

SPORTS

La Salle awaits Hood River in Friday football opener

Dufur, South Wasco and Sherman also open belated 2020 seasons this weekend

A core group of Hood River Valley seniors - not unlike those at other schools - were wondering if this day would ever come; when they could strap on the pads, helmets, and cleats, and get after it again on the football field. Eighteen months of waiting out a pandemic and they will finally get that chance Friday night.

An Eagle team, that has been fluctuating between 45 to 50 players, is coming off its first week of full contact practices.

"It's been great. Selfishly for me, I love being out there; just seeing the kids," Hood River Coach Caleb Sperry said. "The kids are excited to have something to be a part of. A lot of those kids, they wanted to have a senior season, and now they will get that chance."

There will be no easing into things for HRV, whose scheduled opener is 7 p.m. Friday at La Salle in Milwaukie. The Falcons are a talented bunch, returning most of the skill players from their 4-5 playoff team from 2019. The last time these teams played, Oct. 4,

2019, the Falcons won an offensive slugfest, 54-46. La Salle is led by first-team all-league quarterback, senior Ryan Rosummy; first-team all-league running back and kick returner, senior James Menor; first-team all-league wide receiver, junior Riley Peterson; first-team all-league kicker, junior Nolan Ahman; and first-team all-league linebacker, junior Brody Crowley.

"They spread you out and do a good job of the same things (we like to do)," Sperry said. "Trying to get a running game going."

Hood River will counter La Salle with highly touted senior line-men Henry Buckles and Emilio Castaneda, who each have signed to play college football and will anchor the Eagles' offensive and defensive fronts. The Eagles were one win shy of reaching the state playoffs in 2019, when they lost at Hillsboro in a play-in game to conclude their season. HRV and La Salle tied for third place with 3-2 league records in the District 1 East Division.

"We've got a great offensive line and a good running game," Sperry said. "We've got some really talented guys coming back."

The list continues with senior all-leaguer Tanner Fletcher, who led the district in rushing in 2019

and also is a starter at defensive linebacker for the Eagles. Trenton Hughes was an all-league receiver in 2019 and Sperry will use the junior's athletic ability at quarterback this spring. "He's fast and explosive," Sperry said.

"We've got some kids who have moved up through the ranks and are ready for varsity football," he added. "(It's nice) every year to have that new group that comes in and gets to make a name for themselves."

HRV will run a spread offense with multiple looks. "We liked to be balanced. We begin by trying to establish a running game. I would love to see perfect balance; that's the hardest on a defense. (But) we'll take what we can get."

And that's a great philosophy, especially during an ongoing pandemic.

Two other Gorge schools are scheduled to play their openers this weekend. Dufur, the perennial Class 1A eight-man title contender, plays Friday at home against 2A Pilot Rock. The Rangers have won more state football championships than any other team - at any level in Oregon. Dufur's streak of four straight titles was broken in 2019, when the Rangers lost in the state semifinals. Dufur and Pilot



Hood River Coach Caleb Sperry keeps an eye on things during a recent practice. The 2020 season kicks off this weekend.

Rock played last season, when the Rockets won, 50-30.

Dufur returns all-league quarterback/safety Cooper Bales and all-league linemen Trey Darden. The interior line has three other four-year varsity players in Caleb Olson, Hunter Wagonblast and Josiah Dave. Added to the skill position mix is senior Ben Schanno,

an athletic receiver/defensive back, who transferred to Dufur from The Dalles.

In Class 1A six-man games, South Wasco is at Prairie City for a 1 p.m. Friday contest, and Sherman plays 1 p.m. Saturday at Echo.

The Dalles has its 5A season opener March 12 at Putnam of Milwaukie.

TDHS soccer teams hope to ride wave of success

By Mike Weber
For Columbia Gorge News

When The Dalles High School boys and girls soccer teams last played games, it was in the 2019 state playoffs and served as an indicator of the successful strides they've made up the Intermountain Conference ranks. The Riverhawk teams are eager to take another step.

For the boys, it was Nov. 6, 2019 in the first round of the playoffs. Undefeated La Salle (17-0-1) won 5-0 and eventually won the state championship, while The Dalles concluded the season with a 6-8-1 record.

For the girls, it was Nov. 5, 2019, also in the first round of the state playoffs (an 8-0 loss to Crescent Valley). Shortly after that contest, everything turned upside down with the spread of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and the shutting down of Oregon and Washington high school sports. Health and safety guidelines recently issued by Gov. Kate Brown and the Oregon Health Authority have deemed it safe for teams to resume athletic events.

Of course, nobody could have imagined back then that the Riverhawks wouldn't play again until 2021. However, things have finally turned around in the ongoing battle with the coronavirus pandemic. The lifestyle for sports-oriented families seems to be returning somewhat back to normal with high school athletics beginning again.

TD boys soccer

The Riverhawks, guided by fifth-year coach Matt Dallman, started daily practices Feb. 22 in preparation for their first game at home Thursday at 4 p.m. against the Class 3A Riverside Pirates. Dallman and his 25-member varsity/JV squad are looking forward to playing a match for the first time in 16 months.

"It's an interesting year, especially since we haven't played in nearly a year and a half," said Dallman, 35, who led The Dalles to a third-place finish in the six-team Intermountain Conference standings with a 6-3-1 record in 2019. "We're going into the season having only about one and a half weeks of practice, but it's the same tough situation for everyone, so it's hard for every team. We're super happy to be back out onto the field and we feel lucky just to be able to have a season."

A notable 2019 highlight was that the Riverhawks won a boys soccer game against the Hood River Valley Eagles for the first time ever in The Dalles High School history. Dallman was selected 2019 Intermountain Conference coach of the year.

This season, the Riverhawks will be led by seniors Omar Torres, Juan Mejia, Jaimie Castro, Alejandro Gutierrez and Preet Patel. "I expect that we'll have a lot of leadership from Castro, who is a very smart and experienced goalkeeper," said Dallman. "Our center defender, Torres, is an incredibly smart and talented player who has been a starter every year since he was a freshman. We expect him to provide lots of leadership for our team, while setting an example for the younger players. Gutierrez is our forward and who is big (6-foot-1), strong and capable of scoring a majority of our goals."

Juniors who will also help provide the Riverhawks with a solid 14-member varsity squad include Rowan Simpson, Harry Proctor, Jordan Buettner, Alex Wood and Tristan Bass. Wood was a second-team, all-league selection in 2019. The team also includes sophomores Grey Roetcisoender, Miguel Leon and Fabian Canchola (second-team, all-league) and freshmen Carter Randall and Oswaldo Heredia Vargas.

The OSAA Season 2

schedule of traditional fall sports - football, soccer, cross country and volleyball - concludes April 11. A nine-game Riverhawk schedule includes the final regular season game April 1 at home against Hood River.

"Managing the whole pandemic situation to make sure that kids are safe is a big part of my job this year," said Dallman. "That's in addition to the usual things like making sure kids get to the game and having them eligible to play, as well. There's so many things that happen behind the scene in coaching, but this year, there's even more than normal. I love coaching and teaching kids soccer and I just can't imagine how bad the kids felt about not being able to play. I felt heartbroken for the kids when they were unable to play last year, because it was really an awful experience for them."

Because of the shorter-than-normal season, the OSAA decided it will not conduct state championships. Each school will organize a schedule of events for the culminating week April 5-11 to determine an appropriate way to conclude the season. Dallman said the Intermountain Conference will probably conduct league playoffs to conclude the season; athletic directors at the six schools are in the process of formulating a schedule.

TD girls soccer

A strong senior core leads the Riverhawk girls soccer team's return to competition for the first time in 16 months, when they meet the Riverside Pirates Thursday at 4 p.m. in Boardman.

For Riverhawks Coach Colby Tonn and the 25-member varsity/JV players and their fans, they can now breathe a sigh of relief as the return of high school sports has finally become a much welcome reality.

"The participation of the girls has been great; they've been wanting to get out on the field and they're ready to



The Dalles High School boys soccer Head Coach Matt Dallman, above, directs his team through a drill during practice last week. At right, TDHS junior Rowan Simpson, Jr. runs through a drill. Mark B. Gibson photos

play soccer," said Tonn, 41, who returned to the squad for a seventh season in 2019, after a three-year hiatus. The Dalles was 6-7-1 in 2019, 6-4 in the Intermountain Conference.

"It's been such a long time since these girls have played, but they've all been doing some conditioning drills in January and February in preparation for the season," said Tonn. "It would've been nice if we could've had a little more practice time. It is nice that we can play again, even though it's a short season."

The Riverhawk varsity squad will be led by a group of seniors that includes Kierstin White, Hanani Andrade, Courtney Hert, Illiana Moreno-Lopez, Cadence Snyder and Zara Voodre. Hert was a

first-team, all-league selection in 2019.

"They're all very excited about the season and they're ready to go," said Tonn. "Zara is our striker and she's a good team leader who leads by example and she always works hard in practice. Courtney is our center midfielder who is also expected to help lead our team. Kierstin is our goalkeeper; she's a good athlete and she has worked very hard while constantly showing improvement. I really can't say enough about the good attitude that all the girls have."

Official practice started Feb. 22 though some players participated in informal practice sessions in mid-January and February. The OSAA Season 2 schedule, which began March



1, consists of traditional fall sports football, soccer, cross country and volleyball and concludes April 11. The Riverhawks have an eight-game schedule that concludes with a match against their Intermountain Conference rival, Hood River Valley, April 1 in Hood River.

Prep Schedule (as of 2-28-2021)

Cross Country

March 3
The Dalles at Crook County; Hood River at Pendleton.
March 6
Columbia at White Salmon Invite.
March 10
Hood River at The Dalles.

Girls Soccer

March 2
Columbia at Castle Rock
March 4
Hood River at Franklin; The Dalles at Riverside; La Center at Columbia
March 6
Hermiston at The Dalles
March 9
Columbia at Goldendale; Hermiston at Hood River

Boys Soccer

March 2
Horizon at Damascus; Trout Lake at Riverside Christian (WA.)
March 4
Riverside at The Dalles
March 5
Hood River at Franklin; Willamette Valley at Horizon
March 6
Pendleton at The Dalles
March 8
Horizon at Central Christian; Trout Lake at Columbia Christian
March 9
Hood River at Pendleton

Football

March 5
Hood River at La Salle; Columbia at Castle Rock; South Wasco at Prairie City; Pilot Rock at Dufur;
March 6

Volleyball

March 2
Hood River at Redmond; Columbia at Castle Rock; Glenwood/Klickitat at Dufur; Sherman at Arlington/Ione
March 3
Ridgeview at The Dalles
March 4
Columbia at La Center; Trout Lake at Dufur; Lyle at South Wasco; Echo at Sherman
March 6
The Dalles, Ridgeview at Hermiston; Crook County at Hood River
March 9
The Dalles at Hood River; Goldendale at Columbia; Dufur at Lyle; Glenwood/Klickitat at Trout Lake; Sherman at Condon

IMC runners open dual meet season

The Dalles and Hood River cross country teams will test their early-season fitness levels - or lack thereof because of a limited training schedule - at league dual meets this week.

The Dalles opens Intermountain Conference racing with a Wednesday meet in Prineville against Crook County; Hood River heads east to run at Pendleton the same day. The Dalles boys edged Crook County 42-46 at the 2019 district meet. Hood River and The Dalles will race March 10 at Sorosis Park in The Dalles. Columbia High began its

competitive season Saturday at a four-team meet at Seton Catholic in Vancouver.

The Bruin boys team was third behind Goldendale and Seton. Sophomore Camden Uffelman led Columbia by placing fourth in the 5000-meter race in 18 minutes, 22 seconds. Goldendale's Alden Williams won the race and led his team to first place. Seton swept (first through fifth) the scoring in the girls race; Columbia's top runner was sophomore Ella Zimmerman in sixth place.

Baseball signup March 6

The Dalles' Babe Ruth Baseball is signing up players for the spring and summer season. Registration is open to players 12 to 15 years old from The Dalles and Hood River area.

In person registration is at Kramer Field (Babe Ruth Field) March 6, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., or call 541-993-2230 to receive a mail-in application. Registration fee is \$125. New players to Babe Ruth are required to provide a copy of their birth certificate.