

STATE FOOTBALL SEMIFINALS

LAYING IT ALL ON THE LINE

CV leads six area schools with title aspirations

By Dave Nichols
THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

There are six area high school football teams still active, all playing in state semifinal games on Saturday. Eastern Washington has teams alive in five of the six classifications.

4A - Central Valley (10-1) vs. Richland (12-0), 1 p.m. at Edgar Brown Stadium, Pasco: The Bears were ranked eighth in final Associated Press 4A media poll, while Richland was second with four of 10 first-place votes.

CV powered its way past Skyline 41-0 in a quarterfinal game last weekend. Quarterback Grant Hannan rushed for 118 yards with two touchdowns, including an 85-yard romp, and tossed a scoring strike as well.

Richland, which was State 4A runner-up last year, knocked out Gonzaga Prep 28-21 in a quarterfinal last weekend as Parker McCary rushed for 165 yards with a fourth-quarter touchdown, which proved to be the difference after the Bulls tied it in the third. The Bombers, of the Mid-Columbia Conference, have outscored their opponents 549-139 this season.

Asked if facing Richland in a semifinal game was a daunting task, CV coach Ryan Butner joked, "They aren't 12-0 for no reason."

Butner described Richland as athletic and aggressive, creating opportunities on defense and special teams.

"We have to limit our mistakes," he said, while stressing how Richland has a habit of generating points off turnovers.

The Bears are led by dual-threat Hannan but get heavy contributions from fullback Hunter Chodorowski, tailback Ryan Harper and two-way player Jace Edwards, who scored on a punt return last week and has a two-interception game to his credit this season.

"It seems like if one thing isn't working, the other guy steps up," Butner said of his wide-spread talent.

2A - Hockinson (12-0) vs. West Valley (12-0), noon at Gonzaga Prep HS: Hockinson, from the Greater St. Helens League, was ranked third in the state, while West Valley was fourth. Hockinson has scored 545 points this season and allowed 130, while the Eagles have put up 436 and given up 147.

"We've got our work cut out for us," West Valley coach Craig Whitney said. "(Hockinson is) extremely athletic, with good size and speed at the skill positions."

West Valley is led by second-team All-Great Northern League back Tanner Jones, who ran for 75 yards with two touchdowns in its 28-15 win over Selah in a quarterfinal game last week. WV also boasts all-league, first-team dual-threat quarterback Blake Transue and first-team receivers Connor Whitney and Collin Sather.

"We try to spread the ball around a little bit," Whitney said.

"It's a very exciting time for out



DAN PELLE/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

Central Valley's Grant Hannan runs against Camas during a State 4A quarterfinal game at CV on Nov. 10. The Bears won 22-15.



JESSE TINSLEY/THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

West Valley wide receiver Collin Sather snags a pass over teammate Matt Allen during an Eagles practice in September.

kids, our program, the coaches and community," Whitney added. "I'm real happy for everyone involved."

1A - Newport (11-1) vs. Royal (12-0), 1 p.m. at Lions Field, Moses Lake: The 10th-ranked Grizzlies, led by multithreat quarterback Koa Pancho, take on defending champion and No. 1-ranked Royal - which has shut out both of its opponents in the playoffs and has outscored its foes 628-38 this season.

It's a tough task for Newport, making the school's first trip to a football semifinal, running up against Royal.

"You have to acknowledge they are one of, they are probably the best 1A program in the state," Newport coach

Dave Pomante said. "But I also believe if we play with confidence I think we have about 15 to 18 guys that I think can match up with anybody."

"We knew going into the season we knew we had a special player (in Pancho). But if you've been around him and watched him last year to this year, the maturity of him growing mentally - because physically he had all the physical tools last year - the big difference is his mental approach to the game."

Even with the challenge of taking on the defending champs, Pomante likes the improvement his team has made this season.

"We talked about when the playoffs

NWC's Nendel resigns

Jim Nendel announced his resignation as head football coach at Northwest Christian via Facebook on Tuesday. "It is with sadness that I wish to inform you all that I will be resigning as the head football coach at Northwest Christian Football," Nendel wrote. "I have tried to balance character development, academic excellence, spiritual growth and excellence on the field for these young men over the five years that I have been here." The school confirmed the resignation.

started that most teams by this time of the year are done getting better," Pomante said. "I think we're a football team that has continued to improve from week one to last week, which is really fun to be around as a coach."

2B - Asotin (9-3) vs. Liberty (12-0), 3 p.m. at Gonzaga Prep HS: The Lancers, looking to reach the state title game for the second season in a row, were ranked second in state with one first-place vote at the end of the regular season.

The Lancers ran roughshod over the Northeast 2B this season and beat Asotin 21-14 when the teams matched up on Sept. 15. In that one, Juwaun Nave carried 17 times for 148 yards with three touchdowns.

Liberty advanced last week with a 51-7 dismantling of DeSales in a quarterfinal game. James Heer ran for 156 yards with two TDs and Nave added a pair of rushing scores.

Heer accounted for 29 total touch-

downs and 1,680 rushing yards this season, while first-team all-league quarterback Alec Fletcher had more than 1,800 passing yards with 22 touchdowns against just two interceptions.

"We feel real fortunate to be here," seventh-year Liberty coach Mike Dewey said. "We had a great season. We have a great group of seniors with good morale around our program and we're real excited to get out there and see what happens."

After a couple of dry years in the standings, Dewey credits his seniors for turning around the program, making the playoffs the past three years.

"They really like each other and they like football so that makes all the difference," he said.

1B - Almira/Coulee-Hartline (10-2) vs. Lummi Nation (9-3), 1 p.m. at Civic Stadium, Bellingham: ACH finished the regular season ranked fifth in State 1B. The Warriors outscored their opponents 646-258, averaging 53.8 points, while Lummi has averaged just more than 30 points. ACH routed Naselle 60-32 last week in a quarterfinal as Maguire Isaak passed for three touchdowns and ran for two more, with 226 yards on the ground - including an 83-yard scoring run.

1B - Odessa (11-0) vs. Sunnyside Christian (12-0), 4 p.m. at Edgar Brown Stadium: These teams tied for first in the state poll after the regular season with four first-place votes apiece. Odessa has averaged nearly 64 points (700 total) while Sunnyside Christian has scored 753 points (62.75 average). Odessa, which was state runner-up last season playing as Odessa-Harrington, eliminated Garfield-Palouse 60-14 last week as Camden Weber rushed for 172 yards with two touchdowns and passed for two more scores. Colton Hunt added 161 yards on the ground with two TDs for the Tigers.

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