



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Pendleton's Wes Persinger goes up for a rebound in the Bucks' 72-60 win against Hood River last week in Pendleton.

## PERSINGER: Center has chance to be league MVP

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Just as importantly, his interior play has been the catalyst for the Bucks turnaround. After finishing with losing records the past two years, the Buckaroos have already clinched their first CRC league title in three years entering tonight's finale against rival Hermiston.

The player formerly described as "lacking fire" now has plenty of it. In the first meeting of the series against the Bulldogs, Persinger played like a man possessed — diving for loose ball after loose ball. A sliding flip pass over his shoulder to teammate Quinn Cockburn provided the go-ahead hoop that capped a fourth quarter rally.

"Last year, I'd make a bad play and put my head down," Persinger said. "I'd mess up and be like 'Oh, my gosh,' but now I just try and keep my head up. There's always another play."

Persinger has a strong case for league Player of the Year honors. Against conference foes, he has averaged 15.8 points per game, 10.5 rebounds and 2.5 blocks. He's scored efficiently, too,

shooting 62.5-percent from the field.

"I think Wes finally has seen how good he could be. He had a little success and probably is like 'This is pretty cool. I'm the man'. It's been fun to see his growth," Broaddus said.

"I think he figured out that if he wants to go on to the next level and play basketball he's going to have to step it up," Quinn suggested for the turnaround. "He just realized that this could be his last shot."

Those dreams exist for Persinger. His father Jeff Persinger played basketball at Walla Walla Community College. The younger Persinger is waiting until after the season to pursue colleges. At that point, he plans on writing letters and sending his highlight film to coaches.

"I feel like its always been a bit of dream to get to the next level," he said. "I think that'd be an amazing opportunity."

His coach is his biggest advocate in the matter.

"It's kind of up to Wes, like I've been telling him, the only one that can really stop you is you," Broaddus said.

## GIRLS: 7th-seed PRHS

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the second quarter. After Pilot Rock launched off to a 16-3 start, WMHS rallied to cut the lead to single digits with 29 seconds left in the opening half. Weston-McEwen's Sharice Quaempts did the deed when she converted an old-fashioned three-point play that capped an 11-7 run.

"I told them at the half, we're their best players right now," Wilson said. "One thing this team has done all year is adjust at halftime. We get them refocused. Instead of coming out worrying about everything they did wrong, they adjusted. Our third quarters all year have been consistently great."

Saturday was no different. Pilot Rock opened the third quarter making five of seven shots from the field. Dave, the CBC Player of the Year, did the early lifting, scoring five of the first eight points.

"We kind of wanted to just get back to playing our game," Dave said of the second half. "That second quarter we played a little bit sloppy but we came back and got to our level and closed it

out."

She finished with a game-high 17 points and seven rebounds.

"She played like a Player of the Year," Wilson said. "She proved that she earned that tonight."

Once the Rockets lifted off in the second half the TigerScots didn't have a response. They missed all 23 tries from the field and were outscored 22-to-8 in the second. All eight WMHS came from the charity stripe. WMHS shots 5-for-53 for the game.

Dave scored a season-low three points versus Stanfield on Friday. The junior matched and passed that in the first three minutes Saturday. A left angle 3-pointer opened the scoring and a driving layup gave her team a 5-0 lead. She finished with 12 first half points.

Pilot Rock lands as the seventh seed in the Class 2A state playoffs. They'll host Regis on Saturday at 6 p.m. Weston-McEwen is the tournament's No. 14 and will travel to No. 3 Vernonia on Saturday for a 2 p.m. tip.

## Intermountain rodeo competes in Eugene

EUGENE — On a doubleheader weekend, the Intermountain High School Rodeo team had multiple placers.

"It was a good showing," said coach Curtis Pederson, of the Feb. 21-22 rodeos in Eugene.

Preston Pederson captured the state lead in tie down roping, winning with a time of 9.85 seconds. In the same event, teammate Kolby Currin placed third and Calgary Smith placed ninth.

On Saturday, Clayton and Keenan Hack finished fourth

of team roping, with a time of 9.4 seconds, Clayton on head and Keenan on heels.

Other top finishers over the weekend were Cheyenne Wolfe, third in barrel racing and just 2 seconds out of first place. Hailey Basford and Marlene Bodmer finished seventh in goat tying, Lindsey Taylor eighth in break-away roping and Britt Shandle eighth in pole bending.

The team will compete well into the spring and summer, including April 24-26 in Hermiston and at the state finals are June 10-13 in Prineville.

### Prep wrestling

# Heppner, Riverside win titles

East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Riverside Pirates had three district champions while advancing eight wrestlers to the state tournament with another strong day at the Special District 1 championships on Saturday at Hermiston's Armand Larive Middle School.

The Pirates finished third in team scoring, and saw their titles come one after another early in the championship round.

Sophomore Aristotle Rockwell started it all off with a 6-3 win over Rainier's Justice Larson. Senior Elijah Conlon followed at 126 with a first-round pin (1:24) on Larson's team-

mate Isaac Carter.

Then at 132, senior Hans Rockwell won his fourth district title with a 21-6 tech fall on Clatskanie's Cristobal Rojas that came with 40 seconds left in the third period.

Riverside also had two more wrestlers reach the finals, but 182-pounder Ricardo Mendoza and 195-pounder Jesse Hegar had to settle for second.

Mendoza was pinned by Vale's Trace Cummings in the first round (:26) and Hegar lost an 11-2 major decision to Sage Delong, also of Vale.

Also headed to state next weekend at Portland's Veterans Memorial Coliseum are Roberto Peralta who

placed third at 152 pounds, and Brian Mendoza (285) and Anthony Kernal (195) who both placed fourth. Nyssa was the district champion with 327 team points, Vale was second with 255.5 and Riverside was third with 177.5.

### 2A/1A

ENTERPRISE — The Heppner Mustangs brought back bookend titles from the Special District 4 championships on Saturday.

Ryan Smith grabbed the first at 106 pounds with a first-round pin (1:19) on Burns' Kyran Simpson in the finals. Then 285-pounder John Propheter completed the set with a first-round

pin (1:09) on Adran's Florian Nieder.

Only the top two placers in each weight were awarded state berths, and Heppner 182-pounder Cord Flynn came up just short in third place.

The Mustangs were eight in the team scores with 68 points.

Irrigon, which placed 10th with 56 points, had three wrestlers place fourth for their highest finishes.

They were Ammon Byers at 120 pounds, Alex Zavala at 195 and Gabino Ramirez at 285.

Burns won the team title with 184.5 points, Crane was second with 149.5 and Union finished third with 136.5.

### Class 1A girls basketball

# Knights take third title in a row

By MATT ENTRUP

East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Condon/Wheeler girls basketball team won its third Big Sky district championship in a row after holding off Sherman in the second half for a 60-45 win at Hermiston High School.

With the Huskies nipping at their heels early in the third quarter, Knights guard Deana Harris bookended a 7-0 spurt that pushed the lead back into double digits, where it would remain the rest of the game.

"Everybody steps up at district tournaments and I think that as young of a team as we are we had some players out there who were just trying to get used to the atmosphere and all the people," she said of a roster loaded with sophomores. "But I think when they finally stepped up we pulled away. I think it was a blast for everybody."

Even while beating teams by nearly 30 points on average during the second half of the season, Knights coach Teresa Humphrey knew there was one thing that could potentially throw a kink in the team's postseason plans — and the Huskies found it on Saturday.

"I've said it all season, we've got to keep our big three on the court," she said of seniors Harris and Matney Jamieson, and junior Emma Logan.

Her fears were nearly realized when Logan hit the bench in foul trouble early and Sherman began chipping away.

They trimmed the Knights' lead to 37-28 at halftime, then scored the first four points in the third quarter to make it 37-32.

That was as close as they came, though, and by the time Harris' three-pointer dropped through the net with 3:58 left in the frame the lead was back to 44-32.

Harris finished with a game-high 25 points and scored 12 of those during the first quarter as the Knights built a 23-11 lead.

Jamieson added another 21 points and went 6-for-6 at the free throw line in the fourth quarter.

The pair was named Co-Player of the Year for the Big Sky League during trophy presentations.

"That was awesome," Harris said. "We've been the dynamic duo since we were in grade school and it's just amazing to go on this ride with her especially."

Jamieson mirrored those

sentiments, "I wouldn't have liked to have it any other way, that was perfect because Deana is probably one of the greatest players I've played with. I was really happy to share that with her."

Logan, who finished with eight points, was also named to the BSL first team to round out the Knights' selections.

After checking off the last of their secondary goals, the defending state champions turn their attention toward the second round of the state playoffs on Saturday. Their opponent is yet to be decided, but Harris said she's confident the team's younger players got the experience they needed to take on all comers.

"I definitely think that they're ready and they will step up when they need to," she said, "and they've shown that at this tournament."

**CONDON/WHEELER 60, SHERMAN 45**  
 SHS (12-13) 11 17 8 9 — 45  
 C/W (25-11) 23 14 9 14 — 60  
**SHERMAN** — Janet Guzman 11, E. Hill 10, K. Casper 9, M. Blaylock 8, E. Poirier 2, K. Asher 2, S. Green-Hite 2, B. Orendorff 1, B. McKinney, N. Wollenmann, L. White, J. Hill.  
**CONDON/WHEELER** — Deana Harris 25, M. Jamieson 21, E. Logan 8, A. Rietmann 6, A. Terland, J. Homer, A. Ramsey, A. Carnine, T. Pierce.  
**3-point field goals** — SHS 2, C/W 3.  
**Free throws** — SHS 11-19, C/W 15-21.  
**Fouls** — SHS 21, C/W 18. **Fouled out** — none.

**DUFUR 39, IONE 34**  
**OT** — At Hermiston, neither team was ready for its season to end.

The Rangers ultimately got their wish and outlasted the Cardinals in overtime of their 3rd/4th place game at the Big Sky district tournament on Saturday.

The win earned Dufur (17-9) the final state tournament big from the league.

Ione (7-17) had won four of its last five league games to earn its way into the district bracket but ran into the No. 1 and 2 seeds once there.

Following trophy presentations Ione junior Rachel Holland was announced as making the second-team All Big Sky roster.

Dufur's all-league recipients were junior Hannah Harris and senior Aimeelyn Miller on the second team and senior Taylor Darden on the second team.

**In Big Sky boys action:** Horizon Christian nudged Sherman 48-47 in the championship for its fifth-straight district title. Both teams advance to state, along with Dufur, which beat South Wasco 45-30 in the 3rd/4th place game.

## Nixyaawii wins boys district championship

East Oregonian

BAKER CITY — The Echo Cougars are on to the state postseason after a 51-40 win over Powder Valley on Saturday afternoon in the Old Oregon League third-place game at Baker High School.

Klay Jenson led the Cougars (13-11) with 16 points, and Michael Thompson added a double-double with 14 points, 10 rebounds.

Carlos Chavez added 15 points and three assists for the Echo, and Danny Tappo chipped in four assists and three steals.

The Cougars minimized the effect of their 16 turnover, allowing only seven point to come of them. Meanwhile, Echo turned Powder Valley's 19 turnovers in 18 points.

Cade Browne led Powder Valley (10-14) with 15

points.

**ECHO 51, POWDER VALLEY 40**  
 PV (10-14) 6 17 6 11 — 40  
 EHS (13-11) 13 11 13 14 — 51  
**POWDER VALLEY** — Cade Browne 15, L. McElligott 9, I. Colton 8, C. Green 4, E. Beddell 3, G. McGinn 1, T. Eubanks, H. Davis, 18-57 FG  
**ECHO** — Klay Jenson 16, C. Chavez 15, M. Thompson 14, D. Tappo 4, B. Moffitt 2, Z. Gehrke, J. Dorn, C. Medrano, 22-52 FG  
**3-point field goals** — PV 2-13, EHS 3-17.  
**Free throws** — PV 2-6, EHS 4-9. **Fouls** — PV 15, EHS 11. **Fouled out** — McElligott (PV).

**Also in Old Oregon boys:** Nixyaawii won the district championship with a 56-37 win over Joseph. No details were reported.

**In Old Oregon girls action:** Echo won the district title over Powder Valley 43-37 on Saturday evening. Grabbing the third state berth was Wallowa in a nail-biter, 39-38 over Nixyaawii. No details were reported from either game.

## MLB says play pace critical to the sport

PHOENIX (AP) — Commissioner Rob Manfred says new rules intended to speed up the pace of games are aimed at luring younger fans to baseball.

Manfred, speaking publicly on the changes for the first time since they were announced last Friday, said the rules are a "measured" approach worked out with the players' association.

This season, batters will be required to have one foot in the batter's box and pitchers and batters will be required to be ready to go at the conclusion of television commercials.

"The issue of attracting a younger audience and a pace of game is related," he said.

Manfred said he has four children in their 20s.

"I have a passing familiarity with that generation," he said, "and one thing I can say for sure is their attention span seems to be shorter than the rest of ours."

Last season, the average length of a major league game was a record 3 hours, 2 minutes.

"I certainly want to reverse the trend of increasing the length of the game," Manfred said, "and I'm really intent on the idea that we're going to have an average game time that's going to start with a 'two' next year as opposed to a 'three.'"

Any rules changes have to be done with the cooperation of the players' association, Manfred said.

## BOYS BBALL: Irrigon outrebounded Heppner by 14

Continued from 1B

game-high 19 points. "Not very many people can win three in a row."

Playing less than 24 hours after winning a grind-it-out state qualifying game over Stanfield, Heppner (17-5) fell easy prey to the Knights' frenetic up-and-down style. Irrigon was aggressive on both ends, extending baseline-to-baseline defensively and turning Mustang mishaps into quick points.

It was exactly what Irrigon coach Mitch Thompson hoped to see from his state title contending team.

"We want to be the most energetic and enthusiastic team in the state," he said. Heppner bullied Irrigon on the offensive glass for first four minutes of the game. The taller and sturdier Mus-

tangs scored six points on rebound put-backs from post players Patrick Collins and Ross Cutsforth to keep pace with Irrigon.

"That seems to happen and then I go crazy in time-outs and they kind of realize if we keep doing that coach might have a heart attack and die at a young age," he said.

Irrigon recovered nicely, closing the quarter on a 12-3 run capped by a Landeros buzzer beating floater.

The Mustangs still finished plus-14 on the board — thanks mostly to Collins and his 10 points and 12 rebounds — but the frenzied Knights pace made up for the disparity.

Romero drilled another buzzer beater to beat the halftime buzzer that left

convention center buzzing and the Knight with a 34-16 lead.

The Knights really found a rhythm in the game's final three periods. They forced 19 Mustang turnovers and drilled eight three-pointers in the final 24 minutes to remove any doubt.

"Heppner is a good team," Landeros said. "We knew we had to play them hard because they were going to come at us hard because they want to win just as bad as we do. We just played our game and tore it up on the defensive end."

The victory checks of another box off the Irrigon checklist. The Knights will next turn to checking off the final box: a state title defense.

"I feel it's a do or die situ-

ation for us," Landeros said. "We're going to play every game like it's our last one and do what we can to win."

"As long as we give our maximum effort, our maximum attitude every single day, we're going to come out on top," Romero chipped in.

The two-time CBC Player of the Year had 14 points in the win.

Irrigon will open state playoffs with a home game versus 16-seed Faith Bible.

**IRRIGON 67, HEPPNER 36**  
 HHS 9 7 10 10 — 36  
 IHS 16 18 17 16 — 67  
**HEPPNER** — Patrick Collins 10, W. Putnam 8m L. Grieb 6, R. Cutsforth 4, K. Murray 2, C. Hedman 2, J. Corbin 2, J. Petzold 0, J. Lindsay 0.  
**IRRIGON** — Anthony Landeros 19, A. Romero 14, Z. Rice 11, H. White 8, F. Vera 7, A. Timpy 6, R. Reynolds 2, N. Verley 0, X. Rambo 0, A. Rice 0.  
**3-point field goals** — HHS 2, IHS 10.  
**Free throws** — HHS 4-8, IHS 5-9. **Fouls** — HHS 8, IHS 13. **Fouled out** — none.