

BULLDOGS: Defense aims to keep Redmond's running game under wraps

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honored Friday before taking on Redmond at Kennison Field.

James can look to Neal or Joey Gutierrez or Jonathan Hinkle. The list goes on and on, and the seniors aren't just making their presence known on offense. The Class of 2018 has played lights out defense.

Hinkle leads the team with 56 total tackles. Behind him are AJ Tuia (36) and Gutierrez (31). Tuia has notched six sacks on the season, and Gutierrez has seven picks.

But there is more to the senior class than big plays and it isn't just physicality.

"Their attitude. They know how to get the job done," head coach David Faaeteete said. "They have seen it before. They are trying to work toward those things. They do a good job in the weight room. They are here almost all the time during the summer. It's going to be sad to watch this group go, eventually."

While the seniors will play in their last official home game Friday, the season is far from over. A win against Redmond will all but secure the Bulldogs place in the playoffs.

Hermiston currently sits at No. 2 in the league, behind Mountain View and tied with Bend. Pendleton is only one game behind the two.

However, Hermiston isn't worried about the chaos that always comes when a playoff berth is on the line. In fact, the Bulldogs aren't thinking about next week, or the playoffs. They have one focus.

"It doesn't matter who we are playing against," Faaeteete said. "We're going to respect them and play our football game and get in the mindset of do what we do and execute and have a great time doing it. Before we get to next week that's what we have to do, we have to take care of Redmond."

Even though the Panthers (1-6, 1-4) have struggled most of the season, they will still pose a threat when they

come to town.

One of Hermiston's focuses have been stopping the run game with the defensive line. Before hosting Bend, the Bulldogs gave up 550 rushing yards in their previous three games. Things were better last week when they held the Lava Bears to only 136 yards, but Redmond will test their progress, and show which Bulldogs are buying in.

"At practice we're always correcting them on stuff and we just hope that it sinks in sooner rather than later," Faaeteete said. "It sunk in last week and they improved. We'll see who is ready to answer the call when we play on Friday."

The Panthers have a few key players that Hermiston will need to be ready for. They too are a part of a talented senior class.

At the start of the season Redmond was without a quarterback, but Kamau Troutman has filled that role and has a handful of targets to find on the field. Running

back Dillon Taylor is touted as Redmond's most versatile player. Wide receivers Colton Mortenson and Bradly Daniels are known to have the best hands on the team and the fastest feet, respectively.

The Panthers' losing record isn't because lack of talent.

"They play hard. They run the football," Faaeteete said. "They have adjusted their offense to fit, and now they don't have a quarterback issue. They have settled on one guy who has been able to do pretty good for them."

The single wing offense Redmond will bring has Faaeteete a little worried, since Hermiston has trouble stopping the run. But one thing Hermiston doesn't lack is effort.

"Every day we're growing and we have to continue to get better every week, day in and day out," Faaeteete said. "The focus is not on the end result, it's on the process right now for us."

SENIOR GOODBYES

In the pre-game festivities, expect see a lot of emotion — from the players, their parents, and their coach.

The large class possesses a lot of talent and have the experience to endure almost anything on the field and overcome it. They lead in all but one statistical category and will certainly be hard to replace.

Take for example the duo of Peter Earl and Hinkle. On offense, Earl uses his speed and quick feet to weave between defenders and Hinkle uses his strong build and big frame to run guys over. But the two are more than just elusive running backs. When paired up as inside linebackers, they are the heart of the defense.

There's Tyler Rohrman, who only has seven receptions on the season but has made those seven count. He's put up two touchdowns and 185 yards.

Friday night will give these players and others a chance to celebrate their successes while also giving

them the motivation needed to endure a tough postseason stretch.

"It's one of those moments where as a football player — or any kind of high school athlete — your Senior Night, your last official home game, to think back about the four years you went through, that you've struggled," Faaeteete said. "Maybe you've sat on the bench for three years and are finally a starter, things like that. It's a testament to high school athletics and its a testament to their parents for keeping them on and keeping them out."

"When they started as a group I think they were about 33, 34 maybe more and now there's about 17. To keep at least half of those guys out is a testament to their unity as a group, and I'm excited to celebrate that and play a great game on Friday."

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BUCKS: Tough environment in Bend will be tougher with cold, rainy weather

Continued from 1B

and make sure we know how important this game is for us."

With two weeks left to play, Pendleton (4-3 overall, 3-2 5A Special District 1) has a one-game lead on Summit for the fourth-and-final playoff spot in the district. Because of the Buckaroos loss to the Storm in Week 3, Pendleton needs to win its final two games to guarantee its first playoff berth since 2014. That has been the Buckaroos' No. 1 goal all season long, but it will not come easy, starting with Bend.

"We haven't been in a position like this in a couple of years," Pendleton head coach Erik Davis said. "So to get these kids to realize what they have to do to be a playoff team is to have that playoff mentality."

The Lava Bears (5-2, 4-1) come into the game ranked No. 14 in the OSAA's 5A

rankings and had a five-game win streak snapped last week with a close 35-32 loss at Hermiston. In that game, Bend erased a 21-2 first half deficit and used a balanced offensive attack and a stout defense capable of forcing turnovers to play its way back into the game.

On offense, Pendleton will be facing a Bend unit that sits in a Cover-3 base and will try to combat it with a strong running game with some vertical passing. Davis said this week that the keys to the offense come down to a fast start and limiting any turnovers. Pendleton didn't turn the ball over against Hood River, but did not score until late in the second quarter before turning it on in the second half, something they can't allow on Friday.

"We came out flat a little bit against Hood River early and we don't have that luxury this week," Davis said. "We have to get on the

board early and often, we can't afford to wait until the second quarter or late in the game for scoring opportunities ... and we don't want to give them (Bend) any extra offensive possessions because they're a big, physical team that can run the clock down."

And on defense, Pendleton is facing a Bend offense that will try to wear out the opposition with a rushing attack with Haakon Kjellesvik and Marhsall Davis, but also has a threat to throw the ball downfield to some tall receivers.

Last week against Hermiston, Bend ran 65 plays on offense to Hermiston's 49, with 136 yards on 43 rushes and 178 yards on eight pass completions from quarterback Cooper Simmonds.

"I think our linebackers are going to have to play huge Friday, filling in gaps," Davis said. "They're (Bend) not a huge outside the tackles run team, they like

to keep it inside, so to get Kirk (Liscom) and Aiden (Patterson) going and the outside linebackers have to play more physical than they did against Mountain View a couple weeks ago. Our defense has been improving against the run game, but we have to limit the long drives. We need more three-and-outs and not the 10 minute drives like Mountain View."

Some good news came to the defense this week, as junior linebacker Willie Camp was medically cleared to play following his emergency appendectomy two weeks ago. Davis said that how much Camp will play has yet to be determined, that it depended on how Camp responded to testing in practice after being sidelined for the amount of time that he was.

"If he's ready to go, he'll play because he's a tough kid," Davis said. "But We'll monitor what's safe, what's right, and what's most effective."

And as if Friday's game was not already a tough enough environment for Pendleton, the weather forecast as of Wednesday evening calls for temperatures in the low 40s/high 30s by game time with a good chance of precipitation and 10-plus mile-per-hour winds. The two teams played in rough conditions last year in Pendleton, as a days worth of rain turned the Round-Up Arena field into a mudpit for a game that Bend grinded out a 22-7 victory. But the players are not worried too much about it.

"We just have to go down there and make plays," Bower said. "They're (Bend) playing on the same field and same conditions as us, so we just have to go out and make plays."

A win would also go a long way for the Buckaroos program that has yet to beat a true good team this season.

In Pendleton's four wins, the opponents (Putnam, Ridgeview, Redmond, Hood River Valley) have a combined record of just 5-21, while its three losses (La Grande, Summit, Mountain View) are 16-5. Pendleton played tough in those three games, but not tough enough which is something the Buckaroos hope to change on Friday.

"We need to come out faster and stronger," junior Aiden Patterson said. "Every time we come out to start, our defense takes a series or two to warm up and it allows them to score early so we need to come out a lot faster in this game. Every play counts, we can't take a play off ... losing isn't an option. It's a must-win for us and that's our goal."

Kickoff is set for 7 p.m.

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PIGSKIN PICKERS

Week 7

Overall:
Last Week:
Pendleton at Bend
Redmond at Hermiston
Heppner at Stanfield
Irrigon at Umatilla
USC at Notre Dame
Oregon at UCLA
Colorado at WSU
Seahawks at Giants
Cardinals at Rams
Falcons at Patriots



Eric Singer
48-12
6-4
Pendleton
Hermiston
Heppner
Umatilla
USC
Oregon
WSU
Seahawks
Rams
Falcons



Ron Gibbs
47-13
5-5
Bend
Hermiston
Heppner
Irrigon
Notre Dame
UCLA
WSU
Seahawks
Rams
Patriots



Clint Shoemaker
46-14
7-3
Bend
Hermiston
Heppner
Irrigon
Notre Dame
UCLA
WSU
Seahawks
Rams
Patriots



Zachary Orem
45-15
6-4
Bend
Hermiston
Heppner
Irrigon
Notre Dame
Oregon
WSU
Seahawks
Rams
Falcons



John Airolidi
43-17
5-5
Bend
Hermiston
Stanfield
Umatilla
Notre Dame
UCLA
WSU
Seattle
Rams
Patriots



Mike Appleton
43-17
6-4
Bend
Hermiston
Heppner
Umatilla
USC
UCLA
WSU
Seahawks
Rams
Patriots



Jodi Bloomberg
42-18
5-5
Bend
Hermiston
Heppner
Umatilla
USC
Oregon
WSU
Seahawks
Rams
Falcons



Weston Putman
39-21
5-5
Bend
Hermiston
Heppner
Umatilla
USC
Oregon
WSU
Seahawks
Rams
Patriots



Brandon Case
39-21
7-3
Pendleton
Hermiston
Stanfield
Irrigon
USC
Oregon
WSU
Seahawks
Rams
Patriots



Alexis Mansanarez
33-27
3-7
Bend
Hermiston
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