



BOB BRAWDY Tri-City Herald

Kamiakin High's Luis Salgado had six carries for 93 yards rushing and two touchdowns in the Braves' 46-10 victory over Hermiston.

MCC favorites open football season with big victories

BY JEFF MORROW
Special to the Herald

From the look of things, the usual suspects took care of business on opening night of Mid-Columbia Conference football play over the weekend. Chiawana, Kamiakin, Kennewick and Richland — the main four teams everyone sees as vying for the MCC title — had easy victories to open the season.

I was at the Kamiakin at Hermiston opener, which the Braves won 46-10 with a running clock in the second half.

Asked after the game if this year's Kamiakin team could be more loaded than last spring's unit that had three seniors sign with Eastern Washington University, Scott Biglin smiled and said, "We'll see. We'll see. We made a lot of mistakes. Our defense needs to clean up some things. Our offense, we had the short field all game."

Indeed it did. The Braves offense had an average starting point in the first half at the Hermiston 40-yard line.

And there were plenty of stars on offense: Luis Salgado had six carries for 93 yards rushing and two touchdowns. Isaac Friesse rushed for another 55 yards on five carries.

Henry Mercado was lights out at quarterback,

passing 6 for 8 for 68 yards and three TD passes (two to Aidan Canada). Mercado also rushed for 80 yards on four carries.

"I really like what Henry does," said Biglin. "We believe Henry is the best quarterback in the league. And we think Payton Graham is right behind him."

Last year, the two shared QB duties. But on Friday, Mercado ran the show. Graham, on the other hand, was everywhere — playing in the defensive secondary, playing receiver, a little back-up QB, and handling the kicking and punting duties.

Graham — who is headed next year to play baseball at Gonzaga University — scored three TD's in different ways.

He scored on a 6-yard pass from Mercado, ran in from the 1, and returned a blocked field goal 55 yards for a score.

On that blocked kick, Graham thought senior Braxton Akridge had blocked it.

Defensively, the Braves were led by linebackers EJ Hawkins (7 tackles, 2 for loss) and Kale Crawford (5 tackles, 2 for loss, and a pass breakup), and defensive lineman Devin Crow (2 tackles, a forced fumble, fumble recovery and pass breakup).

Senior quarterback Chase Elliott did some damage for Hermiston, rushing for 97 yards and

passing for 71 more. He scored the Bulldogs' lone touchdown on a 29-yard run.

SCORES AND HIGHLIGHTS CHIAWANA 42, HANFORD 6:

JP Zamora opened the season on a tear, throwing for three TD passes and rushing for two more.

Zamora passed for 189 yards and ran for another 102.

Kade Smith caught two of his passes for 78 yards and a score.

KENNEWICK 23, WALLA WALLA 7:

Lions QB Dayton Davis passed for two touchdowns, including a 55-yarder, and Bronson Childs pounced on a bad snap in the end zone for another score, as visiting Kennewick won at Borleske Stadium.

Jake Humphrey found the end zone for the Blue Devils on an 11-yard run.

RICHLAND 56, PASCO 0:

Elijah Rodriguez, Twa-zae Gladney and Landon Charlton all found the end zone as the host Bombers shut down Pasco in the season opener.

SOUTHRIDGE 26, DAVIS 21:

The host Suns opened the Matt Johnson era with a non-league win at home.

The aptly named James Rush scored all four Southridge touchdowns on the ground, finishing with

98 yards on 15 carries. Teammate Lucien Cone total 109 offensive yards on 6 rushes for 37 yards, and 4 catches for 72 more.

SUNNYSIDE 34, PROSSER 23:

Myles Newhouse had a monster night for the visiting Grizzlies, rushing for 214 yards and getting another 73 yards in receiving.

Newhouse scored four TD's to lead Sunnyside to the non-league win.

Prosser QB Kaiden Rivera was 41 for 60 and 358 yards passing. Rivera completed passes to nine different receivers, and found two for TDs.

Isaac Kernan led the Mustangs with 7 catches for 82 yards.

KIONA-BENTON 34, RIVER VIEW 8:

Camron Villarreal rushed 31 times for 186 yards to lead the visiting Bears to a non-league win over the Panthers on Thursday.

TRI-CITIES PREP 94, LIBERTY CHRISTIAN 60:

Yes, this score is correct. Prep lost its first two games of the schedule, and Liberty Christian lost its opening game on the schedule.

So the two Tri-City schools decided to play each other at Chiawana High on Friday, with Prep stepping down to 8-man play from its normal 11-man play.

What occurred was an

offensive showcase.

LC coach Craig Lukins confirmed that junior quarterback Keegan Bishop set a state 8-man record with his 694 yards passing. Bishop was 31-for-62 and tossed 8 TD passes.

Freshman quarterback Caleb Sherfey was 20-for-32 passing for 587 yards, and 10 — yes, 10 — touchdown passes. Sherfey also rushed 14 times for another 138 yards and another TD. He finished with 725 total yards of offense.

Senior receiver Adam Baerlocher caught 8 passes for 295 yards and five touchdowns; while senior receiver Kail Carey added four receptions for 163 yards and two scores.

ROYAL 41, ELLENSBURG 0: Derek Bergeson passed for 223 yards and four touchdowns too lead 1A power Royal over 2A Ellensburg.

Avery Ellis and Luke Bergeson also scored two touchdowns each in the win. Ellis rushed 12 times for 101 yards.

GRANDVIEW 28, WAHLUKE 25:

Chaco Gomez scored two rushing touchdowns to give the Greyhounds a non-league win over the Warriors.

OTHER WEEKEND SCORES

Othello 28, Connell 22; Columbia-Burbank 62, Wapato 21; Warden 52, White Swan 8; Sunnyside Christian 62, Pateros 24.

MORE NWAC SIGNINGS

- Andrew Lyford, a DeSales High graduate, is going to play men's basketball for Blue Mountain Community College.
- Marin Mackey, a Richland High grad, is playing volleyball for Bellevue College.
- Richland High grad Kaitlin Maddison will be playing women's soccer at CBC.
- Madison McClannahan, a Hermiston High grad, is playing women's golf at Southwestern Oregon Community College.
- Steven Meier, a Southridge grad, will be playing baseball at CBC.
- Grace Meirndorf, a Prosser High grad, will be playing volleyball at Yakima Valley Community College.
- Walla Walla High School graduate Gabriel Mercado will play men's soccer at Walla Walla Community College.

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