



PROFILE

Gresham has QB 'problem' most would envy

Suppose you're the coach of a high school football team. You've got these two quarterbacks on the club and you're having a little trouble deciding which one is going to be your main man during the season.

One guy is a senior and a really bright kid, the kind of guy you'd like to see your daughter go out with. He stands around 6-3 and weighs 175 pounds. Last year, his coach thought this guy was one of the most skilled quarterbacks he had ever seen. But he broke the thumb on his throwing hand in practice and didn't play a down of offense. He's back this fall, though, and looking as good as ever.

Then there's the other quarterback, who is the same type of guy. He's a junior this year but last season as a sophomore he stepped in when QB No. 1 got injured. All he did was call signals for the best rushing team in the league while completing 48.5 percent of his passes for 611 yards and five touchdowns. His team won six of nine games. He's back again, vying for the starting spot.

So who do you go with? On the one hand, you have a skilled player with the leadership ability that goes with being a senior. On the



MIKE PALMER
Was soph starter

other hand, you have your returning starter.

Now you know the question placed before Gresham coach Gary Stautz, who is looking at senior Tom Eubanks and junior Mike Palmer. They're the principals in the battle for the Gophers starting job, though the only rivalry between the two is on the field.

Quarterback is a position where Stautz has, if anything, an embarrassment of riches this fall. There's Eubanks and Palmer but there's also senior Todd Nagel,



TOM EUBANKS
Injured last year

who would likely start for many teams in the Mt. Hood Conference. And as if that weren't enough, sophomore Steve Stebbins has received good notices from the Gresham coaching staff.

But it will be Palmer or Eubanks that starts on Friday.

Or, more likely, Eubanks. When asked the question, "Who's going to start?" between doubles sessions at Gresham last week, the red-haired Palmer pointed at Eubanks.

"He's the senior," says Palmer.

Eubanks says Palmer is probably right. But, he adds quickly, "We have three quarterbacks who could start for any team. If anybody has the least credit (to warrant a starting assignment), it's me."

Stautz hasn't figured out who's No. 1 yet and but that could end up being a decision he doesn't have to make.

"They both have skills that can help us," he says. "And they're both the type of guy you like to have around. They're both going to play a lot."

Palmer established his ability early on last season. After getting the No. 1 job for the Gophers opening game, he developed into one of the Wilco League's better quarterbacks, handling Gresham's offense with alacrity. His only really subpar performance came against Reynolds in the season finale and that can't be entirely blamed on Palmer, who was taken out of the game by a Reynolds tackler — at least mentally.

"It was on a triple option," he recalls. "I remember getting hit and then I remember being on the sidelines and Jim Pick (last year's center) asking me what a double nudge was. That's where we snap

the ball without a count, but I didn't have a clue."

Before being quizzed by Pick, though, Palmer played two series and threw an interception.

That's all behind him now, though.

"I'm looking forward to the new season," he says. "Last year I felt a little pressure. I won't be quite as nervous this time."

Eubanks spent the 1981 season with a pin in his right hand that wasn't removed until just before the beginning of basketball season. In the meantime, he was a situation player in the Gresham defensive backfield.

And while he didn't get in any time under center, Eubanks feels the experience was helpful.

"I feel I gained a lot of knowledge about pass defense," he says. "I found out where the seams are and where the defensive backs are while the ball is in the air."

If he can exploit that knowledge, Gresham could have a surprisingly efficient passing game to go with its already established rushing attack.

And if he can't, well, there's always the returning starter.

JIM HAYS

Say goodbye to the Wilco, hello to Mt. Hood

It might take some getting used to, but the Wilco League has joined the Coast-Valley and the old TYV leagues as pages in Oregon High School sports history.

The Oregon School Activities Association realignment of last fall brought about a new league, and with it the need for a new name — the Mt. Hood Conference, which will be District 3-AAA.

Gone are Clackamas, Milwaukie and Putnam, which will move to District 9-AAA — dubbed the Three Rivers Conference — with Lakeridge, Lake Oswego, Oregon City and West Linn. Gone, too, is Hood River, which finally gave up trying to compete with schools two and three times its size and dropped to Class AA.

With the realignment, District 3-AAA picks up David Douglas and Parkrose — both of whom competed in the Metro League until this year — and Sandy, which switches over from the Timber Valley League.

Those three schools join Barlow, Centennial, Columbia, Gresham, Reynolds and The Dalles to form the new Mt. Hood Conference.

There's something else new, too. This season, the nine-team conference will have an unprecedented four state playoff berths, which means a team will likely be able to afford as many as four losses without jeopardizing its playoff hopes.

The OSAA realignment brought down the curtain on the colorful history of the Wilco League.

The Wilco League debuted in 1958 and was comprised of Reynolds, Wy'East, Molalla, Parkrose, Silverton, Sandy, Jesuit and Scappoose. Reynolds is the only school to compete in the Wilco in each of its 24 seasons.

The league went through numerous changes in alignment and by 1971 had ballooned to a membership of 14. It was then split into two divisions with Centennial, Gresham, The Dalles, Hood River, Barlow, Lake Oswego and Reynolds forming the Columbia Division. The Willamette Division had Clackamas, Putnam, Lakeridge, Oregon City, Milwaukie, West Linn and Tigard. Columbia High was

added to the Columbia division when it began play in 1977.

The two-division format was dropped in 1979 when an OSAA realignment pulled

five teams out of the league. With that the Wilco became a 10-team league and re-

mained that way until last fall.

JIM HAYS

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