

2016 CLASS 4A STATE CHAMPIONS: CAMAS PAPERMAKERS



PATRICK HAGERTY For The Columbian

Camas players hold up their championship banner at the Tacoma Dome on Saturday night following their banner season capped off by the Class 4A state championship.

Camas basks in its first title

Perfect finish to perfect football season

By PAUL VALENCIA
Columbian staff writer

TACOMA — They crushed teams in September. They kept rolling in October. They owned November.

In December, the Camas Papermakers finished the job.

They are now and will forever be the Perfect Papermakers and the 2016 Class

4A state football champions.

“Honestly, I feel like I’m on top of the world right now,” quarterback/safety Jack Colletto said Saturday night after leading Camas to a 24-14

victory over Richland in the state finals at the Tacoma Dome.

“So thankful for everybody. The scout team. The community. The coaches. The play-

ers. We all deserved this.”

Will Schultz scored on a 38-yard run — his first carry of the night — to give Camas

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Sweet redemption from 2013 defeat

TACOMA — As the victory celebration swirled around him, Michael Boyle lay on his back at midfield.

He gazed up, where the apex of the Tacoma Dome roof resembled an eye staring down.

His mind’s eye flashed back to three years ago. Then, as a freshman, Boyle and his Camas teammates were also sprawled on the Tacoma Dome turf.

Gutted by a loss in the 2013 state championship game that

saw Camas surrender a 13-point lead in the final 70 seconds, Boyle only remembered glaring disappointment.

For Boyle and his senior classmates, that’s what made Saturday’s 24-14 victory over Richland in the



Micah Rice
Commentary

4A state championship game even sweeter.

“It’s total redemption,” Boyle said. “I’ve never been happier.”

Through 2014, 2015 and this unbeaten 2016 season, that improbable state-championship collapse has bugged the Camas football program like a persistent itch.

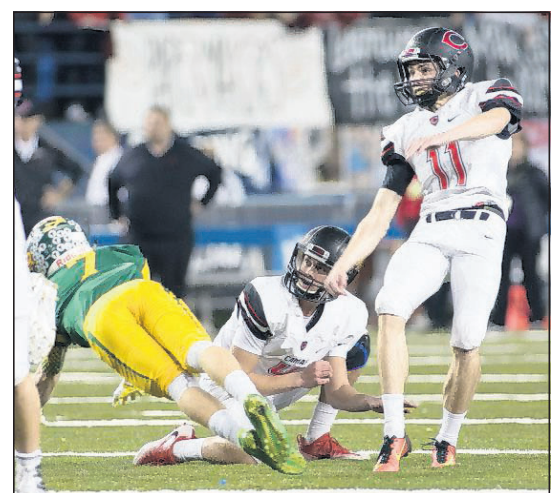
Saturday, the Papermakers did more than scratch out a win. They ripped off a cloak that has shrouded the program for three years.

“We’re kind of the hard luck story,” coach Jon Eagle said. “Finally we can put that story to bed.”

Boyle had been harder on himself than most. As a freshman, the placekicker combined with another kicker to miss two field goals and three extra points in that 27-26 championship game loss to Chiawana.

Saturday, Boyle was perfect. On the last play of

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Camas’ Michael Boyle (11) kicks a field goal to give his team a 10-7 lead at halftime.

HIGH SCHOOLS

FOOTBALL

Saturday’s Game At Tacoma Dome
WIAA CLASS 4A STATE CHAMPIONSHIP
CAMAS 24, RICHLAND 14

Camas	7	3	7	7-24
Richland	0	7	7	0-14

First quarter

Cam — Cooper McNatt 35 pass from Jack Colletto (Michael Boyle kick)

Second quarter

R — Ben Stanfield 41 run (Adam Weissenfels kick)

Cam — Boyle 34 FG

Third quarter

R — Parker McCary recovers offensive fumble in end zone (Weissenfels kick)

Cam — Will Schultz 38 run (Boyle kick) 19.

Fourth quarter

Cam — Colletto 34 run (Boyle kick)

Individual statistics

RUSHING — Camas: Colletto 19-88, Schultz 2-51, Michael Matthews 11-18, Elias Bashir 2-6, Richland: Stanfield 13-83, McCary 10-29, Paxton Stevens 5-26, Team 1-(minus 15).

PASSING — Camas: Colletto 14-20-0-184, Richland: Stevens 15-25-2-175, Weissenfels 0-1-0-0.

RECEIVING — Camas: Drake Owen 7-75, McNatt 4-66, Matthews 1-27, Christian Nghiem 1-11, Richland: Stanfield 2-8, Ryan Piper 1-14, McCary 1-7, Alex Chapman 1-6, Gaven Brasker 4-55, Weissenfels 4-43, Kody Kjarro 2-42.



Camas' Schultz soaks in championship moment

Running back was in at just the right times

By PAUL VALENCIA
Columbian staff writer

TACOMA — His smile lit up the Tacoma Dome as he talked to fans who were there to witness his big night.

Will Schultz was enjoying this moment — the team's moment — enjoying the celebration. He had just helped the Camas Papermakers win their first state championship in football.

That was all he needed, that 24-14 victory over Richland.

He did not really want the spotlight, even after scoring



TED S. WARREN/Associated Press

Camas running back Will Schultz, left, escapes the grasp of Richland's Kyle Kirby, right, to run for a touchdown.

the go-ahead touchdown in the third quarter.

So instead of doing any post-game interviews, he just smiled. He would rather soak in the atmo-

sphere.

"I think that says it all about him," teammate Marshall McIvor said of Schultz. "He's one of the most humble guys I know.

He's a big part of the team. He put one on the board, and he's humble about it. In the classroom, he's the nicest guy you'll ever meet. He's friends with everyone.

"That speaks to his character. It's definitely beyond par."

Schultz, a reserve running back, saw his touches dwindle throughout the season. Yet, as his coach would say, Schultz never stopped working.

At halftime of Saturday's night's championship game, coach Jon Eagle told Schultz the Papermakers were going to need him on offense. To run a few times. To give starter Michael Matthews, who also excels on defense, a break. Eagle told Schultz to be ready to

pass protect, as well.

Pretty much, the coach asked Schultz to do all the things a starter would do, because, after all, that's part of Camas football. Prepare. Be ready. Do the job.

Soon enough, Camas found itself trailing 14-10 in the third quarter. Sure enough, Schultz was in the game.

Schultz, by the way, carried the ball two times total in the previous two weeks.

Saturday, he carried his Papermakers into the lead with a 38-yard touchdown run on his first touch.

"It was a huge run. We've seen him do it before," Eagle said. "But that was a game-winner."

"We've got a lot of play-makers," quarterback Jack

Colletto said. "What's really the most dangerous thing about it is teams don't know who you're giving the ball to. They might be focused on other guys. We used this as a weapon all year."

It could be any one of a number of guys, Colletto said. This night, it was Schultz.

He wasn't done, either. He got one more carry, this one for 13 yards to help Camas get away from the shadow of its own end zone while trying to preserve that three-point lead.

Schultz ended up with 51 yards on two carries — great average — and the game-changing touchdown.

"He's going to be a huge part of our team next year, too," McIvor said.



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Camas' quarterback Jack Colletto (9) takes the team on his back in the final four minutes of the game Saturday night, breaking a long run against the Richland defense in the 4A state championship game Saturday at the Tacoma Dome. Camas won 24-14.

Camas

From Page B1

the lead for good in the third quarter, and Jack Colletto secured the victory with a 34-yard touchdown run in the closing minutes.

Fittingly, Colletto also got the interception to seal the deal. Recently named the state player of the year by The News Tribune of Tacoma, Colletto played Saturday like he was, well, the state player of the year.

"I was pumped. I wasn't letting anybody catch me," Colletto said of the final touchdown. "I just took off."

That gave the Papermakers a 10-point lead with less than three minutes to play. Colletto, though, recalled the last time Camas was in this position, when the Papermakers lost a 13-point lead in the 2013 championship game to Chiawana.

"I'm not letting them beat us when we're up two scores," Colletto said of his mindset just after the touchdown.

Camas had to play defense, again, after all.

"Don't get beat deep,"

Colletto told himself.

Didn't happen. Instead, he got the interception. Three plays later — two in victory formation — Camas could celebrate the school's first state title in the sport.

"You don't have many chances to make history. We definitely did tonight," senior defensive lineman Cody Jackson said.

"Once you see the clock start to wind down, and you know

it's your final plays of high school football, you just give it all you've got," he added. "No better feeling than going out like this."

The Papermakers have made the playoffs the past 14 seasons, they've been to the final four three times before this year, even to the title game once previously.

"It's amazing. First team to bring back the 'ship,' Tanner Howington said. "Just the greatest feeling I've ever felt in my life. I'm never going to forget this."

Michael Matthews, the defensive leader of this team, paid tribute to all

those Papermakers from the past.

"It's a testament to those teams and all the hard work they put in year after year after year," Matthews said. "They set a high standard. Now we're the group of dudes, the first ones to get that ring."

Camas coach Jon Eagle was seen long after the game, holding on to a lot of things, including the championship trophy.

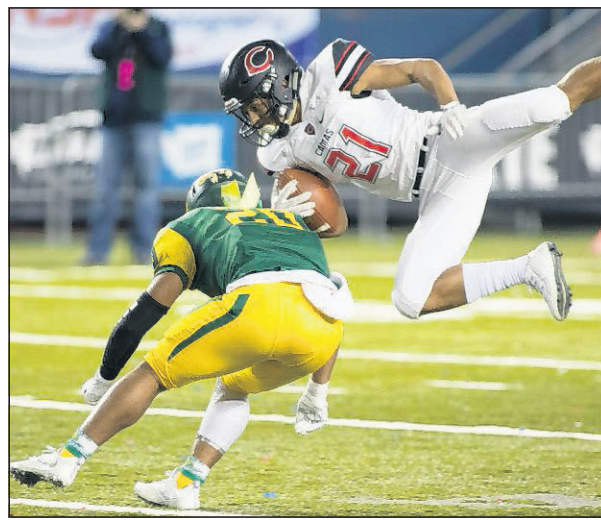
"I'm not letting go of this," he said with a smile as big as the dome.

"It's just a lot of people putting a lot of work in," Eagle said, reflecting on this perfect season. "We thank the players all the time for giving their time, energy and effort, to being part of something bigger than themselves."

When it was over, with Camas in victory formation, Eagle said it was kind of a relief.

"I thought we beat a very good team," Eagle said.

True, this final challenge to a Camas championship



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Camas' Drake Owen (21) gets airborne in front of Richland's Ryan Piper after catching a pass in the first half Saturday night.

came from Richland. The Bombers came prepared, too, holding Camas to a season low in points. And in the third quarter, the Bombers took the lead on a nine-play, 81-yard drive that ended when running back Parker McCary recovered an offensive fumble in the end zone to make it 14-10.

The Papermakers, not used to trailing, had no panic. Instead, they just went to work, responding with an 80-yard drive.

Schultz would get the go-ahead touchdown with four minutes to play in the third quarter.

That put the game into the hands of the Camas defense. Those are very secure hands, by the way.

There would be no miracle finish for a Camas opponent from the Tri-Cities this year.

Instead, it was a championship finish by a perfect team from Southwest Washington.

Rice

From Page B1

the first half, he nailed a 34-yard field goal that saw him keep his poise despite a bobbed snap.

"Three years ago was a disaster," he said. "I couldn't have been happier just to be out here and prove myself. I've been waiting for this moment for three years."

Boyle wasn't the only one who was waiting. Most of 29 seniors on this year's team were freshmen in the Camas program when the 2013 state title slipped away.

That game was a baptism of sorts, their high

school careers christened with the knowledge that state championships don't come easily.

"It definitely raised the stakes of this game," senior linebacker David Aarhus said of his memories of three years ago. "It makes this even more special. If we would have lost, it would have made it even more terrible. But we got the win, so it's all good."

Not everyone on that 2013 Camas team could be on the field Saturday to hoist the program's first state championship trophy.

But that didn't mean they didn't feel a sense of redemption. Reilly Hennessey, the senior quarterback of the 2013



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Camas' Marshall McIvor, right, brings the trophy to the Camas fans after the Papermakers won the 4A state championship on Saturday night at the Tacoma Dome.

team, voiced his pride on Twitter.

"Proud to be a Papermaker," the Eastern Washington QB wrote. "Love that place and could not

be more happy for those guys."

Michael Matthews, a senior linebacker and running back, said many former players have been

in touch this week.

"Those seniors have all been texting me and calling me and telling me just do it for them," Matthews said. "Do it for the whole community."

For three years, Boyle had his eye on this day. Every practice — he kicks year-round — he envisioned redemption on the Tacoma Dome turf.

And when he and the other Camas seniors left that dome for the last time as players on Saturday, they looked back with pride.

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Players reflect on big game

Papermakers celebrate state championship in different ways

By PAUL VALENCIA
Columbian staff writer

The Camas Papermakers took their time late Saturday night.

No need to rush getting on the bus. No need to get home too soon.

They wanted that championship feeling to last.

Pizza. Chocolate Milk. Hey, that's two important ingredients for a football team's celebration.

The chartered buses did not leave the Tacoma Dome until a little after midnight.

By 6 p.m. Sunday, some 20 or so hours after the Papermakers beat Richland 24-14 for the Class 4A state football championship, the Papermakers were still in a good mood.

They just had different ways to celebrate.

Linebacker/running back Michael Matthews said he and teammate Keaton Sturbelle went to Fisherman's Marine to buy some gear Sunday.

"I'm getting ready to go fishing again now that football's over," Matthews said. "I got some new stuff."

Quarterback/safety Jack Colletto relaxed around home for the most part but did get in a trip to Red Robin for a burger.

Lineman Marcus Gray slept in to around noon. Then he woke up, shaking his head.

"I was still in shock with everything," Gray said. "I kept telling myself, 'Man, we did this.' I still really cannot believe it. After we won, I just stood there. I put my hands on my head. I couldn't process everything."

Lineman Dakota Napierkowski had the understatement of the day.

"It still feels pretty good," he said.

Napierkowski, Gray, and Colletto all said they took Sunday to rest and recover.

"My whole body hurts," Napierkowski said.

Gray said he played the championship game with turf toe, and his feet were "killing" him Sunday.

One thing they were not doing, though, was complaining.

"I'd do it over and over again," Gray said.

Napierkowski said it was all worth it.

"You get to wear a cool ring and you get to have a cool picture at the end," Napierkowski said. "And everybody loves you. That's pretty much why."

Napierkowski also watched the television broadcast of the game during the day Sunday. He said it was "kind of weird" watching him and his team play a game on a screen without coaches breaking down the video.

"Even though I knew we were going to win, when I re-watched the game, it's still a ... feeling," Napierkowski said.

Colletto said he planned on watching the replay of the game on ROOT Sports on Sunday night. Matthews was just about to sit down with family and friends Sunday evening to watch the recording.

Chances are, they will enjoy the viewing.