

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

20 Mid-Columbia athletes are among state’s top 2019 football players

BY JEFF MORROW
Special to the Herald

The Mid-Columbia had 20 athletes honored as The Associated Press Washington state high school all-state football teams were released on Monday.

Voting was conducted by sports writers and editors from around the state earlier this month.

Leading the way in the Mid-Columbia is Royal junior quarterback Caleb Christensen, who was voted the Class 1A player of the year after throwing for 3,000 yards and 51 touchdowns, while leading the Knights to an undefeated season and a state championship.

Named to the Class 4A first team on defense was Chiawana senior defensive end Bridger Feldman.

He was a stalwart on a

Riverhawks defensive unit that surrendered just 131 points in 11 games this season.

Feldman was also named the Mid-Columbia Conference’s Defensive Player of the Year by the conference’s coaches.

He was the only MCC player named to the first unit of the 4A all-state team.

However, Richland junior wide receiver Ben Fewel was an honorable mention, as he caught 89 passes for 1,236 yards this season for 13 touchdowns.

On the Class 3A all-state team, Kennewick senior Baylor McElroy was a first-team offensive lineman after helping lead the Lions to the state semifinals. McElroy was named the MCC Lineman of the Year.

His twin brother, Baiden McElroy, was an honorable mention all-state

selection, as was Kennewick senior defensive lineman Jagger Childs.

The McElroys were unanimous all-MCC selections, while Childs spearheaded a tough Kennewick defense.

Also making the 3A honorable mention all-state list is Kamiakin junior running back Tuna Altahir, who led the MCC in rushing, with 188 carries for 1,406 yards and a 7.5 yards-per-carry average.

Altahir also led the MCC in scoring with 20 touchdowns and a 2-point PAT for 122 points.

Despite being injured part of the year, Othello senior Isaiah Perez was named first-team Class 2A all-state as a defensive lineman.

Perez has signed a letter of intent to play next fall at BYU.

Prosser senior Logan

Candanoza was an honorable mention 2A defensive lineman, as he helped the Mustangs advance to the state quarterfinals.

Besides Caleb Christensen being listed as the Class 1A first-team all-state quarterback, the Royal Knights had four other all-state players.

Junior Cooper Christensen was a two-way all-state player, both at wide receiver and defensive back.

He caught 55 passes for 1,357 yards (for an average of 24.7 yards a catch) and 22 touchdowns.

On the defensive side of the ball, he had 30 tackles and eight interceptions.

Junior Jose Medina, whom Knights head coach Wiley Allred called his best offensive lineman, was named first-team all-state.

So was senior defensive lineman Michael Perez, who was also named the SCAC East Defensive Player of the Year. Perez had 11 tackles for losses and was “the most disruptive force I’ve ever coached,” said Allred.

Sophomore linebacker



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Chiawana’s Bridger Feldmann, in blue, was named the Mid-Columbia Conference’s Defensive Player of the Year by the conference’s coaches. He was the only MCC player named to the first unit of the 4A all-state team.

Derek Bergeson adapted well to his first year of varsity football, leading a Royal defense — which pitched seven shutouts this season — in tackles with 90. Bergeson was also named first-team all-state.

Royal senior defensive back Tyler Allred, who had 48 tackles and four interceptions, was honorable mention.

Connell senior Vicente Rodriguez, who was a first-team All-SCAC East

selection at both offensive line and defensive line, was an all-state honorable mention at offensive line.

TRI-CITIES PREP

Four players from Tri-Cities Prep and one from Columbia-Burbank were named first-team Class 2B all-state for their performances this season.

For Prep, junior Dante Maiuri was the quarterback.

SEE TOP PLAYERS, 9A

FROM PAGE 8A
TOP PLAYERS

Maiuri passed for 3,419 yards and 34 touchdowns against just 13 interceptions in helping the Jaguars to a 10-2 season.

Teammate Landon Amato, a senior, was first team at both wide receiver and defensive back.

At wide receiver, Amato caught 83 passes for 1,233 yards (14.9 yards per catch) and 12 TD receptions.

On defense, Amato had 45 tackles. But he also had 11 interceptions.

Senior linebacker Jacob Levy and senior defensive lineman Zerric Pardini also were first-team defensive selections.

Levy led the Jaguars with 135 tackles, while Pardini was second with 95. Pardini also had astounding 18 tackles for loss.

COLUMBIA-BURBANK

Junior running back Abraham Garcia helped lead Columbia-Burbank to the 2B Eastern Washington Athletic Conference regular-season title.

Garcia was named the EWAC Offensive Player of the Year, based on his 1,773 yards rushing and 23 total touchdowns for the Coyotes.

That was also enough for the state’s sports writers and editors to name him first-team 2B all-state.

Steilacoom junior Eme-ka Egbuka was named The

Associated Press Washington state high school football player of the year.

The star wide receiver was a unanimous choice as the state player of the year for all classifications in voting conducted by sports writers and editors from around the state.

Egbuka helped lead Steilacoom to the Class 2A championship game. One of the top recruits in the country for the class of 2021, Egbuka had 2,240 all-purpose yards and 35 total touchdowns. He had more than 1,500 yards receiving.

Egbuka was also voted the player of the year for Class 2A.

Juniors were a theme among players of the year in each classification.

Besides Royal’s Christensen, Kennedy Catholic junior quarterback Sam Huard was voted the Class 4A player of the year.

Eastside Catholic junior lineman J.T. Tuimoloau was voted the Class 3A player of the year.

Onalaska senior running back Ashton Haight was voted the Class 2B player of the year and Odessa’s Marcus King was honored as the Class 1B player of the year.

Jeff Morrow is former sports editor for the Tri-City Herald.