

Pro Football

Wilson hopes win over Cardinals gets Seahawks to playoffs

By **TIM BOOTH**
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Russell Wilson has never carried this much of the load for the Seattle Seahawks to be successful.

They have been stretches in previous seasons where Wilson is the reason Seattle would have offensive success.

But it's never lasted for an entire season such as this where Wilson is the primary offensive reason why Seattle has playoff hopes going into the regular-season finale against Arizona.

Seattle (9-6) needs a victory and an Atlanta loss to extend its playoff streak to six straight years. The Cardinals (7-8) would like to see the Seahawks joining them in cleaning out their lockers come Monday.

"This season there has been a lot to it and guys have been making a lot of great plays and doing a lot of special things," Wilson said. "That's not me, that's the

other guys making plays." Wilson's season is not easy to define. He's been among the best in certain games, yet has forgettable mistakes no quarterback with his experience should make.

He will join the rare fraternity of quarterbacks leading their team in rushing for a season, yet is second in the NFL with 32 touchdown passes, including a league-record 18 in the fourth quarter.

Seattle has scored 36 offensive touchdowns this season — Wilson is responsible for 35 of those running or passing. The Seahawks have just one rushing TD — J.D. McKissic — by someone other than Wilson.

Of Seattle's total offensive yards this season, Wilson is responsible for 81.6 percent of those.

That doesn't mean he's always played well. The past three weeks are a perfect example when Wilson went from being in the MVP conversation to some of his more forgettable perfor-

mances. Last week against Dallas, Wilson threw two touchdowns and didn't commit a turnover, but was hesitant with his throws, finished with just 93 yards passing and Seattle's offense lagged.

Wilson knows he must be better this week against an opponent that's caused Seattle issues in the past and has been playing spectacular defense for the past two months.

The Cardinals are allowing just 268 yards per game since Week 10 and are coming off their first shutout in 25 years.

"I think the guys started playing together longer," Arizona coach Bruce Arians said. "Every year, you bring in some new guys and this time, it took us a little bit longer to get going."

Here's what else to watch as the Cardinals try for a third straight win in Seattle:

NFL



Arizona Cardinals (7-8)

Seattle Seahawks (9-6)

• **Sunday, 1:25 p.m.**
• **TV: FOX**

FITZGERALD: Larry Fitzgerald has already posted his fifth career 100-catch season. He's second in the NFL with 101

receptions entering the regular-season finale.

He needs one catch on Sunday to have 211 straight games with a reception, tying Tony Gonzalez for the second-longest streak in league history.

Even at age 34 and in his 14th season, Fitzgerald has not slowed down.

"He's going to go down as a Hall of Famer but I really can't say enough about the man because I mean he's old as dirt and he's still playing at an extremely high level," Seattle's Doug Baldwin joked. "He's a pro."

RUNAROUND: Seattle's run game has been absent all season. Don't expect it

to suddenly show up in the season finale against Arizona's improving unit.

The Cardinals have allowed just 139 combined yards rushing in the past three games, shutting down the Titans, Redskins and Giants. The Cardinals have allowed just one team — Houston — to rush for more than 100 yards since Week 7.

Seattle is averaging 101.9 yards per game rushing but most of that is because of Wilson, who is set to become the first QB to lead his team in rushing since Cam Newton in 2012. Wilson has 550 yards rushing.

"We're not giving into the circumstances," Cardinals defensive tackle Frostee Rucker said. "We have a lot of guys who have pride and they work very hard."

SLOWING JONES: Arizona's Chandler Jones has a chance to set the franchise record for sacks in a season and become the first Cardinals player to lead the NFL in sacks. Jones has 15 sacks

and needs two more to set the franchise mark.

Jones has enjoyed his games against the Seahawks in the past. Jones has 5½ sacks in four previous games against Seattle.

"He's creative with his rushes and it really comes down to he's just such a long guy and he's just really effective," Seattle coach Pete Carroll said.

NEW HOME: Arians caught grief this week for his postgame comments after last Sunday's win over the Giants where he said about Seattle's CenturyLink Field, "We know that's our home field. We're goin' up there and kick their (behinds)."

The Cardinals have won two straight in Seattle and three of the past four. The road team has enjoyed the upper hand in the series in the past few years with Seattle winning three of the past four in Arizona.

"I saw what their coach said, it's kind of funny," Seattle's K.J. Wright said.

TOP 10: Nixyaawii girls basketball, Riverside boys soccer wrap up state titles

Continued from 1B

beginning with the 2018-19 school year.

The petition was approved in June by the WIAA's executive board, allowing Hermiston to become the first out-of-state school to join the association, and one of only a few schools across the country to compete across state lines.

So after years of competing in leagues with the likes of Pendleton, Hood River Valley, The Dalles, Redmond and the Bend-area schools, Hermiston will join a league with Tri-Cities-area schools as well as Walla Walla in the Mid-Columbia Conference.

3. Nixyaawii girls rule the state

There might not have been a basketball team that was more dominant last season than the Nixyaawii Golden Eagles' girls team. Powered by 1A Player of the Year Mary Stewart, who averaged 27.7 points, 5.9 assists, 4.8 rebounds, and 6.4 steals, and guard Milan Schimmel (12.8 points, 8.2 assists, 6.7 rebounds), Nixyaawii went a perfect 27-0 and captured the 1A state championship with a 68-39 victory over Country Christian on Mar. 4. It was the second state championship in school history, with the first coming in 2011.

The Golden Eagles were not challenged many times in its 27 games, winning by an average of 27.8 points. Their up-tempo offense scored an average of 57.6 points per game only won three games by 10 points or less.

4. Riverside boys soccer wins state championship

Just as the Nixyaawii girls were dominant in basketball, the Riverside Pirates boys soccer team was by far the best in the Class 3A/2A/1A classification in 2017 and they proved it with a state championship trophy.

Riverside compiled a 17-0-1 record in 2017 where it outscored opponents by a whopping 116-16 margin. The only blemish on the season was a 2-2 draw with Catlin Gabel on Oct. 28, the same team that the Pirates defeated 4-1 in the state championship game just two weeks later.

Six Pirates earned all-state honors and senior Quincy Castillo was voted as Player of the Year for the state and 3A Special District 4.

5. Stanfield comes up short thrice

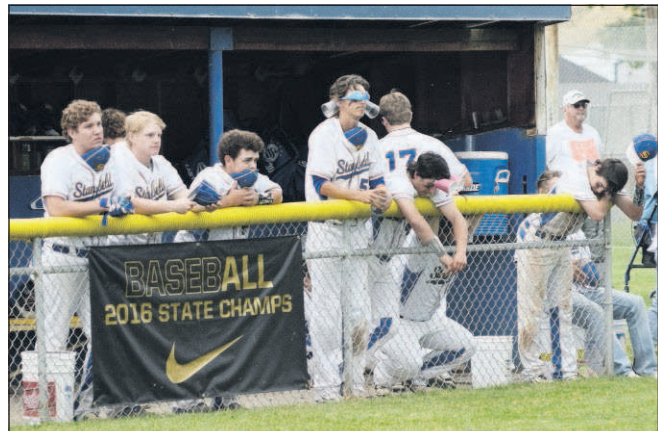
It was quite the school year for the Stanfield Tigers' boys athletic teams in the traditional sports of baseball, football and basketball.

Led by a special group of seniors including Dylan Grogan, Thyler Monkus, Ryan Bailey, Tony Flores, Jose Garcia, Noe Sanchez and junior Brody Woods, the Tigers put together an unfathomable combined record of 58-7 in those three sports with two state runner-up finishes.

With a 2016 3A baseball championship in their back pocket and a Class 2A runner-up finish in football,



Pendleton's Caden Smith holds Pendleton's 5A fourth-place trophy after defeating Summit 50-42.



The Stanfield Tigers react after losing to St. Mary's 3-2 on in the semifinals of the 3A state baseball playoffs in Stanfield.



Cyd Cimmiyotti, left, receives her Pendleton Linebacker's Club Hall of Fame plaque from club President Tom Melton at the induction ceremony at the Pendleton Convention Center.



Pendleton's Lauren Richards, Elli Nirschl and Haley Greb celebrate after the Bucks' 53-48 comeback win against Hermiston in Pendleton.



Pilot Rock's Tehya Ostrom (2) consoles teammate Jilian Adlard after the Rockets' 3-1 loss to North Douglas in the 2A/1A state championship game in Corvallis

the Tigers put together an incredible stretch in basketball by winning 21 consecutive games, winning the Columbia Basin Conference, and running through the 2A state tournament before falling short 57-54 to Santiam to finish as runner-up again.

Then in baseball, Stanfield steamrolled through its schedule and through the first two rounds of the 3A state playoffs and seemed destined to repeat as champs. However, just like football and basketball, the Tigers fell just short again as they lost a 3-2 heart-breaker to St. Mary's in the state semifinals.

6. Farm-City Pro Rodeo opens new arena

For the first 29 years, the Farm-City Pro Rodeo grew from a small-time pro rodeo

into a top-notch event on the PRCA circuit in its home at the Umatilla County Fairgrounds in Hermiston.

Now the rodeo has more space to continue to grow as it moved, along with the county fair, to its brand-new arena on the outskirts of town at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Events Center. A slow bid process and harsh winter gave the rodeo committee a very short window to get the new arena built in time for the early-August rodeo, but it was completed just in time.

It debuted to grand reviews from the fans, who have more room on the concourses to move around and a bigger Chute 8 bar, to the cowboys who have more room to park their trucks and trailers, to the stock contrac-

tors, who are now able to keep the stock on-site for the week instead of having to truck in the animals from farms outside of town.

7. Pendleton boys basketball finishes fourth in the state, snaps drought

The last time the Pendleton boys basketball team had earned a trophy at the OSAA state basketball tournament, the year was 1959 when Dwight D. Eisenhower was President of the United States and Neil Armstrong was still 10 years away from stepping foot on the moon.

However, that drought finally ended this year. The Buckaroos' finished off one of the best seasons in school history, a 17-5 overall record and its third consecutive league title, on Mar. 10 when

they defeated Summit 50-42 to claim a fourth place finish in Class 5A.

It also marked the icing on the cake for senior star Caden Smith's career, who finished as a four-year varsity starter, the program's all-time leading point scorer and a three-time all-state player.

8. Pendleton girls basketball ends Hermiston's decade of dominance

Since the mid-2000s, the rivalry between the Pendleton and Hermiston girls basketball programs has been heavily one-sided towards the Bulldogs. Going into the first meeting of the season between the teams on Jan. 31, Hermiston had won each of the previous 28 meetings dating back to Feb. 17, 2006.

However, in that Jan. 31

game, the Pendleton girls finally got some revenge as they defeated the Bulldogs 53-48 at Warberg Court. Then just three weeks later on Feb. 21, the Buckaroos bested the Bulldogs again 59-37 but this time the victory gave Pendleton its first league championship since 2005.

9. Pendleton Linebacker's Club widens Hall of Fame scope

For the first 12 years of its existence, the Pendleton Linebacker's Club Hall of Fame aimed to recognize the best individuals and teams of Pendleton's storied football history.

However, as the school's de facto athletic Hall of Fame, the Club decided to expand its scope for inductees outside of just football.

"We felt it was time to open it up," Club president Tom Melton said in June. "We just feel like being inclusive now is very important for us. There are other sports and very impressive athletes from other sports we felt were due to be recognized."

In early July, the Linebacker's Club welcomed in a class of 16 individuals that included some of the best men's and women's athletes and supporters that Pendleton High had ever seen, including Kelli Chandler-Read Bullington, Cyd Cimmiyotti, Clarence Cowapoo, Mike Scheiwe, John Eggers, and Lew Beck.

10. Rockets fall short of threepat

With a pair of state championships from 2015 and 2016 in their back pocket, the Pilot Rock Rockets softball team set out to do something only four other teams had done in OSAA history: win three straight championships.

The last time it had been done was Crater in Class 5A and Valley Catholic in Class 3A both winning three straight from 2007-2009. With most of the core from 2016 returned, Pilot Rock put together a 25-5 season to advance to the championship game yet again and were paired with a young North Douglas squad in its first title appearance since 2003.

However, the Rockets' magic ran out at the OSU Softball Complex that day, as Pilot Rock could muster only one run and fell 3-1 to North Douglas. It brought the end to the careers of Rockets' stars such as pitcher Tehya Ostrom and infielder Bekah Roe, who both played crucial parts in all three postseason runs.

Honorable mention

Ladies breakout roping added to Round-Up; BMCC men's soccer team starts inaugural season; Clayton Hass wins 107th Pendleton Round-Up; Heppner gifted all-new, state-of-the-art football uniforms; Hermiston native Lee Fiocchi named head strength and conditioning coach with MLB's Los Angeles Angels; Weston-McEwen boys win 2A track and field championship; Pendleton High School unveils lights, new track surface at athletic field.