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Richland lineman Jacobe Lee kisses the trophy as the Bombers celebrate their WIAA 4A state football championship at the Tacoma Dome on Saturday.

4A STATE CHAMPIONSHIP | RICHLAND 28, WOODINVILLE 21

# Great start, perfect ending as Bombers claim state title

■ The Richland Bombers football team beat the Woodinville Falcons 28-21 on Saturday at the Tacoma Dome to win the WIAA Class 4A state title.

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TACOMA  
A year ago, the Richland High School football team suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of the Camas Papermakers in the state championship game. But time – and winning – heals all wounds.

While not the blowout the first half might have promised, the Bombers showed enough resiliency to hold off the Woodinville Falcons for a 28-21 victory on Saturday in the WIAA 4A title game. “We don’t set out to do this, we just set out to get time together,” 10th-year Richland coach Mike Neidhold said. “And when you set out to get time together, and you love each other, this

is just what happens. This is a by-product of a lot more than just football going on in our football program.” The victory clinched Richland’s first perfect season in the modern era (going 14-0), and allowed it to capture its third state title in school history, the first since 1999. It also served as a fitting sendoff for a senior class that also reached the semifinals in 2015 and won 39 games over the past three seasons. “It’s the best feeling in the world,” senior quarterback

Cade Jensen said. “Ever since my eighth-grade year, I’ve wanted this, probably even before that, actually. It’s just so special to have, and for this to come true is just amazing.” Added senior lineman Jax Lee: “We feel on top of the world, man. We just won a state title with an undefeated season. You can’t ask for anything better than that.” In his second straight trip to the Tacoma Dome, Adam Weissenfels broke out in the Jack-of-all-trades role he’d occupied all season. He

book-ended the game by opening the scoring with a 9-yard touchdown reception from Jensen in the first quarter, and finishing it with his third interception of the day to seal the victory. He also made all four of his extra-point attempts and returned three punts for 77 yards. That outstanding performance – in particular his two second-half interceptions – proved critical in helping the Bombers preserve what was a 28-0 lead at halftime.

“It’s crazy, I’m honestly speechless. There’s no other way you’d want to go out,” Weissenfels said. “We just got closer and closer every year, and now we finally won it. Winning it for the coaches, and this community and my fellow players, it’s just so special, because I love those guys so much.” After getting shut out in the first half, Woodinville quarterback Jaden Sheffey – who finished with 196 yards combined rushing and passing – rallied his offense, and the Falcons defense stepped its game up to match. A couple big scrambles helped Woodinville take the opening drive of the second half 60 yards and punch in a 1-yard run by Brett Accimus for a 28-7 game. Then early in the fourth quarter, the Falcons pulled a double pass out of their bag of tricks, and Noah Stifle hit a wide open Tyler Owens for a 38-yard score to halve the Bombers’ once four-touchdown lead with nearly an entire quarter to play. One the ensuing possession, Jensen converted a third down with a miracle, whirling, falling-out-of-bounds, 28-yard pass to Sammy Cervantes to sustain a nearly 5-minute drive. But it nearly ended in disaster when the fourth-down snap flew high over punter Josh Mendoza’s head. Mendoza fell on the ball at the Richland 10, setting up Woodinville in prime position. And then Weissenfels struck again, interception a pass in the end zone to preserve the two-touchdown lead. But the Falcons weren’t done. With 4½ minutes to go, Richland opted to go for

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a fourth-and-1 on its own 29-yard-line, and Jared Whitby was stuffed in the backfield on the attempt. That set up a short field for Woodinville, which capitalized with a 9-yard Sheffey TD scramble for a 28-21 game. “That quarterback was very, very good,” Lee said. “Obviously during halftime, they worked on a lot of schemes trying to separate our defense any way they could. And they were successful at it, but they came up just short.” Woodinville had to burn the last of its timeouts when Richland converted a third-and-9 with a 13-yard screen pass to Cody Sanderson. The Falcons got the ball back, with just over 2 minutes left, but three misfires by Sheffey forced a fourth-

and-10, which was when Weissenfels made his final pick deep down the field. The ability to hold off a surging Falcons team, undefeated and ranked No. 1 in the state heading into the game, when so little could go right on offense, was the result of a hard-nosed mentality that Neidhold – a former O-line coach and Richland alum – has worked hard to foster. “You grab a rock, baby, and draw a line, and the mission is still on,” Neidhold said after pulling a small rock out of his pocket. “That’s been our motto for the last four or five years. You just grab a rock and draw a line, and when they get across the line, you draw another one. And that’s just a tribute to our kids buying into our philosophy.”

Helping to lead the defensive effort were senior linebackers Casey Perryman (recovered a pair of fumbles) and Caleb Chapman (eight total tackles, a sack and three tackles for loss). Jensen was his typically efficient self, completing 13 of 23 passes for 182 yards and two touchdowns without an interception. Parker McCary led a Richland run game that trounced the touted Woodinville “Dark Side” defense early – to the tune of 93 first-half yards and a touchdown – but found little room to roam after halftime, as he finished the game with 116 yards on 28 carries. “I think our left side was blocking super well, and I was able to put a few moves on the safeties and kind of do what I do,” McCary said of the run game in the first half. “The line was just clicking, and it was working really well. “I think they got some

good momentum right at the beginning (of the second half), and they just made some adjustments at halftime that allowed them to stop us.”

Richland	7	21	0	0	–	28
Woodinville	0	0	7	14	–	21

**SCORING PLAYS**  
R—Adam Weissenfels 9 pass from Cade Jensen (Weissenfels kick)  
R—Jared Whitby 3 run (Weissenfels kick)  
R—Parker McCary 17 run (Weissenfels kick)  
R—Sammy Cervantes 15 pass from Jensen (Weissenfels kick)  
W—Brett Accimus 1 run (Blake Glessner kick)  
W—Tyler Owens 38 pass from Noah Stifle (Glessner kick)  
W—Jaden Sheffey 9 run (Glessner kick)

**STATISTICS**  
RUSHING — R, McCary 28-122; Whitby 7-10; Jensen 6-(minus 22); team 4-(minus 40). W, Sheffey 22-115; Accimus 10-25; Matt Jones 6-15; Nash Fouch 1-10; Wyatt Lane 1-0.  
PASSING — R, Jensen 13-23-0—182; Whitby 0-1-1. W, Sheffey 10-24-3—81; Stifle 1-1-0—38.  
RECEIVING — R, Cervantes 3-64; Josh Mendoza 3-36; Cody Sanderson 2-55; Weissenfels 2-3; Ryan Piper 1-16; Christian Matheson 1-4; McCary 1-4. W, Fouch 4-12; Owens 3-65; Stifle 2-15; Accimus 1-22; Lane 1-5.

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**SPORTS**  
**THE BOMBERS ARE CHAMPS**  
The Richland Bombers hold off the Woodinville Falcons in the WIAA 4A title game. **9A**