

Eagles Flying High Again

West Valley Off to Their Best Start Since Playing for the State Title in 2009

Playing 2A football in the Northeast corner of the state has never been easy.

For one, the league has always been highly competitive.

Schools like Clarkston and Pullman, along with Rogers and in the past, Shadle Park plus Cheney have always made the road to the playoffs difficult.

Now known as the Greater Spokane League (formerly the Great Northern League), football allocations have also been small.

Several times in the past, the northeast region of 2A schools have had to 'glue' with the CWAC for football playoff allocations.

But, the Round of 32 changed that. This year, the GSL received 3 playoff spots.

Another issue that has plagued the region is travel. Pullman is about an hour-and-a-half away and Clarkston over two hours.

In the post-season it is even more difficult. For example, last year, after Clarkston hosted and won their opening game, they had to travel to Tumwater which was over six hours long.

One school who continually faces these challenges is West Valley of Spokane who won the GSL championship this year with a perfect 6-0 league



Quinlan Hyatt, a 6-foot-7, 255 lb left tackle, is headed to the University of Montana on a football scholarship.

record, (9-0 overall).

This Saturday, travel will not be a problem with the Eagles hosting Mark Morris (4-5) of the GSHL at 3PM.

Along with Clarkston, West Valley has been one of the most successful teams since Craig Whitney took over the program in 2004.

In 2009, they lost the state championship to Lynden, 16-6 and nearly every year are among the best teams in the state.

This year, the orange and black are firing on all cylinders.

"We are very pleased with where we are right now," Whitney stated. "Our frosh just completed an undefeated season. Our JV was also very successful

and we got a lot of kids (varsity) game reps."

But, as Whitney points out, everything has been on an upswing this fall for the school.

"We just swept all of the league championships in athletics; soccer, volleyball, both cross country teams and football," he said. "So, we have great things happening at our school right now."

Looking at football, one of the most important victories this fall was over Clarkston (58-44) who won six of their last seven games.

"They were very tough, one of the best games we've ever been a part of," noted Whitney. "We have had many battles with them through the years and this was a classic."

He also pointed out that Rogers and Deer Park made league games tough. "We have so much respect for both programs," he said. "They are well-coached with great kids."

Whitney is among many of the coaches state-wide who are excited about the new Round of 32 format.

"I love it," he said, "Our league has always been tough to get out of. One league slip up and you could be out, This is

exciting to be a part of it, this year."

Whitney refuses to point at any player, feeling it is program-wide success at WV. "All of our kids (97 turned out) are important," he noted.

"Kids contribute in all types of ways, big and small, but they are all important," said Whitney. "We are not about stars here, we count program wins and that is the most important item."

If there was a turning point to this year, it came in the spring, on June 27 at camp. "We played in the biggest division and the kids, especially our seniors, really figured it out and we started to find our identity."

A graduate of CWAC rival, Othello, Whitney has has nothing but positive reflections. "I am proud to be a Husky," he stated. "I have nothing but great memories, living and playing for them."

"Coach (Roger) Hoell has done a tremendous job there and the pride they have is great. I love telling people I am from Othello."

The road to the finals begins this weekend and Whitney adds he is very proud of his staff, who helps mold the team a bit differently each year. "(They do) a great job of helping kids find their strengths and adjusting to them." ♦

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Back Against the Wall, the Fife Trojans Beat Steilacoom for SPSL Playoff Spot

The new playoff format has helped several districts across the state, but in the SPSL it kind of shook things up. (In a positive way.)

In the past, the eight-team SPSL and the eight-team Oly would often cross-over in week 10 for their allotted playoff berths.

This year, the format eliminated that except for their ninth allocation. In this year's only cross-over game, the fifth place schools met. (The top four automatically went to the post-season rather than cross-over for berths.)

On Tuesday, Nov. 5, Bremerton (Oly) defeated Washington (SPSL) 26-24 to become that ninth team.

For SPSL member Fife, it originally looked like they might be playing in that contest.

But a thrilling 30-27 win over Steilacoom propelled them from possibly a fifth-place cross-over game to third place in the SPSL.

For the Trojans, they began the year with a 48-7 victory over Hockinson and followed with a shutout of 3A White River 48-0.

That set up an early-season battle with Orting who would wind up being 8-1 on the year. Fife lost 19-20 but the frustration for Fife head coach Kent Nevin was his kicking game.

"The loss to Orting was a tough one," he explained. "We missed two extra



Kaynen York, junior, came up with this key interception against Steilacoom in the 30-27 victory. He returned it 39 yards. He also kicked the winning FG.

points which ended up being the difference."

"Orting was a tough, physical team," he added. "(But), it ended up being the little things that cost us the game."

Standing 2-1, Fife downed Washington 45-7 and Clover Park 48-12.

With their impressive wins and the narrow loss to Orting, Fife traveled to Eatonville for a key Thursday night clash.

The result was a 32-7 defeat as the Trojans dropped to 4-2 overall.

"(It) was a combination of things," said Nevin. "One was the high school mentality of looking at the prior score and looking at stats rather than playing the game."

"The combination of looking past an opponent

and not executing cost us," he added

He also noted the Trojans were missing their two starting quarterbacks, a starting guard and their senior captain linebacker.

The next week, Fife suffered another defeat, to eventual SPSL champion Franklin Pierce.

They rebounded with a 49-6 win over Foss before setting the stage with a key matchup against third-place Steilacoom on Senior Night.

The Sentinels had just knocked off Eatonville 42-0 and their only two losses were also to both Orting and Franklin Pierce.

However, this contest became one for the ages.

A back-and-forth game, it went down to the final second.

Fife scored first and led 7-0 with nearly four minutes left in the second quarter.

Then, Stelly got within one point 36 seconds later when quarterback Drew Macdonald threw an 81-yard scoring pass to sophomore receiver, Austin Mazzone. The extra point was blocked making it 7-6.

The Sentinels then grabbed the lead with a 96-yard kickoff return to start the second half. The 2-point conversion failed, so it was 12-7.

Fife then used their Wing T offense to score

from three yards out and went up 13-12.

Steilacoom answered back with a bit of trickery on a double pass from junior Xander Shaw to Mazzone that went 62 yards for another TD.

The successful 2-point conversion made it 20-13 in favor of the visitors.

With just seconds left, it was tied 27-27 after another Macdonald TD.

The Trojans then went 65 yards in 39 seconds to get to the 3-yard line. They tried to kick the field goal for the win, but missed. Steilacoom was penalized for running into the kicker and this time it was good with zero seconds left.

"This was a great high school game," stated Nevin.

Fife travels to Ridgefield Sat. for a 3PM game while Stelly heads to Prosser Friday for a 6PM game. ♦



Junior **Slavik Shemedyuk** (5-7, 160) led Fife with 119 yards on 16 carries against Steilacoom. His brother, **Vadyn**, added 99 yards and 2 scores.

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