

# Sports



Richland senior defensive tackle Brigham Whitby (74), tackling Chiawana running back Andrew Vargas, missed most of last season because of a broken foot. This year, he has been one of the best players on the Bombers' roster and in the Mid-Columbia Conference.

BOB BRAWDY Tri-City Herald

4A STATE FOOTBALL | BOTHELL VS. RICHLAND, 5 P.M. SATURDAY

## Bomber is back with a vengeance

■ After breaking his foot in 2015 and missing almost his entire junior season, Richland senior lineman Brigham Whitby has become one of the best — and nastiest — players in the Mid-Columbia Conference.

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It's better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. Brigham Whitby lost what he loves last year, when he had to sit out after breaking his foot on the third play of the Richland High School football season. He briefly appeared in the Bombers' last couple of games.

But that was Whitby's junior season, and so far, he has made his senior campaign count.

"I'm having a good time playing with the guys," Whitby said. "I'm not taking it for granted. I love playing football, just having the chance to actually play it and not watching from the sidelines again."

From his spot at defensive tackle, the 6-foot, 275-pound Whitby has anchored

a Richland defense that led the Mid-Columbia Conference through the regular season (10.4 points, 205.2 yards per game) and pitched shutouts in a regional cross-over game against Central Valley and its state playoff opener against Sunnyside.

He and the No. 3 Bombers (11-0) will look to keep up the intensity in their Class 4A state quarterfinal match-up against Bothell (9-2) at 5 p.m. Saturday at Lampson Stadium.

As Richland coach Mike Neidhold describes, Whitby's technical skills — he uses his hands as well as anyone



Whitby

Neidhold has coached — and relentlessness make him a match-up nightmare for opposing offensive lines.

"He's usually battling two guys, so the fact that he uses his leverage and his strength to stay even in there is pretty impressive," Neidhold said. "Anytime you get two-for-one on the defense, that's a win because it means someone else is running free. And that really helps (junior) Jax Lee on the other side because he's usually got a one-on-one battle going on."

"If it takes two guys to block Brigham and one guy to block Jax, that works out pretty good for us."

While Whitby thinks of himself more as a defense-first player, he also excels at

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his spot on Richland's offensive line.

With Whitby at left guard and 6-5, 300-pound senior Dontae Powell at left tackle, quarterback Paxton Stevens' blind side has been pretty well protected this season.

But as is the story with most talented offensive linemen, Whitby is a better run blocker than pass protector, Neidhold said.

"It suits his personality more as 'I'm going to take your will away from you,'" said Neidhold, who mainly coached the linemen when he was an assistant at Richland from 1986-2007. "Pass blocking is a little more passive, and that's not him at all."

Whitby would agree with that assessment.

"Most of the time I like defense, but sometimes when we're playing offense and we're just running the ball down their throat, I prefer offense," Whitby said. "I like just pushing people and making people get out of the way."

Thanks to the solid play from the offensive line, Richland has had two of the top running backs in the MCC this season in senior Ben Stanfield (784 yards, seven touchdowns) and junior Parker McCary (591 yards, 11 TDs).

"Everywhere around, we've got players that can do the exact same thing," Whitby said. "It's great to know that we have an entire team that can do their job and execute well."

Regardless of what side of the ball Whitby is on, his brash style of play and tireless work ethic in the trenches allow him to fill a

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Richland senior lineman Brigham Whitby

key role for the Bombers: tone setter.

"The O-line and D-line will set the culture of your team, and Brigham has set the culture of our team with his work ethic and nastiness, and willingness to get the job done and knowing when it's time to go to work," Neidhold said. "There's no redo, it's whatever we've got to do, we're going to get it done right now. 'Get up, let's go, it's time to go to work.' I think that's his mantra."

Whitby said he's interested in playing football after he graduates from high school, but hasn't received any college offers. He has applied to Brigham Young University-Idaho and Utah State, and said he is interested in material sciences.

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