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The Richland High girls varsity soccer team gets ready to travel to Puyallup on Thursday for the Class 4A state semifinals. The Bombers will play Issaquah at 6 p.m. today at Sparks Stadium in the first semifinal.

Mid-Columbia teams harboring Wash. state championship hopes

BY JEFF MORROW
Special to the Herald

Here comes another big weekend with fall high school sports playoffs on the schedule.

Football, girls soccer and volleyball are on the menu all around the state.

The Mid-Columbia has five football teams remaining in the race for the state title.

In girls soccer, unbeaten Richland is among the final four in Class 4A. And in volleyball, Kamiakin and Walla Walla are hopeful to earn state championships.

Here is a rundown:

FOOTBALL

Class 4A: No. 5 Camas (7-4) vs. No. 4 Kamiakin (11-0), 3 p.m., Saturday, at Lampson Stadium.

The Braves are still unbeaten at 11-0 and look tough with offensive stars Henry Mercado, Luis Salgado, Payton Graham, E.J. Hawkins and Aidan Canada.

But don't count the Papermakers out. They may be 7-4, but after losing their first four games, they've won seven straight. Winner advances to the Class 4A state semifinals.

Class 3A: No. 6 Kennewick (10-1) vs. No. 3 O'Dea (8-2), 4 p.m., Saturday, at Memorial Stadium, Seattle.

These two teams last met in the 2019 3A state semifinals, with O'Dea winning. This time, it's a

3A quarterfinal.

Kennewick's defense — led the Mid-Columbia Conference Defensive Player of the Year, senior linebacker Bronson Childs — must find a way to stop the Irish's rushing attack. Last week, in a win over Kelso, O'Dea had 10 different rushers combine for 411 yards.

The Lions will counter with RB Myles Mayovsky, QBs Dayton Davis and Andre Breedlove, WR Austin Stoddard, and that big offensive line.

Class 2A: No. 7 Prosser (10-1) vs. No. 2 Lynden (9-1), 7 p.m., Saturday, Civic Stadium, Bellingham.

These two teams have had some great battles over the last 20 years.

This time, the Lions have to figure out how to stop Mustangs quarterback Kaiden Rivera, who has thrown for 2,670 yards and 26 TD passes against just 5 interceptions.

Rivera's top receiver has been Isaac Kernan, with 54 catches for 628 yards.

Lynden counters with QB Kaedan Hermanutz, who has thrown for 915 yards, and running back Lane Heeringa (739 yards rushing).

Class 1A: No. 9 Toppenish (11-0) at No. 1 Royal (11-0), 1 p.m., Saturday, Royal City.

Anybody who should have a chip on their shoulders it's the Wildcats, who went through the regular season unbeaten and still had to hit the road in the

first round of the playoffs. So they went up to No. 8 Mt. Baker last week and won 26-22.

Joshua Perez and Jason Grant are the guys that lead this team.

But here's the problem: Royal has been outstanding all year, and the Knights are easily the heavy favorite to win the state title. Royal has been so dominant this season that the starters normally play just in the first half.

Twins Derek and Luke Bergeson, and Avery Ellis, have been dominant on both sides of the ball.

Class 2B: No. 6 Columbia-Burbank (10-0) vs. No. 3 Okanogan (10-0), 7 p.m., Friday, Apple Bowl, Wenatchee.

Each of the last three seasons, Burbank coach Trevor Curtis' teams have gotten better and better.

The Coyotes are led by Michael Lenke, a junior quarterback who has accounted for over 2,000 offensive yards this season (1,179 passing and 950 rushing) and has been involved in 37 touchdowns.

Elijah Kinsey has rushed for over 1,300 yards and scored 16 touchdowns for Burbank.

The Bulldogs are led by QB Brad Ingram — who has passed for 695 yards — and RB Tucker Pritchard and his 717 yards rushing.

Friday's quarterfinal will definitely be Curtis' team's toughest game to date. But the Coyotes can win this.

GIRLS SOCCER

It's not clear if Richland Bombers head coach Justin Almquist would admit this year's team might be his best ever.

But there are arguments to say it is.

The Bombers are 20-0, and have outscored their opponents 86-5.

Senior forward Hayden Crowley officially signed last week to play for the University of Washington next fall, and sophomore keeper Alyssa Marsh and her defensive backfield have been an absolute wall this season.

And Almquist has built this into a powerhouse program that could last for a while: of the 23 players on the roster, just seven are seniors.

So here's how it goes in the 4A state semifinals on Friday at Sparks Stadium in Puyallup: No. 6 Issaquah (12-3-1) plays No. 2 Richland at 6 p.m.; and No. 4 Skyline (12-2) takes on No. 1 Camas (20-0) at 8 p.m.

The losers will play for third place at 1 p.m. Saturday, while the winners battle for the state title at 5 p.m.

VOLLEYBALL

Morgan Schauble's Kamiakin squad dominated the Mid-Columbia Conference with a 15-1 record this season, then qualified for the 4A state tournament by earning the third District 8 berth last Saturday.

The WIAA committee seeded the Braves 10th out

of 16 teams, and Kamiakin will open the state tournament at 10:45 a.m. Friday against No. 7 seed Mt. Si in Yakima.

A win would put the Braves into the quarterfinals at 8:45 p.m. Friday night, while a loss has them playing at 5:45 p.m.

Walla Walla earned the third District 8 state playoff berth last Saturday, but it's a weird situation for the Blue Devils and head coach Christina Dove.

Because there are 79 Class 3A schools in the state of Washington, the 3A state tournament gets a 20-team field.

That means there were four play-in games on Thursday that are loser-out contests — tough to travel all the way to Yakima for possibly just one match.

And the Blue Devils, a 14 seed, took on No. 19 Bainbridge at 9:45 a.m. Thursday, losing their match 3-2 to end their season.

● Congrats to Walla Walla Valley Academy and head coach Robin Browning, whose team placed second last Saturday in the 2B state tournament in Yakima.

The sixth-seeded Knights, who finished the season with a 28-3 record, lost 3-0 to top seeded LaConner in the final.

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