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Knappa closes in on first state title since '08

Loggers will play Heppner in semifinals

By **GARY HENLEY**
The Astorian

That's two down, two to go for the Knappa football team. The No. 6 seed Loggers are one step closer to their first state championship since 2008, as they defeated the No. 2 seed Coquille Red Devils 36-30 in a Saturday afternoon game on the south coast. Knappa's win puts the Loggers into the class 2A semifinals, where the Loggers will play Heppner next Saturday at Hillsboro Stadium. The winner will advance to the state championship contest.

For now, Knappa will celebrate its eighth straight win. In Saturday's victory, the Logger offense gave Knappa a 36-22 lead heading into the final quarter, and the Logger defense picked up the save, stopping a late drive by the Red Devils. "Wow, what a game," said Knappa coach Aaron Barendse. "The kids and staff worked so hard the last two weeks in preparation. Breaking down film, practice planning and game plans. It's really been amazing seeing the work put in." Knappa took the opening kick-off and marched down the field through the Coquille defense, all on the ground. Eli Takalo scored from a yard out for a 6-0 lead.



Students at Knappa High School wished the football team well on Friday before the players left for the game against Coquille.

"I think our opening drive opened some eyes," Barendse said. "Coquille is a well-coached, good football team that plays the right way. They go hard and they have some dudes on that team." And those dudes countered with a two-play drive, with Coquille's Ean Smith providing the quick strike with a 41-yard TD run. The Red Devils converted the two-point conversion for an 8-6 lead. Knappa answered the Coquille drive with a quick score of its own. On a fourth-and-three play, Takalo connected with Devin Hoover for a 41-yard touchdown and a 12-8 Logger lead. Coquille had the third lead change, Smith scoring on a 2-yard run and adding the two-point con-

version for a 16-12 advantage. The Loggers failed to convert on a fourth-down play on their third drive, but the Knappa defense — coupled with a pair of Coquille penalties — answered with a fourth-down stop of its own deep in Logger territory. Drive No. 4 resulted in more points for the Loggers, who drove 80 yards in six plays. Kanai Philip took a short pass from Takalo and turned it into a 55-yard touchdown. Knappa's two-point conversion was successful, and the Loggers took the lead for good, 20-16. The Red Devils fumbled the ball away on the first play of the second half, and the Loggers cashed in with a 6-yard run by Takalo for a 28-16 lead.

A long scoring run by Coquille had the Red Devils back to within 28-22. Knappa started the ensuing drive from its own 50, and it took just four plays from there, with Phillip scoring on a short run, and Takalo converting the two points for a 36-22 lead. Coquille added one more score, a pass from Jace Haagen to Yates. The Red Devils added a two-point conversion, then stopped the Loggers on Knappa's next drive, which set up one final Coquille possession with 3:49 left. But with no passing game and short on time outs, the Red Devils were unable to move the ball effectively. The Loggers sacked Haagen with five seconds left at the Knappa

27-yard line to end the game. Smith and Yates combined to rush for 343 yards for the Red Devils, but Coquille had just 18 yards passing. Knappa gained 185 yards rushing and Takalo completed six passes for 163 yards. "We have a special group that no matter what happens they continue to find a way," Barendse said. "We came out wanting to show we aren't just a passing team. We can do a little of it all with the athletes and line we have."

And good athletes with a good line produces big plays. "We were able to make plays when we needed them the most," Barendse said. "Camo ran tough and so did Eli. Kanai had a big 55-yard receiving TD and Devin came up big with one as well." Takalo "put the ball on guys and continues to be a great leader," he said. "Our O- and D-line played their hearts out. That's a huge team up front. We held our own and they came up with big stops at the end." Heppner is the No. 3 seed. "We have a great team ahead of us that is well-coached," Barendse said of the Mustangs. "I know they'll have a plan for us and we'll have one for them. We haven't worked this hard and overcome this much to roll over now. I'm excited to prepare with these coaches and young men for a big semifinal game. These boys deserve this opportunity. They've done it the right way."

Warrenton's season ends with loss to Heppner

Mustangs will play Knappa
By **ANNIE FOWLER**
East Oregonian

HEPPNER — Heppner has played stellar defense all season, and nothing changed Saturday afternoon against Warrenton. The Mustangs had five interceptions, and Matt Orem had 11 tackles and one sack as Heppner topped the Warriors 32-7 in the class 2A state quarterfinals at Les Payne Field. "We weren't sharp on offense, but the defense did great," Heppner coach Greg Grant said. "They are tough, they play hard, and they made it happen." The Mustangs (11-0) will play Knappa (9-2) at 2:15 p.m. Saturday at Hillsboro Stadium in the semifinals. Knappa beat Coquille 36-30 to advance. Warrenton finished the season 7-3. "They have a great defense," Warriors coach Ian O'Brien said. "The second half, we had some things clicking and had the lead. They got that kick return, and that took the air out of us. I'm disappointed, but I'm proud of my kids. Three years ago, we were a one-win team." Through 11 games, the Mustangs have given up just 73 points (6.6 per game) and posted six shutouts. "That's pretty cool," Orem said of the Mustangs' stingy defense. "It was a good game and we played our hearts out." Jason Rea added nine tackles, Mason Lehman and Blake Wolters each had eight and Hayden Hyatt had a fumble recovery.

Neither team had much success moving the ball in the first quarter. Heppner's Kason Cimmiyotti and Jace Coe picked off Warrenton quarterback Jacob Morrow in the first quarter, which ended scoreless. The Mustangs chewed up six minutes off the clock in the second quarter, ending with a 2-yard touchdown run by Wolters. Wolters, who finished with 93 yards rushing, had a burst for 12 yards in the series, in which he dragged Warrenton's Hordie Bodden Bodden most of the way. "There is some heart in that kid," Grant said. "He plays with every ounce of energy he has." Heppner would lead 6-0 at the half. "We had a tough time in the first half," Grant said of his offense. "I gave my kids too many things, and that's my fault." A bit of a hush fell over the home crowd when Warrenton's Morrow scored from 16 yards out with 6:36 remaining in the third quarter to give the Warriors a 7-6 lead. Not to worry.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

A pair of Heppner defenders bring down Warrenton running back Devin Jackson (44). The Heppner Mustangs defeated the Warrenton Warriors 32-7 in a class 2A quarterfinal game at Les Payne Field in Heppner on Saturday.



Warrenton quarterback Jacob Morrow throws a pass during the first quarter against the Mustangs.

Jackson Lehman took the ensuing kickoff 64 yards for a touchdown and a 12-7 Heppner lead.

"Casey Fletcher laid a nice block, and I went off that," said Lehman, who also had an interception. "We started off slow, but we came out strong in the second half and went to work." The touchdown was just what the Mustangs needed to get fired up. "That kickoff return was key," Grant said. "They had the momentum, and we got it back." Five minutes later, Jayden Wilson tip-toed down the right sideline for a 38-yard touchdown run to give the Mustangs a 20-7 lead after three quarters. "At the half, Grant said they (the Warriors) aren't better, we just needed to go harder," Wolters said. "It paid off." Early in the fourth quarter, Cimmiyotti got his second interception of the game, and Mason Lehman scored three plays later, running 28 yards and using his size to reach the ball over the goal line to give his team a 28-7 lead. Lehman finished with 110 yards rushing on

10 carries. "Without the pressure from the defensive line, he (Morrow) wouldn't have thrown it so low, and I wouldn't have gotten it," Cimmiyotti said. "I just did my job." Two plays into Warrenton's next drive, Jackson Lehman picked off Morrow and returned the ball to the Warriors' 10-yard line. Wolters took the ball into the end zone on the first play of the drive for a 32-7 lead. "I'm really proud of my line," Wolters said. "I wouldn't do what I do without them. They fight for their lives, and ours." Warrenton finished with 242 yards of offense — 148 of that coming on the ground — but too many mistakes cost the Warriors in the end. "We made some good plays, and sometimes it didn't go our way," O'Brien said. "Congrats to Heppner."