

Sports



NOELLE HARO-GOMEZ Tri-City Herald

Richland players celebrate after winning a 4A state semifinal game against Central Valley. The Bombers reached the state title game for the second year in a row.

4A STATE SEMIFINAL | RICHLAND 42, CENTRAL VALLEY 10

In Week 14, Bombers eye the big prize

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Mike Neidhold begins every fall not necessarily hoping the Richland High School football team wins a championship, but just that it gets a full 14-week season.

That task is now accomplished, but this time around, the Bombers and their coach have a little extra motivation toward hanging a title banner, in the wake of their 24-14 loss to Camas in last year's championship game.

"This group feels like it's got some unfinished business from last year, really

the last two years (lost to Gonzaga Prep 31-17 in 2015 semifinal)," Neidhold said. "They're motivated and driven to get over there and have another shot at it."

Richland earned a chance at redemption after dispatching Greater Spokane League champion Central Valley 42-10 on Saturday at Edgar Brown Memorial

Stadium in a Class 4A semifinal game, paced by senior quarterback Cade Jensen, who completed 18 of 25 passes for 332 yards with five touchdowns.

The No. 2 Bombers (13-0) — who picked up their 38th win in the past three seasons — will play No. 1 Woodinville in the championship game at 7:30 p.m. Saturday

at the Tacoma Dome. It's a prophetic return for Richland, as Jensen Tweeted after last year's championship loss on Dec. 3: "We'll be back... I promise."

"I'm glad that I could fulfill that promise," he said. "Now we've got one more to go."

Jensen continued his stellar campaign in his lone

season as the Bombers start on Saturday, as he found Sammy Cervantes for a pair of jump-ball touchdowns in the fourth quarter, hit Josh Mendoza four times for 90 yards, hooked up with Adam Weissenfels five times for 75 yards and a TD, and hit on a couple deep balls to Cody Sanderson for 79 yards and a touchdown. Parker McCary had 100 rushing yards on 18 carries and a touchdown, and Victor Strasser led the defense with two tackles for loss, a forced fumble and half a sack.

"We saw they (Central Valley) had run it 80 percent all year, before that first drive," Strasser said. "We saw they were gonna pass it so we (the defense) just buckled down and did our job."

Richland lost 9 yards and went three-and-out on its first possession — allowing CV to take a 3-0 lead — but the floodgates opened after that thanks to some vertical throws by Jensen. He converted a lengthy second-and-32 on the Bombers' ensuing drive with a 41-yard completion to Mendoza, then a few plays later hit Sanderson with a 38-yard touchdown pass to give Richland a 7-3 lead in the middle of the first quarter.

"It's hard to replicate Central Valley's speed of the game with our scout team guys, so that's just what happens," Neidhold said of the slow start. "There were some nerves, and once we settled down, we were okay. These kids have a lot of confidence, and (defensive coordinator) DJ Search had a great plan on defense, Jels (Josh Jelinek, offensive coordinator) was able to get some great drives going. And it was just us playing, we just like to play."

The Bombers grew their lead to 28-3 after a 4-yard touchdown run by McCary

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RICHLAND

and scoring passes of 27 — to Adam Weissenfels — and 24 — one-handed by Ryan Piper — yards by Jensen.

That score looked like it would hold until halftime as Jensen knelt on third down with less than 15 seconds to go in the second quarter, but Central Valley coach Ryan Butner opted to use his second timeout to force a punt. That stratagem proved effective, as Grant Hannan connected with Micah Mason for a 45-yard touchdown hookup on the final play of the half to cut Richland's lead to 28-10.

After a scoreless third quarter, Jensen threw his fourth and fifth TD passes of the day to Cervantes on third-down, back-shoulder throws for a 42-10 game.

"Their corners wanted to make some risky plays, and our receivers had some height on them," Jensen said. "Sammy, and Josh, and Cody, they made some amazing plays for me. I'm the luckiest quarterback in the state. I get to throw to the best skill players ever."

Hannan threw for 160 yards on 13 of 28 passing with the one touchdown, and also rushed for 16 yards. Hunter Chodorowski rushed for 44 yards on 12 carries for CV (10-2), but left the game in the second half in an ambulance after taking a hard hit; he did, however, walk off the field with assistance from the trainers.

TITLE TALK

This was already the first time the Bombers reached

the state semifinals in three consecutive seasons, and now they'll play in back-to-back state championship games for the first time in school history as well. A win next week would secure their third state title, with the others coming in 1982 and 1999.

"It's a dream to go win a state championship," Strasser said. "My uncle played in it (in '99). They won it, I've gotta win it now."

CV SEASON WRAP

Despite the loss, Central Valley undoubtedly had one of its best seasons in school history. The Bears reached the state semifinals for just the second time, and the first time since winning it all in 1997. Prior to this season, CV had won just six state games in seven playoff appearances.

Central Valley	3	7	0	0	-	10
Richland	7	21	0	14	-	42

SCORING PLAYS

CV—Rehkov 22 FG
R—Cody Sanderson 38 pass from Cade Jensen (Adam Weissenfels kick)
R—Parker McCary 4 run (Weissenfels kick)
R—Weissenfels 27 pass from Jensen (Weissenfels kick)
R—Ryan Piper 24 pass from Jensen (Weissenfels kick)

CV—Micah Mason 45 pass from Grant Hannan (Rehkov kick)
R—Sammy Cervantes 22 pass from Jensen (Weissenfels kick)
R—Cervantes 17 pass from Jensen (Weissenfels kick)

STATISTICS

RUSHING — CV, Hunter Chodorowski 12-44; Hannan 14-16; Ryan Harper 5-2. R, McCary 18-100; Jared Whitby 10-46; Josh Mendoza 1-25; Jensen 3-(minus 10); Tsega Macduff 1-(minus 3); team 2-(minus 7).

PASSING — CV, Hannan 13-28-0-160; Austin Tomlinson 0-1-0. R, Jensen 18-25-1-332; Andrew Daves 1-1-0-43.

RECEIVING — CV, Micah Mason 2-61; Tomlinson 4-54; Harper 3-14; Jase Edwards 1-26; Chodorowski 1-2; Connor Caffrey 1-(minus 2). R, Mendoza 4-90; Cody Sanderson 3-79; Adam Weissenfels 5-75; Sammy Cervantes 4-50; Brandon Extrom 1-43; Ryan Piper 1-24; Christian Matheson 1-14.

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Richland's Parker McCary (21) runs with Central Valley's Jase Edwards (22) in pursuit. McCary rushed for 100 yards on 18 carries with a touchdown as the Bombers beat the Bears 42-10.