

COMMENTARY

A look at candidates for area prep player, coach of the year



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Eleven weeks in, we're just now getting warmed up as the weather turns chilly come kickoff.

The regional high school football regular season concludes

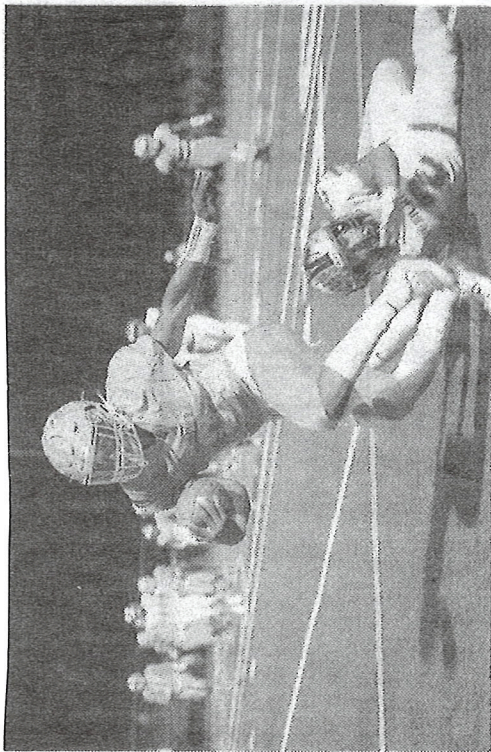
Friday and Saturday, green-lighting the next stretch.

It is now a four-week sprint to the Sac-Joaquin Section finals, a five-week stretch to the CIF Northern California finals and a six-week marathon to the CIF State finals on Dec. 13-14.

Whew. Time to stretch and hydrate.

The section will announce its seven-division playoff bracket at 2 p.m. Sunday with a live stream on the section website, cifsjs.org.

If we named Sacramento Bee Players and Coaches of the Year



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Center quarterback Michael Wortham evades a tackle by Bear River running back Colton Jenkins on Oct. 4.

for the regular season, we have a deserving crop of movers, shakers and mentors in mind with the understanding that section, NorCal and State titles serve as the ultimate difference-maker.

PLAYER OF THE YEAR
Elijah Badger, Folsom: You can't cover him, cannot deny him access to the end zone, and he can play on defense and

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special teams for an outfit that seeks its third CIF State Division I-AA championship in a row. And he has teammates galore, including running back Daniyel Ngata, who plays his best in the postseason, and quarterback Jake Reithmeier and DeShawn Lynch, perhaps the area's top defender in the trenches.

Avant Jacobs, Oak Ridge: He buckles teams as a runner, receiver, return man and defensive back, and wouldn't a Folsom-Oak Ridge rematch in the Division I section finals be grand? Folsom beat Oak Ridge 36-33 to open Sierra Foothill League play. If not Jacobs, perhaps his quarterback, Justin Lamson?

Michael Wortham, Center: He's durable and skilled, and the quarterback's fingerprints are all over the Cougars' 10-0 record, the best in school history.

Max Rodarte, Capital Christian: Offense, defense, special teams, leadership and results, Mad Max does it all for the defending D-III section champions.

Carter Harris, Elk Grove: When he gets going, the Thundering Herd rumbles, and there are times Harris is the most electrifying player in the section.

Cameron Skattebo, Rio Linda: A powerful and swift runner, a kicker, a punter, a quarterback in the pinch and a linebacker for the defending CIF State Division 5-AA champions.

Hans Grassman, Placer: If we based it on cool names alone, he's our guy. Grassman is the workhorse back for a workhorse team that would invite a section D-III rematch with Capital Christian.

Ethan Menezes, Vista del Lago: If he heats up in the playoffs after leading the area in rushing in the regular season, the Eagles will be difficult to defeat.

Taylor Vaughn, Davis: There are multiple reasons why the Blue Devils are 9-1 and a threat in D-I, and this one runs with fury.

UNSGUNG GURUS

Guys who will play a role for teams expecting to win a section cham-

pionship include:

Abraham Banks, Rio Linda: Can throw it 50 yards for a touchdown, run it 50 yards for a score and break up passes on defense.

Aaron Espero, In-derkum: One game he's rushing for multiple touchdowns and the next he's making three interceptions on defense.

C.J. Hutton, Folsom: He seems to regularly reach the end zone on 80 or 90-yard receptions or kickoff returns, and he had four touchdowns catches against Del Oro on Friday.

Luke Jones, Christian Brothers: If the Falcons expect to return to a section final, Jones will have to do Jones things, meaning touchdown grabs and picks on D.

Dylan Overstreet, Casa Roble: Busts 80-yard rushing touchdowns and 80-yard kickoff returns for the Rams, who reached the D-IV section finals a year ago.

Harim Reynolds, Highlands: Catches touchdowns, runs for them, recovers fumbles and makes interceptions for an 8-2 team.

Dino Watson, In-derkum: An tough, explosive runner who makes plays on special teams for

a 10-0 express.

Otha Williams, Prophet Brown, Caleb Ramseur, Monterey Ridge: What a trio of backs the Mustangs unleash each week in going 9-1.

DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Primary stoppers include: linebacker Christian Awwad of Rocklin, Mason Brown of Casa Roble, defensive back Isaiah Dunn of Capital Christian, linebacker Marcus Jones of Monterey Trail, defensive end Graydy Manley of Lincoln, linebacker Sean Myles of Oakmont, linebacker Ben Pau of Rio Linda, defensive end Brad Rankin of Casa Roble, defensive back Ishmael Rehberg of Cosumnes Oaks, defensive back Mujahid Samad of Oak Ridge, linebacker Jacob Wagner of Lincoln and defensive lineman Micah Yokum of Placer.

COACH OF THE YEAR

Paul Doherty, Folsom: Yeah, he has talent, and he inherited a monster program, but if the Bulldogs win it all, that would be hard to ignore, and the man can flat out coach.

Steve Smyte, Davis: Two years after the Blue Devils bottomed out at 0-10, they roll on at 9-1, including 5-0 on the road,

making for the program's best record since a 10-0 showing in 1983.

Eric Cavaliere, Oak Ridge: If the Trojans topple Folsom ... enough said.

Casey Taylor, Capital Christian: A year after a 13-1 showing and mass losses to graduation, the Cougars could wind up in a state final.

Digol JBelly, Center: He's the primary reason the Cougars are 10-0 for the first time in school history (opened in 1982) and tower as the favorite in section D-V.

Jason Adams, Rocklin: A year after the Thunder went 2-8, they loom as the top section seed in D-II, and defense wins championships.

Joe Cattolico, Roseville: A master program builder or through leadership and simplicity, this is one cool cat.

Andrew Bettencourt, Cosumnes Oaks: Not even the confident coach saw this season coming. His players respond to his leadership.

Zac McNally, Whitney: He labored through an 0-10 season last fall, struck it out, inspired the troops and could make a run to section finals with regular-season wins over Placer and Del Oro.

Terry Stark, In-derkum: His Tigers have won 38 consecutive regular-season games and 41 in a row in league play, but it's a section championship that eludes this 229-game winner.

T.J. Ewing, Monterey Trail: Classy leader has a team that can storm to D-I finals after falling to Folsom in the finals in 2018.

Joey Montoya, Placer: A section section in three seasons would crowd up the school trophy case in a hurry.

Chris Horner, Casa Roble: The Rams are back on track after regaining their health, and a section crown would turn heads, his included.

Ryan Nill, Laguna Creek: A year after the Cardinals limped home at 1-9, first-year coach Nill came in and injected new life, an alum coming full circle and resulting in a 7-3 record.

Alex Gomes-Coelho, Johnson: Two years after an 0-10 season that capped a five-year 5-45 showing, the Warriors are 8-2 and league champions for the first time since 2001.

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FROM PAGE 1B

TEAMS

one would have gone 6-4 with that," DeBoard said. "Davis got the six seed in D-I at 9-1 but didn't have that signature win outside league."

Rocklin is the top seed in D-II, but the Thunder (7-3) will not host any section playoff games. The school violated section bylaw 201a last spring, a pre-enrollment contact. In this case, eighth-graders were working out in the Rocklin weight room - a seemingly harmless act, but a violation of section policy.

Cosumnes Oaks (7-3) is the No. 2 seed, followed by Vacaville (8-2) and Jesuit (5-5). Longtime section power Central Catholic of Modesto is seeded fifth and No. 6 Elk Grove and No. 7 Granite Bay loom as dark horses.

The Foothill Valley League advanced all six of its teams, the only one in the section to do so. None of the teams had a losing record: Placer (8-2), Rio Linda (8-2), Oakmont (6-4), Ponderosa (5-5), Lincoln (5-5) and Nevada Union (5-5).

The SFL advanced six of its seven teams: Folsom, Rocklin, Oak Ridge, Del Oro, Granite Bay and Whitney. Only Grant (1-9) is out.

Some teams had good overall records, but their seasons are over.

Laguna Creek went 1-9 last season and is 7-3 now, but will not make the postseason, DeBoard said, because, "It wasn't ranked high enough (top 12 in its division) to advance."

The same is true for 8-2 Grace Davis of Modesto - not a strong enough league, strength of schedule or CalPreps ranking.

It's further proof that

Sac-Joaquin Section playoffs

Division I

All games Friday, 7p.m.

No. 9 Lincoln-S at No. 8 Edison

No. 12 Pleasant Grove at No. 5 Monterey Trail

No. 11 Gregori at No. 6 Davis

No. 10 Del Oro at No. 7 Turlock

Byes: No. 1 Folsom, No. 2 Oak Ridge, No. 3 Inderkum, No. 4 St. Mary's

Division II

All games Friday, 7 p.m.

No. 9 Whitney at No. 8 Lincoln-L

No. 12 Tracy at No. 5 Central Catholic

No. 11 Oakmont at No. 6 Elk Grove

No. 10 Downey at No. 7 Granite Bay

Byes: No. 1 Rocklin, No. 2 Cosumnes Oaks, No. 3 Vacaville, No. 4 Jesuit

Division III

All games Friday, 7 p.m.

No. 9 Antelope at No. 8 Ponderosa

No. 12 River Valley at No. 5 Vista del Lago

No. 11 Johnson at No. 6 Roseville

No. 10 Yuba City at No. 7 Christian Brothers

Byes: No. 1 Capital Christian, No. 2 Placer, No. 3 Buhach Colony, No. 4 Manteca

Division IV

All games Friday at 7 p.m.

No. 9 Nevada Union at No.

8 Vanden

No. 12 Kimball at No. 5 Atwater

No. 11 Beyer at No. 6 Merced

No. 10 Del Campo at No. 7 Patterson

No. 13 Golden Valley at No. 4 Sierra

Byes: No. 1 Rio Linda, No. 2 Oakdale, No. 3 Casa Roble

Division V

All games Friday at 7 p.m.

No. 9 Colfax at No. 8 Union Mine

No. 12 Los Banos at No. 5 Woodland

No. 11 Livingston at No. 6 Rosemont

No. 10 Foothill at No. 7 Liberty Ranch

Byes: No. 1 Center, No. 2 Ripon, No. 3 Amador, No. 4 Bradshaw Christian

Division VI

All games Friday at 7 p.m.

No. 9 Hughson at No. 8 Linden

No. 11 Western Sierra at No. 6 Calaveras

No. 10 Highlands at No. 7 Bear River

Byes: No. 1 Escalon, No. 2 Hilmar, No. 3 Ripon Christian

No. 5 Sonora at No. 4 Golden Sierra, Nov. 15

Division VII

No. 6 Vacaville Christian at No. 3 Woodland Christian

No. 5 Big Valley Christian at No. 4 Le Grand

Byes: No. 1 Denair, No. 2 Mariposa