

Injuries, low numbers leave Riverhawks in limbo

By **BILLY GATES**
The Oregonian/OregonLive

THE DALLES — North Wasco County School District and The Dalles High School announced Wednesday that the Riverhawks' upcoming game against Class 3A Nyssa is canceled.

In a press release, The Dalles athletic director Michael Somnis said due to player safety the football team will not travel to Kennison Field at Hermiston High School to take on Nyssa on Saturday.

Somnis said district administration will monitor the program on a weekly basis due

to low numbers and injuries, which could result in more cancellations. On the Oregon School Activities Association's website, The Dalles' roster includes just 28 players.

"After looking over the injury reports from the varsity team, with student safety in mind, we feel it is best to

re-evaluate the status of our varsity team on a weekly basis for the remainder of the Fall 2015 season," the release said.

The freshman/sophomore team, the second of The Dalles' two football teams, will play the remainder of its schedule unaltered. The release, signed by district

superintendent Candy Armstrong, TDHS principal Nick Nelson and Somnis, said at no point did they discuss bringing freshman up to play at the varsity level.

"We do not feel it is appropriate or safe to bring freshmen players to compete at the varsity level," the

release said.

The Dalles is slated to start Columbia River Conference play against Hermiston on Oct. 16, and that would be its first game against a Class 5A team this season. The Riverhawks are 1-4 with a win against 4A McLoughlin this season.

PREP FOOTBALL: TigerScots looking to bounce back, Rockets trying to get going

Continued from 1B
the two programs.

While most may know Irrigon head coach Steve Sheller was calling the shots during Stanfield's 2013 playoff season — a year that saw the emergence of a talented freshman class that is now the driving force behind the Tigers' current success — they may not know Sheller also coached Salas when he was a high school player at Umatilla.

They may also not know Salas feels he owes his coaching career to Sheller, and his connections to Irrigon go even further since he is the Knights' head boys junior varsity basketball coach.

"First off, the reason I'm in the situation I'm in is because of Steve Sheller," said Salas, who was Sheller's defensive coordinator when he was at Stanfield. "When a lot of people wouldn't give me an opportunity he saw something in me and reached out to me. I'm forever grateful to him."

Sheller said he's been admiring the work put in by his former players, Salas included.

"I'd be lying if I said it wasn't a big deal," he said of the match-up. "It's hard for my Irrigon kids to hear but I really have a genuine affection for those Stanfield kids and that doesn't go away. It's a weird week but our kids are going to be ready. I'm excited to see how it plays out."

Beyond the coaching connections — which explains each team's use of the Wing-T offense — many of the players have known

and competed against each other for years.

"We see each other all the time, the kids are all friends," Salas said.

Sheller said he's using the added emotion swirling around the match-up as a coaching point.

"Emotions are part of the game, they're a part of life," he said. "It's all about can you control those emotions and not let them get the better of you, or in some cases can you utilize them?"

The No. 3 Knights (5-0, 1-0 CBC) enter the game off a 60-54 shootout victory over Culver in last week's CBC opener that secured the program's first-ever winning record. However, Irrigon struggled to wrap up Bulldogs runner Jaiden Jones, who they hadn't seen on any of the game film during that week's preparations.

"We were in positions to make tackles and make plays and for whatever reason just didn't," Sheller said.

He said proper tackling technique has been his biggest point of emphasis in practice this week, and Salas also believes the game will be won or lost on defense.

"(Irrigon) is a big play team, and our motto in Stanfield is, 'If anyone is going to score on us they're going to have to earn it,'" he said. "If they want a touchdown it's going to be a 10-play drive."

No. 5 Stanfield (5-0, 1-0) has put its money where its mouth is so far, and is giving up just 14.6 points a game on average. The Tigers are coming off a 19-14 win over Weston-McEwen, and Salas

said those are the kind of scores he wants to see every week.

"I'm not looking for a shootout," he said. "I'd rather win low scoring games where our defense slows them down."

They'd be the first to slow down the Knights, which are third in Class 2A in scoring with 49.4 points a game and haven't scored fewer than 39 in any week. (Vernonia is first with 55.2 and reigning CBC champion Heppner is second with 49.8). Running backs Freddy Vera and Carlos Zacharias both eclipsed 200 yards on the ground last week.

Stanfield is averaging 39 points, down from their 44-point average heading into last week's defensive battle with the TigerScots. Irrigon is allowing 17.2 points on defense, but went into last week's game with Culver surrendering just eight on average.

With both teams running nearly identical systems, with similar stats, speed, size and strength, it seems just about anything could happen on Friday.

"It's going to come down to who limits big plays and who plays defense," Salas said. "It's going to be fun."

Here's what to look for in the rest of the area's small school match-ups this week (all games are on Friday unless otherwise noted):

CULVER at **HEPPNER, 7 p.m.** — The Heppner Mustangs (5-0, 1-0 CBC) opened league play with a 52-19 win at Pilot Rock last week, and will face another young squad

in the Culver Bulldogs (2-3, 0-1) this week. Culver has just four seniors on its roster and was hammered by Vernonia 72-0 in its league tune-up, but nearly stunned Irrigon before falling 60-54 in their CBC opener.

Junior running back Jaiden Jones (5-foot-11, 205 pounds) caught Irrigon off guard as he picked up big chunks of yardage on the ground, but won't be sneaking up on a Heppner defense that is fourth in Class 2A in allowing just 14.4 points a game. Linebacker Kevin Murray is leading the Mustangs with 8.3 tackles a game.

Heppner's lowest margin of victory this season is 32 points.

PILOT ROCK at **WESTON-MCEWEN, 7 p.m.** — The Weston-McEwen TigerScots (3-2, 0-1 CBC) will try to keep their playoff hopes alive against the struggling Pilot Rock Rockets (0-4, 0-1).

The TigerScots had the ball and a chance to take the lead late in their CBC opener last week, but their drive stalled and Stanfield was able to run out the clock for a 19-14 win. Weston-McEwen's only other loss this season was thanks to a blocked field goal in the closing seconds.

The Rockets haven't been within sniffing range of a win since their season-opening 14-6 loss to Umatilla and have struggled to score against opponents' first string.

Weston-McEwen boasts a top-10 defense, giving up 17.2 points a game on average.

MAC-HI at **LA GRANDE, 7 p.m.** — Injuries and youth have proved major hurdles for the Mac-Hi Pioneers (0-5) in their first season under head coach Doug South.

The La Grande Tigers (4-1) are about to provide another and are coming off a 43-19 win over The Dalles, which defeated Mac-Hi 43-0 in Week 3.

It is the Greater Oregon League opener for both teams.

UMATILLA at **KING'S WAY CHRISTIAN, 6 p.m.** — The Umatilla Vikings (4-1) were able to escape with a victory against winless Tri-Cities Prep in last week's 28-27 game at Umatilla.

They'll have to knock off an opponent looking for a rebound on its home field this week at King's Way Christian in Vancouver, Washington.

The Knights (2-1) are coming off a 42-41 loss in double overtime in its last game, which was three weeks ago on Sep. 18.

JOSEPH at **ECHO, 7 p.m.** — The Echo Cougars (2-3, 0-2 SD1) rallied without their starting quarterback last week but still came up short in a 20-12 loss to Powder Valley.

Coach Rick Thew said the offense was moving the ball into scoring range, but couldn't finish drives against a defense that entered the game allowing 39.3 points a game.

Klay Jensen looks to be done for the year with a dislocated knee, so the

Cougars can't expect any help there.

Joseph (1-3, 0-1) is reeling on defense, however, and has allowed at least 50 points in each of its losses. The Eagles are coming off a 60-0 loss to Deary, Idaho, and a 62-60 loss to Powder Valley.

PERRYDALE at **IONE, Thursday, 6 p.m.** — The Ione Cardinals (1-3, 0-2 SD4) have been burnt by the big play this season and that was the case again last week in a 22-16 loss at Arlington.

Ione gave up two long scoring plays on fourth down and will have to deal with one of the state's top offenses this week.

Perrydale (5-0, 3-0) is averaging 52.8 points a game and is coming off a 80-12 win over South Wasco.

DUFUR at **ARLINGTON, Thursday, 7 p.m.** — With its seven-points-per-game average, Arlington (4-0, 3-0 SD4) has the best defense in Class 1A on paper.

Their opponents, however, are just 4-15 on the season.

The Honkers get their toughest test of the season when Dufur (3-2, 0-2) rolls into town looking to get back into the Special District 4 playoff hunt.

The Ranges are coming off back-to-back two-point losses to Perrydale, 36-34, and Sherman, 32-30.

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PIGSKIN PICKERS

Week 5

Overall: 30-10
Last Week: 7-3

Sandy and Hermiston Pendleton at AC Davis
Stanfield at Irrigon
Joseph at Echo
Wash. St. at Oregon
Oregon State at Arizona
Georgia at Tennessee
Wisconsin at Nebraska
Seahawks at Bengals
Bills at Titans

Mike Appleton	Sam Barbee	Kevin Fisher	Clint Shoemake	Mario Ramirez	Jennifer Cox	Kathy Aney	Eric Singer	Matt Entrup	Jeff Snell	Kim Furgerson
30-10	30-10	29-11	28-12	27-13	26-14	26-14	26-14	25-15	24-16	22-18
7-3	7-3	8-2	8-2	7-3	7-3	7-3	6-4	6-4	6-4	5-5
Hermiston	Hermiston	Hermiston	Hermiston	Hermiston	Hermiston	Hermiston	Hermiston	Hermiston	Hermiston	Sandy
AC Davis	AC Davis	AC Davis	AC Davis	AC Davis	Pendleton	AC Davis	AC Davis	AC Davis	AC Davis	AC Davis
Irrigon	Stanfield	Stanfield	Irrigon	Irrigon	Irrigon	Irrigon	Irrigon	Irrigon	Irrigon	Irrigon
Joseph	Joseph	Joseph	Echo	Echo	Echo	Echo	Echo	Echo	Joseph	Echo
Oregon	Oregon	Oregon	Oregon	Oregon	Oregon	Oregon	Oregon	Oregon	Oregon	Oregon
Arizona	Arizona	Arizona	Arizona	Arizona	Arizona	Arizona	Arizona	Arizona	Arizona	OSU
Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia	Tennessee	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia
Nebraska	Wisconsin	Wisconsin	Wisconsin	Wisconsin	Nebraska	Nebraska	Wisconsin	Wisconsin	Wisconsin	Wisconsin
Bengals	Seahawks	Bengals	Bengals	Bengals	Seahawks	Bengals	Bengals	Bengals	Bengals	Seahawks
Bills	Bills	Bills	Bills	Bills	Bills	Titans	Bills	Bills	Bills	Titans

Winner's notes: "Tough week of flipping the QUARTER." — K.F. "I'm coming for ya, Mike!" — C.S.

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