

# Wahtonka favored to win Columbia Basin Conference

By Ashley Conklin

"Nothing in life is certain, except death and taxes." How true that might be, but when listening to the coaches of the Columbia Basin Conference pick the favorite to win the CBC football race this season, one thing almost does seem certain--Wahtonka will win the CBC.

Last year the Eagles ran to a perfect 8-0 record in league play before losing in the quarterfinals of the Class "A" state playoffs.

Whereas the eight other coaches see Wahtonka as the overwhelming favorite in the CBC, Eagle boss Buck Armstrong (in his third year) is guarding against such talk that his team will easily walk away with the CBC crown and a state championship.

When asked to assess his team's chances in the CBC this season, Armstrong simply said, "We should be in the fight."

Wahtonka returns 13 starters from last season's team, including senior running backs Jamie Baucum and Rob Watson. Baucum rushed for over 1,000 yards last season and the all-conference back will again run behind the likes of all-conference picks such as senior guard Scott Carty and senior tackle Jay Collier. Umatilla, which earned the CBC's second playoff berth a year ago, will return all-conference first team quarterback Russell Richards, a senior.

Sherman County and Wasco County will be hard pressed this season to even field a team at times, as numbers have become a problem at those two schools.

The Huskies have 29 players out this season, but 10 are freshman and 15 have never played football before.

Over at Maupin, Wasco County has only 20out, with 14 of those being either freshmen or sophomores. Stanfield also may have problems this season, with just 26 players on the roster.

Another big change in the CBC is the hiring of five new head coaches this season. Dirk Dirksen takes over at Riverside, Mike Clarke assumes the head job at Stanfield, Bill Dale will guide Umatilla, Mike Cutter moves in at Wasco County, and leading Weston-McEwen will be Lynn Harris.

While Wahtonka has been tabbed to win the CBC, there is no clear-cut favorite to win the second playoff berth.

Heppner coach Tim Birkby sees Heppner, Riverside, Umatilla, and Wahtonka as the top four teams in the league. Husky head coach Ron Townsend agrees with Birkby, but adds Stanfield to the list. Some, like Clarke, see the race for the number two spot wide open.

When asked to name a dark horse in the league this season, several picked Heppner, who returns 10 seniors. But Birkby sees a young Pilot Rock team that has matured since last season and Clarke picks his own team as a dark horse because, "we have been near the bottom of the league for some time, but surviving any injuries we should be a better team this year." Again, the numbers game figures into the race.

Below is a look alphabetically at how the CBC race shapes up.

## Heppner

Birkby, in his second year at the helm, will be trying to lead the Mustangs to the playoffs for the first time since 1981. Heppner has the luxury of 10 returning seniors and started eight of them on both offense and defense in last Friday's 6-0 non-conference loss to Weston-McEwen.

The Mustangs start five seniors on the offensive line, led by tackles Jason Palmer (5'10", 195 lbs.) and Bob Riehl (5'9", 180 lbs.).

In the backfield, senior Joe Taylor (5'6", 140 lbs.) will run Heppner's option game and has seniors Scott Buschke (5'11", 170 lbs.) and David Pedro (6'0", 180 lbs.) plus junior Scott Jones (5'8", 140 lbs.) to give the ball to.

On defense the Mustangs will look

for the talented play and leadership of Palmer and Pedro at linebackers and Riehl at tackle.

The one weakness Heppner does have is its passing game where Taylor will be throwing to sophomores Craig Angell (5'11", 150 lbs.) and Bryan Padberg (5'7", 135 lbs.). Experience is a problem at the receiving positions, and even more so since junior Mark Fishburn (5'10", 135 lbs.) dislocated his shoulder against Weston-McEwen.

But if the Mustangs are able to use their strength to overcome the weaknesses it could be playoff action for Heppner in November.

## Pilot Rock

Last season was not an easy one for first-year coach Ed Fisher who struggled through an 0-9 season, 0-8 in league play.

But last year's sophomore-dominated squad is a year older now and with 15 returning starters the Rock has nowhere to go but up.

Back is talented junior quarterback and linebacker Rick Rasmussen (5'11", 160 lbs.) Also back is a backfield of junior Jerry Lankford (5'6", 150 lbs.) and senior Dennis Deno (5'7", 155 lbs.).

Blocking for those backs will be junior Corey Griffith (5'11", 215 lbs.) and senior Ernie Wickert (6'0", 190 lbs.).

The Rockets will have Rasmussen run Deno at fullback and Lankford at tailback out of the "I" formation, in order for the Rockets to use their speed in those positions.

"We will be competitive with the whole league this season," Fisher said. "I think all the teams are fairly well matched with the exception of Wahtonka."

If Pilot Rock is able to use its speed and as Fisher says, "stay away from injuries," the Rock should be very competitive.

## Riverside

Umatilla is not the only team returning an all-conference quarterback as the Pirates return senior Mike Griffin, an honorable mention all-conference pick a year ago.

However, Dirksen would like to use Griffin at tailback in his "I" formation this season.

Also returning to the Riverside offense are senior tailback Rick Holden, senior fullback Matt Nuttbrock, and wide receiver Mike Ammons.

Nuttbrock may be switched to flanker this season, where senior transfer Boyd Davis currently is. Dirksen is expecting big things of Davis, who might also fill in at tailback.

Defensively, the linebackers are a solid group with Griffin and Nuttbrock, an honorable mention selection last season. Also returning are Ammons and Holden in the secondary.

"The biggest question marks we have right now are both our offensive and defensive lines," Dirksen said, where there are no returners.

"Our kids are working hard and have a willingness to work," he adds, "which is definitely a plus."

That hard work just might pay off and take the Pirates from a 4-5 overall record, 4-4 in league play, last season, to a playoff berth this season.

## Sherman County

With 29 players out, and 15 of them freshmen, or first-year players, it looks like a rebuilding year for second-year coach Townsend, whose team finished third in the CBC a year ago with a 6-2 league record and 7-2 mark overall. What kept the Huskies out of playoff action last season was a loss to Umatilla in the season's final game.

Senior Brian Peters, a second-team all-conference pick a year ago at both the offensive and defensive lines, is the only returning full-time starter from a year ago. Aside from Peters' size (5'11", 195 lbs.), the rest of the Huskies are relatively small.

"When you're small I guess you're supposed to have speed and I think we should have a good amount of speed," Townsend said.

Indeed, Townsend will have speed in junior Mark Baskins, (6'1", 170 lbs.) the runner-up in the 400 meter dash at last spring's Class "A" state track meet.

Baskins will be in the backfield along with senior Gary Eaton (5'7", 150 lbs.). Last year, Eaton was SC's starting quarterback before he broke his collarbone in the fourth game of the year.

However, Eaton may be a running back in Townsend's split-back offense. If so, senior Tracy Fields (5'10", 150 lbs.) will be the quarterback. However, there are two other candidates for running back in Jason Andreas and Jamie Wallace. Whoever the quarterback is, will throw to wide receiver Bryan Robertson (5'7", 155 lbs.).

On defense the Huskies strength should lie with Peters and in the secondary where Eaton and Robertson will play.

"Experience is definitely a factor for us this season, but if we can get some experience in games along the way, we should be competitive," Townsend said. "The kids have a good attitude and are willing to work hard."

If the hard work pays off, coupled with experience, SC may be very competitive.

## Stanfield

Clarke, even though in his first year as head coach of the Tigers, is no stranger to the coaching ranks with three years assistant coaching experience at Stanfield, three years as head coach at Echo, and four years as head coach at Cascade Locks, both Class "B" schools. Clarke will also bring back Kelly Williams as an assistant coach, who is now in his fourth year.

Stanfield is also faced with a numbers problem, but hopes that having 11 returning starters among its 26 players will help improve the team's league and overall records of 2-6 of a year ago.

"We do have a lack of depth and if somebody goes down with an injury we're in trouble," Clarke said. But what Clarke does have to work with is indeed very good.

Returning on the line is senior tackle Norm Stewart (6'1", 230 lbs.), who Clarke refers to as "a good all-around player."

Senior split end Scott Clarke (5'8", 155 lbs.) and junior end Eric MacPherson (6'0", 170 lbs.) also return. MacPherson was an honorable mention all-conference pick a year ago and Clarke, who plays safety on defense, was an honorable mention defensive back last season.

Throwing the ball to Clarke and MacPherson will be sophomore Shawn Martesculli (5'6", 150 lbs.) who started the Tigers' last three games last season.

Also in the backfield will be returning starter Brent Morris (5'10", 180 lbs.) a senior, who is also an "excellent" linebacker according to coach Clarke.

Another key performer will be senior Troy Clark (6'0", 165 lbs.) who will play either halfback, flanker, or on the offensive line.

Despite not having the depth of a playoff team, Stanfield definitely has talent and that talent could carry them to the playoffs.

## Umatilla

After advancing to the first round of the Class "A" state playoffs a year ago, the Vikings hope to do so again on Richards' arm that produced a league record of 7-1 and an overall mark of 7-3.

Dale, though is forced to replace an offensive line that was wiped out by graduation. If the line can be rebuilt, and give Richards enough time to throw, the Vikings should have another banner season.

Richards' wideouts will be seniors Keith Kennedy and Jerry Leicht. In the backfield along with Richards will be Cory Muth and Cruz Garcia. Muth was also an all-conference performer for Umatilla a year ago.

Defensively, Dale will try to keep Richards from playing safety so that his signal caller can concentrate on offense. Garcia will return to fill one secondary spot.

However, like the offense and the rest of the Vikings' success this season, everything lies in how well the line can perform.

## Wahtonka

"We're taking this season one game at a time," Armstrong said, "and injuries will tell the story." That, probably more than anything else, best describes Wahtonka's chances this season.

At least on paper the Eagles should run away with the CBC and contend for the Class "A" state title.

Wahtonka will once again run out of the "T" formation, featuring Baucum at halfback, Watson at fullback, and junior Fred Brackenbury at the other halfback position. Running the offense will be Chris Miller.

The offensive line is bolstered by Carty (6'0", 180 lbs.) and Collier (6'0", 200 lbs.) and have added junior transfer Troy Harris (6'2", 205 lbs.) The Eagles will run a 6-2 alignment defensively, and despite the presence of Carty, Collier, and Harris, Armstrong notes the Eagles are weak in their down linemen. Another key performer for Wahtonka will be defensive safety Ken LeBrun, a senior.

Only time will tell if the Eagles can run away with the CBC and win the state crown.

## Ione sets sights on district tourney

By Ashley Conklin

Four seems to be the magic number for this year's Ione Varsity Volleyball team as they set their sights on advancing to the Big Sky Conference District 3-B volleyball tournament on November 1.

Jocelyn Jones returns to coach the Cardinals. Jones, in her fourth year, will be trying to take Ione to the district tournament for the first time ever.

Two years ago the Cardinals fell two games short of advancing to the district tournament and ended up in third place in the four-team Eastern Division of the Big Sky Conference.

Last season Ione finished 6-4 in Big Sky Conference play, and 7-10 overall, but again fell short of seeing post-season action.

But with four returning starters this season in seniors Deena Hams, Patty McElligott, Candi Rudisill, and junior Rondi Tews. Ione has the experience they have lacked in recent years.

Hams, McElligott, and Rudisill are all three-year starters. However, Ione will miss Sandi Wright who left school a year early. "Our one weakness this year will be height, because we lost Sandi (who was 5'11")," explained Jones.

The other two starters will be sophomore Angie Rudisill, a returner from last year, and freshman Jo Cupps. At press time the other varsity spots had not been filled. "We finally have experience on our side," said Jones, "and that will definitely be our biggest strength."

The Cardinals may have a tough time advancing to district, though. Arlington, the runner-up in last year's Class "B" state tournament returns its entire team almost completely intact. Echo, a powerhouse in recent years, is down in numbers this year and probably will not contend for a district playoff berth. However, Jones sees Helix as a team on the rise and said, "they might be pretty decent." Helix, like Ione, has struggled in the past.

Ione will have a tough pre-season to get them ready for Big Sky Conference action though.

After opening at home on Friday with Dayville, Ione must then face last season's District 7-A champ.

Heppner on Tuesday, Sept. 9. Later, the Cardinals will participate in the five-team Dufur tournament. Then, on September 27, Ione must travel to Portland to participate in the 16-team Rex Putnam tournament that will feature 15 Class "AAA" high schools, and Ione. "We have a good pre-season which should really prepare us for league play," Jones said.

"If there's ever been a year in which Ione should go to the district tournament, this should be it," Jones added. "With the experience we

## Weston-McEwen

In his first-year Harris has a young team, but will be blessed with another all-conference quarterback in senior Todd Hanson. Hanson was second-team pick a year ago.

Last season the TigerScots ran the option as their primary offense, but will let Hanson put the ball in the air this season.

However, it was the threat of the pass against Heppner last Friday night that opened up the option and the rest of the running game en route to a 6-0 win.

Sophomore tailback John Pike returns to run the ball out of the "I" formation and was very instrumental in Weston-McEwen's win over Heppner.

Bill Copenhaver (6'2", 175lbs.) will be one of Hanson's targets this season along with John Shanks. Copenhaver was an all-conference tight end a year ago.

The TigerScots' line was a heavy casualty to graduation and will start senior Loren Peterson (5'11", 185 lbs.), Bob Shanks, Drew Bernier, and Ernie Clark.

If Weston-McEwen can use the passing and running game equally well to threaten the opposition, they

might be a threat for the playoffs.

## Wasco County

Cutter's first year at Wasco County won't be an easy one as only four starters on the 20 man roster return from last season's 3-6 overall mark, 3-5 in league action.

Fourteen Redsidians are either freshmen or sophomores, so appropriately, Cutter is hoping for some experienced players to provide leadership.

"We're lacking experience and size, but the players we have are eager to play football," he said.

Sam Woodside returns on the line, where he should receive help from Jim Hull (6'1", 175 lbs.) and Jim Barger.

Those three will be opening holes for running backs Mike Earl and Dan Thomas, plus quarterback Dusty Smith. When Smith throws the ball he'll be looking for Eric Peterson.

"This is a building year for us," Cutter said, who moved over after being an assistant coach at Bend High School for three years. "Since this is a building year, we'll be weak."

If the Redsidians can build for the future, the future may be bright not weak, for Wasco County.

have we should be able to see post-season action."

Four might be the magic number for Ione this season, but the magic

date will be November 1, the date of the District 3-B district tournament.

## Taylor, Riehl named Players of the Week

By Ashley Conklin

Seniors Joe Taylor and Bob Riehl were named by head Mustang football coach Tim Birkby as offensive and defensive Players of the Week respectively for their roles in Heppner's season-opening game against Weston-McEwen last Friday.

The Mustangs lost the non-conference game 6-0 and struggled offensively, as they racked up only 77 yards of total offense.

However, Taylor was able to gain 38 yards on the ground and was cited by Birkby for "doing a good job running the option," Heppner's main offense.

Riehl, the Mustangs leading tackler a year ago, led Heppner defensively with 19 tackles for 21 defensive points. Riehl, a tackle, also led the defense that allowed the TigerScots only 114 yards of total offense.

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## Players of the Week

Offensive

Defensive



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Senior



Bob Riehl #55  
5'9", 175 lbs., T-T  
Senior

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