

Herald Sports



BACK ON THE FIELD

Noland's change of heart paying dividends for Hermiston football

By **ANNIE FOWLER**
STAFF WRITER

There's something about a crisp fall morning that appeals to Wyatt Noland.

Walking among the falling leaves and tracking deer and elk puts the Hermiston senior in his happy place.

"I have been doing it forever," he said of hunting. "My dad (Justin) and my uncle (Judd Noland) are really big into hunting, and I got into it too. I love the mountains. I could be there everyday."

It was hunting and his love of the outdoors that drew Noland away from football last year.

"I was hunting with my uncle last year when they were playing in the state championship game," Noland said of Hermiston's 38-35 victory over Churchill for the Oregon 5A state title. "I never went to one game last year. I was the same old me, I just didn't play football. I focused more on baseball and went hunting."

A change of heart

Noland, 17, had planned on playing football last year, participating in spring drills and attending every workout. He was penciled in as the starting middle linebacker.

When it came time to hand out gear, Noland was nowhere to be found.

He wasn't going to play this year either, but some sage advice from family and coaches swayed him to strap on the pads one last time.

Assistant football coach Mike Mosher had a long talk with Noland, and quarterback and longtime friend Andrew James also put in his two cents.

"Coach Mosher said he really needed someone like me," Noland said. "Andrew texted me and said he'd like to ball with me this year. I decided to do it."

James said he supported Noland last year, but is glad to be sharing the backfield with him this fall.

"Last year, everyone was kind of like, OK," James said. "He put in a lot of work in the spring. We were lifting partners. It was his decision and I stood



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston running back Wyatt Noland took his junior year of football off so that he could enjoy the outdoors and hunt big game. Noland has come back to the gridiron for his senior season with a vengeance, racking up 1,227 yards rushing and 17 touchdowns.

by him. Taking that year off, I think he realizes what he missed."

Justin Noland also had his say. "My dad told me I had the rest of my life to hunt, but I only have a short time to play high school sports," Noland said. "It has turned out to be fun, so far, playing football with my friends."

Justin and Judd Noland both played football at Stanfield High School, and Wyatt's grandpa Ron Noland played on Wallowa High School's 8-man state championship team in 1967.

"My dad was excited I was playing this year," Noland said. "I think my grandpa was more excited."

They have reason to be. The 6-foot-1, 195-pound Noland is the MCC's leading rusher with 1,227 yards through seven games (average of 175 yards per game), and leads the conference in scoring with 17 total touchdowns. The Bulldogs (5-2) hosted Eisenhower in a nonleague homecoming game last Friday.

"People feed off his toughness," James said. "He's put a lot of weight on his shoulders. He brings a lot to

the table. Without him, I don't know where we'd be."

Noland was held to a season-low 82 yards two weeks ago in a 34-10 loss to Chiawana, but he gave credit where it was due.

"That was the best defense we will see all year," Noland said. "They were disciplined."

However, he turned around and put up a career high Friday, running 303 yards for four touchdowns.

Hermiston coach David Faaeteete said he is happy to see Noland back out on the field.

"We are glad to have him back out," Faaeteete said. "He picked up where he let off. He has a great attitude and a good work ethic."

A way of life

"I wish I could not go to practice and just play in the games," he said with a smile. "Running people over is my favorite thing. There will be an opening and sometimes I will choose to run over someone. Andrew tells me to hit the hole or he will keep the ball himself."

After the football season is over,

Noland will put his efforts into the weight room and baseball, where he is a catcher for the Bulldogs.

From there, he's not sure what the future holds.

Western Oregon has contacted him about playing football and baseball.

"I'd play college football, but baseball is my thing," Noland said. "I probably don't know half the things I'm capable of. Every day, I make it the best that I can. It may turn out that I'm better at football."

James said that it's hard at times to tell which sport Noland prefers.

"He's loved baseball forever," James said. "That's his sport. You want him back there if you are a pitcher. After seeing what he's done this year in football, I can't tell which one he likes more."

While college is in his plans, Noland also said he would like to one day join the Marine Corps.

"At some point in my life, I will go there," he said. "I see them as the top people. You want to be the best, you train with the best."

Noland has a career day in Hermiston's win over Ike

By **ANNIE FOWLER**
STAFF WRITER

Was that good enough?

That was the question Hermiston coach David Faaeteete asked his team Friday night after beating Eisenhower 61-42 in a nonleague tilt at Kennison Field.

"The defense was disappointing," said Faaeteete, whose team gave up more points than it had all year.

"We took a step back. We have to get better. We weren't making tackles and the D-Line was getting blown off the ball."

Hermiston's offense was in fine working order Friday night.

Wyatt Noland ran for a career high 303 yards and four touchdowns.

"He was a workhorse," Faaeteete said.

Noland picked up a big chunk of his yards on touchdown runs of 58 and 65 yards in the second half.

Hermiston led 14-7 after the first quarter, then pulled away in the second, needing less than 2 minutes on each of its scoring drives.

The Bulldogs took a 41-21 lead into halftime, scoring on six of their eight possessions.

The highlight of the first half for the Bulldogs was a 90-yard kickoff return for a touchdown by Jordan Ramirez in the second quarter.

"I was dead after that," Ramirez said. "I couldn't feel my legs. I saw a hole open up and I ran through it. I looked back and there was nothing (penalty flags). It was beautiful."

Noland ran for first-half



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Eisenhower's Damian Pacheco gets stripped of the ball by Hermiston's Ryan Arnold in the Bulldogs' 61-42 win against the Cadets on Friday in Hermiston.

touchdowns of 34 and 3 yards, while Andrew James had scoring runs of 19 and 34 yards. James finished with 117 yards on the ground.

Youbani Razon also caught a 20-yard scoring pass from James.

Eisenhower tried to climb back in the game late, and had the ball inside the Hermiston 10-yard line in the final seconds, but could not convert on fourth down.

The Cadets got 173 yards and two touchdowns from Damian Pacheco, while Drew Reyes

caught touchdown passes of 37 and 22 yards from Drew Kornegay. Kornegay threw for 336 yards and three touchdowns.

Hermiston (5-2 overall, 4-2 MCC) will return to Mid-Columbia Conference play Friday, taking on Hanford at Fran Rish Stadium.

Eisenhower	7	14	7	14	-42
Hermiston	14	27	7	13	-61
Scoring					
1Q					
H - Andrew James 19 run (Juan Carlos Navarrete kick)					
H - Wyatt Noland 34 run (Navarrete kick)					
E - Damian Pacheco 1 run (Thomas Oplinger kick)					
2Q					
H - Youbani Razon 20 pass from James (Navarrete kick)					
H - James 34 run (Navarrete kick)					
H - Noland 3 run (pass failed)					
E - Drew Reyes 37 pass from Drew Kornegay (Oplinger kick)					
H - Jordan Ramirez 90 kickoff return (Navarrete kick)					
E - Jesse Magallon 8 pass from Kornegay (Oplinger kick)					
3Q					
H - Noland 58 run (Navarrete kick)					
E - Pacheco 1 run (Oplinger kick)					
4Q					
E - Reyes 22 pass from Kornegay (Oplinger kick)					
H - James 1 run (pass failed)					
E - Demario Morgan 2 run (Oplinger kick)					
H - Noland 65 run (Navarrete kick)					
Statistics					
Passing - HHS, Andrew James 9-10-0-79-1; EHS Drew Kornegay 22-39-1-336.					
Rushing - HHS, Andrew James 10-117, Wyatt Noland 20-303, Trevor Vagner 1-2; EHS Damian Pacheco 35-173, Demario Morgan 6-13, Drew Kornegay 8-34, Drew Reyes 1-3.					
Receiving - HHS, Youbani Razon 2-20, Garrett Walchli 2-24, Jordan Ramirez 4-28, Wyatt Noland 1-7; EHS Demario Morgan 1-7, Drew Reyes 9-185, Malachi Spurrier 3-29, Jesse Magallon 5-79, Will Yocum 4-36.					

Bulldogs need to step up defense against Hanford

By **ANNIE FOWLER**
STAFF WRITER

The top two offenses in the Mid-Columbia Conference will take the field Friday night at Fran Rish Stadium in Richland.

The Hermiston Bulldogs (5-2 overall, 4-2 MCC) will take on the Hanford Falcons (6-1, 5-1) in a game that features two of the top running backs in the league.

The Bulldogs have gotten 1,227 yards and 17 touchdowns from Wyatt Noland, who leads the MCC in rushing. He broke free for 303 yards and four touchdowns last week against Eisenhower.

"He has his bumps and bruises, but it is his warrior spirit that drives him," Hermiston coach David Faaeteete said. "He and Andrew James, they want to put it on the line for their teammates. Same for Jacob Liebe. They love their brothers so much, they are willing to compete. That makes you want to coach football."

The Falcons feature running Jared Devine, who has run for 537 yards and nine touchdowns. But where Hanford moves the ball is through the air. Quarterback Garrett Horner has thrown for 1,701 yards and 18 touchdowns to a variety of receivers, with Blake VanderTop being his favorite with 20 catches for 309 yards and five touchdowns.

"Hanford is playing well, they are on fire," Faaeteete said. "They are well coached and they do things at a high level. We match up well in some areas. It will be a battle of wills - about ball control and explosive plays. We'll see if we can get our defense reaffirmed for the week."

The Bulldogs gave up a season-high 559 yards to Eisenhower last week, with 336 coming in the air.

"We didn't do anything well," Faaeteete said of his team's defense. "We were soft up front and we didn't tackle well. We just did not put it together against Eisenhower."