

DEWITT VS HASLETT... SOME RIVALRY MEMORIES.



The Haslett Vikings have been DeWitt's most often played opponent in football. As of this writing, August 2022, the two have played 47 times with DeWitt holding a 38-9 advantage in wins. After a five year pause, the two will renew the rivalry in a BIG way in the Big House as part of the Battle at the Big House on Thursday, August 25 at Michigan Stadium. The two teams have played some memorable games over the years, many of which pitted two intense coaches, Haslett's Charlie Otlewski and DeWitt, Rob Zimmerman.

1994 The Quagmire: DeWitt has its best team since the 1989 Silverdome team. Gail Thornton's wishbone option attack has both power and speed to burn led by quarterback DJ Reyburn. After a good week of practice in the dry October weather, the Panthers arrive at Haslett and the field is more like a marsh. The Panthers stand in several inches of mud on the sideline and the field is equally as mushy. Apparently, the grounds person "forgot" to turn off the sprinklers the night before. The mud slows the speedy Panthers but they prevail 14-0.

1999 Welcome to the Neighborhood: Coming off a Silverdome appearance in 1988, the powerful Vikings are marching toward another deep run into the playoffs. Led by quarterback Nick Schiebly, Haslett welcomes new DeWitt coach Rob Zimmerman to the Ingham County League with a 44-20 thumping at Haslett and the Vikings end up in the semi-finals.



[2000 Which one?](#) Once again at Haslett. This year the Panthers shut down the powerful "T" running attack of Haslett and featured back Brain McIntosh and the Vikings do the same against Zimmerman's new flex-option offense. In an off/on cold rain the teams trade punts and play most of the game between the 30 yard lines. Against Haslett's top ranked defense, late in the game, the rain subsides and Tony Pulice hit Cole/Tyler Thelen (we can't remember which one)



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DEWITT VS HASLETT... SOME RIVALRY MEMORIES.

for a 16 yard touchdown pass to give the Panthers a hard fought 7-0 win. It was Cole.



2001 Student Body Left: At DeWitt. Another hard fought game between Coach Charlie Otlewski's powerful "T" and Rob Zimmerman's hi-octane flex option-offense. With the crowd ringing the entire north end of the field three and four deep, the Vikings featured their backfield-brother tandem of Brian and Brent McIntosh and the Panthers with Tyler and Cole Thelen. The Panthers score late on a Chad Alger to AJ Muysenberg pass with Muysenberg falling out of bounds to catch the pass to tie the game at 14. In overtime toward the flag pole end of the field, the Panthers loose the ball on the first play on a fumbled pitch. The Vikings score on their first play from the 10 yard line on a "student body left" play which Coach Otlewski said he had saved for just such an occasion. Behind the tight-end and all three backs leading the way around the left end, McIntosh scored untouched. The Vikings win 20-14.

[2002 Part 1: The Comeback:](#) At Haslett. The top Division 4 ranked Panthers had rolled to four wins with Zimmerman's new spread offense directed by quarterback Chad Alger. The Vikings lost their first two games but turned it around and blistered Perry and Williamston, entering the game 2-2. Before another overflow crowd, the scoreboard blinks several times just before the game and decides to call it a night and goes out for the remainder of the night. Behind three long "fullback traps" by Brian McIntosh, the Vikings stun the huge crowd with a 28-12 half time lead. The Panthers regroup at half time and behind the clutch passing of Alger to Kirk Williams/Adam Holland/Jeff Lloyd/Austin Way, power running of Jason Bunce and Alger and a tightened up defense led by Eric Schaar, who seemed to be in the Viking huddle, the Panthers rally for an exciting 41-34 win.



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DEWITT VS HASLETT... SOME RIVALRY MEMORIES.



[2002 Part 2: Fourth and Goal at the One:](#) At DeWitt. The Panthers draw a much-improved Haslett team in the first round of the Division 3 playoffs at DeWitt. A much different game unfolds this time around as the Panthers hold a commanding 21-7 lead mid-way through the fourth quarter. But, Coach Otlewski rallies his team and they score two late touchdowns to send the game into overtime. At the north end of the field, Haslett has the ball first and after three running plays, the ball lay on the one yard line on the western hash-mark. Fourth and goal from the one. When you need a yard, where to you run? Behind your all-state 280 pound left tackle Mike McMahanaman if you are Haslett. As the Vikings broke the huddle, 180 pound Panther lineman Eric Schaar turned to linebacker Tim Ramieriz and tells him to come in high right behind him because the play is coming here. On the snap, Schaar undercuts the Viking all-stater McMahanaman making a pile with two lead blockers and Rameriz comes in over the pile and stuffs McIntosh short of the endzone setting off a wild celebration on the Panther side. After one running play, Zimmerman has had enough and calls in Luke Wey to kick a 25 yard field goal giving the Panthers a 24-21 victory. The Panthers go onto the Silverdome for the first time since 1989. Prior to game, in attempt to silence "The Panther" the 480 volt power feed to the scoreboard is cut with tree pruners with shocking results.



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DEWITT VS HASLETT... SOME RIVALRY MEMORIES.

2003 The Comback Falls Short: At Haslett, the Vikings run over, around and through the Panthers in the first half and take a 28-7 lead into the locker room. The Panthers roar back in the second half behind quarterback Dan Bleemaster to tie the game at 28. A late Haslett field goal gives the Vikings a 31-28 win. The Panthers gel late in the season and go onto the Division 4 State Finals.

2004 Steam-rolled: The 2004 edition of the Panthers squad was "Paving the Way". At DeWitt, before another huge crowd, Haslett takes the opening kickoff and marched 80 yards in 17 plays in eight minutes in classic Coach Otlewski offense. The rest of the night belonged to the Panthers as some defensive adjustments by defensive coordinator Adam Nolen for Justin Braska, Matt Brynic, Rickey Seinz, Casey Curtiss and Cody Worden shut down the Vikings and make holes for Justin Meeder as the Panthers steam roll the Vikings 21-7 and roll all the way to the 'Dome for the third consecutive year.

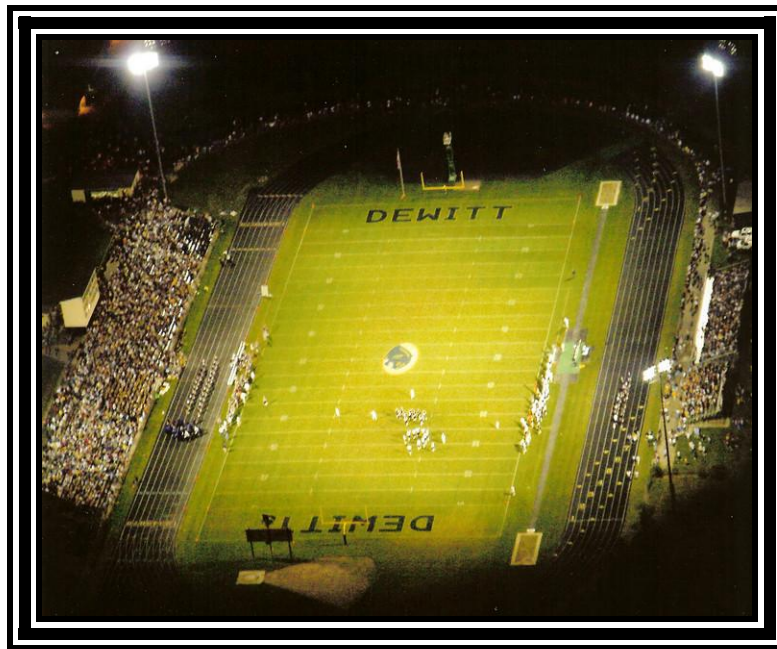


Photo by Jim Sigmon, Pilot Mark Brynic (2004)

2005 Turner-ed: Once again the winner of the CAAC conference makes the State finals. However, this year it is Haslett's turn. Coach Otlewski spreads out the defenses and lets quick-as-lightening Nate Turner find holes in defenses and turns on the afterburners and scorches the Panthers 49-28 in week eight of the season. However, the 28 points are the most given up by Haslett until the regional finals. This marked the emergence of a young sophomore quarterback for DeWitt, Dan Van Dreumel (DVD). It is the only year a Zimmerman coached team has not made the playoffs.

2006 Twice as Nice: At DeWitt, The Vikings have no answer for the latest Zimmerman option and passing offense as DVD rushes for 154 yards and passes for 215 and the Panthers route the Vikings 42-14.



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DEWITT VS HASLETT... SOME RIVALRY MEMORIES.



2006 Playoffs: Again the Panthers draw Haslett for the first round of the playoffs. The Panthers are ranked #1 in the State and behind the passing of DVD to Sam Celentino, Julian Horn, all-state speedster Jason Fleet, DonTait and Andrew Schaar and the running of Zac Blankenship and DVD, the Panthers cruise to a 34-7 victory and drive to the semi-finals.



[2007 Twice Again?:](#) After two lopsided losses in 2006, Coach Otlewski takes his coaching staff to Florida in the off season and comes up with a new defense to throw at the hi-powered Panther offensive attack. Rushing only

DEWITT VS HASLETT... SOME RIVALRY MEMORIES.

three down linemen and leaving eight back in pass coverage trying to slow the passing attack of Dan VanDreumel. The first game of the year, DVD shreds the new Viking defense with three touchdown passes and a rushing attack of Joe Bliesner, Thompson and Cody Grice for a 41-18 drubbing.

2007 Whew: Again, the Vikings and Panthers meet in the Division 3 playoffs. The Vikings defense stymies the #1 ranked Panther attack. With the Vikings clinging to a 3-0 lead at the half. DVD finds Jason Fleet for a touchdown pass in the fourth quarter to give the Panthers a tenuous 7-3 lead. Late in the game, Haslett, Haslett took over on downs deep in Panther territory and started moving out of its own territory with a three yard and a cloud of dust offense. On a second and short at the Viking 42, Coach Otlewski sneaks a tight end behind the run-focused Panther secondary for a 58 yard touchdown pass and run, giving the Vikings a 10-7 lead late in the game. The Panthers mount a furious drive behind the passing of DVD and Fleet and get inside the Viking 10 with under a minute to play. With less than 10 seconds to play, the Panthers face a fourth down on the one yard line. With a double tight end set and Fleet double teamed at split end, DVD takes the snap in the shot gun formation, tucks the ball under his arm and heads for the goal line. Suddenly he pulls up and lofts a floater of a pass that resembles a free throw, into the hands of a leaping 6'5" JT Whitman at back of the end zone, giving the Panthers a 14-10 victory.



2008 Another Goal Line Stand: at DeWitt. Both teams are in a transition year. Haslett lost the first two games to East Lansing and Portland while DeWitt lost two of their first four games. In a battle for the CAAC Gold League



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DEWITT VS HASLETT... SOME RIVALRY MEMORIES.

Championship, The Panthers have one loss to Charlotte. Haslett has defeated Charlotte the week prior. Both teams are trying to work toward that magical six win season to make the playoffs. Haslett nearly doubles the time of possession on DeWitt with each team scoring a touchdown in the first quarter, Haslett on a long drive and DeWitt on a touchdown from Jimmy Williams to Jordan Johnson. The pair connect in the third quarter as well. Nursing a 14-7 lead late into the game, Haslett marches deep into Panther territory. On a fourth down from the Panther three, Haslett runs around the right end and the running back cuts back and dives toward the end zone where he meets DeWitt's Brandon Keener. In a tremendous hit, both players fall to the ground but the ball is a yard short of the goal line. DeWitt manages to get a couple of first downs to ice the win. Brandon Wegenke leads DeWitt with 21 tackles and Keener eleven. DeWitt, Haslett and Charlotte share the CAAC Gold that season. Both teams finish 6-3 and make the playoffs.

2009 Panther's Year: At Haslett, behind All-State QB Jimmy Williams passing for 245 yards and three TDs, the Panthers put down the Vikings 38-12 with one of Coach Zimmerman's strongest teams. Up 31-0 midway through the fourth quarter, Haslett puts a couple touchdowns on the board as the Panthers started to relax. DeWitt's Ross Parsons puts the frosting on the cake with an 85 yard kickoff return for a score with three minutes to play. Haslett does not make the playoffs while DeWitt ends up in the Semi-Finals.



2010 Higbied: At DeWitt, All-State QB Caleb Higbie has a game to remember as DeWitt rolls to 435 yards of offense, 228 rushing and 221 passing. Haslett put two scores on DeWitt early in the first with Marcus Jenks and



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Jake Lampman running for scores. DeWitt puts three TDs on the board in the second quarter on touchdown passes to Jacob Higbie and Jordan Johnson and a rush by Caleb Higbie. Each team scores in the fourth quarter to make the game interesting, but Ethan Rennaker's interception at the end of the game seals the game.



2012 Went for the win: At DeWitt. The Panthers lose All-State QB Jacob Johnson in week 2 against Everett with a broken hand. Jacob Heath filled in perfectly for Jacob Johnson on 16 of 25 passing for 300 yards. DeWitt rushes only 18 times for 83 yards. Coach Otlewski's offense is in classic form rushing 52 times for 340 yards with Graham Riley (23 for 129 yards) and Connor Brewer (13 for 121 yards) pounding away at the Panther line. DeWitt scores all three times it has the ball in the first half. Haslett scores its first two times in the second half on 77 and 80 yard drives to tie DeWitt at 21 with ten minutes to play. DeWitt then scored on a Heath to Ryan Anderson pass play with 8:47 to play, making the score 28-21 DeWitt. A three and out by the Panther defense was followed by a three and out by the Viking defense. The Vikings blocked the Panther punt with just over five minutes to play and took over the ball at the Panther 4 yard line. Viking QB Same Wegenke threw his only pass of the game, a nine yard TD to Connor Brewer to make it 28-27. Coach Otlewski went for two on the extra point and the Panthers stuffed Riley at the five. DeWitt ran out the clock on a couple of first down runs by John Lippert. Haslett does not make the playoffs while DeWitt returns to the Division 3 semi-finals.



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