

LATEST HEADLINES

Game of the Week: Emotions flood the field for Seaside-Monterey Battle of the Bay



Seaside High running back Josiah Escort runs against visiting Monte Vista Christian during the teams' season opener. (Raul Ebio – Herald Correspondent)



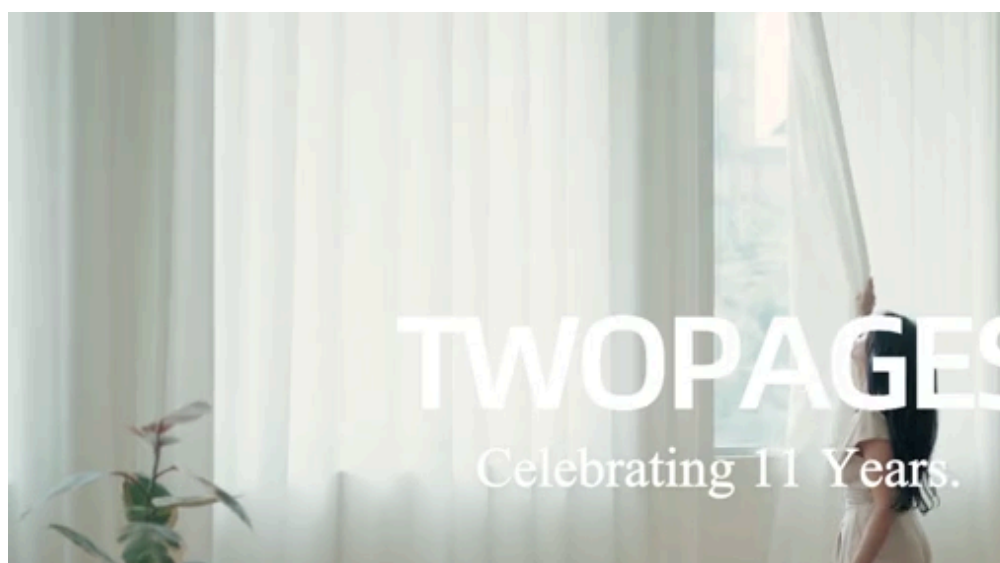
By **JOHN DEVINE** | jdevine@montereyherald.com | Monterey Herald

SEASIDE – Unlike the “Shoe” trophy or the “Megaphone,” two long-standing rivalry football games in Monterey County, there was originally no coined phrase for what is now referred to as the Battle of the Bay.

Even as Monterey and Seaside High’s rivalry began to rise in the 1970s and 80s, there was no name to spice it up, no trophy for one program to bring back to campus.

The 61st meeting on Saturday between Monterey and the host Spartans adopted the name “Battle of the Bay” in the mid-90s, but not before a few different suggestions were made.

“They were going to call it the ‘Battle of the Seagulls,’” Seaside coach Al Avila said. “It was (former Athletic Director) Andy Gray and I who came up with the ‘Battle of the Bay.’ I’m not sure what a seagull would have looked like on a perpetual trophy.”



Avila and the Spartans haven’t seen the trophy for five years as Monterey has kept it on its campus, holding a 37-27-1 overall series lead.

The past three games have been one-sided, as the Toreadores – members of the Pacific Coast Athletic League’s Gabilan Division, the most competitive of



Monterey Bronson Gulley, shown here last season, has moved to tight end.
(Donald Fukui/Herald correspondent)

"We have to control our emotions, approach it with the same standards like any other week," Monterey coach Alex Besaw said. "We addressed that in a team meeting."

Yet, it's not like any other week. It's a week of hype on both campuses, as Besaw cautioned about the outside noise – particularly on social media.

"A lot of what is said happens outside the game," Besaw said. "Our approach does not significantly change, or the meaning of the game. It's our rivals, and we don't take it lightly."

Besaw has never suffered a loss to Seaside in his four seasons, although it took a stopped 2-point conversion as time expired in his first year in 2022 to escape with a 29-27 win, clinching a playoff spot in the process.

A similar sequence occurred last Thursday when the Toreadores defense rose to the occasion with a stop of a 2-point attempt late in the fourth quarter in a 27-26 win over Christopher.

Besaw, whose team roster hovers at 34, was speaking about how the Toreadores watched a 20-point second-half lead wither away in the stretch of 12 minutes.

"The urgency in practice to condition ourselves better is something we emphasized," insisted Besaw. "With our roster size, that has been a focal point."

The Spartans, who began last season on life support, have a pulse this year, even if their numbers sit just under 25 healthy players.

Defensively, Seaside matched up with Monte Vista in last week's 16-8 loss. The offense remains a work in progress as it didn't produce its first points until the fourth quarter.

"We couldn't throw the ball, so they (Monte Vista) loaded the box on us," Avila said. "With no film of them, we had no idea what we were doing. We went in totally blind. We had to adjust as we went."

That included using a pair of quarterbacks last week as Avila – now in his 46th season – looks to find some continuity in the passing game to balance Seaside's offense.

"We have to be able to provide different looks," Avila said. "This week has been more learning and slowing stuff down. The kids just showed up and talked about playing 'the Peninsula.'"

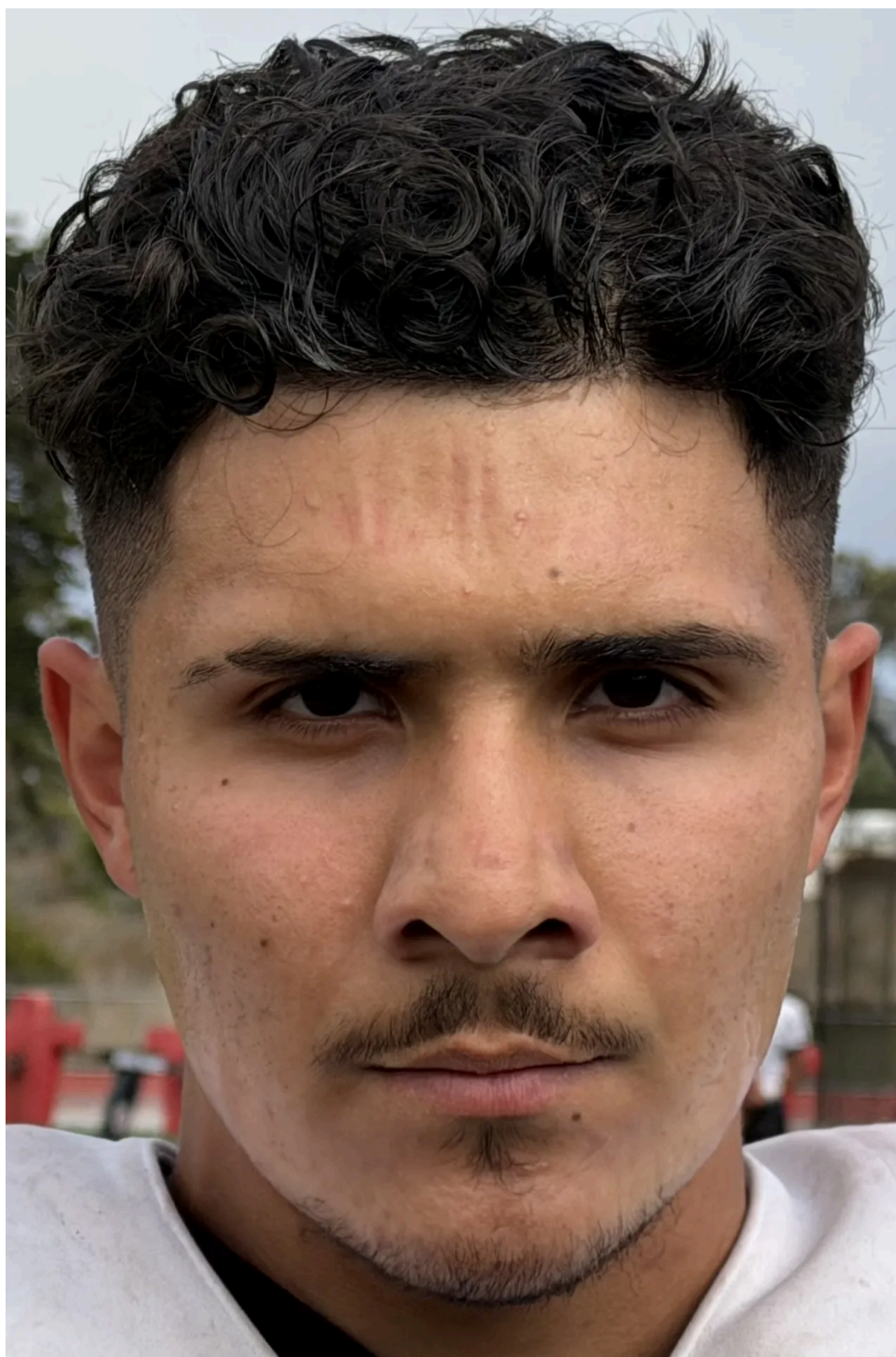
It's a phrase that has been adopted at Seaside in reference to Monterey having players on campus who live in Marina and Seaside, including across the street from players in Seaside.

"We've reminded our guys to play the game with respect," Besaw said. "It can be a heated rivalry, but within the rules. It's a storm that is brewing. It's lightning in a bottle. But when you uncork the bottle, the message is that being fundamentally sound wins football games."

Closing last season by winning three of its final four games has brought pride back to the Spartans' program in what Avila has called a three-year plan in rebuilding the structure and foundation.

"People don't understand how far these kids have come in three years," Avila

That includes Seaside linebacker Juan Ceballos, who has emerged as one of the top linebackers in the area with a motor that runs four full quarters of football.



Seaside's Juan Ceballos. (John Devine -- Monterey Herald)

"They got a guy (Ceballos) that's really explosive off the ball," Besaw said.

"Seaside has some team speed on defense. It is a fast, physical and aggressive group that rallies to the ball."

Besaw could have also been talking about Jonah Leau, who provided Seaside with a presence inside, adding strength to the interior of the defense.

Minus a stretch of 12 minutes in the second half, the Toreadores defense held Christopher to seven points behind linebacker Nate Mendoza and defensive end Bronson Gulley.

Gulley, who started the first four games last year at quarterback for Monterey before a season-ending injury, is playing on the edge on defense and contributing as a tight end as well.

The 6-foot-6, 210-pound three-sport athlete was disruptive on the defensive side of the ball, creating havoc coming off the edge against Christopher.

"I think No. 7 (Gulley) is their best athlete," Avila said. "He might have found his niche as an edge guy in college. He's going to fill out that body. That might be his ticket."

The emergence of sophomore quarterback Logan Vanderberg-Grace has enabled Besaw to move Gulley back to a more natural position.

While the 6-foot-4 Vanderberg-Grace continues to develop, pressure has been taken off him by the emergence of tailback Neasean Mitchell, who rushed for 128 yards and a touchdown last week.

"Logan has areas to improve upon, simple things, such as growing as a quarterback," Besaw said. "He has the quarterback mentality. Neasean was ready for the moment."

So was Zander Morse, who came in and offered a change of pace in the backfield, scoring in the second half as well for the Toreadores.

"Monterey is big and strong," Avila said. "The running back (Mitchell) is tough. He runs in between the tackles. He'll turn the corner. The offense keeps you honest with the pass."

Until Seaside proves it can throw the ball, look for the Toreadores to duplicate



Monterey's Bronson Gulley. (John Devine -- Monterey Herald)

For the Spartans to turn tailback Josiah Escort loose, it will need some production at quarterback, where Avila is weighing a decision this week on two players.

The Spartans did put the ball in the air 17 times with moderate success last week, with Noah Sanks coming off the bench to complete 7-of-8 attempts.

"I liked that we were physical last week," Besaw said. "We were the first ones to punch. We executed some of our wrinkles in the game plan. I thought our

Injuries have already hit both teams as Monterey will be without at least two players that played extensively last week, while Seaside lost one two-way starter.

"We had a good week of practice with great tempo," Besaw said. "A lot of good energy. I had to kick some of them off the practice field. It's a small group that works hard."

SCHEDULE

FRIDAY

Carmel at Woodside, 7 p.m.

Sacred Heart Cathedral vs. Palma at Rabobank, 7:30 p.m.

Half Moon Bay at Pacific Grove, 7:30 p.m.

Carmel at Woodside, 7:30 p.m.

Salinas at Los Gatos, 7:30 p.m.

Hollister at Alvarez, 7:30 p.m.

North Salinas at Soledad, 7:30 p.m.

Stevenson at Livingston, 7:30 p.m.

SATURDAY

Greenfield at St. Francis, 12:30 p.m.

Monterey at Seaside, 2 p.m.

COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Chabot at Hartnell, 1 p.m.

San Jose at Monterey Peninsula College, 1 p.m.

The Herald's Top 10

3. Soquel (0-1) at Aptos, 7:30 p.m., Friday
4. North Salinas (1-0) at Soledad, 7:30 p.m., Friday
5. King City (1-0) vs. Gonzales, late Thursday
6. Monterey (1-0) at Seaside, 2 p.m., Saturday
7. Hollister (1-0) at Alvarez, 7:30 p.m., Friday
8. Pacific Grove (1-0) vs. Half Moon Bay, 7:30 p.m., Friday
9. Carmel (0-1) at Woodside, 7:30 p.m., Friday
10. Stevenson (0-1) at Livingston, 7:30 p.m. Friday

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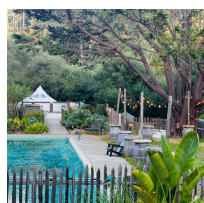
County agreement for more Flock cameras postponed

Wednesday, August 26



Preps of the Week

Tuesday, September 1



Dannah Nielsen, Off the Beaten Path: A peaceful coastal retreat to Pescadero

Wednesday, August 26



Monterey County prep football Week 1 – Weekend scoreboard, how Top 10 fared

Sunday, August 30



The Monterey Herald's Top 10 volleyball rankings

Wednesday, September 2



Trump has submitted civil nuclear agreement with Saudi Arabia to Congress for review...

Wednesday, August 26



SF Giants' red-hot Devers blasts homer No. 30 in win over Atlanta

Monday, August 31



College Athlete of the Week

Monday, August 31



Game day hangouts: 7 fan- tastic Bay Area sports bars

Wednesday, May 23



Restoration underway on Salinas' Gabilan Creek

Tuesday, September 1



Salinas schools gain recognition for “whole-child” support

Friday, August 28



Man, 14-year-old girl sought in death of Baby Angelita found on side of Moss Landing road

Monday, August 31

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