

High School Football Preview

SCHEDULES

Monroe Bearcats

Friday, Sept. 4 @ Jackson
Friday, Sept. 11 @ Cedarcrest
Friday, Sept. 18 vs. Mountlake Terrace
Friday, Sept. 25 @ Everett, 8 p.m.
Thursday, Oct. 1 @ Sedro Woolley
Friday, Oct. 9 vs. Cascade
Friday, Oct. 16 @ Marysville-Getchell
Friday, Oct. 23 vs. Snohomish
Friday, Oct. 30 vs. TBD
All games are at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted

Glacier Peak Grizzlies

Friday, Sept. 4 vs. Skyview
Friday, Sept. 11 @ Snohomish
Thursday, Sept. 17 @ Bothell
Thursday, Sept. 24 @ Ferndale
Friday, Oct. 2 vs. Kamiak
Friday, Oct. 9 vs. Lake Stevens
Friday, Oct. 16 @ Arlington
Friday, Oct. 23 @ Jackson, 5 p.m.
Friday, Oct. 30 vs. Mariner
All games are at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted

Lake Stevens Vikings

Friday, Sept. 4 vs. Graham Kapowsin
Friday, Sept. 11 @ Bothell
Friday, Sept. 18 vs. Puyallup
Friday, Oct. 2 vs. Jackson
Friday, Oct. 9 @ Glacier Peak
Friday, Oct. 16 vs. Mariner
Friday, Oct. 23 vs. Arlington
Friday, Oct. 30 @ Kamiak
All games are at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted

Monroe enters season with experience, expectations and championship goals

By MERRICK PARNELL
contributing writer

After a season of learning and growth, Monroe High School football enters the 2026 season with a veteran core and increased expectations.

Head coach Scott Darrow believes the Bearcats are positioned to take a significant step forward after gaining valuable experience last year. Monroe returns 10 players who started on defense and nine offensive starters, giving the team 19 returning starters overall.

“We were a young team last season, so I expect our returning players to play with more confidence, maturity, and experience,” Darrow said. “More importantly, I expect our veterans to set the standard for our younger players every day.”

That experience could prove to be one of Monroe’s biggest strengths entering the season. “Our biggest strength is our experience and culture,” Darrow said. “Having 19 returning players who started for us last year gives us a foundation that we didn’t have a year ago.”

The Bearcats will be led offensively by a group of returning seniors, including quarterback Chris Britt and wide receivers Matthew Lachappelle, Carson Cox and Parker Toyoji.

All four return as starters from last season and have continued to develop during the offseason.

“Each of these players has taken significant steps forward in the offseason and is



Jim Scolman photo

The Monroe Bearcats Varsity Football squad fine-tuned their moves before the season opening at a four-team jamboree on Thursday, Aug. 27. The coaches ran the team through blocking and rushing drills and looked over the offense and the passing game.

bigger, stronger, and faster than they were a year ago,” Darrow said. “Their experience and development will be critical to our success.”

Darrow expects the senior leaders to set the tone through their preparation and consistency.

“We expect them to lead our offense through their preparation, confidence, and consistency,” he said.

On the defensive side, Monroe will rely heavily on middle linebacker Romeo Smith.

Smith returns after earning First Team All-League honors last season and leading the Bearcats in tackles.

“Romeo brings experience, toughness, and a physical presence to our defense,” Darrow said. “We will rely on him to be one of the leaders of that side of the ball.”

With Smith and a defense featuring 10 returning starters, Monroe has the experience to build a strong defensive unit.

While experience is an obvious strength, Darrow believes consistency will be one of the team’s biggest areas of emphasis.

“Experience only matters if you use it the right way,” Darrow said. “We need to become a team that plays with great discipline, communicates well, takes care of the football, and does the little things right on a consistent basis.”

The Bearcats will emphasize playing with pace and physicality while limiting mistakes.

“We want to play fast, physical, and together,” Darrow said. “We will emphasize creating explosive plays, winning the turnover battle, limiting missed tackles, and being fundamentally sound.”

With a more experienced roster comes greater expectations, but Darrow knows Monroe cannot overlook the work required to meet those expectations.

Ultimately, Monroe’s goals extend beyond what happens on Friday nights.

“Our goal is to have a team that competes for championships, but our definition of success goes beyond wins and losses,” Darrow said. “We want our players to have fun, compete, improve every day, and ultimately become better men through their experience in our program.”

That philosophy is summed up by a simple message within the program.

“Everything we do is bigger than football,” Darrow said.

Darrow wants the Bearcats to build a family-oriented culture where players hold each other accountable and compete for one another.

“If we can build that kind of team and culture, the wins will take care of themselves,” Darrow said.

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High School Football Preview

Snohomish Panthers look to rebuild after string of so-so seasons

By SAM DAVIS
contributing writer

The Snohomish Panthers are looking to build on last season as they prepare for their 2026 campaign under second-year coach Eric Solbakken.

Last season, Solbakken led Snohomish to a 3-7 record, matching the Panthers' record from the 2024 season.

When asked what he learned from his first year as head coach at the WESCO 3A conference media day on Aug. 16, Solbakken noted understanding his players was one of the biggest lessons.

"From a head coaching standpoint, there are a lot of things that go into it that you can't necessarily project or know that it's going to happen," Solbakken noted.

The biggest thing for us as a coaching staff was understanding the players, what makes them tick, their strengths, and kind of what we were walking into."

One of those key players is senior Jack Penhollow, who will play center on offense and defensive line this season.

Penhollow said at the 3A media day that one of the biggest lessons he took from last season was the importance of playing together.

"I learned that playing as a team is one of the most im-



Jim Scolman file photo

Snohomish Panther football players practice and exercise during a 2025 training session to prepare for the season.

portant things you can do as a player," Penhollow said.

"Toward the end of last season, we started to play as a team, and I think that's a big part of what I learned."

Another key player, senior runningback and linebacker Luke Sage, believes that a lot of the Panthers team are going to "surprise a bunch of people" this season, Sage said.

"There's been a lot of people in the weight room this offseason putting in the work. They've been grinding, showing up every single day throughout the summer," Sage said.

That work has also translated to growth on both sides of the ball, according to offensive line coach Logan Bruce and defensive coordinator Kai Smalley.

Both coaches agreed that the Panthers have made strides since the start of last season, with the team working better together and developing a higher standard for the upcoming season.

"I think the boys started to figure out what the standard is," Bruce noted. "Thier mentality and playing as a unit has definitely grown in my opinion."

When asked what fans should expect from the Panthers this season, Solbakken said opponents will have to earn everything they get against Snohomish.

"Just a physical brand of ball that plays hard-nosed defense that is going to be cerebral," Solbakken said.

"We're going to take our shots when we see them and impose our will on people."

The Panthers will get their first chance to put that identity to the test on Sept. 3, when Snohomish travels to Auburn to play the Trojans to open the 2026 season.

SCHEDULES

Snohomish Panthers

- Thursday, Sept. 3 @ Auburn, 7:30 p.m.
- Friday, Sept. 11 vs. Glacier Peak
- Friday, Sept. 18 vs. Sedro Woolley
- Friday, Sept. 25 vs. Marysville-Getchell
- Friday, Oct. 2 @ Everett, 5 p.m.
- Friday, Oct. 9 @ Stanwood
- Friday, Oct. 16 vs. Cascade
- Friday, Oct. 23 @ Monroe

All games are at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted

Jackson Timberwolves

- Friday, Sept. 4 vs. Monroe
- Friday, Sept. 11 vs. North Creek, 8 p.m.
- Friday, Sept. 18 @ Everett, 5 p.m.
- Friday, Sept. 25 @ Cascade, 5 p.m.
- Friday, Oct. 2 @ Lake Stevens
- Friday, Oct. 9 vs. Mariner
- Friday, Oct. 16 @ Kamiak
- Friday, Oct. 23 vs. Glacier Peak, 5 p.m.
- Friday, Oct. 30 @ Arlington

All games are at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted

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High School Football Preview

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Everett Seagulls

Friday, Sept. 4 @ Ferndale
Friday, Sept. 11 @ Shorecrest
Friday, Sept. 18 vs. Jackson, 5 p.m.
Friday, Sept. 25 vs. Monroe, 8 p.m.
Friday, Oct. 2 vs. Snohomish, 5 p.m.
Friday, Oct. 9 @ Marysville-Getchell
Friday, Oct. 16 vs. Mount Vernon
Friday, Oct. 23 @ Cascade, 8 p.m.
All games are at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted

Cascade Bruins

Friday, Sept. 4 @ Marysville-Getchell
Friday, Sept. 11 vs. Stanwood, 5 p.m.
Friday, Sept. 18 @ Lynnwood, 5 p.m.
Friday, Sept. 25 vs. Jackson, 5 p.m.
Friday, Oct. 2 vs. Marysville-Getchell, 8 p.m.
Friday, Oct. 9 @ Monroe
Friday, Oct. 16 @ Sedro Woolley
Friday, Oct. 23 @ Everett, 8 p.m.
All games are at 7 p.m. unless otherwise noted

By SAM DAVIS
contributing writer

After a 10-2 season and a deep run through the 4A state playoffs, the Glacier Peak Grizzlies enter 2026 with state championship aspirations once again.

Last season, Glacier Peak was one of the top teams in a very competitive Wesco 4A league.

The Grizzlies went 5-1 in league play before advancing to the state quarterfinals, where their season came to an end against Sumner, the eventual 4A state champion.

In head coach Shane Keck's 8th season at the helm, the Grizzlies will rely on a senior class this year that may be small in numbers, but big in experience.

"There are only 13 (seniors), which we believe is probably the smallest class since the school's opened," Keck said at the Wesco 4A media day Aug. 23. "But they're all high-level players. A lot of guys are going to play college football, and a lot of guys have played a lot of football for us."

One of those seniors is University of Washington commit Zach Albright, a versatile two-way standout who contributes at tight end and defensive line, while even handling punting duties.

As he enters his final season, Albright said the biggest difference with this year's team to those in the past is its chemistry.



Jim Scolman 2025 photo

Glacier Peak celebrates during an October 2025 game against the Cascade Bruins.

"I don't think I've seen a team come together as much as this one has," Albright said. "I believe these players will step up to put us in a great position."

Another senior who figures to play a major role is senior Max Bridges, who plays tight end and defensive line, and is coming off an

18.5-sack season.

The Grizzlies' defense allowed just 15.5 points per game last season, good for third-best in the state, and Bridges believes the unit is poised to surprise a lot of people again this year.

"We just need to carry the mindset we had from last year into this season,"

Bridges said.

"Our defense last year was like, 'the train don't stop,' so we just have to build on that," Bridges said.

On offense, senior wide receiver Matt Kowalski is focused on building even more chemistry with his quarterback Oliver Setterberg, while helping younger players take on bigger roles.

"I think just continuing to build that relationship with Oliver, and working with him to expand what we can do together," Kowalski said.

"Also building up the younger players, giving them chances to shine and grow, that's a big focus."

With all this talent and expectations for the Grizzlies this upcoming season, Keck expects to be back in contention for a state title.

A challenging schedule will give the Grizzlies plenty of opportunities to test themselves and prepare for another long playoff run.

"We want to play in big-time games so come November, we have been battle-tested," Keck said.

"We're trying to climb the ladder, from that seven, eight, nine range in the rankings to one or two. We want to play past Thanksgiving, and you can only do that by challenging yourself."

The Grizzlies' first test of the season comes early against the Skyview Storm on Sept. 4, at Veterans Memorial Stadium.

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