

# Sports

It's a battle for the trenches as Braves, Bombers hit the field Page 6B



BOB BRAWDY Tri-City Herald

While Richland and Kamiakin have had big success in the passing game, both teams say the ground game will be key in their matchup Friday.

## PREP FOOTBALL PREVIEW | WEEK 6

# Battle for the trenches

■ Despite their high-flying offenses, both Kamiakin and Richland say Friday's game will be won by the ground-pounding big men. Southridge and Chiawana meet in another matchup of MCC leaders.

BY DUSTIN BRENNAN  
dbrennan@tricityherald.com

While Friday's matchup between Richland and Kamiakin will feature some of the top backs and receivers the Mid-Columbia Conference has to offer, Bombers coach Mike Neidhold — a

former offensive line coach — wants the attention to stay at the line of scrimmage.

"All this fancy passing down here is great, and it looks great," Neidhold said. "But I want the big sweaty guys that can get down in there and wrestle somebody down into the dirt. Those

are my guys. I want to see us do well there."

Kamiakin coach Scott Biglin echoed that sentiment.

"That's kind of how it is in any game you play — it's the big guys," Biglin said. "If we can handle their front four, we could have some success. But they're a good all-around football team. If we get around their front four, they've got some DBs with (multiple) interceptions a piece, so it's going to be a

tough battle for us."

While both Richland (5-0, 3-0 MCC) and Kamiakin (4-1, 2-1) have had the most dynamic passing attacks in the conference all season, both teams' ground games have ranked in the middle of the pack.

Braves running back Jethro Questad had his first 100-yard rushing game of the conference season against Hanford last week —

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## TRENCHES

he's still averaging 7 yards a crack on his 67 carries. The Bombers have only gotten one 100-yard rushing performance since MCC play started: a 16-carry, 105-yard and two-touchdown performance from junior Parker McCary in Week 4 against Kennewick.

Part of Richland's lack of a standout rusher can be attributed to three players splitting carries — junior Victor Strasser, senior Ben Stanfield and McCary have shared time — but a bigger part of it has been a reliance on the passing game to move the ball downfield. Neidhold said that tendency will likely have to shift this week in a game that will more than likely be won in the trenches.

"If we have an Achilles' heel, in the last couple of weeks we haven't been able to run the ball very well, very clean," Neidhold said. "We haven't blocked it right and ran it right enough, and as we head into this stretch run of our season, we're going to have to do that."

The turning points for both the Bombers' and Braves' seasons seem clear.

For Richland, it was at halftime in their season opener against Skyline — which is 4-0 since that early September game at Fran Rish Stadium — as the Bombers have allowed just 35 points in their past 18 quarters on defense. For Kamiakin, it was a 35-13 drubbing at the hands of the Chiawana Riverhawks in Week 3, as the Braves responded with blowout wins against Pasco and Hanford over the past two weeks.

"When we played Chiawana, we weren't ready for what they were gonna bring, and they got after us and kicked our butts pretty heavily," Biglin said. "We came back on Monday and, needless to say, we were pretty ticked off and we let the kids know that's not how we play our brand of football. And the last two weeks, they stepped up. So we're gonna find out again this week when we face a physical Richland team if we're going to overcome that and step up to the challenge, or fold tent again."

Friday represents the toughest matchup for both teams since their respective turning points, and both coaches are looking forward to the opportunity to get tested as the MCC season hits the halfway point.

"After five weeks, we want a game like this. We need a game like this, and so do they," Neidhold said. "A game that tests us and gets us out of our comfort zone a little bit. This week will be that for sure."

Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. at Lampson Stadium.

### AROUND THE MCC SOUTHRIDGE AT CHIAWANA

In this matchup of teams tied at the top of their respective classifications in the MCC, the Riverhawks (5-0, 3-0) still feel like a steady favorite over the Suns (3-2, 2-1), considering only one of their victories has been by fewer than 30 points.

Chiawana running back Andrew Vargas picked apart the Kennewick defense last week for 241 yards and seven touchdowns to lead the Riverhawks to a convincing 54-7 victory. With an MCC-best 1,390 rushing yards and 22 touchdowns already to his credit, Vargas and the Chiawana offensive line will square off against a Southridge defense that has allowed just one opposing rusher to crack the 100-yard mark.

In the Suns' 26-20 victory over Walla Walla last week, running back Zayid Al-Ghani had 171 rushing yards, quarterback Mason Martin added 135, and the defense held the Blue Devils to a season-low point total.

**KENNEWICK AT HANFORD:** Coming off consecutive blowout losses against two of the conference's top teams — Chiawana and Kamiakin — the Falcons (2-3, 0-3) will try to get their pass-happy offense off the ground against the Lions (2-3, 1-2), who have faced a similarly daunting conference schedule thus far.

Kennewick topped Walla Walla by a point in overtime two weeks ago, but bookended its lone MCC win with a 40-0 defeat to Richland and the aforementioned 54-7 loss against Chiawana. Even after matching up with three of the conference's top offenses, the Lions' defense has managed to stay in the middle of the pack against the pass, allowing an average of 157 yards per game.

Hanford wide receiver Joe Gauthier — 25 receptions for 251 yards with six touchdowns — ranks second in the conference in receiving and has been a big weapon for sophomore quarterback Garrett Horner, who leads the MCC in completions (94) and is second in TD passes (15) and third in yards (1,087).

**PASCO AT WALLA WALLA:** No doubt frustrated after falling to Southridge a week ago, the Blue Devils (2-3, 1-2) will try to get back on track against the Bulldogs (0-5, 0-3).

Down 20-0 at halftime against Southridge, Walla Walla quarterback Mitch Lesmeister threw three

### Mid-Columbia Conference

	Lg	All
Chiawana	3-0	5-0
Richland	3-0	5-0
Kamiakin	2-1	4-1
Southridge	2-1	3-2
Kennewick	1-2	2-3
Walla Walla	1-2	2-3
Hanford	0-3	2-3
Pasco	0-3	0-5

**Friday**  
Kennewick at Hanford, 7 p.m.  
Pasco at Walla Walla, 7 p.m.  
Richland at Kamiakin, 7 p.m.  
Southridge at Chiawana, 7 p.m.

### CWAC

	Lg	All
Ellensburg	4-0	4-1
Othello	4-0	4-1
Prosser	3-1	4-1
East Valley	2-2	3-2
Quincy	2-2	2-3
Selah	2-2	2-3
Toppenish	2-2	2-3
Ephrata	1-3	1-4
Grandview	0-4	1-4
Wapato	0-4	0-5

**Friday**  
Grandview at Prosser, 7 p.m.  
Ephrata at Othello, 7 p.m.  
Toppenish at East Valley, 7 p.m.  
Ellensburg at Quincy, 7 p.m.  
Selah at Wapato, 7 p.m.

### SCAC East

	Lg	All
Connell	3-0	5-0
Royal	3-0	5-0
Columbia-Burbank	2-1	2-3
Kiona-Benton	1-2	1-4
River View	1-2	1-4
Wahluke	1-2	1-4
Warden	1-2	1-4
College Place	0-3	1-4

**Friday**  
Connell at River View, 7 p.m.

Columbia-Burbank at Warden, 7 p.m.  
Wahluke at College Place, 7 p.m.  
Kiona-Benton at Royal, 7 p.m.

### Eastern Washington Athletic Conference

	Lg	All
Kittitas	3-0	4-0
Dayton-Waitsburg	3-0	4-1
Tri-Cities Prep	2-1	4-1
Mabton	2-1	3-2
DeSales	1-2	2-3
Liberty Christian	1-2	1-3
Lyle-Wishram	0-3	1-4
White Swan	0-3	0-5

**Friday**  
Tri-Cities Prep at Liberty Christian (Hanford HS), 7 p.m.  
DeSales at Kittitas, 7 p.m.  
Mabton at Dayton-Waitsburg, 7 p.m.

### Southeast 1B

	Lg	All
Garfield-Palouse	1-0	3-1
Sunnyside Christian	0-0	4-0
Colton	0-0	4-1
Touchet	0-0	2-2
St. John-Endicott	0-0	0-4
Pomeroy	0-1	3-2

**Friday**  
Sunnyside Christian at Touchet, 7 p.m.

### OREGON 5A District 1

	Lg	All
Bend	3-0	5-0
Summit	3-0	4-1
Hermiston	2-1	2-3
Redmond	2-1	2-3
Pendleton	1-2	2-3
Ridgeview	1-2	1-4
Mountain View	0-3	2-3
Hood River Valley	0-3	0-5

**Friday**  
Ridgeview at Hermiston, 7 p.m.

touchdowns to tie the game up, but the Blue Devils would fall in heartbreaking fashion for the second week in a row. Walla Walla boasts the league's No. 2 rushing attack, which averages 274.4 yards per game, but struggled to get rolling against the Suns, carrying 30 times for just 110 yards. Starting running back Brennan Barberich was a game-time scratch because of a lingering back injury.

A menacing finish looms for Walla Walla, with Richland, Kamiakin and Chiawana coming up to finish out the regular season. With losses to Southridge, Kamiakin and Richland in the rearview mirror, Pasco has a notably lighter second-half MCC schedule.

### SMALL SCHOOLS TRI-CITIES PREP AT LIBERTY CHRISTIAN

The Jaguars (4-1, 2-1 EWAC) rebounded from their loss to EWAC favorite Dayton Waitsburg with a 32-28 victory over winless White Swan last week in a game that looked like a blowout until the last two minutes. They'll try to keep their strong season going against the Patriots (1-3, 1-2), who nearly knocked off undefeated Kittitas a week ago but ended up falling 20-14.

The veteran Tri-Cities Prep squad is led offensively by senior Gavin Baker, who has provided rock-solid play at the quarterback position all season, passing for 577 yards and six touchdowns and leading the team with 648 rushing yards and 10 scores.

Tri-Cities Prep senior

linebacker Will Dituri leads the team with 44 tackles despite missing last week's contest. He'll be tasked with slowing down Liberty Christian running back Konnor Denhoed, who had 195 yards and a touchdown against Kittitas.

The game will be played at Hanford High School.

Other local games include Grandview at Prosser, Ephrata at Othello, Connell at River View, Columbia-Burbank at Warden, Wahluke at College Place, Kiona-Benton at Royal, Sunnyside Christian at Touchet, DeSales at Kittitas, Mabton at Dayton-Waitsburg, and Ridgeview at Hermiston.

Dustin Brennan:  
509-582-1413,  
@Tweet\_By\_Dustin