

ATHENA

TigerScots sign the dotted line

Lambert, Coffman sign to play college softball

By ERIC SINGER
East Oregonian

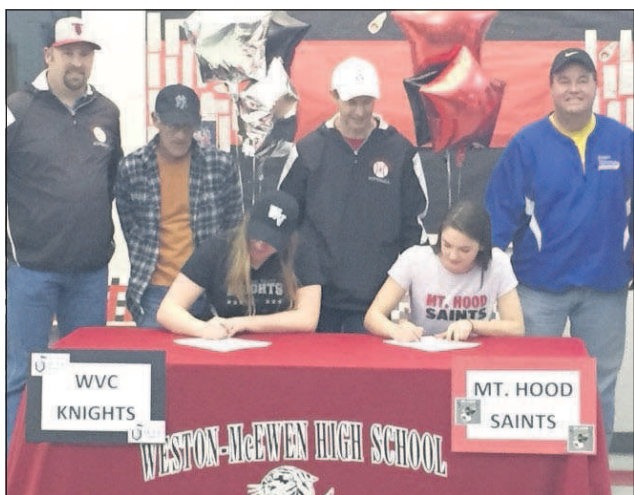
After long recruiting processes, Weston-McEwen softball players Jessica Lambert and Megan Coffman finally put pen to paper on Wednesday to continue their athletic careers collegiately.

The pair held a small ceremony at Weston-McEwen high school on Wednesday night, as Lambert signed with Wenatchee Valley College in Wenatchee, Washington and Coffman signed with Mt. Hood Community College in Gresham.

"It's super exciting, but a little nervous because you're committing yourself and I'm still a little nervous about going to college and I haven't even graduated high school yet," said Coffman.

Lambert said that she was happy to finally put an end to the process, which has consumed the past two-plus years for her.

"It was a pretty long process," said Lambert, "I started really my sophomore year so the last few years have been pretty long. I went and met a lot of teams and (Wenatchee Valley) just seemed like the



Staff photo by Eric Singer

Weston-McEwen seniors Jessica Lambert, left, and Megan Coffman sign letters of intent to compete in softball at Wenatchee Valley College and Mt. Hood Community College, respectively, at a signing event held Wednesday night at Weston-McEwen High School in Athena.

right fit."

Coffman's recruiting trail features more fresh pavement than Lambert, as she did not really decide on playing collegiate softball until this past summer.

"I told my summer league coach Rob Hillmick that I was thinking of playing college ball and right away we started emailing coaches," she said. "In the end, it was about which coach fit best and other general things like the campus."

The pair were key cogs to Weston-McEwen's successful 2015 season. Lambert, a pitcher, and Coffman, and outfielder, helped the TigerScots finished third place in

2A/1A Special District 6 with a 23-7, 8-4 record, but had a great run through the postseason ending with a second place finish at state to Pilot Rock.

Both have been involved with softball for as long as they can remember, which made it a no-brainer to continue playing at the collegiate level.

"Softball's always been in my life," Lambert said. "I've put a lot of work in and had some success and given the opportunity to continue on I took it."

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HERMISTON

Kopacz chooses Hawks

Bulldogs shortstop signs with Columbia Basin College

East Oregonian

After much deliberation, Hermiston senior infielder Mikayla Kopacz decided playing time trumped a large-school experience and signed a national letter of intent with Columbia Basin College softball on Tuesday.

Kopacz, who intends to study nursing or business, spurned interest from two NCAA Division I schools to stay local and attend the Pasco, Washington, junior college.

"I think last year it hit me (softball) was gonna be the sport I would go far in," she said.

After starting her search for a college team a little later than most, Kopacz was still able to catch the eye of Bradley University (Illinois) and Campbell University (North Carolina), but chose CBC and the Hawks for three main reasons — cost, the chance to start right away, and head coach Adrian Ochoa.

Ochoa recruited Kopacz after coaching her on the



Staff photo by Kathy Aney/file

In this May 6, 2015 file photo, Hermiston shortstop Mikayla Kopacz scoops up a throw from behind the plate as Pendleton's Lauren Richards steals second in a game played in Pendleton.

travel team Washington Angels this past summer.

"He actually saw what I had and what I was bringing to the field," Kopacz said. "He helped me tremendously in hitting and fielding and gave me an offer I couldn't really pass up."

The Hawks finished fourth in the NWAC East last season going 28-23 overall and 14-14 in league play and are entering the eighth season of Ochoa's tenure.

Kopacz said Ochoa has offered her the starting spot at shortstop and the assurance that he'll do everything he

can to get her a scholarship at a four-year school.

"My coach (Ochoa) really assured me that he's going to push me somewhere else," she said. "He gave me a lot of scenarios. The school I was looking at in North Carolina, if their shortstop blew out a knee or something, the coach there could call (Ochoa) and ship me right out. He's going to get me somewhere else."

Kopacz was a third-team All State infielder for Hermiston as a junior and made the first-team All-Columbia River Conference while batting for a .408 average.

Spieth takes early share of lead at Singapore

Associated Press

SINGAPORE — Jordan Spieth showed no signs of fatigue on the latest leg of his globe-trotting tour, taking a share of the lead at the Singapore Open on Thursday despite having his agent caddie for him.

The world's top-ranked player began with a birdie at Sentosa Golf Club and birdied three of his last 10 holes to complete a bogey-free round of 4-under 67.

That was enough for a share of the clubhouse lead with An

Byeong-hun of South Korea, the next highest-ranked player in the field at 26 in the world.

Spieth, who has played his past five tournaments in five different countries, was forced to turn to his manager Jay Danzi to carry his bag after his long-time regular caddie Michael Greller injured an ankle in Abu Dhabi last week and skipped the trip to Southeast Asia.

By his own dizzy standards, Spieth was not at his best during his opening round, driving well but misjudging most of his approach shots

to the green, although there were some mitigating circumstances for the 22-year-old.

He avoided the worst of Singapore's stifling humidity when he teed off in front of a big gallery just after sunrise and made a perfect start when he drained a 20-foot birdie putt on the 10th hole, his first of the day.

The Texan made par at his next eight holes as he struggled to get his yardage right on the unfamiliar course before picking up another shot on the par-5 18th to reach the turn at two-under.

FREEMAN: Induction ceremony on April 30

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When he left the Air Force a few years later, Freeman moved to Eugene where he enrolled at Lane Community College and began to assist with the wrestling program there. After just one season, he became a full-time assistant at Lane before moving to La Grande to finish up his Bachelor's degree at Eastern Oregon University.

A few years after graduating and starting his teaching career at Enterprise, Freeman moved to Pendleton to take over as the junior high wrestling coach — something he envisioned as a short stopover before cracking into the club ranks in Portland.

"At the time there were two clubs (in Portland) that were the two top club teams in the United States," he said. "I wanted to get in that area, so I was going to be a junior high coach and work my way up."

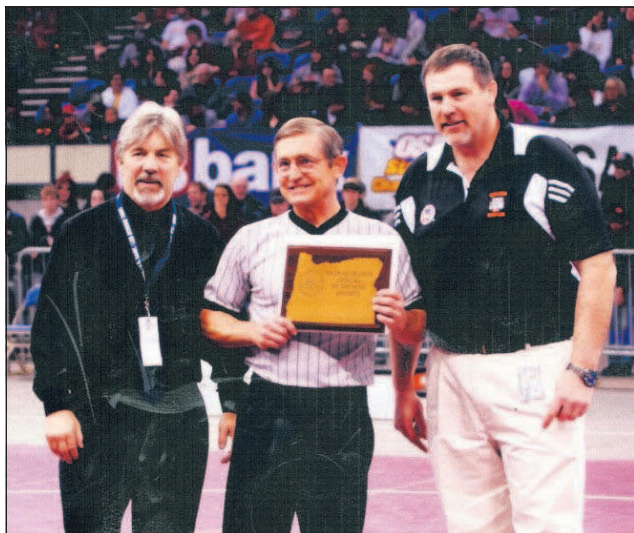
But once Freeman settled into Pendleton, he knew that plan would quickly change. He loved the community atmosphere and loved the way the community rallied around everything.

"We had spent one year here and one day I told my wife 'We'll never leave,'" he said. "That was in 1984 and we're still here."

Biding his time as the junior high coach for three years, Freeman applied for and got the head job in 1987 and held that position for 13 years. In that time, he coached 33 Inter Mountain Conference champions, four state champions, 18 state placers, and were the Tri-State champs in 1992.

But after the 2000 season, Freeman decided that enough was enough and stepped down as Pendleton's wrestling coach.

"I think a lot of people have a hard time



Contributed photo courtesy of Dale Freeman

In this 2011 photo, Dale Freeman, center, accepts a plaque commemorating his selection as Official of the Year at the OSAA state championships.

understanding how much energy goes into coaching anymore," he said. "It's not like it used to be where it was a few months of the year and then everybody went to another sport, it became a year-round thing.

"I spent summers away from my family a lot and that got really hard. Also with coaching in the IMC, all the long trips tended to wear on me a bit and I just thought it was time for a younger person to step in."

Freeman took the entire next year off and away from the sport, enjoying the time with his family that he had lost as a coach. But after a while, his passion for the sport began burn inside him again. He decided to get back in the sport, but this time as an official.

"I got back involved and take a lot of pride in what I do," he said. "I'm almost 64 years old and I still get excited about going out and officiating."

The veteran official says he was always known as a stickler for rules and regulations as a coach, and he uses that same mentality when he officiates matches, because he says they owe it to the kids.

"In every sport there's some officials that just don't take it serious enough, they're mediocre and they're hurting the kids," he said. "The kids put all of the time and effort and heart and soul into what they're doing and if you're not on your 'A' game you're cheating those kids."

Since he started officiating, he has been involved with the state tournament for numerous years and was voted by coaches from all ranks as the OSAA's Official of the Year in 2011.

Freeman will be officially inducted into the Hall of Fame on Saturday, April 30 during the Oregon Chapter's 22nd annual celebration at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Tigard. Freeman will receive a replica plaque of the one that will be hung in Stillwater a place that Freeman now hopes to visit soon.

"I grew up in Wichita, Kansas and my dad grew up in Oklahoma, I spent every summer there so I've always wanted to go back and see the Hall of Fame," he said. "Now it'll be a little more special."

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T-WOLVES: Collins nets team-high 17

Continued from 1B

And that's exactly what happened.

Each team went on runs without the lead changing hands, but after Heugly converted BMCC's final field goal of the first half with 4:36 still left before intermission, WWCC mounted a 9-1 run that reset the score headed into the locker rooms.

Left alone in the right corner, Walla Walla's Marquel Greene released her shot over a closing BMCC defender and found nothing but net to knot the score at 32-all with 4.8 seconds left in the first half. It was the first tie of the game and BMCC would never lead again.

"It probably was (a momentum changer), and that was another one of those rotation deals where they wait to see where the ball lands before they go out there," Driver said. "They just need to sprint on the pass instead of waiting until it gets caught."

Walla Walla opened the third quarter on a 12-2 run and never let The T-Wolves any closer than eight points the rest of the way.

"We just have too many defensive lapses where we don't talk, we lose sight of who we're guarding and then just are slow on some rotations," Driver said. "It only takes three or four of those and then you go from tied to down by eight or 12. It's frustrating."

The lead hit its largest at 17 points when Shayna Allert scored three of her game-high 18 points with 6:54 left in the fourth quarter. Allert finished 5 of 9 from deep range and after it's slow start Walla Walla hit 10 of 31 three-



BMCC's Kylie Collins shoots the ball guarded by Walla Walla's Emily Hancock in the Timberwolves' 73-60 loss to the Warriors on Wednesday in Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

pointers in the game.

"Chipping away wasn't going to work, especially with the threes they were knocking down," Driver said. "We couldn't keep trading buckets with them in the fourth quarter and that's what we did for the first half of the fourth quarter."

Collins finished with a team-high 17 points for the T-Wolves and Savannah Heugly added a quiet double-double with 15 points and 11 rebounds.

"Obviously we want to get (Heugly) a little more involved in the offense but everybody's game plan against us is to slow her down, and so whenever she touches it she usually has at least two, sometimes even three defenders collapse in on her," Driver said. "In the

first half she did a good job distributing the ball and we got some pretty easy layups out of that. ... She picked it up there in the second half but she also was in foul trouble so that took away a little bit of the aggressiveness."

Despite losing three of their last four games, BMCC is still right in the thick of the playoff hunt just two games out with seven to play.

The T-Wolves host Treasure Valley to complete the first half of the league slate on Saturday at 2 p.m.

WWCC (15-4, 4-2) 17 25 16 — 73
BMCC (8-12, 2-4) 19 13 11 17 — 60
WALLA WALLA — S. Allert 18, K. Corrigan 15, K. Green 11, E. Hancock 9, T. Wellsandt 8, M. Greene 6, C. James 6, J. Jensen, K. Twohy. (24-64)
BLUE MOUNTAIN — K. Collins 17, B. Gregory 16, S. Heugly 15, B. Haringa 8, K. Reyna 4, E. Ramsey, L. Cagle. (21-51)
3-pointers — WWCC 10-31, BMCC 2-9.
Free throws — WWCC 15-20, BMCC 16-23.
Fouls — WWCC 24, BMCC 18. Fouled out — E. Hancock (WWCC), K. Collins (BMCC)

BLUE MOUNTAIN: Crockett scores 24 to lead team

Continued from 1B

Blue Mountain (9-12, 0-6 East) held the lead for most of the first half thanks to a 13-3 run that Luke Meyers capped with a layup to make it 37-28 with 3:10 left before halftime, but every time the T-Wolves looked like they were ready to go for the kill, Walla Walla (8-13, 2-4) would shoot its way back into the fray.

The Warriors went 30 of 52 (57.7 percent) from the field to offset the T-Wolves' streaky scoring, and a 14-6 run by Walla Walla to close out the first half cut BMCC's lead to 43-42.

The Warriors kept it going after the break and came out of the locker room on a 14-7 run that gave them the lead for good.

Blue Mountain didn't fold up shop after falling behind, though, and cut the lead to a single possession after Jared Mathews scored down low off a pass from

Tyler Thurman that made it 67-64 with 8:13 to play.

That was as close as the T-Wolves would come.

An inside bucket from Walla Walla leading scorer Roman McNight gave him the last of his 27 points with 7:57 to play and after missed shots by both teams, Darrian Caffaro-Briggs converted a three-point play to give his team a 72-64 lead with 6:56 showing.

Following a Walla Walla turnover, Thurman made his only basket of the game to pull the T-Wolves within 72-66, but the lead was quickly back out to double digits following back-to-back three-pointers by Caffaro-Briggs and Dalton Thompson.

Walla Walla maintained the lead from there, never letting BMCC within 10.

D'Quan Crockett led BMCC with 24 points, but like the rest of the team, was unable to find his shooting touch late in

the game. Meyers added 23 points while Mathews finished with eight points and nine rebounds. BMCC shot 28 of 64 (43.8 percent) from the field but just 4 of 20 from three-point range, where most of their shots were taken late in the second half.

The T-Wolves, which entered league play with the third-most wins in the East, are running out of chances to turn their season around and trail fourth-place Columbia Basin by three games. They finish up the first half of league play on Saturday by hosting three-win Treasure Valley at 4 p.m.

WWCC (8-13, 2-4) 42 46 — 88
BMCC (9-12, 0-6) 43 32 — 75
WALLA WALLA — R. McNight 27, D. Caffaro-Briggs 20, D. Thompson 17, P. Radliff 12, J. Downey 8, M. Schutt 4, M. Mueller, B. Tillerman, D. Steele, T. Sperry, M. Henderson. (30-52)
BLUE MOUNTAIN — D. Crockett 24, L. Meyers 23, J. Mathews 8, J. Schultz 5, R. Bell 4, L. Hawkins 4, Q. George 3, I. Harris 2, T. Thurman 2, G. Blankenship, A. Dean. (28-64)
3-pointers — WWCC 11-24, BMCC 4-20.
Free throws — WWCC 21, BMCC 15-23.
Fouls — WWCC 21, BMCC 23. Fouled out — R. Bell (BMCC).