

Bulldogs to be aggressive on bases in 2016

HERMISTON
SOFTBALL

COACH: Kate Greenough, 1st year

2015 SEASON: 7-18, 1-11 CRC (4th)

POSTSEASON STORY: The Bulldogs last made the playoffs in 2013.

LOSSES: OF Abi Drotzmann, INF Bobbi Hofbauer, INF Kalene Wheeler, INF Makenzie Juul, OF Ashley Moser.

RETURNERS: INF Mikayla Kopacz, sr.; P Breyanna Naylor, sr.; OF Amanda Baron, soph.; P Alex Barton, jr.; OF Kylie Green, soph.; OF Kiersten Miller, sr.; C/OF Kylie Hinkley, sr.; P Julissa Almaguer, soph.; P Taylor Betz, sr.; C/OF Jaime Hinkley, sr.; P Alex Barton, jr.; INF Ellery Jones, sr.

By **SAM BARBEE**
East Oregonian



Mikayla Kopacz (center) leads a Hermiston softball team optimistic about the 2016 season.

File Photo

Kate Greenough brings experience and knowledge to the dirt diamond at Rocky Heights Elementary.

The first-year Hermiston coach, who teaches special education at the high school, pitched collegiately for Northern Illinois then Utah State, before returning to Oregon to coach scholastic ball.

“I was very excited about being a part of the program, however may look,” she said. “I have lot of softball experience with high school and college and I guess I fit the part.”

Greenough wants to run. With an athletic roster, Greenough envisions lots of ground balls and aggressive base running. She doesn’t want to have runs handed to her Bulldogs. She wants to take them.

“We are gonna be aggressive on the bases, hit the ball hard and score a lot of runs,” she said. “Softball has become a hitter’s game, and so we are gonna fit that part and score as many runs as we can at all times. We plan on running a lot, hitting the ball on the ground, moving runners all the time.”

To employ that style of play, Greenough is hoping seniors Mikayla Kopacz, twins Kylie and Jaime Hinkley and Ellery Jones can shoulder most of that load. Kopacz slots in at the shortstop position, and Jones will fit in at third, giving Hermiston a strong left side of the infield to go with a decent pitching staff.

That staff, led by sophomore lefty Julissa Almaguer, Taylor Betz and Breyanna Naylor, is hoping to be a main area of success.

“I’ve seen some huge leadership with some of those seniors,” Greenough said. “Taylor Betz has showed up and has been ready to play. It’s been exciting to see them show up and want to be a part of something special.”

Greenough inherits a program that has struggled in recent years. From her perch, the first-year coach can feel the mentality changing a bit.

“From day one, we’ve treated

them like adults and expect that’s how they play,” Greenough said. “They’ve risen to that expectation. They’re playing like they’re a winning program. They’re not playing like things have been mediocre. They expect to win games. That’s exciting to see, especially when you’re coming (to) a building program.”

Greenough takes over a program that resides in the competitive CRC, with perennial power Pendleton just down the highway. She isn’t overwhelmed, though.

“I’d love to come in at the top of conference, that would be ideal,” she said. “I’d like to win as many games as we can. That’s pretty general, I guess, but there’s no reason why we can’t be at the top of conference. However that may fall in the rankings, we can compete with everyone in this conference.”

2016 SCHEDULE		
	vs. Ridgeview	4 p.m.
	vs. Liberty (DH)	4 p.m.
	at Putnam Spring Break Bash	TBD
	at Putnam Spring Break Bash	TBD
	at Pasco (WA) (DH)	10 a.m.
	vs. Summit	4 p.m.
	at Reynolds (DH)	TBD
	at Canby	4 p.m.
	vs. The Dalles (DH)*	Noon
	at Kennewick	4 p.m.
	at The Dalles*	4 p.m.
	vs. Hood River (DH)*	Noon
	at Hood River*	4 p.m.
	at Pendleton (DH)*	Noon
	vs. Pendleton*	4 p.m.
	at Hood River*	4 p.m.
	vs. Pendleton*	4 p.m.
	*League game	



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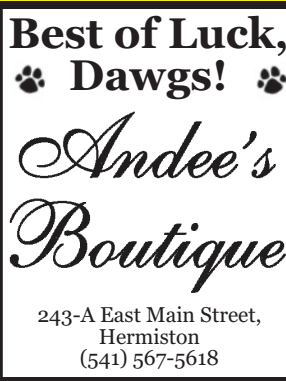


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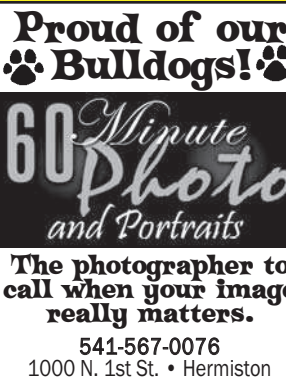
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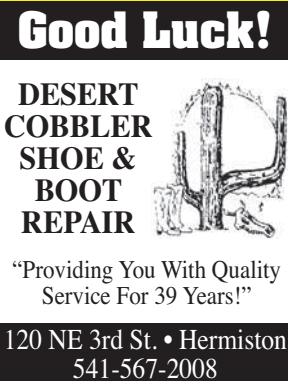


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