

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

Richland will test Chiawana's pass attack

BY DUSTIN BRENNAN
dbrennan@tricityherald.com

With Andrew Vargas, one of the most productive high school running backs in state history, graduating from the Chiawana football team's backfield, 2017 was bound to feature a period of self-discovery for the Riverhawks offense.

With one of Washington's most touted offensive lines leading the way, Chiawana went to what it knew best early on, pounding the rock and controlling the clock with Tayden Jenkins and Ethan Garcia. But despite the Riverhawks'

smashmouth identity, what's allowed them to take off on offense this season has been the rock-steady — and always improving — play of quarterback Enoch Vargas and his expanding bounty of receiving talent.

"I knew coming into this season, it was going to be tough," said Vargas, no relation to Andrew. "I had to get together with the receivers and do a lot of extra work in the summer in the weight room. ...

"I think I've come a long way, from last year getting hardly any playing time, just on JV, I didn't feel like I was ready. But putting in

the work, I think it's showed."

It took some time for things to click, however. In uninspiring nonconference wins over Moses Lake and West Valley (Yakima), Jenkins, Garcia and Vargas (all first-year starters) struggled behind an O-Line that, despite returning five of its top six guys from last year, was underperforming, coach Steve Graff said.

"Our offensive line needs to do a better job of setting the tone. They were a little soft tonight," Graff said after the 30-12 win over West Valley.

But after an 84-0 blowout over Pasco on Friday — the team's



NOELLE HARO-GOMEZ Herald file

Chiawana's Enoch Vargas (12) has completed nearly 70 percent of his passes with just three interceptions. The Riverhawks need him at his best tonight.

second straight shutout and third straight game scoring at least 34 points — the Riverhawks find themselves among the Mid-Columbia Conference's leaders in several offensive categories, with

Jenkins (638 yards and 12 touchdowns on 100 carries) and Garcia (499 and six on 93 carries) in the top three in rushing, and Vargas

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threatening to contend with the top passers (96 of 141 for 1,218 yards and 11 touchdowns).

"Being able to protect (Vargas) and giving him a chance to throw the ball has helped," Graff said. "We might have issues with that this weekend, because they (Richland) are awful good up front."

There's a lot of wisdom in those words, as the Riverhawks look ahead to a Week 8 game at No. 3 Richland at 7 p.m. Friday.

The Bombers (7-0, 5-0) lead the league defensively in yards (173.4 yards allowed per game) and points allowed (9 points per game). They are led by two of the area's top pass-rushers and run-stoppers in linemen Jax Lee and Eric Davison, and a bounty of ball-hawking defensive backs. The group shut out and created two takeaways against then undefeated Kamiakin in a 33-0 win two weeks ago.

But those are the hurdles that have to be overcome to claim the top spot among the MCC's 4A teams, which the winner of this game will move into.

"Our motto for this week and last week is just 'be perfect,'" Vargas said. "That's what we're all trying to carry ourselves with — just every rep give it 100 percent. Because this game is going to determine what our playoffs look like, so we're going to keep trying to be perfect."

And Vargas has been near perfection so far this season. He's completing just under 70 percent of his passes and has tossed only three in-

terceptions — both stats lead the league among qualifying passers.

He and his receivers — most of whom are also first-year starters — worked all summer to develop chemistry and timing. Guys like Daylen Storaci, Tavin Blair and Josiah Richardson will have to step up to give Chiawana a chance against a Richland defensive backfield giving up fewer than 100 passing yards per contest.

"We're gonna knock heads," Storaci said of the wide receiver/defensive back groups matching up. "It's going to be rough, but we're gonna have to get it done."

LOOKING BACK

Chiawana will be looking for revenge after a 21-14 loss to the Bombers last year, highlighted by a game-winning 9-yard touchdown run by now-senior running back Parker McCary.

Also now a senior for Richland is Josh Mendoza, who caught the 50-yard bomb from the graduated Paxton Stevens that set up McCary's TD run.

"It got away on that long pass, with like a minute, 39 to go," Graff said. "They've got playmakers all over the place. If we give up big plays, it's gonna be a long night for us."

The Riverhawks managed to hang around in that game despite turning the ball over six times, including three fumbles by Andrew Vargas.

Dustin Brennan:
509-582-1413,
@Tweet_By_Dustin

Week 8 MCC football glance

Chiawana (6-1, 4-1) at Richland (7-0, 5-0)

When, where: 7 p.m., Fran Rish Stadium

Series history: Richland won 21-14 last year for second straight victory to even all-time series at 4-4.

Team offense: Chi—1215 rush (1st in MCC), 1233 pass (5th), 349.7/game total (3rd), 259 points (2nd). Rich—1021 rush (3rd), 1818 pass (1st), 405.6/game total (1st), 326 points (1st).

Team defense: Chi—549 rush (1st), 950 pass (2nd), 214.1/game total (2nd), 69 points (2nd). Rich—551 rush (2nd), 663 pass (1st), 173.4/game total (1st), 63 points (1st).

Key players: Chi—RB Tayden Jenkins (100-638, 12TD); QB Enoch Vargas (96-141-3—1218, 11TD); RB Ethan Garcia (93-499, 6TD); WR Daylen Storaci (31-393, 4TD); DB/WR Riley Cissne (6INT); WR Josiah Richardson (28-352, 2TD); WR/DB Tavin Blair; DB Jose Cruz (3INT); K Ryan Lowry (31XP, 6FG); OL/DL Ford Powers; OL/DL Josh Alvarez; OL/DL Julian Benitez; OL/DL Joey Aikala; DL Nelson Cardenas. Rich—QB Cade Jensen (114-188-6—1782, 22TD); WR/DB Josh Mendoza (11-358, 5TD); RB Parker McCary (64-428, 8 total TD); RB Jared Whitby (43-275, 6TD); WR/DB/K Adam Weissenfels (20-265, 6 total TD, 35XP); DL Jax Lee; OL/DL Eric Davison; WR/DB Sammy Cervantes (23-291, 2TD).

Last week: Chiawana def. Pasco 84-0; Richland def. Walla Walla 39-6

Next week: Walla Walla at Chiawana; Richland at Hanford

KENNEWICK (1-6, 0-5) AT SOUTHRIDGE (3-4, 2-3)

When, where: 7 p.m., Lampson Stadium

Last year: Southridge 31, Kennewick 21

Team offense: Ken—430 rush (7th in MCC), 494 pass (7th), 132/game total (last), 91 points (6th); SR—369 rush (last), 1805 pass (2nd), 310.6/game total (5th), 162 points (5th)

Team defense: Ken—1013 rush (6th), 1158 pass (5th), 310.1/game total (6th), 207 points (6th); SR—1185 rush (last), 1329 pass (7th), 359.1/game total (7th), 237 points (7th)

Key players: Ken—QB Tim Gee (52-120-9—417, 3TD); RB Cedric Riel (66-279, 1TD); DE/TE Moses McAninch; RB/LB/P Isaac Ruiz; RB JJ Rodriguez; WR/DB Talon LaFontaine; WR/DB/PR Tucker Newman (7 punt returns for 92 yards, 13.1 average); WR/DB Emilio Ramos (3INT). SR—QB Mason Perez (146-285-11—1767, 18TD); WR/DB Peyton Monson (64-744, 9TD); WR/DB/P Eric Stayrook (33-482, 6TD); C/LS Flynn McPheron; DT Sergio Midili; LB Hayden Brimberry

Last week: Kamiakin def. Kennewick 35-12; Hanford def. Southridge 49-47

Next week: Southridge at Kamiakin (Thursday); Pasco at Kennewick

KAMIAKIN (6-1, 4-1) AT WALLA WALLA (2-5, 2-3)

When, where: 7 p.m., Borleske Stadium

Last year: Kamiakin 48, Walla Walla 21

Team offense: Kam—1006 rush (4th in MCC), 1441 pass (3rd), 349.6/game total (4th), 234 points (3rd). WW—918 rush (5th), 364 pass (last), 183.1/game total (6th), 72 points (7th)

Team defense: Kam—728 rush (3rd), 956 pass (3rd), 240.6/game total (3rd), 84 points (3rd). WW—888 rush (5th), 1165 pass (6th), 293.3/game total (5th), 164 points (5th)

Key players: Kam—QB Payton Flynn (108-227-12—1414, 17TD); WR/DB Champ Grayson (33-546, 8 total TD; 2INT); WR/DB Colten Chelin (26-286, 2TD); WR/DB Benson Smith (34-433, 8 total TD, 2INT); RB/LB Talmage Jacobson (92-438, 6 total TD); RB Tuna Altahir (67-464, 6TD); LB Dillon Crawford; DE Chase Kissell; K Kaden Shymanski (28XP, 1FG). WW—QB Nickolas Zehner (40-93-7—290 pass; 81-360, 4TD rush; 3INT); RB Darin Ongers (36-135, 1TD); LB Jahmal Mangarero; WR Mason Knowles; WR Dalton Thompson; RB/DB Josiah Wik (48-197, 2TD); RB/LB Edwin Romero (34-130, 2TD)

Last week: Kamiakin def. Kennewick 35-12; Richland def. Walla Walla 39-6

Next week: Southridge at Kamiakin; Walla Walla at Chiawana

HANFORD (4-3, 3-2) AT PASCO (0-7, 0-5)

When, where: 7 p.m., Edgar Brown Memorial Stadium

Last year: Hanford 49, Pasco 23

Team offense: Han—1092 rush (2nd in MCC), 1408 pass (4th), 357.1/game total (2nd), 181 points (4th). Pas—638 rush (6th), 597 pass (6th), 176.4/game total (7th), 67 points (last)

Team defense: Han—730 rush (4th), 1119 pass (4th), 264.1/game total (4th), 140 points (4th). Pas—1056 rush (7th), 1470 pass (last), 360.9/game total (last), 337 points (last)

Key players: Han—QB Garrett Horner (122-197-6—1406, 18TD); RB Jared DeVine (111-676, 2TD Rush; 33-221 rec); WR/DB Thomas Kitchens (25-253, 4TD); RB/LB Drezdyn O'Daol (64-381, 1TD); LB/FB AJ Wiegand; WR/DB Dimitri Kennedy-Woody (18-259, 8TD, 2INT); DB Colton Bozich (2INT); DB Chris Gray (2INT). Pas—RB/LB/P Efrain Farias (109-492, 7 total TD); QB Kashon Tate (70-158-10—597, 3TD); WR Isaiah Gomez (18-242); Davion Pruitt OL/DL; WR Brandon Scott; WR Matt Millet; WR/DB Kael Stueckle (3INT)

Last week: Hanford def. Southridge 49-47; Chiawana def. Pasco 84-0

Next week: Richland at Hanford; Pasco at Kennewick