

The Columbian

High school football 2023

Saturday, August 26, 2023



FRIDAY NIGHT SITES

Southwest Washington's football stadiums have a history as unique as the communities they represent

Page 2

Inside:

Preview stories and key players for 25 area football teams

Projections for local 4A, 3A, 2A and 1A leagues

High School Football 2023

*A Special Section
of The Columbian*

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■ **Stories by Meg Wochnick, Will Denner and Tim Martinez**
■ **Cover photo by Taylor Balkom. Historical photos from Columbian archives and The Daily News**

■ **Stay up to date on Southwest Washington high school sports by following @360preps on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook**



Camas High School's original football stadium, built on site of the current Liberty Middle School campus.

HASHMARKS OF HISTORY

Southwest Washington's high school football stadiums hold unique origin stories

By TIM MARTINEZ
The Columbian

On Sept. 1, lights at high school stadiums all over Southwest Washington will illuminate, kicking off the first Friday night of high school football of the 2023 season.

Fans all over the region will flock to Doc Harris Stadium, McKenzie Stadium, Fishback Stadium and Kiggins Bowl that weekend.

But have you ever wondered who is Doc

Harris? Or McKenzie? Or Fishback?

What are the stories behind the high school stadiums that serve as canvases of high school memories for years? Some of the high school stadiums have histories that reach back more than 90 years.

Two stadiums — McKenzie Stadium and Longview Memorial Stadium — will be hosting their 50th season of high school football this fall.

With Longview Memorial receiving artificial turf this summer, the only area high school teams that still play football on natural grass are Castle Rock, La Center, Hockinson, the Washington School for the Deaf, Stevenson and Columbia-White Salmon.

Here is a glance at every high school stadium from Castle Rock to White Salmon and the history of those facilities.

McKenzie Stadium

Home of Evergreen, Mountain View, Heritage and Union high schools.

Location: 2211 NE 138th Ave., Vancouver, just north of Evergreen High School.

McKenzie Stadium was part of the third phase of construction of the new Evergreen High School, which opened in 1969. Stadium construction did not get a green light until 1973. The original plans called for a covered grandstand. But

when bids came in too high, the project was scaled back without a roof, which would be added "at some undetermined later date, when funds are available."

Evergreen played the first game in there on Sept. 27, 1974. On Nov. 8, 1974, the stadium was officially dedicated as "KW McKenzie Stadium." The namesake was Kenneth W. McKenzie, a local dairyman who was the chairman

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of the first school board when Evergreen school district was founded in 1945 and served on the board until his retirement in 1963.

The Mountain View Thunder started playing there in 1981.

The roof finally arrived in 1983 when a \$1.4 million improvement project added 1,900 seats to the south grandstand and added a roof. Portable bleachers on the north side of the stadium were replaced with a 1,200-seat covered grandstand, bringing the

total capacity to 5,980 seats from the original 2,880.

With Heritage set to open in the fall of 1999, the school district



Kenneth W. McKenzie

installed an AstroTurf field, making the facility the second in the area to have artificial turf.

Union became the fourth school to call McKenzie Stadium home in 2007. In 2008, Friday night football doubleheaders started.

In 2016, 2018 and 2019, McKenzie Stadium hosted a pair of state semifinal games.

Kiggins Bowl

Home of Fort Vancouver, Hudson's Bay and Skyview high schools.

Location: 800 E. 40th St., Vancouver, just north of Discovery Middle School.

Athletic fields at the base of a natural amphitheater in Leverich Park were built in 1933 and dedicated as Kiggins Bowl for mayor John Kiggins, who was instrumental in the construction in the park. In 1936, construction began on a stadium around the

field, which was completed in 1938. High school teams didn't start playing football there until 1946 after the Vancouver school district paid for improvements that included a new roof and lights. Vancouver High (later Fort Vancouver) has played its home games there since. Hudson's Bay has been playing there since 1956. The stadium underwent a big renovation in 1969. When Skyview started playing there in 1997, Kiggins Bowl became the first high school stadium in Southwest Washington with an artificial turf field. The turf was replaced in 2011, when the field was dedicated as Gary Boggs

field for the teacher and coach at Fort Vancouver for 34 years. The turf was replaced again in 2021 and major renovations to the grandstand and the addition of a fieldhouse were completed in 2022.

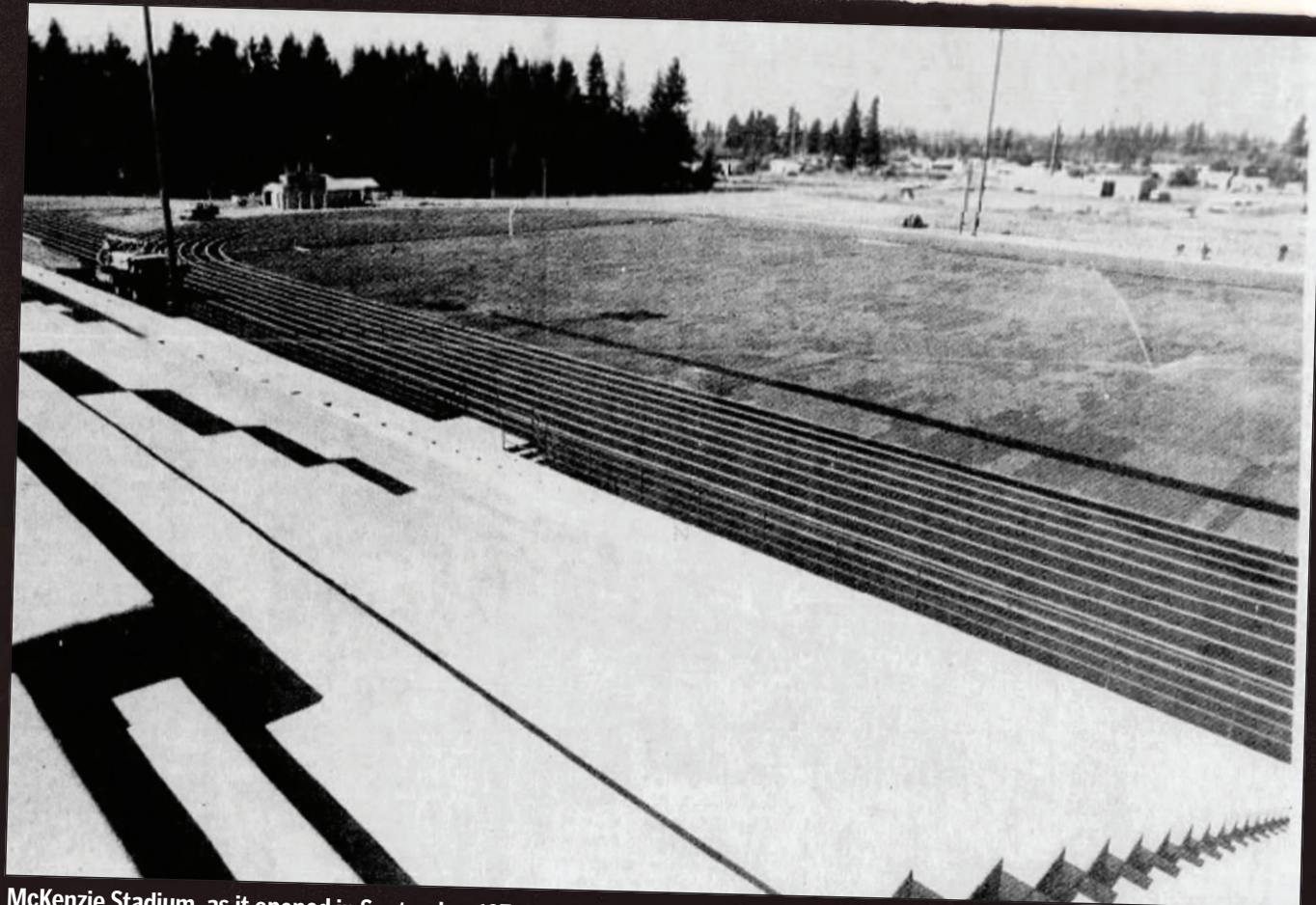
Fishback Stadium

Home of Washougal High School.

Location: 1201 39th St., Washougal, west end of Washougal High School.

Fishback Stadium was built in 1962. The stadium received its name in 1966 to honor John Fishback, who served as Washougal Schools superintendent

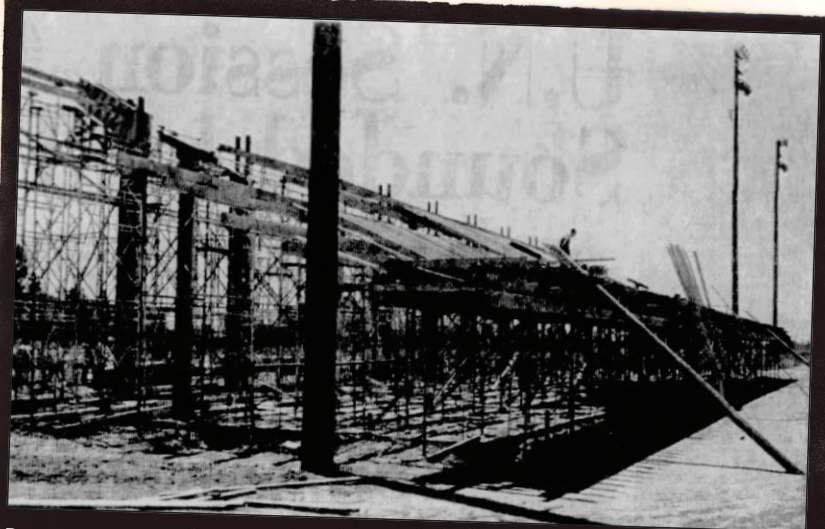
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McKenzie Stadium, as it opened in September 1974.



Vancouver Mayor John P. Kiggins (center of back seat) with James J. Hill (right) at the Vancouver railroad depot in 1911. Hill was known as the Empire Builder due to his Great Northern Railway.



District Stadium at Battle Ground High School under construction in 1967.



The construction of Longview Memorial Stadium in 1974.

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for 20 years before dying of a heart attack in March 1966. The stadium was regularly packed when



John Fishback

rival Camas came to play the Panthers, although many of those games were played in muddy field conditions.

In 2002, Fishback became Clark County's fourth high school stadium to install artificial turf, which was replaced in 2013.

District Stadium

Home of Battle Ground and Prairie high schools.

Location: 300 W. Main St., Battle Ground, north side of Battle Ground High School.

Although Battle Ground has played on the field at District Stadium since 1954, the current grandstand was constructed in 1967 at a cost of \$122,500 and had a capacity of 1,400.



District Stadium at Battle Ground High School in 2023.

Prairie called the stadium home starting in 1979. But the Falcons weren't the first birds to inhabit District Stadium. In the early 1970s, an owl that Battle Ground students dubbed Oliver nested in the rafters of the grandstand. It is said that when the Battle Ground High band would begin to play, Oliver would be flushed out of his nest, fly over the visiting bench and deposit some droppings. The facility was officially named Battle Ground High School Stadium, or simply Battle Ground Stadium. But some people referred to it as "Tiger Stadium," including a local radio announcer. This angered

supporters at Prairie High School, who then lobbied to school board to change the stadium name. That was officially done in October 1984 when the name was changed to "District Stadium." After many mud-soaked Friday nights, District Stadium received artificial turf in 2006. It was replaced in 2018.

Longview Memorial Stadium

Home of R.A. Long and Mark Morris high schools.

Location: 2903 Nichols Blvd., Longview, on the west side of R.A. Long High School campus
The south grandstand



Longview Memorial Stadium with newly installed artificial turf in August 2023.

of the original R.A. Long Stadium was built in 1931. A smaller north grandstand was built five years later. Mark Morris joined R.A. Long on the home field in 1957. By the late 1960s, the stadium was under threat of being condemned. A citizens committee convened in 1969 and recommended the construction of a 3,000-seat grandstand with artificial turf. But a levy meant to pay for the improvements

was rejected by voters. Two more bond measures to pay for a scaled-back stadium (2,000-seat grandstand, no artificial turf) failed before winning approval in November 1973. The new stadium was built in 1974. On Oct. 16, 1974, the school board voted to call the new stadium "Longview Memorial Stadium." In 2016, the 70-year-old wooden north grandstand was condemned and torn down. In April,

Longview Public Schools began the Longview Memorial Stadium Improvement Project, which is a four-year plan to repair and upgrade the stadium, scoreboard and playing surface. It started with the installation of an artificial turf field, track surfaces and video scoreboard this summer. Over the next three years, the south grandstand will

STADIUMS, Page 5



Before its current home stadium was finished in 1975, Ridgefield High School played its home football games at its old downtown campus.



Schroeder Field at Kelso High School was built in 1979. The Hilanders played at their old Vine Street campus west of Interstate 5 from 1939 until a 1977 fire burnt the grandstand.

Stadiums

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undergo repairs and upgrades, and new bleachers will be installed on the north side of the stadium.

Ridgefield Stadium

Home of Ridgefield High School.

Location: 2630 S. Hillhurst Rd., southeast portion of Ridgefield High School campus.

While the new Ridgefield High School opened on its current site on Hillhurst Road in 1971, construction of the campus was done in phases while the district worked to receive funding through a series of levy votes. Work on the football stadium finally began in 1975. From 1971 to 1975, the Spudders continued to play home games at the field at the old campus. "For the first time in four years, we don't have to bus the players downtown for practice each afternoon," Ridgefield principal Wayne Ball said in the summer of 1975. The Spudders played their first game in the sta-



Chinook Stadium at Kalama High School.

dium on Oct. 3, 1975. The stadium got artificial turf in 2013.

Chinook Stadium

Home of Kalama High School.

Location: 548 China Garden Rd., Kalama, on north end of Kalama High School campus.

While the football field at Kalama High School has overlooked the town of Kalama since the school was built on "High School Hill" in 1926, the current manifestation of Chinook Stadium was built in 1995, replacing the small wooden grandstand. In 2007, thanks to an anonymous donation, the stadium received a syn-

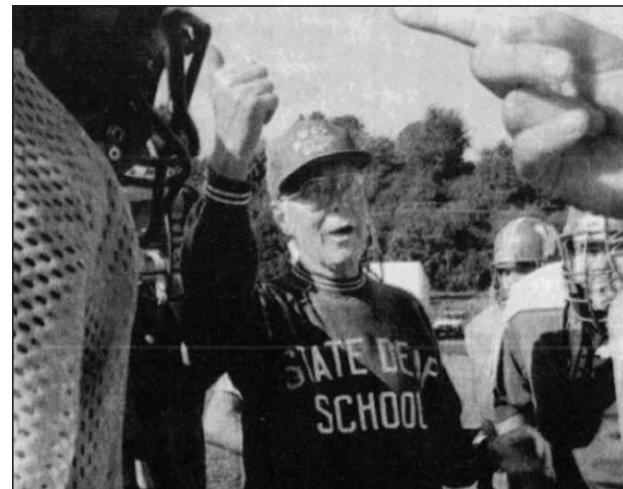
thetic turf field, installed at a cost of \$750,000. The field and track were resurfaced in 2022.

Deveraux Field

Home of Washington School for the Deaf.

Location: 3000 block of E. 5th St., Vancouver, just west of Martin Ave.

Built in 1972, the home field for the Washington School for the Deaf is located below the WSD campus. It was named Deveraux Field in 1992 for Bob Deveraux, who served as the school's football coach for 34 seasons from 1962-1998. Deveraux stepped away from coaching in



Washington State School for the Deaf football coach Bob Deveraux instructs his players in this 1995 photo.

1989 while he served as a principal of the school. The school named the stadium for Deveraux before he decided to return to coaching for the 1992 season. Thirty years later, the facility still has no lights, meaning the Terriers play their games in the afternoon.

Laulainen Stadium at Schroeder Field

Home of Kelso High School.

Location: 1904 Allen St., Kelso, southeast part of Kelso High School campus. Kelso High School's field was originally built in 1932,

lights were added in 1936, and the grandstand was remodeled in 1942. It was located at the 700 block of Vine Street, which is on the west side of Interstate 5. In 1952, the Kelso School Board voted to name the field for Emmett (Mutt) Schroeder, who served as Kelso football coach from 1934-1951. On Sept. 13, 1977, the grandstand at Schroeder burned down in an early-morning fire. Plans were already in place to build a stadium at the new high school. Schroeder Field, as it stands today, was built in 1979. After playing

two seasons at Longview Memorial Stadium, Kelso played its first game at the new Schroeder Field on Sept. 7, 1979. In 2011, the Kelso School Board voted to rename the facility Laulainen Stadium at Schroeder Field to honor Ed Laulainen, who coached the Hilanders from 1971 to 1995 and led Kelso to the state title in 1983. The facility received an artificial turf field in 2018.

Rocket Stadium

Home of Castle Rock High School.

Location: 5180 Westside Hwy., Castle Rock, east side of Castle Rock High School campus.

Castle Rock Stadium has long been a place to be on Friday nights in the fall in Castle Rock. In 1963, the school had to bring extra bleachers from the Columbia Empire Fairgrounds to accommodate the large crowd expected for a battle of unbeaten teams between the Rockets and Washougal. The 1,000-seat grandstand, which looks a little bit like a barn, was built in 1985 after voters passed a bond

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Stadiums

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in 1984. The stadium was dedicated on Oct. 4, 1985.

Stevenson Football Field

Home of Stevenson High School.

Location: 390 NW Gropper Rd., Stevenson, south end of Stevenson High School campus.

The current stadium was rebuilt in 1987, replacing the grandstand that was built when the school was constructed in 1955. Construction of the new stadium was supposed to be done in time for the Bulldogs to play three home games in late October of the 1987 season. But delays only allowed Stevenson to play one home game that season. "We're installing a new scoreboard this summer," Stevenson coach David Waymire said. "It's the scoreboard that was installed when the stadium was rebuilt way back in 1987."

Hockinson HS Stadium

Home of Hockinson High School.

Location: 16819 NE 159th St., Hockinson, south end of Hockinson High School campus.

Hockinson High School Stadium opened in 2004 at Nautilus Field, thanks to contributions the fitness equipment manufacturer made to the construction of the modest 600-seat uncovered grandstand on the field's eastern sideline. The name was changed by 2016 when the school district made an investment to construct a 1,400-seat covered grandstand on the western side of the field. With improvements this summer at Longview Memorial Stadium, Hockinson is the only member of the Greater St. Helens League (4A, 3A or 2A) to play home games on a natural grass

field. That is until late in the season, when the field gets so soggy that most postseason games are often played at Battle Ground's District Stadium.

Doc Harris Stadium

Home of Camas High School.

Location: 841 NE 22nd Ave., Camas, east of Helen Baller Elementary and Camas School District offices.

The original Doc Harris Stadium was built in 1958, to go along with the new Camas High School, located in the current site of Liberty Middle School. The Papermakers' previous home field was where Liberty's athletic field is currently. At a dedication ceremony for the new stadium on Oct. 17, 1958, seven members of the first Camas High football team of 1909 attended. The facility had no official name until July 1970 when the School Board named it for a local physician who served as team doctor for Camas football teams and provided free physicals to Camas High athletes for more than four decades. The school district officially named the facility "Arthur K. Harris Stadium," but the stadium quickly became known as Doc Harris Stadium. The stadium installed artificial turf in 2000. The stadium underwent a major renovation in 2010, increasing the seating capacity from 1,650 to more than 4,000 with both the home and visitor sides being covered with a roof. The stadium also included a statue of Dr. Harris.

La Center Community Stadium

Home of La Center High School.

Location: 725 NE Highland Ave., La Center, south-east part of La Center High School campus.

The first stadium for La

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Demolition on the Doc Harris Stadium in Camas began in December 2009 and was completed in August 2010.



The current Doc Harris Stadium features a statue of Arthur K. "Doc" Harris. He served as the Camas High School football team doctor and provided free physicals to Camas athletes for more than four decades.

Stadiums

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Center High School was built in part with funds from the sale of lumber from trees cleared to create the field in 1969 on the site of the current La Center Elementary School. When new La Center High School was built on its current location in 1993, the football team continued to play its games at the old campus, with its small bleachers and dim lighting. “It was a great place to play, not if you wanted to get a great view or you wanted a lot of light on the field,” La Center coach John Lambert said. “We had a few punts disappear above the lights.” Starting 2014, with community fundraising and volunteer-led construction campaign, the La Center Education Foundation began work on an on-campus athletic field and stadium. The Wildcats played their first game there that fall. The project has seen improvements over the years since, piece by piece. The roof to the grandstand was added in 2017. After the pandemic stalled the project, work has resumed. Still almost a decade after work started, the press box and storage rooms behind the grandstand remain in skeletal form, port-a-potties serve as bathrooms and a food truck as the concession stand.

John O’Rourke Field at Columbia River

Home of Columbia River High School.

Location: 800 NW 99th St., Vancouver, east end of Columbia River High School campus.

When Columbia River High School opened its doors in 1962, it was determined by the school district that River could not use Kiggins Bowl with Fort



The Wildcat outside La Center Community Stadium at La Center High School.

Vancouver and Hudson’s Bay already alternating Friday nights there. So it was decided that River would have its own on-campus football stadium. However, grading the bank where the grandstand would be built did not take place until the summer of 1963. Further delays led River to play its first two varsity seasons (1963 and 1964) at Kiggins Bowl. A bid for a lighting system at the stadium was not accepted until August 1965, and Columbia River played its first on-campus game on Oct. 8, 1965. A stadium roof was added in 1968. The grass field was replaced with artificial turf in 2018. Through the years, the facility was known at Chieftain Stadium until the school board voted to drop the Chieftain mascot in 2020. In 2022, the grandstand was reconstructed. On Sept. 16, 2022, the new facility was rededicated as John O’Rourke Field at Columbia River, for the man who was River’s head football coach from 1994 to 2015 and passed away in November 2021 at age 76.

Seton Catholic Football Field

Home of Seton Catholic High School.

Location: 9000 NE 64th Ave., Vancouver, south end of Seton Catholic High School campus.

Seton Catholic played its first four varsity seasons with a vagabond existence, playing most home games at Doc Harris Stadium. In 2016, when the school moved into its new building in the Five Corners neighborhood of Vancouver, the football team combined with King’s Way Christian. But in 2017, the Cougars played on their on-campus field with artificial turf for the first time. But without lights, the Cougars played home games on Saturday afternoons. On Oct. 14, 2017, the field was blessed by The Most Rev. Daniel Mueggenborg, an auxiliary bishop of the Seattle archdiocese, prior to the Cougars’ homecoming game. The field has seen modest bleachers that have steadily grown over the

past six years. Lights were added in 2021, and a press box was added in 2022.

Beaver Stadium

Home of Woodland High School.

Location: 1500 Dike Access Rd., Woodland, east end of Woodland High School campus.

Woodland High School proved to be an anomaly for new-school construction. When the new Woodland High School was built in 2015, it came in under budget. And because of that, the football stadium was also ready to go when the school opened to students, unlike the construction at other area high schools. The new Beaver Stadium has a covered grandstand that seats 1,600, twice as many as Woodland’s previous stadium at the old school closer to downtown. And the school saved so much money during construction, the district opted to invest in an artificial turf field. But it came with a caveat: The school would need to raise money for the

eventual replacement of the turf. Boosters sold bricks out front of the stadium with donor names.

Bruin Stadium

Home of Columbia High School (White Salmon).

Location: 1455 NW Bruin Country Rd., White Salmon, southeast portion of Columbia High School campus.

When the old Columbia High School in the heart of White Salmon was replaced with a new campus northwest of the town in 1970, the nearby wooden grandstand at the former rodeo grounds/racetrack served as an ideal site for an athletic field. While improvements were made throughout the years, the aging grandstand was completely rebuilt in 2002. The Bruins played their first home game there Sept. 27, 2002. The installation of artificial turf has been a topic of conversation for 30 years but gained steam in the past decade. The decision eventually was made to

dedicate resources instead to build a new community and student multipurpose center, which now resides next to the school’s baseball field.

S.R. Preece Memorial Stadium

Home of King’s Way Christian School.

Location: 3606 NE 78th St., Vancouver, north end of King’s Way Christian High School campus.

The field with artificial turf was constructed in 2012. For years, the facility had modest bleachers and the press box that stood on scaffolding. In 2019, the school constructed a covered grandstand with 1,000 seats. On Sept. 27, 2019, the facility was dedicated as S.R. Preece Memorial Stadium. The school acknowledged “the Preece Family as being gracious and supportive of the mission and purpose of King’s Way Christian Schools.” Football games kick off at 6 p.m. out of respect for the school’s neighbors.

Fort Vancouver HS Field

Home of Fort Vancouver High School.

Location: 5700 E. 18th Street, Vancouver, east portion of Fort Vancouver High School campus.

A bond measure approved by voters in 2017 led to Vancouver Public Schools installing new turf fields at Fort Vancouver, Hudson’s Bay, Columbia River and Skyview high schools. While Fort’s home field is at Kiggins Bowl, the Trappers have scheduled at least one game on its on-campus field each season since 2019, trying to bolster a sense of community for the neighborhood with a more intimate setting. The field has lights, a scoreboard and a modest row of metal bleachers. This season, the Trappers host Vashon Island in Week 1 on campus.

4A GREATER ST. HELENS LEAGUE

PROJECTED FINISH

Picks by Columbian sports staff

- 1  **SKYVIEW:** Many position groups remind coach Steve Kizer of the 2011 state runner-up team.
- 2  **CAMAS:** Papermakers have an all-senior offensive line ready to pave the way.
- 3  **UNION:** Expectations remain high as Titans adjust to interim coach Kevin Coad.
- 4  **BATTLE GROUND:** Tigers look to make big strides behind a big off-season and large senior class.

REMEMBER WHEN?

TITANIC TRIUMPH: Camas entered the 4A GSHL with a bang in 2012. The Papermakers rolled off 58 straight regular-season wins and captured the program's first state championship in 2016. But Union finally pierced Camas' invincibility before 7,000 lively Doc Harris Stadium fans on Oct. 27, 2017. The Titans rallied from 13 points down in the fourth quarter to win 14-13, with Jojo Siofele's 5-yard touchdown run putting Union ahead with 3:41 to play. That breakthrough set the stage for Union's undefeated state championship season the following year. But Camas wasn't done. The Papermakers rebounded to win the state championship in 2019, also going undefeated.



Union quarterback Lincoln Victor (5) and head coach Rory Rosenbach celebrate a 14-13 win over Camas on Oct. 27, 2017.

FILES/The Columbian

Little has separated Camas, Skyview



TAYLOR BALKOM/The Columbian

Camas players celebrate a dramatic 36-33 win over Skyview on Oct. 14, 2022, at Kiggins Bowl.

Kevin Coad doesn't need an introduction to the 4A Greater St. Helens League.

A former Evergreen all-league standout at receiver in the early 2000s, Coad was part of playoff-bound teams for the Plainsmen before graduating in 2004.

After a seven-year assistant-coaching stint at Union, Coad now takes the reins this fall as the team's interim head coach. Coad first became a defensive assistant at Union in 2015, and served as defensive coordinator on the Titans' undefeated 4A state title team in 2018.

What makes the 4A GSHL so competitive annually? Let Coad explain as a former player, assistant coach and now interim coach:

"I think it's the pride that the players and the (coaching) staffs have year over year, regardless if you're down and regardless if you're at the top. There's a lot of great coaches who are great teachers of football. Some of them were my coaches."

That includes opposing sidelines, too. Among them is current Battle Ground coach Mike Woodward, who led Mountain View to consecutive 4A state playoff appearances in the early 2000s.

The 4A GSHL is back to having three postseason berths, meaning 75 percent of the league's teams qualify for the Week 10 state preliminary round.

Is this the year Skyview breaks through for its first league title in more than a decade? The Storm came

agonizingly close last season, losing to Camas 36-33 after leading by 19 points in the fourth quarter.

Longtime coach Steve Kizer said this year's team reminds him of the Storm's 2011 squad that reached the 4A state title game — the last year the Storm won a league crown. Fourteen starters, including co-offensive league MVP Jake Kennedy at quarterback, return from a Skyview team that went 8-3 and reached the 4A state playoffs for the fourth straight season.

Expect Camas to be in the league-title hunt behind a senior class with 30-plus players and a dominant all-senior offensive line. Third-year coach Jack Hathaway said depth and experience range across all position groups,

including a trio of quarterbacks working this spring and summer to be named the Papermakers' starter.

The Titans, under Coad, are poised to put an end to their mini two-year playoff drought while adapting to a last-minute summer coaching change. The most depth lies in the linebacker corps and a familiar face is back at quarterback — senior Mitch Ratigan — who saw snaps at quarterback as a sophomore in 2021.

The word is out about how good of a spring and summer Battle Ground had. The Tigers' senior class features 22 players — including a trio of returning senior all-league linebackers — as coach Mike Woodward looks to shake things up offensively and defensively.



BATTLE GROUND TIGERS

LAST SEASON

2-7, 0-3, fourth in 4A GSHL

BEST STATE FINISH

First round in 1979, 2015

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Ethan Adams	6-1, 170, so.	QB
Jacob Champine	5-11, 190, sr.	RB/LB
Angel Lopez	5-10, 165, sr.	WR/DB
Artem Bahnyuk	5-11, 170, sr.	WR/DB
Saveliy Tkachenko	5-10, 165, sr.	WR/DB
Cody Clarke	5-11, 195, sr.	LB
Cody Huntsinger	5-10, 200, sr.	LB
Aiden Goncalves	6-3, 210, jr.	OL/DL
Thomas Anders	6-4, 210, sr.	OL/DL
Noah Currie	6-3, 175, sr.	TE/LB

Coach: Mike Woodward (second year, 2-7)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ Although the Tigers had played at the field at District Stadium since 1954, their first game in front of the grandstand that would become District Stadium was played on Sept. 29, 1967, a 20-8 loss to Fort Vancouver. The first win came on Oct. 13, 1967, when Bob Carlile's touchdown run provided the only points in a 7-0 win over Evergreen.



District Stadium

at Battle Ground HS
400 W. Main St.,
Battle Ground

Strong offseason has Tigers feeling confident

Since 1999, when Mike Woodward first became a head football coach, there's one thing he's always believed in.

"Let's face it," the coach said, "most of what you do in football is in the offseason."

Battle Ground had an offseason to remember that included drawing rave reviews from teams — and even college coaches — at its June team camp at George Fox University. In fact, the Tigers won back-to-back team competitions as part of what Woodward called a special three-and-a-half days.

"I think the team camp was a turning point for us," Woodward said. "Going into (the season), their confidence is at an all-time high."

"The kids are feeling confident and have good vibes going into 2023."

There's lots for Woodward and his coaching staff to be excited for entering Woodward's second year coaching at his high school alma mater. For starters, an experienced, 22-player senior class is poised to continue an upward trajectory after a 2-7 campaign in 2022.

Six of them, including a trio of linebackers — Jacob Champine, Cody Clarke and Cody Huntsinger — all are



TIM MARTINEZ/The Columbian

Artem Bahnyuk of Battle Ground celebrates his touchdown in 71-0 win over Heritage last season.

returning all-league honorees. So are receivers Angel Lopez and Saveliy Tkachenko and tight end Noah Currie.

"Everybody's kind of been waiting on this group to be seniors and to see what they can do," Woodward said.

Despite a two-win season in 2022, the Tigers scored 25 or more points in five games,

but there's changes coming on both sides of the ball. Woodward said the defense will transition to a 3-4 base set, noting the defensive line has turned into a team strength with size ranging from 6-foot-2 to 6-4 plus utilizing the talents of Champine, Clarke, Huntsinger and Currie in the second level. Offensively, expect the Tigers

to run the ball more than in prior seasons, Woodward said.

All of this has the Tigers and their coach with high hopes for 2023 following a big off-season.

"Word got out about our summer," Woodward said, "and we did well, so our confidence is high. We're planning on having an amazing season."

FRI., SEPT. 1



at Mark
Morris

7 p.m.

SAT., SEPT. 9



Todd Beamer

Noon

FRI., SEPT. 15



Prairie

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



at Heritage

7 p.m.

SAT. SEPT. 30



at Mount
Tahoma

1 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



at White River

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



at Union*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



at Skyview*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



Camas*

7 p.m.

*-denotes 4A Greater St. Helens League game



CAMAS PAPERMAKERS

LAST SEASON

6-4, 3-0, first in 4A GSHL, reached 4A state preliminary round

BEST STATE FINISH

State champion in 2016, 2019

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Carson Osmus	6-6, 285, sr.	OL
Trenton Swanson	6-2, 190, sr.	WR
Ethan Linerud	6-2, 220, sr.	OL
Reid Tennant	6-2, 170, sr.	RB
Nikko Spear	6-2, 210, jr.	LB/TE
Elliott Scott	6-1, 190, sr.	LB
Evan Paul	6-4, 240, sr.	OL
Konan Figueroa	6-0, 210, sr.	DL

Coach: Jack Hathaway (third year, 13-9)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ The original Doc Harris Stadium (although it wouldn't get that name for another 12 years) opened in 1958 with Camas beating Mark Morris 40-8 on Sept. 19, 1958. The stadium underwent a major renovation in 2010. The Papermakers christened the new Doc Harris with a 42-6 win over Columbia River on Sept. 17, 2010, with Zack Marshall returning a kickoff 96 yards for a touchdown.



Doc Harris Stadium

1125 NE 22nd Ave.,
Camas

Big veteran offensive line recipe for success

The Camas Papermakers have a strong history of developing imposing offensive lines that pave the way for the team's success.

That goes for success in the postseason, too. Need proof? Look no further recently than the 2019 undefeated 4A state championship team, behind an experienced line with size, skill and experience.

This fall is no exception, and it's music to the ears of third-year coach Jack Hathaway.

"We didn't have a single senior offensive lineman last year," Hathaway said. "So when you think about that, kids grow up and they mature and they get stronger, faster, and bigger and just another year more of experience within the program, that's huge."

Huge goes to another level, too. Three stand 6-foot-4 or taller and all five range from 215 to 285 pounds. Both offensive tackles — Dason Miller and Washington State-bound Carson Osmus — are 6-6, 285.

"That's probably our strength," Hathaway said of the offensive line.

Camas welcomes back six starters on each side of the ball off a 6-4 season. The Papermakers won their fourth straight league title and reached the 4A state preliminary round with a beefy junior



TAYLOR BALKOM/The Columbian

Camas receiver/defensive back Trenton Swanson, left, is among seven returning all-league seniors.

class numbers-wise. Now seniors, that class is 30-plus players.

And of the eight all-league returners, seven are seniors. That includes two-way all-league Trenton Swanson (receiver, defensive back) and two position groups with two or more all-league starters back: offensive line (Osmus, Ethan Linerud, Evan Paul) and linebacker (Nikko Spear,

Elliott Scott).

Going into fall practices Aug. 16, three quarterbacks were up for the starting job — senior Grady Milholen, junior Jake Davidson and sophomore Zuko Lopez. Hathaway said all three impact the offense in their own way, but also have talents that stretch beyond quarterback.

"They all have attributes that make them great," Hathaway said. "They've all taken the

steps to be the guys, and some can play other positions."

Camas kicks off its season hosting defending 3A state champion Yelm — the first of four consecutive non-league opponents that reached the postseason in 2022.

"We want that top spot (out of the 4A GSHL) — that's what it's all about," Hathaway said, "so we schedule and we play tough teams for a reason."

FRI., SEPT. 1



Yelm

7:15 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



at Glacier
Peak

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



Lincoln-
Tacoma

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



at Kelso

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



Kamiak

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



Evergreen

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



Skyview*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



at Union*

4:30 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



at Battle
Ground*

7 p.m.

*-denotes 4A Greater St. Helens League game



SKYVIEW STORM

LAST SEASON

8-3, 2-1, second in 4A GSHL, reached first round of 4A state playoffs

BEST STATE FINISH

Second in 2011

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Jake Kennedy	6-1, 175, sr.	QB
Gavin Packer	5-10, 175, jr.	WR/DB
Noah Thomas	6-4, 240, jr.	OL
Trey Jacob	5-8, 180, sr.	RB
Cameron Crooks	5-11, 180, sr.	DB
Colby Warner	5-9, 190, sr.	LB
Riley Artis	5-10, 170, sr.	WR
Gavin Poffenroth	6-1, 200, sr.	TE/DL
Hezechariah Po Ching	6-0, 230, jr.	TE/DL

Coach: Steve Kizer (21st year, 133-73)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ Skyview played its first varsity game at Kiggins Bowl on Sept. 11, 1998. The Storm's first home win came on Oct. 2 when Brandon Redfern recovered a fumble in overtime after Shane Thorp scored a 5-yard touchdown run for a 13-7 win over R.A. Long.



Kiggins Bowl

Near the campus of Discovery Middle School, 800 E. 40th St., Vancouver

Team shares traits with 2011 state runner-up

When talking about this year's Skyview Storm, starting by rattling off 14 returning starters between offense and defense, longtime coach Steve Kizer couldn't help but think back to the past.

How far back? Kizer went in the vault 12 seasons ago to when Skyview reached the 4A state title game against Skyline.

"I'm hoping it's like the 2011 team," said Kizer, starting his 21st season at Skyview. "I'm hoping."

That team won the 4A Greater St. Helens League title and finished 11-3 overall. No Skyview has matched those feats since.

Are there similarities between the two teams more than a decade apart? Yes, Kizer said, and it starts with the work ethic. The coach said he couldn't be more pleased with how things developed this off-season.

"We had a good winter program and spring ball went well, and we had a dang good summer," he said. "So that usually means, we'll have some success."

The second factor is returning experience. Fourteen starters — eight offense, six defense — return from a 2022 team that reached the 4A state playoffs for the fourth straight season.



TAYLOR BALKOM/The Columbian

Skyview quarterback Jake Kennedy (6) led the Storm to its fourth straight state playoff berth.

That includes the entire receiving and defensive-back groups and 11 all-league returners at eight positions: Jake Kennedy (quarterback), Gavin Packer (receiver, defensive back), Trey Jacob (running back), Gavin Poffenroth (defensive line), Riley Artis (receiver), Cameron Crooks (defensive back), Noah Thomas (offensive line), Riah Po Ching (defensive line), Colby Warner (linebacker),

Jimmy Garduno (kicker) and Brady Davis (punter).

Kennedy, the reigning 4A GSHL co-offensive MVP, is the league's lone returning starting quarterback from 2022.

The only question mark, Kizer said, is up front, with a number of "untested linemen." But the coach said he's pleased with the continued progression.

"We've got some big, young guys, but I think we'll be OK,"

Kizer said.

Skyview, like the rest of the 4A GSHL, starts league play Oct. 13. Until then, there's six nonleague games Kizer hopes to prepare the Storm for what they hope is to come. That includes four straight road games, including two up north at Kamiak and Kentwood.

"We should be tested well," Kizer said. "Hopefully, we can get some more miles at the end of the year."

SAT., SEPT. 1



Jesuit (Ore.)

8 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



Columbia River

8 p.m.

SAT., SEPT. 15



Bothell

7 p.m.

SAT., SEPT. 23



at Kamiak

3 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



at Heritage

7 p.m.

SAT., OCT. 7



at Kentwood

1 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



at Camas*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



Battle Ground*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



Union*

5 p.m.

*-denotes 4A Greater St. Helens League game



UNION TITANS

LAST SEASON

3-6, 1-2, third in 4A GSHL

BEST STATE FINISH

State champion in 2018

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Mitch Ratigan	5-11, 170, sr.	QB
Chase Harrington	6-2, 300, sr.	OL
Ben Hallead	6-2, 175, sr.	WR/DB
Alex Olson	5-10, 170, sr.	LB/RB
Taylor Lepak	6-4, 210, sr.	DE
Caden Drobinski	6-0, 180, jr.	WR
Chase Lofton	6-0, 170, sr.	WR
Rylan Stevison	6-0, 185, jr.	LB/TE

Coach: Kevin Coad, interim (first year)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ The Titans played their first game at McKenzie Stadium on Sept. 7, 2007. Brandon Weller threw three touchdowns passes, two to Mitch Saylor, and Saylor added a defensive touchdown in a 35-12 win over Hazen.



McKenzie Stadium

Near Evergreen HS,
2205 NE 138th Ave.,
Vancouver

Continuity expected amid coaching change

It's been a whirlwind month-and-a-half for Kevin Coad as Union's interim football coach, but he wouldn't have it any other way.

Union is all Coad has known — coaching football, anyway. As a former all-league receiver at Evergreen in the early 2000s, Coad joined Union's staff as a defensive assistant in 2015. He also was defensive coordinator on the Titans' undefeated 4A state title team in 2018.

Coad was promoted to interim coach in mid-July after Rory Rosenbach's resignation.

"I'm where I need to be," Coad said. "Union has been home for me and this has only reaffirmed that feeling for me — having taken over."

With a late off-season coaching change, there are few other changes that will happen, Coad said. That's because the experienced coaching staff plus how well players have adapted have made for an easy transition for all, the coach added.

Union is coming off a 3-6 season in 2022. It's only the second time since the school opened in 2007 that Union has posted consecutive non-playoff seasons, and this year's senior class is leading the charge to change that. The seniors came up with their season motto of "Count Me In."

"I think a lot of people in the



TAYLOR BALKOM/The Columbian

Union senior Chase Lofton, right, is among an experienced group of receivers for the Titans.

outer circle are counting us out," Coad said, "but we know what we stand for, and we know what we bring to the table, and we're going to compete like crazy."

Union returns six starters on each side of the ball. One familiar face not seen since 2021 is senior quarterback Mitch Ratigan, who played his junior

campaign in Arizona. He had multiple starts at quarterback as a sophomore in 2021, and Coad said the leadership Ratigan brings already is evident.

"We're going to achieve based on how he's going to lead," he said.

And there will be plenty of weapons on the outside that include all-league receiver Caden

Drobinski, and the experience of seniors Chase Lofton and Ben Hallead. On defense, Coad is pleased with the depth at the second level of the front seven, led by linebacker Alex Olson.

"I feel very confident about seven or eight guys playing meaningful reps," the coach said. "Hopefully, that drives our defense."

FRI., SEPT. 1



at O'Dea

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



at Yelm

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



Mountain View

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



at Prairie

4 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



Coeur d'Alene (Idaho)

4:30 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



at Stanwood

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



Battle Ground*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



Camas*

4:30 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



at Skyview*



5 p.m.

*-denotes 4A Greater St. Helens League game

3A GREATER ST. HELENS LEAGUE

PROJECTED FINISH

Picks by Columbian sports staff

- 1  **EVERGREEN:** Plainsmen have talent, experience, depth for a breakthrough.
- 2  **MOUNTAIN VIEW:** Cupboard isn't bare for new coach Aaron Hart.
- 3  **KELSO:** Reigning league champs' strength lies up front.
- 4  **PRAIRIE:** Falcons continue to climb under second-year coach.
- 5  **HERITAGE:** First-year coach Peterson's new culture already evident.

REMEMBER WHEN?

PRIDE OF THE PLAINSMEN: Vancouver high school football history was made in 2004. That's when the Evergreen Plainsmen became the first school from the city to win a state football championship. Union's title in 2018 is the only other from a Vancouver school. Evergreen rolled to a 9-0 regular season, outscoring its opponents by an average of 41-10. The Plainsmen got their toughest test in the state semifinals, eking out a 31-30 win over Gonzaga Prep. In the title game, Evergreen rode a stellar rushing attack led by Tyler Rank, who played college football at South Carolina. Rank rushed for 211 yards and three touchdowns as the Plainsmen beat Skyline 28-14 to etch their mark in prep football history.



Evergreen quarterback Nick Fleck celebrates winning the 2004 state title, the first in football for a Vancouver school.

FILES/
The Columbian

Parity, talent could be highest in years



TAYLOR BALKOM/The Columbian

With a talent-rich roster including two Division-I commits, Evergreen is seeking its first league title since 2007.

As the new dean of coaches in the 3A Greater St. Helens League, what stands out for Kelso's 11th-year coach Steve Amrine is the individual talent across the board as of late.

That includes his own Hilanders team, the defending 3A GSHL champions. Leading the way is Oregon State-bound Payton Stewart at tackle — one of a trio of Division I commits out of the 3A GSHL ahead of the 2023 season opener. More are expected by season's end.

"From top to bottom," said Amrine, starting his 11th season at Kelso, "this is the most talent that it's

been."

So is the parity in the league. In 2022, three of the five teams reached at least six wins, and Kelso, the undefeated league champion, reached the first round of the Class 3A state playoffs.

Expect more of that parity in 2023 as, once again, just two playoff berths are projected out of the 3A GSHL.

Is this the year Evergreen breaks through for a playoff run? The Plainsmen last won a league title in 2007 and since then have reached the postseason three times. Fifth-year coach Christian Swain

believes the talent, experience and depth make for a perfect playoff-bound recipe.

There's no shortage of talent for new Mountain View coach Aaron Hart, who joins Heritage's Kevin Peterson as the league's new coaching faces. The Thunder have six all-league players back from a 2022 team that reached the postseason for the sixth time since 2016.

No team has had more consecutive playoff appearances from the 3A GSHL than Amrine's Hilanders. Although Kelso graduated eight all-league players, the Hilanders are senior-heavy

and hope to build momentum off a tough nonleague schedule in the opening four weeks.

Prairie's changing things up on defense behind what second-year coach Will Ephraim calls a "stacked" linebacking corps. The six wins last season were the most for Prairie since 2019 when the program reached the 3A state playoffs.

Peterson, at Heritage, is the Timberwolves' third coach in as many seasons. Heritage welcomes back two all-league players, and Peterson estimates about 75 percent of starters both ways will be sophomores.



EVERGREEN PLAINSMEN

LAST SEASON

6-3, 2-2, tied for second in 3A GSHL

BEST STATE FINISH

State champions in 2004

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Jayden Crace	6-0, 215, sr.	QB
Fox Crader	6-6, 290, sr.	OL
Arthur Ban	6-5, 205, sr.	TE
Mark Williams	5-11, 215, jr.	RB/LB
Logan Trotter	6-3, 215, sr.	LB/DB
Steve Canda	6-2, 255, sr.	OL
Jakai Clardy	5-11, 150, jr.	WR/DB
Mahki Miller	5-9, 200, jr.	OL/DL
Terrance Saryon	5-10, 160, so.	WR/DB

Coach: Christian Swain (fifth year, 17-17)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ The Plainsmen played the first game ever at McKenzie Stadium on Sept. 27, 1974, falling to Columbia River 22-13. Their first home win would come a week later on Oct. 4 when Gene Thompson rushed for two touchdowns in a 29-6 win over Battle Ground.



McKenzie Stadium

Near Evergreen HS,
2205 NE 138th Ave.,
Vancouver

Superior depth fuels league-title goals

In the 15 years Christian Swain has been a high school head football coach, this fall marks the first time his team has produced this much depth across multiple position groups.

"It's not even close," the coach said.

That's just one of the reasons why the fifth-year Plainsmen coach has high hopes for Evergreen to do big things in 2023.

It wasn't that long ago that Swain can recall up to five, six or even seven players needing to start both ways early in his Evergreen coaching tenure.

Not anymore. Swain said he's expecting just one player — newcomer Jakari Clardy — to start both ways at receiver and secondary. Then there's the line of scrimmage, where Swain said the eight offensive linemen are talented enough to play both sides, but aren't needed to.

Swain chalks that up to increasing depth across the board.

"That's a huge difference," Swain said, "and hopefully that gets us over the hump to compete for a league title and even maybe compete against some of the 4A teams on our schedule. That's the part I'm most excited about — just our depth that we've been able to develop in our program."



MEG WOCHNICK/The Columbian

Tight end Arthur Ban, a San Diego State commit, is among Evergreen's three returning all-leaguers.

When it comes to league titles, the drought goes back to 2007 for Evergreen. The Plainsmen have reached the post-season three times since then, including as recently as 2019. With only two playoff spots for the 3A GSHL, Swain knows the margin for error is small. Last fall, Evergreen finished in a three-way tie for second and had its season end in a Kansas tiebreaker to determine the

final playoff spot.

Where experience lies most for 2023 is a handful of seniors who not only are multi-year starters, but also returning all-leaguers. Left tackle Fox Crader (Oregon commit), tight end Arthur Ban (San Diego State) and running back/linebacker Mark Williams are all-league returnees. Seniors Jayden Crace (quarterback) and Steve Canda (offensive/

defensive line) are three-year starters.

With multiple pieces in place, Swain feels this team can not only be playoff bound, but also possibly end the league-title drought.

"I think we've got a really good chance," Swain said. "We do feel like this is the team that should do it. I think just the pride of being at Evergreen has been the big difference."

FRI., SEPT. 1



at Eisenhower

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



Hockinson

4:30 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



at Kentlake

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



Glacier Peak

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



Mountain View*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



at Camas

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 15



Heritage*

4:30 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 22



Prairie*

7 p.m.

THU., OCT. 28



at Kelso*

7 p.m.

*-denotes 3A Greater St. Helens League game



HERITAGE TIMBERWOLVES

LAST SEASON

0-9, 0-4, fifth in 3A GSHL

BEST STATE FINISH

Preliminary round in 2007

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Evan Buckman	5-9, 190, sr.	RB/LB
Leonel Lopez-Santillano	5-10, 215, sr.	OL/DL
Jackson Graham	6-0, 165, jr.	WR/DB
Nate Vega	5-9, 160, jr.	QB
Luke Melvin	6-0, 170, jr.	WB/DB
Jaidin Compton	6-0, 195, jr.	OL/DL
Dakari Bradford	6-0, 160, soph.	WR/DB

Coach: Kevin Peterson (first year)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ After a winless first season in 1999, Heritage got its first win at McKenzie Stadium on Sept. 8, 2000, when Luke Chase completed 10 of 16 passes and Ron Howard had six catches for 116 yards and a touchdown in a 19-12 win over Skyview.



McKenzie Stadium

Near Evergreen HS,
2205 NE 138th Ave.,
Vancouver

Young team with fresh start eyes future success

Kevin Peterson never foresaw himself becoming a high school head football coach, but everything fell into place at the right time for him to take that next step.

This fall marks Peterson's 20th year teaching physical education at Heritage. As an assistant football coach from 2004-12 who returned to the staff last fall after a nine-year hiatus, Peterson's first step as head coach is creating stability for a program that's seen its ups and downs. Peterson is Heritage's third coach in three years.

"As far as where I'm at in my life," he said, "this is the perfect opportunity. ... I've got 12 to 15 years left in education, and I can't see a better way to spend my time."

Already, things are looking up for a team seeking to bounce back from an 0-9 campaign in 2022. For starters, Peterson said nearly a dozen assistant coaches work at Heritage, including three who are head coaches of boys and girls basketball and wrestling.

"I can't think of another high school in the area that has that many coaches in-building," Peterson said. "We've kind of unified our athletic department, too."

Then, there's player person-



TIM MARTINEZ/The Columbian

On its third coach in three years, Heritage aims to plant the seeds of long-term stability this season.

nel. Heritage has a small senior class, but is plentiful on the underclassmen front. In fact, Peterson said he's expecting 75 percent of starters to be sophomores. Heritage does return all-league running back Evan Buckman, a senior, and also has winning experience from two-way starter Jackson Graham, a junior, who played goalkeeper on Heritage's league title-winning soccer

team last spring.

But the largest class numbers are freshmen and sophomores.

"We are going to be really, really young," Peterson said.

Heritage last made the postseason in 2011, but Peterson knows what it takes for the program to get there. He previously was an assistant coach under three head coaches who guided the Timberwolves to

five straight postseason berths from 2007-11.

Postseason isn't what Peterson and his staff is focusing on in the immediate future. Instead, he's focused on building the culture within and creating a blueprint for sustained success.

"We're laying the foundation for what we do," the coach said, "and the standard we're setting."

FRI., SEPT. 1



at Hudson's
Bay
5 p.m.

SAT., SEPT. 8



Stadium
7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



East Valley-
Yakima
4:30 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



at Battle
Ground
7 p.m.

THU., SEPT. 28



Skyview
7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



Kelso*
4:30 p.m.

THU., OCT. 12



at Evergreen*
4:30 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



at Mountain
View*
7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



Prairie*
7 p.m.

*-denotes 3A Greater St. Helens League game



KELSO HILANDERS

LAST SEASON

7-3, 4-0, first in 3A GSHL, reached first round of state playoffs

BEST STATE FINISH

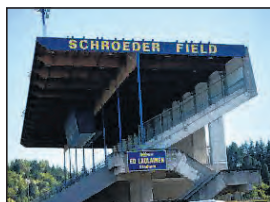
State champion in 1983

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Tucker Amrine	5-10, 170, jr.	QB
Payton Stewart	6-7, 275, sr.	OL/DL
Jay Eubanks	6-2, 240, sr.	OL/DL
Connor Wesemann	6-3, 220, sr.	OL/DL
Easton Marshall	5-10, 160, sr.	WR/DB
Logan Hiatt	5-10, 170, sr.	WR/DB
Laurence Bostic	5-9, 170, sr.	RB/DB
Tate Meade	5-11, 160, jr.	K
Coach: Steve Amrine (11th year, 61-40)		

FIRST HOME WIN

■ The Hilanders played their first game in the current Schroeder Field on Sept. 7, 1979. Their first home win would come three weeks later on Sept. 28. Jeff Hanks threw two TD passes to Jeff DeGallier as Kelso beat R.A. Long 21-3.



Schroeder Field

Kelso HS,
1904 Allen Street,
Kelso

Strength starts up front for reigning champs

On paper, the fact that Kelso graduated eight all-league seniors from its league title-winning team may look like the Hilanders lack experience for 2023.

Not so fast, coach Steve Amrine said.

"I label it kind of as a veteran/non-veteran team," said Amrine, starting his 11th season leading the Hilanders. "We're going to play a lot of seniors, but not a ton of them have a bunch of varsity experience."

That doesn't mean Kelso isn't trying to push for consecutive 3A Greater St. Helens League titles and another playoff push. The Hilanders have won two league titles the past four seasons and reached the playoffs seven straight seasons (minus the spring COVID season).

"They've all been a part of it, and they understand," Amrine said. "That's the one thing about Kelso kids — they're going to play and compete."

"You could bring the (San Francisco) 49ers in, and we believe that we will battle with them. That phrase will never change."

Once again, the success of Kelso starts in the trenches. Its senior-heavy offensive line of Oregon State-bound Payton Stewart, Jay Eubanks, Connor



TAYLOR BALKOM/The Columbian

Kelso quarterback Tucker Amrine led the Hilanders to the 3A Greater St. Helens League title last year.

Wesemann, Jerry Lunsford and Logan Barker range from 230 to 275 pounds. Stewart and Eubanks join junior quarterback Tucker Amrine as Kelso's returning all-leaguers. With the departure of four-year varsity starter Conner Noah, Coach Amrine said there's up to four ball carriers expected to see reps. Laurence Bostic

had three touchdowns in four games in 2022.

"We'll use them differently," the coach said, "and see what they can do."

Last fall, Kelso went undefeated in 3A GSHL play on its way to reaching the 3A state playoffs. It again is embracing a stiff nonleague schedule in its first four weeks — Timberline

of Lacey, Capital of Olympia, 2A Tumwater and 4A Camas. It also travels to 2A Othello in Week 8.

"It's a gamut," Amrine said, "but our guys take a lot of pride in that you've got to just keep your eyes on the prize out there, get through the pre-season and learn where you're at."

FRI., SEPT. 1



at Timberline

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



Capital

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



at Tumwater

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



Camas

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



at Prairie*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



at Heritage*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



Mountain View*

4:30 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



at Othello

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



Evergreen*

7 p.m.

* - denotes 3A Greater St. Helens League game



MOUNTAIN VIEW THUNDER

LAST SEASON

5-5, 2-2, tied for second in 3A GSHL,
reached state preliminary round

BEST STATE FINISH

Semifinals in 2001, 2002, 2018

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Juan Pasillas-Stanton	6-3, 300, jr.	OL
Aiden Nicholson	6-2, 190, sr.	WR/TE
JJ Thompson	6-0, 160, sr.	WR
Akili Kamau	5-11, 170, sr.	RB
Porter Drake	5-9, 185, sr.	RB
Cash Cook	6-1, 185, sr.	QB
Ayden Denbo	6-2, 215, sr.	LB/DL
Xavier Frazer	6-1, 230, jr.	OL/DL

Coach: Aaron Hart (first year)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ In the Thunder's first varsity football game on Sept. 11, 1981, Mark Wyckoff rushed for two touchdowns and intercepted three passes, returning the third 95 yards for a score, in a 33-0 win over Roosevelt of Portland at McKenzie Stadium.



McKenzie Stadium

Near Evergreen HS,
2205 NE 138th Ave.,
Vancouver

Standard remains high despite transition year

Aaron Hart couldn't be happier with the new players, coaching staff, and program he has at Mountain View.

"I'm really enjoying being around them," Hart said. "They've got a good sense of humor and work hard."

"It's fun to work with these kids, and especially with their hearts in the right place."

It's all part of what Hart calls a transition year. As one of two new head coaches in the 3A Greater St. Helens League, Hart was hired in early June after four seasons as head coach of Class 3A Lincoln of Seattle. While there is new personnel on the head-coaching front, the expectations and mission remain the same for a Thunder program that's accustomed to success. Mountain View has captured four league titles since 2016 and in that same time span, reached the postseason six times.

Without hesitation, Hart expects nothing less.

"Absolutely — 100 percent," he said. "I'm not satisfied doing it any other way."

Hart said he's been impressed with the off-season commitment. Unlike at Lincoln, when Hart restarted a program from scratch in 2019, the cupboard isn't bare when it comes to inheriting talent at Mountain



TIM MARTINEZ/The Columbian

Mountain View's Porter Drake (22) gets a block during a 3A Greater St. Helens League tiebreaker last season. The Thunder survived to reach the postseason for the sixth time since 2016.

View. The Thunder come off a 5-5 season in 2022, reaching the 3A state preliminary round, and have several players with multiple years of varsity experience. That includes six all-league returning players Hart's gotten to know through team camp, scrimmages and summer workouts: center Juan Pasillas-Stanton, receiver JJ

Thompson, running backs Porter Drake and Akili Kamau, and linebacker Ayden Denbo. Another receiver, senior Aiden Nicholson, had more than 500 receiving yards in eight touchdowns in 2022 before a season-ending injury midway through the season.

Safety Cash Cook moves into the starting quarterback role.

Hart hired several Mountain View assistants off its 2022 team, plus others who served on prior coaching staffs. Even in a transition year, the bar remains high.

"It's on us as a coaching staff to get them in the right positions," Hart said, "and if we do that, I believe we can make a run in the playoffs."

FRI., SEPT. 1



Nooksack Valley
6 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



at Ridgefield
7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



at Union
7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



Hanford
4:30 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



at Evergreen*
7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



Prairie*
7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



at Kelso*
7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



Heritage*
7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



Richland
4:30 p.m.

*-denotes 3A Greater St. Helens League game



PRAIRIE FALCONS

LAST SEASON

6-3, 2-2, tied for second in 3A GSHL

BEST STATE FINISH

Quarterfinals in 1985, 1986, 1989

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Braeden Slamp	5-9, 170, sr.	QB
Alex Juhl	6-3, 185, sr.	WR/LB
Seth Blick	6-0, 215, sr.	OL/DL
Ethan Cabral	6-0, 160, sr.	WR/DB
Pierson Lameh	5-0, 195, sr.	RB/LB
Luis Islas	6-0, 260, sr.	OL/DL
AJ Burke	5-0, 150, sr.	WR/DB
Mason Frei	5-11, 180, sr.	LB
Nicholas Merritt	6-0, 230, soph.	OL/DL

Coach: Will Ephraim (second year, 6-3)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ The Falcons got their first win in program history in their first home game at District Stadium (then Battle Ground Stadium) with a 21-0 win over R.A. Long on Sept. 21, 1979, with Jed Bradshaw leading the way, including a 80-yard kickoff return for a touchdown.



District Stadium

at Battle Ground HS
400 W. Main St.,
Battle Ground

Coach plays to team's strength at linebacker

Of all the years Will Ephraim has coached high school football as a head coach or assistant, it's not often he changes up from his traditional 4-2-5 front in favor of a 3-4 base set.

This year is an exception with the Prairie Falcons. Why? Let Ephraim, the Falcons' second-year coach, explain:

"We are stacked at linebacker. I think we're ready for it. ... We're going to take advantage of the many linebackers that we have. You've got to have the personnel and the right mentality to run that defense."

That personnel is full of speed and depth, according to Ephraim. Hence, the reason for a 3-4 base set behind all-league outside backer Pierson Lameh leading a senior-heavy linebacking corps.

Prairie welcomes back nine starters — five offense, four defense — from a 2022 team that posted its second straight six-win season. It fell short in a Kansas tiebreaker to determine the 3A Greater St. Helens League's second and final playoff spot.

Ephraim believes taking that next step is in the cards, especially with a defense he believes is this year's team strength. But the second-level defense isn't the only group where Ephraim feels



TAYLOR BALKOM/The Columbian

Prairie's Braeden Slamp is a dual-threat quarterback who earned all-league honors last season.

the Falcons have a wealth of talent. While the coach noted the offensive line is slim on experience, the skill-position players are far from it. All-league dual-threat quarterback Braeden Slamp once again leads the offense with plenty of weapons on the outside. Senior Ethan Cabral, also a returning all-league honoree, had more than 400 receiving yards

in 2022. Receiver Alex Juhl, at 6-foot-3, also will be a big factor in a new-look defense, Ephraim said.

Ephraim is a defensive guy. A former defensive back at Oregon State in the early 90s, Ephraim still calls the defense as a head coach. The Falcons got a taste of that new-look defense during off-season scrimmages that included going

against 4A Camas and defending Oregon 6A champion West Linn. There, Ephraim said the growth was visible and that, in turn, has the coach believing Prairie's trajectory is on the right track going into Year 2 in Ephraim's system.

"These guys are ready," he said, "and I think we're going to be alright."

FRI., SEPT. 1



Auburn

6 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



GW Graham
(B.C.)

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



at Battle
Ground

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



Union

4 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



Kelso*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



at Mountain
View*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



at W.F. West

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



Evergreen*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



at Heritage*

7 p.m.

*-denotes 3A Greater St. Helens League game

2A GREATER ST. HELENS LEAGUE

PROJECTED FINISH

Picks by Columbian sports staff

- 1  **WASHOUGAL:** Defending league champs return quarterback Holden Bea and a talented core of skill players.
- 2  **RIDGEFIELD:** The Spudders tout depth and experience, though question marks remain, particularly on defense.
- 3  **WOODLAND:** Fresh off of playoff appearance with new coach, Beavers believe they can make more noise.
- 4  **COLUMBIA RIVER:** Postseason is the expectation for senior-heavy Rapids under first-year head coach.
- 5  **HOCKINSON:** Turned over Hawks depth chart has players pushing each other for snaps at multiple positions.
- 6  **MARK MORRIS:** Expect early growing pains from young Monarchs team, but the group embraces hard work.
- 7  **HUDSON'S BAY:** Continuity in trenches is the foundation the Eagles plan to build around.
- 8  **R.A. LONG:** Following winless season, Lumberjacks look to build consistency through all four quarters.

REMEMBER WHEN?

SAWYER'S SHOW: Sawyer Racanelli wouldn't be stopped. Trailing Lynden 24-7, the Hockinson receiver used his big body to rush for five touchdowns as the Hawks rallied for a 42-37 win in the 2018 Class 2A state title game. He finished with 167 yards (85 rushing, 55 receiving, 27 passing) as the Hawks won their second consecutive state title.



Sawyer Racanelli

Experienced QBs could be difference

When taking stock of the current landscape across the 2A Greater St. Helens League, Hudson's Bay head coach Mark Oliverio calls the competitive balance among the eight teams "unmatched" in Southwest Washington high school football.

"I'd put us up there with any league, probably, in the state where you've got so many teams in the hunt," Oliverio said.

"It's a really, really good, dynamic group of head coaches, and it makes (the league) really fun."

It's not only a credit to the longtime coaches like Mark Morris' Shawn Perkins (21st year), Washougal's Dave Hajek (18th year) and Ridgefield's Scott Rice (fifth year), according to Oliverio. The five remaining teams have changed head coaches within the last four years, most recently with Columbia River hiring Dewayne Patterson, a former assistant in the program for eight years, this offseason.

In a short time, all of them have made their programs competitive to keep the 2A GSHL tough top to bottom.

"New coaches bring new energy, but sometimes it also takes a while to get established," Hajek said. "It will be interesting to see what happens this year."

In addition to relatively new coaches, there will be a lot of fresh faces stepping into larger roles around the league.

Three teams return their starting quarterbacks from last season, and it's not a coincidence all three have a reasonable chance to finish near the top of the league.



TAYLOR BALKOM/The Columbian

Washougal and Ridgefield are the favorites to win the Class 2A Greater St. Helens League.

The group is headlined by Washougal third-year starter Holden Bea, the reigning 2A GSHL Offensive MVP, and a strong core of skill players who helped the Panthers go undefeated in the 2A GSHL en route to their first league title since 1999.

"Right now, it's Washougal's title," Patterson said. "We're going after them right now, but I think it's going to be a very competitive league season."

Next comes Ridgefield, which took third last season and won the league in 2021, with seniors Logan DeBeaumont and Brayden Malella. The signal-callers competed for the starting job in each of the last two seasons, but this year, Rice

said the Spudders plan to give both of them substantial time at the position.

In Woodland, senior quarterback Brett Martynowicz also brings multiple years of starting experience to the table. Along with a stout group of returners led by all-league running back Elijah Andersen, the team leader in rushing and receiving last season, the Beavers are not a team to be slept on.

"Woodland is probably the riser," Ridgefield coach Scott Rice said. "(Head coach) Sean McDonald clearly knows how to win football games. We did 7-on-7 with them all summer and I think they're figuring their offense out. They'll hit hard and they'll play fast."

Programs like Mark Mor-

ris and Hockinson saw a lot of roster turnover after last season, but both are historically contenders. While River is starting fresh at a couple positions, a team heavy on seniors is eager to return to the postseason.

Hudson's Bay is setting the tone by returning four of five starting offensive linemen, including all-league performers Jake Hildebrand and Taiese Talea. R.A. Long has dynamic skill players in TraMayne Jenkins and Koynn Williamdyke.

"It's tough because we do have good quality teams down here and there's a lot of good coaches," Hockinson coach Clint LeCount said.

"Everybody is in the mix."



COLUMBIA RIVER RAPIDS

LAST SEASON

4-5, 3-4, tied for fourth in 2A GSHL

BEST STATE FINISH

Semifinals in 2002

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Tommy Blau	5-11, 180, sr.	WR/DB
Chris Parkin	5-11, 175, sr.	WR/DB
Joey Pena	6-2, 210, sr.	DB/TE
Reece Mickel	5-10, 175, sr.	DB/WR
Preston Shearer	6-2, 195, jr.	DL/TE
Brayden Schiefer	6-0, 175, sr.	QB/DB
Alex Holen	6-2, 195, sr.	OL/DL
Ha'aheo Delarose	6-2, 175, jr.	DB/WR
Coach: Dewayne Patterson (first year)		

FIRST HOME WIN

■ River played its first game at John O'Rourke Field at Columbia River on Sept. 16 of last season, falling 33-31 to Mark Morris. The Rapids got their first win there on Sept. 30 in a 28-7 win over R.A. Long with Nicholas Ianello and Adam Watts each rushing for over 100 yards. The first game played in the original stadium at River was a 7-7 tie with Battle Ground on Oct. 8, 1965.



John O'Rourke Field

On the campus of Columbia River High, 800 E. 99th St., Vancouver

Senior-laden team seeks postseason return

A small mistake on its own may be inconsequential, but can easily change a team's direction as more pile up over the course of a season.

That's why Columbia River and first-year head coach Dewayne Patterson are putting an emphasis on fixing the little things.

The Rapids finished the 2022 season tied for fourth place in the 2A GSHL, but were on the wrong end of a head-to-head tiebreaker with Woodland and missed the 2A District 4 playoffs. Of the team's four league losses, three were decided by seven points or less, including games against league champion Washougal (28-23) and runner-up Mark Morris (33-31).

"That's kind of been (what) I've been preaching all off-season and this summer: 'One, let's finish games. And, focus on the little things and make sure those little things don't hurt us in the long run,'" said Patterson, who took over as head coach after being an assistant in the program for eight years.

Returning to the postseason remains a top priority for the Rapids, especially with a roster heavy on seniors (28, to be exact).

The group includes receivers Tommy Blau and Chris Parkin, both of whom were named 2A



WILL DENNER/The Columbian

Team captain Tommy Blau, center, earned first-team all-league honors at wide receiver last season.

GSHL all-league players as juniors last year. Blau was also picked as team captain by his peers.

The starting quarterback competition is up for grabs between seniors Ethan Long and Brayden Schiefer. The latter transferred from King's Way Christian after starting for the Knights in 2022. However, he played for River as a freshman and is already familiar with teammates and coaches.

"He just slid right in," Patterson said. "He didn't feel like he was an outsider coming in; he kind of felt like he was always here."

River's defense remains a focal point under Patterson, a former defensive coordinator and safety during his playing career. The team's secondary is likely its most experienced unit, led by seniors Joey Pena, Reece Mickel, Mason McKleskey and Blau. The defensive

line is replacing multiple graduated seniors, but still has incoming junior Preston Shearer, a starter since his freshman year.

"I'm bringing in some experience, so that's nice when you have a big senior class and some good underclassmen that can play," Patterson said. "That's one of the reasons why I applied for this job, knowing what I had coming back the next year."

SAT., SEPT. 1



at West Seattle

6 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



at Skyview

8 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



at Mark Morris*

8 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



Woodland*

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



at R.A. Long*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



at Hockinson*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



Ridgefield*

5 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



at Washougal*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



Hudson's Bay*

7 p.m.

*-denotes 2A Greater St. Helens League game

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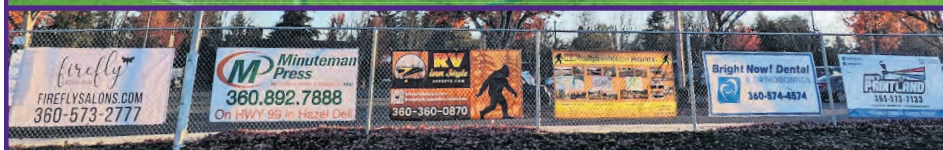
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HOCKINSON HAWKS

LAST SEASON

3-6, 2-5, tied for sixth in 2A GSHL

BEST STATE FINISH

State champions in 2017, 2018

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Carter Cameron	6-2, 180, sr.	WR/DB
Andon Stenersen	5-11, 190, sr.	QB/LB
Aiden Donowitz	6-0, 165, jr.	QB
Jacob Dark	6-3, 225, jr.	OL/DL
Jake McKee	5-7, 150, jr.	RB/LB
Nelson Thompson	6-1, 185, sr.	DL/TE
Shey Yarbrough	5-10, 180, jr.	RB/DB
Kasen Niemitalo	5-8, 155, sr.	WR/DB
Keegan McAfee	6-3, 245, so.	OL/DL
Ryder Stenersen	6-1, 175, jr.	TE/LB

Coach: Clint LeCount (third year, 10-9)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ After a winless first season in 2004 and playing only one home game with temporary bleachers, the Hawks got their first home win on Oct. 21, 2005, with a 21-6 win over La Center. Kyle Schneider rushed for 203 yards and two touchdowns. Playing their first game at the expanded Hockinson Stadium on Sept. 2, 2016, Matt Henry caught four touchdown passes as the Hawks beat La Center 46-35.



Hockinson HS Stadium

at Hockinson HS.
16819 N.E. 159th St.
Hockinson

Competition for playing time sharpens team

Competition can be found throughout the Hockinson Hawks football program, not just for the starting quarterback position.

While that battle is shaping up to be a close one between senior Andon Stenersen and junior Aiden Donowitz, a transfer from Union, Hockinson's depth at multiple positions means playing time is up for grabs.

"It's going to be a lot of competition and a lot of movement on the depth chart this fall," Hockinson head coach Clint LeCount said. "Seeing which kids step up, start to take over, apply themselves and kind of impose their will on the position."

For one, the offensive line — led by returning starter Jacob Dark — is a gritty, hard-nosed group that has several young players pushing incumbent starters, LeCount said.

The Hawks have experience in their skill positions with senior receivers Carter Cameron and Kasen Niemitalo. Junior running backs Shey Yarbrough and Jake McKee are like thunder and lightning, LeCount said, giving the Hawks power between the tackles and speed on the outside.

Within Hockinson's 4-2-5 defensive scheme, there's also competition for linebacker snaps among Trevor Holmes,



KATELYN METZGER/The Daily News

Hockinson's Jake McKee (20) is part of a one-two punch at running back this season for the Hawks.

Stenersen and Brody Bonife. In the secondary, strong spring performances from sophomores Gage Prepula and Reece Holmes have them pushing for more.

So, while the roster has turned over a lot in the last two years, there's no shortage of opportunities ahead for the young Hawks, who won seven straight league titles before Ridgefield

ended the run in 2021.

"Every single year you have to reload," LeCount said. "You always have those kids that are coming up, and they're showing flashes here and there. We're really excited about the group we have."

The head coach stopped short of calling Hockinson's roster a full-on youth movement — they still have 12

seniors, after all — but the future is promising. Seventy-four athletes participated in the program's spring practice slate, which LeCount said was the largest turnout in his time at Hockinson dating back to 2010.

"The program is growing, building and there's a lot of excitement," LeCount said, "We're ready to go (and) we're ready to get after it."

FRI., SEPT. 1



at La Center

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



at Evergreen

4:30 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



Ridgefield*

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



R.A. Long*

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



at Woodland*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



Columbia River*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



at Mark Morris*

7 p.m.

THU., OCT. 19



at Hudson's Bay*

5 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



Washougal*

7 p.m.

*-denotes 2A Greater St. Helens League game



HUDSON'S BAY EAGLES

LAST SEASON

3-6, 2-5, seventh in 2A GSHL

BEST STATE FINISH

Quarterfinals in 1999

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Talan Leon-Guerrero	5-10, 215, sr.	LB/FB
Rafael Bauman	6-0, 180, sr.	DB/RB/WR
Aqeel Bauman	5-11, 185, so.	RB/WR/DB
Jake Hildebrand	5-9, 215, jr.	OL/DL
Taiese Telea	5-10, 255, jr.	OL/DL
Michael Brinson	6-2, 230, sr.	OL/DL
Neistche LaBossiere	6-0, 185, jr.	WR/DB
Jay Peppler	5-6, 165, sr.	WR/DB
Maxx Van Hoomissen	6-1, 195, sr.	LB/WR
Malukai Hodges	5-10, 170, so.	RB/DB

Coach: Mark Oliverio (third year, 8-10)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ Although the school opened in 1955, Hudson's Bay didn't play its first football season until 1956. In their debut, played at Kiggins Bowl, the Eagles beat Evergreen 19-0 on Sept. 14, 1956, with Bob Henderson rushing for touchdowns of 57, 53 and 27 yards.



Kiggins Bowl

Near the campus of Discovery Middle School,
800 E. 40th St.,
Vancouver

Bay looks to build around solid offensive line

When building a new team, having an experienced offensive line is a good place to start.

Hudson's Bay has its foundation set with four starters, Jake Hildebrand, Taiese Telea, Michael Brinson and Jeremiah Moen, plus senior Timote Vaea joining the fold, giving the Eagles a formidable bunch to build around.

"To get that group back, and have some chemistry and continuity there, will just kind of help everything, hopefully, get a faster start," Bay head coach Mark Oliverio said.

"That's really going to be the foundation on both sides of the ball. Being able to have some continuity at the line of scrimmage and then build around that."

Behind that offensive line, highlighted by all-league returners Hildebrand and Telea entering their junior year, leading rusher Rafael Bauman returns at running back, receiver and cornerback. Last year as a junior, his workload increased in the back half of the season after starter Mateo Varona went down with an injury.

Bauman's brother, Aqeel Bauman, a sophomore, gives Bay another offensive weapon as a utility player who lines up in the backfield and out wide.



TIM MARTINEZ/The Columbian

Hudson's Bay senior Rafael Bauman (1) is a dynamic player both in the backfield and at receiver.

The Eagles' defense is led by senior middle linebacker Talan Leon-Guerrero, a reigning all-league first team linebacker who also plays fullback.

"He's a big piece of what we do defensively ... outstanding player on both sides of the ball," Oliverio said.

Bay won two of its first three games last season against

Heritage and R.A. Long, then grabbed another 2A GSHL win late in the year against Woodland. The success of this year's team won't only be measured by wins and losses, Oliverio said, but more the overall growth and improvement of the entire program.

"I just want to see our players continue to grow and develop

as a team ... not only individually, but as a team to the point where it ultimately shows up on the scoreboard," Oliverio said.

"I like our team. I like the commitment. We don't have a million numbers, but we've got a solid group of guys that are football guys. I like where we're at and I'm optimistic about where we're going."

FRI., SEPT. 1



Heritage

5 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



at King's Way
Christian

6 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



at R.A. Long*

5 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



at Ridgefield*

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



Mark Morris*

5 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



Washougal*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



at Woodland*

7 p.m.

THU., OCT. 19



Hockinson*

5 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



at Columbia
River*

8 p.m.

*-denotes 2A Greater St. Helens League game



MARK MORRIS MONARCHS

LAST SEASON

8-2, 6-1, second in 2A GSHL,
reached state preliminary round

BEST STATE FINISH

Second in 1979

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Cade Warren	6-1, 190, sr.	QB/DB
Brady Schlecht	5-10, 180, jr.	RB/LB
Mac West	6-0, 225, jr.	TE/DE
DJ Vandenberg	6-0, 190, sr.	HB/LB
Kyler Keith	6-1, 250, sr.	OL/DL
Coach: Shawn Perkins (21st year, 94-101)		

FIRST HOME WIN

■ Mike Warren scored a touchdown and defense did the rest as the Monarchs beat Hoquiam 9-0 on Sept. 7, 1974, the first game in what would later be dubbed Longview Memorial Stadium.



Longview Memorial Stadium

R.A. Long High School
2903 Nichols Blvd., Longview

Team rebuilds after large class graduates

Over two decades, Mark Morris head coach Shawn Perkins has seen many talented players come and go. Yet it's rare when a team graduates so many all at once, much like the Monarchs did at the end of the 2022 season.

All-league players including Kobe Parlin, Deacon Dietz, Justus McCann, Zack Ziegler, Langston Bartell and Carter Kiser have all moved on. Mark Morris is also without Dosen Morrow, an all-league defensive lineman who will likely miss his senior season after suffering a torn labrum during baseball season last spring.

So following two consecutive playoff appearances, the success of this Mark Morris team hinges on a group largely made up of young, unproven players.

"There's some big holes that need to be filled," Perkins said. "It'll be fun to see how some of these kids step up. We're going to have some growing pains because we have a lot of young kids, but it's also exciting to see how they finish out the year."

One thing the Monarchs have in their favor is a willingness to work. Perkins estimates the team has averaged 50-60 players during weight room sessions this summer,



TAYLOR BALKOM/The Columbian

Daniel Vandenberg, center, is among a senior class that has big shoes to fill after last year's success.

and has 82 signed up across the program.

Helping bridge the gap between a younger group of players are returners including Cade Warren, Brady Schlecht, Mac West, DJ Vandenberg and Kyler Keith.

Warren, a senior, will take over as the team's starting quarterback after playing

receiver and defensive back last year.

"We're going to have a bunch of young kids this year that have to step up (and) haven't had a whole lot of varsity experience," Perkins said. "I think they take some pride in trying to keep that (tradition) going."

Adding to the anticipation

of a new season, Mark Morris will play the first game at recently renovated Longview Memorial Stadium on Sept. 1 against Battle Ground. The project included installation of a new turf field, track surface and scoreboard.

"It will be the first game on the turf, so I'm pretty excited about that," Perkins said.

FRI., SEPT. 1



Battle Ground

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



at Astoria
(Ore.)

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



at Columbia
River*

8 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



Washougal*

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



at Hudson's
Bay*

5 p.m.

THU., OCT. 6



at Ridgefield*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



Hockinson*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



at Woodland*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



R.A. Long*

7 p.m.

*-denotes 2A Greater St. Helens League game



R.A. LONG LUMBERJACKS

LAST SEASON

0-9, 0-7, eighth in 2A GSHL

BEST STATE FINISH

First round in 2010

PLAYERS TO WATCH

TraMayne Jenkins 5-11, 180, jr. QB/DB
Koynn Williamdyke 6-0, 160, sr. WR/DB
Franklin Pihl 5-11, 165, jr. FB/LB
Coach: Jon Barker (fourth year, 2-21)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ Jeff Washburn rushed for two touchdowns and Warren Walker led the Lumberjack defense in a 14-0 win over Evergreen in R.A. Long's first game at Longview Memorial Stadium on Sept. 20, 1974.



Longview Memorial Stadium

R.A. Long High School
2903 Nichols Blvd., Longview

Speed, consistency keys to reaching goals

R.A. Long showed flashes of brilliance in multiple games during a winless 2022 season. For the Lumberjacks to take the next step, head coach Jon Barker wants to see the team put together consistent efforts for all four quarters.

"There were a lot of games where we came out and we would play good for the first half, and then we'd come up after halftime and the effort was inconsistent," Barker said. "We're just trying to get more consistent with our effort, be more focused, less focused on what the other team is doing."

For the second straight year, however, a young, undersized offensive line means the Lumberjacks will need to lean on their speed and athleticism on the edge.

With that philosophy in mind, the Lumberjacks gave the keys to junior TraMayne Jenkins in the starting quarterback role, in addition to his spot at free safety.

Jenkins has been a versatile weapon by playing running back and receiver in two seasons at R.A. Long. Now, he will have the ball in his hands on every play.

His top target is senior Koynn Williamdyke, a multi-sport athlete who also took third in the 300-meter hurdles at the 2A state track and field



KATELYN METZGER/for The Columbian

After playing running back last year, R.A. Long's TraMayne Jenkins (21) will take over at quarterback.

championships last spring.

"He's been our jet back, or z-back, but we might put him outside at x (receiver) this year," Barker said. "(He has) just great track speed. ... it's his senior year, and he's developed a little more mentally and physically every year, so he should be primed for a good senior year."

R.A. Long is also excited about the return of fullback/linebacker Franklin Pihl, who

played in the Lumberjacks' spring ball program as a freshman before moving to Napavine. He was part of the Tigers' 2022 Class 2B state championship team and now back in Longview.

Barker is going into his fourth year as the Lumberjacks' head coach, which means the current group of seniors has played for the same coaching staff during their entire high school ca-

reers. That has brought some much-needed stability to the program.

"We've established that culture and the seniors know what we're doing," Barker said. "There's trust between the kids, what the scheme is and the vocabulary is consistent. We've kind of gotten to the point where we can just look at each other, I can say like three words, they know what I want and we can put it into action."

FRI., SEPT. 1



at Castle Rock

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



Mercer Island

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



Hudson's Bay*

5 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



at Hockinson*

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



Columbia River*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



Woodland*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



at Washougal*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



Ridgefield*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



at Mark Morris*

7 p.m.

*-denotes 2A Greater St. Helens League game



RIDGEFIELD SPUDDERS

LAST SEASON

5-5, 5-2, second in 2A GSHL

BEST STATE FINISH

Champions in 1995

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Danny McDonnell	6-2, 235, sr.	OL/DL
Logan DeBeaumont	6-0, 180, sr.	QB
Brayden Malella	6-0, 175, sr.	QB/DB
Rocco Wright	5-11, 160, sr.	RB/LB
Cly Stephens	5-9, 160, jr.	RB/LB
Cash Hill	5-8, 165, sr.	WR/DB
Josh Bell	5-9, 230, sr.	OL/DL
Noah Stromberg	6-2, 180, jr.	WR/DB

Coach: Scott Rice (fifth year, 26-12)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ The Spudders' first game at their on-campus stadium was on Oct. 3, 1975, in a loss to Castle Rock. The first win at home came in the season opener in 1976 when Gordon Avery's fourth-quarter touchdown sealed a 20-12 win over Ilwaco on Sept. 10.



Ridgefield Stadium

at Ridgefield HS,
2630 S. Hillhurst
Rd., Ridgefield

Strength, experience found in line, backfield

In a nutshell, Ridgefield head coach Scott Rice sums up the Spudders' outlook for the upcoming season like this:

"There's great depth, there's good experience, but there's plenty of question marks for sure."

Depth-wise, Ridgefield had an estimated 88 players on its roster to begin fall camp. Plus, the program continues to make further inroads with seven Clark County Youth Football feeder teams in the fast-growing Ridgefield community.

As for experience, the Spudders return several impact players who were part of the team's 2A state quarterfinal run in 2021 and third-place league finish last season.

Four of five offensive linemen are back, led by senior all-league players Danny McDonnell and Josh Bell. Running backs Rocco Wright and Cly Stephens took the lion's share of carries last season. Both return to a Ridgefield offense that relishes running the ball.

And, for a third consecutive season, seniors Logan DeBeaumont and Brayden Malella are competing for snaps at quarterback. But unlike past years, when the coaching staff set a deadline to pick a starter, Rice suggested both seniors will get substantial time at quarterback. The



TIM MARTINEZ/The Columbian

Rocco Wright (23) gives Ridgefield a hard-nosed running back behind an experienced offensive line.

team isn't afraid to ride the hot hand and capitalize on having two starting-caliber players.

"We're expecting to split time with those guys throughout the year, not just week one. We're not going to name a starter for the year," Rice said.

But then, as Rice alluded to, come some question marks. Ridgefield's receiving corps took a hit with Isaiah Cowley graduating and Landon Kelsey transferring to Central Catholic in Portland.

Aside from the defensive front and Malella at cornerback, most of Ridgefield's defense will be made up of first-time starters. Graduating stalwarts like linebacker Wyatt Bartroff, last year's 2A GSHL Defensive POY, and Cowley in the secondary, leaves the Spudders looking for new leaders to emerge.

Questions aside, Ridgefield has become a perennial playoff team with three postseason appearances since 2019. Rice,

the Spudders' fifth-year coach, said the key to maintaining recent success is continuing to build the program's culture up.

"It takes a lot of work," he said. "I think that's probably what we saw most this year ... guys committed to coming to offseason stuff, guys committed to being in the weight room four days a week through six weeks of summer lifting, going to camp. We're really starting to get some things in line."

FRI., SEPT. 1



at W.F. West

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



Mountain View

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



at Hockinson*

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



Hudson's Bay*

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



at Washougal*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



Mark Morris*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



at Columbia River*

5 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



at R.A. Long*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



Woodland*

7 p.m.

*-denotes 2A Greater St. Helens League game



WASHOUGAL PANTHERS

LAST SEASON

9-2, 7-0, first in 2A GSHL, reached first round of 2A state playoffs

BEST STATE FINISH

Semifinals in 1974

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Holden Bea	6-3, 195, sr.	QB
Sam Evers	6-2, 185, sr.	WR/DB
Sam Bisila	6-0, 200, sr.	OL/DL
Will Cooper	5-10, 185, sr.	RB/LB
Cooper Maxey	6-0, 190, sr.	WR/RB/LB
Harrison DeShazer	6-5, 230, jr.	DL/TE/WR
Deondrae Goodell	5-9, 150, so.	RB/LB

Coach: Dave Hajek (18th year, 73-87)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ Ron Shurm scored two touchdowns and the defense notched a shutout as the Panthers opened their new stadium (later named Fishback Stadium in 1966) with a 33-0 win over Evergreen on Sept. 14, 1962.



Fishback Stadium

at Washougal HS, 1201 39th St., Washougal

Players put in extra work in quest to be great

On the heels of the program's first league title since 1999, the build-up to a new season in Washougal is business as usual.

There is one difference Panthers head coach Dave Hajek notices from past seasons, however. In addition to the training that takes place within a team setting, an increasing number of players sought out individual camps during the offseason in hopes of reaching the collegiate level.

Senior quarterback Holden Bea was one of the main catalysts in recent memory, and other players have since followed suit.

Long snapper Owen Edwards and kicker/punter Koby Johnson have traveled to multiple specialist camps around the country to boost their recruiting profiles. The same goes for players like Sam Evers, Cooper Maxey and Harrison DeShazer, among others who have attended college and skill camps.

"It's the enthusiasm for not only playing football, but really putting in the time, effort and work ethic behind it that makes them good football players," Hajek said.

"For a long time at Washougal, we've had guys that were talented and guys that worked hard, but they haven't taken it to that level. ... You see these guys doing that now at Washougal,



TAYLOR BALKOM/The Columbian

After its first league title since 1999, Washougal aims to solidify itself among the area's top programs.

(whereas) we didn't have that as much, two, three, four, five years ago."

How that extra work translates to the upcoming season remains to be seen, but the talent level up and down the Panthers' roster is plentiful. No longer the young team looking for a breakthrough, the reigning 2A GSHL champions are now set on defending their title and making a deeper run in the 2A state playoffs beyond the first round.

The Panthers' potential starts with Bea, The Columbian's 2022 All-Region Player of the Year, who Hajek contends is one of the best quarterbacks in

the state. As a senior, the Idaho commit has taken on an even bigger leadership role.

"He's progressed every year," Hajek said of the third-year starter. "... Last year, I don't want to say he surprised me how good he was, but he had progressed quicker than I realized until we got into the season. This year, I think the step with him is developing that leadership skill."

Bea has a talented group of skill players to throw to, led by Evers. After tallying 929 receiving yards and 16 touchdowns last season, Evers comes back as a bigger, faster, more athletic

receiver for his senior season.

Maxey and DeShazer give the Panthers more pass catchers who are also defensive starters. Senior Will Cooper takes over the starting running back role.

The Panthers also have some experience in the trenches with all-league center Sam Bisila, the leader of the offensive line.

"Obviously, we have some high expectations this year," Hajek said. "Going into our season I think that's the mindset of the kids ... we have another opportunity to be one of the top teams in our league and hopefully get to the round of 16 in the state playoffs."

THU., AUG. 31



River Ridge

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



at Toppenish

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



Woodland*

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



at Mark Morris*

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



Ridgefield*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



at Hudson's Bay*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



R.A. Long*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



at Columbia River*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



at Hockinson*

7 p.m.

*-denotes 2A Greater St. Helens League game



WOODLAND BEAVERS

LAST SEASON

4-6, 3-4, tied for fourth in 2A GSHL,
reached state preliminary round

BEST STATE FINISH

Semifinals in 1974

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Elijah Andersen	6-1, 175, jr.	RB/LB
Brett Martynowicz	5-10, 165, sr.	QB/DB
Jess Starr	6-0, 200, sr.	OL/DL/LB
Cody Armstrong	5-10, 225, sr.	OL/DL
Chase Hall	6-0, 165, jr.	DB/TE
Seth Popp	6-0, 185, jr.	ATH

Coach: Sean McDonald (second year, 4-6)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ Wyatt Harsh rushed for two third-quarter touchdowns and Jared Cloud's late interception sealed a 28-26 win for the Beavers over La Center on Sept. 11, 2015, to open the new Beaver Stadium on the new Woodland High School campus.



Beaver Stadium

at Woodland HS,
1500 Dike Access
Rd. Woodland

Expectations elevated after last year's success

The Woodland Beavers are elevating expectations under head coach Sean McDonald in year two.

Around the 2A GSHL, multiple coaches mentioned Woodland as a team making noise during summer 7-on-7 events.

Within the program, the Beavers believe in themselves, too. They took fourth in the league last season to earn a postseason berth, before losing to W.F. West in the 2A state preliminary round.

From there, the team had a productive offseason with more familiarity between players and McDonald. The second-year coach took over at Woodland in 2022 following seven seasons at Kalama with three 2B state championships.

"I think expectations are definitely higher this year," McDonald said. "Making it to that postseason game last year was definitely a good end to the season. ... There's some confidence with this group now. They saw the mistakes we made last year. I think they're ready to take a step forward and hopefully compete for a league championship."

Woodland was a somewhat run-heavy offense last year, but McDonald expects this season to be well balanced behind a solid offensive line. The Beavers bring back senior quarter-



TIM MARTINEZ/The Columbian

Sean McDonald coached Woodland to the playoffs in his first season after seven years at Kalama.

back Brett Martynowicz, one of just three returning starting signal-callers in the 2A GSHL. They also have workhorse running back Elijah Andersen, who was an all-league player last season as a sophomore while leading Woodland in rushing and receiving.

"Elijah Andersen is one of our best athletes, so we're going to try to get him the ball in multiple different ways," McDonald said.

Senior Jess Starr, who starts at offensive tackle, while playing defensive end and linebacker on the other side of the ball, capped a strong summer by earning all-camp team accolades at Linfield, the camp the Beavers attended.

"He's going to be a dude to look out for," McDonald said.

Also anchoring Woodland's line is senior Cody Armstrong, a two-time, all-league offensive lineman.

Top to bottom, McDonald sees a lot of buy-in with this team over the summer, beginning with player-led workouts right after the spring baseball season ended.

"We've got a lot of hard workers, a lot of kids that are just doing the right things," McDonald said. "They kind of saw the mistakes that we made last year and have learned from that. I think they're going to make some big things happen."

FRI., SEPT. 1



Kalama

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



at La Center

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



at Washougal*

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



at Columbia
River*

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



Hockinson*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



at R.A. Long*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



Hudson's Bay*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



Mark Morris*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



at Ridgefield*

7 p.m.

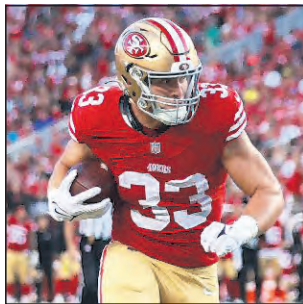
*-denotes 2A Greater St. Helens League game

360PREPS TO 360PROS



The Columbian files

Camas High's Jack Colletto in 2016.



The Associated Press

San Francisco 49ers fullback Jack Colletto in an NFL preseason game on Aug. 19.



The Columbian files

Heritage High's Garrett Grayson in 2009.



The Associated Press

New Orleans Saints quarterback Garrett Grayson in an NFL preseason game in 2017.



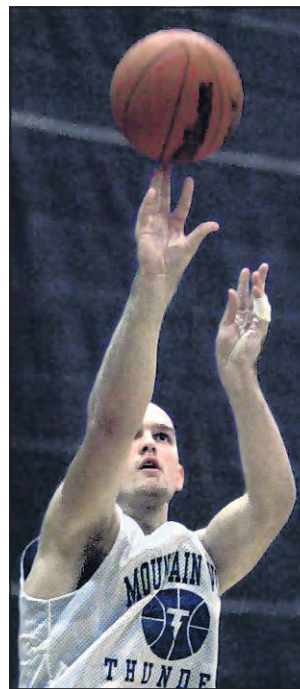
The Columbian files

Mountain View High alum Rian Lindell in 2000 as a rookie kicker for the Seattle Seahawks.



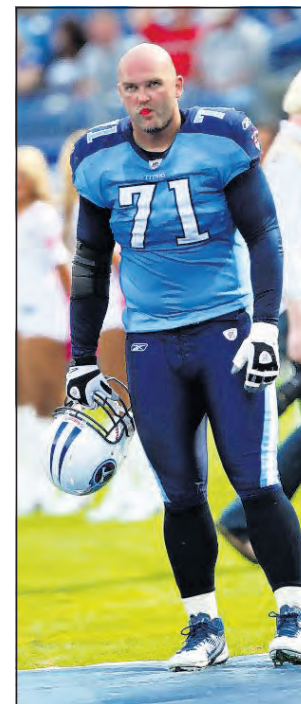
The Associated Press files

Buffalo Bills' kicker Rian Lindell (9) beating the New England Patriots in 2011.



The Columbian files

Mountain View High School's Michael Roos in 1999 on the Thunder's basketball team.



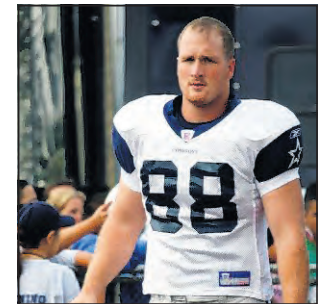
The Associated Press files

Tennessee Titans tackle Michael Roos in 2011.



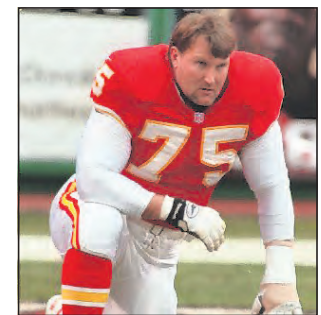
The Columbian files

Columbia River's Brett Pierce (95) in 1999.



The Associated Press files

Brett Pierce at Dallas Cowboys' training camp in 2006.



The Associated Press files

Columbia River High alum Joe Phillips with the Kansas City Chiefs in 1998.



The Columbian files

Fort Vancouver High alum Travis Claridge (71) with the Atlanta Falcons in 2000.

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON PLAYERS WHO WENT ON TO THE NFL

JACK COLLETT (Camas) FB 2023 49ers (camp)

GARRETT GRAYSON (Heritage) QB 2016-19 Saints, Falcons, Broncos (practice squads)

MICHAEL ROOS (Mountain View) T 2005-2014 Titans

BRETT PIERCE (Columbia River) TE 2004-05 Cowboys

RIAN LINDELL (Mountain View) PK 2000-2013 Seahawks, Bills, Bucs

TRAVIS CLARIDGE (Fort Vancouver) G-T 2000-2003 Falcons

DAVID RICHIE (Kelso) NT 1997-2000 Broncos, 49ers, Jaguars

JON SHIELDS (Fort Vancouver) G 1987 Cowboys

JOE PHILLIPS (Columbia River) NT-DT-DE 1986-1999 Vikings, Chargers, Chiefs, Rams

STEVE DILS (Fort Vancouver) QB 1979-1988 Vikings, Rams, Falcons

BOB GAMBOLD (Longview) QB 1953 Eagles

FRED PROVO (Vancouver HS) HB 1948 Packers

BILL BRIAN (Vancouver HS) T-C-LB 1935-36 Eagles

(Source: www.pro-football-reference.com; *list may be incomplete, email info to sports@columbian.com)

1A TRICO LEAGUE

PROJECTED FINISH

Picks by Columbian sports staff

- 1  **LA CENTER:** Four-time reigning league champ is looking to get past the first round of state for the first time since 2017.
- 2  **CASTLE ROCK:** Rockets have a new coach, but that hasn't changed the goal of improving off their second-place standing the past four seasons.
- 3  **SETON CATHOLIC:** The Cougars have just one senior on the roster, but a wealth of talented juniors with a lot of experience.
- 4  **STEVENSON:** Versatile senior quarterback Kacen Bach leads an athletic squad that will play a hybrid 1A Trico/2B Central schedule.
- 5  **KING'S WAY CHRISTIAN:** New coach brings decades of experience to a young squad eager to learn.
- 6  **COLUMBIA - WHITE SALMON:** The Bruins must shake the memory of their first winless season since 2011, a good start would go a long way.
- 7  **FORT VANCOUVER:** The Trappers graduated seven all-league seniors from last year's team, but they left behind a sense of hope for the future.

REMEMBER WHEN?

TRIPLE OT THRILLER: One of the most dramatic wins in La Center football history saw the Wildcats outlast Cascade Christian 41-35 in triple overtime of the 2017 Class 1A state quarterfinals. Hayden Williamson ran in from 5 yards to put the Wildcats ahead 41-35 in triple OT. Then Evan Honore, who broke two vertebrae earlier in the game, came up with the game-saving tackle at the 1.



TIM MARTINEZ/The Columbian

La Center players celebrate after a 31-0 win over Castle Rock on Oct. 28, 2022, a victory which clinched the league title.

La Center hopes to follow familiar script

The last four seasons in the Trico League followed a familiar path.

La Center and Castle Rock start league play undefeated until meeting in the league finale.

Then La Center beats Castle Rock for the league title.

So Trico coaches believe there is no reason not to consider La Center the team to beat again.

"The gatekeeper right now is La Center," Fort Vancouver coach Doug Bilodeau said. "You want to get somewhere in this league, you have to beat La Center, and they're a machine right now. They can probably beat some 3A

teams, for crying out loud."

"La Center has a quality program year in and year out," Castle Rock's Cody Warner said. "They are kind of the top dog until somebody dethrones them."

But John Lambert, entering his 25th season as La Center's head coach, sees improvement throughout the league that can make things interesting in the Trico.

He points to Seton Catholic as a team to watch. The Cougars have finished third in the league behind La Center and Castle Rock each of the last three seasons.

"Seton Catholic, they

have a lot of sophomores who will be juniors, and there is a big jump sophomore to junior year," Lambert said. "I think they're going to be pretty good. ... And then Castle Rock, they've got some good kids coming back. So that Week 5 game between Seton and Castle Rock will truly be telling. Last year, Castle Rock just dominated. But I think Seton Catholic really feels this is their year to really make an impact."

"And I think it's great. I'm a big proponent of our league being strong."

The wild card in the equation is that four of the seven teams in the league changed head coaches in

the offseason — Castle Rock, King's Way Christian, Columbia-White Salmon and Seton Catholic.

"We have a lot of new faces in the coaching scene," said Dan Chase, who is returning for his third stint as head coach at Seton. "That's going to be exciting. There are a lot of unknowns of what those new coaches bring to those programs. So as far as I'm concerned, it's anybody's game."

"Obviously, La Center has an advantage being league champs from last year, and they have John Lambert, who has been there forever. So they will be strong."



CASTLE ROCK ROCKETS

LAST SEASON

7-3, 4-1, second in Trico League,
reached district playoffs

BEST STATE FINISH

State champion in 1988

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Stephen Ibsen	5-10, 180 Sr.	RB/LB
Trevor Rogen	5-11, 175 Jr.	QB/DB
Ryker Heller	5-11, 180 Sr.	TE/DL
Ian Burton	5-9, 160 Sr.	RB/LB
Ethan Inman	5-11 195 Sr.	OL/LB
Owen Langsdon	6-2, 175 Jr.	WR/LB
Aaron Smiley	6-3 280 Sr.	OL/DL
Noah Schulke	5-9 220 Jr.	OL/DL
Coach: Cody Warner (first year)		

FIRST HOME WIN

■ Ed Bate threw TD passes to John Godinho, Sam Althof and Randy Silva as Castle Rock marked the dedication of Rocket Stadium with a 34-8 win over Ilwaco on Oct. 4, 1985.



Rocket Stadium

at Castle Rock HS,
5180 Westside
Hwy., Castle Rock

New coach has MVP, familiar weapons

Castle Rock has a new coach, but fans can expect some familiar things out of the Rockets in 2023.

"Offensively and defensively, we'll be really similar to what we've been," first-year coach Cody Warner said. "I didn't want to shake things up too much because we were successful last year. And I really liked the direction of the program."

After coaching stints at St. Helens, Ore., and in Lewiston, Idaho, Warner takes over for Aaron Gehring, who was the Rockets head coach for five seasons. Warner was Gehring's offensive coordinator last season.

"Anytime an opportunity to be a head coach presents itself, it's something that I had to listen to," Warner said. "A lot of the players encouraged me to go forward with it. I am very excited."

Warner will have some familiar tools on offense at his disposal, led by senior Stephen Ibsen, who split time at quarterback and running back last season on his way to being named the Trico League MVP.

"We did lose some key seniors last year, but we've got a really good group coming back. Stephen Ibsen was the league MVP last year, and he's coming back, and he's healthy. And we've got some other players



TIM MARTINEZ/The Columbian

Castle Rock quarterback Trevor Rogen (2) is healthy after battling injuries much of last season.

who saw some time last year, and those roles will increase."

Trevor Rogen, who saw time at quarterback as a sophomore, returns as does big targets in Owen Langdon and Ryker Heller.

"I expect Trevor Rogen to have a big year this year," War-

ner said. "He was banged up last year for a lot of the beginning of the season."

While the Rockets lost some key contributors up front to graduation, it presents an opportunity for players like Aaron Smiley and Noah Schulke.

"I'm excited to lead the

program," he said. "It hasn't really sunk in to me that I'm the head coach. I haven't had that opportunity to walk out and be the head guy on a Friday night. It should be fun. I've got a great group of kids who work their butts off, and that should show up on the field."

FRI., SEPT. 1



R.A. Long

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



at Kalama

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



At Elma

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



Montesano

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



Fort
Vancouver*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



at Seton
Catholic*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



at Columbia-
White Salmon*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



King's Way
Christian*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



La Center*

7 p.m.

*-denotes 1A Trico League game



COLUMBIA BRUINS

LAST SEASON

0-9, 0-5, sixth in Trico League

BEST STATE FINISH

Quarterfinals in 1996, 1998

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Petey Schlegel	5-3, 135 Sr.	WR/DB
Wesley White	6-0, 165 Sr.	RB
Landon Castilla	5-9, 160 Sr.	RB
Yadier Ruiz	6-2, 265 Sr.	OL/DL
Matthias Posini	6-2, 245 Jr.	OL/DL
Kai Brasuell	6-2, 185 Jr.	WR/DB
Sawyer Muehlbauer	6-3, 175 Jr.	WR/DB
Liam Cox	6-1, 170 Sr.	OL/DL

Coach: Shawn Friese (first year)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ Columbia High School moved into its new high school in 1970, but the first win on its new home field didn't come until Sept. 17, 1971. Tony Pate's 14-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter beat Wahtonka 12-6.



Bruin Stadium

at Columbia HS,
1455 NW Bruin
Country Rd.,
White Salmon

New coach looks forward to year of progress

It's the perfect time for a fresh start in White Salmon.

Coming off their first winless since 2011 and welcoming in a new head coach, that's exactly what the Columbia-White Salmon Bruins are looking for.

Shawn Friese takes over as head coach after Dan Smith stepped down after five seasons. Friese has been an assistant at Columbia for six years.

"I've been an assistant coach for pretty much my entire teaching career, and that's 14 years," Friese said. "We're changing a lot of things. But one thing that I have going for me is that I'm a teacher at the school and an assistant coach, so I know most of the players. So it's not like a new head coach coming in from out of nowhere."

Youth, inexperience and a lack of depth contributed to the Bruins' 0-9 season. But Friese says they return eight starters on each side of the ball, creating a good foundation to build on.

Leading the way for the Bruins up front will be senior Javier Ruiz and junior Matthias Posini.

"They will be at the core of our line play, and that's going to be pretty big for us this year," Friese said.

Running back Wesley White returns in the backfield, and on the perimeter senior Pete Schlegel and junior Kai Brasuell and



Photo courtesy of JOHN HALLEAD

Bruin Stadium at Columbia High School in White Salmon.

Sawyer Muehlbauer return.

"That experience will play a big role, I think," Friese said. "We're changing some things up with the program, going with a fresh start. And that will have some difficulties as well. But I think that's something we need

after last year. Really, since COVID."

Since their last 0-9 season in 2011, the Bruins averaged five wins a year from 2012 to 2019. But they are 4-19 since the shortened COVID season of 2020-21.

"It was a rough year last year, and that will still be one of the challenges going forward for us," Friese said. "We have to think of this season as a fresh start and a new year, and not dwell on what happened in the past."

FRI., SEPT. 1



at Goldendale

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



Stevenson

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



Montesano

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



at Elma

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



Seton
Catholic*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



at King's Way
Christian*

6 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



Castle Rock*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



at La Center*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



at Fort
Vancouver*

7 p.m.

*-denotes 1A Trico League game



FORT VANCOUVER TRAPPERS

LAST SEASON

3-6, 1-3, fifth in Trico League

BEST STATE FINISH

Quarterfinals in 1973

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Ryan Faumuina	6-4, 310 Sr.	OL/DL
Denis Zayets	6-0, 235 Jr.	RB
Kyler Smith	5-11, 195 Jr.	QB
Caleb Hyde	5-10, 175 Jr.	QB
Kyle Sammi	5-10, 185 Sr.	RB/LB
Coach: Doug Bilodeau (fourth year, 3-16)		

FIRST HOME WIN

■ The Trappers, then Vancouver High School, played the first high school game at Kiggins Bowl on Sept. 20, 1946, falling to Washington of Portland 12-6 in front of an estimated crowd of more than 6,000. The Trappers' first home win at Kiggins came a week later, on Sept. 27, with a 28-14 win over R.A. Long with Ed Rood and Bill Osborne starring for the Trappers.



Kiggins Bowl

Near the campus of Discovery Middle School, 800 E. 40th St., Vancouver

Team looks to continue positive momentum

Fort Vancouver graduated seven all-league seniors from a team that won more games last season than any Trapper squad since 2007.

But there is one thing those all-leaguers left behind — hope.

“I think what happens is once you break that ice, kids are like ‘Oh, we can do it!’” head coach Doug Bilodeau said. “It’s like going on a long hike up a big mountain to a lake up there that is pristine and beautiful. That’s the payoff, but it’s a long, hard grind to get there. ... But when all you’ve done is lose for a while, it’s hard because they think there’s nothing at the top of that mountain that will be worth the grind.”

Laying the foundation for success going forward for the Trappers will be their lone returning all-leaguer Ryan Faumuina, a 6-foot-4, 310-pound center.

“Ryan is just an awesome guy and a good leader,” Bilodeau said. “All of our line guys are strong and dedicated to the program. They’re a group that hangs together. They do a lot together. It’s hard when the linemen don’t hang out, but other groups do. It can form a split, and you’re trying to figure that out. But this group is pretty close and they hold themselves accountable.”



MICAH RICE/The Columbian

Fort Vancouver coach Doug Bilodeau hugs an assistant coach after a 29-27 win over Stevenson on Sept. 16, 2022. The victory was the program’s first since 2019.

Juniors Kyler Smith and Caleb Hyde will be battling for playing time at quarterback, and junior Denis Zayets at 235 pounds will lead the rushing attack.

“We have a big junior class,” Bilodeau said. “They won’t have as much experience, but they’ve been working hard this

summer. ... The kids are really working together. That’s one thing we’ve got going for us right now is a good culture now with the players.”

In his fourth season with the program, Bilodeau continues to build the program’s size. The Trappers fielded varsity and C-squad teams last year. This year,

Bilodeau also hopes to schedule some junior varsity games.

“I’m pushing for 70 kids in the program this year,” he said. “I want every helmet off the shelf. I want to go to (athletic director James) Ensley and say ‘Ensley, I need 10 more helmets.’ Just to have him look over his glasses and smile at me.”

SAT., SEPT. 2



Vashon
Island#
3 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



Hoquiam
5 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



at Stevenson
7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



The Dalles
(Ore.)
7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



at Castle
Rock*
7 p.m.

SAT., OCT. 7



at White River
4 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



King's Way
Christian*
7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



at Seton
Catholic*
7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



Columbia-
White Salmon*
7 p.m.

*-denotes 1A Trico League game, #-at Fort Vancouver High



KING'S WAY CHRISTIAN KNIGHTS

LAST SEASON

4-4, 2-3, fourth in Trico League

BEST STATE FINISH

1B (8-man) quarterfinals in 2011

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Cade Irwin	5-11, 175, sr.	WR/DB
Chase Wollam	5-11, 155, jr.	WR/DB
Elliott Thwaite	6-1, 205, sr.	OL/DL
Noah Boncore	6-1, 265, sr.	OL/DL
Zach Lewis	5-11, 155, sr.	WR/DB
Asher Wyckoff	5-9, 165, jr.	WR/DB
Jace Barnes	5-10, 180, jr.	RB/CB
Ryan Charlton	5-11, 175, jr.	RB/LB
Sam Somarakis	5-10, 185, so.	QB

Coach: Dale Rule (first year)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ After playing home games at the Washington School for the Deaf, the Knights played their first game on-campus on Oct. 13, 2012, in a 108-42 loss to Taholah playing eight-man 1B football. The Knights got their first home win over Oakville (72-34) on Nov. 2, 2012. S.R. Preece Memorial Stadium was dedicated before a 67-0 win over Riverside (Ore.) on Sept. 27, 2019.



S.R. Preece Memorial Stadium

On the campus of King's Way Christian
3606 N.E. 78th St.,
Vancouver

New coach mines small school's talent pool

After 33 years as an assistant, Dale Rule embarks on his first season as a head coach at King's Way Christian.

But that's not the only big change in store for Rule, who has spent the last seven years as an assistant at Camas High School.

"So last year, I had 72 boys play football for the Camas freshman team," Rule said. "There are 140 boys in the entire school at King's Way. ... But I just dove into the hallways. The minute I got the job, I'm not sure I missed a home sporting event at King's Way. There are 140 boys at the school, and there are athletes at the school. And my job is to try to get as many of them out to the football field."

Rule said he's made inroads on that over the summer, which is important because the program graduated 12 seniors off a roster last year that had 38 players on it.

"This is the smallest senior class that they've had in a long time," Rule said. "This is the senior class from the year that King's Way didn't have a football program. So that's a significant drop in resources for me. ... But whatever. We'll take what we get and start implementing what we are all about."

Rule will have returning all-leaguers in juniors Ryan Charlton and Jace Barnes and



TIM MARTINEZ/The Columbian

With a small senior class, King's Way Christian will give plenty of responsibility this season to younger players such as sophomore quarterback Sam Somarakis.

senior lineman Noah Boncore. And he's convinced some members of the soccer team to come out for football. Sam Somarakis, who saw playing time at quarterback as a freshman last season, will take over

as the starter this season.

"We're going to be young, but we're going to be athletic," Rule said. "I think the biggest asset I've got going for me is we brought in a big coaching staff. We'll have 15 guys on our staff.

... We're going to love on kids, and I tell them all the time 'It's not what you can teach them about football. It's can you get kids to run through a wall for you. Because then you can teach them anything.'"

FRI., SEPT. 1



Stevenson

6 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



Hudson's Bay

6 p.m.

SAT., SEPT. 16



at Meridian

5 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



at Kalama

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



at La Center*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



Columbia-
White Salmon*

6 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



at Fort
Vancouver*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



at Castle
Rock*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



Seton
Catholic*

6 p.m.

*-denotes 1A Trico League game



LA CENTER WILDCATS

LAST SEASON

9-2, 5-0, first in Trico League, reached first round of state playoffs

BEST STATE FINISH

Semifinals in 2016, 2017

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Ryan Kawalek	6-3, 300, sr.	OL/DL
Isaac Chromey	5-10, 165, jr.	RB/LB
Jalen Ward	5-6, 170, sr.	RB/DB
Garrett Maunu	5-9, 160, sr.	QB
Wyatt Eiesland	6-2, 195, jr.	WR/LB
Austin Nixon	6-2, 210, sr.	WR/LB
Lincoln Cooley	5-10, 265, jr.	OL/DL
Houston Coyle	6-2, 175, jr.	WR/DB
Parker McKinney	6-2, 190, jr.	WR/DB

Coach: John Lambert (25th year, 173-79)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ The Wildcats played their first game on their on-campus field on Sept. 12, 2014, falling to Woodland 44-0. The first home win came on Oct. 3 of that season. Cole Judd rushed for 157 yards and two touchdowns in a 28-7 win over Castle Rock.



La Center Community Stadium

On the campus of La Center High School,
725 N.E. Highland Ave., La Center

Leap to next level is goal for large junior class

As John Lambert begins his 25th season as head coach at La Center, he'll encounter something he hasn't experienced before.

"We're a little low on seniors; we only have four seniors out," Lambert said. "That's the lowest I've ever had in my time here. They're really good four seniors, two have started since they were freshmen."

One of those seniors is lineman Ryan Kawalek, the 6-foot-3, 300-pounder who has committed to play at Idaho. The other is all-league running back Jalen Ward.

But Lambert says the program has a large and experienced class of juniors.

"A lot of these juniors played as sophomores, so they have a ton of experience," Lambert said. "And there normally is a big jump from sophomore to junior year. That's the biggest jump that I've seen with kids being ready to play."

With last year's starter at quarterback, Tru Feldman, moving away from La Center, senior Garrett Maunu takes over behind center.

"Garrett was ready for this opportunity last year," Lambert said. "He's the point guard on the basketball team, shortstop/pitcher on the baseball team. He's well-liked by his teammates, competitive as all get out



ELAYNA YUSSEN for The Columbian

La Center's Austin Nixon (44) is one of just four seniors on this year's Wildcats team.

and an accurate passer. He's got some big kids to throw to."

Success for the Wildcats begins up front, and Kawalek serves as big anchor there. Lambert will also lean on junior Lincoln Cooley, and Wyatt Eiesland, a second-team all-league linebacker who will play center this fall.

"He's played everything from

quarterback to running back to wide receiver to tight end to running back," Lambert said of Eiesland. "He's a versatile, physical, fast kid."

Then Lambert is looking for the next set of Wildcat linemen to step up this fall. And they'll have a good leader to follow in Kawalek.

"We have other guys who

have been kind of waiting in the wings," Lambert said. "We've had years when we've had five senior linemen, and this year we just have one ... But it's nice having Ryan up there because he's experienced a lot of football. He's the leader of that group, and the kids respect him. And he understands what it takes to be successful."

FRI., SEPT. 1



at Hockinson

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



Woodland

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



Kalama

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



at Connell

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



King's Way
Christian*

7 p.m.

SAT., OCT. 7



Mount Baker

2 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



at Seton
Catholic*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



Columbia-
White Salmon*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



at Castle
Rock*

7 p.m.

*-denotes 1A Trico League game



SETON CATHOLIC COUGARS

LAST SEASON

5-5, 3-2, third in Trico League,
reached district playoff

BEST STATE FINISH

District round in 2021, 2022

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Ryan Stuck	6-2, 195, sr.	WR
Ryker Ruelas	6-2, 150, jr.	WR/DB
Joe Callera	5-11, 190, jr.	RB/DB
Jacob Williams	5-10, 195, jr.	RB/LB
Kolten Gesser	6-1, 165, so.	QB
Austin St. Amour	6-6, 375, so.	OL/DL

Coach: Dan Chase (6th year, 1st in third stint, 8-35)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ The Cougars played their first game at home on Sept. 9, 2017, falling to Charles Wright 22-13. Their first home win came the next week, on Sept. 16, in a 39-25 win over Nestucca (Ore.) with Taj Muhammad rushing for 203 yards.



Seton Catholic Football Field

On the campus of Seton Catholic,
9000 N.E. 64th Ave., Vancouver

Team is experienced despite lack of seniors

Dan Chase is back for this third stint as head football coach at Seton Catholic.

But this season will be unlike any he experienced in his previous five seasons as head coach.

"Starting the program back in 2011, it was right from scratch," Chase said. "And now I feel like I'm inheriting a pretty well in-place program already. So that's exciting."

The Cougars are coming off back-to-back seasons of reaching the postseason, and Chase is hoping Seton can take the next step this fall.

But there is one commonality between the 2023 Cougars and that first team Chase coached a decade ago — not a lot of seniors.

"We only have one senior this year, and that's Ryan Stuck, a wide receiver," Chase said. "He's been working hard and will offer some perspective as a four-year player. But we have a number of juniors who are coming back who will be three-year starters, and a lot of sophomores started as freshman last year. So we should have a lot of team experience."

Sophomore quarterback Kolten Gesser returns as an all-league honoree last year, along with running backs Jacob Williams and Joe Callera and receiver Ryker Ruelas.

But the big questions come



Photo courtesy of CARI NOLTE

Seton Catholic has reached the postseason each of the past two years.

up front, where the Cougars graduated three all-league linemen.

"One of the things that we are building this year is our offensive and defensive line," Chase said. "We feel like we are going to be OK at those positions, even though we did lose a number of linemen to graduation. Our young offensive and defensive linemen

have done a lot of work in the offseason to be prepared for varsity play."

Chase said the program will have about 50 players on the roster, bolstered by a co-op with five small Christian schools in the area — Agape Christian, Firm Foundation, Cornerstone Christian, Hope Learning Academy and Hosanna Christian.

And all that has Chase excited for the season ahead and hopes the Cougars can improve on their third-place finish in the Trico League last year.

"Our goal is to go as far as we can in the playoffs this year," he said. "And the expectations we have for our team is do our very best, and we're going to go for first place. That's the goal at least."

FRI., SEPT. 1



at Rochester

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



at Goldendale

7 p.m.

SAT., SEPT. 16



at Life
Christian

4 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



Stevenson

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



Columbia-
White Salmon*

7 p.m.

SAT., OCT. 7



Castle Rock*

2 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



La Center*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



Fort
Vancouver*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



at King's Way
Christian*

6 p.m.

*-denotes 1A Trico League game



STEVENSON BULLDOGS

LAST SEASON

3-6, fourth in Trico League

BEST STATE FINISH

First round in 2010, 2018

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Kacen Bach	6-3, 190, sr.	QB/LB/K
Hudson Holzhauser	6-1, 210, sr.	OL/LB
Tucker Wyninger	6-0, 160, sr.	RB/LB
Jordan Waymire	6-0, 170, sr.	WR/CB
Derek White	5-8, 145, jr.	WR/DB
Nate Kick	5-9, 150, jr.	WR/CB

Coach: David Waymire (13th year, 45-87)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ Construction delays at Stevenson's home stadium forced the Bulldogs to play only one home game in 1987. That came on Oct. 30, when Dustin Klinger hit Karl Bach with a 7-yard TD pass with 29 seconds left to lift Stevenson over La Center 20-14.



Stevenson Football Field

At Stevenson High School, 390 NW Gropper Rd., Stevenson

Bulldogs in last year of hybrid 2B/1A schedule

Stevenson has one thing going for it this fall — the Bulldogs have athletes. Seniors Tucker Wyninger and Hudson Holzhauser were both placers at the 1A state track and field meet last spring. And senior Kacen Bach returns all over the field for coach David Waymire.

"Our quarterback (Bach) is kind of a multi-position guy — a quarterback, free safety, kicker," Waymire said. "I mean he can kick a 50-yard field goal. Kind of an all-around athlete. He does whatever I ask of him."

"He had a clutch game-winning field, a 42-yard field goal against Wahkiakum. He had zero pressure, seven seconds left on the clock. It would have been good from 60. He doesn't get rattled. You don't see kids like that very often."

That experience in the backfield will be good, as most of the Bulldogs' returning experience are players on the perimeter and not so much up front.

"I've been pretty nervous about our line," Waymire said. "We only have a couple of returning varsity starters. But I've had a few transfer students who have shown up during our spring practices, upperclassmen who look like they'll be pretty good additions. So as nervous as I was, it's getting a



MICAH RICE/The Columbian

Stevenson players converge for a tackle in a game against Fort Vancouver last year at Kiggins Bowl.

lot better."

Waymire also will receive an influx of young players with a large incoming freshman class.

"They went undefeated as an eighth-grade team last year," he said. "And there are some pretty good athletes there, so that's good for the future."

If all those former middle

school players turn out for the high school team, Waymire said he could have numbers that challenge the most he's had in his time at Stevenson.

Stevenson will spend one last season with a hybrid schedule between the 2B Central League and the 1A Trico League before becoming a

full-fledged Trico member next season.

"We went to 2B because of our numbers," Waymire said. "But the 2B League is really tough, especially in football. And the travel was brutal. I'm really looking forward to getting back into the Trico League."

FRI., SEPT. 1



at King's Way
Christian

6 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



at Columbia-
White Salmon

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



Fort
Vancouver

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



at Seton
Catholic

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



Kalama

7 p.m.

SAT., OCT. 7



at Adna

2 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



at Onalaska

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 20



Open

FRI., OCT. 27



Toledo

7 p.m.



KALAMA CHINOOKS

LAST SEASON

3-5, third in 2B Central South

BEST STATE FINISH

State champions in 1998, 2017, 2018

PLAYERS TO WATCH

Aiden Brown	5-9, 195, jr.	QB
Dylan Jones	6-2, 205, sr.	LB/G
Reece Achen	5-10, 180, so.	OL/DL
Ethan Brightbill	6-2, 165, sr.	RB/SS
Chase Leigh	6-0, 150, sr.	WR/DB
Drew Schlangen	5-10, 180, jr.	RB/LB
Hayden Lawson	5-7, 155, sr.	WR/LB

Coach: Mike Phelps (second year, 5-5)

FIRST HOME WIN

■ Kalama played its first game in the current Chinook Stadium on Sept. 8, 1995, falling to Toledo 18-13. The first home win came on Oct. 13, 1995, with Brian Hoggatt and Todd Rader each scoring two TDs in a 35-12 win over Napavine.



Chinook Stadium

At Kalama High School, 548 China Garden Road, Kalama

Chinooks ready to test against state's best

In his debut game as Kalama's head coach, Mike Phelps celebrated the Chinooks' third state championship team in five years.

But that 2021 team graduated 22 seniors, and the 2022 team only had two seniors. Predictably, the Chinooks struggled out of the gate, losing their first three games.

But the Chinooks rebounded late to reach the district playoffs, falling to Raymond 48-42.

"We lost that game five different ways," Phelps said. "I still lose sleep when I think about it."

This fall, the Chinooks will have about 10 seniors on the roster, and Phelps believes Kalama has the talent to again make deep pushes into the postseason.

One of those seniors is Dylan Jones, a middle linebacker/offensive lineman.

"He's already got a couple of college offers," Phelps said. "He was the defensive player of the year for the league last year."

Also returning is quarterback Aidan Brown, who earned first-team all-league status as a sophomore last year.

"He ran track for us last spring and his foot speed is really good," Phelps said. "Plus, he's put on about 25 pounds



TIM MARTINEZ/The Columbian

The Kalama Chinooks are expecting to challenge for a playoff berth and league title.

of solid muscle. He's getting really strong."

The Chinooks also bring back all-league performers in WR/DB Ethan Brightbill, OL Reece Achen and RB/DL Drew Schlangen.

"And we've got a great coaching staff," Phelps said. "I've got a lot of great people helping me out. So we're hoping to start off on the right foot this year."

An opening schedule of Woodland, Castle Rock and La Center will challenge the Chinooks early.

"I would argue that we have the toughest schedule in the state as far as 2B goes," Phelps said. "All of our non-league games are against 1A or 2A schools, and we have Napavine on our schedule too and we all know how good they always

are."

But Phelps hopes that will get Kalama ready to battle Toledo, Onalaska and Adna in league play.

"You don't want to sound arrogant, but you also want to sound confident," Phelps said. "But I'm hoping we can give Toledo a run for the league championship."

FRI., SEPT. 1



at Woodland

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 8



Castle Rock

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 15



at La Center

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 22



King's Way
Christian

7 p.m.

FRI., SEPT. 29



at Stevenson

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 6



Onalaska*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 13



at Napavine*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 22



Toledo*

7 p.m.

FRI., OCT. 27



Adna*

7 p.m.

*-denotes 2B Central league game

SNAPS FROM LAST SEASON



ELAYNA YUSSEN for The Columbian

La Center's Clayton Muffett stands for the national anthem before a game against Hockinson on Sept. 2, 2022.



TAYLOR BALKOM/The Columbian

Washougal quarterback Holden Bea, center, sprints down the field during the Panthers' 34-27 win against Ridgefield on Sept. 30, 2022, at Ridgefield High School.



TAYLOR BALKOM/The Columbian

Skyview receiver Gavin Packer (8) and Puyallup's Jacob Velasco jump for a ball in the end zone Nov. 4, 2022, during the Storm's 14-11 win in a 4A playoff game at Kiggins Bowl.



TAYLOR BALKOM/The Columbian

Prairie linebacker Pierson Lameh (37) lets out a yell after a sack in a 13-6 win against Evergreen on Oct. 21, 2022.



TAYLOR BALKOM/The Columbian

Mountain View's Aiden Nicholson, right, upends Ridgefield senior Isaiah Cowley during a punt return Sept. 9, 2022, during the Thunder's 26-20 triple overtime win against Ridgefield at McKenzie Stadium.



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