and a 13-1 record. The Comets, coached by legendary Pat O'Keefe, defeated the top four ranked teams in Division 1 to seize the title.

Named the 4th Greatest State Finals game since 1990 by MLive

More Links on the State Title Team

[Induction into the Lansing Sports Hall of Fame](#)

[Top 30 High School Football Finals of the Last 30 Years](#)

[Brock Palmbo on the 2000 State Title Game](#)

Saturday, December 2, 2000



Lansing State Journal

Special commemorative section

www.lsj.com

STATE CHAMPS

GRAND LEDGE COMETS ROCKET TO MHSAA CROWN



Here's to the winners: Members of the 2000 Grand Ledge football team hoist the Michigan High School Athletic Association Division 1 championship trophy.

Comets put the crowning touch on a dream season

Comets put the crowning touch on a dream season

It's about pride.
It's about community.
It's about tradition.
It's about being the best.
The best.

That's what the Grand Ledge proved to be this season on the football field.

Champions.

Few would have believed it at the beginning of the season.

Not with more than 30 seniors gone from 1999.

Not without an experienced 1,000-yard rusher in the backfield.

The Comets proved the naysayers wrong, more than a few times during this magical autumn.

Jackson was expected to win the Capital Area Conference.

Grand Ledge took care of that.

It was nearly a sure thing in some eyes that Brighton, Clarkston or Utica Eisenhower would win the Division I state championship.

Yet all three fell at the Comets' hands

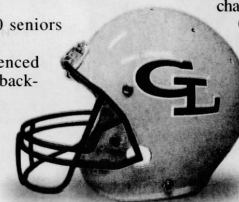
during Grand Ledge's title run.

Even when Grand Ledge trailed Eisenhower 14-7 with only four minutes left at the Silverdome, senior quarterback **Matt Bohnet** and company had a few more thrills to leave on the field.

And at the end of the afternoon, a father named Pat O'Keefe and a son named Collin left the field together, with a football championship to add to Coach O'Keefe's two baseball titles.

Football is something that matters in Grand Ledge. The home stands are always packed and roughly 10,000 fans journeyed to the Silverdome to watch their children and neighbors play for

greatness. People will be talking about this for a while. Events like what happened this fall don't easily fade away from memory. And they shouldn't, considering what 42 young men and their bevy of knowledgeable coaches did to bring pride and respect to their hometown.



•TEXT BY GEOFF KIMMERLY• PHOTO BY CHRIS HOLMES • EDITED BY VINCE ELLIS



THE JOURNEY

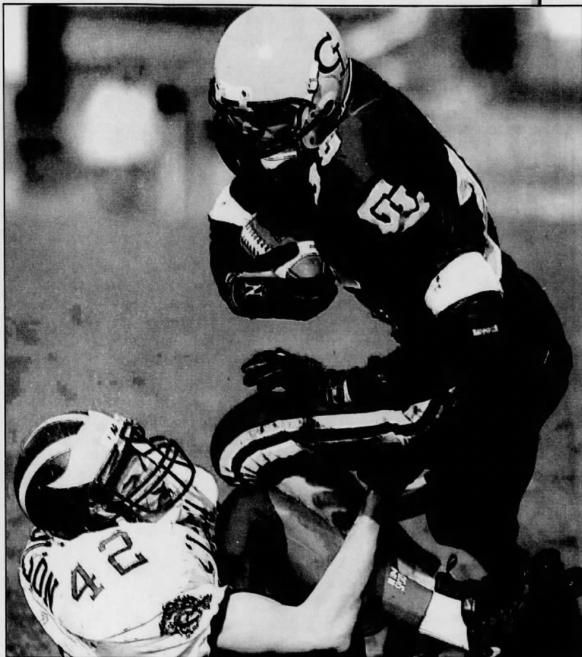
FROM A WIN OVER HOWELL TO THE UPSET OF CLARKSTON, THE TEAM HAD ONE GOAL



No gain: Grand Ledge linebacker Dan Sawdy tackles Clarkston running back Nate Davis in the Division 1 state semifinal. Quarterback Matt Bohnet hit Ryan Mitchell for a 27-yard score to key the 17-15 win.



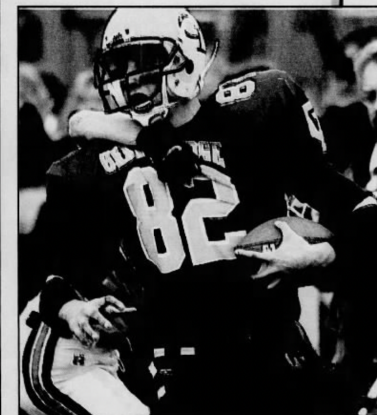
Up in the air: Comet running back Michael Holben is upended by an East Lansing defender during this early-season contest won by Grand Ledge. The 14-6 win gave Grand Ledge a 2-1 record.



Power back: Grand Ledge fullback Steve Dick is pulled down by a Clarkston defender in this Division 1 state semifinal. The 6-foot-3, 200-pounder is a senior.



Tough yards: Running back Jon Hawkins (25) carries Rockford defenders for extra yardage during the Comets' 27-24 regional final victory. Hawkins, a junior, will return next season.



Nice catch: Grand Ledge tight end Ryan Mitchell is tackled after catching a pass against Rockford during the Comets' 27-24 regional final win.

Game 1 Grand Ledge 19, Howell 0

At Howell – The Grand Ledge defense showed right away what it was made of, shutting out the Highlanders to begin the regular season. Junior Michael Holben scored all three touchdowns for Grand Ledge, on runs of 2, 1 and 2 yards. Matt Bohnet was 11-of-15 for 168 yards for the Comets and senior Derrick Hall ran for 67 of the Comets' 147 yards.

Game 2 East Kentwood 39, Grand Ledge 30

At Grand Ledge – The Comets suffered their only loss of the season in this shootout. Bohnet hit Hall with a 57-yard touchdown pass early, and completed 12-of-24 passes for 199 yards. Bohnet also ran for a score as did Holben.

Game 3 Grand Ledge 14, East Lansing 6

At East Lansing – The Comets rebounded against their biggest rival, taking down the Trojans on opening night in the CAC. Holben had a 6-yard touchdown run and Bohnet hit senior Steve Dick for an 18-yard touchdown. Two extra points from senior Nick Sandy gave Grand Ledge a 14-0 lead.

Game 4 Grand Ledge 28, Sutton 0

At Sutton – The Comets claimed their third shutout of the season at Sutton. Holben scored on a 1-yard run and Hall, who had 101 yards rushing on 11 carries, scored from 16 yards out. Bohnet also hit senior Chad Espar with a 35-yard touchdown pass and senior Matt Cook returned an interception 19 yards for a score.

Game 5 Grand Ledge 30, Everett 0

At Grand Ledge – Hall ran for 69 yards and two touchdowns and the defense got its second-straight shutout as Grand Ledge went to 3-0 in the CAC. Holben led the Comets with 114 yards rushing and scored on 3-yard run.

Game 6 Grand Ledge 42, Jackson 7

At Grand Ledge – The Comets showed they were now the favorites to win the CAC, defeating preseason pick Jackson on Homecoming night. Holben ran for 5- and 95-yard scores and Bohnet ran for 8- and 1-yard touchdowns. Bohnet also hit senior Ryan Mitchell with a 40-yard scoring pass.

Game 7 Grand Ledge 55, Eastern 6

At Grand Ledge – Junior Jon Hawkins, Hall, Holben and Bohnet each scored twice in this CAC rout. Hawkins led the way with 130 yards rushing on 22 carries. Sandy kicked seven extra points. Again, the biggest story was the defense, which held Eastern to only 15 total yards.



THE JOURNEY'S END

STATE CHAMPIONSHIP GAME, PONTIAC SILVERDOME, NOVEMBER 25, 2000



Loyal fans: Roughly 10,000 Grand Ledge fans traveled to the Pontiac Silverdome to watch the Comets' 19-14 state title win over Utica Eisenhower. Grand Ledge had one of the largest groups at the state title games.



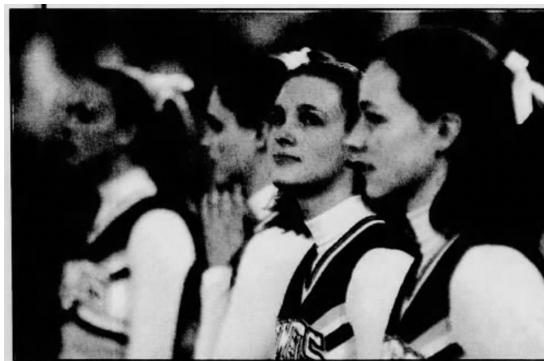
Speedy back: Grand Ledge running back Derrick Hall runs through a big hole during the state final against Utica Eisenhower. Hall rushed for 61 yards on 16 carries in the championship game.



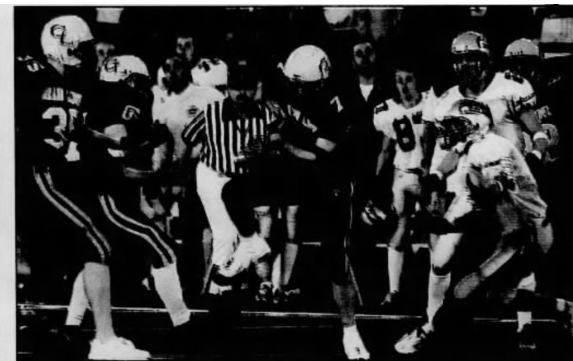
Dive for glory: Grand Ledge quarterback Matt Bohnet dives for the end zone on a 5-yard scoring run. Bohnet also delivered two touchdown passes in Grand Ledge's 19-14 win.



For the fans: Grand Ledge football coach Pat O'Keefe lifts the Michigan High School Athletic Association trophy during the ceremony honoring him and his team after the championship game. In his eighth season as head coach, O'Keefe finally landed the title.



Not so fast: From left, Grand Ledge cheerleaders Anna Whiting, Amber Pickering, Sarah Beam and Anna McGrew react to a missed two-point conversion.



Key play: Grand Ledge defensive back Collin O'Keefe recovers an onside kick which allowed the team to score the winning touchdown with less than one minute to play.

• TITLE GAME PHOTOS BY CHRIS HOLMES •

Game 8

**Grand Ledge 44,
Waverly 20**

At Waverly – Bohnet ran for three touchdowns and passed for three as Grand Ledge clinched a share of the CAC title at Waverly. Espar caught a 7-yard score, senior Tim George a 10-yarder, and Collin O'Keefe caught a 23-yard score. Sandy kicked a 26-yard field goal and five extra points.

Game 9

**Grand Ledge 21,
Holt 3**

At Holt – Grand Ledge claimed the CAC title with this regular-season finale win. It was the Comets' first league title since sharing it in 1997. Bohnet hit Mitchell with a 60-yard scoring pass, after a Cook interception, to start the scoring. Hall added two 29-yard touchdown runs and Sandy kicked three extra points.

Game 10

**Grand Ledge 54,
Jackson 13**

District playoff – The Comets forced six Jackson fumbles, recovering four, as they won their first playoff game since 1997. Grand Ledge also intercepted two passes. Bohnet threw three touchdown passes and ran for two scores.

Game 11

**Grand Ledge 22,
Brighton 20**

District championship – Grand Ledge avenged a 51-20 playoff loss from a year ago in defeating highly-regarded Brighton to win a district championship. Bohnet hit Mitchell with a 34-yard touchdown pass in the fourth quarter that was the game-winner.

Game 12

**Grand Ledge 27,
Rockford 24**

Regional final – Sandy kicked an 18-yard field goal as time expired to push the Comets into the Division 1 semifinals. A 33-yard pass to Joe Wohlscheld set up the final kick. Bohnet twice hit George on touchdown passes for 34 and 71 yards.

Game 13

**Grand Ledge 17,
Clarkston 15**

State semifinal – The Comets defeated favorite Clarkston at Everett to advance to the state title game at the Pontiac Silverdome. Sandy started the scoring with a 24-yard field goal and Bohnet hit Mitchell with a 27-yard touchdown pass in Grand Ledge's first possession after halftime.

Game 14

**Grand Ledge 19,
Utica Eisenhower 14**

State championship – The Comets claimed their first-ever state championship. Bohnet, after throwing two early interceptions, finished 16-of-26 passing for 243 yards. George caught six passes for 133 yards. Again the defense came through, holding Eisenhower to only seven offensive points.