



NOELLE HARO-GOMEZ Tri-City Herald

Richland offensive linemen: front, Santos Gallegos, Rene Marin Cuevas; back, Ben Dezember, Kristian Mijic, Geoffrey Robinson and Aric Davison.

**Today's high school football glance**

(8) CENTRAL VALLEY (11-1, NO. 11 IN GSL) AT (2) RICHLAND (12-0, NO. 1 MCC)

**When, where:** 1 p.m., Edgar Brown Memorial Stadium

**Broadcast:** KONA 610 AM (radio), SWX (Channel 183)

**Series history:** Third straight year teams have met. Richland def. CV 30-3 in 2015 first-round state game, and 37-0 in 2016 crossover, for 2-1 lead in all-time series.

**Key players:** CV—QB Grant Hannan; FB Hunter Codorowski; TB Ryan Harper; WR/SS Jase Edwards. Rich—QB Cade Jensen (41TD pass); WR/DB Josh Mendoza (12 total TD; 5INT); RB Parker McCary (11 total TD); RB Jared Whitby (6TD rush); WR/DB/K Adam Weissenfels (14 total TD, 8INT); WR/DB Ryan Piper (7TD rec); DL Jax Lee; DL Aric Davison; WR/DB Sammy Cervantes (5TD rec); LB/RB Casey Perryman; LB Victor Strasser.

**Last week:** Central Valley def. Skyline 40-0; Richland def. Gonzaga Prep 28-21

**Next week:** Winner plays Woodvinville-Sumner winner in 4A state title game at the Tacoma Dome. Richland lost to Camas in last year's championship while Central Valley hasn't been since winning it all in 1998.

**4A STATE SEMIFINALS**

# Richland O-line paves way for another playoff drive

BY ANNIE FOWLER  
afowler@tricityherald.com

Offensive linemen are the heart and soul of a football team, but when it comes to getting a little love, their quarterback, running backs and their mothers are the only ones in line.

After that, the general public would be hard-pressed to name the men in the trenches who keep the guy with the ball upright.

The Richland Bombers' front six are as vanilla as they come. They aren't huge. They aren't on the radar of Division I schools. But they have done their jobs in

helping the team to a 12-0 record and a third consecutive trip to the Class 4A state semifinals.

"They are an eclectic group," Richland coach Mike Neidhold said. "They are under-appreciated as a group. They are not a dominant group like the Chiawana offensive line. They are not a big group like some of the teams we have played. They are just a bunch of hard workers that work together really well. They communicate real well, and with the success we have had this year, a large part is due to them working together as a unit."

The Bombers, who beat Gonzaga Prep 28-21 last weekend, take on Central Valley

(10-1) at 1 p.m. Saturday at Edgar Brown Stadium in Pasco. The winner gets a spot in the championship game Dec. 2 against the winner of Woodinville/Sumner at 7:30 p.m. at the Tacoma Dome.

"Central Valley's D-line is very big and fast, and they seem to be very angry on film," Neidhold said. "Our guys respect all, fear none. That is our motto around here. They just play."

**LET'S MEET THE BOYS**

At center, the Bombers have Geoffrey Robinson (jr., 6-0, 235), who shares duties with Santos Gallegos (sr., 6-0, 250). At guard are Rene Marin Cuevas (sr., 6-0, 235) and Jax Lee (sr., 6-2, 240),

who share time on one side, while Jacob Stanfield (sr., 6-1, 210) and Kristian Mijic (sr., 6-0, 250) split time on the other side.

The tackles are Aric Davison (jr., 6-3, 275) and Ben Dezember (sr., 6-0, 195), while Connor Faucheux (12, 6-4, 200) lines up at tight end.

"There are no big monster guys that are going to go play play Pac-12 football," Neidhold said. "Aric Davison is a three-year starter for us and he is real dependable. Ben Dezember is a tireless worker. They understand our scheme and what we do. Every week, they get a little better, a bit more of a cohesive group, and here we are playing in the state semifinals."

Davison, the biggest man of the group, said even though they are small side of offensive linemen, there are time when size doesn't matter.

"I feel, personally, we block cohesively, we have good communication and we are tough," Davi-

SEE RICHLAND, 6B

FROM PAGE 5B

## RICHLAND

son said. "Whoever is tougher is going to win at the end of the day."

For Dezember, a first-team All-Mid-Columbia Conference selection, the man across from him is no different than the guy he faced the week before.

"It's just another team," he said. "My job is to block my man. I don't care how big he is or who he is, I just have to block him. We aren't the first people who come to mind after a game, but we know the quarterback and running backs know what we have done."

"Parker (McCary) comes by and gives us a pat on the butt, or we get a thumbs up from Cade (Jensen) after he throws for a touchdown," Davison chimed in.

Jensen, the Bombers quarterback, has thrown for more than 3,000 yards and 40 touchdowns this season, while McCary, the primary

running back, has chewed up more than 800 yards on the ground.

"They are great players for me," Jensen said of his line. "I'm fortunate to have them. They are the MVPs of the team. The O-line does not get a lot of love. They have gone up against some great D-linemen and they have contained them. We have to keep it up two more weeks. I would rather have heart than size any day of the week."

**THE O-LINE HAS HAD TO EARN ITS GOLD STAR**

There were times last spring when Neidhold wasn't sure the Bombers had the manpower up front. As the season progressed, so did the unit.

"Every week, it's a little better," Neidhold said. "To be completely honest, we were nervous about this group at the start of the year because we didn't know

how they would be. You can't have a successful football campaign if your offensive line isn't very good. To their credit, they have stuck it out. They have worked tirelessly, they have put up with me, as an ex-offensive line coach, and my nonsense. They just go to work. That is a tribute to Zach Fife, the O-line coach, and Josh Jelinek, the offensive coordinator."

In the first round round of the playoffs, the Bombers beat West Valley 62-28, and had the task of wrangling defensive linemen who ranged from 240 to 300 pounds. Last week, Gonzaga Prep was no different.

"Each one of these guys has lined up across from a better player once or twice this year in our league, and certainly more than once or twice in the playoffs, and held their own," Neidhold said. "They did it against

Mead, they did it against West Valley and against Gonzaga Prep, who had some really good guys up front. They just got in their way long enough for Parker to whiz by them. It's kinda cool to see."

And while they love their jobs, there are times Davison and Dezember dream of getting a little glory.

"I've always wanted to be a running back and score some points," Davison said. "Maybe my senior year we can get the 'Fridge' in there. I'm a junior, I'll just keep my mouth shut for now."

One player they don't want to trade jobs with? "Adam (Weissenfels)," Dezember said of the Bombers' hard-working wide receiver, cornerback, place kicker and punt returner. "He has a hard job. I don't want to be him."

Annie Fowler: 509-582-1574, @TCHIceQueen

**SPORTS**

## Richland's underrated O-line leading another playoff push 5B

