

## PENDLETON

## Diamondjaxx win Battle of the Bats tournament

East Oregonian

TACOMA, Wash. — The Pepsi Diamondjaxx went a perfect 5-0 at the Battle of the Bats tournament over the weekend, claiming the championship following a 2-1 victory over City Gold in the title game on Sunday.

In the championship, Blake Davis and Blake Been each drove in one run to carry the offense. In the top of the second inning, Davis drew a bases-loaded walk to bring in Brett Swanson to give the Diamondjaxx the 1-0 lead, and then Been ripped an RBI single in the sixth inning to bring home Yeager for the 2-0 lead.

Four pitchers combined to give up just one run and five hits in the game, with Gabe Umbarger lasting three innings as the starter, followed by Matthew Demianew (two innings), Chris Large (one inning), and Cameron Sandford (one inning). Large gave up the



**The Pepsi Diamondjaxx pose following their championship victory at the Battle of the Bats tournament in Tacoma, Washington on Sunday. #notforsale**

Contributed photo from Travis Zander

only run to City Gold in the bottom of the seventh, started the inning with a single and a walk against him to force a pitching change. Sandford came in and allowed the run to score on a fielder's choice, but then struck out the next batter to end the game and clinch the championship.

Cameron Sandford and Quinn Doherty each had impressive showings at the plate for the tournament, as Sandford went 6-16 (.375) with two runs scored and 4 RBI while Doherty was 5-12 with five runs scored and two RBI. Blake Been and Justin Duso each went 4-9 at

the plate for the tournament, with Been also scoring four runs with one RBI and Duso turning in three RBI.

The Diamondjaxx also had the benefit of some excellent outings from several pitchers, led by Ryan Stahl's start in the quarterfinals on Sunday. Stahl tossed a

complete game on 86 pitches, allowing just two hits, one run and one walk with three strikeouts to help the team to a 3-1 victory. Sandford also tossed a five-inning complete game in the semifinals on Sunday, allowing just one hit, one run, and three walks with seven strikeouts.

Demianew was also reliable out of the bullpen, pitching seven innings over three games while giving up just one run and four hits with two walks and seven strikeouts.

## HODGEN TAKES 7TH PLACE

TACOMA, Wash. — At the Battle of the Bats tournament, Hodgen Distributing finished in seventh place out of 27 teams in their division after a close 6-5 loss to Cascade Crush on Sunday in the fifth-place game.

In that game, Hodgen faced a 6-2 deficit as they came to bat in the bottom

of the seventh inning and scrapped together a string of good luck to push across three runs. In that inning, Shaw Jerome and Caleb Cary touched home on a RBI double to center field by Kaden Clark to cut the lead to 6-4. Next up, Joe St. Pierre singled into right field to score Clark to cut the lead to just 6-5 with two outs.

But the rally ended there as Nick Bower grounded into a fielder's choice to the shortstop for the final out of the game.

Avery Deutz had the hot bat for Hodgen in the game with a 2-3 game while Jared Beveridge, Hayden Villers, Clark, and St. Pierre each contributed one hit apiece. Austin Zaugg had a decent start on the mound, giving up three hits and one unearned run over four innings with 48 pitches. Villers pitched three tough innings in relief and gave up five runs and three hits in three innings.

## 3-ON-3: Hermiston's Crafton flies high for second dunk contest victory

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for sure. I played in college and that's what I was known for, and as you get older you don't get as high off the ground as you used to, that's why I don't enter the dunk contest," he laughed.

Six competitors took the court to go for the 3-point contest, with the top two advancing to the championship. As the defending champion, Paola was the last to go of the group. The first three competitors made a combined nine 3-pointers, before Brandon Castro found a rhythm and sank 11 on 24 shots (46 percent) to set the tone. Tim Cave then followed up Castro's performance with nine 3s, which meant Paola would need to hit 10 shots to advance to the finals.

Once the clock started, Paola's experience in the event showed as the 45-year-old started out at a steady pace with his smooth jump shot as to not tire him as easily. After making two of his first seven shots, Paola found a groove and sank seven of his next eight attempts to tie him with

Cave before swishing two more home to advance to the finals with 11 makes on 21 total shot attempts (52 percent).

In the finals Castro was the first to shoot and he jumped out to a quicker pace that forced several missed shots early and resulted in just two makes out of 12 shots in the first 30 seconds. Castro rebounded a little in the latter half of his round with five makes on 12 shots to finish with seven.

Seeing that mark, Paola said he wasn't too focused on the number as much as just finding a rhythm and shoot like he knew how.

"I'm 45 and been doing it a long time and you can tell when the kids get in the finals and they tense up a little bit," Paola said. "You just have to go out there and relax and pretend nobody is there just like you're in the gym shooting with a friend or something because when you're tensing up everything is short. It helps a lot and makes me calm down to not think too much."

And calm he was. He took the court one more time in the finals just as smooth and



**Keegan Crafton, of Hermiston, won Saturday's slam dunk competition during the 3-on-3 basketball tournament on Main Street.**

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

relaxed as he was in Round 1, sinking five 3-pointers in the first 30 seconds of the round. As time ticked down, he swished home his sixth, seventh, and eighth made

shots to clinch the title, resulting in a big cheer and numerous high-fives from the several hundred people that had gathered around to watch.

In the slam dunk contest, Hermiston native Keegan Crafton took home the championship in a rather anti-climactic competition with two dunks that garnered some big cheers from the crowd.

Crafton, a 2015 Hermiston graduate, misfired on his first attempt of the first round, but followed up with a big up-and-under reverse dunk that drew a near-perfect score of 28 from the three judges. The only other competitor to slam home a dunk was one that went by the name 'Miguel' with a 24 score that sent him to the finals by default.

In the finals, 'Miguel' went for success over flash by throwing down a two-hand straight-on dunk that garnered a score of 25. That brought Crafton back to the court, and the crowd instantly was behind the hometown guy.

Crafton started from the left wing, tossed the ball in the air to cause a big bounce and then proceeded to grab the ball at its highest point and throw down a vicious two-hand dunk to send the crowd into a roaring cheer.

The dunk received a perfect 30 score from the judges to claim the victory.

"There was no planning in that at all," Crafton said with a wide grin. "I had no idea what I was going to do, I just thought it up there on the court."

It's the second time that Crafton has won the event, after he claimed victory in 2014, and he says he loves coming back for the event each year.

"It's absolutely exhilarating," he said. "I love every minute of this."

Crafton and Paola each received Takin' it to the Streets Nike dri-fit shirts and basketball shorts for winning the events.

Action for the Takin' it to the Streets tournament picks back up again on Sunday afternoon with the final games of bracket play and championship action for each of the 20 different brackets on Main Street in Hermiston.

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## TEAM NAMES: Care Bears, Milk Studs two of the most entertaining

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Maybe' after the hit pop song, and made up shirts to wear that had the team name on the front and each player's phone number on the back.

Some of the more original team names this year included 'Curry up and shoot' (high school girls division), Vicious Ninjas (sixth grade girls), Antler Addicts (second/third grade boys), Java Junkies (Men's 6' recreational), Shake-n-Bake Kings (seventh grade boys), and God Squad (11th/12th grade boys).

However, perhaps the best two team names of the tournament ended up facing off against each other in the eighth grade boys championship with the Care Bears and the Milk Studs. The Care Bears, based out of Yakima, Washington, went undefeated in the tournament and won the title with a 20-9 victory over the Milk Studs, a local team from Hermiston.

"(Our name) came out of a two-hour basketball game in the driveway where we were just tossing around names," said Milk Studs coach Brett Conner. "The kids were throwing around candy names, I tossed around 'Milk Studs' and it eventually formed into 'Milk Studs' and it stuck."

Both teams even went as far as to create jerseys for the tournament, with the Care Bears donning pink tank tops with the Care Bear logo printed on the front, and the Milk Studs donning purple jerseys with a small logo on the front.

**BULLDOGS GET FEISTY**



**The Care Bears (in pink) and the Milk Studs face off during the eighth-grade boys championship game during the Takin' it to the Streets three-on-three basketball tournament.**

Staff by Kathy Aney

When the 11th and 12th grade boys championship game got underway on Sunday afternoon, it had the look of a Hermiston varsity basketball practice.

The two teams battling for the championship, Purosho and Splash, were comprised of mostly Hermiston Bulldogs, including Chance Flores, Dayshawn Neal, Jerry Ramirez, and Thomas McCullough. That aspect added extra intrigue to the game for the players.

"I knew it was going to be really competitive ... we play with them a lot," said Flores. "Some of those guys are on varsity too so it was good to go against them. I would definitely rather play against guys I know, it makes it more fun."

The game was highly-competitive and

ultra-physical from the start with plenty of pushing, shoving, and physical play to go around for both teams. Team Purosho, with Flores and Ramirez, found success on the offensive glass with second-chance points and ran out to the early lead. Splash, headed by Neal and McCullough, made a run in the middle stage of the game with some sharp-shooting by Neal, but ultimately Purosho came out on top with a 20-11 victory for the title.

"We won this bracket last year and it feels good to repeat," Flores said. "I love the tournament ... we never get a cakewalk."

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## WILDHORSE: Pendleton's Megan George earns top net score with 128

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Hegarty (five-over 149). After tying with Simmons for the lead in round one, Christensen struggled to a 10-over 82 score Sunday. Hegarty dropped five strokes, but was able to finish the back-nine with a pair of birdies.

Although everyone in the group is plenty familiar with the course, no one knows it as well as Dick. He's worked at the course for years and his three Wildhorse Amateur titles - 2005, 2006 and 2014 - are the most in the tournament's 18-year history.

Dick said if he has any advantage on the course, it comes on the putting greens. Simmons estimated he took 35 putts Sunday, while Dick dropped a couple 20-foot putts.

"On number eight (Nathan) handed me the pin



Staff photo by Will Denner

**Kurt Simmons reads the green during the Wildhorse Amateur Championship on Sunday in Pendleton.**

sheet," Simmons remembered. "He goes, 'Here you can have this. I don't need this anymore.'"

Nathan Som (three-over, 147) improved by eight strokes Sunday to finish third. Megan George, a 15-handicap golfer, won

finished with a top net score of 128.

Simmons earned a \$750 credit to the Wildhorse Golf pro shop as a result of his win. He said the first thing he'll buy with his winnings is a new pair of golf shoes for his father, Roger.

## SOFTBALL: First game is Friday

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"We've talked many times that we're there to win, not just vacation with our friends for 10 days," Garton said.

Garton added that the team has already seen an outpour of support from the community and local businesses, whether it was sending their best wishes along or helping them in fundraising to make the trip to California. SeaPort, with the help of Pendleton airport manager Steve Chrisman, who's daughter Ella is on the team, donated two planes to fly the team from Pendleton

to Portland to help with travel. Another financial boost was the anonymous donation of \$1,000 that was earmarked to help cover the cost of the 15-passenger van that the team needed to rent for their 10-day stay.

Also, DG Gifts donated its labor to help transform the team jerseys from simply saying 'Pendleton' to help them become Team Oregon.

"It's exciting for the girls that they were able to add Oregon and add their names on the back so they can keep them afterwards," Garton said. "It's just a memorable experience for everybody."

The team is having a sendoff party Tuesday night from 7:30-8:30 p.m. at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport, and everyone from the community is invited to attend. There will be cake and refreshments in the terminal provided by the airport.

"It's been a fun ride and we're super grateful to be able to do this with the community and these families," said Garton.

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