

# Team parity keeps broadcasters guessing

Every year we ask KBZY broadcaster Mark Gilman and Craig Spivey, now with CCTV, for their thoughts on the upcoming season and this year is no different.

Both weighed in on their picks for the top of the league and who they will be keeping an eye on this season.

**Keizertimes:** What do you think was the big take-away from last year's nine-team conference? A good thing? Bad thing? Somewhere middling?

**Mark Gilman:** Overall, the nine team conference was a decided success last year—in particular, West Albany brought a good measure of competitiveness to the Salem-Keizer area teams after being the big fish at the 5A level the previous season. I expect more of the same in 2015, especially from Forest Grove this season.

**Craig Spivey:** I really liked the make up of the Greater Valley Conference. It allowed for a great team, West Albany, to step up in class and they competed well. The nine team conference also, in my opinion, is much better for scheduling. It still allowed matchups with teams for around the state with a much stronger base of conference games.

**KT:** On the team-level, what changes have you most excited or intrigued this year?

**MG:** I am curious to see if Forest Grove will be a team to reckon with in the GVC. Their coach is anticipating the team will compete for a league title.

**CS:** I don't know that there is a team this year that does not have some big questions going into the season. The stalwarts, Sprague and West Salem, are young, North Salem has some great athletes on offense, but depth is always a question.

McNary has a new approach with a new (old) coaching staff. South Salem has probably the best athlete in the conference in Gabe Matthews, but can they give him some more weapons?

If I had to choose, I am really curious to see how a Jeff Auvénin-coached McNary team fares. Jeff is a disciplinarian – not that Isaac Parker was not – but there is a different intensity around the Celtic camp. McNary has some talented seniors, but will rely heavily on newcomers that have not been tested on Friday nights. So, I am curious as to how the kids react to Jeff's style.

**KT:** What do you think the challenges will be for each team?

**MG:** Forest Grove: Improving upon last season's defensive struggles to be a conference title contender. The Vikings have to be able to contain the offenses of the top contenders to be successful.

**McKay:** Building upon last season's early success and the loss of key players from a smaller player pool than most GVC teams, the Scots are looking to pound the ball in their wing-T offense.

**McMinnville:** Adjusting to a new coach and new offensive system is never easy, but quarterback Wyatt Smith could make the transition an easy one.

**McNary:** Rising to the occasion to fill the shoes of some key playmakers, while adjusting to a new head coach is always a challenge. Having a great turnout of players will help this season.

**North Salem:** Improving upon last season while replacing key players on both sides of the football is a way of life at

North Salem. Jeff Flood has plenty of speed in his offensive backfield.

**Sprague:** Using the experience of a "young team" to generate more wins in 2015 is Coach Jay Minyard's challenge. Many players gained valuable experience as sophomores last year.

**South Salem:** Trying to defend their GVC title with lots of youth, especially on defense is never an easy task. But Coach Scott Dufault has some potential stars in the making.

**West Albany:** Working to return to the state playoffs without an experienced quarterback is tough, and the Bulldogs were still looking at five or six underclassmen in that position.

**West Salem:** Reloading after a very successful run last year in the 6A playoffs has been a Titan tradition. Coach Shawn Stanley is always optimistic, and with 190 players out for the team, it is easy to see why.

**CS:** North Salem has two good quarterback candidates and a bevy of running backs. But they have a brand new offensive line. There is the potential to be explosive in Jeff Flood's version of the Wing-T, and unfortunately I think the Vikings are going to need to score a lot of points to be competitive.

**South Salem** has a very experienced offensive line and I think one of the best quarterbacks in the state in Gabe Matthews. But for the Saxon offense to fly, they need more production out of their passing game than a year ago. There is good balance with running back Davis Carter, but can the Saxons throw the ball?

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