

# <sup>The</sup> Daily Independent 2018 FALL SPORTS GUIDE



## **INSIDE:**

- Full schedules of local teams
- Pictures of season preparation
- Interviews with coaches
- College football previews



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## The New Sports Guy's Picks

DI sports editor Andrew Salmi helps you get hyped for college football season with a Pac-12 preview, Heisman hopefuls, and good players on bad teams..... 24



Team logos courtesy of their respective teams.

**All schedules are subject to change.**

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Cover Photo: Christopher Livingston; Photos: Christopher Livingston, Andrew Salmi, courtesy photos: Burroughs cross country, Cerro Coso volleyball





# NEW ERA, FRESH FACES, AND ONE POWERFUL BROTHERHOOD

Burroughs football, following a magical and unforgettable season, is headed in the right direction under new head coach Sean Fullerton

**T**wenty-six seniors. That is how many Burroughs High School varsity football players who graduated back in June with the class of 2018.

In 2017, many of them contributed at a high level week in and week out when the Burros had one of the most memorable runs in Ridgecrest prep

sports history.

Under coach Todd Mather, the Burros continued to defy the odds with an 11-3 record and hosted the CIF Southern Section championship game for the first time ever in front of thousands of people coming from all over the state of California.

Those memories will never be for-

gotten by this town in the wake of such an incredible run, but it is time to officially turn the page and begin the 2018-19 Burroughs football season with many fresh new faces, including first-year varsity head coach Sean Fullerton.

After what seems like an eternity of waiting, the Burros will finally kick off their 2018 season on Aug. 17 when they

host the Legacy High School Longhorns of North Las Vegas.

It is unclear at this point how much the dropoff in experience from last year's team to now will affect the Burros right away.

The quarterback position has a lot of

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 6**





# Burroughs Football

Head Coach: Sean Fullerton (1st season) • 2017 record: 11-3 (4-1 MRL) • Home field: Sherman E. Burroughs Stadium



## 2018 BURROUGHS VARSITY FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

**Aug. 17 vs. Legacy, 7 p.m.**  
**Aug. 24 @ Palmdale, 7 p.m.**  
**Aug. 31 vs. Knight, 7 p.m.**  
**Sept. 14 vs. Barstow, 7 p.m.**  
**Sept. 21 vs. Bishop Union, 7 p.m.**  
**Sept. 28 vs. Apple Valley, 7 p.m.**  
**Oct. 4 @ Oak Hills, 7 p.m.**  
**\*Oct. 12 vs. Serrano, 7 p.m.**  
**Oct. 19 @ Sultana, 7 p.m.**  
**Oct. 26 vs. Hesperia, 7 p.m.**

### Mojave River League games

#### \* Homecoming game

**All home games at Sherman E. Burroughs Stadium**

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“We have tough kids, which has always been something Burros has hung its hat on. We have very talented athletes here in Ridgecrest that can compete with larger schools. I would say you should be excited to see a fun having, hard hitting, talented, and well coached football team on the field that is backed and supported by a community that loves football and feeds the spirits of the players on the field.”



HEAD COACH SEAN FULLERTON ON WHAT HIS PLAYERS BRING TO THE TABLE FOR THE 2018 FOOTBALL SEASON

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## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

intrigue to it heading into the first game as the Burros will look to replace former star quarterback Austin Griffin, who graduated with the class of 2018 following a very memorable 2017-18 season for Burroughs.

Griffin, who battled a shoulder injury during the second half of last season, still put up great numbers for his senior year. In 14 games, Griffin threw for 332 touchdowns on 193-of-379 (50.9 percent)

passes completed, 2,787 yards, and 15 interceptions.

This year, Fullerton has decided to go with junior quarterback Trevor Ireland as his opening game starter. On Monday evening in the Burros' first practice in shoulder pads and helmets, Ireland looked like a natural and hit many of his receivers in stride while taking reps with the first team offense.

However, one of those players from last season who will make a return is the team's leading receiver in senior Bryson Pippin,

who will be used as one of the team's top playmakers all over the field on both offense and defense.

"Pippin will get moved around," Fullerton said. "Split out as wide receiver and run the ball out the backfield, along with some other players. My goal is to get the playmakers touches and the ball in space."

In 14 games for Burroughs in 2017 as just a junior, Pippin had a team-high 76 receptions for 1,141 yards receiving and caught 16 touchdowns.



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“I don't think I have unattainable expectations of myself or the 2018 team, so I think it's important to have realistic but high expectations. I would like to do some things differently than Coach Mather, I think this is important for me starting out my career to make my own path. I don't think I can replace Coach Mather completely, nor should I try, but instead offer a different experience for the returning players and begin to build my program based on my vision.”



HEAD COACH SEAN FULLERTON ON HIS FIRST SEASON AT THE HELM OF BURROUGHS VARSITY FOOTBALL

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# START FAST, FINISH STRONG

Lady Burros volleyball looks to build on last season's success under first-year head coach Laura Metcalf, break through in MRL play

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9





# Burroughs Girls Volleyball

Head Coach: Laura Metcalf (1st season) • 2017 record: 16-11 (2-8 MRL) • Home court: Burroughs Barn



## CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

**T**he Lady Burros volleyball team is also welcoming in a new era in 2018.

Under first-year varsity head coach Laura Metcalf, the Burroughs looks to improve on its 16-11 record from the 2017 season.

However, the team limped to an underwhelming 2-8 record in Mojave

River League play and unfortunately did not get to participate in the post-season.

With a fresh roster loaded with many new faces and plenty of talent, the Lady Burros will hit the road for their first two games of the season.

"We have a lot of new athletes on the freshman level that are really impressive," Metcalf said earlier this

summer. "We have a lot of potential coming up in the next few years, I think. We have a lot of girls and a lot of athletes to choose from, so it's kind of difficult to figure out where we want to put everybody."

The freshman, junior varsity, and varsity teams will each open their 2018 campaign on Aug. 16 against Lancaster High School, followed by another road contest on Aug. 21

against Bishop Union High School.

This could definitely be a year that the Lady Burros really put things together down the stretch and open eyes in the MRL.

As of right now, though, the Burroughs volleyball program seems to be in very good hands with Metcalf going forward and it will be really interesting to see how this team gels together during the 2018-19 season.





“There’s a lot of opportunities in Ridgecrest. So when I got back into coaching, I started to realize that I wanted to be the type of coach that encourages athletes not only to be good on the court but to be good

human beings. There’s a lot that goes into coaching. I feel like I can be a mentor, someday have a relationship with the students I coached, and have an impact on their lives.”

HEAD COACH LAURA METCALF ON  
WHAT DRAWS HER TO COACHING



### 2018 BURROUGHS GIRLS VARSITY VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

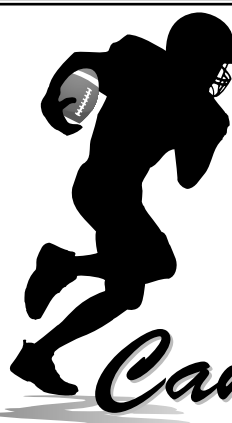
Aug. 16 @ Lancaster, 5 p.m.  
Aug. 21 @ Bishop Union, 5:30 p.m.  
Aug. 23 vs. Adelanto, 5:30 p.m.  
Aug. 28 vs. Mammoth, 5:30 p.m.  
Aug. 29 @ Barstow, 5:30 p.m.  
Aug. 31 vs. Pomona, 5:30 p.m.  
Sept. 7-8 @ Highland Tournament  
Sept. 11 vs. Apple Valley, 5:30 p.m.  
Sept. 13 @ Serrano, 5:30 p.m.  
Sept. 14-15 @ Cal City Tournament  
Sept. 18 vs. Sultana, 5:30 p.m.  
Sept. 20 vs. Hesperia, 5:30 p.m.

Sept. 25 vs. Oak Hills, 5:30 p.m.  
Sept. 27 @ Apple Valley, 5:30 p.m.  
Oct. 2 vs. Serrano, 5:30 p.m.  
Oct. 4 @ Sultana, 5:30 p.m.  
Oct. 9 @ Hesperia, 5:30 p.m.  
Oct. 11 @ Oak Hills, 5:30 p.m.

#### Mojave River League matches

All home matches at Burroughs Barn

- General admission – \$5
- High School Student with ASB card – \$2
- K-8 with parent or school ID – \$3
- Seniors 60+ – \$3
- Children 4 and below are free



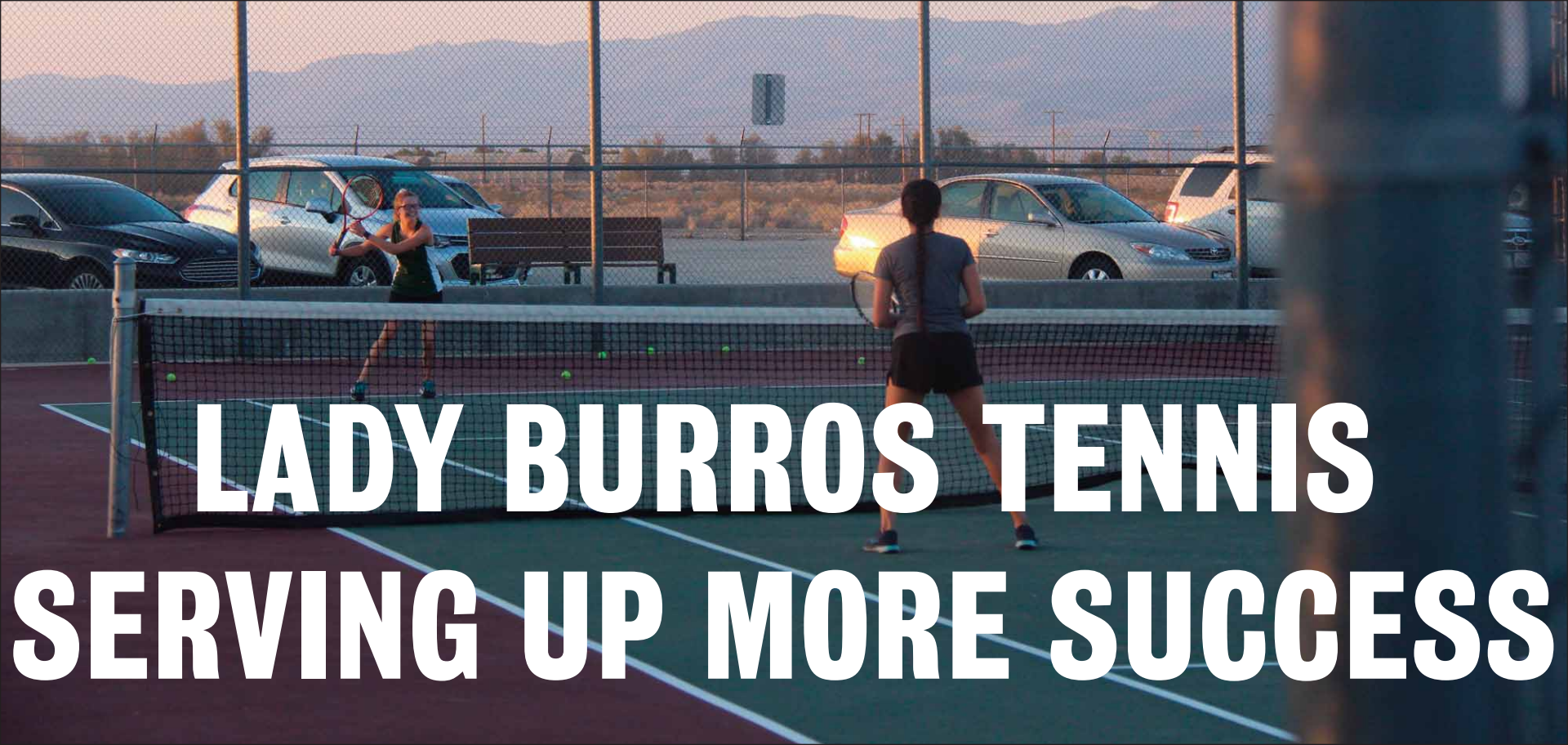
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# LADY BURROS TENNIS

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# Burroughs Girls Tennis

Head Coach: Kenold Prince (20th season) • 2017 MRL rank: 2nd • Home court: Burroughs High School Tennis Courts



## 2018 BURROUGHS VARSITY GIRLS TENNIS SCHEDULE

Aug. 21 @ Adelanto, 3:15 p.m.

Aug. 22-25 @ Etiwanda Tourney

TBA vs. Tehachapi, 3:15 p.m.

Sept. 6 vs. Bishop, 3:15 p.m.

Sept. 8 Hesperia Tourney, 8 a.m.

Sept. 14 @ Palmdale, 3:15 p.m.

TBA @ Quartz Hill Tourney

Sept. 20 @ Apple Valley, 3:15 p.m.

Sept. 25 vs. Serrano, 3:15 p.m.

Sept. 27 @ Sultana, 3:15 p.m.

Oct. 2 @ Hesperia, 3:15 p.m.

Oct. 4 @ Oak Hills, 3:15 p.m.

Oct. 5 vs. Quartz Hill, 3:15 p.m.

Oct. 9 vs. Apple Valley, 3:15 p.m.

Oct. 10 vs. Barstow, 3:15 p.m.

Oct. 11 @ Serrano, 3:15 p.m.

Oct. 16 vs. Sultana, 3:15 p.m.

Oct. 18 vs. Hesperia, 3:15 p.m.

Oct. 23 vs. Oak Hills, 3:15 p.m.

Oct. 25 MRL Finals (at Hesperia)

League matches

All home matches at BHS Courts

Admission is free.



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# Burroughs Cross Country

Head Boys and Girls Coach: Anthony Barnes • Home course: Cerro Coso Community College



## PLETHORA OF YOUNG RUNNERS HAS BURROS CROSS COUNTRY AIMING HIGH



“Our girls’ goals are very ambitious. We feel we have the right athletes to outperform any previous runners and teams.



Early indications are that both will be achieved, our first 1.5-mile time trial for the summer produced four top twenty all-time and three in the top 10. We want to go to CIF prelims, finish second in league or better, and make CIF Finals.

BURROUGHS HEAD COACH ANTHONY BARNES ON HIS FIRST SEASON AS GIRL'S HEAD COACH

### 2018 BURROUGHS CROSS COUNTRY SCHEDULE

**Sept. 1 @ Riverside Invitational**  
**Sept. 5 @ MRL Cluster 1 (Serrano)**  
**Sept. 14 @ Woodbridge Invitational**  
**Sept. 22 @ Wayne Walker Invitational**  
**Sept. 26 @ MRL Cluster 2 (Sultana)**  
**Oct. 6 @ Clovis Invitational**  
**Oct. 13 @ Inland Empire Championships**  
**Oct. 17 @ MRL Cluster 3 (Apple Valley)**  
**Oct. 27 @ Rebel Invitational (Bakersfield)**  
**Oct. 31 @ MRL Finals (Sultana)**  
**Nov. 9-10 CIF Prelims (Riverside)**  
**Nov. 17 CIF Finals (Riverside)**  
**Nov. 24 CIF State Meet (Woodward Park, Fresno)**

**League meets**







# Cerro Coso Women's Soccer

Head Coach: Egmont Cervantes (2nd season) • 2017 record: 1-17-4 • Home field: Cerro Coso Soccer Field



## BRICK BY BRICK, LADY COYOTES SOCCER GRADUALLY IMPROVING



“One of our challenges is to keep everyone healthy because of our small roster. It will be my second season here at CCCC and I could tell you that we should be able to be more competitive because of the quality players we have this season. Just because of that it motivates me to get them ready for the season.”



HEAD COACH EGMONT CERVANTES ON HIS SECOND SEASON

### 2018 CERRO COSO WOMEN'S SOCCER SCHEDULE

**Aug. 28 @ Antelope Valley College, 5 p.m.**  
**Sept. 7 @ Victor Valley College, 3 p.m.**  
**Sept. 11 vs. Bakersfield College, 6 p.m.**  
**Sept. 18 vs. Compton College, 6 p.m.**  
**Sept. 21 vs. Glendale College, 6 p.m.**  
**Sept. 25 @ West Hills College Lemoore, 4 p.m.**  
**Sept. 28 @ College of the Sequoias, 1 p.m.**  
**Oct. 5 @ Reedley College, 4 p.m.**  
**Oct. 9 @ Fresno City College, 4 p.m.**  
**Oct. 12 @ Clovis College, 2 p.m.**  
**Oct. 19 vs. West Hills College Lemoore, 4 p.m.**  
**Oct. 23 vs. College of the Sequoias, 4 p.m.**  
**Oct. 30 vs. Reedley College, 4 p.m.**  
**Nov. 2 vs. Fresno City College, 3 p.m.**  
**Nov. 6 vs. Clovis College, 3 p.m.**

**League games**

**All home games at Cerro Coso Field**



# LADY COYOTES VOLLEYBALL MAKING STRIDES AND STAYING HUNGRY IN CVC







# Cerro Coso Women's Volleyball

Head Coach: Kim Young (7th season) • 2017 record: 9-18 (6-10 CVC) • Home court: Cerro Coso Gymnasium



After an eight-game improvement in the victory column from 2016 to 2017, Lady Coyotes enter a renovated Cerro Coso Gymnasium will look to impress in Central Valley Conference play this season



## 2018 CERRO COSO WOMEN'S VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

**Aug. 31 vs. Chaffey College (at Victor Valley)**  
**Sept. 5 @ Santa Ana College, 4 p.m.**  
**Sept. 5 vs. Orange Coast College (at SAC)**  
**Sept. 7 @ Antelope Valley College, 5 p.m.**  
**Sept. 12 vs. College of the Sequoias, 5 p.m.**  
**Sept. 14 @ Reedley College, 5 p.m.**  
**Sept. 15 vs. Allan Hancock College, 12 p.m.**  
**Sept. 19 @ Porterville College, 6 p.m.**  
**Sept. 21 vs. Merced College, 5 p.m.**  
**Sept. 26 @ Taft College, 5 p.m.**  
**Sept. 28 @ West Hills College Lemoore, 5 p.m.**  
**Oct. 3 vs. West Hills College Coalinga, 5 p.m.**  
**Oct. 5 @ Columbia College, 5 p.m.**

**Oct. 10 vs. Fresno City College, 5 p.m.**  
**Oct. 12 @ College of the Sequoias, 5 p.m.**  
**Oct. 17 @ Reedley College, 5 p.m.**  
**Oct. 19 vs. Porterville College, 6 p.m.**  
**Oct. 24 @ Merced College, 5 p.m.**  
**Oct. 26 vs. Taft College, 5 p.m.**  
**Oct. 31 vs. West Hills College Lemoore, 5 p.m.**  
**Nov. 2 @ West Hills College Coalinga, 5 p.m.**  
**Nov. 7 vs. Porterville College, 5 p.m.**  
**Nov. 9 @ Fresno City College, 5 p.m.**

**League games**

**All home games at Cerro Coso Gymnasium**



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# Trona Tornadoes Football

Head Coach: Richard Ancira (1st season) • 2017 record: 10-1 • Home field: The Pit



“Some of them have gotten the raw end of the stick, so those are the ones that I can relate to because I kind of grew up as a little bit of troublemaker back in the day and I was able to turn my life around. So that’s something that I bring to the table with these guys. Just because you’re labeled this or whatever, you don’t have to be that. You have an outlet here and this keeps kids out of trouble.”

TRONA FOOTBALL HEAD COACH  
RICHARD ANCIRA ON CONNECTING  
WITH HIS PLAYERS



## 2018 TRONA VARSITY FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

**Aug. 17 @ Lancaster Baptist, 7 p.m.**

**Aug. 24 @ Alpaugh, 7 p.m.**

**Aug. 31 vs. Lucerne Valley, 7 p.m.**

**Sept. 7 @ Beatty, 7 p.m.**

**Sept. 14 vs. Mammoth, 7 p.m.**

**Sept. 21 @ Coast Union, 7 p.m.**

**Sept. 29 @ Spring Mountain, 1 p.m.**

**Oct. 5 vs. Blair, 7 p.m.**

**Oct. 12 vs. Desert, 7 p.m.**

**Oct. 20 vs. Lone Pine, 2:30 p.m.**

**All home games at The Pit**



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# Trona Tornadoes Girls Volleyball

Head Coach: David Scott (1st season) • 2017 record: 2-17 (0-8 Hi-Lo League) • Home court: Trona High School



## LADY TORNADOES HEAD INTO SECOND SEASON IN HI-LO LEAGUE

### 2018 TRONA TORNADOES GIRLS VOLLEYBALL SCHEDULE

**Aug. 18 @ Victor Valley Christian, 12 p.m.**

**Aug. 20 @ Silver Valley, 4 p.m.**

**Aug. 22 vs. Silver Valley, 4 p.m.**

**Aug. 23 @ Lucerne Valley, 4 p.m.**

**Aug. 27 vs. Lucerne Valley, 4 p.m.**

**Aug. 28 @ Beatty, TBA**

**Sept. 3 @ Desert Christian, 4 p.m.**

**Sept. 4 @ Lone Pine, 4 p.m.**

**Sept. 5 @ Mojave, 3 p.m.**

**Sept. 7 vs. Beatty, 5 p.m.**

**Sept. 11 vs. Owens Valley, 4 p.m.**

**Sept. 18 @ Big Pine, 4 p.m.**

**Sept. 25 vs. Baker, 4 p.m.**

**Oct. 2 @ Lee Vining, 4 p.m.**

**Oct. 5 vs. Big Pine, 4 p.m.**

**Oct. 8 vs. Mojave, 4 p.m.**

**Oct. 12 @ Owens Valley, 4 p.m.**

**Oct. 16 @ Baker, 4 p.m.**

**All home games at Trona High School**

**Hi-Lo League games**

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# Huskies lead Pac-12 favorites in search of league redemption

**BY GREG BEACHAM**  
Associated Press

Chris Petersen spent the past half-decade building a powerhouse at Washington, and his latest group is the strong favorite to win the Pac-12 title while leading the league's quest to regain national respectability.

So why was Petersen so disappointed when a pre-season media poll simply confirmed what everyone already knows by anointing the Huskies as the Pac-12 favorites?

"I like to be on a different team than you guys are on," Petersen said to reporters at Pac-12 media day. "I'd rather prove you wrong than to prove you right. Now we're working to prove you right rather than prove you wrong."

Apparently you can take the coach out of Boise, but you can't take the Boise out of the coach. Petersen just won't ditch his underdog worldview, even with quarterback Jake Browning and running back Myles Gaskin leading a Huskies roster stacked deep with NFL-caliber talent and chasing its second playoff berth in three years.

But in truth, the entire Pac-12 could be excused for taking a bit of Petersen's mentality into this fall. The league's reputation is still smarting from its 1-8 record in bowl

games last winter, followed by an offseason of heavy coaching turnover featuring five schools turning to new leaders. The Pac-12 returns with its usual wealth of talent, but uncertainty at many programs.

Washington has little uncertainty anywhere, and that's why Petersen's team is the consensus pick to win the West. The Huskies' season-opening showdown with Auburn in Atlanta is a chance to show the sport that the Pac-12 is back — or it could just be another game on a long road of redemption.

"I've been hearing that a lot, that we have to represent the Pac-12, but we're just going out there looking to beat Auburn," said Washington safety JoJo McIntosh, one of five returning starters in the Huskies' secondary. "Just go out there and compete, and win, and they'll notice you."

Here are more things to watch in the eighth season of the conference's current 12-team configuration:

## CHIP PART 2

Chip Kelly led the speed-based revolution in college football and won three Pac-12 titles during his four-year tenure as Oregon's head coach. After two stints in the NFL and a year as a broadcaster,

Kelly was enticed back to the college game by UCLA and its deep-pocketed boosters, who are determined to put the Bruins on equal footing with crosstown rival Southern California. Kelly could start slowly with a mixed bag of talent, including no standout starting quarterback and little experience at receiver. He isn't saying much about his plans, naturally. But the entire sport is waiting to see what Kelly can conjure in Westwood.

## LOVE ON THE FARM

Heisman Trophy runner-up Bryce Love defied most predictions and the conventional wisdom around tailbacks by returning to Stanford for his senior season. The human biology major is determined to graduate in December to protect his dream of going to medical school, but his return also sets up the Cardinal for another season of their punishing ground game with Love running behind four returning starters on the offensive line. Stanford also has four returning receivers for K.J. Costello or whichever quarterback claims the starting job. While Washington is the favorite, the Cardinal are a strong contender in the Pac-12 North.

## HERM'S HEAD

Aside from Kelly's re-

turn, the most intriguing new hire among the league's five new coaches is Herm Edwards. The veteran NFL boss is also the biggest risk: Although he enjoyed modest success with the Jets and Chiefs, Edwards hasn't coached anywhere since 2008, and he hasn't been a college coach since his three-year stint as San Jose State's defensive backs coach in the 1980s. Edwards' progress in his new job should be fascinating to watch, but the rebuilding Sun Devils are projected to finish last in the South division. "We don't go by polls," Edwards said. "We've got our own aspirations. We're trying to win a Pac-12 championship. So whatever people write, they can write what they want. That's good. Hopefully no players are listening to that, because no coaches are listening to it."

## USC'S NEXT QB

Sam Darnold has left USC for the New York Jets after one Rose Bowl victory and one Pac-12 title. He also left a void behind center for the Trojans, and three young passers are competing in camp to become the next passer in their school's enviable lineage. Jack Sears and Matt Fink have advantages in experience, but touted freshman J.T. Daniels is making early strides.



DEAN RUTZ/SEATTLE TIMES/TNS

**Washington running back Myles Gaskin gets around the corner against Washington State cornerback Darrien Molton (3) at Husky Stadium in Seattle on November 25, 2017.**

Coach Clay Helton is likely to wait to make his decision until USC is close to its season opener. The Trojans are the preseason favorites to repeat in the Pac-12 South, but their ability to stay afloat during their usual daunting September schedule could depend on quickly finding a standout quarterback.

## WILDCAT STRIKE

In his first season at Texas A&M, Kevin Sumlin coached a relatively unsung, athletic quarterback

to a surprising Heisman Trophy. Six years after Johnny Manziel did the improbable, Sumlin is taking over at Arizona with the chance to make a star out of Khalil Tate, the dual-threat QB who passed for 1,591 yards and rushed for 1,411 more while starting just nine games last season. The Wildcats are a popular pick to challenge USC for the Pac-12 South title largely on the strength of their coach-passer duo.



# Heisman darkhorses: Can Browning repeat Mayfield's path?

**BY JOE REEDY**  
Associated Press

Washington's Jake Browning is hoping to repeat what Baker Mayfield did last year.

Mayfield was a Heisman Trophy longshot in the preseason, but ended up winning the award while leading Oklahoma to the College Football Playoff for the second time in three years.

Browning was sixth in the Heisman voting two years ago after leading the Huskies to the Pac-12 title and the playoff, where they lost to Alabama in the semifinals. His productivity declined last year though as his touchdowns

fell from 43 to 19.

Washington was 10-3 last season, but is the preseason favorite to win the Pac 12. Browning and the Huskies will also have an early opportunity to make a favorable impression to rest of the nation as they face Auburn in the opener in Atlanta on Sept. 1.

Browning — who has thrown for over 9,000 yards and 78 touchdowns the past three seasons — is facing high expectations, but none might be bigger than what coach Chris Peterson expects out of the senior.

"Jake plays really good football and has made some spectacular plays in his career," Peterson said.

"We're looking for him to do that at the most difficult position in football at a really high, elite level play after play after play."

A look at other Heisman longshots looking to improve their odds:

## **ED OLIVER, DT, Houston**

The junior might have set the record for being the earliest to announce that he is entering the NFL Draft. But there is good reason for that as Oliver might be the top pick. The 6-foot-3, 290-pound defensive lineman faces huge odds to win, but with 38 1/2 tackles for loss the last two seasons and the possibility that coach Major Apple-

white could use him on some offensive plays, he could at least get to New York as one of the finalists.

## **McKENZIE MILTON, QB, Central Florida**

Milton was eighth in the voting last year after he led the Knights to an improbable 13-0 record and a victory over Auburn in the Peach Bowl. He was second in the nation in passing efficiency (179.3) and yards per attempt (10.22), finishing behind Mayfield. UCF though has a new coach in Josh Heupel after Scott Frost left for Nebraska. Also hampering Milton's bid is a lack of weekly exposure.

The Knights' first national appearance won't be until Sept. 15 against North Carolina.

## **DREW LOCK, QB, Missouri**

Lock set an Southeastern Conference record last season with 44 touchdown passes. Three SEC quarterbacks have won the award since 2007, but the senior is going to need to produce wins for a Tigers squad that lost five of its first six last season before finishing 7-6.

## **CAM AKERS, RB, Florida State**

New coach Willie Taggart says that the theme of his offense is "lethal simplicity." That is also an

apt description of Akers. The sophomore had four 100-yard games last season along with setting Florida State's freshman rushing record with 1,025 yards. Akers will be counted on early to be a focal point of Taggart's offense, starting with the Sept. 3 opener against Virginia Tech.

## **BRIAN LEWERKE, QB, Michigan State**

The junior is a dual-threat quarterback who accounted for 3,352 yards of total offense as the Spartans won 10 games last

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season. With the turmoil surrounding Ohio State's program, Michigan State could end up as the favorite in the Big Ten East.

#### RODNEY ANDERSON, RB, Oklahoma

There have been only three occasions where the same school has produced different Heisman winners in back-to-back seasons. Anderson didn't even start until mid-season last year, but he finished with 1,442 yards and 18 touchdowns from scrimmage. In his best game, he had 290 yards and four touchdowns from scrimmage in a regular-season win over TCU. At 6-foot-1 and 220 pounds, he is a powerhouse with break-away speed and good enough hands to have grabbed five touchdown receptions last season.

# College football 2018: Six players who will star for losing teams

BY RALPH D. RUSSO  
Associated Press

Football being, in many ways, the ultimate team game can make it difficult for good players to shine when the players around them are ... not so good.

Stars toiling on losing teams rarely get much recognition. They almost never win the big awards or get selected to the All-America teams. Time to give some love to those overlooked players whose teams did not reach the

postseason last year and might have a hard time climbing back into it in 2018.

#### Marquise Copeland, DT, Cincinnati

The Bearcats are in the second year of a rebuild under coach Luke Fickell, who brought in the top-ranked recruiting class in the American Athletic Conference this year. Copeland was one of the few real keepers Fickell inherited and probably the team's best player last

year. The senior had 63 tackles and 3.5 sacks in 2017. Undersized at 6-foot-2 and 282 pounds, Copeland could develop into an NFL draft pick.

#### Eric Dungey, QB, Syracuse

Dungey has been starting for the Orange since his freshman season. The problem is he has not been finishing the seasons healthy. When healthy, Dungey is a two-way threat with athleticism and size (6-4, 228) that

could draw NFL attention. He enters 2018 as the only active quarterback in FBS with at least 6,000 yards passing and 1,000 yards rushing. The Orange have not been bowl-eligible since 2013. A full season for Dungey is a must for Syracuse to have any chance to get back, but just in case, best catch him in the regular season.

#### Joe Dineen, LB, Kansas

The fifth-year senior has played on teams that

have won six games in four seasons. He also lost most of his 2016 season, when he was poised for a breakout as team captain, to hamstring injury. That big breakout came last season when Dineen led the nation in solo tackles per game (7.6) and set a school record with 25 tackles for loss. Yes, the Jayhawks' defense spends

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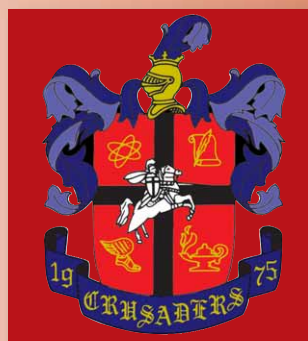
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a lot of time on the field and that inflates some stats. But Dineen had almost twice as many tackles as any other Kansas defender. Also, deserving of a shoutout on Kansas is defensive tackle Daniel Wise (16 tackles for loss and sev-

en sacks), who is probably an even better pro prospect than Dineen.

**Denzel Mims, WR, Baylor**

The Bears managed just one victory in 2017, but Mims was a problem for opponents. He caught 61 passes for 1,087 yards and eight touchdowns. His three-touchdown performance against Oklahoma

gave the Sooners a legitimate scare. Mims was by far Baylor's best receiver last season, but this year the Bears hope the return of senior Chris Platt from injury and the addition of Tennessee transfer Jalen Hurd, the running back-turned-receiver, gives them one of the best sets of pass-catchers in the Big 12.

**Stanley Morgan Jr., WR,**

**Nebraska**

Cornhuskers fans are looking toward a hopeful future with new coach Scott Frost after going 4-8 last season under Mike Riley. There is much rebuilding to do, and Nebraska has a difficult schedule in 2018 with road games at Michigan, Ohio State and Wisconsin. A major turnaround would take a minor miracle

by Frost. Morgan, though, should be one of the best receivers in the Big Ten as a senior. He caught 61 passes for 986 yards and 10 touchdowns last year.

**Trey Smith, OT, Tennessee**

Smith stepped into the Volunteers' starting lineup last season as a freshman and played like a veteran.

He started games at guard and tackle, and during an ugly year in Knoxville, Smith's performance was a thing of beauty. The off-season provided a scare. He was treated for blood clots in his lungs. Cleared to play, Smith is a 6-foot-6, 320-pound building block for new coach Jeremy Pruitt.

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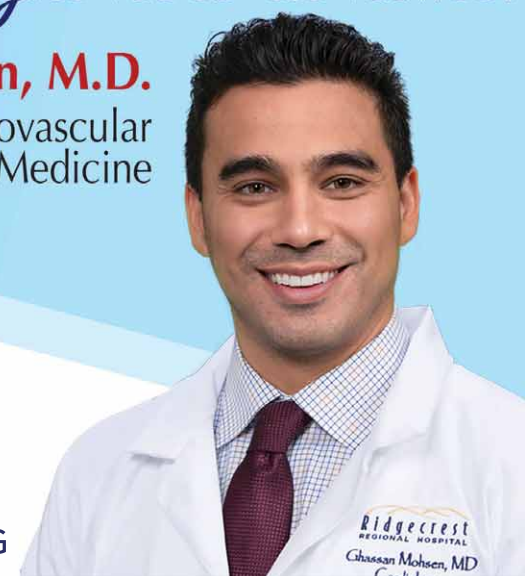
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