

CONTACT US
Gary Henley | Sports Reporter
ghenley@dailyastorian.com

FOLLOW US
facebook.com/
DailyAstorianSports

SPORTS

Naselle players upbeat about state title chances

Comets play Saturday for 1B football trophy

By **PATRICK WEBB**
For The Astorian

NASELLE, Wash. — Back in 2015, the second year after the switch to eight-man football at Naselle, senior lineman Ramzi Estes delighted in quoting Mark Twain: “It’s not the size of the dog in the fight, but the size of the fight in the dog.”

The 2019 Comets will be relying on that philosophy Saturday when they travel to Tacoma, Washington, for the WIAA state championship game.

They face top-ranked Odessa, the returning 1B state champions, which has a roster of 21 players, three weighing more than 200 pounds.

But Naselle senior Gabe Gilbert isn’t worried. “We are all confident,” he said. “It’s pretty cool to make it this far.”

Both finalists are undefeated and were ranked No. 1 and 2 going into the post-season playoff bracket.

Naselle, with just 16 on its roster, won its semifinal Saturday against Almira-Coulee-Hartline 70-44.

ACH had beaten the Comets 82-28 in a semifinal last season and eliminated them in the quarterfinals the year before.

To gain revenge, Naselle came from behind twice. At halftime it was 32-30, then senior running back Fa’aoso Tutu’u found his groove and blasted through the Warriors’ defense to score on four penetrating runs.

“We kept our head in the game,” Tutu’u said, reflectively. “We went there and did the job.”

Odessa has won every game this season by 54 points or more. Its biggest margin was a 92-6 league win against eastern Washington neighbors ACH. The Tigers demolished Entiat 84-20 in the semifinals, having scored 11 touchdowns in the first half against Selkirk in the quarters.

Previewing the season in the Spokesman-Review in Spokane, sports writer Dave Nichols said last year’s 63-12 win over ACH was Odessa’s first state championship in 25 years. The Tigers scored 40 points in the first quarter, a WIAA title game record.

In an early September story, the writer noted that fifth-year coach Jeff Nelson was welcoming back last year’s 1B player of the year, running back Marcus King, and all-state lineman of the year Jaden Hunt, as well as all-league quar-



Photos by Patrick Webb

Assistant Coach Pete Riley demonstrates a play watched by Naselle senior quarterback Ethan Lindstrom and guard Daniel Holt, right.

WIAA 1B CHAMPIONSHIP FOOTBALL GAME

Who: Naselle vs. Odessa

When: Noon, Saturday

Where: Mt. Tahoma High School, Tacoma, Washington

terback Camden Weber. Returning Tim DeWulf also earned 2018 all-league honors on offense and defense.

Naselle coaches Jeff Eaton, Pete Riley and Matt Scrabeck have watched hours of film to devise a plan to combat them.

At practice Tuesday, the tone was upbeat with an emphasis on solidifying earlier successes.

“I don’t want you to reinvent the wheel,” Scrabeck yelled as they rehearsed their plays. “What you have got is good stuff — you just have to execute better!”

Sophomore Jordan Lopez is looking ahead with confidence.

“We have good coaches who push us and want to best out of us,” he said. “If

we keep working hard in practice, and be aggressive at the game, we should be able to win.”

Jimmy Strange, a junior, was named all-state linebacker last year. He was praised by Coach Eaton for making a team-high 17 tackles in the semifinal win. He scored a touchdown and ran in a 2-point conversion.

“We are pretty excited,” said Strange, whose brother Joey, a sophomore, also scored a touchdown and a couple of conversion runs. “Someone said we haven’t had a state championship for 40 years.”

For the record, 1969 was before WIAA introduced a bracketed playoff system. In those days, some state champions were determined by a vote. Naselle teacher Rob Dalton said the Comets’ last team appearance at a state title game was 1998 when the volleyball squad were runners up.

Lopez is upbeat. “It’s good that we get this close,” he said, noting confidence comes from the pride they share in wearing the navy blue and gold Naselle jersey. “Once you are a Comet, you stay a Comet,” he smiled.



Sophomore Jordan Lopez displays his balance and follow-through as he executes a punt during practice in Naselle Tuesday.

Lake is new University of Washington football coach

By **MIKE VOREL**
Seattle Times

On Saturday, Jimmy Lake’s family attended a party to celebrate his appointment as head football coach at the University of Washington.

They just didn’t know it at the time.

Lake’s mother and two brothers had flown into Seattle for Thanksgiving weekend. His wife, Michelle, and children — Jimmy Jr., Faith and Bronson — were all there, too. On Saturday afternoon, they were sitting on the couch, watching the Iron Bowl game between Auburn and Alabama — ironically enough, considering the Crimson Tide’s reported interest in Lake in recent years — when the phone rang.

It was UW athletics director Jen Cohen. Why was it Jen Cohen?

Lake — UW’s second-year defensive coordinator, for now — went upstairs to answer it, and Cohen told the 42-year-old assistant what only a handful of people on Earth already knew. Chris Petersen, Washington’s decorated sixth-year head football coach, had decided to step down following the Huskies’ upcoming bowl game. For the first time in Lake’s life, a head-coaching job was his.

And, out of respect for Petersen, Lake told only his wife. He said at an introductory news conference on Tuesday that “I wanted to make sure he got this (news) out the way he wanted to get it out.” Which meant, in a house crowded with loved ones, Lake sat on the most significant professional development of his life. He held a winning lottery number and had to wait to cash it in.

He didn’t tell his mother. He didn’t tell



Mike Siegel/Seattle Times

Husky football coach Chris Petersen, right, listens to new head coach Jimmy Lake during a press conference on Tuesday at Husky Stadium.

his brothers. He didn’t tell his sons and daughter. This was a reverse surprise party, where the subject of the celebration is the only one who knew.

Though, admittedly, Lake’s poker face could use a little work.

“My oldest son, Jimmy Jr., I was kind of staring at him, knowing that I was going to be the next head football coach at Washington,” Lake said. “He goes, ‘Dad, what are you doing? What are you looking at me like that for?’

“I go, ‘Oh, nothing. Nothing.’ So they kind of knew something was going on, but they had no idea that this was the news.”

Lake finally let his children in on the secret on Sunday night. He called his mother and brothers a few hours before the official announcement on Monday morning. By 9 a.m. on Tuesday, his immediate family was seated in the front row of the Don James Center on the north side of Husky Stadium, while Lake posed for pictures and held a purple jersey with his last

name on the back — surrounded on each side by Petersen and Cohen.

Behind them, on Husky Stadium’s massive video board, three words were printed in bold white letters for all to see. The same words were plastered across every flat-screen television in sight: A NEW REIGN.

For further context, the words were also sandwiched by a pair of smiling faces — Petersen on the left, Lake on the right.

The secret was officially out. Now, all he had to do was say it.

“And so now, here we go: I’m the head football coach,” Lake said with a smile on Tuesday, sporting a purple tie, a white shirt and a black suit that matched his beard.

But perhaps it’s appropriate that Petersen and Lake’s faces were both featured on the poster. After all, according to Lake, the foundation of Petersen’s program will remain in place.

“A lot of the reason we are here is because of what coach Pete brought with his culture, his Built for Life program, the uncommon unity we have on our team,” said Lake, who agreed to a five-year deal beginning with an annual guaranteed salary of \$3 million. “So I want to make sure — and I spoke with the team yesterday — that all that is going to remain the same.”

“It’s one of the biggest reasons I’ve remained here over the years when I’ve had chances to leave: I want to be a part of this unbelievable culture that Chris Petersen has laid down for us. So my message to the current recruits that we’re recruiting and our team is, the recipe is going to remain the same. This is not going to change. I know how it’s supposed to be done, and it’s supposed to be done how Chris Petersen has done it.”