

2016 ITEMIZER-OBSERVER ALL-REGION PREP FOOTBALL TEAM

QUARTERBACK

Peter Mendazona

Central

The junior quarterback had a breakout season. Mendazona threw for 2,743 yards and 36 touchdowns, while also rushing for 155 yards and three touchdowns. He helped direct a potent offensive attack that averaged 28 points per game and earned all-league honorable mention for his efforts this season.

RECEIVER/DEFENSIVE BACK

Peter Mason

Central

Mason stood out as Mendazona's go-to target throughout the 2016 campaign. He had team-highs in catches (52), receiving yards (1,208) and receiving touchdowns (16). Mason was also a force on defense, recording a team-best six interceptions and 12 pass deflections. Mason earned first-team all-league honors on offense and defense.

DEFENSIVE LINEMAN

Marlon Tuipulotu

Central

To put it simply, Tuipulotu, the MWC's Defensive Player of the Year, was a force to be reckoned with. He made offenses account for his presence at all times and was named the conference's Defensive Player of the Year for the second season in a row. Tuipulotu led the Panthers in tackles for loss (14) and fumble recoveries (four) and was second in total tackles (62), sacks (six) and disrupted many plays. Tuipulotu has committed to playing for the University of Washington.

RUNNING BACK

AJ Morales

Central

The senior running back saw an increased workload after senior Alvin Berroa went down with an injury. Morales stepped up to the challenge. He had 160 carries for 811 yards and three touchdowns, becoming the Panthers'



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer file

Central quarterback Peter Mendazona threw for 36 touchdowns during 2016.

leading rusher in the process. Morales was also a threat on the receiving end, recording 24 catches for 229 yards and three touchdowns. Morales earned second team all-MWC recognition.

RUNNING BACK

Tanner Earhart

Dallas

Earhart was the heart and soul of Dallas' offense. The senior set school records for single game rush yards (429) most touchdowns in a single game (seven), total rush yards (2,068) and most rushing touchdowns in a season (24). Earhart, the MWC's Offensive Player of the Year, helped propel Dallas to the 5A state semifinals and one of the team's best seasons in recent memory.

DEFENSIVE LINEMAN

Cade Caudill

Dallas

The senior lineman was a rock for the Dragons on defense. He had 31 tackles, five sacks and a fumble recovery and was able to disrupt opponents all through the season. Caudill earned first team all-MWC honors on

defense.

LINEBACKER

Jacob Collins

Dallas

The senior linebacker was an all-around threat on defense. He led the Dragons in tackles with 95, including nine tackles for loss. He also led the team in interceptions with four and had eight pass defenses. He even got involved on offense, carrying the ball 19 times for 206 yards and two touchdowns. Collins received

TIGHT END/LINEBACKER

TJ Dimick

Dallas

The junior asserted himself in a big way for the Dragons. Dimick was part of an offensive line that paved the way for a ground game that gained 4,045 yards during the 2016 season. He also had seven catches for 144 yards. At linebacker, he was third on the team in total tackles with 78 and had 1½ sacks, one interception and one fumble recovery. Dimick earned first team all-league offense recognition and received all-league honorable mention on defense.

OFFENSIVE LINEMAN

Cody Janssen

Dallas

The senior lineman was one of the rocks of the offensive and defensive line. On offense, Janssen helped pave the way for the Dragons' rushing attack. On defense, he recorded 14 tackles and 1½ sacks, despite missing five games. Janssen was named first team all-league on offense for his efforts.

TIGHT END/LINEBACKER

Haylen Janesofsky

Perrydale

The senior was a force for the Pirates throughout the 2016 season. He was among Perrydale's most potent offensive threats and earned first team all Special District 4 honors on defense and second team all-league on offense.

RUNNING BACK/DEFENSIVE BACK

Austin Burgess

Falls City

The sophomore became one of Falls City's most potent weapons. He led the Mountaineers with 639 rush yards and added nine touchdowns during league games. Along with Jeremy Labrado (624 yards, 13 touchdowns) and Noah Sickles (403 yards, 11 touchdowns) Burgess helped Falls City advance to the state playoffs for the first time in more than three decades.

COACH

Tracy Jackson

Dallas

A season ago, Dallas finished 3-6 overall. The Dragons roared back to life in 2016, finishing 9-3 overall. Dallas' rushing attack was among the most potent in the state. The Dragons advanced to the state semifinals after wins over No. 9 Eagle Point and No. 1 and 2015 state champions Summit.

The All-Region football team was selected by the Itemizer-Observer Sports Editor Lukas Eggen along with heavy input from area coaches.

Earhart: Football career will continue in college

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In hostile territory against the defending state champions, Earhart wasn't going to let illness keep him down.

"I just went out there and did my best," Earhart said.

The will to fight — a theme among the Dragons' players — helped drive Earhart to a spectacular season.

The senior was the heart and soul of Dallas' offense, helping the Dragons reach the semifinals of the 5A state playoffs — and helping make him the *Itemizer-Observer's* Player of the Year.

Earhart was born to run. "Ever since I had been in flag football, I loved to run the ball," Tanner said. "You don't really have to think very much, you just let your body react."

He grew up idolizing University of Oregon running

backs such as Jonathan Stewart.

"You have to be willing to take a lot of hits," Tanner said. "And you have to run hard. I love that about running back."

The Earhart family has a long history with Dallas football. Tanner's dad, Jeff, played on Dallas' 1982 football team that won a state title. Jeff coached Tanner through his youth football years.

"Sometimes it's a little hard," Tanner said with a smile. "It's different. Your coach, you have to listen to him. If he's your dad, I always wanted to talk back, but I tried not to."

When he entered high school, Tanner had years of experience as a running back and seemed to be a perfect fit for the Dragons' run-first offense.

The start of his junior year tested his resolve.

Dallas experimented with a new offense — but the team struggled to execute.

"It seemed like a pretty good idea," Tanner said. "But it was new, and I feel like not everyone bought into it. It's hard to explain, it just wouldn't work for us."

The Dragons switched back to what they do best, but finished the season 3-6 overall.

"All of us, we knew what it felt like to not win very much," Tanner said. "We didn't want that. We didn't want to go out on that note this year."

Tanner made sure they wouldn't experience a season like that again.

Dallas opened the year with wins over Parkrose and North Eugene — which included a 429-yard, seven

touchdown performance against North Eugene.

"That was a super, super fun game," Tanner said. "It's funny because everyone asked me if I was super sore the next day. I actually wasn't. Our offensive line blocked so well, I didn't get tackled too much."

It was the following week against Silverton that proved to be a turning point.

The Dragons defeated Silverton 20-13.

"I knew we were good, but we hadn't proven it yet," Tanner said. "After we beat them, everyone realized we had something good going."

The senior played a major role in the team's success. He was the focal point on offense.

He gained 100 or more rushing yards in all but two of Dallas' games.

"Tanner is a guy who is

going to fight and compete and go hard," Dallas coach Tracy Jackson said. "When he played, a lot of his yards came after he was hit two or three times and kept moving forward. I think that's pretty indicative of him as an individual as a person and a player."

But a running back is only as successful as the line in front of him, Tanner said. And in his case, he said his line made life easy.

"They had confidence and a willingness to fight," Tanner said. "That was the case for our entire team. We were undersized against everyone, but (the team) was willing to fight and be tough. They were the toughest kids around."

Never the big talker, Tanner was a quiet leader — though his actions spoke louder than any word could. "Well I think one thing is

he's not a diva, never been and never will be," Jackson said. "If a lineman comes up to him after a good run and tells him good job, Tanner would return the compliment. I used to be a lineman and, to me, that's what keeps them fighting for you. Whenever I had a running back telling me nice job, I was ready to jump off the stadium for him."

Tanner's football journey isn't over. The senior said he is considering playing football at Western Oregon or Linfield.

But his time as a Dragon will be one that he'll never forget.

"I've played with a lot of these guys since I started playing as a kid," Tanner said. "I've made a lot of memories that will last forever, and that's something we won't have ever again."

PERRYDALE ROUNDUP

Pirates open with wins

Itemizer-Observer staff report

PERRYDALE — Perrydale's girls basketball team opened the 2016 season with a pair of victories. The Pirates defeated Alsea 45-24 on Friday before downing Dufur 41-31 on Saturday.

"I'm happy with the fact that we won," coach Terry Newton said. "We got to Alsea with our press, but we are extremely young and had some turnovers on our part. I am happy with the team returning to the floor on Saturday less than 24 hours later and competing well. I was really happy with

our leadership."

The Pirates played Livingstone Adventist Tuesday after press time. Perrydale plays at Willamette Valley Christian on Thursday before hosting Crosshill Christian Dec. 14 at 5:30 p.m.

"We keep reinforcing the fact that we are going to make mistakes, and we have to understand why and learn from them," Newton said. "It just takes patience and going through the process so in a month and a half, they will still be young, but will be playing the game a lot better."

BOYS BASKETBALL WINS

BIG: Perrydale's boys basketball team defeated Alsea 69-11 on Friday and Dufur 53-43 on Saturday.

"It was good to see the kids out on the floor," coach Brian Domes said. "We saw a lot of little things that can be fixed, but they played with a lot of good energy and worked hard."

Though the Pirates opened with a pair of victories, Domes said he's looking for better balance on offense and an increased focus on defense.

"It can be difficult because everyone wants to score the basketball, but I'm adamant on the defensive end," Domes said. "It's fun to watch the kids play."

FALLS CITY ROUNDUP

Boys defeat McKenzie

Itemizer-Observer staff report

FALLS CITY — Falls City's boys basketball team defeated McKenzie 39-34 on Nov. 30 before falling to Eddyville Charter 48-45 on Friday.

"The guys work hard," coach Micke Kidd said. "Every single one of them has a tremendous work ethic. The hardest part has been slowing them down and teaching them that sometimes you have to recognize situations and slow

the game down."

Austin Burgess led the Mountaineers scoring 14 points against McKenzie and Eddyville Charter.

Jeremy Labrado added 12 points against Eddyville. Falls City played Crosshill Christian Tuesday after press time. The Mountaineers play at Eddyville on Thursday before hosting Mapleton Friday at 7 p.m.

GIRLS DROP TWO: Falls City's girls basketball team lost to McKenzie 44-31 on Nov. 30 before losing to Gaston 38-29

on Friday.

Amara Houghtaling scored 14 points against McKenzie and 19 points against Gaston to lead the Mountaineers. Emma Burgess added six and eight points.

The Mountaineers played Crosshill Christian Tuesday after press time. Falls City hosts Mapleton Friday at 5:30 p.m.

"We want the kids to go through as much in-game adversity as we can get," coach Micke Kidd said. "It does us a lot of good to play in games where we have to compete the whole game."

DALLAS ROUNDUP

Dragons fall to Glencoe

Itemizer-Observer staff report

HILLSBORO — Dallas' boys basketball team lost to Glencoe 37-32 on Friday in the team's season-opener. The Dragons led 21-15 at the half.

"I thought we played well enough defensively to win," coach Trent Schwartz said. "The kids executed the game plan well, limiting a 6-foot-6 post to 12 points. We had some flashes offensively, particularly in the second quarter. We need to do a better job playing with a lead and extending the lead."

Jason Richey scored 10 points to lead Dallas, while Jacob Collins added eight points. The Dragons saw a host of players contribute

on defense.

"I thought Jake Ronco, TJ Dimick, Johnathan Bennett and Zach Wallace all did a great job battling to deny their big guy good looks all night, and our help defense was tremendous," Schwartz said.

Dallas plays at Churchill on Friday before hosting Hillsboro Tuesday at 7 p.m.

GIRLS BASKETBALL FALLS TO MARIST: Dallas' girls basketball team lost to Marist Catholic 61-38 on Friday.

The Dragons played The Dalles Tuesday after press time. Dallas hosts Churchill Friday at 7 p.m. before playing at South Eugene on Tuesday.

WRESTLING TAKES FOURTH: Dallas' wrestling team finished fourth at the



Bibler

Home and North Marion.

Ryan Bibler (113 pounds) and Clay Coxen (182) finished second to lead the Dragons. Jacob Jones (126) finished third, while Dawson Barcroft (120) and Nicholas Nelson (160) finished fourth.

The Dragons also finished second at the McNary Duals on Friday, falling to Roseburg in the first-place match.

Dallas will compete at the Rose City Championship on Friday and Saturday.

Central: Wrestling takes third place at Tillamook

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BOYS BASKETBALL DEFEATS NORTH EUGENE: Central's boys basketball team opened the 2016-17 season with a 61-27 win over North Eugene on Nov. 30.

"The kids came out with a lot of energy and caused some early turnovers, which allowed us to pick up a few quick

points," coach Tim Kreta said. Alec Barba scored 12 points to lead the Panthers. Jesse Cable added 11 points.

Central played Liberty Tuesday after press time. The Panthers host Philomath Friday at 7 p.m.

WRESTLING TAKES THIRD: Central's wrestling team finished third at the Tillamook

Country Smoker on Friday. The Panthers scored 121 points, behind Tillamook (161) and Willamina (159½).

Noah Worthington (106 pounds), Sam Crow (195) and David Negrete (220) placed first to lead Central.

Chris Polanco (170) finished second, and Manuel Martinez (120) took third.