

Elk Grove Citizen

Sports Page

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HALFWAY THERE

The *Citizen* looks at the best players in the Delta Valley and River conferences

By Jeff Forward

Citizen Sports Writer - With six games into the records books already, several players have already made a name for themselves. The *Citizen* takes a look at the best players – offense, defense and special teams – from the area high school football season so far. Because so many players are utilized on both offense and defense, the list includes only 16 players.

Quarterback: Brandon Summers, Laguna Creek: Summers has been a steady presence under center for the 5-1 Cardinals. He keeps his poise under pressure and controls a solid, fundamentally sound offense with few mistakes. He's completed more than 61 percent of his passes for 851 yards, eight touchdowns, and three interceptions.

Quarterback/Punter: Cam Morris, Sheldon: Morris is the leader of the Huskies' offense and has proven that he can throw the ball just as well as he can run it. The senior signal caller had 232 yards passing in the Huskies' win over Lincoln of Stockton. When he's been contained, as Elk Grove and Laguna Creek managed to do, Sheldon has struggled. He has run the ball 82 times for 432 yards and 10 touchdowns; completed more than 56 percent of his passes for 744 yards, eight touchdowns and four interceptions; and is averaging slightly more than 30 yards on 12 punts.

Running back/Linebacker: Edward Russell, Franklin: Russell is probably the player of the year in the league. He has run for touchdowns, passed for touchdowns, and even caught touchdown passes. He's also blocked kicks, recovered fumbles, and handled kick-off duties for 5-1 Franklin. His biggest games were at Lincoln of Stockton (four rushing touchdowns) and at Nevada Union. He has rushed 80 times for 771 yards and 13



Sheldon wide receiver Alex Dillard returns a kick-off 90-yards for a touchdown against Lodi earlier this season. Dillard has been one of the best offensive players so far this season.

touchdowns; caught 19 passes for 379 yards and two touchdowns; made 21 tackles, one sack, has two interceptions, and blocked a punt. Oh yeah, he also returned a kick-off 88 yards for a touchdown against Oak Ridge.

Running Back: Bryan Hilliard, Laguna Creek: Hilliard is a big, powerful running back that punishes defenses with his hard-running style. Two weeks after suffering a shoulder injury against Sheldon, Hilliard was back on the field scoring two crucial touchdowns to seal a win over Elk Grove. He's rushed for 801 yards and five touchdowns on 132 carries for the season.

Wide Receiver/defensive back/ kick returner: Alex Dillard, Sheldon: Dillard may be small, but he is lightning quick. He is leading the league in scores over 40 yards with a multitude of long receptions, punt returns, and kick-off returns for touchdowns. He's also run the ball well and played defensive back for the 4-2 Huskies. Dillard has run the ball 24 times for 179 yards; caught 14 passes for 360 yards and six touchdowns, and returned both a punt and kick-off for touchdowns. On defense, he has 14 tackles, an interception and a fumble recovery.

Wide Receiver/defensive back: L.T. Thomas, Laguna Creek: When the Cardinals need a big play through the air, don't be surprised if they look to Thomas. Against Sheldon, he burned Dillard on a post pattern for a crucial score. Thomas is tall, has good hands, and has speed to compete with anyone in the league. He has 15 receptions for 310 yards and three touchdowns. He also has 27 tackles and an interception on the year.

Offensive/ defensive Line: Armond Armstead, Pleasant Grove: Armstead is only a junior and is playing both ways for the Eagles. He is solid on the offensive line and has 30 tackles on defense for a surprising 4-2 Pleasant Grove squad.

Offensive/defensive Line: Zach Waller, Franklin: Waller anchors an offensive line that has led Franklin to a 5-1 record. He can block anyone in the league and he also plays defensive line. At 6'6" and more than 270 pounds, Waller is one of the biggest players in the league and helps open holes for Oscar Loza and Russell.

Offensive Line: Taylor Dever, Nevada Union: Dever has been having a solid season until the Franklin game when he was manhandled by a smaller, but very quick defender. Otherwise his play has been stellar enough for schools such as Nebraska, Washington and Fresno State, among others, to take interest. He has the size – 6'6" and 295 pounds – to play at the Division I level.

Tight End, defensive Line: Bryan Eisenbeisz: The tight end is one of the least utilized positions in most local offenses, but Eisenbeisz has proven he can catch passes, block and also play defensive line. Although he has only 2 catches on the year, his blocking helps the Thundering Herd pile up the rushing yards. On defense, he has 24 tackles and three sacks.

Defensive Line: Brian Stockton, Nevada Union: Stockton is a speed rusher who comes

off the edge to terrify opposing quarterbacks. He has 17 tackles and an amazing 12 sacks on the season for the defending champions.

Defensive Line: Perry Jackson, Laguna Creek: Jackson has 67 tackles, five sacks and two recovered fumbles on the year from his defensive line position. He's been a dominating force for the Cardinal as they've held opponents to no more than 14 points in regulation of each game this season. Sheldon Head Coach Ed Lombardi credited the Cardinals' win over his team to their defensive line play.

Linebacker: Lincoln Togia, Elk Grove: Togia says his tremendous family support (several dozen regularly attend his games) helps motivate him on the field. To be honest, I don't think this 6'1", 250-pound beast needs any more pumping up. Togia is fast and very physical and loves to hit. His jarring tackle of Sheldon quarterback Cam Morris may be the hit of the year. He has 43 tackles and numerous sacks on the season.

Linebacker: Sean McCabe, Sheldon: McCabe is a linebacker that should play safety in college. He has plenty of speed and power and can deliver as big a hit as anyone in the league. What sets McCabe apart, though, is his instinctual ability to find the ball and make the play. He has 52 tackles and three sacks on the season.

Defensive Back: Kamaal Mack, Laguna Creek: Mack has played a crucial role as Laguna Creek's defense has led the Cardinal to a 5-1 record. He has 56 tackles and three interceptions on the year. His two interceptions against Elk Grove helped Laguna Creek secure a big league win.

Kicker/Defensive Back: Ryan Williams, Sheldon: Williams isn't your stereotypical kicker. Just ask any of the players he's tackled this season. He has made 27 PATs, three field goals, and 18 of his 31 kick-offs have been touchbacks. In addition to his stellar kicking skills, Williams also has 27 tackles and an interception from his defensive back position.