

CLASS 6A-5A PREP FOOTBALL

Riddell ready to take on state's best

Trio of Polk County athletes prepare to play in Les Schwab Tires Bowl

By Lukas Eggen
The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — When one of Central High's newest graduates, running back/defensive back Wes Riddell, takes the field for the South squad at the Les Schwab Tires Bowl in Hillsboro on Saturday, he knows it'll be a challenge.

The all-star game for seniors in Class 6A and 5A features some of the best football players in the state of Oregon.

"I'm expecting quite a bit of good competition," Riddell said. "I get to go against some of the best players in Oregon. It's going to prepare me, and I'm just excited to have some fun with it."

Riddell is one of three Polk County players participating in the game, joining teammate Alberto Meza (offensive/defensive line) and Dallas' Spencer McCarron (tight end).

Panthers coach Shane Hedrick will serve as one of the assistant coaches for the South team.

"Having coach there and a teammate will help me feel more comfortable, and I think it will help me fit in better," Riddell said.

For Meza, Saturday provides the perfect end to his high school career.

"I'm really thankful to get one last opportunity to play one last high school football game," Meza said. "I'm very



AARON YOST/Itemizer-Observer file

Central running back Wes Riddell (32) will take part in the Les Schwab Tires Bowl.

excited to play with some of the region's best players. I think it should be a really fun and neat experience."

But for Riddell, Saturday's all-star game isn't the end of the journey.

Riddell may have played baseball in the spring, but football has always been the sport on his mind the most.

"I've been missing football since it ended," Riddell said. "I've been doing work-

outs through baseball season to get ready for football. I've been preparing myself for a while now."

Riddell's taste of high school football came early, when he was the Panthers' ball boy during his sixth grade year. Since then, he's racked up numerous accolades, including being named the *Itemizer-Observer's* football player of the year for the 2014 season.

While Saturday marks the

end of his high school career, Riddell's football journey appears far from over. This fall, Riddell will join the Oregon State Beavers.

"I always loved Oregon State," Riddell said. "It's almost in our backyard. My parents went to school there, which kind of swayed me a little bit. Talking to the coaches, they seem really cool, down-to-earth guys."

But Riddell had to take things into his own hands to

Les Schwab Tires Bowl

What: Les Schwab Tires Bowl.
When: Saturday, 6 p.m.
Where: Hillsboro Stadium, Hillsboro.
Tickets: Adults, \$15; students/seniors \$12 reserved; \$8 and \$6 general admission.
Local participants: CENTRAL — Wes Riddell (running back/defensive back), Alberto Meza (offensive/defensive line), Shane Hedrick (assistant coach). DALLAS — Spencer McCarron (tight end).

get there.

The Beavers hired Gary Anderson, formerly head coach at Wisconsin, to take over the football program this fall. With the program busy adjusting to a new staff, Riddell reached out to OSU during the winter. Within a matter of weeks, Riddell had made up his mind.

"It really is cool to come in with a new coaching staff," Riddell said. "No one knows anyone, and it's time to make a name for yourself. They are all new. You're new. It's cool to come in and build with them."

The Panthers have seen several players compete at the Division I level in recent years. Grant Hedrick, a 2010 graduate, played quarterback at Boise State, while Riddell's cousin Jordan Pratt competed at Stanford.

"He didn't have much to say except that it's a whole new experience," Riddell said. "It's a major step up, and it's going to be a lot of work. Most of my schedule will revolve around football."

Riddell is confident that he's ready to face the step up in competition.

"The way (Central coach Shane Hedrick) ran practices, he ran it like a college practice," Riddell said. "He also made sure that academics came before sports and everything. He taught me work ethic and how to carry myself on and off the field. He helped me build great character through the years. I'm grateful for what he and my teammates have done."

Riddell has come a long way since the days he roamed the sidelines as a ball boy in sixth grade. Now, he's ready for the next chapter in his career.

"It's incredible," Riddell said. "Growing up, you always see the guys on TV, and I thought that it'd be awesome to be there someday. It's an awesome opportunity for me to get to play and be one of the guys I've been watching my whole life. I'm ecstatic just thinking about it."

SPORTS BRIEFS

Polk Pedalers rides open to cyclists of all ages

POLK COUNTY — The Polk Pedalers Bicycle Club will host its longest day of the year ride Wednesday (today).

The ride will go from Sisters to Smith Rock and Madras Bikeway for a total of 70 miles. The ride is rated moderately difficult.

All are welcome, but children must have an adult with them. All riders must wear a helmet. Carpooling will be available. The group's next ride will be July 15 at 8 a.m. at Perrydale School. The annual breakfast round-trip ride from Perrydale to Amity is 30 miles long.

For more information: 503-623-6533.

Silver: Pirates hope for top five finishes

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"I'd like to place in the top five in all of my events," Silver said. "To get top three, that would be amazing, but I would really like to finish top five."

Zoe Couey is competing in five events for the Pirates. And while she's hoping to be among the leaders in each, Couey will be happy with whatever happens during competition.

"It's going to be a very in-



Price

imagined it, it's just going to make me grow a little bit more and realize what I need to work on for the next show."

teresting week," Couey said. "I feel like it would help me, even if I go up there and it's not how I

For Taylor Price, state competition is about the culmination of countless hours of practice.

"You just have to trust that your horse will guide you and no matter what, that you will succeed," Price said. "Good runs or bad, they're what got you there in the first place and you always let them know they did good because they give it their all. ... That's all I could ever ask for."

Dallas: Dragons look for strong showing

Continued from Page 10A

Mauk hopes for a top five finish in at least one of her events.

But she's already proud of how far she's come this season.

"I've been working with a new mini," Mauk said. "We're doing what other horses have done for years. I'm already pleased with where I'm at. Just making it to state is an awesome thing."

Teammate Kelsey Riemer has also seen riding change her life, fully devoting herself to riding in middle school.

"It's been the best time of

my life," Riemer said. "I've played other sports, and it just got really hard for me to keep up with those sports. I wanted a change of scenery and to try something different, which I did by coming here and experiencing horses."

Since that decision, riding has become more than a hobby.

"When I'm on an animal, I feel like I'm untouchable," Riemer said. "I love the way the horse moves under my body. I love the experience. I love the thrill of it. Anything you can imagine about a horse, I love it."

As Dallas makes final

preparations before traveling to Redmond, riders are optimistic about their chances.

"We've worked really hard," Karlie Dalke said. "We just want a solid performance and hopefully come out on top if we can."

Most of all, Dallas' riders hope the state championships provide them with one more chance to compete together.

"My teammates have been there for me," Mauk said. "We're not friends; we're family, and they've been there for me. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for them."

OREGON HIGH SCHOOL EQUESTRIAN TEAM

Central trio looks to earn high finish at state meet

By Lukas Eggen

The Itemizer-Observer

INDEPENDENCE — Times, they are a-changing for Taylor Knauss, Madeline Francis and Mari Whelton. The three members of Central's Oregon High School Equestrian Team (OHSET) entered the season never having worked together before.

They're looking to end their year by placing at the OHSET State Championships June 24-27.

The trio will compete in team penning and in-hand obstacle relay, while Whelton will also participate in driving and keyhole, and Knauss will compete in individual flags. While their initial success may have come as a surprise to many, including themselves, they're no longer satisfied with having qualified.

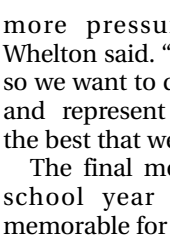
"We deserve to be here," Francis said. "We put in a lot of time and work together. I never expected to be here. Now that we've gotten here, we've shown we're



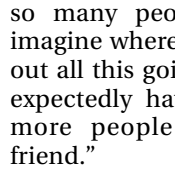
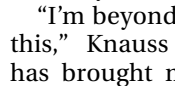
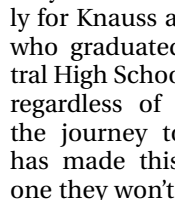
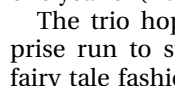
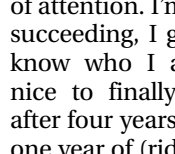
Knauss



Francis



Whelton



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Western Oregon University is committed to improving the athleticism and team skills of our local student athletes by providing a safe, fun, skill based experience for kids ages 7 to 17 years old. WOU speed camps help young athletes gain a step up on the competition through expert instruction in a collegiate environment and interaction with collegiate student athletes.