

Sports



NOELLE HARO-GOMEZ Tri-City Herald

Richland's Adam Weissenfels (7) is the Herald's All-Area Player of the Year.

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ALL-AREA FOOTBALL TEAM

Weissenfels is biggest performer on biggest stage

It's been a good couple of months for Adam Weissenfels. Throughout the process of helping the Richland High School football team win its first state title since 1999, the senior jack-of-all-trades was named the Mid-Columbia Conference's Defensive Player of the Year (in addition to a first-team defensive back and wide receiver, and second-team kicker), got picked for the (Tacoma) News Tribune's and Seattle Times' All-State teams, and on Friday was named the Associated Press 4A state player of the year. So, while the Weissenfels family is still busy adding shelves to its

trophy display, let's throw another piece of hardware on to Adam's haul: He's the Tri-City Herald's All-Area football player of the year. "I obviously always hoped to be recognized this way; I think it's a tribute to all the hard work I put in," said Weissenfels, who is a first-team defensive back and return specialist and second-team pick at wide receiver and kicker. "Every day in the offseason I was trying to make myself better, not only for myself but for the team, and I know every one else on our team was, too.

"We had one goal, and that was to win a state championship." As solid as Weissenfels' body of work was this season (16 total touchdowns and 11 interceptions), he officially solidified his presence in the state spotlight Dec. 2 at the Tacoma Dome. In Richland's second straight appearance in the 4A title game, Weissenfels posted a stat line that has become familiar to many in the Bombers' 28-21 victory over Woodinville: A 9-yard touchdown catch, a forced fumble, four punt returns for 77 yards, four made extra points on four tries, and a 4A

finals record-tying three interceptions. "I just felt like I was playing my role," he said. "If Krisko, Ryan Kriskovich (fellow Bomber DB), was in my position, I feel like he could have made the same plays. I just did my job when I needed to, and I ended up making a few big plays." Either way, the performance was career-defining — and possibly career-extending. The gravity of the moment is not lost on Weissenfels. "Having such a big game on such a big stage was huge," he

said. "I said a couple of times, 'Big-time players make big-time plays,' so that's what I felt like I had to do, and it ended up working out." In addition to being a supremely talented and hard-working player, Weissenfels receives plenty of praise for the intangibles he brought to Richland's program. He was a team captain and an active contributor to the fun and classroom-like atmosphere coach Mike Neidhold and his staff have worked to foster. "He's just a special kid that you're lucky to have on your team," Neidhold said. "He's a wonderful young man, a passionate kid. Very, very smart, just an asset to Richland High School and our whole community." With the trove of accolades he's racked up this season, Weissenfels said there's still no contest which is the most valuable. "One hundred percent the state championship," he said. "The News Tribune came out with its All-State team I think like a week before the state championship, and my mom was really excited — she showed me the article and stuff. And the first thing I said to her was, 'None of this will matter if we don't win the state championship.'" After the best send-off he could have asked for from his high school football career, Weissenfels now gets to start weighing his prospects for college, which continue to look brighter every day. He received football and/or baseball offers from College of Idaho, University of Puget Sound, Eastern Oregon University, University of Redlands and Pacific Lutheran University in the wake of the title game. But even with the enticing athletic offers, Weissenfels is still leaning toward following in his father's footsteps in trying to attend the Naval Academy, where he could wind up walking on to the football team. "I've been told I had a better chance at playing baseball in college," he said. "But after this season, I can't imagine myself not playing football." It was a tough call, but if forced to choose one position to play in college, Weissenfels said he'd have to go with defensive back.

THE LINEUP

Other Bombers on the All-Area

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first team include quarterback Cade Jensen (finished the season with 3,400 yards and 48 touchdowns passing, and was also the All-State 4A first team QB); linemen Ben DeZemmer, Aric Davison and Jax Lee; linebacker Casey Perryman; and defensive back Josh Mendoza. With three state championships in the area, the team features three coaches of the year: Richland's Neidhold, Royal's Wiley Allred (also the Seahawks High School Coach of the Year) and Hermiston's David Faeteete. Hermiston won its second state championship in the past four years, and Royal took home its third in a row. For Richland, which captured its third in the program's illustrious history, the title was a climactic finish to a thrilling three-year arc for the team's seniors (who reached the semis in 2015 and lost the 2016 title game) and a long-time coming for the Bombers ninth-year head coach. "One of the hidden beauties of this is that it's a sad goodbye," Neidhold said of his influential senior class. "You invest so much into what you're doing and into each other, and at the end it's supposed to be a little bit sad, because our time together is over. "And that has been true — it's been a little bit sad to say goodbye to these kids, all these seniors. But at the same time it's wonderful

that there are some tears because it means that our time together was worth it." Parity should be on the rise in the MCC with Richland graduating a cache of big-time seniors, Hermiston entering the league led by quarterback Andrew James (All-Area second team), and teams like Hanford, Walla Walla and Kennewick building up talented young cores. "I would expect the whole league to be a little bit more competitive," Neidhold said. "I understand they've been talking about going to an RPI system for football soon in the WIAA ... so you want your league to be very competitive and very tough. "I would expect Hanford to continue growing as a program, Brett (Jay) does a great job over there. I would expect Kennewick to be better and Southridge has got a new system in place so they're going to be better. Walla Walla's always going to work hard, so they're going to be better as well. And when they're better, everyone's better."

TRI-CITY HERALD 2017 ALL-AREA FOOTBALL TEAM
Player of the Year: Adam Weissenfels, Sr., Richland. Coaches of the year: Mike Neidhold, Richland; Wiley Allred, Royal; David Faeteete, Hermiston.
FIRST TEAM
QB: Cade Jensen, Sr., Richland.
RB: Jonathan Hinkle, Sr., Hermiston; Jared DeVine, Jr., Hanford.
WR: Champ Grayson, Sr., Kamiakin; Corbin Christensen, Sr., Royal; Dayshawn Neal, Sr., Hermiston.
OL: Ben DeZemmer, Sr., Richland; Josh Alvarez, Sr., Chiawana; Ford Powers, Sr., Chiawana; Aric Davison, Jr., Richland; Seer Deines, Sr., Connell.
DL: Jax Lee, Sr., Richland; Christian Ramos, Sr., Kamiakin; Seer Deines, Sr., Connell; AJ Vongphachanh, Jr., Chiawana.
LB: Dillon Crawford, Sr., Kamiakin; Casey Perryman, Sr., Richland; Austin Penny, Sr., Chiawana; Colton Timmin, Sr., Tri-Cities Prep.
DB: Champ Grayson, Sr., Kamiakin; Adam Weissenfels, Sr., Richland; Riley Cissne, So., Chiawana; Josh Mendoza, Sr., Richland.
K: Ryan Lowry, Jr., Chiawana.
P: Christian Ramos, Sr., Kamiakin.
RS: Adam Weissenfels, Sr., Richland.
SECOND TEAM
QB: Andrew James, Jr., Hermiston.
RB: Tayden Jenkins, Sr., Chiawana; Bubba Valencia, Sr., Tri-Cities Prep; Parker McCary, Sr., Richland.
WR: Adam Weissenfels, Sr., Richland; Josh Mendoza, Sr., Richland; Peyton Monson, Sr., Southridge.
OL: Flynn McPherson, Sr., Southridge; Davion Pruitt, Jr., Pasco; Luke Eskelsen, Sr., Kamiakin; Rams Gonzalez, Sr., Royal; Max Busseleman, Sr., Hanford.
DL: Jacob Stanfield, Sr., Richland; Rams Gonzalez, Sr., Royal; Moses McAninch, Sr., Kennewick; Aric Davison, Jr., Richland.
LB: AJ Wiegand, Sr., Hanford; Jonathan Hinkle, Sr., Hermiston; Jahmal Mangarero, Jr., Walla Walla; Isaac Ellis, Sr., Royal.
DB: Kobe Singleton, So., Tri-Cities Prep; Colten Chelin, Sr., Kamiakin; Ryan Piper, Sr., Richland; Luis Ramos, Sr., Connell.
K: Adam Weissenfels, Sr., Richland.
P: Elijah Perez, Jr., Chiawana.
RS: Champ Grayson, Sr., Kamiakin.
HONORABLE MENTION
QB: Sawyer Jenks, Jr., Royal; Payton Flynn, Sr., Kamiakin; Kobe Singleton, So., Tri-Cities Prep.
RB: Ethan Garcia, Sr., Chiawana; J.R. Coleman, Sr., Prosser; Efrain Farias, Sr., Pasco; Alonso Hernandez, Jr., Royal; Tristen Garland, Sr., Connell.
WR: Benson Smith, Sr., Kamiakin; Sammy Cervantes, Sr., Richland; Daniel Rizin, Sr., Kiowa-Benton; Colten Chelin, Sr., Kamiakin.
OL: Caesar Salas, Jr., Kamiakin; Vincent Walsh, Sr., Hanford; Raynor Bierle, Sr., Royal; Tristan Larkins, Sr., Walla Walla; Benito Bravo, Jr., Prosser; Logan Shimskey, Jr., Southridge; Leo Schroeder, Jr., Tri-Cities Prep; Zane Andrewjeski, Sr., Connell.
DL: Chase Kissell, Sr., Kamiakin; Vincent Walsh, Sr., Hanford; Isaac Melton, Sr., Walla Walla; Tyler Durbin, Jr., Prosser.
LB: Emilio Ramos, Sr., Kennewick; Anthony Liudahl, Sr., Chiawana; Victor Strasser, Sr., Richland; J.R. Coleman, Sr., Prosser; Trevor Hilmes, Sr., Othello.
DB: Mason Knowles, Sr., Walla Walla; Ryan Kriskovich, Jr., Richland; Daniel Rizin, Sr., Sr., Royal; Konnor denHoed, Sr., Liberty Christian; Benson Smith, Sr., Kamiakin; Josiah Richardson, Sr., Chiawana.
K: Kaden Shymanski, Jr., Kamiakin; Jonathan Jaime, Sr., Warden.
P: Eric Stayrook, Sr., Southridge.
RS: Angel Farias, Jr., Royal; Cedric Riel, Sr., Kennewick.

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