

NFL

Seahawks' offense missing during first two weeks

By **TIM BOOTH**
Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — With Russell Wilson's mobility limited because of his sprained right ankle, the Seattle Seahawks were hoping to find balance on offense.

Instead, Week 2 only brought more offensive frustration.

"We're not getting the same balance that we felt, about mixing the run game and the pass game where we can play off the running game and it hasn't been as obvious right off the bat. That's an issue," Seattle coach Pete Carroll said on Monday.

Seattle has just 15 points in two games after Sunday's 9-3 loss to Los Angeles. Its only offensive touchdown came on the final drive of the opener against Miami.

The run game is spotty at best, Seattle's offensive line has struggled against two of the better defensive fronts in the NFL and while Wilson's been able to throw successfully, he's not much of a running threat because of his injured ankle suffered in the opener.



AP Photo/Jae Hong

Seattle Seahawks running back Christine Michael, right, fumbles the ball as Los Angeles Rams outside linebacker Mark Barron, left, tackles him along with outside linebacker Alec Ogletree, center, during the second half of an NFL football game at the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum, Sunday, Sept. 18, 2016, in Los Angeles.

And to top it off, injuries are starting to mount already. Along with Wilson's ankle sprain, wide receivers Doug Baldwin and Tyler Lockett were limited in Sunday's game.

Both underwent MRIs on Monday, but Carroll did not

immediately have results, saying it would be later in the week before their status was determined.

Lockett missed a significant chunk of the game with a sprained knee, but returned for the final drive and caught a 53-yard pass from Wilson.

Baldwin did not miss any game time despite getting rolled up on from behind while blocking in the first half.

Running back Thomas Rawls also suffered a contusion to the outside of his upper left leg and like the

other two will be evaluated later in the week.

"I don't know really good information for you, like I said, but (Baldwin) seems to feel OK and there will be three or four guys that we got to check out as the days come off this week," Carroll said.

"We'll see what happens Wednesday-Thursday. Give them a couple days to get back and see what happens."

Sluggish starts to the season offensively aren't new during Carroll's time in Seattle. But it's the combination of issues already surfacing that are causing concern.

First are the struggles of the offensive line that appeared settled through the preseason before rookie right guard Germain Ifedi suffered an ankle injury just before the opener.

J'Marcus Webb has started the first two games in place of Ifedi, but did not play the position for Seattle through training camp.

In their defense, the Seahawks have faced two of the better defensive lines in the NFL to start the season with Miami and Los Angeles, but the problems up front

have amplified the issues in the run game.

The Seahawks are averaging just 3.2 yards per carry, tied for 25th in the NFL. Both Rawls and Christine Michael have been unable to find a rhythm in the run game.

And the inability to find sustained success on the ground is putting extra pressure on a hobbled Wilson and the passing game, especially on third down.

The Seahawks are a combined 9 of 29 on third-down attempts and many of those — especially against the Rams — were third-and-long situations.

Carroll said he expected Seattle to pick up where it left off last season with its third down success. The Seahawks were fourth in the NFL last season converting 46 percent of third-down opportunities.

"That's staying on schedule. It goes back to the running game. Remember last year how much we talked about third down, and you saw third down shift and you saw everything change," Carroll said. "That's still the key, and converting and creating a new set of downs and all that is crucial."



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Maria Chavez, of Hillsboro, and Hermiston's Cydney Lind battle for the ball Tuesday in Hermiston.

DAWGS: Hillsboro scores final goal in 81st minute

Continued from 1B

the ball slipped past her into the net for a good goal — Torres' first goal of the season — tying the game at 1-1.

"At first I saw her grab the ball and I was like 'Oh man at least I took the shot,'" Torres said, "and then it slipped through and I didn't know what to think ... I wasn't expecting it to go in."

However, Hermiston's momentum quickly evaporated after the goal and just three minutes later Hillsboro re-took the lead and then added some insurance in the 81st minute to grab the victory.

The Spartans are also the third straight solid 5A team that Hermiston has faced, joining Putnam (lost 3-1) and St. Helens (lost 2-1) for a combined 10-4 record so far this season. Both Hillsboro and St. Helens are also top-10

teams currently in the OSAA rankings, which Torres said has been good for Hermiston to play against.

"For the most part I think playing teams like this will help out when it comes time for league play ... it will really help us with our defense," Torres said. "Hood River and The Dalles both have strong teams and tall girls like (Hillsboro)," Torres said. "Last year we really struggled down the stretch with our defense but this year I feel like we've stepped up and I think we'll be able to compete really well."

Hermiston next plays at Sandy on Thursday for a 4 p.m. start before starting up league play next Tuesday at home against The Dalles.

Contact Eric Singer at esinger@eastoregonian.com or (541) 966-0839. Follow him on Twitter @ByEricSinger.

BULLDOGS: Look to match explosive offense

Continued from 1B

for a win and it was a great opportunity for us," Hermiston coach David Faateete said after the team's practice on Tuesday. "It was a hard-fought game for us all the way to the fourth quarter. It was fun for our crowds, the students were crazy and it was fun to listen to them roar. "It was just an awesome win for our team."

Senior offensive lineman said that the victory has led to an increased morale at practice, but admitted that the team should not be satisfied with just the one win.

"Now that we have that winning taste we want more," Caldwell said. "It's definitely helped us this week but we just have to stay motivated and keep working even harder at practice and not get complacent."

And if there was any week to not be complacent, this week would be it for Hermiston (1-2, 1-0 SD1). The Bulldogs host the defending Class 5A state champion Summit Storm on Friday in Special District 1 action. The Storm (2-1, 1-0) roll into town on a two game win streak, most recently dominating Pendleton 55-17 last week.

"It's exciting, everyone's ready for this," Caldwell said. "(Summit's) a tough team, for sure, and they'll come out and play good football but hopefully at the end of the night we'll come out as the better team."

"It's going to be a fun game."

SCOUTING SUMMIT
The defending state champion Summit Storm aren't quite the dominant

team they were one year ago, when they outscored opponents by an average of 46-11 last season, but the Storm are still one of the elite teams in Class 5A this season.

The most notable returning starter Summit returns from last year's squad is senior quarterback John Bledsoe — the son of ex-NFL quarterback and current Summit offensive coordinator Drew Bledsoe. John, a 6-3, 210-pound right thrower was the 5A Player of the Year in 2015 as he threw for more than 2,500 yards and 30 touchdowns, and has continued his success this season so far as well.

Bledsoe did miss part of Summit's victory over Pendleton last week with an injury to his non-throwing left shoulder, though all indications are that Bledsoe — a Northern Arizona football commitment — will be ready to go on Friday night. Aside from Bledsoe, Summit's biggest weapons are senior running back Dawson Ruhl — who also threw two touchdown passes in relief of Bledsoe last week — and senior receiver Brayden Durfee who has cemented himself as Bledsoe's favorite target.

"(Summit) has plenty of depth, that's for sure," Caldwell said. "They have depth at every position and we have to be as prepared as possible."

After losing their season opener to a Class 6A top-five team in Clackamas 42-14, Summit responded with a 35-21 victory over 2015 state runner-up Ashland in Week two before the blowout win over Pendleton last week.

KEYS FOR HERMISTON

KEEP ON RUNNING: Hermiston offense has been a work-in-progress for the most part through its first three games. The unit has flashed at times, but has also shown plenty of growing pains with sophomore quarterback Andrew James and some inconsistency in the run game.

Last week's win was the best overall effort from the offense so far, as James completed nearly 60 percent of his passes and tossed three touchdowns while the running game got going behind a 20-rush, 111-yard effort from Jonathan Hinkle.

A key reason for the Bulldogs success in the run game against Mountain View was in the dominance of the offensive line.

Anchored by Caldwell at the center position, Hermiston routinely got the push up front it had been lacking through the first two games, and opened up holes for Hinkle, James, and Mitch Brown to run freely.

"We prepared really well that week, watched a lot of film and as a group we played really well," Caldwell said. "Hopefully again this week we can come in prepared enough, watch enough film and be ready for Summit."

The Bulldogs will have their hands full against a stout defensive front from Summit on Friday that helped limit Pendleton to a combined minus-29 rushing yards last week. Caldwell said that working together being smart with their assignment will be important on Friday.

"We definitely have to work as a group, and execute everything our coaches tell

us to pretty much," Caldwell said. "As long as we do as we're told, block the right guys and do everything right we should come out on top."

Continuing the ground success could be a useful tool for Hermiston in an attempt to control the clock and keep its defense fresh against the Storm's fast-paced, high-scoring offense. Though Faateete said the initial gameplan will be to stand toe-to-toe with the Storm.

"Our gameplan is going to be to try and match their offense," he said. "Our running game is going to come if our running backs can get going and get movement up front. But we have the ability to run the football when we need to, we showed it last game."

WEATHER THE 'STORM' ON DEFENSE:

With an offense like Summit's, it is hard to truly stop the unit. Instead, Hermiston must do its best to contain the Storm's skill positions as much as possible and limit the big plays. Faateete said that the defensive focus this week has been trying to close gaps in the secondary as well as getting off of blocks with the front seven to create more pressure up front.

"Quick-paced offenses' big nemesis are incomplections or short gains on first downs and schematically we need to win first and second down to make third downs longer and more difficult to call for them," Faateete said.

Hermiston will need its best efforts from defensive anchors Vaemu Ena, John Henry-Line, Dayshawn Neal, and run-stuffer Beau Blake to give the Bulldogs its best chance at the upset victory.

BUCKS: Ridgeview senior quarterback Blaine Gibbs gets overtime win in first start

Continued from 1B

avoid an 0-2 start to league play after a 55-17 loss at Summit last week.

Pendleton (1-2, 0-1) got off to a good start against the No. 1 team in the state, but was outscored 34-3 after the first quarter and hurt itself with multiple penalties.

The team's 11 seniors are putting it on themselves to get the Bucks headed in the right direction after back-to-back losses, and held a seniors-only meeting after practice.

"Us as seniors, we have to be leaders to the younger guys," said starting linebacker/safety Morgan Holcomb. "They have one more year, this is our last year. So we have to give it everything we've got to show them that Pendleton football is the best."

Jamal Vann, a running back and defensive end, said hearing Davis call this a must-win game adds some pressure.

"It really does," he said. "It means that everyone that's going to be playing in

this game needs to put in the hard work. They have to give 110 percent in practice, and even more when they step on the field."

Kickoff will be at 7 p.m. on Friday at Ridgeview High School in Redmond.

It's the second-straight week the team travels to central Oregon, and will be a homecoming of sorts for Davis, who graduated from Redmond High School in 1994. The Bucks are eager to get a home game, but also are making the most of the long bus rides.

"We're not really used to going to the Bend area ... but we always bond a lot on the bus," Holcomb said. "We joke around, make fun of each other. That's our team bonding, the longer the trips the more the bond."

SCOUTING RIDGEVIEW

The Ravens were thrown a loop when senior quarterback Brent Yeakey quit the team two games into the season to focus on a promising track & field career, but responded by literally pulling their first win out of thin air in a 12-6 over-

time win against Hood River Valley last week with senior Blaine Gibbs under center.

A blocked extra point preserved the 6-6 tie following Hood River's late touchdown, and the Eagles' kicking game came up short again on the first drive of overtime with a missed field goal.

Facing 4th-and-13 from the Eagles 28-yard line on Ridgeview's ensuing drive, Gibbs found Clayton Brown for his second touchdown of the game.

It was a thrilling first start for Gibbs, but Pendleton should pose a much tougher test than the offensively-challenged Eagles, which have 5A's 30th ranked offense at just 10.1 points a game.

Ridgeview won't be asking Gibbs to do much passing, though, and head coach Andy Coddling runs a throwback offense that relies on big, athletic linemen to move the ball on the ground.

"It's basically a modified double wing, your basic three yards and a cloud of dust," Davis said.

Paving the way for the Ravens is senior guard

Gregory Connor, who at 6-foot-4 and more than 400 pounds is a player Pendleton simply can't match.

"We've noticed Ridgeview has a tendency, even on fourth-and-1 in their own territory, they're going to think they can get that one yard just based off of they've got a 400-pound kid on the offensive line," Davis said. "He's a genuinely big boy, and not matter what you can lean forward on that and get a yard."

That's going to put extra emphasis on keeping the Ravens in 3rd-and-long situations.

"They're just short-yard running, that's it. If we give them three yards every play then it's going to be a long night," Holcomb said.

"They've got to play low defensively," Davis said. "They pull three, four guys all the time, and if we play with our pads down I think we're going to be OK."

On defense, Ridgeview allowed more than 500 yards of total offense in each of its first two games and was equally as porous attacking the run as protecting against

the pass in losses to the Midwestern League's Eagle Point (3-0) and Thurston (3-0).

Pendleton's offense isn't in that league just yet, but junior quarterback Nick Bower is coming off a 268-yard passing game and wide receiver Shaw Jerome went for 197 yards on seven catches against Summit.

KEYS FOR PENDLETON

RUNNING THEME: Davis has said it every week and he'll continue saying it, the Bucks need to get Bower some help by establishing a viable rushing attack.

"If we can't run the football, Summit proved that you can pin your ears back and come, and if they bring seven sometimes it's hard to protect the quarterback," Davis said.

EFFICIENT OFFENSE: The Ravens' plodding offense may not put up a lot of points, but it eats a lot of clock.

"When we're on offense we have to score every time," Davis said. "I truly

believe that we can't struggle on offense because you may only get a couple possessions per a quarter the way they kind of just methodically chunk down the field. So we have to score fast and often."

NO FREELANCING: The Bucks struggled the last time they played a run-first offense, a 49-21 loss to Putnam in Week 2, but said they've learned their lesson.

"We had a lot of kids trying to do other people's jobs and it didn't work out too well for us against Putnam," Davis said.

SEEING YELLOW: Penalties, particularly offsides, really hurt the Pendleton defense's ability to get off the field, and eliminating those has been a focus in practice.

"It was mainly penalties that got us during that game (against Summit), which is usually something that we work on," Vann said. "I don't know what happened, but it's not something that we're going to be doing this week."

Contact Matt Entrup at mentrup@eastoregonian.com or (541) 966-0838.