

FOOTBALL PLAYOFF PREVIEW: Richland at Federal Way



Federal Way senior quarterback Keenan Curran hands the ball off to junior Chico McClatcher during the Eagles' 26-20 win over Skyline Friday night in Sammamish. Federal Way will host Richland at 7 p.m. tonight in the state quarterfinals. — Image Credit: Rick Edelman, For The Mirror

by CASEY OLSON, Federal Way Mirror Sports Editor
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What: Federal Way (9-2) vs. Richland (10-1)

When: 7 p.m., Friday

Where: Federal Way Memorial Stadium

What's at stake: A berth into the semifinals of the Class 4A State Football Playoffs. The winner of the Federal Way/Richland game will host the winner of a game between Chiawana and Wenatchee on either Nov. 29 or 30. The semifinal game will be played in Eastern Washington.

Why Richland will win: The Bombers haven't just been winning during their eight-game streak, they have been dominating. Since getting beaten up in the third week of the season by Chiawana, 42-7, Richland has been scoring 44 points a game.

The offense is led by senior quarterback Zach Whitby. The 5-foot-10, 180-pounder is a true "dual threat" and might be a better runner than passer. Last week against Skyview, Whitby was 10 for 17 for 76 yards and also ran the ball six times, including an 11-yard touchdown. On the season, Whitby has thrown for 1,984 yards and 22 touchdowns and only eight interceptions.

Whitby's leading receiver is senior Payton Radliff, who has 32 catches for 600 yards and 10 touchdowns. Radliff was a first-team, All-Mid Columbian League selection, as was 6-foot-4, 300-pound junior offensive lineman William Fisher.

The Bombers leading rusher is senior Anthony Galat, who ran the ball 19 times for 133 yards and a touchdown against Skyview.

The Bombers have also been dominant on the defensive side of the ball. Richland has given up 14 points or under in nine of its 11 games. In their two playoff games, the Bombers gave up just seven points to the Ferris Saxons and nine to a high-powered Skyview offense.

Richland finished second to Chiawana in the Mid-Columbian League with a 6-1 record. Chiawana, who plays Wenatchee in the quarterfinals, was a perfect 7-0.

The Bombers have an impressive group of assistant coaches that includes legendary Prosser head coach Tom Moore and 17-year NFL vet Kimo Von Oelhoffen. Moore, Richland's quarterbacks coach, is the father of former Boise State quarterback Kellen Moore and won four state titles at Prosser. Von Oelhoffen was best known as a defensive lineman for the Pittsburgh Steelers.

Why Federal Way will win: The Eagles seemed to be dead in the water after a lackluster first half last week against the No. 2-ranked Skyline Spartans. Federal Way trailed 14-0 and never really threatened the Skyline defense on a rainy, windy and cold night in Sammamish.

But the second half was a different story for the Eagles, who outscored the Spartans, 26-6, to advance to the state quarterfinals for the second year in a row. Last season, Federal Way was blasted in the quarterfinals by Camas after traveling to Vancouver.

However, the Eagles won't have to get on a bus this year. Instead, Richland will make the four-hour bus ride across the mountains to play at Federal Way Memorial Stadium on Friday night.

The Eagles have put together a pair of solid games during the postseason, both on the road.

Federal Way played its most complete game of the season during their playoff-opening win over Edmonds-Woodway, 37-20. And played the impressive second-half during the victory over No. 2-ranked Skyline.

In the Eagles' two losses during the SPSL South season to Graham-Kapowsin and Curtis, the team made several big-time mistakes in all three phases of the game — offense, defense and special teams. Federal Way finished third in the six-team division.

Obviously, the Eagles will be leaning heavily on Keenan Curran and Chico McClatcher, who might be the most dynamic duo in the state this season. Both are over 2,000 yards of total offense apiece and both have rushed for over 1,300 yards in 11 games.

McClatcher, a junior, has rushed for 1,449 yards and has scored a grand total of 28 touchdowns this season. He also has 632 yards receiving and has touchdowns on punt, kickoff and interception returns and also threw a touchdown pass.

McClatcher already has offers from college programs like Washington, Washington State, Utah, UCLA, Boise State and Arizona State.

Curran, a 6-foot-2, 185-pound athlete, has rushed for 1,303 yards and 14 touchdowns from the quarterback position and also has 646 yards passing with six TDs. On the defensive side of the ball, Curran led the SPSL with five interceptions. He was voted the SPSL 4A South Division Defensive Back of the Year this week.

Curran already has scholarship offers from Air Force, Army, Idaho, San Jose State, Wyoming and Yale.

The Eagles gashed the Skyline defense during their second-half run last week and ended the game with 414 yards on the ground and zero through the air. McClatcher finished up with 246 yards on 25 carries and a TD and Curran had 16 carries for 140 yards and two scores.

The Eagles will obviously need to score points and run the ball effectively to beat Richland. In their nine wins, Federal Way has averaged over 40 points a game. But, in their two losses to Graham-Kapowsin and Curtis, the Eagles scored only 14 points a game.

The Eagles' defense has been swarming to the ball during the postseason. Last week against Skyline, Federal Way had an amazing 18 players make a tackle. Robert Savusa led the way with five tackles and two sacks. Chris Tuiasosopo finished with seven tackles and Jared Pulu and Jay-Tee Tiuli both ended up with five each.

CLASS 4A State Playoffs

Richland @ **Federal Way**, 7 p.m. Friday

Chiawana @ Wenatchee, 1 p.m. Saturday

Bothell @ Bellarmine Prep, 1 p.m. Saturday

Camas @ Eastlake, 3 p.m. Saturday

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