

Camas hopes this is finally the year for state crown

STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS | Papermakers are ranked 16th in nation, and only Richland stands in their way Saturday.

By JAYDA EVANS / *Seattle Times* staff reporter

Camas coach Jon Eagle is used to success. In his past six years coaching the Papermakers, he's lost a combined seven games. Oddly, all of that winning hasn't led to a football state championship.

Not one.

"We've been right there knocking on the door," Eagle said. "We're hoping maybe this can be the year."

Camas (13-0), undefeated and ranked 16th in the nation according to MaxPreps.com, will play Richland (13-0) on Saturday night for the Class 4A state football championship. It would be the Papermakers' first state football title. The Bombers last won state in 1999.

Eagle said he'll be a little nervous for the game, which caps the six championship matchups at the Tacoma Dome this weekend. His — and Camas' — only other experience in the finals will do that to a person.

Camas, then ranked 67th in the nation, had a 13-point lead with less than two minutes remaining against Chiawana in the 2013

State football championships

4A: CAMAS (13-0) VS. RICHLAND (13-0)

When: Saturday, 7:30 p.m.

Storyline: These teams have been ranked 1-2 in the state polls most of the season and seemed destined to meet for the state title. MaxPreps has the Papermakers ranked No. 16 in the nation. Richland, which was No. 1 until Camas took the spot, has a stout defense and is trying to win first state title since 1999.

3A: O'DEA (13-0) VS. KAMIAKIN (11-2)

When: Friday, 7:30 p.m.

Storyline: With Bellevue ineligible for postseason play and Eastside Catholic knocked out in the semifinals, the Class 3A title, for the first time since Ferndale won in 2005, won't come from the east side of Lake Washington.

2A: ARCHBISHOP MURPHY (13-0) VS. LIBERTY (12-0)

When: Saturday, 1 p.m.

Storyline: Archbishop Murphy might be the least surprising team playing for a championship. Five teams chose to forfeit rather than face the team with a surplus of size and speed. Liberty of Issaquah surprised plenty, playing an independent schedule and

title game. But the Riverhawks scored quickly, recovered the ensuing onside kick and scored again as time expired, winning 27-26.

"My son (Zach) was a senior on that team, and it was a real special group of kids," Eagle said. "And we lost. ... This group is similar in

marching through the playoffs.

1A: ROYAL (12-0) VS. CONNELL (12-1)

When: Saturday, 10 a.m.

Storyline: Royal, the defending champ, is going for its sixth state title in the last 20 years. Its SCAC rival Connell is going for its third state title since 2009. These teams have combined for 11 state title-game appearances since 2000.

2B: NAPAVALINE (12-0) VS. LIBERTY (12-1)

When: Friday, 4 p.m.

Storyline: Napavine, which has been ranked No. 1 all season, has lost in the state-title game the last two years. Liberty, from Spangle near Spokane, is going for its third state title but first since 1993.

1B: ODESSA-HARRINGTON (13-0) VS. NEAH BAY (10-1)

When: Saturday, 4 p.m.

Storyline: Neah Bay has been a regular in the eight-man state-title game, winning three times since 2011. This is the first time since Odessa joined forces with Harrington in 2010 that it has made the state-title game.

All games at Tacoma Dome

Nathan Joyce

it has strong leadership and good work ethic. We'll see."

It's been a slow process getting Camas, located 20 miles northeast of Portland, into the national spotlight. The team struggled in the 1990s, at one point enduring a 27-game

losing streak.

"Bob Holman took it over when nobody really wanted the job," said Eagle of his predecessor. "He worked here for about 10 years and really laid the foundation of which we're enjoying now."

The Papermakers, called such because of the old Georgia-Pacific paper mill downtown, benefited from the population surge in the area. The once-Class 1A school now has approximately 500 kids involved in the football program from youth up to varsity. Eagle encourages the players to be multifaceted.

This year's team is led by Jack Colletto, a 6-foot-3, 220-pound senior who's passed for 2,662 yards and rushed for 1,165 more, with a combined 46 touchdowns. He has a trio of receivers, including 5-11 senior Drake Owen, who was medically cleared to play Saturday.

Owen, who has 717 yards receiving with seven touchdowns, left in the second quarter of the Papermakers' semifinal win against Sumner last week after a hard hit while trying to field a punt.

Eagle declined to talk about there not being a player ejection due to the hit. After reviewing footage, officials at the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association told The Columbian it was "a targeting call and it should have been an ejection."

Camas averaged 45.7 points this season, but Richland allowed opponents an average of only 11.9 during its lead up to state.

"They've had a really good run of talent the past couple years, and they're coached well, which is a lethal combination," Eagle said. "They won't overwhelm you in terms of size, but they're very athletic and they don't make mistakes."

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