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Friday Night Lights in Western Oregon

to Riddle set the tone for a challenging season, but the Eagles kept strapping up the pads and taking the field every Friday night. In small schools, those seasons matter—because even when the wins aren’t plenty, the effort always is. The community stands behind them, and

Coastal football had its moments as well. Marshfield in Coos Bay saw its offense come alive midway through the season, with a quarterback who found his stride and playmakers who stretched the field. Their rivalry matchups drew some of the loudest crowds anywhere



the groundwork laid this fall will pay dividends down the line. From there, the spotlight widened across Western Oregon.

In the 5A ranks, Silverton continued its tradition of disciplined, physical football. The Foxes stormed through the back end of their schedule behind a stingy defense and a run game that punished opponents week after week. Several games came down to the closing moments, but Silverton’s consistency kept them in playoff contention all season.

Down in the Umpqua Valley, Sutherlin turned in one of its best seasons in recent memory. Led by a feisty defensive unit that specialized in timely turnovers, the Bulldogs had fans buzzing on chilly Friday nights. Roseburg, battling injuries and depth challenges, still flashed a balanced attack that reminded folks why the town has long been known for its football tradition.

along the Coast. In Lane County, Thurston continued to showcase one of the most explosive spread offenses in the region, lighting up scoreboards and keeping opposing defensive coordinators up at night. Springfield, with a young roster, showed steady week-to-week improvement that suggests bigger things ahead. Junction City and Elmira played their signature brand of tough, run-first football, earning the respect of opponents up and down the Valley.

Smaller-school programs added plenty of charm and drama. Lowell surprised several league rivals with a disciplined defense, while Monroe and Harrisburg—both classic small-town powerhouses—played the kind of ironman football where half the roster never leaves the field. These schools remind us why Oregon’s lower classifications produce some of the grittiest athletes in the state.

In Linn County, West Albany and Lebanon stood

tall again this year. West Albany rode the strength of a punishing offensive line and a pair of reliable backs. Lebanon thrilled fans with a late-season surge that included a double-overtime win folks will be talking about long after winter sets in.

Farther south, Reedsport and South Umpqua proved they can hold their own. Reedsport’s young squad improved dramatically as the weeks rolled by, while South Umpqua’s disciplined approach kept them competitive in nearly every game.

As the final whistles echoed into November, it wasn’t just the championship hopefuls that defined the season—it was the rivalries, the student sections, the last home game for the seniors, and the underclassmen stepping into bigger shoes. It was small towns showing up for their teams, families gathering under stadium lights, and the kind of community pride you can’t manufacture.

Win or lose, Western Oregon football once again delivered a season worth celebrating. And as helmets come off and basketballs start bouncing, one thing’s certain: when next fall arrives, the Coast, the Valley, and the Umpqua hills will be ready for kickoff all over again.



NDHS Warriors over Lyle Cougars 36 - 30
Above & Left Photos by Becky Gerrard Photography
Below & front page photos by Nathan Miller Photography



Homeless Camps

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unsafe behavior rather than address long-term needs.

City officials acknowledge that homelessness is a growing challenge in Roseburg, affecting parks, downtown businesses, and emergency services. But they note that unsanctioned private camps complicate things, creating pockets of activity outside the city’s direct control.

Meanwhile, those living in the camps have mixed experiences. Some say they feel safer than sleeping downtown or along the river, appreciating the fencing and the sense of community. Others say the expectations placed on them—including mandatory work hours—feel confusing or unfair. Several individuals expressed the fear that if they spoke out about conditions, they might lose their space.

The broader community is split. Some residents see the camps as a creative workaround in a state tangled up in regulations and short on shelter beds. Others believe that allowing private businesses or individuals to house—and direct—unhoused people sets a dangerous precedent that could lead to bigger problems if left unchecked.

Local nonprofits working in homelessness say the issue highlights a larger truth: Roseburg needs more stable, professionally run shelter options and long-term housing solutions. The debate around private camps is a symptom of a system stretched thin.

For now, the camps appear here to stay while the legal landscape remains hazy. Whether they represent a compassionate experiment or a problematic loophole remains to be seen. But the conversation in Roseburg is far from over—and for many residents, the tension underscores the complex balance between compassion, safety, and community responsibility.

The Drain Chamber of Commerce, the Friends of the Midland Whiggle Library, & the North Douglas Library District present

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