

Prosser, Ellensburg will duel for CWAC supremacy

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Not yet to the halfway point of the season, the annual matchup between the CWAC's perennial powerhouses could go a long ways toward deciding a league champ.

The No. 3 Prosser Mustangs (3-0 overall, 2-0 CWAC) will travel to Ellensburg on Friday to take on the Bulldogs (2-1, 2-0), and the winner will be guaranteed at least a share of the conference lead.

Prosser coach Corey Ingvalson said it was too early in the season to call this his team's biggest game of the year, but he did say there's a little something extra on the line every time the Mustangs take on Ellensburg.

"There's added importance, definitely, because anytime you play Ellensburg it's a great measuring stick because they're so good, so well coached," Ingvalson said. "But, with it being so early, it presents an opportunity to get a ton better throughout the course of the year, no matter what happens. But is it the most important game of the season? I think all of them are important."

Like in past years, it's entirely possible this won't be the only meeting between Prosser and Ellensburg. In 2015, the Bulldogs won a 27-26 thriller at home over the Mustangs in Week 7, but that would be the only game Prosser would lose, as it got the last laugh with a 31-0 win over Ellensburg in the second round of the Class 2A state playoffs en route to another state title.

With a fairly young roster, Ingvalson said the Mustangs' chances to knock off Ellensburg might be improved if the matchup were to come later in the year, but he's nevertheless relishing the opportunity to see his squad get tested.

"I think Week 4 is going to be great for us as far as measuring where we are as a team and where we need to improve," Ingvalson said. "I think (Ellensburg coach Randy Affholter) has always echoed those statements that that's the best

measuring stick. The advantage, of course, is that in Week 4 you get a lot of time to correct what's wrong, win or lose.”

Though Prosser's lineup features several underclassmen in starting positions, senior quarterback Tanner Bolt — the reigning 2A Player of the Year — has shown no signs of slowing down from his stellar junior campaign. He's thrown 14 touchdown passes and no interceptions while leading the Mustangs to victories over Kennewick, Toppenish and Quincy.

“Echoing what I said earlier in the year, we kind of gave the keys of the car to Tanner. It's his senior year and he's in that mastery phase of our offense,” Ingvalson said. “He understands where we want to go with the ball. He has great progression within his reads.”

Ellensburg dropped its season opener to reigning 1A state champion Royal, 21-14, but has been nothing short of dominant since. The Bulldogs knocked off Grandview and Wapato by a combined scored of 131-0 over the past two weeks.