

Running backs dominate the Mid-Col landscape

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The Mid-Columbia Conference may be in its first year of existence, but its running backs sure are helping put the fledgling organization on the map.

Last week, Walla Walla senior Jonah Hoe rushed for 436 yards in a 45-27 win over Pasco. A week before that, it was Kennewick senior Devven Ramos,

who scampered for 303 yards in a 40-28 win over Wa-Hi.

Hoe already has eclipsed the 1,000-yard mark and leads the MCC with 14 TDs and 1,193 yards on 168 carries — an average of 7.1 yards a carry. But he's not the only one with his eyes on a big season.

Five other running backs could crack 1,000 by regular-season's end.

Ramos (140 carries-899 yards, 7 TDs), Hanford senior Jalen DeVine (112-893, 7); Pasco senior Luis Murillo (115-796, 4); Southridge junior Kadin Diaz (120-666, 6); and Chiawana sophomore Clifton Lozano (124-659, 4) are on track to reach what is consid-

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ered to be a magic mark for any running back.

That's not even including Josh

Phillips and Cameron Simpson at Richland. They have combined to run for 632 yards on 124 carries and four TDs to lead the Bombers' ground attack.

"This is a great league for running backs," said Hanford coach Rob Oram, whose team will have the daunting task of containing Ramos when the teams meet at 7 p.m. today at Lampson Stadium.

"Ramos is a very, very gifted player. He might be the best of them all," Oram said. "He'll outrun four guys and then make two more miss on a shake-and-bake. Very few runners can do both."

Oram also pointed to Lions receiver Bodie Simpson as a dangerous threat from anywhere on the field.

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"He's a threat any time he touches the ball. Kennewick (3-2-1 overall, 2-2 MCC) does a good job putting him in a variety of situations to exploit a mismatch," Oram said.

But Hanford (5-1, 3-1) won't be without its weapons, either. The Falcons will counter with DeVine, who leads the MCC with 8 yards per carry. He'll do so behind an offensive line with two Division I-caliber tackles in Joe Douglas and Will Ramos.

Hanford, however, will be without two-way lineman Xavier Johnson, who will miss the rest of the season with a broken leg. But the 6-foot senior

has been working to get his replacement, 6-5 senior Aaron Cunningham, ready for duty.

"Xavier was out at practice today with his broken leg and his little cart. Cunningham was sicker than a dog, but Xavier was teaching him some things about playing defensive line," Oram said. "Xavier is injured, but he's still helping the team, coaching people up.

"It's a good group of young men and some special senior leaders."

PASCO (0-4, 0-6) VS. KAMIAKIN (3-1, 4-2), LAMPSON STADIUM, 7 P.M.: The loss of top WR K Perrins (back) will sting the Braves, but the Bulldogs could be playing without Murillo, who has scored 30 of Pasco's 52 points this season out of the back-field.

Bulldogs coach Dustin Lamb

said Murillo is questionable for the game with an unspecified injury, but he's also encouraged by the amount of young players willing to step in and contribute.

"We start so many darn sophomores. They look at it like they're getting an on-field education. They're always hungry," Lamb said. "But we've got to play a little bit of defense (against Kamiakin). They're among the league leaders in offense, and we're among the very last in defense. We have to try to give them some different looks."

Braves coach Scott Biglin isn't panicking about Perrins. In fact, he's excited to see what 6-6 WR Jim Fowler can do in his place. And after last week's loss to Chiawana, the Braves are eager to make that a distant memory.

"It's always nice to go out and wipe the slate clean," Biglin said. "The short week is a disadvantage,

because you don't get as many reps. You just hope fundamentals take over."

SOUTHRIDGE (3-1, 4-2) VS. WALLA WALLA (1-3, 3-3), 7 P.M., BORLESKE STADIUM: The Suns need a big win on the road to stay in the race for the MCC title.

This should be a fun matchup for fans, as the Blue Devils are the top rushing team in the league (271 yards per game), and Southridge has the best defense against the run (104 yards allowed per game).

One of them has to give Friday night.

CHIAWANA (3-3) VS. LAKE CITY, IDAHO (4-2-1), 7 P.M., EDGAR BROWN STADIUM: Lake City tied Kennewick 27-27 in a Week 1 matchup in Coeur d'Alene.

RICHLAND (3-2) VS. POST FALLS, IDAHO (1-5), 7 P.M., FRAN RISH STADIUM: Post Falls has been outscored 188-107 this season.