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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL 2018 PREVIEWS

THERE ARE ONLY TWO SEASONS.

Football season, and Waiting For Football Season.

Well, as we all waited for the games to be played, ClarkCountyToday.com staffers heading to scrimmages earlier in the summer, then practices in August, trying to find stories on all 18 high school football programs in our coverage area.

Over the last couple weeks of August, we posted those stories online.

We've put them together here, for those of you who would like to download the pictures, schedules, season outlooks as well as the feature stories from all 18.

**HAPPY FOOTBALL
SEASON EVERYBODY.**



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2018 FOOTBALL PREVIEW: BATTLE GROUND TIGERS

Battle Ground's Boden Strouse was told he would miss all of his junior season due to an injury. He pushed himself, though, to be with his team for the final week of the year and got to celebrate a victory. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

BODEN STROUSE WANTS TO MAKE THE BEST OF 2018 AFTER A TOUGH BREAK IN 2017

BATTLE GROUND — He got back to the field sooner than expected, sooner, perhaps than his doctor would have preferred.

There are only so many games in a high school football season. Missing one or two games, much less eight, can be unbearable.

So Boden Strouse did all he could to return to action before the end of the 2017 season with the Battle Ground Tigers.

BATTLE GROUND TIGERS

Coach: Mike Kesler

Season outlook: The Tigers look for improvement in the second year of Kesler's system. The schedule will not help in terms of wins and losses. Besides playing in the tough 4A GSHL, the Tigers also get a non-league game against the Class 3A state runner-up, Rainier Beach, plus a game against 3A GSHL champion Mountain View. "The expectations are to work hard, start to buy in to the program a little bit more, and bring it back up," Kesler said.

Some key returners: Blake Harris, sr.; Garrett Moon, sr.; Trent Thompson, sr.; Boden Strouse, sr.; Seth Workman, sr.

2017 in review: A new coach and pretty much a brand new team went through a lot of growing pains in 2017. The Tigers felt they let one get away in Week 4 and were certainly in position to win in Week 8. Then they got the breakthrough they needed, a victory in Week 9 to finish 1-8.



Battle Ground's players hope to navigate through the challenging course that is the Greater St. Helens League this season. Photo by Mike Schultz

Even before he could play again, he remained involved, engaged with the team, trying to absorb every bit of knowledge to improve.

The injury he sustained last August ruined most of his junior season. But he was not done as a football player.

Now, as he prepares for his senior year, he has a new point of view.

"Every play on the field is a gift," he said. "You can't take that for granted. That's what I learned from my collarbone experience."

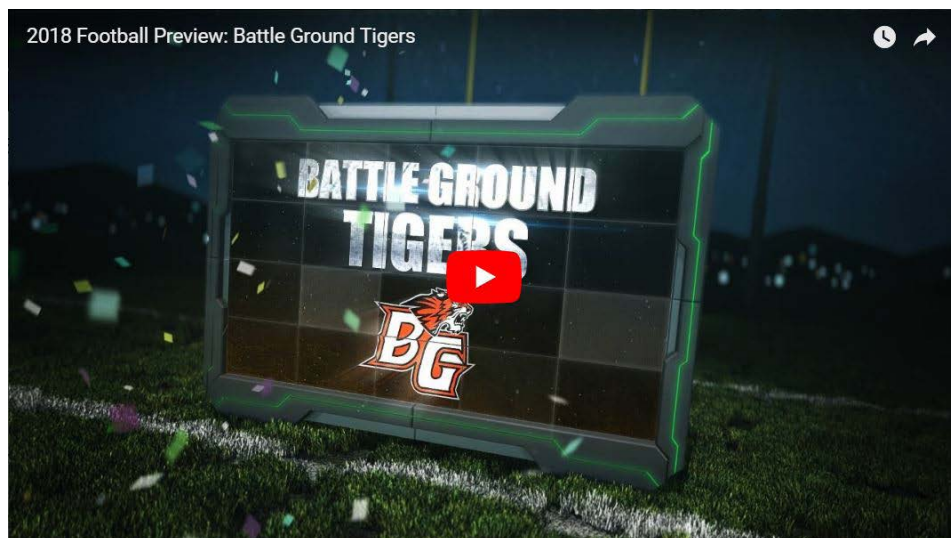
Strouse, a 6-foot, 2-inch wide receiver and safety, soared high into the air in an attempt to get

the ball in the final scrimmage of August practice last summer. He would secure the interception, but he also came down hard on his right side.

At that moment, he was not

sure of the severity of the injury. A little while later, though, while he was being driven to an emergency room, he figured it out on his own.

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"I felt the bone sticking out of my skin," Strouse said. "That's when I realized I wasn't going to be able to play. That was very hard to comprehend."

He was about to miss all, or most, of a transitional year for the Tigers. Battle Ground had a new head coach, Mike Kesler, and a new system. Plus, after graduating a ton of talent from the 2016 squad, it was going to be a chance for the next wave of athletes to showcase their skills.

Strouse never really got that chance.

He did, however, get to show off his character.

"He's one of those kids who is not necessarily vocal. He shows by example. He sets the tone," Kesler said.

Strouse had surgery to repair his collarbone on the first day of school. He was told it would take three months to recover. He was told he would not play that season.

It turned out, Strouse was on the field for Battle Ground's Week 9 victory.

"That was his mindset from day one after the surgery," Kesler said. "It showed me the character of the kid."

It is with that kind of leadership, the coach said, that will bring the program "back to where it was."

The Tigers went a combined 15-5 in 2015 and 2016. The rebuilding project started last season and it took a while to see success on the scoreboard. But there were the Tigers, with Strouse on the field in Week 9.

"I remember everything," Strouse said of that game. "From running through the tunnel, the crowd cheering, the big plays, the first whistle. I wouldn't trade that moment for anything."

Statistically, Battle Ground outplayed Prairie in Week 4, but the in-district rival beat the Tigers by one. In Week 8, Battle Ground lost by a touchdown.

The Tigers were down to their last chance at victory, Week 9 vs. A.C. Davis. Strouse and the Tigers walked off the field with a 28-20 win.

"To get that win with my team, to be part of it with them, it was amazing," Strouse said.

That victory allows them to walk into the 2018 season with a good feeling, too.

"We learned a lot and we created a lot of unity," Strouse said of enduring that season. "I think we're

BATTLE GROUND TIGERS

Fri., Aug. 31 - at Bethel, 7 p.m.

Sat., Sept. 8 - at Rainier Beach (Seattle), 3:30 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - at Mountain View, 7:30 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 - at Prairie, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 - Skyview, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - Heritage, 7 p.m.

Thu., Oct. 11 - at Camas, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - at Union, 4:30 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 26 - South Kitsap, 7 p.m.

Note - Road game at Union at McKenzie Stadium. Road game at Rainier Beach at Seattle Memorial Stadium.



Battle Ground's players hope to navigate through the challenging course that is the Greater St. Helens League this season. Photo by Mike Schultz

going to surprise a lot of people this year.”

On offense or on defense, Strouse's individual goal is simply to be the best player he can be, every play.

It is a similar philosophy he has for the team's goal this season.

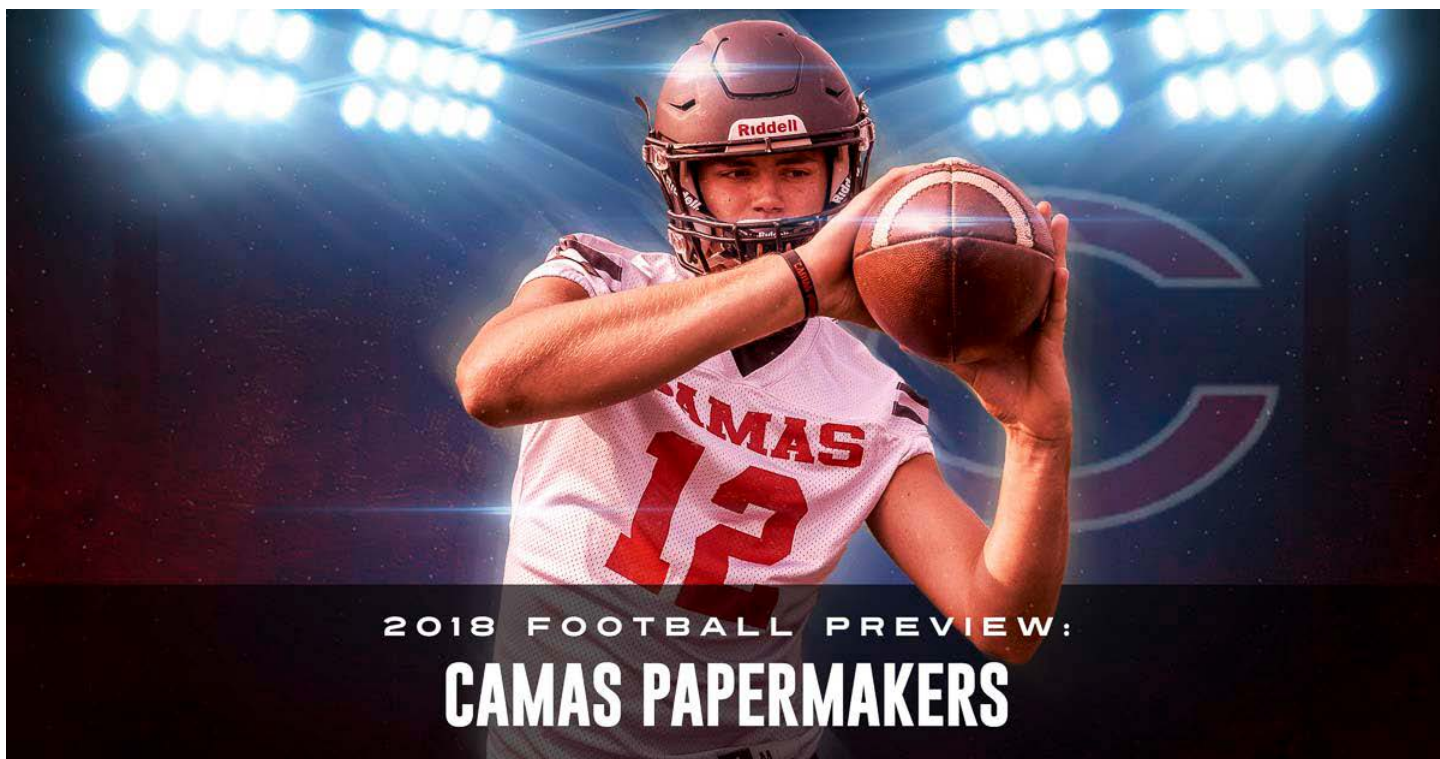
“Our goal is to play our heart out every single play we run,” he said. “If we can do that every single game, we'll be successful.”

It was that heart that got Strouse back on the field last season. He did not rush to come back to join a team going on a playoff run. He rushed to come back just to be with his teammates.

He plans on enjoying a full season with the Tigers in 2018. 🍀



Lineman Blake Harris is one of the key returning players at Battle Ground this season. Photo by Mike Schultz



Shane Jamison is a three-sport athlete and a great student at Camas High School. Football is his top sport, and he loves representing his team to the community. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz

SHANE JAMISON DOES A LITTLE BIT OF EVERYTHING AT CAMAS

CAMAS — It turns out, there is plenty of time for the things that are important.

Shane Jamison's schedule is pretty much full. Throughout the day. Throughout the year.

A student with a grade-point average of 3.99 who has taken five advanced placement courses so far in high school is about to take three more AP classes his senior year.

He also expects to play three sports again for the Camas Papermakers.

The only thing this talented student and multi-sport athlete specializes in is time management.

CAMAS PAPERMAKERS

Coach: Jon Eagle

Season outlook: This is an interesting group for the Papermakers. Been a long, long time, in fact, since the team did not return a single position player who made all-league. That just makes this team hungry to prove itself, though. People would be crazy to overlook this group. Not many household names in August. But there should be plenty by October. "What makes this job fun is to watch them gain confidence and change physically and mentally, seeing the pieces of the puzzle start taking shape," Eagle said.

Some key returners: Andrew Boyle, sr.; Dawson Ingram, sr.; Shane Jamison, sr.; Luc Sturbelle, sr.; Tristan Souza, jr.

2017 in review: The Papermakers increased their incredible regular-season winning streak to 58 games — that might never happen again in Southwest Washington — before losing to Union in Week 9 and losing the 4A GSHL title. The pride of the Papermakers helped with a bounce-back in the Week 10 playoff game to reach state for the eighth consecutive season. Camas lost in the first round, completing its season with a 9-2 record.



At Camas, the Papermakers are always carrying the burden of lofty expectations and the 2018 season is no different. Photo by Mike Schultz

“Everyone plays multiple sports when they are little. Then everyone drops out and specializes,” Jamison said. “I see no reason to do that. I love all three sports. Doing that in Camas is extra special because you get the whole community behind you.”

In one sport in particular.

“There is nothing like football,” Jamison said. “It’s just the atmosphere. You get good turnouts for basketball and baseball, but the whole city is talking about football, the whole city is going to the game. Few places in the country really bring the whole city to the football game like Camas.”

Jamison, who played a bit as a sophomore on the 2016 state championship team, and then got a lot of playing time on both offense and defense last season, is

excited for one final season in the Camas uniform, playing in front of that special crowd at Doc Harris Stadium.

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For the first time since the beginning of the 2011 season, the Papermakers are not going into a campaign as the defending league champions. They also have no returning all-league position players. Andrew Boyle is returning all-league punter and kicker (all-state, in fact) but no all-league returners on offense nor defense. (Boyle, by the way, is expected to start at quarterback this season.)

Still, this is Camas. This is the program that has won 58 of its

past 59 regular-season games. The loss, though, was Week 9 last year to the Union Titans.

But again, the Papermakers have the same goals as always: Win league. Then try to win state. "I don't really think of the pressure too much," Jamison said of playing at Camas. "It's more motivating, to show what this group can bring to Camas football. It's more pride than there is pressure."

Naturally, Jamison and the Papermakers want to get back on

top of the Class 4A Greater St. Helens League. Not just for them. Not just for their classmates. Not just for their fans throughout the city. But also their coaches.

Jamison is proud to be a three-sport athlete and loves the fact that the football coaches at Camas encourage that competition.

"He's not pressuring us just to do football," Jamison said of Camas coach Jon Eagle. "He knows we'll take care of football. But he wants us to have fun. He wants us to be kids."

Jamison's June was hectic. School, then football practice for spring drills, then basketball practice. Homework. Bed. Repeat.

In July, football workouts every day, basketball open gym three or four times a week, and Jamison also helped coach the kids basketball camp. He did not play summer baseball this year but still expects to play ball next spring for the Papermakers.

He said it is an honor to wear the Camas uniform.

Football is No. 1 in his athletic life, plus, Jamison said, the other sports help him in the fall.

Baseball is such a mental game, he said, always knowing where to go in this situation or that scenario. He said playing baseball helps him in football, for that recognition needed before every snap.

At 6-foot-4, he is a post for the Camas basketball team and it is expected of him to sky for rebounds. He said he uses those

CAMAS PAPERMAKERS

Fri., Aug. 31 - at Lincoln (Tacoma), 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 7 - Hazen, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - at West Valley (Yakima), 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 - Bellevue, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 - at Heritage, 4:30 p.m.

Thu., Oct. 4 - at Sumner, 7 p.m.

Thu., Oct. 11 - Battle Ground, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - Skyview, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 26 - at Union, 7:30 p.m.

Note - Road games at Heritage and Union at McKenzie Stadium.



Senior Luc Sturbelle catches a pass during a recent Camas practice. Sturbelle is one of the key returning players for the Papermakers in 2018. Photo by Mike Schultz



Senior Andrew Boyle is expected to lead the Camas offense this season. Photo by Mike Schultz

box-out skills on the football field, too, hauling in passes in the end zone.

His sports are important but they have not overtaken his life. He has an offer to play college football at Cornell University. Ivy League schools are not interested in athletes without a great academic record.

“Grades have always been a big part of my life,” Jamison said.

So big, in fact, that he is still bummed about the 3.99. Numbers matter to him. He wants to be a financial advisor one day. So that A-minus he received in an English class his freshman year still haunts him.

“That’s always going to be on my mind. I’m very ticked off about that,” he said.

He lets his aggression out on the football field, saying he prefers safety to wide receiver because of the hitting involved.

As far as his individual goals this season, Jamison said he wants to play like he is capable, but more importantly, he wants everyone to know he is giving it his all.

“All-league (honors) are great, but if you’re not really playing your heart out, it’s not the same,” he said.

At Camas, it is all about the team. The Papermakers are using last season as motivation for this

season. First thing, they want a league championship.

“We want to take back that crown,” Jamison said. “We want to show that last year was a fluke.”

He has state championship experience, too. He knows what it is like to win it all.

Interestingly, that is not what the Papermakers discuss in preparations for 2018.

“I’d rather talk about how losing sucks,” Jamison said. “Losing to Central Valley (in the first round of state) last year was one of the worst feelings I’ve had in a long time. We don’t lose too much at Camas. It definitely motivates you to do better the next time.”



Kanen Eaton went from junior varsity player as a sophomore to a breakout star as a junior. Now, he is one of more than 30 seniors on the Columbia River team hoping make some noise in November. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

KANEN EATON PROVED IT TO HIMSELF FIRST, THEN PROVED IT ON THE FIELD

VANCOUVER — Kanen Eaton thought he was ready for varsity football when he was a sophomore with the Columbia River Chieftains.

His coaches thought otherwise.

It was a jolt to the system, no doubt. It also was motivating.

“Sophomore year, I expected to get varsity time. I played very little,” he said. “Junior year was really my first varsity experience. Each week I added to my inventory to try to prove myself.”

He proved he did belong, after that year of learning.

COLUMBIA RIVER CHIEFTAINS

Coach: Christian Swain

Season outlook: With more than 30 seniors, the time is now for the Columbia River Chieftains. This is also Swain’s third season. He said the players understand his system, and he understands his players. This year, the goal is not just to make the playoffs but to win a playoff game ... or several.

Players to watch: Matthew Asplund, sr.; Kanen Eaton, sr.; Tristan Hoyer, sr.; Dawson Lieurance, sr.; Rylee Sadler, sr.; Logan Wilson, jr.

2017 in review: The Chieftains shook off a tough non-league schedule to win four of six games in the 2A GSHL and tie for second place. River then lost in the district playoff, finishing 4-6.



With more than 30 seniors, the time is now for the Columbia River Chieftains. Photo by Mike Schultz

Now, he wants to prove he belongs beyond high school football.

Eaton is one of 32 seniors on the Columbia River team this season, and one of the top returners in the region after his breakout performance in 2017.

His progression is clear from the video on the Hudl account. Every week, Eaton seemed to make more and more plays for the Chieftains.

“I kind of had to pinch myself,” Eaton said.

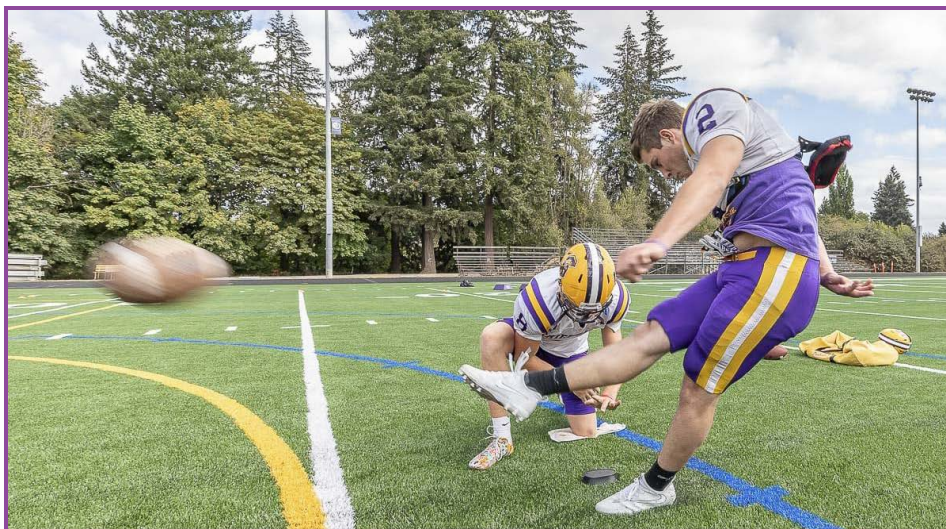
He improved, right along with the team. Columbia River opened the season 1-4 but won three of the

last four games to finish in a tie for second place in the 2A Greater St. Helens League to make the playoffs.

Eaton said it was the final regular season game of the year when he felt he had arrived.

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Columbia River's Matt Asplund holds for kicker Tristan Hoyer at a recent Chieftains' practice. Photo by Mike Schultz

COLUMBIA RIVER CHIEFTAINS

Fri., Aug. 31 - at Centralia, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 7 - Skyview, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - at Ridgefield, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 - Hockinson, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 - at Mark Morris, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - Washougal, 7 p.m.

Thu., Oct. 11 - at R.A. Long, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - Woodland, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 26 - Clarkston, 6 p.m.

"At that point, I knew everything I was supposed to do. It was all about execution," he said. "Every time I got a chance to do something, I did it."

He scored on offense. He scored on defense.

Since then, he has scored several looks from college coaches. Eaton spent much of the off-season going to camps and clinics, getting his name out there, far and wide. He even went to a showcase at Southern Cal, in hopes of getting scene by coaches outside of the Northwest.

A 6-foot-4 safety and wide receiver for the Chieftains, Eaton said he just wants to play college football — either side of the ball.

So now that he proved to himself he can excel in this game, he is looking to attack his final high school season to prove that Columbia River can excel, too.

Yes, the Chieftains finished in second place last season but they were not satisfied with the 4-5 regular-season mark. With so much talent returning, they are looking at not just a winning season but they also want to surprise some people.

"To win league," Eaton said. "We know that means we have to take out the big dogs, Hockinson."

Oh yes, the Hawks, the defending 2A state champions who expect to make another long playoff run in 2018. The Chieftains have respect for

the Hawks. They do not fear them, though.

Columbia River coach Christian Swain appreciates that attitude, too.

“We’ve got 32 seniors who have been working very hard in the offseason,” he said. “This is the year we can do some really good things.”

Swain took over the program in 2016 after 23 seasons of the John O’Rourke era.

“We’re starting to get our rhythm,” Swain said. “This is Year 3 with the staff. This year has been easier. We are not installing things. Starting to feel like my program. Hope that translates into some wins this year.”

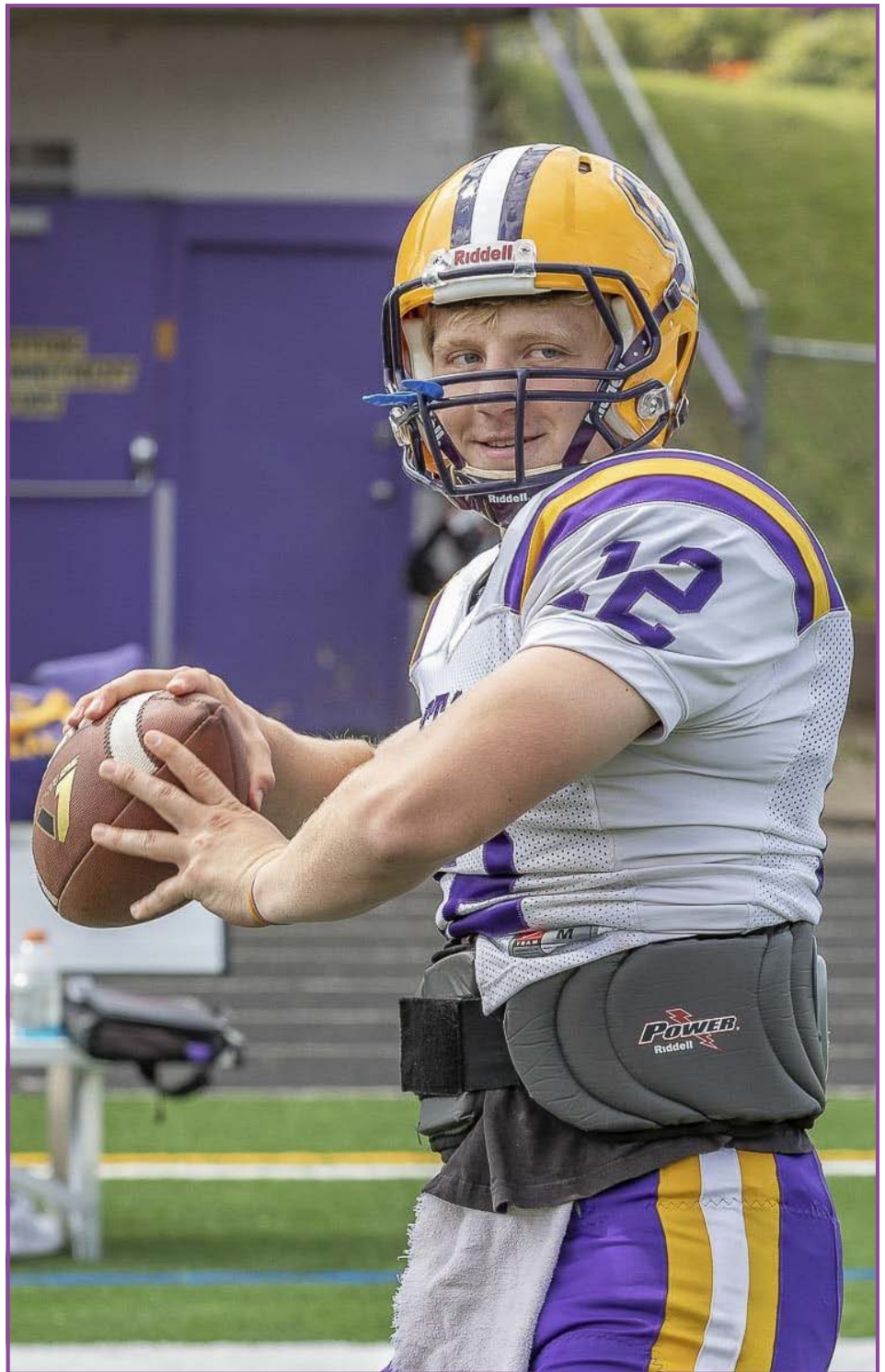
Eaton’s progress goes along with Swain’s progress with the program, too.

“He’s really developed. JV player as a sophomore then last year his breakout season,” Swain said. “Blew up at all the camps.”

Still, when it comes down to it, it is all about what comes next. He made a name for himself last year. He got noticed at camps in the offseason. But he must make an impact on the field this season in order to demand attention from college coaches.

“He’s got all the hype,” Swain said. “Now he has to prove it on the field, in the pads.”

The coach said Eaton has earned this shot, too.



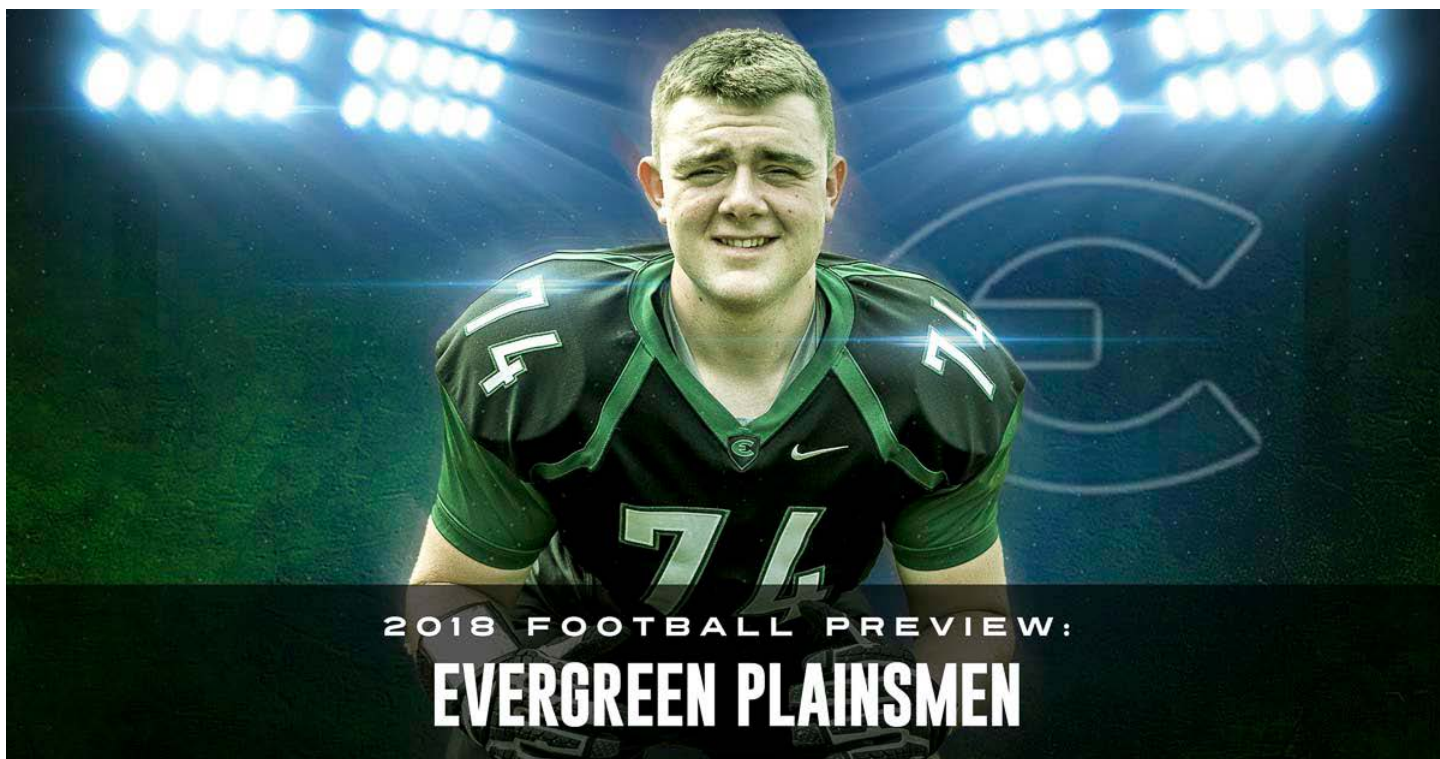
Senior Dawson Lieurance is one of two quarterbacks – the other is Matthew Asplund – who will guide the Columbia River offense in 2018. Photo by Mike Schultz

“He’s a kid you want to be successful because he put the work in,” Swain said. “He’s a great kid with great character.”

As an individual, Eaton said he

wants to be first team all league on both sides of the ball.

As a teammate, he wants to help Columbia River prove that it belongs among the best in the state, too. ■



Jacob Leckie's motor never stops. A senior at Evergreen, he is always working out, improving his technique, or encouraging a teammate. He is the hardest working football player his coach has ever seen. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

GOING THE EXTRA YARD IS JUST THE NORM FOR EVERGREEN'S JACOB LECKIE

VANCOUVER — He thought this was the norm, the usual. He did not think he was doing anything special.

Only his coach disagreed. His teammates disagreed, too.

When it came time to discuss team captains for the 2018 Evergreen football season, he was an obvious choice. A unanimous choice.

Because Jacob Leckie did so much for the team last year, especially when he could do no more for the team on the field on Friday nights.

EVERGREEN PLAINSMEN

Coach: Terry Hyde

Season outlook: The Plainsmen are getting close. They know it. But this is the season, they believe, they can hit that 5-3 goal. At Evergreen, that means at least five regular-season wins and a top-three finish in the 3A Greater St. Helens League. That would mean a winning season and a playoff berth. Not a large group of Plainsmen out for football this season, but a dedicated bunch, the coach said.

Some key returners: Ryan Blaize, sr.; Zyll Griffin, jr.; Jacob Leckie, sr.; Nathan Lien, jr.; Eli Vall-lei-ataua, sr.

2017 in review: The Plainsmen lost two league games by a touchdown or less. Had they won one of those games, they would have made the playoffs. Instead, they lost in a tiebreaker, finishing the season 4-5 overall.



The Evergreen Plainsmen have their eyes on a playoff berth this season. Photo by Mike Schultz

A broken thumb in September ruined most of his junior season. Or so he thought.

It turned out, the injury brought to light some of his other attributes. He never missed a practice. He never missed an opportunity to learn from his coaches. He never missed a chance to help out a teammate who might have been struggling with a concept.

He kept running, to stay in shape. When the injury healed, he attacked the offseason weight training program. Over the summer, he dominated at team camp in Linfield, being named the defensive lineman and offensive lineman of the camp.

Back at Evergreen, whenever the team met up for conditioning drills, he was there. Always. And if he saw a teammate having a tough time during the final lap, for example, he would

run beside him, always with an encouraging word.

“It’s not about me. It’s about them team,” Leckie said. “It’s about building a foundation for

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the future. Evergreen was once a powerhouse. I'd very much like to see it become a powerhouse again."

Evergreen coach Terry Hyde said Leckie was the first name mentioned by every other player on the team when captains were announced.

"I've never seen anybody work harder in getting prepared for a season ... ever," said Hyde, who has been a head coach

or assistant coach in Clark County for decades.

"He is such a person who is going to give his best in everything he does, so he wants that from anyone else around him," Hyde said. "This is the standard here. This is what we do."

He was already a good teammate before the injury. How he responded after the fact, though, really opened some eyes.

At first, Leckie thought he had

dislocated his right thumb during a drill in practice.

"I tried to whack it back into place," he said. "That didn't work."

The next day, he went to the trainer, hoping to get the thumb taped. The trainer took one look and said no, advising Leckie to go to a doctor. This was not a simple tape job.

That is when he got official word. His season was over.

"It was terrible. More or less, I felt worthless," Leckie said.

EVERGREEN PLAINSMEN

Fri., Aug. 31 - at Heritage, 4:30 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 7 - Centralia, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - at Lakewood, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 - Rochester, 4:30 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 - at Fort Vancouver, 5 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - Kelso, 7:30 p.m.

Thu., Oct. 11 - at Mountain View, 4:30 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - Hudson's Bay, 7:30 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 26 - Prairie, 4:30 p.m.

Note - Home games at McKenzie Stadium; road games at Heritage and at Mountain View also played at McKenzie Stadium. Road game vs. Fort Vancouver played at Kiggins Bowl.



Senior Eli Vaa-leiataua is one of Evergreen's key returning players this season. Photo by Mike Schultz

He snapped out of that funk and focused instead on what he still could do for his teammates.

“Well, I’m here. I’m still part of this team,” he reminded himself. “I continued to show up for practice. While I’m here, I might as well make myself useful.

“I just thought I was just doing what I was expected to do.”

Sure, technically, that is the expectation — still attend practice, try to learn as an observer. Most injured players do just that. But many do the minimum.

Hyde and the Plainsmen, though, realized Leckie was doing so much more for the team.

“Being captain means leading by example and being there for the guys when they need me, on and off the field,” Leckie said.

That leading-by-example part was on display at Linfield College during team camp. Hyde said he could not recall the last time camp coaches selected the same player for top honors on both the offensive and defensive lines.

“It’s just a drive to keep going, no matter how tired I got,” Leckie said. “I’m working for the guy next to me. You’re always in the arena. They’re my brothers, right next to me. I’ll do anything for them.”

Leckie also thrives under the demands of the game.

“I love being in the thick of it. They put us right in the trenches,” he said.

He also recalled a saying Hyde



Junior Nathan Lien adds some size and strength to the Evergreen line. Photo by Mike Schultz

told all of the Plainsmen back when they were freshmen. “It’s a fist fight in a phone booth.”

“I love it, that fighting spirit,” Leckie said. “It’s always got to be fed.”

He also has fun, within that same spirit. When he was a freshman, he made a big play on defense and announced to everyone on the field something to the effect of “This is my swamp.” He has been called Shrek ever since.

After high school, Leckie dreams of serving in the military. He might enlist, or, if he finds a place to play college football, he might take ROTC classes.

Before he leaves Evergreen, though, he wants to leave a lasting mark. On and off the field.

“The goal is to have a winning season, to build the foundation for the younger generation, and to eventually become the powerhouse we once were,” Leckie said. “More than that, it’s to make quality citizens after high school. After all, football is only four years.”

Leckie knows first-hand that even those four years are not guaranteed on the field. But even with an injury, one can remain committed to a cause. ■



2018 FOOTBALL PREVIEW: FORT VANCOUVER TRAPPERS

Jonavin Salavea, Isaac Martinez and Elimu Jackson believe in the present and future of the Fort Vancouver football program. As they improve their football skills, they also are buying in to a philosophy that teaches them to be better students, better people. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

THIS NEW START FOR FORT INCLUDES DAILY WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND INSPIRATION

VANCOUVER — It is another fresh start.

Only, this one feels a little different.

There were more than 40 football players out the first week of practice for the Fort Vancouver Trappers. That means there are plans for a varsity squad and a C-squad this season. That means there is hope.

“Be the foundation for the future,” said lineman Jonavin Salavea. “This is just the start at what’s coming.”

FORT VANCOUVER TRAPPERS

Coach: Neil Lomax

Season outlook: Do not be fooled. There are athletes on this team. Maybe not enough to win a bunch of games, but there is potential. This season, it is all about a new beginning. Seniors want to be able to look back and say they helped start something special. Juniors and sophomores know if they put in the work now, they will see positive results.

Some key players: Jonavin Salavea; Isaac Martinez; Elimu Jackson, Austin Real James, Tyler Runkle, Nick Laurenza.

2017 in review: The Trappers went 0-9, failing to score in six games.



Former National Football League great Neil Lomax takes over as head football coach at Fort Vancouver High School in 2018.
Photo by Mike Schultz

“A start to something new,” added Elimu Jackson, a linebacker and tight end.

“Coach really wants to change the program,” noted Isaac Martinez, adding that he is hoping to get more athletes out for football and then help them improve.

“I want them to be as good as they can be,” he said.

Being good on the field, in terms

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20



of wins and losses, might take some time at Fort Vancouver. But the latest new approach to the sport is focusing on being strong, being unified off the field. That is something that does not need time for improvement.

That can start right now.

Under new head coach Neil Lomax.

He is the fifth head coach in the past seven seasons at Fort Vancouver.

Lomax, the former NFL quarterback and a Portland State legend, has long been an assistant coach at the high school level, working in similar places where the wins were few and far between when he arrived. Which is why his top priority at Fort Vancouver has nothing to do with the scoreboard.

"The No. 1 goal for the kids is to graduate high school. We can use football to do that," he said.

He preaches a word of the day.

Dedication. Hope. Faith. Humility. Trust.

Oh yes, trust. That is a big one. These players do not know Lomax's history in this game. Well, they might now. But they were born long after his playing days with the Cardinals organization. These players just know he is another new coach.

"Hopefully, they'll trust me," Lomax said.

Hope has an impact, too. Lomax wants to inform his players that there is a future for them, no matter the score on Friday nights. If they put in the work, if they are committed to a common goal, they will prove to themselves that they can put in the work in areas of more importance than a football field.

That has to be the Fort Vancouver way now.

And if the players put in that work, the team will start to improve. A win, just one win, would be an improvement over last year. Perhaps in the near future, the Trappers get to a few wins in a season. Just keep working.

"The word of the day has special meaning," Jackson said. "It will change a person's attitude on how they should practice that day. It helps motivate us more."

"It is working," Salavea said. "I feel we are getting closer."

A recent day showcased the word desire. That led to dedication. And then discipline.

"He explains to us what it's go-

FORT VANCOUVER TRAPPERS

Sat., Sept. 1 - at Seton Catholic, noon

Fri., Sept. 7 - Ridgefield, 8 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - at Mark Morris, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 - Centralia, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 - Evergreen, 5 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - at Hudson's Bay, 8 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 12 - Kelso, 8 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - at Prairie, 7 p.m.

Thu., Oct. 25 - at Mountain View, 7 p.m.

Note - Home games at Kiggins Bowl; road game at Hudson's Bay at Kiggins Bowl. Road game at Mountain View played at McKenzie Stadium.



Being good on the field, in terms of wins and losses, might take some time at Fort Vancouver. But the latest new approach to the sport is focusing on being strong, being unified off the field. Photo by Mike Schultz

ing to take,” Martinez said. “To be disciplined and dedicated, that leads to desiring football and wanting to be here and just loving the sport. It shows you how you should always be.”

This is the new beginning for Fort Vancouver. There are no promises about winning a set number of games this season, but the Trappers are a promising bunch because they value what their new coach is trying to teach them.

“We want to give it our all, do the best we can, be more mature and be better people,” Martinez said.

That would make for a winning season at Fort Vancouver. 🍀



An increased turnout at Fort Vancouver High School has given the Trappers hope for the future of their football program. Photo by Mike Schultz



2018 FOOTBALL PREVIEW: HERITAGE TIMBERWOLVES

A year ago, Jonathan Salo was told his football career was over. Two surgeries and countless hours a rehabilitation later, he is preparing to play for the Heritage Timberwolves. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

JONATHAN SALO IS A 'PROGRAM MAKER' FOR HIS DEDICATION TO THE GAME AND HIS TEAM

VANCOUVER — Jonathan Salo was crushed. His football career was finished, his doctor said. Find a new sport, his doctor said.

"That was pretty depressing, to be honest. I love football so much," Salo said. "I was a little pissed off, too. Doctor said I should start to golf, try low-impact stuff. I didn't want to play golf. I want to play football."

A year later, Salo has returned to action, on the

HERITAGE TIMBERWOLVES

Coach: Matt Gracey

Season outlook: The Timberwolves understand the difficulty in earning a winning season. They have come close the past two seasons but have yet to get to five wins. Schedule-wise, this year might even be tougher. Still, the program is showing signs of improvement and has a good mix of returning players and hungry, young talent. The players know what to expect from their coach and vice versa. "We want to play the best game we can each week," Gracey said.

Some key returners: Jonathan Salo, sr.; Skyler Scoggins, jr.; Andrew Thom, sr.; Solofua Vercher, jr.; Kahai Umiama, sr.

2017 in review: The Timberwolves went 4-5 for the second year in a row, including a league win.



Former National Football League great Neil Lomax takes over as head football coach at Fort Vancouver High School in 2018.
Photo by Mike Schultz

football field, hoping to make the most of his senior season with the Heritage Timberwolves.

“Something snapped in me,” Salo said. “I can accept this or do something about this. I had to try, at least.”

He did not know it, but Salo was born with an impingement in his hips. He always had difficulty getting in the proper position on the football field. A three-point stance was nearly impossible. He could never get parallel while doing squats in the weight room, either.

“I didn’t think anything was wrong. Just thought I had tight hips,” Salo said.

The pain intensified last summer, though. He went to a doctor.

Salo found out he he had a torn labrum in his right hip and a torn labrum in his left hip. Surgery was required. His junior season was over before it started.

“Do you think I can play next year?” Salo asked.

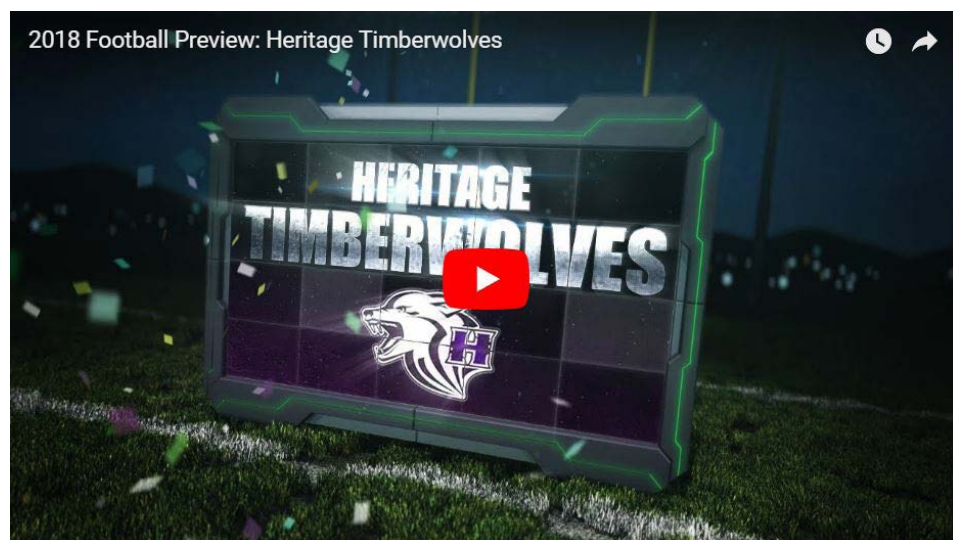
The answer, at the time, was no.

“I was pretty devastated from that,” Salo said.

He had surgery on his right hip in September, then a couple months later his left hip was repaired.

“The right hip was painful. The

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left his wasn't," he said. "The body works in weird ways."

The boys works in incredible ways when it is healthy, though.

Salo went to work as soon as he could. Stretching. Physical therapy. Three, four hours every day. Following the advice of medical professionals. He was preparing for a football season that was no guarantee of ever arriving.

He could not live with himself if he did not try.

Months later, and Salo is asking again about his future.

"My doctor was shocked I could morph into this new person so soon," Salo said.

He. Was. Back.

Heritage coach Matt Gracey calls Salo a "player to watch" this season even though he is kind of a mystery. The Timberwolves had big plans for Salo last year as a junior. Those plans, clearly, changed. And now Salo goes into

his final season without that full year of experience.

At the same time, the experience Salo did go through is really all the coaches needed to figure they have a winner.

"He is a program maker," Gracey said. "He has come back with a vengeance."

Salo successfully got parallel on the squat, lifting 315 pounds five times.

"I could never do that before," he said.

"I'm way faster, too. That's one thing I have noticed."

All of this success in the offseason has brought a new confidence.

The Timberwolves have gone 4-5 the past two seasons. They are looking for their first winning regular season since 2008.

"I feel it this year, I really do," Salo said.

Plus he has some individual goals in mind.

"Give it my all and aim high," Salo said. "Aim for first team all league. If I can get through this hip thing, football better be a breeze. I'd say 75 to 80 percent of this battle was getting over the hip thing."

He also is not taking anything for granted. That season away from the game was too tough to handle. Earlier this summer at team camp, Salo broke a finger. Still, he didn't take any days off or practice.

HERITAGE TIMBERWOLVES

Fri., Aug. 31 - Evergreen, 4:30 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 7 - at Hudson's Bay, 5 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - at Kelso, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 - Mountain View, 7:30 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 - Camas, 4:30 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - at Battle Ground, 7 p.m.

Thu., Oct. 11 - Union, 7:30 p.m.

Sat., Oct. 20 - at Emerald Ridge (Puyallup), 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 26 - at Skyview, 8 p.m.

Note - Home games at McKenzie Stadium. Road games at Hudson's Bay and Skyview at Kiggins Bowl.



The Heritage Timberwolves have been hard at work this week preparing for the 2018 high school football season. Photo by Mike Schultz

“I’m just so thankful, thankful to be playing,” he said.

His rehabilitation, his mind-over-matter philosophy sounds a lot like the blueprint for a football team’s success.

“Never give up and really put in the work,” Salo said. “I could have given up. I could have listened to the doctor. It all worked out in the end. Look where I am now.”

Jonathan Salo is back on the football field, where he belongs 🟢



Junior Solofua Vercher is one of the key returning players in the Heritage football program in 2018. Photo by Mike Schultz



Levi Crum says there is no pressure taking over as the starting quarterback for the defending state champion Hockinson Hawks. He has, after all, prepared for this opportunity for years. Plus, he said, he has plenty of help from talented teammates. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

LEVI CRUM TAKES THE REINS OF HOCKINSON'S HIGH-POWERED OFFENSE

HOCKINSON — The Hockinson Hawks have won 43 football games the past four years with a simple, yet effective, philosophy.

“On to the next one,” Levi Crum said. “We win, and now it’s over with.”

In other words, congrats on the victory, now let’s work on the next victory.

For one specific position, Crum is the next one, taking over for one of the greatest quarterbacks in Southwest Washington high school football history.

HOCKINSON HAWKS

Coach: Rick Steele

Season outlook: The Seattle Times listed the Hawks as the preseason No. 1 team in Class 2A. Not just because the Hawks won the state title a year ago. But because of all the talent returning. Sawyer Racanelli, a junior, already has an offer from a Pac-12 school and interest from more. The Hawks have experienced linemen. They have an experienced defense. And they all experienced how to win a state championship, so might as well set the goal to do it again.

Some key returners: Nathan Balderas, jr.; Peyton Brammer, jr.; Levi Crum, jr.; Jonathan Domingos, sr.; Nicholas Frichtl, sr.; Aidan Mallory, sr.; Sawyer Racanelli, jr.; Taku-mi Velej, jr.

2017 in review: The Hawks went 14-0 and won the Class 2A state tournament. Their closest game was the state championship game when they beat Tumwater 35-22. Hockinson averaged 45.2 points per game, giving up 13.

Canon Racanelli led Hockinson to a 14-0 season and a Class 2A state championship in 2017. He's off to college. Next up, his cousin.

"It seems like there should be a bunch of pressure and stuff. Personally, for me, it's all about simplifying what I have to do. I don't have to do what Canon did last year. I'm stepping in for the best offense in the state. (Coach Rick Steele) doesn't need me to do what senior Canon did. I just have to do what Canon did his first year."

That would be plenty good, too. And Crum knows he is capable of doing just that as he enters his junior season with the Hawks.

He knows it is his time to play quarterback, but he does not need the spotlight.

"Just do my job. That is truly what it's all about," he said. "We have all the playmakers. We have all the tools. I can't try to over-do stuff."

Read the defense. Get the ball to the right people. Let them do their thing.

"That's the way I'm looking at this season," Crum said.

There is some pressure, albeit internal. The 2018 Hawks want to do exactly what the 2017 Hawks accomplished.

"We've been there. We know what it's like. That is the best feeling. That is it," Crum said. "Anything less wouldn't be satisfying. Our goal is to go back and win the state championship."



Senior Nathan Balderas (71), shown here in the final moments of a playoff win over Tumwater last season, returns to anchor the Hockinson offensive and defensive lines in 2018. Photo by Mike Schultz

Before the playoffs, there will be a tough non-league schedule before playing in the 2A Greater St. Helens League. Last season, the Hawks were not tested in league.

That set up a memorable November, and then the trip to the Tacoma Dome.

Last December's championship

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28



game sparked a longer-than-usual celebration for the Hawks. No more games to play that season, it was not necessary to have an “on to the next one” mentality right away. Crum said the Hawks gave it about a week.

“Then it was our turn to do our thing, to lift and get better on our own before this season,” the quarterback said.

The 2018 Hawks, like all other teams in August, are 0-0.

True, but they do have a target.

That trophy. Those championship rings. They belong to the Hawks now.

“Before last year, no one knew where we were, where Hockinson was,” Crum said. “Last year was cool being a huge underdog.”

Prior to 2017, Hockinson had never reached the state semifinals.

“I definitely think people know where Hockinson is at, for sure,” Crum said.

Crum does have some varsity experience at the position. He played some fourth quarters last season, plus he had one snap in the championship game when Racanelli needed a quick breather.

Now, it is Crum’s offense, in terms of the quarterback being the leader of any offense.

He defers, though, to others, those playmakers. Sawyer Racanelli, also a junior, is a wide receiver and linebacker and one of

HOCKINSON HAWKS

Fri., Aug. 31 - at Toppenish, 7 p.m.

Thurs., Sept. 6 - at Archbishop Murphy (Everett),
7 p.m. (on Root Sports NW)

Fri., Sept. 14 - R.A. Long, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 - at Columbia River, 7 p.m.

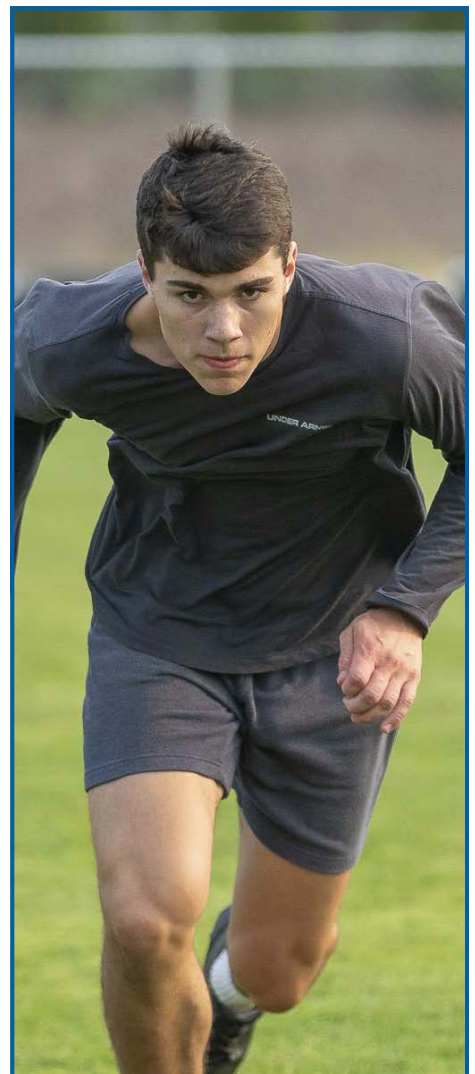
Fri., Sept. 28 - Woodland, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - Mark Morris, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 12 - To be announced

Fri., Oct. 19 - at Washougal, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 26 - at Ridgefield, 7 p.m.



Receiver Peyton Brammer is just one of many explosive offensive weapons returning for the Hockinson Hawks this season. Photo by Mike Schultz



Receiver Sawyer Racanelli was a key cog in Hockinson's offense that averaged 45.2 points per game last season. Photo by Mike Schultz

the top recruits in the state for the graduating class of 2020. Peyton Brammer will also make a quarterback look good with his receiving skills.

The Hawks lost did lose eight all-league players to graduation, yet they return so many experienced players, as well. Steele said all the talent around Crum will make Crum even better.

The coach also said he has already seen a new player emerge in Crum. This summer, in 7-on-

7 tournaments and clinics, Crum put on a show.

"We knew he was going to be good, but we didn't know he was going to be that good," Steele said. "He is going to surprise some people."

That is the challenge for the long-range this season, for a team that expects to play a lot of games in November.

For now, though, Crum has a short-term goal.

"With my first time as the starting quarterback, I just want

to get the speed of the game," Crum said. "The numbers will come, but it's mostly about winning games."

Still, he understands the game within the game. The quarterback, especially for an offense accustomed to putting the ball in the air, is the focal point.

"It's not just like any other position. It's a big one, especially for this school after what we did last year," Crum said. "I'm super excited. I'm sure it will be a lot of fun." 🍀



Logan DeGrandpre and the Eagles made it to the playoffs in 2017. It lasted one game for the team, and only a quarter for DeGrandpre. Now, after recovering from a serious knee injury, DeGrandpre hopes to help the Eagles make it back to the playoffs. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

LOGAN DEGRANDPRE, BACK FROM KNEE INJURY, STANDS TALL WITH HIS TEAMMATES

VANCOUVER — It was years in the making for the athletes, years in the making for the program.

They had made it, the postseason. For the first time since 2001, the Hudson's Bay Eagles were in the football playoffs.

It was supposed to be a night of celebration, win or lose.

Unfortunately for offensive lineman Logan De-

HUDSON'S BAY EAGLES

Coach: Ray Lions

Season outlook: Coming off back-to-back winning seasons for the first time since 2002, these Eagles are out to prove that the program's turnaround remains a work in progress, that it is not about to take another dip just because a talented group of seniors graduated from last year's squad. As far as the Eagles are concerned, three winning seasons in a row and/or another playoff berth would prove the doubters wrong.

Some key returners: Logan DeGrandpre, sr.; Akilotoa Kaumatule sr.; Parker Marsh sr.; Carter Morse, sr.; Treyce Teague, jr.

2017 in review: The Eagles won six games in a season for the first time since they won eight in 2001. They made the playoffs for the first time since 2001, too. So, yes, it was quite the breakthrough for the program.



Senior Akilotoa Kaumatule is one of the key returning players at Hudson's Bay this season. Photo by Mike Schultz

Grandpre, the night ended way too early with a crushing injury in the first quarter.

"I was blocking my guy. I was just focused on my guy," DeGrandpre recalled. "People started falling. Someone fell, helmet first, on the outside of my knee."

DeGrandpre came crashing to the turf.

"At first, I thought, 'That can't be me. I can't get hurt.'"

He tried to get up, but he could not. He flipped over on his back, trying to buy some time to give himself another opportunity to stand.

That is when he realized this was not a minor injury.

"I can't get up," he said.

The medical professionals at that game were not sure of the

extent of the leg injury. When they are unsure, they prefer not to move an athlete. An ambulance was called, and the game

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was put in a long delay, allowing DeGrandpre to process everything around him.

“Damn, there goes the rest of the game,” DeGrandpre said. “I was upset I had to go to the hospital, that I couldn’t be with the team for the end of the game. Just to leave the team empty like that sucked.”

It was the end of DeGrandpre’s season, and three quarters later, it was the end of the season for Hudson’s Bay.

Not exactly how the Eagles wanted Week 10 to go, but months later, they at least get to say they made it to Week 10.

“Practices were the best practices we had all season,” DeGrandpre said of that week. “Everybody was high energy. Everybody was ecstatic. Everybody had high spirits.”

They know, after all, where they once were.

When DeGrandpre arrived at Hudson’s Bay, the Eagles had

won three games combined in the previous four seasons. DeGrandpre ended up as a starter on varsity as a freshman on a team that went 2-7. The next season, the Eagles went 5-4 for their first winning season since 2002 but missed out on the playoffs due to a tiebreaker.

Then the breakthrough in 2017, with a 6-3 record and a tiebreaker win this time to take the third seed from the 3A Greater St. Helens League.

“It was nice to be able to play in the playoffs. I was looking forward to it. The team was looking forward to it,” DeGrandpre said.

The game was against traditional power Bellevue, and no one gave the Eagles much of a chance of advancing beyond Week 10. But at least they were there.

“I was focused on we had to give it 100 percent, that we couldn’t give up,” DeGrandpre said.

He did not give up. He just could not go on anymore after the injury.

It turned out, DeGrandpre had a complete tear of his ACL and MCL and a partial tear of the meniscus. He had surgery in December.

Since then, he has been trying to follow all of the medical advice in terms of his rehabilitation. He has been cleared for drills, and he has been working on getting back in shape.

A 6-foot-3 left tackle, he played at 280 pounds last season. Today,

HUDSON’S BAY EAGLES

Fri., Aug. 31 - Washougal, 8 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 7 - Heritage, 5 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - W.F. West, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 - at Franklin (Portland), 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 - Mountain View, 8 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - Fort Vancouver, 8 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 12 - at Prairie, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - at Evergreen, 7:30 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 26 - Kelso, 5 p.m.

Note - Home games at Kiggins Bowl. Road game at Evergreen played at McKenzie Stadium.



Senior Parker Marsh will guide the Hudson's Bay offense this season. Photo by Mike Schultz



Senior Carter Morse catches a pass at a recent Hudson's Bay practice, forced indoors due to air quality concerns. Photo by Mike Schultz

he is 315 pounds. Some of that weight gain, he said, came from being on the couch, not moving too much soon after the surgery.

"Now I'm trying to transform it into good weight," he said.

He is "95 percent" sure he will be ready to play in Week 1.

"I don't want to let down my team," he said.

The Eagles don't want to let down

one another. Now that they have tasted the postseason, they want to keep improving.

"The goal is to be consistently making the playoffs and not taking a bad dip," DeGrandpre said. "Stay a good team for a long time."

Beyond high school, DeGrandpre does want to play college football.

He said he will concern himself

with that endeavour after his senior season, though.

He is getting healthy, and he wants another campaign that stretches into November. This time, though, he wants to walk off the field with his teammates.

"It gives me a sense of pride being a Hudson's Bay Eagle," DeGrandpre said. "Coming back from this injury is going to give me more self-confidence, too." 🟩



Dylan Scott was 5-6 as a freshman at King's Way Christian. Now, he is a 6-foot tall lineman and linebacker. He also hopes King's Way Christian football continues to grow. Photo by Mike Schults. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

DYLAN SCOTT GROWS INTO LEADERSHIP ROLE IN HOPES OF HELPING PROGRAM GROW

VANCOUVER — It has been one interesting ride for the football players at King's Way Christian, so many twists and turns on this road.

That journey, though, makes it special to be where they are now, especially for senior Dylan Scott.

"I just feel like this is now, in a sense, my team," he said. "If we're talking about the players, this is the team I want to lead. I've gone through all

KING'S WAY CHRISTIAN KNIGHTS

Coach: Brian Rodriguez

Season outlook: No one associated with the program is guaranteeing a playoff berth. The Knights do promise to prepare, be accountable, be coachable. And their new coach and coaching staff promises to show respect for the players. Together, they expect to play for each other, thrive together. "They're hungry. They're hungry," Rodriguez said. "We have the vision. Kids are buying in."

Players to watch: Bailey Meek, so.; Bryson Metz, fr.; Gage Koenders, jr.; Dylan Scott, sr. Kemper Shrock, jr.

2017 in review: The Knights won two of their last three games, including an overtime thriller over a league opponent, to finish 3-6.



Kemper Shrock has the look of quarterback. He is tall with a great arm and is improving every day, according to his coach. Photo by Mike Schultz

the coaching changes to become 'That Guy.' I've always wanted to be the guy others look up to, to talk to the freshmen."

He also wants to be a leader on the team that helps stabilize the program.

Brian Rodriguez is the newest new head coach for the Knights. A former assistant at Skyview, he is the fourth head coach in the past four years.

The Knights had a lot of success on the field when Scott was a sophomore, playing special teams. That team was loaded with seniors, though, and the head coach took another job. Last year, the Knights went 3-6, and the head coach resigned.

No doubt, the constant turnover has taken a toll.

It does not have to remain a neg-



New coach Brian Rodriguez says he wants to be at King's Way Christian for the long-term plan. The program has had four head coaches in four years. Rodriguez wants the Knights to have stability. Photo by Mike Schultz

ative, though. Starting now, Scott says, it is all positive for the Knights.

"He's really, really cool," Scott said of Rodriguez. "He's helped me so much, not just with football, but with everything. And I've only known him a couple months."

Now it is time for the senior leaders and Rodriguez to show the rest of the King's Way support-

ers that this is a new beginning. While the seniors only have one season left, if they achieve what they set out to do, the program will thrive in the future.

Wins on the field would help, but something more important is required for King's Way Christian football.

"We need to build an environ-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36



ment where all of us are 100-percent dedicated to the program,” Scott said. “If we build an environment everyone is going to enjoy, I think we can do some things. If that environment is contagious, it will grow every year. I’m hoping people will start saying, ‘I wish I played last year.’”

Naturally, Scott said he would love to see it all come together this season on the field, that the Knights could go on a magical run and make the playoffs. Hon-

estly, though, he would rather be part of a larger legacy.

“Overall, I just want the program to grow this year. I want the students to be excited about Friday football games instead of ‘Can’t wait to see you guys lose.’ I want the team to grow, and I want the school to be excited about Friday nights,” he said.

Rodriguez appreciates that attitude. He also understands there could be some hesita-

tion among those outside of the football program.

No, he said, he will not be a one-and-done coach.

“I want to be here,” Rodriguez said. “I don’t want to use King’s Way as a stepping stone.”

He said results on the scoreboard will eventually take care of themselves as long as the Knights take care of themselves.

“My vision for Year One is to have a lot of fun,” Rodriguez said, adding that he wants a culture of we, not me.

The Knights need to be accountable, dependable, and coachable, he said. And the coaches need to show the same commitment to the players.

“We’re not going to focus on winning,” Rodriguez said. “If we’re focusing on winning, we’re losing.”

As the football program has had its growing pains, Scott has just been growing.

Scott was 5-6, 130 pounds as a freshman. Back then he was a quarterback. The next year, he was a tight end and running back. Last year, he became an offensive lineman and linebacker. Today, he is listed at 6-0, 200 pounds.

Don’t tell anyone, but he secretly hoped to play tight end this season, to catch a few passes maybe, but he will play wherever the team needs him.

That is leadership, too. He knows so many positions, but

KING’S WAY CHRISTIAN KNIGHTS

Fri., Aug. 31 - Elma, 6 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 7 - at Tenino, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - Bellevue Christian, 7 p.m.

**Fri., Sept. 21 - at Riverside (Boardman, Ore.),
7 p.m.**

Fri., Sept. 28 - at La Center, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - Castle Rock, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 12 - White Salmon, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - at Stevenson, 7 p.m.

Sat., Oct. 27 - at Seton Catholic, 1 p.m.



Dylan Scott is such a good athlete he can play multiple positions. The Knights likely will need him as a lineman and linebacker this season. Photo by Mike Schultz

he will go wherever his new coach needs him.

Naturally, Scott wants the Knights to feel victory this season. But because he is all about the team first, he knows the first item of the agenda at King's Way Christian football must be stability.

"The record doesn't really matter. If the team is behind each other, and it's fun environment, and people want to play here ... that's the most I could ask for," Scott said.

Then, after a short pause, he added one more thing to his wish list.

"And that Coach Rodriguez could be here for a while and be successful." 🍀



Bryson Metz has already made an impact with the program. Only a freshman, his coaches say he could be the best athlete in the school. Photo by Mike Schultz



Wyatt Dodson has been making plays for La Center for years. He rushed for more than 1,500 yards as a junior. Now a senior, he wants to be more of a leader. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

LA CENTER WILL HAVE TO FILL SOME VACANCIES IN ORDER TO REPEAT AS TRICO LEAGUE CHAMPS

LA CENTER — The La Center Wildcats had 25 seniors last year, including 20 in starting roles.

Interestingly enough, those 25 are still helping the Wildcats this season.

“They showed me how to become a leader,” Wyatt Dodson said.

The Wildcats will need a lot more leaders this season. After back-to-back trips to the Class

LA CENTER WILDCATS

Coach: John Lambert

Season outlook: Don’t look for the Wildcats to just accept the notion that because they are inexperienced that this will be a down season. The players who were backups last year played every day in practice against one of the best teams in the state. The Wildcats have not lost a Trico League game since 2015. They know how to win. With that said, this team will need time to find itself. There will be 20 new starters on the field. “They’ve been waiting and waiting and waiting, putting all this time and energy into the program without a lot of playing time. This is their time,” Lambert said.

Key returning players: Wyatt Dodson, sr.; Tom Lambert, so.; Max Muffett, jr.; Collin Namanny, sr.; Jayden Schmitz, sr.; Cyrus Zumstein, sr.

2017 in review: La Center lost its first two non-league games, including a loss to eventual 2A state champion Hockinson, then reeled off 10 consecutive wins to reach the 1A state semifinals for the second year in a row. The Wildcats won their second consecutive Trico League title.



Senior Collin Namanny (12) is one of just two returning starters from La Center's 2017 Trico League championship team. Photo by Mike Schultz

1A state semifinals, La Center will have a lot of new faces in big roles in 2018.

Fortunately for the Wildcats, they still have Dodson, who has been making key contributions since his sophomore year. Last year, he was the team's leading rusher, although that was not the plan going into the season.

An injury forced him to be the go-to guy in the ground attack — the centerpiece of the La Center attack.

La Center coach John Lambert knows Dodson can play. His teammates know he can play. His fans know he can play.

This season, though, Dodson wants to lead.

"It goes back to integrity," Dodson said. "Do what you're supposed to do, even if no one is looking."

Dodson and Collin Namanny are the lone returning starters from the 2017 season. By default, that

makes them leaders. Dodson wants to make sure they lead the right way. So he is reminded of how the older players treated him when he was younger.

As a sophomore, he acknowl-

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edged he was restless in team meetings. A year ago, he learned the value of listening. That, he said, made him a better player.

"It makes you more coachable," Dodson said.

He also wants to carry on another tradition at La Center. It is the job of senior football players to encourage younger players.

"Pick-ups only. No put-downs," Dodson said.

Positive reinforcement is key, especially for a relatively new team.

"I'm not really sure what we are capable of just yet, but from what I've seen, we could be pretty good. We're quick learners. We were shaky at first (at team camp) but by the end, we were making lots of plays," Dodson said. "Our players are good. Just not as experienced."

Every player has to start somewhere.

Dodson got some good varsity

looks during his sophomore season. Last year, he was expecting to get more carries, but after a preseason injury to another running back, it turned into getting most of the touches.

He rose to the occasion, leading the Wildcats with more than 1,500 yards rushing. But it took a bit of a toll.

"Not going to lie. It was a lot harder than sophomore year, the constant hitting," he said. "It made me tougher."

It also showed him that he needed to work even harder during the offseason, building his body to prepare for the punishment.

Now that practice has started, he is truly in his element. He does not just love the games, but he loves preparing for the games.

"What you put into practice is what you get out of in the games," Dodson said.

This season will bring a new position for Dodson on the other side of the ball. Not known for his defense, another injury forced him to play linebacker for most of last season's semifinal game. This fall, he is moving to safety. In his final season with Wildcats, he will be a true two-way player.

"It's going to be a challenge," Dodson said. "That's what football is."

Sounds a lot like a leader, someone who appreciates the game.

"I pretty much live for it. You're out there with your friends, the

LA CENTER WILDCATS

Fri., Aug. 31 - at Ridgefield, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 7 - Woodland, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - at Hoquiam, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 - at Kalama, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 - King's Way Christian, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - at Stevenson, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 12 - Seton Catholic, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - at White Salmon, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 26 - Castle Rock, 7 p.m.



Tom Lambert takes over as La Center's starting quarterback in 2018. Photo by Mike Schultz

excitement of Friday nights," Dodson said.

At the same time, he does not feel too much pressure.

"Win or lose, it's football," Dodson said. "I'm playing it because I like the sport."

He hopes to play in college, as well, although those plans are not finalized. Instead, his focus right now is one final season with La Center football, pretty much a whole new team with a couple new leaders.

"Just give it everything," Dodson said. "It's my last year. Let's try to do what we did last year, but better." 🍀



Senior Cyrus Zumstein will be one of La Center's key linemen this season. Photo by Mike Schultz



2018 FOOTBALL PREVIEW: MOUNTAIN VIEW THUNDER

Jack Mertens was pushed to go out for football as a sophomore, picked up the game in a hurry, and became a starter by Week 2. Now a senior, he is hoping to help Mountain View win a third consecutive 3A GSHL title. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

VERSATILE JACK MERTENS OFFERS THUNDER MULTIPLE OPTIONS ON OFFENSE

VANCOUVER — In the winter, Jack Mertens likes to head to a mountain for snowboarding.

In the summer, he finds time for wakeboarding or trail riding on a motorcycle.

"I just do everything. I do it all. I'll do whatever," Mertens said. "I'm not too much of a daredevil. I'm more of a thrill-seeker."

All of those activities make him an athlete, too. So it was no surprise to his friends that Mertens

MOUNTAIN VIEW THUNDER

Coach: Adam Mathieson

Season outlook: Coming off back-to-back league titles, the 2018 Thunder are so sick of losing in the first round of state. Yes, the prospects of another league title look promising for a team that will have with a half-dozen three-year starters. But it is beyond league that will make or break this team. A trip to the quarterfinals, at least, is the goal. The 3A defensive player of the year, Andrew Gulliford, is back, and the Thunder have a host of receivers and running backs, all who are a threat to make a big play at any moment. "They're fun to be around," Mathieson said. "They're program guys. It's our team. We don't have to dip into free agency like other programs do to supplement the roster."

Some key returners: Kobe Anderson, sr.; Makai Anderson, sr.; Michael Bolds, sr.; Preston Collins, jr.; Phillip Earnhardt, sr.; Andrew Gulliford, sr.; Justin Lufkin-Quant, sr.; Jack Mertens, sr.; Garrett Moen, sr.; Rodolfo Montiel, sr.

2017 in review: The Thunder went 2-2 in the non-league schedule, survived an overtime thriller with Kelso and went undefeated in the 3A GSHL. They advanced to state with a playoff win in Week 10, but for the second year in a row lost to Peninsula in the first round, finishing with a 8-3 overall record.



Senior Andrew Gulliford (35) is one of six Mountain View players who will be three-year starters this season. Photo by Mike Schultz

found almost instant success on the football field for the Mountain View Thunder when Mertens was a sophomore.

"I just tried out, showed up," Mertens said. "I was expecting to play JV. But (a friend) said, 'You'll start varsity.' Somehow, I did."

Mertens had not played organized football for three years but by Week 2 in 2016, he was starting for the Thunder.

Now a senior, he has played in 21 varsity games, with 20 starts, and he is a big reason the Thunder are once again the team to beat in the Class 3A Greater St. Helens League.

Mertens earned first-team, all-league status as a receiver last year, but technically he played the Z position in Mountain View's left coast spread Wing-T offense.

Yes, he caught passes and made defenders miss, but he also got several carries.

This season, the athlete who

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says he will do “whatever” is moving to the featured back role for the Thunder.

“I want to get to a thousand yards rushing. That would be really cool,” Mertens said. “Mostly, though, the goal is just to win. I really want another league title.”

If the Thunder accomplish that, Mertens will be perfect for his high school football career: Three seasons, three league titles.

Six players will be three-year starters — Kobe Anderson, Mi-

chael Bolds, Phillip Earnhardt, Andrew Gulliford, Mertens, and Rodolfo Montiel. They have experienced league titles, but they want more.

“The state title is the only thing everybody wants,” Mertens said.

While that is the dream, the Thunder would also be thrilled with making a long run in the playoffs. Or perhaps getting to eight regular-season wins. In the winning tradition of Mountain View football, that has nev-

er happened. The Thunder have won seven regular-season games many times, but never eight.

Of course, Mountain View always seems to have a tough non-league schedule. The Thunder, in fact, open with Union, a team that will likely begin the season ranked in the state’s top five among Class 4A programs.

Bottom line, the Thunder are not concerned as much with results in September as they will be in November. They have lost close games in the first round of state the past two seasons.

“I really want to get at least to the final four,” Mertens said. “We really are a huge veteran squad. We have the smarts. We are capable of getting there.”

One of the questions marks for this squad, though, is its offensive line. Mountain View’s high-power offense starts up front, and the squad graduated three gems.

Still, this is an established program. The Thunder do not rebuild. They just move on to the next wave of talent and expect them to rise to the challenge.

“Our line is actually looking pretty good,” Mertens said. “I ran behind them at camp. It was really, really fun. I’m excited to run behind them.”

The yards, the touchdowns, the victories, all will be added up on the football field. Mertens is proud to be playing alongside his classmates not just for the results,

MOUNTAIN VIEW THUNDER

Fri., Aug. 31 - Union, 7:30 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 7 - at Juanita (Kirkland), 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - Battle Ground, 7:30 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 - at Heritage, 7:30 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 - at Hudson’s Bay, 8 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - Prairie, 4:30 p.m.

Thu., Oct. 11 - Evergreen, 4:30 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - at Kelso, 7 p.m.

Thu., Oct. 25 - Fort Vancouver, 7 p.m.

Note - Home games at McKenzie Stadium; road game at Heritage also played at McKenzie Stadium. Road game vs. Hudson’s Bay played at Kiggins Bowl.

though. It is more than football at Mountain View.

He started feeling burnout in another sport. His friends kept encouraging him to try football. Mertens is grateful.

“It’s the best coaching experience I’ve ever had,” he said. “Every single coach is amazing.”

He specifically noted head coach Adam Mathieson.

“All the work he puts in for the school, not just football. He puts way too many hours into the school. To The Top — that’s our scheme for life after football. At Mountain View, you feel welcomed.”

Mountain View wants to get to the top and stay at the top of the football standings. But also at Mountain View, former players stop by to talk about their successes after high school, and credit the values taught in the football program.

“They use To The Top wherever they are at. It’s not just for football,” Mertens said. “It’s a life thing.”

For Mertens, life is about trying new things, that thrill-seeker mentality.

Trying football in high school was a life changer. He wants to reward his friends for pushing him to play and he wants to honor his coaches by having the best possible senior season. 🍀



Wide receiver Makai Anderson (14) is one of the key returning players for the Mountain View Thunder in 2018. Photo by Mike Schultz



Senior tight end Rodolfo Montiel (left) returns to lead the Mountain View line this season. Photo by Mike Schultz



Tim Banaszek and Max Velarde believe the offensive line is the heart of any football team. If that is true, the Falcons have a lot of heart, with Banaszek and Velarde being true team leaders through the offseason, helping Prairie prepare for 2018. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

LINEMEN BANASZEK AND VELARDE PROVIDE THE HEART FOR THE PRAIRIE PROGRAM

BRUSH PRAIRIE — They stand so tall, even if, by offensive linemen standards, they are not so big.

Tim Banaszek is 5-foot-9, and Max Velarde is 5-8. Not exactly the prototypical measurements for a center and a left guard.

They do have things much more important than height, though. They have the will to lead, the desire to improve, and the passion to turn Prairie into a winner.

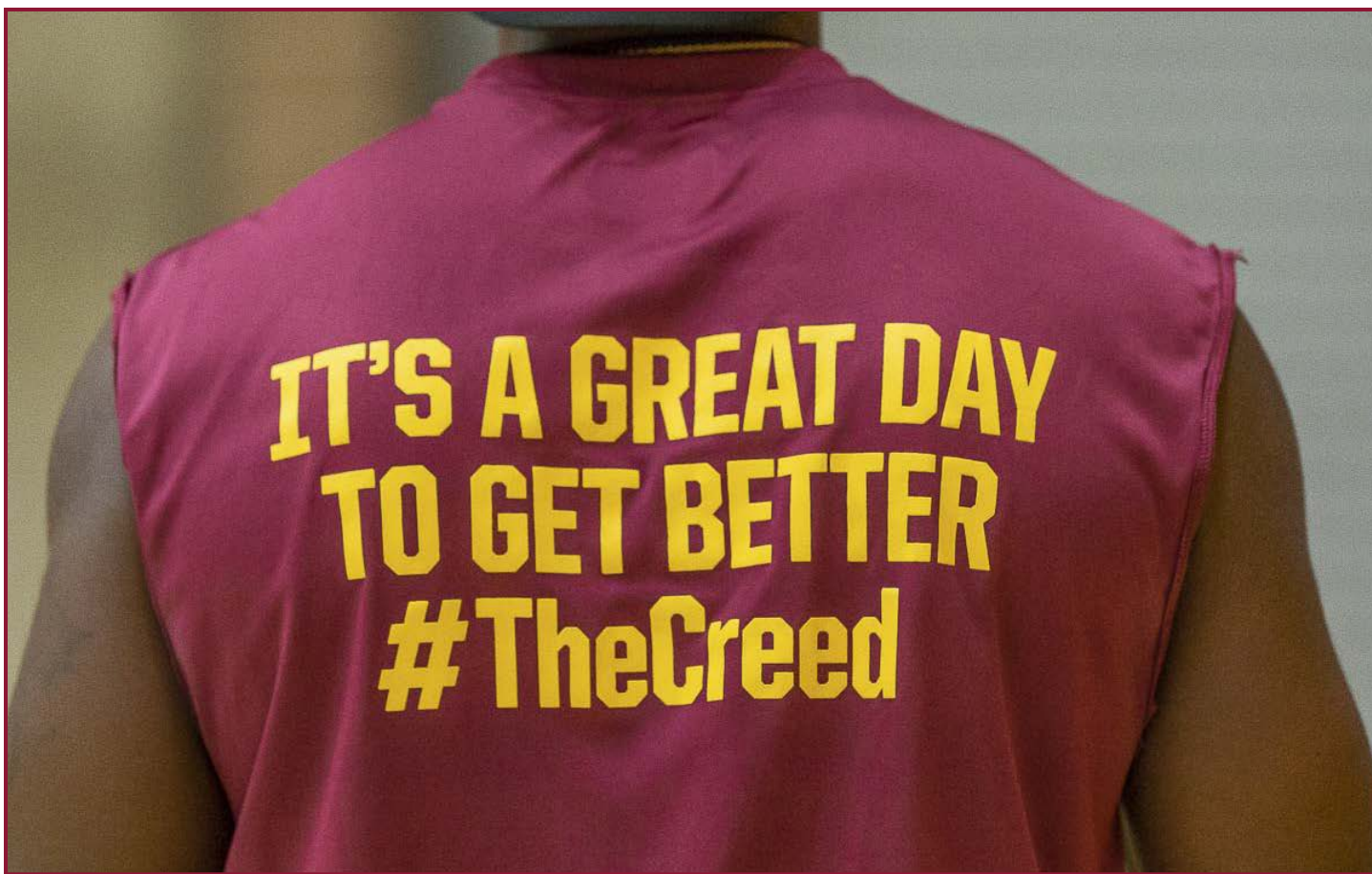
PRAIRIE FALCONS

Coach: Mike Peck

Season outlook: A new head coach in Mike Peck. Another year with a new offense, because Peck was the offensive coordinator last season. And an all-in investment by the players throughout the offseason. Every time one looked on Twitter, there was a Prairie Falcon working out, trying to prepare for 2018. That is half the battle right there, and a reason the Falcons are optimistic going into the season.

Some key returners: Tim Banaszek, jr.; A.J. Dixon, jr.; Zeke Dixon, jr.; Nolan Mickenham, sr.; Conor Rogers, sr.; Max Velarde, jr.

2017 in review: The Falcons won a game they had no business winning, but they also lost a couple they probably should have won. Growing pains. They ended up 3-6, but two were league wins, putting them in a three-way tie for third place in the 3A GSHL. The Falcons lost the tiebreaker, but they walked off the field knowing they are getting closer.



The Prairie Falcons football team has their own creed. Photo by Mike Schultz

That makes them gigantic. That makes them true leaders for a program trying to turn around decades worth of struggles.

The Falcons have had one winning season this century. If Banaszek, Velarde, and the rest of the linemen do their jobs this season, they will have a shot at five — or more — regular-season victories.

They understand that pressure. They love that pressure.

“We get to run everything,” Banaszek said, adding that it might not sound “cool” to be a lineman, but there is a lot of responsibility. “If the offensive line messes up, the team is going to mess up.”

“We’re like the heart of it,” Velarde said. “It starts with

us. Whatever we do results in the rest of the play. It’s pretty important, and we take our job seriously.”

Which is why Velarde, a senior, and Banaszek, a junior, are members of the program’s lead-

ership council. In all, there are 10 players, representing freshmen through seniors, who try to lift up their peers in order to get them to practice, to workouts, to dedicating themselves to football.

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"I try to be the voice," Velarde said. "If people are complaining, I say, 'Just get it done. We're going to get better.' I want to be the voice of reason. All the work we're doing right now is going to be worth it in the end."

Weight training in the offseason. Then spring drills. And summer conditioning. It can be a lot. The Falcons realize that it is going to take a lot to turn Prairie into a winner.

"We just have to push through," Banaszek said.

They keep pushing their teammates, and their coach has noticed.

"They are the model for what Prairie football is all about," said first-year head coach Mike Peck, who was the offensive coordinator last season.

A look on Prairie football's twitter account shows an emphasis on offseason workouts. Peck

constantly praises his players for their commitment.

Peck wanted to give a shout out to all of the athletes who have gone above and beyond the expectation this offseason, particularly Banaszek and Velarde.

"They work hard. They're always giving great effort. They have great attitudes. They're great people to be around, and the other kids love them," Peck said.

Every successful football season starts up front, too.

"Coach Peck always preaches the O-line is the heart of the team," Banaszek said. "If we are the leaders of the O-line, we're among the leaders of the team."

PRAIRIE FALCONS

Fri., Aug. 31 Parkrose, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 7 at Washougal, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 Black Hills, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 Battle Ground, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 at Kelso, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 at Mountain View, 4:30 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 12 Hudson's Bay, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 Fort Vancouver, 7 p.m.

Thu., Oct. 25 at Evergreen, 4:30 p.m.

Note -- Home games at District Stadium. Road games at Mountain View and Evergreen played at McKenzie Stadium.



Mike Peck takes over as head football coach at Prairie this season. Photo by Mike Schultz



Junior A.J. Dixon will attempt to help the Prairie Falcons improve on last season's 3-6 record. Photo by Mike Schultz

"He sees our dedication to the sport, and to the team," Velarde added, before amending that statement.

"I don't really think of it as a team. I think of it as a family," he said. "It's my second family. I do everything for them."

That family often gets together off the field, as well. Banaszek's family home has a spare room, a place for teammates to hang out and play games.

"Everyone just gets together more. In the last few years, not everybody was fully in it," he said.

This year, there is a new vibe with Prairie football. Velarde and Banaszek both said, at the same time, "League championship" when asked of the team's goal.

That would be quite impressive considering Mountain View is in the league and the fact that Prairie has just that one winning season since 1998.

That is the point, though. Things are changing at Prairie.

"We're starting to believe," Velarde said. "Everybody is really dedicated. Everybody is ready to learn. Everybody is ready to hit. Everybody is ready to start firing together."

"We don't want to be out here just to play football," Banaszek said. "We want to show our school we want to do something for them." ■



Simon Berkey might be smaller than the typical linebacker but he plays big, plays smart, and is a leader of the new Ridgefield Spudders. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

SIMON BERKEY AND THE SPUDDERS WANT TO MAKE THE MOST OF THEMSELVES

RIDGEFIELD — Simon Berkey knows he does not have “the look” of a ferocious linebacker.

He also does not care.

“It’s about how you play. It’s not about how you look or how big you are,” Berkey said. “It’s how you make the most of yourself.”

Those words have even more meaning this season for Berkey and the Ridgefield Spudders.

Coming off a 1-8 campaign and a very late coaching change, the Spudders do not “look” like

RIDGEFIELD SPUDDERS

Coach: Chris Abrams

Season outlook: The Spudders have had to adapt to some major changes, including a coaching change in August. Still, the players are out to prove they are better than last season, that they can be competitive in a very tough 2A Greater St. Helens League. They also have Brock Harrison, one of the top players in the county at any classification.

Some key returners: Cole Andersen, sr.; Simon Berkey, sr.; Brock Harrison, sr.; Makani Schultz, sr.; Calvin Staker, sr.

2017 in review: The Spudders won their first game of the season but then dropped eight in a row.



The Ridgefield Spudders wasted no time getting started on the 2018 season. They hit the field at midnight on the first official day of practice. Photo by Mike Schultz

playoff contenders in the Class 2A Greater St. Helens League.

Berkey and the Spudders, though, don't care about anybody else's opinion of the program.

"I 100 percent believe last year will be in the past," Berkey said.

This year, the Spudders are out to prove last year was a fluke, the anomaly. After all, the Spudders won a total of 17 games the previous three seasons. While maybe not a powerhouse, this program is not accustomed to losing eight games in a row.

"Even though people are going to look at this as a rebuilding year for Ridgefield, I strongly feel that

it is not," Berkey said. "I believe in the ability of this team to compete among the highest levels in our league, and I will stand by that 100 percent."

Interestingly, Berkey will be em-

bracing a new coach while using a philosophy taught by the former coach. Ridgefield made a coaching change in the first week of August. Out is Kim Ulman and

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Ridgefield coach Chris Abrams gives a post-practice talk to the Spudders. Photo by Mike Schultz

RIDGEFIELD SPUDDERS

Fri., Aug. 31 - La Center, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 7 - at Fort Vancouver, 8 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - Columbia River, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 - at Mark Morris, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 - Washougal, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - at R.A. Long, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 12 - at Woodland, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - To be announced

Fri., Oct. 26 - Hockinson, 7 p.m.

Note - Road game at Fort Vancouver played at Kiggins Bowl.

in, on an interim basis, is former assistant coach Chris Abrams.

"I was surprised. Didn't expect it two weeks before the season," Berkey acknowledged. "(Coach Ulman) always used to tell us there are things you can control and things you can't. We can't control who the school district decides who our coach is, but just because we lose a coach doesn't mean our season is going to waste."

In fact, there is a new vibe at Ridgefield. That burst of energy started the very first minute it could. Abrams and his staff held a midnight practice on the first official day of the season.

Out of the darkness, the Spudders appear, the new Spudders, looking to erase the memories of 2017.

While this team has some incredible next-level talent — looking at you, 6-3, 235-pound Brock Harrison — the Spudders will also need an undersized senior linebacker who cannot control his height but can control how he prepares to play this game.

"I don't have to play undersized," said Berkey, who is listed at 5-8, 180 pounds on the team's roster. "Watch film. Get a step above everybody else. If you make the right read, you'll be somewhere else before they can hit you."

His commitment to video study matches his desire on the practice field.

"I try to pride myself on being the



After a tough 2017 season and a late coaching change, the Ridgefield Spudders are now focused on improving in 2018. Photo by Mike Schultz

hardest worker. If you give max effort in everything, you lead by example,” Berkey said. “I’m not super tall, super jacked. But I can always be the hardest worker. I might not have the body, but I definitely have the mind. That shows on the field.”

Last year, though, the field was a nightmare for the Spudders. They won in Week 1 but did not win again.

“I don’t know what happened to make us go 1-8,” Berkey said. “We were always in the game in the first half.”

No one wants to endure such a season. Now that the Spudders have gone through that ex-

perience, though, it could be a blessing.

“It was hard, but it’s an advantage for us because we are all hungry,” Berkey said. “It gave us hunger for revenge. We’re ready. We’re ready for it.”

Changes have been made, and now it is time for a change in results for Ridgefield.

“It’s going to be crazy. People aren’t going to be expecting anything from us,” Berkey said. “I have never been this excited for a football season in my entire life. We’re going to be one of the most aggressive defenses in the league. Our offense is going to be exciting. We love Coach Abrams. I’m



The Ridgefield program suffered through a miserable 2017 season, but these players have pride and they want to prove that last year was a fluke. Photo by Mike Schultz

really happy it’s someone we already knew.

“I love Coach Ulman. I love Coach Abrams. I’m just ready to play.” 🟢



2018 FOOTBALL PREVIEW: SETON CATHOLIC COUGARS

Bobby Voitik, an all-league lineman a year ago, believes the future starts now for Seton Catholic football. He wants to lead the Cougars to new heights. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz

SENIOR BOBBY VOITIK BELIEVES FUTURE STARTS NOW FOR PROGRAM

VANCOUVER — This season, the Seton Catholic Cougars are for real.

Really.

Oh sure, the football program was back as the Seton Catholic program last year. And the school even opened a brand new field in front of its beautiful brand new campus.

But the Cougars did not play as a full-time member of the Trico League.

This season, two years after a nightmare sce-

SETON CATHOLIC COUGARS

Coach: Will Ephraim

Season outlook: The Cougars are back as a full-time member of the Trico League. Still a very small program in terms of numbers, Seton Catholic is done worrying about that and is only focused on improving this season and growing the program into the future. Improving, to the Cougars, will mean competing for one of the three playoff spots.

Some key returners: Tyvauntae Deloney, jr.; Myl-es McGovern, sr.; Taj Muhammad, sr.; Mikey Silveira, jr.; Bobby Voitik, sr.

2017 in review: The Cougars did not play a full Trico League schedule so did not play some of the powerhouse programs. Instead, they went 4-4 in a hybrid league/independent schedule.



Seton Catholic coach Will Ephraim said this is the season the Cougar will have to prove they belong at this level. Photo by Mike Schultz

nario, the Cougars are living a dream.

They will proudly play their home games on Saturday afternoons — no lights — and they are a full member of the Trico League.

The Cougars have arrived.

“This is going to be the most successful year we’ve had,” said senior lineman Bobby Voitik. “We’ve all gone through this experience together. Now, we’re ready to take on our league again.”

Voitik was a sophomore when he and a few of his teammates and some parents were called into a meeting. It was only a few teammates because, well, there were only a few teammates.

School administrators said there were not enough players to field a team. The Cougars would have to join with King’s Way Christian.

“Everybody was just ... it was heartbreaking when we didn’t have our own team,” Voitik recalled. “It was not ideal.”



Mikey Silveira expects to be a top target in the Seton Catholic passing game. by Mike Schultz

The Cougars and Knights don’t want to be teammates. They want to be friendly rivals, two small, private schools opting up in classification to compete with Class

1A programs in Southwest Washington.

That bizarre season when they were together was a success on

CONTINUED ON PAGE 56



the field. But still, as Voitik said, it was not ideal.

The Cougars were thrilled when they had enough to have their own program back again last season, even if it was with a hybrid schedule with just a couple of league games.

The school embraced the football team, too.

"It got more lively and lively every game," said Voitik, who also had a strong year individually.

Because the team was not a full member of the Trico League, the Cougars did not get a lot of recognition with all-league teams. Voitik, an offensive and defensive lineman, got voted second-team honors for his skills on offense.

All of this leads to the present.

"We want to play here. We want to win for our fans. We want to win here," Voitik said. "The fan turnout will be amazing again."

Saturday games are not exactly tradition around these parts, not

for high school football. Voitik said Seton Catholic players embrace it. The only team in the region with no lights, this is just the way it is going to be so they have a positive attitude about it.

"We get an extra day of practice to get ready," Voitik said.

The Cougars will be ready, too.

"I think this is our time to be good and make something happen."

That is exactly what coach Will Ephraim wants to hear.

"They feel they have something to prove and this is the year," Ephraim said, adding he appreciates that Seton Catholic is not moving backward.

It really is a numbers game.

Voitik and his coach can be optimistic because they know the numbers. No, Seton Catholic is not a huge program in terms of players. However, athletes are starting to take notice.

"The goal this year is to draw even more attention, that we are a competitive program," Ephraim said.

Plus, the Seton Catholic athletes on the team now are not just coming out for football. They are dedicating themselves to football. There is a difference.

"I feel solid. We've had people in the weight room all summer, on the field conditioning. I've never been more excited for a football season," Voitik said. "The people

SETON CATHOLIC COUGARS

Sat., Sept. 1 - Fort Vancouver, noon

Fri., Sept. 7 - at Charles Wright (Tacoma), 7 p.m.

Sat., Sept. 15 - Riverside, 1 p.m.

Sat., Sept. 22 - at Tenino, 7 p.m.

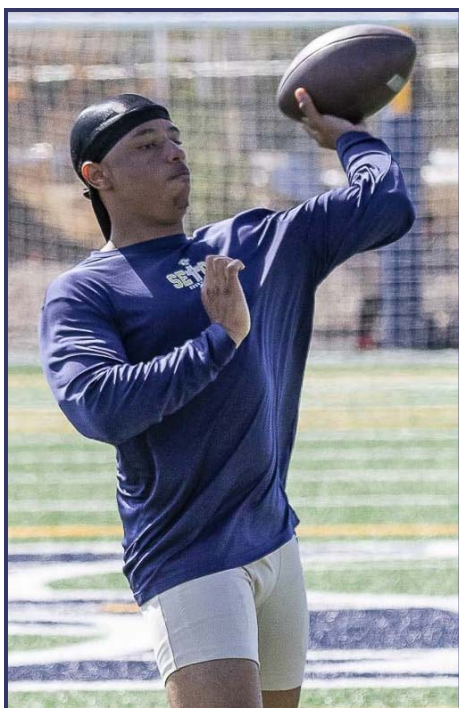
Sat., Sept. 29 - Stevenson, 1 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - at White Salmon, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 12 - at La Center, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - at Castle Rock, 7 p.m.

Sat., Oct. 27 - King's Way, 1 p.m.



Now a junior, Tyvauntae Deloney threw for more than 1,000 yards last season and his coach says he just keeps getting better. Photo by Mike Schultz

who play now care. Everybody wants to succeed.”

The older players are helping the younger players, too. Need a ride to offseason training? Someone will be there.

Seniors and juniors support a sophomore who might support a freshman, and then in future years they all learn that is how a program continues to be a program.

“Winning is important. Everybody wants to see a winner,” Voitik said. “But the most important this is that we leave a foundation for the underclassmen so they don’t have to go through what we went through.”

That is history at Seton Catholic.

The future of Seton Catholic football begins now. 🍀



A senior running back and linebacker, Myles McGovern has a great combination of strength and speed. Photo by Mike Schultz



The Seton Catholic Cougars don’t care how he gets the ball, by pass or by rush, but the goal will be to get Taj Muhammad the ball. Photo by Mike Schultz



Skyview's Jalynnee McGee was having the best game of the year against Camas before an injury slowed him. He is healthy now, and looking for a huge year at running back and defense this season for the Storm. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

JALYNNEE MCGEE HAS BIG PERSONAL GOALS, BUT TEAM PERFORMANCE IS THE PRIORITY

VANCOUVER — They have to get back to November.

That's it. That is the mission for the Skyview Storm.

November.

After all, the team had made the playoffs the previous 12 years, one of the best streaks in Clark County history.

It all ended, though, with losses to Union and

SKYVIEW STORM

Coach: Steve Kizer

Season outlook: The Storm lost a ton of all-league talent to graduation, but here is an interesting fact... The coaches love this year's squad. They truly enjoy working with this group. Perhaps it is the underdog status. After all, last year's all-league talent was not enough to make the playoffs. This year's leaders understand that everyone else is thinking Union or Camas will lead the pack this season. That's OK. The Storm won't mind if anyone overlooks them. "That's fair," Kizer said of preseason expectations. "That's why you play the games, I guess." The smile on his face when he said that reflects optimism from the coach.

Some key returners: Cooper Barnum, jr.; Yaroslav Duvanko, jr.; Jalynnee McGee, jr.; Mason Wheeler, jr.; Ahmani Williams, jr.

2017 in review: The Storm lost a tough one to Camas and later got overpowered by Union, ending a 12-year streak of reaching the playoffs. Skyview responded after the Union loss to win in Week 9, to keep another streak alive. Skyview made it to 12 consecutive winning regular seasons, finishing with a 5-4 mark.



For the first time in many years, the Skyview Storm enter the 2018 high school football season as a bit of an underdog. Photo by Mike Schultz

Camas in the Class 4A Greater St. Helens League. Only two teams made the playoffs last year. Junior running back Jalynnee McGee said he and his teammates will be doing everything in their power to get back to November.

“Redeem ourselves from last year. That playoff streak? Start it up again,” McGee said. “We know, we all know, we should have made the playoffs last year. And we all know what we need to do to get back to that point.”

That “should have” still hurts the Storm. It was the Camas game.

The Papermakers would go on to win 38-20, but there was a crucial 14-point swing that could have gone either way, and the Storm suffered two key injuries, includ-

ing one to McGee. In a half of football, McGee had rushed for 140 yards. He did not play in the second half.

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Skyview coach Steve Kizer addresses his team at a recent practice. The Storm are working to get back to the postseason after missing the playoffs last year for the first times in 12 years. Photo by Mike Schultz

SKYVIEW STORM

Fri., Aug. 31 - Yelm, 5 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 7 - at Columbia River, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - Mount Si, TBA

Sat., Sept. 22 - at Rogers (Puyallup), 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 - at Battle Ground, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - Union, 5 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 12 - Olympia, 5 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - at Camas, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 26 - Heritage, 8 p.m.

Note - Home games at Kiggins Bowl.

"It was horrible," McGee said. "I was constantly going up to the trainer, 'Can I keep playing?'"

The answer was no. A shoulder injury ended his night. Two weeks later, Union ended Skyview's streak with a no-doubt-about-it victory.

"It shows us no matter how good we think we are, we still have to be in the weight room getting better," McGee said.

That has to be the same approach even though the postseason set-up has changed this season. Instead of two 4A GSHL teams making the playoff like the past two seasons, three will make it to Week 10 in 2018.

No one at Skyview wants to rely on finishing third, though. Oh, the Storm know that many

fans expect this will be Union's year again. Or Camas might get back on top. The Storm understand the challenge, and they are up to it.

"We're not going to cower because we know it's going to be hard," McGee said. "We hear the chatter. It motivates us to go out there and win."

He is motivated to have a historic season. McGee was on his way to a 200-yard game against Camas last season before the injury, a mark he has not reached as a varsity football player. Which makes his goal for 2018 to be so ... so ... out there.

"I want to have at least 2,000 yards," he said.

That would be averaging 200 yards for 10 games, or 180-plus if the Storm go beyond 10 games. Either way, that's a lot of yards.

Will that happen? Can it happen? Honestly, that final number does not really matter to McGee. The target is enough to keep him focused.

"I'm raising the bar higher than expectations in order to push me," he said.

McGee also will be expected to shine on defense, too. He said plans are for him to play cornerback this season.

"I want to keep my side locked down," McGee said. "Anything that comes my way, I want to pick it off or get a pass break-up."

This summer he rehabilitated his injuries — he also hurt his knee



Junior Yaroslav Duvalko is one of the key returning players for the Skyview Storm this season. Photo by Mike Schultz

— plus he worked out on 7-on-7 drills, trying to hone his defensive skills.

Still, in his heart, the 5-11, 190-pounder says he is a running back first.

But anything for the team.

"It's a brotherhood," he said of the Storm. "I know if I'm down or something, I can count on the

players or the coaches to help me. They know I'd help them out with anything they need. Everyone is tight. Everyone comes together to make sure everyone feels part of the family."

That family has a need going into the 2018 season. The family needs to get back to November football. ■



2018 FOOTBALL PREVIEW: UNION TITANS

They call him The Dream. Alishawuan Taylor can be a nightmare to opponents, though. A 6-4, 245-pound senior, he is a wide receiver and a dominating linebacker for the Union Titans. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz

ON A TEAM WITH MANY OFFENSIVE STARS, ALISHAWUAN TAYLOR LEADS THE TITANS ON DEFENSE

VANCOUVER — The dream for the Union Titans is to make it to the final day of the season, Dec. 1, 2018 at the Tacoma Dome for the Class 4A state championship.

Fortunately, they have The Dream to help them work toward that goal.

Even if Alishawuan Taylor did not excel in football, he would still have one of the coolest names

UNION TITANS

Coach: Rory Rosenbach

Season outlook: The Seattle Times has opened with Union as the No. 3 team in the state in Class 4A football. Not bad for a program that had back-to-back losing seasons prior to last year's break-out performance. "Kind of fun, huh?" Rosenbach said. "Sounds like we have a target on our backs. That's the expectation you hope to create, culture-wise. It feels a lot better than coming off a 4-5 season, I can promise you that." The Titans got the league title last year but not much more. This season, with so much talent returning, the goal is to play beyond Thanksgiving.

Some key returners: Darien Chase, sr.; Nile Jones, sr. (moved to Union); Josh Joo, sr.; Giovany Rojo, sr.; Dumitru Salagor, sr.; Jojo Siofele, sr.; Alishawuan Taylor, sr.; Alex Vallejo, sr.; Lincoln Victor, sr.

2017 in review: The Titans got better and better as the regular season progressed, clinched a playoff berth by cruising past Skyview, then put an end to the greatest regular-season winning streak in Clark County football



Senior running back JoJo Siofele (26) is one of many standout skill position players returning for the Union Titans this season. Photo by Mike Schultz

in Clark County. And no doubt the best nickname.

Even better for the Titans, he can play this game. Both sides of the ball, in fact. He proved it last season, as he brought his 6-foot, 3-inch, 230-pound frame from the Midwest to the Northwest, earning starting roles on offense and defense.

Those physical stats are old, too. This August, he measured 6-4, 245.

At wide receiver, he is not the story for the Titans. That would be Darien Chase, one of the top recruits in the state. Taylor, though, knows defense is his game, lining

up as a linebacker. That is what he wants to do in college. He has a couple offers but is hoping to showcase his skills one more season to increase his options.

“My senior year has to be my best year,” Taylor said.

Not to disregard the future plans for the Union program but 2018

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does, indeed, look to be the window of opportunity. With Chase back and Offensive Player of the Year Lincoln Victor back at quarterback, and with running back Jojo Siofele truly healthy, this team is loaded. In all, the Titans have nine all-leaguers from 2017, a season that saw the Titans knock off Camas.

That was just the beginning, they hope. Taylor and all the Titans are all-in with having their best year starting right now.

"We're doing all we can to get that dream everyone wants, and that's a state championship," Taylor said.

There is that word again, dream. Which leads us back to The Dream.

"My dad was a huge Hakeem Olajuwon fan," Taylor said, referring to the NBA Hall of Famer. "He didn't want to spell it the same way. So he changed it up."

Olajuwon became Alishawuan,

but they share the same nickname.

Taylor grew up in Rockford, Ill., just outside of Chicago. He moved to Vancouver in the middle of his sophomore year when his dad was presented with a business opportunity. After some research, the family decided on Union,

for academics and athletics.

Interestingly enough, in football, the Titans were coming off of back-to-back losing seasons.

"They had fallen off a little bit, but they wanted to change everything around," Taylor said.

He wanted to be part of that. Then he became part of it.

Union crushed Skyview in a Week 8 matchup to clinch a play-off spot, then rallied in the second half to end Camas' 50-game regular-season win streak.

"We prepared and worked our butts off just for that one match-up," Taylor said.

There was a lot of talk going into the season that Union had the skill but maybe not the toughness to match up with Camas. The Titans had to prove it.

Taylor knows exactly what that is like. He, too, came to Union looking like an athlete. Then he had to prove it.

"I had to show everyone here I could play. 'Oh, he's just big. He probably can't do this, or can't do that.' I wanted to show people I could do it," Taylor said.

UNION TITANS

Fri., Aug. 31 - at Mountain View, 7:30 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 7 - at El Cerrito (Calif.), 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - Eastlake (Sammamish), 4:30 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 - at Chiawana (Pasco), 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 - Puyallup, 7:30 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - at Skyview, 5 p.m.

Thu., Oct. 11 - at Heritage, 7:30 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - Battle Ground, 4:30 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 26 - Camas, 7:30 p.m.

Note - Home games at McKenzie Stadium; road games at Mountain View and Heritage also played at McKenzie Stadium. Road game vs. Skyview played at Kiggins Bowl.



Senior Darien Chase (3) is one of the most explosive offensive players in the state of Washington. Photo by Mike Schultz

He ended up starting on offense and defense. Taylor was voted by the coaches to the second-team, all-league squad, competing on a defense that limited its league opponents to a total of seven touchdowns in five games.

This year, he said, he wants to make all-league on both sides of the ball.

On offense, he is so much bigger and stronger than cornerbacks, and he is faster than most linebackers. On defense, he can make plays even when he is blocked, using his size to knock down passes or force the QB into a bad throw. "He's just an enforcer," Union coach Rory Rosenbach said.



Senior Lincoln Victor (5) is back at quarterback for the Union Titans in 2018. Photo by Mike Schultz

"Such a physical presence. He works super hard in the weight room."

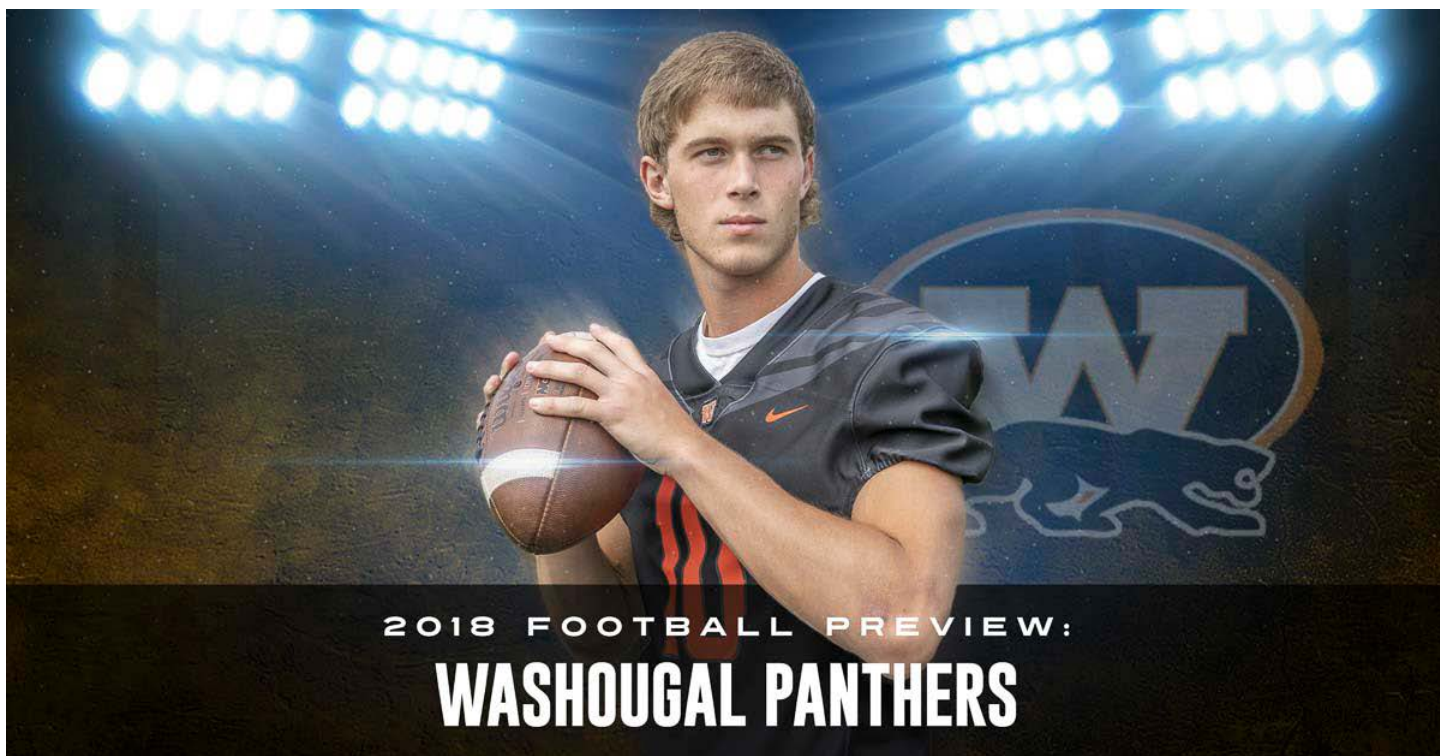
He also has the look of a player.

"We want him getting off the bus first," Rosenbach said with a laugh.

Taylor's frame, his speed, his toughness have attracted some

interest from college coaches. He does have two offers, while other coaches have said they want to see one more season of progress from Alishawuan Taylor.

The Dream hopes that it will be a long season, as in 14 games in 2018 for the Union Titans. 🍀



Dalton Payne got varsity experience as a defensive back and wide receiver last year, all in preparation to take over as quarterback this season. It is his time now at Washougal. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

DALTON PAYNE'S EXPERIENCE PREPARES HIM TO BECOME QUARTERBACK

WASHOUGAL — The Washougal Panthers took their time with Dalton Payne the quarterback.

Now ... now, it is time.

Payne had the talent to play the position last year but the Panthers already had a quality senior leader as the signal caller.

There was no rush, no reason to put a sophomore in that role.

Instead, the Panthers put Payne on the field as a

WASHOUGAL PANTHERS

Coach: Dave Hajek

Season outlook: The Panthers are loaded with skill position players. A young team, but a hungry one, too. Committed to the offseason program. Because of that, their coach believes this is going to be a special group. The goal is to take another step, which means not just making the playoffs this year, but getting a playoff win.

Some key returners: Dakota Andelman, sr.; Brevan Bea, jr.; Jakob Davis, jr.; Julien Jones, jr.; Dalton Payne, jr.

2017 in review: The Panthers jumped out to a 5-0 start. A loss to eventual state champion Hockinson, and then a crushing run of injuries derailed the season. Still, finished tied for second in the 2A Greater St. Helens League. Lost in district playoff to finish 6-4 overall.



The Washougal Panthers have made the playoffs the past two seasons. This year, the goal is to get a win in the postseason.
Photo by Mike Schultz

defensive back and then a wide receiver. The coaches wanted Payne to get varsity time, to know what playing under the pressure of Friday nights was like prior to adding the pressure of playing quarterback.

"It was good for me," Payne said. "Last year I was kind of nervous going into games."

"We were trying to bring him along slowly, get a taste of varsity football," Washougal coach Dave Hajek said. "That was my philosophy."

It seems to have worked, too. Payne embraced that role and did what he was asked.

"I got to learn throughout the year," he said. "This year, I already feel a lot more comfortable."

With that declaration, the Panthers are ready to reveal a new offense.

"This year, he's the guy," Hajek said. "He's worked hard. He's athletic. We've changed up our offense to fit his skillset. We're going to spread it out a little more."

That does not mean throwing

the ball every down. But the ball should be in the air more.

"That's what I wanted. We've always had a lot of success running, but I feel it will open up the running game even more if we pass more," Payne said.

Payne said the goal is 60 per-

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Lineman Dakota Andelman is another player to watch for the Washougal Panthers in 2018. Photo by Mike Schultz

WASHOUGAL PANTHERS

Fri., Aug. 31 - at Hudson's Bay, 8 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 7 - Prairie, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - at Woodland, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 - W.F. West, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 - at Ridgefield, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - at Columbia River, 7 p.m.

Thu., Oct. 11 - Mark Morris, 8 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - Hockinson, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 26 - at R.A. Long, 7 p.m.

Note - Road game at Hudson's Bay played at Kiggins Bowl.

cent pass plays, 40 percent running plays.

"That's what he wants to build up to," Payne said of Hajek's strategy. "He needs to know I can do it. I have to prove I can deal with it. Now it's up to me to execute it."

Payne was a running back in youth football until the seventh grade when a coach — Gary McGarvie, who is now Washougal's athletic director — suggested that he try quarterback.

That day changed everything for Payne as a football player. He became a quarterback. So even last year, when he was asked to play defensive back and then receiver, he still had the mindset of a quarterback, trying to see the game from that perspective.

"I've learned what not to do and what to do," he said.

Part of playing the position is accountability, too.

"If I mess up, it's my fault," Payne said.

He is ready for that responsibility.

He also is ready to help Washougal get over the obstacle of Week 10. The Panthers have made the district playoff the past two seasons, only to lose to Tumwater both years.

"Get past Week 10," Payne said as the ultimate goal.

Before November, though, they must win in September and October. A year ago, the Panthers jumped out to a 5-0 start, then lost to eventual state champion

Hockinson. Injury after injury also slowed the team's momentum, and the Panthers finished 6-4. They ended up in a tie for second place in the 2A Greater St. Helens League but got the No. 4 seed to the playoffs via tiebreaker.

This year, it is all about finishing strong. Finishing games with the right attitude, no matter the score. Finishing the schedule with some wins. Making an impact.

"We want to hit you and you never forget it," Payne said.

That kind of mentality will be new to Washougal, Payne said. In fact, he is still bothered by what he experienced last year when it seemed too many Panthers went into a funk when things went south.

"We were always getting down when we were losing," he said. "I don't want to be known as quitters if we're down. We just have to keep trying."

Fortunately, he is now in the perfect position to keep everyone in the right frame of mind. A quarterback's demeanor can set the tone.

"I just want to be a better leader," Payne said. "I'm not cocky at all. It's a team. But I want to be the big leader. I want to be the one cheering kids and helping kids up."

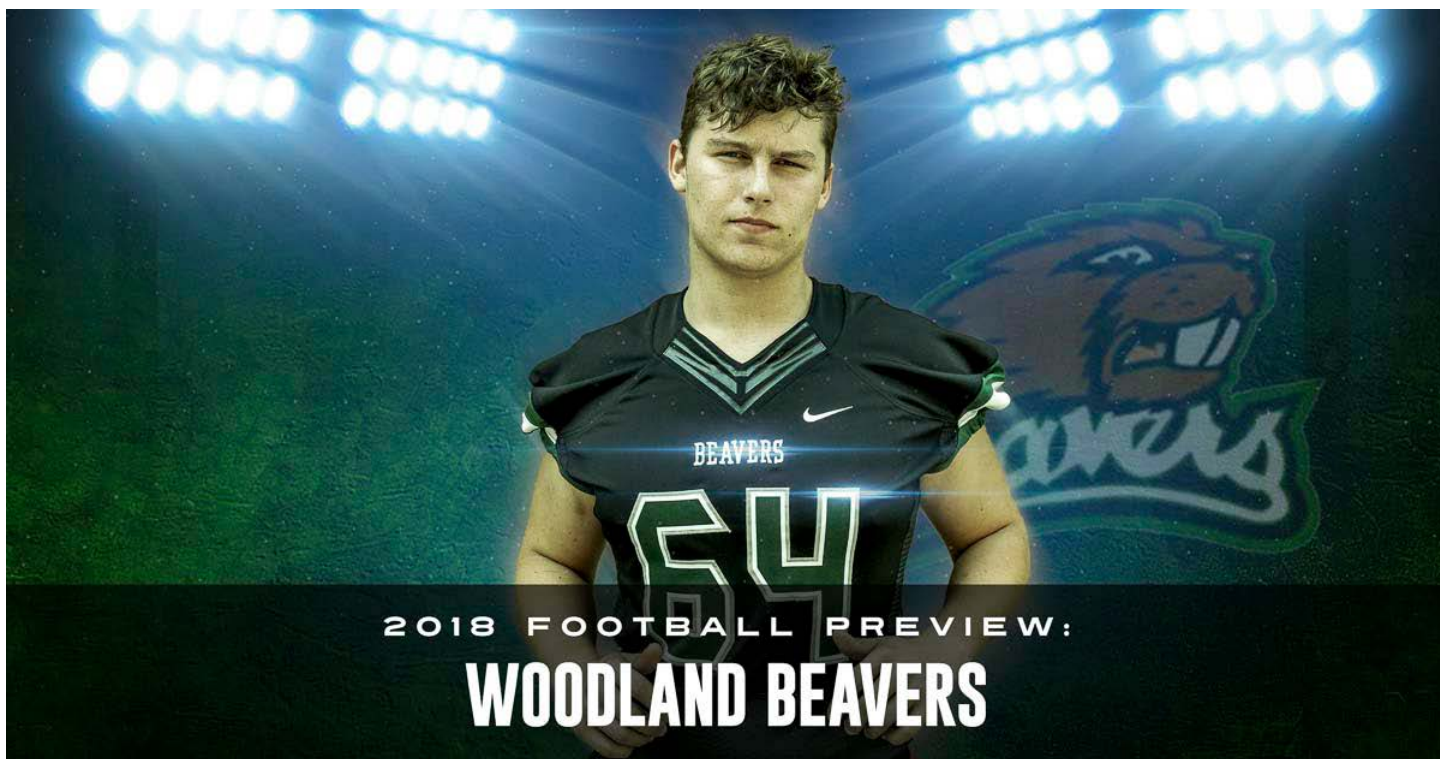
Sounds like Dalton Payne is ready to make his return to the quarterback position. 🍀



Dalton Payne said as quarterback he must become the leader of this team. Photo by Mike Schultz



Jakob Davis is healthy again, which gives Washougal more star power on offense. Photo by Mike Schultz



Alex Wakefield lived his first 16 years in Germany. Now living in Woodland, he has picked up American football and is one of the team's top offensive linemen. Photo by Mike Schultz. Edited by Andi Schwartz.

ALEX WAKEFIELD, WHO GREW UP IN GERMANY, ADAPTS TO AMERICAN LIFE, FOOTBALL

WOODLAND — Alex Wakefield still calls it American football because where he was raised, that is what it was called.

The sport is not as important in Germany as it is here, but he did play the game for a bit before moving to America two years ago.

Clearly, then, he is a natural. Or he is quick to adapt. Probably a little of both.

He played junior varsity as a sophomore at

WOODLAND BEAVERS

Coach: Mike Woodward

Season outlook: The Beavers gave state-champion Hockinson its most competitive game of the league season a year ago, and this year they say they have enough to give the Hawks another scare. A solid returning group, and a new-look on offense, has the Beavers optimistic about playing well into November.

Some key returners: Alex Bishop, sr.; Tyler Flanagan, sr.; Bryce Graham, sr.; Isaac Hall, jr.; Elijua Schultz, sr.; Alex Wakefield, sr.

2017 in review: The Beavers won their last three games of the season to tie for second in the 2A Greater St. Helens League. They lost by three points in the district play-off, finishing with a 5-5 record.



Woodland is looking to challenge defending champion Hockinson in the Class 2A Greater St. Helens League in 2018. Photo by Mike Schultz

Woodland, then made an impact last year as a varsity lineman.

“I don’t want to be cocky, but I feel I’m pretty good at it,” Wakefield said.

He is good at transitions, too.

After all, Wakefield has adapted to his new home, a new school, and a new community.

Today, his English is solid. Every once in a while, the German accent sounds, giving a listener a hint that he is not from the Northwest.

Yes, he took English classes in Germany. And his father is an American. But he mostly spoke German.

“It was pretty rough finding friends (because) I’m not really good with the language,” Wakefield said, recalling his first days in Woodland. “Sometimes it was hard to have easy conversations because they use slang.”

A good student in math, he said he struggled early at Woodland in his English class. He is proud to say he got an A in the subject in his last grading period.

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A fast learner for sure.

He was late to the school year as a sophomore at Woodland, then went out for football. He played JV ball.

A year later, he was starting on varsity.

"I try to light people up. I try to put people on the ground," Wakefield said. "I like to play nasty. Not dirty, but nasty. I want to make the defense hate being out there and put them on the

ground. Make the defense hate to be out there."

At 6-2, 230 pounds, Wakefield said it is his footwork that has led to his success in football. The first step while protecting a quarterback is key, for balance and then for leverage. He did play a lot of soccer in Germany, so maybe that was a benefit to American football.

"The team is not as united," Wakefield said of his American football squad in Germany. "There is not a will to win. Over

there, it doesn't really matter if you win or lose. Coaches over here are much more engaged."

In Germany, Wakefield watched American football once a year — the Super Bowl during the early morning hours. That was it.

Now, he is all in with the game.

"In football, the coaches gave me the chance to get better," he said, praising the Woodland staff.

The game also helped with his big move to the United States.

His father, Lincoln, played and graduated from Woodland. Lincoln was in the Army when he met Petra. They married and had Alex and lived in Germany for Alex's first 16 years. The marriage ended and Lincoln planned on moving back to Washington.

"The reason I moved is I wanted to support my dad, and I always like trying new things," Alex Wakefield said. "Why not move?"

Still, it was tough leaving his mom. And all of his friends. The internet, though, keeps everyone in touch, he added.

Joining the football team as soon as he arrived was another life-changing decision. He said he has so many friends because of the game.

"How the team connects, how it feels when you are part of a team, you are part of a family," Wakefield said. "Not just during the season, but in the offseason. You stick together."

A year ago, the Beavers tied for

WOODLAND BEAVERS

Fri., Aug. 31 - Kalama, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 7 - at La Center, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 14 - Washougal, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 21 - R.A. Long, 7 p.m.

Fri., Sept. 28 - at Hockinson, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 5 - To be announced

Fri., Oct. 12 - Ridgefield, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 19 - at Columbia River, 7 p.m.

Fri., Oct. 26 - Mark Morris, 7 p.m.

second in the Class 2A Greater St. Helens League, then lost a heartbreaker in the district playoffs. They also gave state champion Hockinson its closest battle in league play.

Wakefield said this is the year the Beavers should take another step in becoming a great program.

“It’s our senior year. We all have the drive to make big things happen,” Wakefield said.

He added that the team is talented enough for a state championship.

OK, that might be a huge stretch, considering Woodland has not won a state playoff game since 1984. But Wakefield and the Beavers love the mindset. They have to think big. They witnessed a team from their league win it all a year ago. The Beavers respect Hockinson but are not afraid to battle them.

“Why would we have fear if we want to become what they are?” Wakefield asked. “If we want to become state champions, we cannot fear them.”

See? That did not take long for Alex Wakefield to learn the first thing about having success in American football. One must believe in his teammates and believe in himself.

Alex Wakefield challenged himself when he decided to move to a new country at the age of 16. He has found success on the football field and in school, making new friends, creating new memories. 🍀



Senior Tyler Flanagan is one of the key returning players for the Woodland Beavers in 2018. Photo by Mike Schultz



Junior Isaac Hall will likely be a big part of the Woodland offense this season. Photo by Mike Schultz

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