

This story is taken from [Sacbee](#) / [Sports](#) / [High School Sports](#)

Sac High back Johnson gives Dragons big lift

bpaterson@sacbee.com

PUBLISHED SUNDAY, SEP. 06, 2009

Clinton Johnson is one of the best teenage Olympic weight lifters in the United States.

But he's passing on a major weeklong international competition this month in Chile to stay home and play with his Sacramento High School football teammates.

"I didn't want to abandon my team this season," Johnson said. "I know that if I'm around, they have a lot better chance of winning. I just want to help them out."

Johnson showed the importance of his presence Saturday in the Dragons' 33-0 victory over Woodside in their season opener in Oak Park.

Despite only having started to practice Monday after a five-week bout with mononucleosis, the 5-foot-9, 200-pound senior running back rushed for 196 yards and three touchdowns on 23 carries. Another 74-yard score was called back because of a penalty. He also scored on a 16-yard pass from Arturo Amaya.

While players from both teams were cramping and showing obvious exhaustion from the afternoon heat, Johnson was running as hard on his last carry as he was on his first.

"The strength and conditioning really helps," he said of his weightlifting training. "It works my full body. My legs, my hips aren't cramping because they're trained for that abuse."

Assistant coach Paul Doherty, who coaches Sacramento High's national-championship club weightlifting team, said Johnson is an amazing athlete.

"He has put more work into lifting the last four years than any other kid I've come across," Doherty said.

Johnson also is on a mission. As a sophomore in 2007, he helped the perennial bottom feeders to a 7-4 season, the school's best in nearly two decades.

But the Dragons slipped back to mediocrity last year in going 3-7.

"We had a senior class last year that wasn't dedicated to being the best they could be," said Sacramento coach Doug Cosbie. "Now we have guys who want to win and are willing to work together to be successful."

Woodside beat Sacramento 41-14 last year in Redwood City en route to an 8-4 season that included another trip to the playoffs for the perennial Central Coast Section power.

But the Wildcats were hit hard by graduation, have only two returning starters and are down to 28 players.

Still, Cosbie was surprised with his team's dominance, especially starting five sophomores, including three on the offensive line.

"I didn't know how good Woodside would be, but I thought we'd play well," said Cosbie, who is in his fourth season. "But that's the best first half of football we've played since I've been here."

While gaining 359 yards on offense, the Dragons limited Woodside to 109 total yards.

And befitting a team with a newfound positive attitude, Johnson was quick to note the contributions of the offensive line, especially senior captain Samuel Peterson, a guard.

"They're really hitting," Johnson said. "They're not the biggest in the world, but they're scrappy and get after it real hard."

Del Campo 42, Arroyo 6 in Fair Oaks – Ryan Dimino rushed for 382 yards and two touchdowns and threw for 86 yards and a score to lead the Cougars past the Dons of San Lorenzo.

Eddie Plantaric blocked a punt and returned it four yards for a touchdown, and Dominic Pruitt returned an interception 75 yards for a score.

 [Buzz up!](#)

Call The Bee's Bill Paterson, (916) 326-5506.