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Bucks return home to face No. 2 Broncos this Friday

By **BRETT KANE**
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — After two weeks on the road, the Pendleton Bucks are ready to come home. And for their homecoming game, the stakes couldn't be higher.

On Friday night, the 5A Special District 1's No. 1 Bucks football team will host the Parkrose Broncos — the league's second-ranked contenders. The Bucks handily shook the Broncos 41-10 last season, and if they can pull off a repeat, they'll be looking at another league title.

"If we win this game, we win it outright," Pendleton coach Erik Davis said. "The kids are handling the pressure pretty good. Their focus is where it needs to be. It's homecoming week, so there's some extra distractions, but they're not putting those distractions ahead of their preparation."

Both teams will hit the Round-Up Stadium with the momentum of two huge shutouts: Pendleton took down the conference's previous No. 2 seed La Salle Prep 34-0 last Thursday, while Parkrose defeated Wilson 56-0 the next day.

"They're extremely fast and physical," Davis said of the Broncos. "They're a great football team. We knew from last year that they were young, but they had athleticism and speed. We have to match that. With that being said, I expect there to be quite a bit of fireworks on both sides of the ball. They're vying for the league title."

The Bucks have some speed of their own up their sleeves, including 6-foot-1, 185-pound junior running back Zaanan Bane, who ran for 63 yards and two touchdowns in their win over La Salle Prep last week.

"Zaanan is going to have to continue that," Davis said. "It comes down to how our offensive line handles their front. We haven't been blocking as well as we could be. The biggest thing is the turnover battle — we have to make sure we win that. We'll see if we can't create a couple of turnovers."

After two weeks on the bus and with two back-to-back shutouts in tow, the Bucks will make their return for their third home appearance of the season.

"It's always nice to come back and play on your home field," Davis said. "We'll let someone else

travel the I-84. We get that home field advantage. The Round-Up Grounds present an ominous environment to teams that haven't played there before. We're going to take advantage of that."

The team hasn't dropped a game since their nonleague season opener at La Grande, and Davis said he's noticed a tremendous growth since that night in early September.

"We've seen the team grow as a whole," he said. "They came into this year unproven at the varsity

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LEADER OF THE PACK

Hermiston's Ryan Arnold runs the defense on the field, and leads the team in tackles

By **ANNIE FOWLER**
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — While this season has not gone as planned for the Hermiston football team, there is one constant every Friday night — Ryan Arnold.



Arnold

The 6-foot, 170-pound senior middle linebacker puts his helmet on every game and gives his team an honest effort, to the tune of 13 tackles per game.

"He's the leader by example, for sure," Bulldogs coach David Faeteete said. "He knows his assignments. He does his job to the best of his ability. He's our little defensive general — he manages the defense."

Arnold leads the Bulldogs with 77 tackles this season — 59 solo and 18 assists. He also has two interceptions. The next man on the list (Trevor Wagner) has 37 tackles, while Sam Cadenas has 31.

"The linemen up front (Sean Stewart, Cadenas, Tyson Stocker, Seilala Sepeni, Chase Bradshaw and AJ Erivea) are helping me get my tackles by not getting pushed back every play," said Arnold, who also led the team in tackles last season. "If they are getting pushed back, my vision is limited and I can't do my job."

Faeteete said their defense is designed to get the linebackers more involved.

"When there is a play to be made, he is there," Faeteete said of Arnold. "Our defensive tackles have been doing a great job. Sam and Sean allow Ryan to have a bigger impact. It's a team effort."

Growing up on the gridiron

Arnold has been playing football since the second grade. When he was younger, he always played up an age group.

"Playing with kids with experience helps a lot," Arnold said.

As a sophomore, he played on the 2017 team that won the Oregon Class 5A state title.

"My sophomore year I improved a lot," he said. "I learned a lot playing with Jonathan Hinkle and Peter Earl. I didn't get to play a lot, but Chase (Bradshaw) and I got to play in the (championship) game. I started on special teams — kickoff and kick return. I had a few



Hermiston's Ryan Arnold (7) gets ready to take down Southridge's Albersh Kuwa during the Oct. 3, 2019, game in Kennewick. Also in on the tackle is Hermiston's Garrett Walchli (5).

Staff photo by Kathy Aney, File

tackles. It was fun."

He also got to play his sophomore season with his older brother Tayler, a right tackle. Tayler now is a defenseman for the University of Montana men's lacrosse team.

Last year, Arnold learned from guys like Cash Campbell as Hermiston entered the Mid-Columbia Conference.

"Getting that experience as a junior helped a lot," Arnold said. "We put up a pretty good fight for our first year in the MCC, but I think we could have done better. This year, some of the scores don't give you a true feel of the game. We've had some turnovers and shot ourselves in the foot. You also get a lot more looks from college coaches (in the MCC)."

While learning from those next to him on the field has been invaluable, Arnold also gleans what he can from Faeteete, a former defensive tackle for the University of Oregon.

"Coach has helped me tremendously at linebacker," Arnold said. "He has so much knowledge. He is pretty smart."

Faeteete said he knew Arnold was going to be a special player when he was a sophomore.

"We knew he was going to get a lot better," Faeteete said. "Now, he's teaching guys to do their jobs. That's a credit to his parents. He's a great kid."

Giving mom a scare

Arnold was a good-sized baby when he was born — 8 pounds and 21 inches long.

When he was a month old, he had RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) and had to be life flighted to Portland. While he was sick, he

dropped to 6 pounds.

Once he recovered, his parents Lizzie and Jacob thought it would be smooth sailing from there. They were wrong.

The spring of his eighth grade year, Arnold started getting lightheaded, had tunnel vision and started seeing spots. He was playing lacrosse at the time, and he would have to take breaks.

"One time, my heart was beating 228 times a minute," Arnold recalled.

He was diagnosed with supraventricular tachycardia (SVT), and had surgery at Doernbecher Children's Hospital in Portland.

"It was pretty scary," Lizzie Arnold said. "We didn't really know what was going on. The doctor said it was normal and an easy fix. It was."

The worst thing that Arnold experiences now is general aches and pains that come with playing football.

What the future holds

Arnold would like to be an electrician, but hasn't dismissed playing college football or lacrosse (he led Hermiston in scoring last year).

"I haven't gotten any offers yet," he said.

There is one thing he does know — his love of football goes beyond the game.

"It will be sad when it's all over," he said. "You have played since second grade, and you never know when it will be your last game. You go from playing all your life to not playing at all. When you play football, you are a family. You can fall back on the team, and the coaches are there for you."



Staff by Kathy Aney

Pilot Rock/Nixyaawii quarterback Tanner Corwin launches the ball during the Rockets' Oct. 11 game against the Union Bobcats.

Pilot Rock-Dufur game is the one to watch

Both teams are undefeated in league play at 4-0

By **ANNIE FOWLER**
East Oregonian

PILOT ROCK — One of the biggest football games in Eastern Oregon on Friday night will be played by two of the smaller teams.

Pilot Rock/Nixyaawii will play a Special District 3 game at four-time defending 1A state champion Dufur. Both teams are 4-0 in league play, and their scores against the other teams in the league are nearly identical.

"We are playing a mirror image of ourselves," Pilot Rock coach Mike Baleztena said. "They are well-coached. It's unreal how he (Jack Henderson) has kept that program going for so long."

Henderson, who is in his 33rd year at Dufur (4-2, 4-0), has coached the Rangers to 10 state titles.

"If I wasn't coaching this game, I'd go watch," Henderson said. "It's eerie how similar we are. Hopefully, it is a good game."

The Rockets (5-0, 4-0) have gotten a lot of mileage out of junior running back Tyasin Burns — who has more than 1,400 yards in five games. He will benefit this week with the return of fullback Caden Thornton, who missed last week when he was under concussion protocol.

"Caden is a beast," Baleztena said. "He is one of the best defensive ends in the league, and with him back, the blocking will be there for Tyasin."

The Rangers, who dropped their first two games of the season to Adrian/Jordan Valley and St. Paul, have won their past four games, but Henderson said that won't make a difference come Friday night.

"We are going to have to compete really, really well to compete with them," Henderson said of the Rockets. "We will have to show up to be in the game at all. They are pretty athletic."

Dufur will be without the services of running back/linebacker Asa Farrell, whose season is over because of lingering

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Cross-country: Nygard, Sanchez finish in the top 5

By **ANNIE FOWLER**
East Oregonian

KENNEWICK, Wash. — On an ideal day for a run, the Hermiston boys and girls cross-country teams posted some of their best times of the season Wednesday at the second Mid-Columbia Conference meet at Lawrence Scott Park.

Amanda Nygard finished fourth for the Bulldogs in a time of 18 minutes, 24.61 seconds, with teammate Cydney Sanchez a couple of steps behind at 18:27.60.

Ella Nelson of Walla Walla took top honors at 17:50.89, followed by Richland's Natalie Ruzauskas (17:51.90) and Kennewick's Geraldina Correa (17:59.90). The trio led the race from start to finish.

"I look forward to running against them," Nygard said of the top three runners. "I like the competition."

Richland won the girls team title

with 44 points, with Hermiston sixth with 125.

Nygard gets pushed every day by Sanchez in practice, which has helped them stay in the top pack of runners.

Sanchez said she liked the 3-mile course, which is relatively flat.

"I like the faster courses," she said. "It's easier to push yourself."

Hermiston's No. 3 runner, Alexis Serna, clocked in at 19:33.33 (26th), while Ellie Ernst was 42nd. Julianna Joyce was 48th.

"Our four and five runners were a little further back than we would have liked," Hermiston coach Troy Blackburn said. "Amanda and Cydney are two of the top runners in the state. They are looking good. Alexia ran under 20 minutes for the



Sanchez

first time. I'm really proud of all three of them."

Kamiakin dominated the boys race, placing its top five runners among the first seven across the finish line, led by sophomore Isaac Teeple (14:34.17) and senior Stanford Smith (14:36.64).

The Braves won the team title with 20 points, with Walla Walla a distant second with 66. Hermiston was fifth (130).

Hermiston's Greg Anderson ran a steady race, staying in the 13th spot over the course of the four laps.

"I was trying to be in the top 14," said Anderson, who ran a 15:54.73. "This was a PR for me. This course is great. It's fast and it helps us prepare for the championship season."

Anderson said competing against the Kamiakin runners has helped him improve his times.

"This competition is not like anything I'd seen before in Ore-

gon," he said. "We didn't run against teams like Kamiakin on a consistent basis."

Logan Springstead (16:18.61) was the second Bulldog across the finish line, followed by Jackson Shaver (16:21.39), Adrian Delgado (16:54.60) and Pedro Pacheco (16:57.46).

"He had not broke 18 (minutes) until a couple of weeks ago," Blackburn said of Pacheco. "He is making great strides. Our top five were under 17 minutes — we didn't have that last year."

The Bulldogs will get another look at Kamiakin, Kennewick and Southridge on Oct. 24 at the MCC 3A Championships at Leslie Grove Park in Richland.

"That's what we train for, to keep up with Kamiakin," Blackburn said. "We had the Summits and Craters with the same tradition, but we only saw them once or twice a year, not on a weekly basis."