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Richland coach Mike Neidhold will be one of six championship coaches to raise the 12th Man Flag Dec. 17 at a Seattle Seahawks game.

FOOTBALL

Richland, Royal coaches to raise 12th Man Flag at Seahawks game

BY ANNIE FOWLER
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What do Ken Griffey Jr., Bill Russell, Jack Sikma, Randy Johnson and Mike Neidhold have in common?

Nothing, for now. But come Dec. 17th, the Richland football coach along with his counterpart at Royal, Wiley Allred, will join the ranks who have raised the 12th Man Flag at a Seattle Seahawks game.

"I have no idea what I'm getting myself into," said Neidhold, who led the Bombers to the Class 4A state title last weekend. "I had to do some research. Why is it such a

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Royal coach Wiley Allred

big deal? Then you look at the people who have done it.

"The boys think it's funny because I'm not the guy to put myself out there for that. I would prefer the senior captains do it."

Allred hadn't told his players yet. He was planning on doing that at their football banquet next week,

but now the cat's out of the bag.

"It's a great honor," said Allred, whose team won its third consecutive Class 1A state title last week. "I'm glad others are going."

Neidhold and Allred will be joined by the other four coaches whose teams won state titles this year — Monte Kohler (3A, O'Dea), Rick Steele (2A, Hockinson), Sean McDonald (2B, Kalama) and Brandon Walsh (1B, Almira-Coulee-Hartline). They will all take part in raising the flag before the Seahawks play the Los Angeles Rams at CenturyLink Field.

The coaches were met by a Seahawks representative after their respective games. They were congratulated, given a spiel about the



Courtesy of Royal High School

Royal coach Wiley Allred, right, who led the Knights to the Class 1A state football title Dec. 2, also will be raising the 12th Man Flag.

event and handed an envelope with all the details.

"I'm excited to represent Richland High and the football program," Neidhold said.

Allred said he's seen people raise the flag while watching Seahawks games. Some he knows, but others, not so much.

"I had to ask my wife if Chris Pratt was an actor or a singer," Allred admitted.

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FLAG

Neidhold, who is a big Pearl Jam fan, was excited at the prospect of standing in the same spot as Mike McCready, the band's lead guitarist. However, when McCready raised the flag during the 2015 playoffs, it was atop the Space Needle.

But let's just keep that little fact between us and let Neidhold enjoy his day.

Though Neidhold and Allred have two of the most successful programs on the eastern side of the state, they have only met a couple of times.

Once was when they were named Seattle Seahawks High School Coaches of the Week in September 2016 and they were invited to a game.

"He is a kind man and has had a great run at Royal," Neidhold said. "It should be a good time."

Allred repaid the kind words to Neidhold, and he too wishes his players had the honor.

"I am blessed to be with these kids," Allred said. "You don't win the Ken-

tucky Derby on a mule. To be able to keep them together and get the support we get is pretty awesome."

RICHLAND-L.A. CONNECTION

It's only fitting that the Seahawks are playing the Rams when Neidhold will raise the flag.

Los Angeles quarterbacks coach Greg Olson is a former Richland Bomber, playing on the great 1980 team with Richland assistant coach Kent Kafentziz and Joey

Neidhold, Mike's younger brother.

"That may have been the best team Richland fielded until this year," Neidhold said. "They lost in the semifinals to Mt. Tahoma that year."

Olson and his players reached out to the Bombers during championship week.

"The quarterbacks (Jared Goff, Sean Mannion and Brandon Allen) took time out of their day to send us messages and wish us good luck," Neidhold said. "It was

And Cooper Kupp (married to Richland grad Anna Croskrey) sent the team a good luck video. Greg said he'd bring some of the guys over to meet me when we are on the field. That will be nice."

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