

# Sports



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Kennewick Lions senior Myles Mayovsky (18) dodges Spanaway Lake Sentinels defense during the playoff game. The Lions play for the state football championship title in the 3A division against Eastside Catholic on Saturday.

## Kennewick's wild season peaks Saturday in title game

BY JEFF MORROW  
Special to the Herald

### KENNEWICK, WA

I'm not sure if there has ever been a more impressive run through the state high school football playoffs than what Kennewick High has been doing.

After knocking off Metro League power O'Dea 27-21 in the state quarterfinals in Seattle, the Lions then traveled back again to stop another Metro League power, Eastside Catholic, 14-7, in the semifinals.

Now, the Lions will take on KingCo juggernaut Bellevue in the state 3A championship at noon on Saturday at Sparks Stadium in Puyallup.

It has been a wild ride for Kennewick, even for head coach Randy Affholter.

"Playoff-wise, this is the toughest road a team of mine has ever had," said Affholter, who has been in the state semifinals six times with Ellensburg (four) and Kennewick (two). "I have never had anything similar to this ever happen."

Senior standout Myles Mayovsky said that Affholter broke down after last Saturday's win against Eastside Catholic.

"He just said, 'I'm so proud of you guys,'" said Mayovsky. "It was kind of touching."

"The last two weeks, I've been pretty emotional," admits Affholter. "When the kids buy in, when they sell out for the program, it's not hard to get emotional. As a head coach,

that's when I have nothing but respect for these guys."

None more so than the semifinal win over a talented Eastside Catholic team.

### SEMIFINAL BATTLE

It was a game where the Lions had trouble moving the football against the talented Crusaders.

But Kennewick had two big plays in the game: a 96-yard pass from Dayton Davis to Austin Stoddard for a touchdown, and Si-meon Howard's 55-yard interception return for a score.

"We saw on film how aggressive their cornerback was," said Affholter. "That was all on Coach (Lenny) Ayres. We ran an RPO (Run-Pass Option) on it. And we caught it."

Davis was looking at the cornerback.

"If he stepped inside I was going to pass to Austin," said Davis. "Then Austin put it in another gear I didn't know he had."

From that point on, the Lions defense did a number on the Crusaders, keeping them out of the end zone.

"We played pretty solid defense out there," said Mayovsky, who was credited with 10 tackles from his linebacker position.

Early in the third quarter, Howard read a pass play correctly, and the senior snared an interception and was gone for 55 yards, a touchdown, and what turned out to be an insurmountable 14-0 lead.

"We are all seeing things better on defense," said senior linebacker Bronson

Childs, who led Kennewick with 13 tackles. "We're just pushing to go win a state championship."

Against Bellevue, the Lions face a Wing-T offense which uses a lot of misdirection.

"We have to play assignment football on defense," said Affholter. "We've got to be disciplined on defense. Not get caught by all of the movement in the shifts."

Mayovsky agrees. "We have to tackle the guy we're assigned to," said Mayovsky. "Even the guy who doesn't have the football."

Childs agrees. Last year, as a junior, he transferred to a school in Idaho when Washington schools were not able to play football in the fall.

"I faced (the Wing-T) last year with a number of teams in Idaho," said Childs. "You have to be disciplined, rely on your teammate to make the tackle. You can't look in the backfield because the ball could already be handed off a few times."

### BEST DEFENSE

And perhaps the Lions' best defense could be its offense.

"This is my opinion," Affholter continued, "this is a possession game. We've got to control the football, and put points on the board."

If that happens, the Wolverines might have to throw the football — which makes them uncomfortable.

Kennewick did that earlier this season in a win over Chiawana. By hanging

on to the football for large chunks of time, the Lions were able to keep the ball out of Riverhawks quarterback JP Zamora's hands.

"The big thing is, if we can get a lead when we start out, we'll force them to pass," said Davis.

And that could put the Wolverines in a hole.

Win or lose, Kennewick has had a great season. But a win would be a great way to cap the season.

"We have a lot of confidence," said Childs.

### WATCH ONLINE

Not going to Puyallup?

Go online to watch the contest on NFHSnetwork.com — it costs \$11 for one month.

It was worth the price to watch both Kamiakin and Kennewick play in the state semifinals last week.

I'm planning on watching Kennewick on Saturday on it, then likely unsubscribe after that.

Also, Michael McDonnal plans on doing radio play-by-play on KONA 610 AM for the game, starting with an 11:45 a.m. pre-game show.

### ROYAL KNIGHTS

Meanwhile, Wiley Allred leads his Royal Knights football team into battle at the same time Kennewick plays — noon on Saturday — against Eatonville in the 1A state football championship.

Both teams are 13-0.

Allred's teams have won state football crowns four out of the last five times the tournament has been held.

In the spring of this year, with no one getting to play in the state playoffs because of the pandemic, the Knights routed three Class 4A teams in Eastmont, Moses Lake and Wenatchee.

This fall, playing just 1A competition, Allred's Knights have once again been dominant. But he's not ready to proclaim this year's squad the best.

"We need to finish it before I can even think about that," said Allred. "We've had a couple games this year where there just wasn't any competition."

Let's be clear about this: he says that last statement without any arrogance at all. Royal is just that good.

Almost every game has been out of hand before halftime, with the running clock activated before intermission with at least a 40-point lead.

It's been a double-edged sword: Royal first-teamers are done before halftime. So they don't get enough repetitions. On the other hand, the second- and third-team players get some reps in too. The counter argument is they

don't get much, because the running clock is going.

"I've always said staying healthy is the key to winning the state championship," said Allred.

If that's the case, things are looking bright for Royal, since everybody seems healthy.

The Knights have dominated by putting a lot of points on the board.

But Allred says if you ask him what this team's strength is, it's defense.

"Defensively, we're pretty strong," said Allred. "Jeremy Scoggins has done a great job with the defense."

And guys like seniors Derek Bergeson and Avery Ellis — both starting linebackers since their sophomore years — plus senior defensive lineman Eddie Jimenez have been starters for three years.

"There is a lot of senior leadership on this team," said Allred.

So what does Royal have to do to beat Eatonville?

"We've got to protect the football," said Allred. "And somehow, we've got to run the ball."

### STATE CHAMPIONSHIPS

So here are the state finals this Saturday by classification:

**Class 4A:** Lake Stevens vs. Graham-Kapowsin, 4 p.m., Mount Tahoma High School.

**Class 3A:** Bellevue vs. Kennewick, noon, Sparks Stadium, Puyallup.

**Class 2A:** Lynden vs. Tumwater, 4 p.m., Sparks Stadium, Puyallup.

**Class 1A:** Eatonville vs. Royal, noon, Harry E. Lang Stadium, Lakewood.

**Class 2B:** Kalama vs. Napavine, 4 p.m., Harry E. Lang Stadium, Lakewood.

**Class 1B:** Almirra-Coulee-Hartline vs. Quilcene, noon, Mount Tahoma High School.

Let me be clear on this: this is a bad way to hold the state football championships.

I understand the WIAA believes it's being overcharged by the Tacoma Dome to hold all six games over a two-day period.

But for fans — and for media people such as Myck Miller of KEPR TV and Jamie Council at KNDU — it's hard to cover events going on at different places at the same time.

The WIAA needs to find a facility that can hold all six games over a two-day period so that fans can also see all of the state's best teams — whether that's Husky Stadium, Lumen Stadium, Vancouver's Kiggins Bowl, or places in the Tri-Cities, Spokane or even Moses Lake.

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