

The Chronicle 2022 PREP FOOTBALL PREVIEW

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Jared Wenzelburger / jwenzelburger@chronline.com

Napavine players, from left, Ashton Demarest, Cael Stanley and Deacon Parker pose for a photo on Tuesday during a preseason practice in Napavine.

After Season-Ending Heartbreak, Tigers Are 2B Favorites

By Josh Kirshenbaum
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It's been nine months, and Deacon Parker is still losing sleep over the last football game he played.

"I stay up every night thinking about it," he said. "I just think about how I could've done my friends better, how I could've made it better for Keith (Olson) or Gavin (Parker) or Lucas (Dahl) or Glade (Shannon) or anyone, because I know that I didn't do my best in it. It still haunts me to this day."

He's not the only Napavine player in a similar bind. Safe to say, these Tigers don't forget easily.

They don't forget the eight-point lead with six minutes to go at Harry E. Lang Stadium last December. They don't forget Gavin Parker getting stuffed

in his own end zone for a safety, or Jackson Esary plunging into the end zone, first for a touchdown and then for the go-ahead two-point conversion. And they certainly don't forget the sight of Kalama raising the 2B state championship trophy on the other end of the field after coming oh-so-close to glory.

They stung through the off-season and into spring ball, and remembered throughout the summer.

"I think everybody still thinks about what happened last year," Cael Stanley said. "It keeps a chip on everybody's shoulder to come out and play hard and play for each other."

Now, after oh so long of remembering and stewing, nine months later, the Tigers finally get a chance to make things right the only way you can af-

ter coming in second place in heartbreaking fashion.

"We want to focus on what's in front of us and how we can get better," head coach Josh Fay said. "But our ultimate goal is to see if we can get back to that game and have a different outcome."

They're certainly in a prime spot to do so. Despite losing a Pac-12 lineman in Keith Olson, two first-team all-league skill players in Dahl and Gavin Parker, and a big receiving threat in Shannon, Napavine is set to return about as many starters as the other three state semifinalists from last fall combined.

That includes the man running it all on offense, with Demarest coming back for his second stint as a starting quarterback after earning first-team all-C2BL North Division hon-

ors last fall.

"I think I'm more in shape," the junior said. "I'm hungrier than ever. I just want to get back to the top."

Stanley, who himself earned a second-team all-league nod as the Tigers' No. 2 back in 2021, will get a go at being the starring rusher this season, bulking up on the carries and — Napavine hopes — the yards.

Those two will be operating behind a line that loses the reigning C2BL North Offensive Player of the Year (Olson) and two more first-team blockers (Scott Burdick and Deven Searles) but returns a third in Deacon Parker and a second-teamer in Gabe Harris, and has the depth to fill out.

"Every guy that's going to start on that offensive line has

please see NAPAVINE, page C8

A Week-by-Week Breakdown of What Games to Watch

By Josh Kirshenbaum
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Behold, nine straight weeks of beautiful football are on the horizon. With full slates every Friday, it could be a bit overwhelming for the local fan to discern which stadium will be the place to be each week. Have no fear; here are the Chronicle's picks for the ultimate fall road trip of local games.

Week 1: Tenino at Pe Ell-Willapa Valley

The area hits the ground running with a couple of marquee non-league matchups —

please see GAMES, page C4

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Experienced Group of Bearcats Motivated for Improved 2022

By Alec Dietz

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Last year saw the W.F. West football team make its deepest run in the postseason in some time, earning a state berth for the first time since 2017 before going one-and-done in a tight loss with Prosser.

This year, the Bearcats have grander plans.

"They're chomping at the bit, there's been a different motivation in this group than the last couple of years," coach Dan Hill said. "They're going to have a good opportunity. They have some goals set and they're going to go week-to-week."

W.F. West hasn't won a state playoff game since a deep run in 2012 that saw the Bearcats make it all the way to the semifinals.

With 17 returning starters from last year's squad, the Bearcats feel pretty good about where they stand in 2022. 2A Evergreen Conference Offensive MVP Gavin Fugate returns at quarterback, and league Defensive MVP Daniel Matagi returns to anchor the line.

Fugate has a whole cast of receivers and playmakers to throw to, including Cameron Amoroso and sophomore Gage Brumfield. Matagi isn't alone on defense either, with Blake Ely returning at linebacker and an experienced line that includes William Buzzard leading the charge in the trenches.

It could be the perfect storm for the Bearcats, who are looking to dethrone a Tumwater squad that have had a stranglehold on the league, and state, for years. Hill and his staff saw the opportunity for a strong season, and loaded up their non-league schedule with defending 2A champ Lynden, 1A runner-up Eatonville, and Greater St. Helens League champion Ridgefield.

"That was the plan," Hill said. "We know we have a team



Alec Dietz / alec@chronline.com

W.F. West quarterback Gavin Fugate throws a pass during a drill Aug. 17 on the first day of fall camp in Chehalis.

that can play, we're going to be tough. We know we're going to have an opportunity to have a playoff team. We wanted these guys to have an opportunity to see some high level teams from the get-go."

And though it seems the expectations are raised every year in Chehalis, the Bearcats have the returning production, system, and new playmakers to make some noise in their eyes.

"More than anything this is the strongest team physically I've been a part of the last four years," Matagi said. "It'll be one of the best seasons W.F. West is going to have."



W.F. West coach Dan Hill talks with his team during the first day of fall camp in Chehalis Aug. 17.

W.F. West Bearcats

COACH: Dan Hill (5th)
2021: 8-3 (First round of state)

PLAYERS TO WATCH: Gavin Fugate, QB, sr; Daniel Matagi, OL/DL, sr; William Buzzard, OL/DL, sr.

Sept. 2 at Ridgefield
Sept. 9 Lynden
Sept. 16 Shelton*
Sept. 23 at Black Hills*
Sept. 30 at Tumwater*
Oct. 7 Rochester*
Oct. 14 Eatonville
Oct. 21 Aberdeen*
Oct. 28 at Centralia*

*Denotes EvCo games

Tigers Turn the Page With Renewed Belief Under New Coach

By Alec Dietz

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Before new Centralia football coach Dustin McGee made the cross country trek from Tennessee back to the Pacific Northwest, he did everything he could to hit the ground running.

It's been quite awhile since the Tigers have competed with the likes of the Tumwaters and W.F. Wests of the 2A Evergreen Conference. Centralia has had just two winning seasons since 2012, and has lost the Swamp Cup to its rival Bearcats 13 seasons in a row.

So the first step in coming to rebuild a program is getting the Tigers to believe that they can beat anyone on their schedule.

"I just want the kids to believe in themselves," McGee said. "It's been a long time since Centralia's been on the map athletically. We have a whole new regime in the high school, it's exciting."

"We're trying to instill belief



Alec Dietz / alec@chronline.com

Centralia head coach Dustin McGee talks with his team in a huddle during the first practice of fall camp Aug. 17 at Tiger Stadium.

in these guys, there's a lot of talent in our high school. It's just guys believing in who they are and who we are as coaches and trying to do things right from day one, and being consistent year-in and year-out."

And while it might be unreasonable to expect a huge leap in the first year of McGee's run as

the Tigers coach, the Hub City squad is bringing back a good chunk of experience.

Landen Jenkins will return at quarterback, and Gabe Seymour and Mikey Hoyt earned praise from their new coach for how they've approached the summer and fall camp so far.

McGee also credited the of-

fensive line for taking on the challenge in the weight room during the offseason.

In a top-heavy EvCo that features favorites Tumwater and W.F. West nipping at the T-Birds' heels, the Tigers are hoping to put together a good start to the season before league play begins.

"It'll be exciting for us to see that and get to know all the teams in our league," McGee said. "Everything I've heard about this league is that it's really competitive. We're looking forward to it."

Centralia Tigers

COACH: Dustin McGee (1st)

2021: 1-8

PLAYERS TO WATCH: Gabe Seymour, RB/LB, sr; Mikey Hoyt, TE/DT, sr; Landen Jenkins, QB, jr.

Sept. 2 at Elma
Sept. 9 Battle Ground
Sept. 16 at Aberdeen
Sept. 23 Tumwater*
Sept. 30 at Rochester*
Oct. 7 Shelton*
Oct. 14 at Black Hills*
Oct. 21 Hoquiam*
Oct. 28 W.F. West*

*Denotes EvCo games

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Alec Dietz / alec@chronline.com

Rochester wideout Braden Hartley catches a pass during a drill Aug. 19.

Warriors Confident in Quick Reload

By Alec Dietz

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On the outside looking in, it would appear the Rochester football team is losing a lot.

Talon Betts, an all-league and all-area pick last year who racked up all-purpose yards like they were nothing and was a standout at safety, is playing in Cheney for Eastern Washington this fall. Landon Hawes, an all-league standout at quarterback, has also graduated.

But despite some unproven offensive production, the Warriors return a lot of leaders and playmakers from a strong year last season.

Four seniors will get action in the backfield for the Warriors this season, and they return over half of their defensive starters. Though Betts and Hawes' production will be hard to replace with two players, the Warriors have a group of players that can fill in those roles in different ways.

In coach AJ Easley's third

year at the helm, this is exactly what he envisioned his team would look like.

"It just builds on itself, the more success you have, the more people want to come out," Easley said. "When you are successful and do things right, people want to be a part of it. Our middle school numbers are through the roof and our youth programs are through the roof. We've gotten more people on board because we're doing things the right way and building our culture."

Tate Quarnstrom and Brady Baird return and will feature heavily in the backfield, with Baird, in particular, earning high praise for his leadership from Easley.

On the line, Owen Gillespie and Jaden Nichols will anchor a line that is more experienced than its been in recent memory. Palmer Watt will continue to feature at the fullback spot for the Warriors.

Returning from injury and fresh off a stellar baseball season,

Rochester Warriors

COACH: AJ Easley (3rd)

2021: 5-4 (district crossover)

PLAYERS TO WATCH: Owen

Gillespie, OL/DL, sr; Palmer Watt,

FB/LB, sr; Brady Baird, LB, sr;

Sept. 2 at Seton Catholic

Sept. 9 at Kingston

Sept. 16 Black Hills*

Sept. 23 at Shelton*

Sept. 30 Centralia*

Oct. 7 at W.F. West*

Oct. 14 at Aberdeen*

Oct. 21 Tumwater*

Oct. 28 Tenino*

*Denotes EvCo games



Josh Kirshenbaum / josh@chronline.com

Tumwater's Alex Overbay throws a pass during the T-Birds' Aug. 22 practice.

It's a New Year and a Very New Group at Tumwater

By Josh Kirshenbaum

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The road back to success for the Tumwater football team won't be as simple as rolling the same team out onto the field and expecting similar results.

Instead, after graduating 30 seniors for the third straight season, the Thunderbirds have undergone a much more thorough reloading process, with plenty of new bodies scattered all over the field.

"As coaches, we realize that we have a lot of guys that have had limited playing time, so it takes a little bit longer, but the standard doesn't change," coach Bill Beattie said. "What we expect out of those kids is the same as any other group that's come here. As coaches, we've had to be a little bit more understanding, take them through a little bit more, spend a little bit more time talking and chalking."

Beattie estimated that the number of sophomores playing meaningful minutes could hit double-figures easily. But with nearly the entire lineup in turnover, even many of the upperclassmen are in a similar position to the 10th graders, stepping into a starting role for the first time.

"They're doing a good job," Beattie said. "A lot of them are in the same boat. They're looking at starting for the first time, so their reps are very valuable as well."

The good news for the T-Birds starts with a couple familiar faces that are back. Alex Overbay is well-versed in the offense and ready for another year as Tumwater's starting quarter-

Tumwater Thunderbirds

COACH: Bill Beattie (6th)

2021: 10-3 (state runner-up)

PLAYERS TO WATCH: Carlos

Matheney, RB/LB, sr; Alex Over-

bay, QB, sr; Jadin Allen, RB/DL, sr;

Sept. 2 at Burlington-Edison

Sept. 9 North Kitsap

Sept. 16 at Kelso

Sept. 23 at Centralia*

Sept. 30 W.F. West*

Oct. 7 Aberdeen*

Oct. 14 at Shelton*

Oct. 21 at Rochester*

Oct. 28 Black Hills*

*Denotes EvCo games

back, and Carlos Matheney, who spent 2021 as the second option to Payton Hoyt, will slot into the fullback role as the ground game's primary weapon.

"Inherently in the Wing-T, the fullback is the guy," Beattie said. "He's typically going to get more carries than anybody else. However, the great thing is that if that's who you focus on, there's two or three other guys who are going to get the ball and go."

The new-look Thunderbirds will have to grow up in a hurry, going from a Week 1 matchup with Burlington-Edison to a Week 2 showdown against 2A state semifinalist North Kitsap, with a trip to 3A Kelso wrapping up the non-league portion of its schedule.

"Our young guys are going to get valuable experience, and then Week 5, we'll have another top-10 team in Chehalis coming to play," Beattie said. "If nothing else, we're going to get quality reps and quality experience that will make those young guys grow up in a hurry."

Wolves Looking Up Going Into Second Year Under Baldwin

By Josh Kirshenbaum

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It's just Year 2 of the Garrett Baldwin era at Black Hills — and Year 1 did not end spectacularly in terms of the final record — but the second-year head coach can already see things moving in the right direction for the Wolves.

"It's a much different group, a much better group," he said.

Focusing on culture as much as anything early on in his tenure, a tough first fall turned into a productive spring and summer, leading to a chance for Black Hills to get right back in the thick of things in the 2A Evergreen Conference.

And — in Baldwin's eyes — hopefully stay there for awhile.

"For us at Black Hills, if you look at our history, we are inconsistent," Baldwin said. "The program's history has had two-year, three-year stretches where you get winning seasons and trips to the playoffs. We're just trying to fix that. And that is hard. But the way that we're trying to go about it is just convincing the kids that it's possible."

The Wolves will try to make that breakthrough with a core that went through the struggle of a 1-8 season, but is back with the goal of being the group that rights the ship.

Jaxsen Beck, who started under center immediately for the Wolves as a freshman last year, is back for his second stint under center.

"He's quiet, he leads by example," Baldwin said.

Meanwhile, Johnnie Stall-



Josh Kirshenbaum / josh@chronline.com

Black Hills sophomore Jaxsen Beck warms up during the Wolves' Aug. 22 practice.

Black Hills Wolves

COACH: Garrett Baldwin (2nd)

2021: 1-8

PLAYERS TO WATCH: Johnnie

Stallings, RB, sr; Tanner Parkin-

son, DB/WR, sr; Keagen Rongen,

TE/DL, sr;

Sept. 2 Montesano

Sept. 8 at North Thurston

Sept. 16 at Rochester*

Sept. 23 W.F. West*

Sept. 30 at Aberdeen*

Oct. 7 at Elma

Oct. 14 Centralia*

Oct. 21 Shelton*

Oct. 28 at Tumwater*

*Denotes EvCo games

ings returns to start at tailback, after running his way onto the 2A EvCo second team in 2021. Baldwin said that Braiden Bond is close behind him, though, and that both will feature in Black Hills' run-first offense.

"They can be a good double-headed snake," he said.

Last year, the Wolves' lone win came against Centralia in league play, with two non-league losses to 3A schools. This time around, the slate gets easier on paper — at least following a tough matchup with 1A Montesano — with non-league games against 1A Elma and 3A North Thurston, both of which had losing seasons in 2021.

But it'll be up to the Wolves themselves to take that next step.

"We've got a lot of leadership in this group," Baldwin said. "We've got a pretty solid amount of returning starters that were part of the 1-8 (team), but now they're the seniors, and they're realizing how much they can change if they change their habits."



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New Faces Hope to Build Something New in Rainier

By Alec Dietz

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Plenty of changes are coming to the Rainier football team in 2022. After a tough, winless season last year that featured multiple COVID cancellations and discord, the Mountaineers are hoping to turn the page.

An enormous senior class in Rainier is gone, and has made way for new faces hoping to turn things around quickly in the ever competitive 2B Southwest Washington league.

"We could just never get on track," Rainier coach Andy Bartell said. "It was a little rough, but guys kept fighting. We really want to win games this year, we can only get better from here."

With 2021 firmly in the rearview mirror, the Mountaineers are looking forward to its new group of leaders, including Trevor Anderson, Tyler Potts, and new sophomore quarterback Jake Meldrum, to lead the way.

Recognizing that last year's team lost focus in certain matchups, this year's group of leaders isn't going to make the same mistakes.

"You have to play everyone like it's the state championship, you have to come into every



Alec Dietz / alec@chronline.com

Rainier receiver Hunter Howell weaves through a conditioning drill Aug. 22.

game and give 100%," Anderson said. "Last year we came into games thinking we should win and it didn't work out for us, we have to give our 100% this year."

Along with some personnel changes, including a freshmen group in the double-digits, Bar-

tell is also shifting away from his typical pass-heavy attack and moving to more of a ground game.

With more athletes on the field, it's about putting his guys in a position to succeed with their skillsets. But that doesn't

mean he's going to abandon the passing game, either.

Hunter Howell returns at wideout after a standout freshman season, and will give his new quarterback Meldrum a big and proven target in the passing game.

Rainier Mountaineers

COACH: Andy Bartell (4th)

2021: 0-6

PLAYERS TO WATCH: Trevor Anderson, TE/DL, sr; Hunter Howell, WR/DB, so; Jake Meldrum, QB, so.

Sept. 2 at Wahkiakum*

Sept. 9 Toledo*

Sept. 16 Napavine*

Sept. 23 at Morton-White Pass*

Sept. 30 at Ilwaco*

Oct. 7 at Raymond-South Bend*

Oct. 14 Forks*

Oct. 22 at Nooksack Valley

Oct. 28 Pe Ell-Willapa Valley*

*Denotes C2BL games

But more than anything, the Mountaineers are just happy to move forward and get the bad taste of 2021 out of their mouths. If fall camp has been any indication, things have felt a bit different from previous years in Rainier.

"I'm excited to be out here, I'm excited to be with our team," Potts said. "It seems like we're coming together really well and bonding nicely. I think we're going to have a good season."

MWP, Complete With Two QBs, Set to Take on 2B World

By Josh Kirshenbaum

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Nearly half of the current Morton-White Pass football roster may be freshmen, but Lee Metcalf has a core of returning players ready to both keep the train moving this year and get the next wave of T-Wolves ready for their own time to shine.

"You plug in somebody else and move forward, and that's what we've done," Metcalf said. "We're running the same stuff we've always run... Not everything's the same, but some of the traditional Morton-White Pass stuff we still kept, and we're going to continue to run that. It's kind of our identity."

The look will change a bit under center, with the Timberwolves set to employ a two-quarterback system to start the season. Metcalf named both junior Brecken Pelletier and sophomore Judah Kelly as options both at quarterback and running back, and doesn't feel like he needs to pick one moving forward to be the sole factor.

"I wouldn't really call it a competition," he said. "They each have different skill sets that we can play to our advantage if we see something we like defensively that presents itself."

Whoever's throwing the ball will have 6-foot, 2-inch first-team all-league tight end Hunter



File Photo / The Chronicle

Morton-White Pass' Carter Dantinne (8) runs around end with Pe Ell-Willapa Valley's Garrett Keeton (53) in pursuit on Oct. 1, 2021.

Hazen to get it to.

Also back for the T-Wolves is Carter Dantinne, who earned himself an honorable mention spot in the all-league lists at tailback and second-team nods at defensive line and punter.

"He's a good athlete for us," Metcalf said. "Obviously brings a lot to the table on both sides of the ball. He's a physical kid, solid player."

how the 2B world is going to shake out, but at the moment, this could be one with a whole lot of stakes. After a couple years of being stuck behind the likes of Napavine, Onalaska, and Kalama, this could be the time Adna makes a resurgence, or Toledo takes that step from the penultimate level of the C2BL to the premier spot. It'll be two teams trying to shoot their way up the ranks going at it, and it'll be fun to watch.

Also keep an eye on: Eatonville at W.F. West

Week 8: Mossyrock at Winlock

These two teams combined for 82 points in a thriller last season, and with Naselle coming in heavy favorites once again in the 1B world, it could come down to this game to determine second and third place in the district. Easton and Keegan Kolb give the Vikings a dynamic duo on offense again, while Winlock will have to figure out how to replace Nolan Swofford, along with most of last year's production.

Also keep an eye on: Tenino at Montesano, Adna at Onalaska, Forks at PWV

Week 9: W.F. West at Centralia

All eyes turn homeward dur-

On the line, Metcalf is turning to the returning trio of Gavin Addy, Gaven Cheney, and Landan Elkins to lead the way, while finding two new bodies to enter into starting roles.

Last season, the Timberwolves played just two games decided by fewer than 20 points, either blowing teams out or getting blown out themselves. This time around facing the always

tough likes of Napavine, Pe Ell-Willapa Valley, and Forks, it'll be up to some of the old faces stepping into larger roles to try to work MWP up from the middle

of the pack.

"This is a very tough place to play football," Metcalf said. "Southwest Washington 2Bs are kind of like the SEC of small-school football. You've got to be on top of your game every Friday night. There's no telling what a kid's going to do on a Friday night sometimes. It's hard to predict. But we just try to be consistent, not make mistakes, and play football the right way. Hopefully that will translate into some wins for us."

"The difference between the impossible and the possible lies in a man's determination."

~Tommy Lasorda

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Games

Continued from page C4

a bunch back on the line. The Bearcats gave themselves a whole lot of non-league tests to measure themselves up against, including a home date against defending 2A champs Lynden, but to be the best in the EvCo, you've got to beat the best in the EvCo. It's been Tumwater's league for a minute, and the T-Birds aren't planning on giving their crown away any time soon.

Also keep an eye on: Eatonville at Tenino, Toledo at Onalaska

Week 6: Kalama at Onalaska

You want bad blood? Three years ago, Onalaska rolled past Kalama to a state championship. Two years ago, the Loggers beat up the Chinoos at home. Last season, Kalama got back, steam-rolling Ony not once but twice. This year, both teams are going to be full of newcomers to the rivalry, but the hate won't be going anywhere.

Also keep an eye on: Rochester at W.F. West

Week 8: Toledo at Adna

By this point in the season we'll have a much better feel of

what to expect from the two

newcomers.

Week 9: Toledo at Adna

By this point in the season we'll have a much better feel of

what to expect from the two

newcomers.

Week 9: W.F. West at Centralia

All eyes turn homeward dur-

ing rivalry week, and in Lewis County, that means it's time for the Swamp Cup. The matchup has skewed heavily in Chehalis' favor of late, but throw your records and your common knowledge out of the window when it comes to a rivalry of a regular-season finale.

Also keep an eye on: Tenino at Rochester, Napavine at Forks

Week 9: W.F. West at Centralia

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All eyes turn homeward dur-

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Pirates Feel Like They Can Beat Anyone With Large Returning Group

By Alec Dietz

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The Adna football team doesn't exactly have a friendly opener scheduled in 2022, like most of its last few seasons.

The Pirates, with 12 returning starters and playmakers everywhere, will open their season against the undisputed 2B state title favorites Napavine in Week 1. After a rough go against the Tigers the last few times out, new coach Jason Dunnagan is looking to instill new belief in the 2022 Pirates.

"The way I approach games, I feel like we can win every game," he said. "I'm not thinking Napavine should beat us, I think we can beat them. We have to have that mindset and get that in these guys' heads. They've taken us to the woodshed the last couple of times we've played, so it's hard to forget that and move on but we see a lot of opportunity this year for our team."

That mindset will carry the Pirates hopefully past the Tigers Week 1, win or lose, as Adna looks to return to relevance at the state level after a couple of down seasons.

Lane Johnson returns at the quarterback spot, and will be the headliner of the offense. Jax-



on Dunnagan will get a prominent role as a tailback, and Seth Meister and company will get the lion-share of targets on the outside at wideout.

With a lot of these guys playing significantly as freshmen and sophomores the last couple of seasons, that added experi-

ence is just a bonus this year.

"It definitely helps with the confidence," Johnson said. "Knowing what to do and having those experiences in the past."

With K.C. Johnson moving on as head coach to become the superintendent of Raymond School District, Dunnagan isn't

changing much, but tweaking things to hope to make one final run for a large group of Pirate seniors that have waited for this year.

Having seen what it took for the Pirates to make consistent state semifinals appearances and capture a state title years

Alec Dietz / alec@chronline.com
Adna quarterback Lane Johnson tosses a pass during a drill Aug. 20.

Adna Pirates

COACH: Jason Dunnagan (1st)

2021: 4-4 (district crossover)

PLAYERS TO WATCH: Lane

Johnson, QB, jr; Jaxon Dunnagan, RB/CB, sr; Asher Guerrero, RB/LB, sr;

Sept. 2 at Napavine*

Sept. 9 Pe Ell-Willapa Valley*

Sept. 16 White Swan

Sept. 23 at Raymond-South

Bend*

Sept. 30 at Wahkiakum*

Oct. 7 at Stevenson*

Oct. 14 Toledo*

Oct. 21 at Onalaska*

Oct. 28 Kalama*

*Denotes C2BL games

ago in 2009, Dunnagan is hoping the little things can make the biggest difference.

"We have to get back to fundamentals," he said. "All the way down to where we place our hands on the ground. Your first step means something, that gives us an advantage. Focusing on the little things will add up to our success and where we want to be."

'Old Dog' Pe Ell-Willapa Valley Ready to Compete with League's Elite

By Alec Dietz

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The Pe Ell-Willapa Valley football team has had a tumultuous past couple of seasons.

After barely missing out on a state berth in 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic hit, pushing the season all the way to the spring. The Titans won just one game that spring, but rebounded to win six games last year.

Finally, in 2022, the Titans feel like they're bringing enough back to make some noise in the 2B ranks.

"We were young the last few years," senior Wil Clements said. "It finally feels good to be the big dogs."

And with just about every key contributor coming back — aside from the large losses at quarterback in Tyler Adkins and on the line in Kaden Ritzman — PWV could have the squad to earn that elusive state berth.

Despite the raised expectations that come with an older group, the mindset week-to-week will be the same, whether in Menlo or Pe Ell.

"We have nothing to lose," Clements said. "We go out, hit hard, and expect to win."

Pushed by a small taste of success last season, being just

two wins away from the state playoffs and giving 2B quarterfinal participant Toledo a run for its money in the district crossover round, PWV is looking to do even more damage in 2022.

Led by Clements, Kolton and Derek Fluke, Garrett Keaton, and more, the Titans will hit the ground running with a Week 1 matchup against 1A quarterfinalist Tenino before a Week 2 matchup with rival Adna.

"It leaves them hungry," coach Josh Fluke said. "They're excited to get back in that position and win and keep going."

Pe Ell-Willapa Valley Titans

COACH: Josh Fluke (6th)

2021: 6-4 (district crossover)

PLAYERS TO WATCH: Wil Clements, QB/RB/LB, sr; Kolton Fluke, QB/TE/LB, sr; Garrett Keaton, OL/DL/K, sr.

Sept. 2 Tenino

Sept. 9 at Adna*

Sept. 16 Wahkiakum*

Sept. 23 Napavine*

Sept. 30 at Morton-White

Pass*

Oct. 7 Ilwaco*

Oct. 14 at Raymond-South

Bend*

Oct. 21 Forks*

Oct. 28 at Rainier*

*Denotes C2BL games



Pe Ell-Willapa Valley's Wil Clements unleashes a toss during a drill Aug. 18 in Lebam.

Alec Dietz / alec@chronline.com

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Kolb Brothers Back to Lead Vikings

By Josh Kirshenbaum
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Heading into its second full season in the 1B ranks, Mossyrock is fully into the 8-man football realm. Now, the feeling-out period is over, and the Vikings feel they're due to take the next step.

"These kids, they want to be better," head coach Eric Ollikainen said. "They're tired of .500 and (they) want something more for themselves. The upper-classmen are really setting the tone this year."

And Mossyrock could well have the group to do it. Eight returning key players would be a good amount for an 11-man team, but in the 1B ranks, the Vikings are set to have experience lining up at just about every spot on the field.

The attack will begin with Mossyrock's returning all-league brothers. Keegan Kolb racked up over 1,700 all-purpose yards to lead the Vikings both in receiving and rushing, and comes back for his senior season as arguably the most dangerous big-play threat in the league.

"He's just explosive," Ollikainen said. "He's not a huge kid, but he's pretty powerful, and now he's got another year in the weight room. He's a pretty powerful kid, and pretty shifty. He's tough to bring down."

His brother Easton, meanwhile, was already playing above his freshman status by the end of last fall, and comes back ready to take the next step.

"He continues to progress in the huddle and his leadership on the team, he's sort of taking over," Ollikainen said. "The kids believe in him. And he's got the arm to back it up too."

But beyond those two, the Vikings think they have a full arsenal of weapons to add.

Sage Greisen and Marshall Brockway are set to play off each other — and the Kolbs — at tailback, giving Mossyrock another dimension with a downhill game, and Zack Munoz will give



Alec Dietz / alec@chronline.com

Mossyrock Vikings

COACH: Eric Ollikainen (3rd)
2021: 5-5 (district crossover)
PLAYERS TO WATCH: Easton Kolb, QB, so; Keegan Kolb, WR/DB, sr; Sage Greisen, RB/LB, sr.
Sept. 2 at Concrete
Sept. 10 at Quilcene
Sept. 16 Muckleshoot Tribal*
Sept. 24 at Sound Christian Academy*
Sept. 30 Taholah*
Sept. 14 at Naselle*
Sept. 21 Winlock*
Sept. 28 Oakville*
*Denotes CVL games

opposing defenses yet another outside threat to worry about.

"It's nice to have other weapons too," Ollikainen said. "Keegan got hot last year, and that's good, that's what we wanted. But I think we're going to have more kids getting hot this year."

Throw in experience on the line as well, and the Vikings could well have the group needed to truly step into the state picture.

They'll certainly find out in a hurry, with another loaded non-league slate. Back-to-back trips north to start the season — included a visit to state runners-up Quilcene — will be a tough ask, and the Vikings once again get to face Naselle and Winlock in back-to-back weeks late in the season, with a whole lot on the line.

"It looks pretty good on paper, though we looked good on paper last year," Ollikainen said. "It doesn't count until we play the games."

Acorns Eager to Get Back Onto the Field

By Alec Dietz
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After a one-win season a year ago, August and a new season could not come soon enough for the Oakville football team.

The Acorns, who took a break from football due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-21, struggled in head coach Skyler Davis' first season at the helm last year, but are looking forward to more improvement in 2022.

"August came quick," Davis said. "As the days kept getting closer and closer we were ready to get the pads on. When we had our parent information night and the kids came out to that, they kept asking, 'when is the first day we can hit?'"

Returning all but two players from last season, and with some improved turnout, Davis feels like his guys can string together more wins this season. And more importantly, his players be-

lieve the same.

"I can tell they're eager," he said. "They're ready to win, they don't want to be complacent again like last year. Same with me, I'm ready to do my best to put them in the right positions."

Ashton Boyd returns at tailback and will receive a large chunk of carries once again, and junior quarterback Eddie Klatush will be a factor in the offense as well. Davis also praised the play and experience of his line, headlined by Courtney Price.

Though the Acorns will play most of their games on the road, due to locker room availability issues and construction at Oakville High School, they're ready for their first contest against Lake Quinault Sept. 10.

In Year 2 of the Davis era, the coach and his team are going to utilize the lessons learned from 2021 after a full year of prep to

hopefully be more competitive in 2022.

Oakville Acorns

COACH: Skyler Davis (2nd)
2021: 1-7
PLAYERS TO WATCH: Eddie Klatush, QB/DB, jr; Ashton Boyd, RB/LB, sr.
Sept. 10 at Lake Quinault*
Sept. 16 at Taholah*
Sept. 23 Evergreen Lutheran*
Sept. 30 at Naselle*
Oct. 7 at Winlock*
Oct. 14 Sound Christian*
Oct. 21 Muckleshoot Tribal
Oct. 28 at Mossyrock*
*Denotes CVL games

it was pretty humbling to have one win last year," Davis said. "It's also nice because you can't do much worse. We know we can expand on that and be competitive in games and not be a checkmark on other teams' schedules."

Behind them, it'll be Payton Sickles coming into play quarterback, a spot he already has experience with. Back in the winter season in 2021, Sickles went into the shortened slate in a battle with Patching and split time with him under center; come the fall last year he moved out to split end for most of the season.

This fall, he's back as not just the undisputed starter, but the most experienced rushing threat the team has.

"I'm taking it as I'm going to be the guy, I want to be the guy," Sickles said. "I don't want someone else to be that guy; they can be that, but I want to be that leader on the field, off the field,

please see WINLOCK, page C8

Cardinals Replacing Plenty From Historic Team

By Josh Kirshenbaum

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The Winlock football team's first full season as an 8-man squad was one for the history books, with a second-place league finish, a home crossover win, and its first state playoff win in over two decades.

Now, the Cardinals have to move on to the second step for all newly-successful teams: maintaining it through turnover.

Gone is Nolan Swofford, who nearly reached 2,000 yards on the ground and broke the state single-game scoring record. Gone is Neal Patching, who sliced up opponents nearly as efficiently and earned all-league honors at quarterback. Gone is Collin Regalado, who, on the few occasions the Cardinals threw the ball, was usually the man they targeted.

Now, it's up to head coach Ernie Samples, his staff, and his squad to prove that all those

Winlock Cardinals

COACH: Ernie Samples (6th)
2021: 9-2 (state quarterfinals)
PLAYERS TO WATCH: Jay Crow, OL/DL, jr; Xavier Barragan, OL/DL, sr; Payton Sickles, QB/DB, sr.
Sept. 2 Toutle Lake
Sept. 10 at Concrete
Sept. 17 at Evergreen Lutheran*
Sept. 23 Naselle*
Sept. 30 at Sound Christian*
Oct. 7 Oakville*
Oct. 14 Muckleshoot Tribal
Oct. 21 at Mossyrock*
Oct. 28 Taholah*
*Denotes CVL games

wins weren't a one-year thing.

It'll start up front, with Xavier Barragan, Kyle Akin, and Austin Allen forming the three-man line to create gaps and get the Cardinals into all that open space the 8-man game provides.

"We're an option team, so we don't block everybody on the line of scrimmage; it adds that



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Expectations for Strong Season Higher Than Ever in Tenino

By Alec Dietz

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It's not often you lose an All-Area MVP, Division I recruit, all-everything player, and expect to be even better the following year.

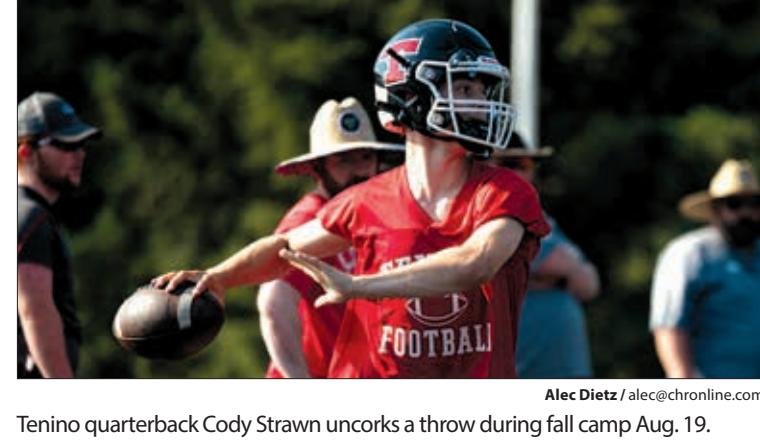
Gone are the years yearning for relevance in Tenino. The Beavers, despite needing to fill the massive void left by Takari Hickle, expect big things from a group returning 18 starters.

"We expect a lot of our team, we expect to do good things," senior Dylan Spicer said. "Losing a great player isn't going to hold us back, we're going to do the same thing we did last year and continue to dominate."

After Hickle announced before last season that the Beavers weren't afraid of the Montesano's or Eatonville's anymore — and proceeded to rush for over 2,000 yards and help the Beavs dispatch the Bulldogs and lose their only regular season game to the Cruisers — that mindset has only grown in Tenino.

No longer are the Beavers intimidated, now the expectation is to win and to make a deeper run at state than last season's quarterfinal experience.

"We've got a lot of guys that have played football, period," Beavers coach Cary Nagel said. "Them having that opportunity to go that far in the playoffs last year was beneficial for practices



Alec Dietz / alec@chronline.com

Tenino quarterback Cody Strawn uncorks a throw during fall camp Aug. 19.

and all that. It was huge for them and they're hungry for more."

Spicer is back after rushing for over 1,000 yards last year, and will earn the lion-share of carries for the Beavers this year in the backfield. Kysen Knox is swapping over from quarterback to fullback and will earn some touches in the backfield, and Cody Strawn, after some bad injury luck, will give the Beavs an outside run threat at quarterback.

Randall Marti will return to help anchor the Beaver defense at linebacker, and slot into the backfield as one of the best athletes on the field. Tenino also returns a good chunk of experience in the trenches.

All of that experience will help them in perhaps the toughest 1A league in the state.

"Our league is a gauntlet," Nagel said. "The coaches in our league do a fantastic job of getting their guys ready to play. It adds

Tenino Beavers

COACH: Cary Nagel (6th)

2021: 10-2 (state quarterfinals)

PLAYERS TO WATCH: Dylan

Spicer, RB/LB, sr; Randall Marti, RB/LB, sr; Andres Zamudio, OL/DL, sr.

Sept. 2 at PWV

Sept. 9 Sequim

Sept. 16 Klahowya

Sept. 23 at Onalaska

Sept. 30 Eatonville*

Oct. 7 at Hoquiam*

Oct. 14 Elma*

Oct. 21 at Montesano*

Oct. 28 at Rochester

*Denotes Evergreen games

to the value and the product that our league puts on the field. But the boys know, they've been playing Monte and Elma since they were kids. They understand the task that's ahead of them, they've put their best foot forward in the weight room this summer."



Alec Dietz / alec@chronline.com

A Winlock ballcarrier eludes tacklers against Naselle at the Cardinals' jamboree Aug. 27.

Winlock

Continued from page C1

in the classroom. I'm ready to accept that and take that on."

Accompanying him in the backfield, Jay Crow is set to make the move from offensive lineman to tailback, playing off Sickles and — the Cardinals hope — setting the tone on the

ground.

Without Swofford to bulldoze through entire defenses at once, though, Samples is expecting to have to dip into more facets of the option between Sickles and Crow to get their yards.

"Last year we went away from the veer and pitch stuff to more power because of Nolan and the way he ran," he said. "It's going to be interesting what we're going to look like."

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