



# THE 'BIG HUDDLE'

*Under Friday night lights, community rallies HRVHS tradition*

By KIRBY NEUMANN-REA  
News editor

Fireworks and plenty else burst forth in customary style under perfect weather conditions Sept. 6 at Hood River Valley High School.

"The Big Huddle," as one fan called it, was under way. The first home football game of the season, with guests Forest Grove Vikings, attracted a crowd of hundreds for that annual event that says Autumn Is Back.

Dozens of people are involved in making sure every detail is accounted for, according to Athletic Director Keith Bassham.

The game is not the only thing. The first fall football game is a beloved ritual, bringing out Hood River natives and town visitors for an evening of community and all-American entertainment.

#### HOME GAMES

See page B6 for details on upcoming HRVHS athletics.

the KHR radio duo of Mark Bailey and Phil Hukari connected their monitors, concession stand workers and FFA officers prepared chili, popcorn, ribs and sandwiches to serve supporters, and ballboys Robert Rowan and Zach Wells had towels and pigskins ready to go.

As game time arrived, the stands filled with students and community members, Boy Scout Troop 282 raised the flag, and the first Lions' fireworks went off during singing of the national anthem, by choir members Noah Tauscher, Emily McPherson, Caitlyn Fick and Justin Danner.

Folks were still buying tickets from Kelly Semmes, HRVHS Class of 1984, who is also advisor to the junior class members who were selling concessions.

"Good job for bringing that," she said to a student who showed his ASB card. Moments after the national anthem, the rally squad chanted from formation. "Are you ready for the Hood River Eagles? 'Cause we are ready for YOU!"

One of the cheerleaders, sophomore Kelsey Beam, is daughter of Booster Club president Teri Beam, who sells HRV hats, shirts and gear including the new day-glo yellow "Eagle Army" shirts, signature garb of the new student spirit club.

Everything seems tied together under the Friday Night Lights at the HRVHS athletic facility where football is played, appropriately named Henderson Community Stadium, from the turf to the press box.

Atop the stadium, radio guys, statisticians and coaches, including opposing coaches, enjoy complimentary ribs and pulled-pork and tri-tip sandwiches courtesy of the

Please see FOOTBALL, Page B6



Photos by Kirby Neumann-Rea  
Rally, crowd and coaching photos  
by Adam Lapiere

**NOT JUST** faces in the crowd: Some of the folks at Henderson Stadium on Friday night, from top: Eagle rally squad, Micaela and Eric Keller and their son, Keegan, 1; Eileen and Pete Vallejo listen to the national anthem; Eagle Army members lead student section in cheers; ballboys Robert Rowan and Zach Wells on the sidelines with Clyde Rowan and downmarker guy Wes Bailey; videographer Tristan Fisher gets an Eagles'-eye view; Booster Club president Teri Beam; high-fivin' the mascot; AD Keith Bassham; Phil Hukari, left, and Mark Bailey of KHR; Ed Ing buys popcorn from Yvette Sanchez and Jesus Garcia; coaches Randy Yoshimura, center, and Vinnie Schlosser.





# FOOTBALL

Continued from Page B1

FFA — and home-baked cookies by longtime stats volunteer Cherie Vannet, who's been involved in HRVHS athletics at least as long as Bassham, Bailey, assistant coaches Bruce Burton and Vinnie Schlosser, and Jon Hiatt, who is now a coach and was a player on the Eagles' 1989 state championship team.

"On a Friday night I can't imagine any other place to be," said radio color guy Phil Hukari, who played on the Hood River High School football squad and later became a teacher and coach at HRVHS.

Hukari said, "I'm sad to see community people who don't come to games anymore."

But the fans, and their enthusiasm, were plentiful on Friday.

From the ticket booth to the fireworks post, these are the things that people had to say about Hood River Valley's Friday Night Lights:

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"This is the best part of it, watching them warm up," said Pete Vallejo. He and his wife, Eileen, were the first folks in the stands. "We wouldn't miss it," Pete said.

In the second quarter, they would see their son, Wyatt, a senior, score his first touchdown pass.

"We're really happy for him," Eileen said. "He has worked hard for this."

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"It's time to do football," said HRVHS parent Dennis Harvey. "It's great to be here, to watch the football game, enjoy a beautiful evening. This is just a great American pastime; this is what the fabric of our country is made of. I'm a football fan, but it's about coming and being part of a community, especially a rural fabric."

"It's the big huddle. It's enjoyable as a common interest. It's the whole big picture."

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At precisely 7 p.m., player introductions are done, the national anthem is sung, and announcer Bassham gives his trademark exhortation, "Ladies and gentlemen — it's time to play some FOOTBALL!"

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"Patience, and having good backup with people like Keith Bassham," said Kelly Semmes, asked about the secret to running the main ticket booth.

"I'm an Eagle all the way," said Semmes, who works at HRVHS as an instructional assistant. "I love being involved in things like this. I know pretty much everyone who comes through."

That can have its drawbacks. Semmes must make sure that everyone pays their proper ticket price, has the appropriate pass, or is carrying student identification.

"I get a lot of that, 'You know me, I go to school here' from kids who don't have their ASB card. I have parents sometimes get mad at me for telling their kid that. But it's part of learning responsibility," Semmes said.

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As concession stand advisor, she does double duty on game nights. How does she handle the booth and make sure all goes well in concessions?

"I just have good kids," she said.

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"You gotta keep smiling," said senior Celeste Martinez, working the concession stand. "People expect fast food service but it's just ordinary kids doing it."

The juniors will use the year's concession revenue "to pull off a really good prom this year," said Lulu Rodriguez. Also working concessions were Brenda Garcia, Brook Lee, Yvette Sanchez, Luis Lopez and Jesus Garcia.

New this year; bowls of chili and chili dogs.

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"It's always exciting," KIHRS's Mark Bailey said. "It's different than basketball or baseball; there's an electricity."

"I like the fact that it's the ultimate gladiator combat," said his radio mate, Phil Hukari. "I think back to the highlights of my athletic career, scoring a touchdown — there is no other feeling like that. I like the teamwork. I think it's the ultimate American sport."

This is season 26 for Bailey, who works closely with Donnie Herneisen, in his fourth year as stats chief and

seven years overall as HRVHS coach. (He's the head track and field coach in spring.)

"I get a dry seat, the best seat in the house," Herneisen said. "Unless we're in The Dalles (where HRV will visit this season). I'd be here anywhere, but I'd rather be up here where it's dry."

"The great thing is I don't have to worry about this stuff (stats) anymore," Bailey said, gesturing to his monitor and Herneisen's. "I just look at the screen."

"It's real-time stats, as I put it in, it updates," Herneisen said. (Helping matters, Henderson Field just got Internet connection last year.)

"It's easier, and more accurate," Bailey said. "I used to have a sheet where I kept (stats) but to me it was always more important to make sure that I was describing the play, and this makes it far easier." Not only does Bailey have immediate stats but he can keep track of trends such as who's gaining plenty of yards in the second quarter. And Herneisen can immediately dispatch stats to the coaches to analyze during the game. "No more waiting until the next morning," Herneisen said.

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Down on the field, Clyde Rowan backs up two key participants in the game: ball-boys Robert Rowan, his son, and Zach Wells. Normally, Rowan would be handling the end zone camera, but on Friday he had technical difficulties so he was on the field with the boys. (Atop the stadium, sophomore Tristan Fisher trained his camera on the action, for the team's video record.)

"I don't get to give back a lot and this is my volunteer time," said Rowan, describing his commute as an IT professional.

"I work in Portland and am on the road but Friday night I'm not doing much, and this is where I am." He and his wife, Emily, a May Street second-grade teacher, also have a daughter, Gracie, 6.

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Teri Beam watched her son, Kyle, Class of 2013, play varsity football and she's back at the Booster Club booth, as president. She notes that Booster Club supports everything at the high school, "not just athletics but activities, too."

"I just like to give back to the community," she said of her role. "It's been a great place to raise kids. It's exciting to see everyone here. There are a lot of people here to support the team. This is such a good community; everyone rallies around and watches out for each other's kids. It's a special place, I feel fortunate I got to raise my kids here."

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That's part of the spirit of Eagle Army, said school counselor Tammy Hosaka, who worked with Nan Noteboom (English teacher and ever-present photo-chronicler of HRVHS events) to get Eagle Army going.

"It's another thing to get kids excited about coming to home sporting events and different activities we have at school and getting involved," Hosaka said.

"We want our students to go to games, swim meets, tennis matches instead of just a few of the more popular ones. It's about supporting our team and not being against anyone."

Students in Eagle Army sign a form agreeing to obey OSAA sportsmanship rules.

"Last year at games a couple of kids painted faces but we didn't get the turnout we wanted, and we wanted the entire school in on it and supporting the team," said senior Trenton Gallagher, who led the charge at Eagle Army's debut during the morning pep assembly.

"We have a good turnout so far and hopefully next time it'll be full-fledged, but so far it's a little in the making," Gallagher said. "Hopefully the word will spread. I think kids are really going to get behind it."

"School spirit is cool now!"

Close to the action is HRVHS parent Wes Bailey, who for years has handled the down marker sign, with its adjustable "1-2-3-4" indicator. There's another one on the other side of the field, where the chain gang marks the downs and yards to go. Bailey said staging a down marker on the stadium side is not required by OSAA, "but we do it anyway."

He said the thing he likes

## Eagle Army, on video

HRVHS scored a touchdown on the fourth play of the game, but Forest Grove soon tied it, and with the score close and the Vikings driving downfield, rally advisor Jennifer Schlosser was concerned about timing.

For a video shoot, the Eagle mascot and Eagle Army general Trenton Gallagher were prepared to sprint through the phalanx of cheerleaders, but Schlosser told them to wait.

"I don't want to do it if they're going to score," Schlosser said. So the Eagle and friends waited until HRV had the ball a few minutes later, and videographer Parker Kennedy captured a rousing scene.

It's all part of a video that

Kennedy and other students are putting together as an "Eagle Army" tribute, planned for its debut during Homecoming Week.

Spirited events continue this year with home HRVHS football games on Sept. 20 and Oct. 4 (Homecoming).

Other home athletic events include today's Skip Sparks-Bob Sullivan Invitational Cross Country meet, 3 p.m. at Henderson, girls soccer on Sept. 17 (at Henderson), boys soccer at noon on Sept. 21, and volleyball on Sept. 17 against Reynolds at 6:30 p.m.

Homecoming Week will be Sept. 30-Oct. 4, culminating in the community parade at 1 p.m. on Oct. 4, and the football game that night.



Photo by Kirby Neumann-Rea

**VIDEO** in progress: guided by photographer Parker Kennedy, right, Eagle Army General Trenton Gallagher and the Eagle Mascot prepare for their their entrance.

about football nights is the weather.

"It's been good. If you look at last year we had only one poor night last year where we had drizzle."

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Preparing for Friday Night Lights is a two-day process for Don Schmidt, and the FFA barbecue crew he advises.

"I like the atmosphere," junior Stan Ochesky said of Friday nights. "We get to meet people and talk to the people who support the football program and FFA, and it's just good to have everyone together."

"We start at 6:30 a.m., put the pork on," Schmidt said. Ochesky notes that the work really starts the day before, when the fat is trimmed off the pork.

"We start the day before and get it ready for the grill, and season it. We start the briquettes and smoke it for four hours and cook for four, then pull it and add the sauce."

"The tri tip we season the day before and let it marinate for all day," Ochesky said.

"Two hours," Schmidt interjects.

"Well, it's pretty much all day for a high schooler," Ochesky quips.

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At half time, the press box aroma is spicy, thanks to FFA ribs and sandwiches.

"Up here we got the greatest

event going on in town; we're having a blast," Bassham said. "I just talked with the Forest Grove AD and they can't have fireworks in Forest Grove so they are just eating it up, they love it. We put on a good show, the kids are awesome, and we get to eat ribs."

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Kyle Rosselle and his family have a new perspective on HRV Friday night.

Roselle, a 1994 graduate of Pendleton High School, played against HRVHS (and later played football at Oregon State University) Formerly a The Dalles-Wahtonka assistant, he was hired this summer as HRVHS assistant principal. His two children have been enrolled in Hood River schools for two years.

"It feels really good to be here," said Roselle, enjoying tri-tip with his wife, Nicole, and parents Jim and Sally, of Pendleton.

"I remember sitting on the other side in the rain," Sally said.

"I think we lost, too," Kyle recalled.

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Wearing his own "Eagle Army" shirt, Principal Rich Polkinghorn said he loves the community aspect of the games.

"The home football games are always fun, bringing community together, starting with our pep assembly this morning, and the start of the whole

fall season. It's good memories."

He said that while there are new people involved in keeping students and the public safe at the games, not much new needed to be done this year.

"We have a well-constructed system put together. It's getting people organized so we have eyes on all the dark spots. We have great fans, visitors are always great, there aren't too many issues, and sometimes we get to just enjoy the game."

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Bassham said it is teamwork that makes Friday Night Lights go.

"Everyone knows how to do their job. I just stay out of their way. The unsung heroes are the guys who take care of this field, the best looking grass field in the state of Oregon," he said, crediting Wynn Winfield and Eduardo Yanez.

"They bust a gut to keep it looking good. The whole staff does a great job, the other custodians who work their butts off to keep it looking good so you come here and you have a great facility to look at it," Bassham said.

"It's always a little hectic, the first home game. But it's a good battle, we thought it would be close, kids are playing tough."

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Not everyone at the game has a Hood River connection.

Kevin Fry watched from the northwest sidelines, his first time at Henderson. Fry, an engineering contractor for Insitu, commutes for the week from his home on Puget Sound, Wash., but stayed in the Gorge this weekend.

"I was around and I just wanted to watch a game. It's been awhile since I went to a high school football game. I checked the papers to and saw White Salmon (Columbia) and The Dalles were away, and saw Hood River had a home game. I'm having a great time."

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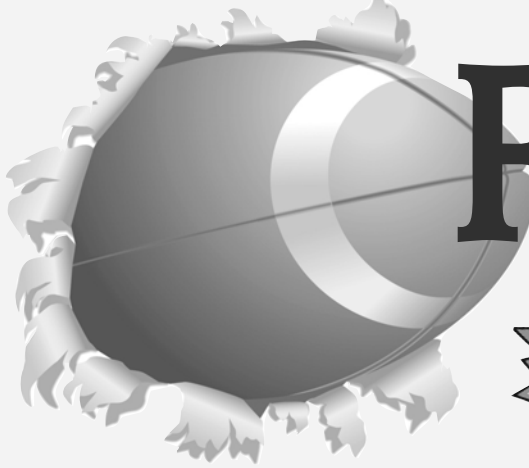
As halftime winds down, Bassham intones, "AND HERE COME YOUR EAGLES!" and soon the Eagles are back in it, 28-25 on a pass from Riley Van Hoose to Alex Jimenez, and more fireworks will go off before the night is over.

"We sit in anticipation of a touchdown, and we're cussing when we don't have success," jokes Lions pyro crew chief Paul Zastrow. "It's just great to be out here and help in the celebration," Zastrow said. By the end of the game, the Lions will fire a total of 18 explosions. That's three after the national anthem, a total of 10 for Eagle touchdowns and, at the game-ending horn, a five-rocket burst of Friday Night Lights.

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## Pigskin Prognosticators:

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## Pick the Winners in our annual Football Contest

### Here's How It Works:

Weekly, in The Hood River News you will find a football contest page. Within each of the ads on the page you will find a scheduled high school, college or professional football game. To enter, cut out the entry blank on that page and write down in numerical order the advertiser's name and the team you think will win the game. Do not abbreviate. Send in your entry to The Hood River News. It's as easy as that!

Each week, the person who has the most correct picks will win a prize. In case of a tie, one person will be drawn from the group of most correct picks. All weekly entries will be automatically entered in the grand prize contest. The weekly winner will be listed in the following week's paper. In December, 2013, a grand prize winner will be drawn from all the previous entries submitted for the weekly contests.

Look for game details in the main section of The Hood River News starting Sept. 18.

## Good Luck!