

FOOTBALL

Central rallies to beat Silverton



Silverton's Colton Meyer tries to gain some ground past Central's Xander Bailey (98) during the game at Silverton High School on Oct. 20. PHOTOS BY ANNA REED/STATESMAN JOURNAL

Panthers pounce, keep playoff hopes alive with 41-35 victory

GARY HOROWITZ
STATESMAN JOURNAL

An impressive streak was in jeopardy.

Central High School football coach Shane Hedrick, in his 17th season at the school, has led Central to the playoffs 13 years in a row and in 15 of his prior 16 seasons despite the school bouncing around to three different classifications in that period.

Had the Panthers lost to then-No. 5 ranked Silverton Friday, that streak would have ended.

"I've not been in that position at Central where the last game going into it you knew you were done," Hedrick said. "I've never been there."

Central, which prevailed 41-35, has reached the state semifinals five times with Hedrick as head coach, including last season.

But had the Panthers (4-4 overall, 2-3 Mid-Willamette Conference) lost Friday to Silverton they would have been playing for pride only in their regular season finale at home on Friday, Oct. 27 against Corvallis.

It's been a long road back this season for Central, which had lost back-to-back games to Crescent Valley and Lebanon entering the Silverton game.

Central's junior quarterback Pete Mendazona scored the game-winning touchdown on a one-yard run with 25 seconds left as the teams swapped the lead for the final time.

"We have a team full of heart. That's really us," said Mendazona, who passed for 184 yards and two TDs. "Our coach preached it. We've got to stay the course."

For the Panthers, their game against Silverton was essentially a playoff game. "It was a must win, definitely," said



Central's Peter Mendazona, right, looks to pass the ball during the game against Silverton.

junior Hunter Chase, who ran for 230 yards and three TDs, including a 94-yard score. "We wanna continue our season."

Central moved up two spots to No. 10 in the OSAA power rankings. Silverton, which won its first four games and reached No. 1 after a 31-30 victory at defending state champion in Lebanon in Week 4, fell two spots to No. 7.

But unlike Class 6A, where eight teams receive wildcard berths based on OSAA rankings to fill a 32-team bracket, only the top four 5A teams in each of the four conferences are playoff bound. In case of a three-way tie for third place, rankings would come into play.

Five teams from the Mid-Willamette Conference are ranked among the top 12.

No. 2-ranked Crescent Valley (8-0, 5-0) hosts No. 8 South Albany (4-4, 4-1) on Friday, and both teams have clinched playoff berths.

The Central/Corvallis winner will be 3-3 in league play; Silverton has concluded league at 3-3; and Lebanon would finish 3-3 if it beats Dallas on Friday at home.

According to Hedrick, who also is the athletic director at Central, a three-way tie would be broken based on the final OSAA rankings on Oct. 28.

Each league has its own standard operating procedures to break ties and determine playoff spots.

It could be argued that Central is better than its record indicates. Silverton could make the same claim because both teams play in such a strong conference.

"Last week (against Lebanon) we kind of got down on ourselves," said Central senior wide receiver/defensive back Isaiah Abraham, who had a 90-yard touchdown reception and two interceptions.

"This week we stayed positive. We know we're a good team, it's just staying positive and keep going."

Silverton presses on and figures into the playoff equation as well.

The Foxes were unable to come up with a defensive stop when they needed it most against Central.

Junior quarterback Levi Nielsen passed for 200 yards and two TDs, and also ran for 97 yards and a 10-yard touchdown that knotted the game at 35-35 with 5:36 remaining.

"Central's a well-coached team and they get it. They run the ball hard," said first-year Silverton coach Josh Craig. "They did just enough things to beat us and we did just enough things wrong to not win the game."

ghorowitz@StatesmanJournal.com or Twitter.com/ghorowitz

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

OSAA Board's decision: Cascade to move to 5A

Salem schools in league with Bend

BILL POEHLER
STATESMAN JOURNAL

WILSONVILLE — After a year of meetings and proposals, three hours of impassioned testimony Oct. 16 and the 90 minutes of deliberations that followed, the OSAA's Executive Board voted to accept a plan that will move Salem high schools into a league with schools in Bend.

Starting in the fall of 2018 and continuing four years, McKay, McNary, South Salem, Sprague and West Salem will be in the Greater Valley Conference with Bend, Mountain View and Summit. Before its public vote at the Holiday

Inn in Wilsonville, the executive board took a consolatory tone as members made statements urging schools to work together during the next four years.

"I'm speaking to the people who thought they were wronged in the process," said Mark Hannan, a Silverton school district administrator and president of the executive board.

The three hours of testimony included 14 people from Salem-Keizer including West Salem parent Michael Rice, who grew emotional and stormed out of the room after speaking.

"This clearly about doubles our loss of instructional time," Salem-Keizer superintendent Christy Perry said to the board.

The lone no vote on the reclassification was Mary Lou Boderman, coordina-

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Silverton's Maggie Roth tries to get around Bend's Tayla Wheeler as the Foxes defeat Bend 44-22 in last year's OSAA Class 5A state basketball tournament. With the new OSAA ruling, Bend schools will bump up to 6A, joining the same league as Salem schools. Silverton will stay in 5A. DANIELLE PETERSON / STATESMAN JOURNAL