

Herald Sports

TOUGH TEST AHEAD IN SEMIS



Bulldogs take on No. 2 Willsonville in Hillsboro

By **ALEXIS MANSANAREZ**
STAFF WRITER

HERMISTON — The Hermiston Bulldogs are hoping to prolong their goodbye as long as possible.

The football team extended its "OSAA Farewell Tour" another week with a 40-22 win Friday over South Albany, and will travel Saturday to Hillsboro to take on No. 2 Willsonville.

The No. 3 Bulldogs enter the semifinals with a 9-2 record and an eight game winning streak.

"It feels great but at the same time we still have to get through what we're supposed to do, and make sure the kids are ready to go Saturday," head coach David Faaeteete said.

Hermiston is going up against one of its toughest opponents to date. Since their lone league loss on Sept. 15 against No. 1 Mountain View, the Bulldogs have been on a tear. In all but two of those wins the Bulldogs defeated their opponents by 20 or more points by peaking in the second quarter and scoring almost half of all their points in the second half.

"They've got an opportunity to make a dream a reality," Faaeteete said. "Everyone in the quarters and the semis are good football programs ... but our approach doesn't change."

Repeating that steady performance, however, will be tough against Willsonville.

The Wildcats are coming off 31-7 win over Lebanon, the defending Class 5A champions. The game was a rematch of last season's finale when Lebanon defeated Willsonville



Hermiston's Dayshawn Neal makes the catch in the endzone as Eli Nafziger, of South Albany, tries to defend during Friday's playoff game at Kennison Field.

STAFF PHOTOS BY KATHY ANEY

34-17 for the title. Willsonville had its revenge and held the No. 10-seeded team to only one touchdown.

That's been a theme for the 10-1 team throughout the year, as they bounced back from a season-opening loss to South Medford, a Class 6A team with only one loss on the season. During that time, Willsonville has shut out three opponents — two in back-to-back weeks — and allowed the fewest points (132) in the entire 5A class. The most any team has scored

against the Wildcats is 21, which happened in Round 1 of the playoffs during a 41-21 win over Bend.

The defense is led by two upperclassmen at the line, senior Aiden Burkhead and junior Caleb Baker. The duo totals a mass of 475 pounds and leads the team with 46 and 45 total tackles, respectively. Burkhead also has a team-high seven sacks.

"I don't think we've seen anything similar to this football team," Faaeteete said. "They've got a Division-1

lineman, and a great quarterback. They're defensive front seven is as good as they come."

Willsonville's success doesn't just come from the line. A pair of linebackers, seniors Manav Raghubansh and Chance Hansen, sit in the heart of the defense and are good for 80 combined tackles while the secondary has also done their job and recorded six of the team's 12 interceptions.

"We have to be tenacious, we have to be physical and keep their offense off the field as long as possible," Faaeteete said.

Last week, Hermiston quarterback Andrew James' trust in the process led to one of his best games as of late. Even though he wasn't the most accurate — completing 14-of-22 passes — he threw for over 200 yards and four touchdowns.

It was Hermiston's fourth consecutive game scoring 40 or more points, and its sixth of the season. The high scoring affair was thanks to big plays on all three sides of the ball.

Senior Dayshawn Neal that set up Hermiston's first scoring drive with 60-plus-yard kickoff return. Fellow seniors Jonathan Hinkle and Joey Gutierrez each had 80-plus-yard runs to the house, and the defense won the turnover game recovering four fumbles and nabbing two interceptions.

Faaeteete is hoping for a repeat of that performance when Willsonville's junior quarterback Nathan Overholt and his offense is on the field.

"(We have to) win the turnover takeaway battle," he said. "Win first downs and make second downs more manageable. At the end of the day the game of football comes down to hitting and tackling. We have to be ready to go."

The semifinal contest will be held at a neutral site, Hillsboro Stadium, and kickoff is scheduled for 5:30 p.m.

Riverside brings state title back to Boardman

By **ALEXIS MANSANAREZ**
STAFF WRITER

HILLSBORO — It was the rematch for the ages. The No. 1 Riverside Pirates pitted against the No. 2 Catlin Gabel Eagles, both teams undefeated with a tie on the books from earlier this month.

On Saturday, the two schools met at Liberty High School in Hillsboro for the Class 3A/2A/1A title, and the Pirates sunk the defending champion Eagles 4-1.

"I'm shocked, about the score — that's the only thing I'm shocked about is the score," assistant coach Jose Duenas said. "We knew we had a really good team — we had the right pieces for the right team and everything worked out."

The victory didn't come without some heart-stopping moments.

To start, the Eagles (12-1-5) and Pirates (17-0-1) were trading attacks which put both goalies to work. Riverside's freshman keeper Gerardo Lopez made two key back-to-back stops that easily could have given Catlin Gabel the lead.

A shot from Armando Ramirez-Cardenas in the 17th minutes found the net to give Riverside a 1-0 lead, with senior Kevin Madrigal on the assist.

"We needed that (goal)," senior Jose Peralta said. "They were attacking well, but our goal set them back. ... We were expecting them to come in hard, and knew they wanted to defend their title."

Riverside opened the second half with goals on back-to-back possessions to push its lead to 3-0.

The first came off the foot of sophomore Ulyces Lopez after he

beat three Catlin Gabel defenders. Lopez ended up a few feet away from the goal line before he turned and fired to the inside post.

"The keep was expecting it to go far post," Lopez said, "and I trusted my gut and went near post, and it went in."

Peralta would send another one in on the ensuing attack after he beat the keeper and was charging toward an open goal, and senior Misael Madrigal scored on a penalty kick shortly afterward.

Riverside brings its second title back to Boardman, and the first under head coach Francisco Velazquez.

"It's my dream," he said. "I had the state championship when I was the assistant coach and now I have my state championship as the head coach."

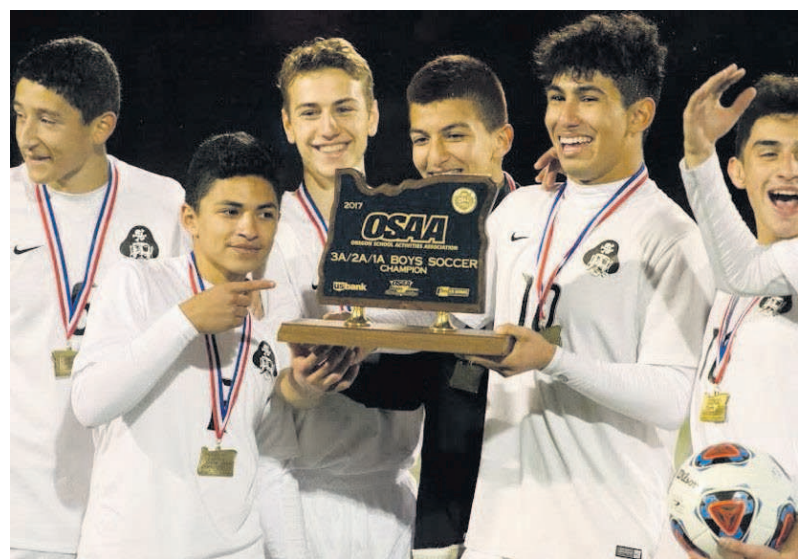


PHOTO COURTESY OF TODD VEENHUIS/THE OREGONIAN

Riverside Pirate players celebrate with the 3A/2A/1A state championship trophy after defeating Catlin Gabel 4-1 on Saturday at Liberty High School in Hillsboro.

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