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Harrington thrown to wolves by inconsiderate Lions coaching staff

We knew it wouldn't be long until Joey Harrington was thrown head-first into the NFL mosh pit.

But Week 3? Joey Harrington, Detroit Lions starting quarterback. It's now official, announced Wednesday by the Lions that the rookie will start for the first time Sunday.

We get the concept. The Lions have a beautiful new stadium, Ford Field, and Sunday's game is the home opener against the Green Bay Packers. The Lions are looking for their first win of the season, and former starter Mike McMahon was throwing like a sixth-grade girl. So they made a strong decision and put in the rookie, the new guy, the fresh meat.

It's the right move. It's also the wrong move.

If there was ever a rookie quarterback in the NFL that could handle being a rookie quarterback in the

NFL, it's Harrington. Oregon fans know how cool he is. He's ice on a football field. But ice can melt.

Especially when ice is protected by the worst offensive line in the league outside of Houston. The Lions' o-line has given up nine sacks for a loss of 71 yards this season. Yes, that's in two games. Detroit quarterbacks have thrown one touchdown pass, McMahon's lone strike in the first game against the Miami Dolphins.

Maybe the Detroit line just doesn't like McMahon. The former starter was sacked nine times in 48 pass attempts, a rate of 5.3 attempts per sack. Harrington still hasn't been sacked in 18 pass attempts.

Hmm. Doesn't matter. It's still not smart to send Harrington into battle against Green Bay. Detroit head coach Marty Mornhinweg knows it, and it may not have been his decision.

"I didn't expect to make this decision so early," Mornhinweg told Detroit reporters Wednesday. "To be quite honest with you, I was hoping to wait at least until the bye week and then sit back and be able to evaluate Mike and be able to evaluate Joey's progression."

McMahon himself sounds almost relieved to be getting over to

the sidelines.

"I think everyone was kind of expecting this, especially with our situation," McMahon told reporters. "It is a business. A business decision was made, and you have to live with it."

And like any business, there is a possibility of damaging the product. Harrington was a long-term investment for the Lions; why use him selfishly for the short-term? During the entire preseason, even when Harrington was outperforming McMahon, Mornhinweg stuck to his statements about waiting on the rookie, saving him until he was ready.

But pressure is a punk. There is more pressure in Detroit than any other NFL market because the Lions have been so horrible for so long.

Mornhinweg should have resisted the pressure and waited until Harrington had at least a half-year of backup experience under his belt. Instead, Harrington's being thrown to the wolves.

Maybe they won't tear him to pieces.

Contact the sports editor at peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Peter Hockaday

Two minutes for crosschecking



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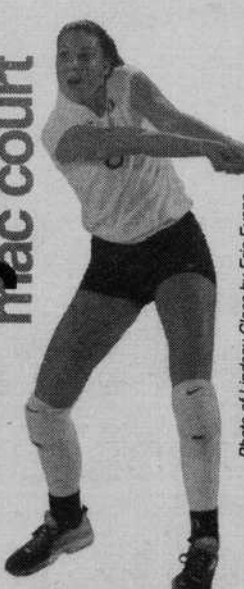
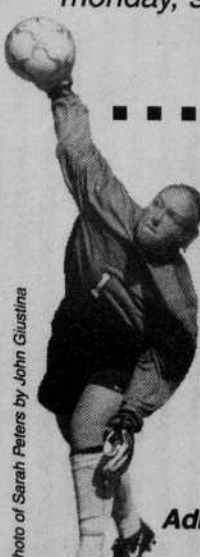
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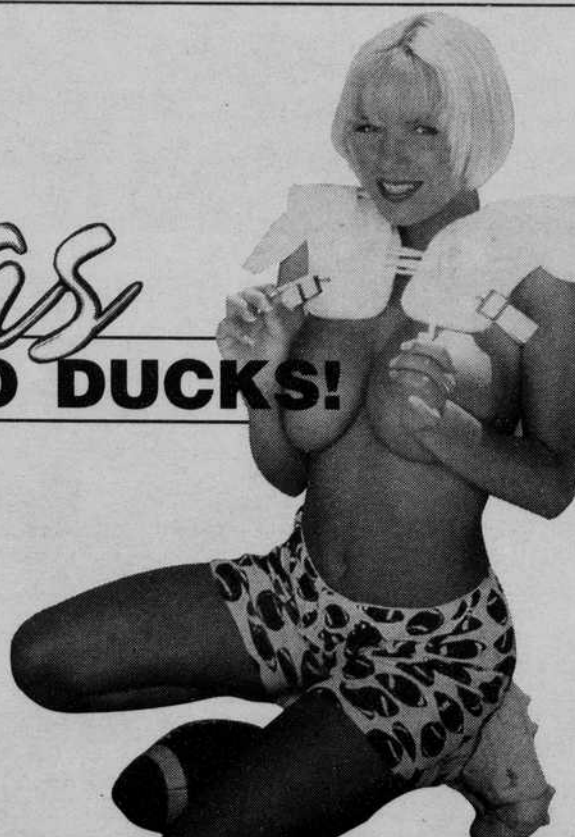



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