

BASEBALL: Jerome tallies six hits, five RBI for Buckaroos

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teams came in trying to climb the ladder to the top of the Columbia River Conference with the season beginning to wind down. Pendleton and Hermiston battled back-and-forth in a doubleheader at Armand Larive ball park, and for the most part neither team was able to really have a comfortable advantage.

At the end of the day, each team walked away with a victory as the Bulldogs defended their home turf in Game 1 with a 10-5 victory and Pendleton rallied time and time again in Game 2 to cement a 10-8 victory. The split leaves Hermiston (9-12, 3-5 CRC) and Pendleton (7-14, 3-5) in a three-way tie with The Dalles for second place in the CRC.

Hermiston certainly had its chances in Game 2 to seal down a win for the sweep, holding a three-run lead early and a two-run lead in the sixth inning, however the Bulldogs couldn't keep the Bucks down. Bulldogs coach Lance Hawkins said that while he would have loved two victories, he was pretty satisfied with the way his team played.

"I told the guys before that at the end of the day if we can look at ourselves

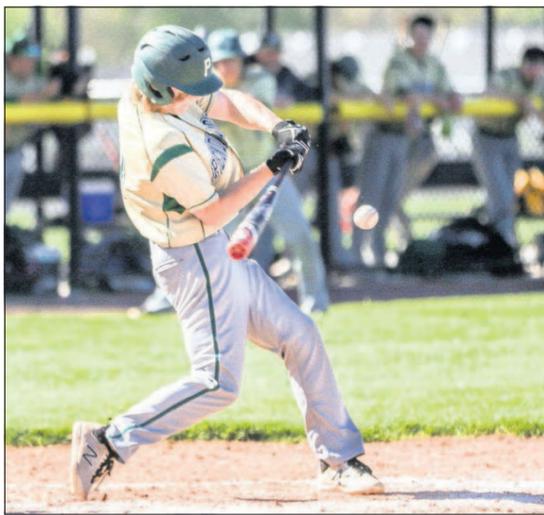
and say we tried our best and worked hard it doesn't matter what the outcome is," Hawkins said, "and I really think we did that today. That's two teams that are pretty compatible squaring off and we just fell a little short in the second game."

Pendleton coach T.J. Haguwood was ecstatic the Buckaroos were able to find a way to win Game 2.

"We had our backs up against the wall about five times I think and we battled back again and again," he said. "Credit to Hermiston, though, they pounded and pounded and kept putting pressure on us and it was a good seesaw battle, what you'd expect from a rivalry game."

The Buckaroos breakthrough in Game 2 came in the sixth inning which started with back-to-back walks by Chris Large and Wyatt Morris. That set up a bunt attempt by Shaw Jerome, which was layed down perfectly but an errant throw to first from Hermiston catcher Slade Gritz allowed two runs to score to tie the game at 8-8 and Jerome ended up at second base.

Next batter up was Nick Bower, who dropped in a flare into shallow right field for his third hit of the game



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Daniel Naughton, of Pendleton, gets ready to hit the ball during Friday's Columbia River Conference game against Hermiston at Armand Larive Middle School.

to bring in Jerome for a 9-8 lead.

Jerome gave the Buckaroos an insurance run in the seventh inning, when he ripped an RBI single into right field to bring home Parker Smith to make it a 10-8 game.

The junior outfielder had an incredible day at the plate for Pendleton, going a combined 6 for 8 on the day with a triple, a double, five RBI, two runs scored and

two stolen bases from his No. 2 spot in the lineup.

"I was seeing the ball pretty well today," Jerome said wearing a big smile. "I was getting some extra hacks at practice with the coaches and I think that helped."

Large pitched the last 2 2/3 innings of Game 2 for Pendleton and slammed the door shut on Hermiston's offense, as he gave up just one hit and zero runs in relief of starter Ryan Russell.

"We preach throwing strikes and letting the defense work behind you and I thought Chris came in and did a great job," Haguwood said. "He threw strikes, kept the ball down and beared down when we need it."

But Hermiston's offense feasted on Pendleton pitching in Game 1, as the Bulldogs smacked 10 hits to get their 10 runs. The Bulldogs wasted no time getting the offense going, as Joel Mendez started the first inning with a walk and two batters later Wyatt Noland dropped a single into center field to score Mendez for a 1-0 lead. An RBI groundout by Cole Campbell made it a 2-0 lead after one inning.

When Pendleton tied the game at 2-2 in the second with the help of two Bulldog errors, Hermiston re-took the lead in the third when Gritz mashed a fastball deep to left field for a solo home run, his first of the season. It added on in the fourth on a Pendleton error and an RBI single by Kaden Caldwell and Hermiston went to the sixth inning with a 5-2 lead.

But once again Pendleton clawed its way back with three runs in the sixth with a two-RBI single by Jerome and a wild pitch to bring in Morris as the Buckaroos tied

the game at 5-5.

But the tie was short-lived. Hermiston deployed some great plate discipline against Pendleton pitcher Nick Lani, working two walks in the inning, tapping a pair of infield singles and then getting a timely two-RBI single by Mendez to work in five runs to boost up to a 10-5 lead on the Buckaroos.

Mendez reached base six times on the day for Hermiston with three hits, two walks and a hit-by-pitch, while also scoring a team-best four runs and adding two RBIs. Noland and Caldwell each had three hits, with Nolan driving in three and scoring three runs, while Caldwell drove in a pair with a double.

UP NEXT

The two teams will meet again on Tuesday in Pendleton at 4:30 p.m.

Game 1		R	H	E
PHS	020003	0	5	8
HHS	201205	X	10	11

Game 2		R	H	E
PHS	022203	1	10	16
HHS	140030	0	8	11



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Pendleton's Kila Solomon connects with the ball during the first of two Columbia River Conference games Friday against Hermiston at Rocky Heights Elementary School.

BUCKS: Teams will meet again Tuesday

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Eighteen of the Bucks' 19 hits in Game 1 were singles, and Pendleton coach Tim Cary said it was their ability to string those singles together that led to such a lopsided win.

Richards was 4 for 5 at the plate, and Alexi Brehaut and Payton Hergert were both 3 for 5.

Hermiston kept up the pressure in Game 2, but Pendleton's defense didn't falter this time and the Bucks won their ninth shutout of the season.

Kalan McGlothran went 5 for 8 on the day with two doubles for Pendleton.

The Buckaroos may have gotten out of Hermiston with a sweep, but Cary came away impressed with the Bulldogs.

"They're a tough team, even though their record



Hermiston's Sydney Stefani throws the ball to the pitcher after putting out Payton Hergert, of Pendleton, at second base during a Columbia River Conference game Friday at Rocky Heights Elementary School.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

may not show that they're getting a lot of wins," he said. "They come out and battle every inning and they make you earn everything. They're a quality team."

UP NEXT

Hermiston will come to Pendleton on Tuesday for a single game at 4:30 p.m.

Game 1		R	H	E
PHS	231303	1	13	19
HHS	004000	0	4	2

Game 2		R	H	E
PHS	200000	1	3	7
HHS	000000	0	0	2

KNIGHTS: Coaches, athletes look to internet for training tips

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face for something as simple as practice, it's a wonder to him how they continually show up their peers in competition.

Based on the team's performances, one would never assume they were working with anything less than top notch facilities and coaching. As of this article's printing, Irrigon has five individuals and one relay team that have posted top-10 marks in the state at Class 3A this season. The boys' team has won two consecutive district titles, and is trying to make it three in a row in its first season at the 3A level.

Thompson said he enjoys the looks on other coaches' faces when they hear about the Knights' situation.

"It's funny because until I tell them they don't really realize," he said. "They see us show up here and, 'Gosh you guys are good,'" he said. "We're pretty amazing actually, if you knew what we have to work with."

"These kids amaze me every time we go out, because I know what they're up against. And we don't let them use it as an excuse. It's kind of our, hey we're Cinderella and this is our glass slipper, we don't have a track. And so that's how we kind of put a chip on our shoulder and go compete."

There's no sugar-coating the dismal state of Irrigon's track facilities.

Their pads are so old Thompson won't let his pole vaulters do anything but feet-first landings, but only after clearing the imaginary crossbar.

The track is in worse shape than most of the

national forest roads in the Blue Mountains, and without any lanes it's impossible for runners to do anything more than conditioning and starts while they wait for the bus. Shin splints run rampant.

The jumping pit's runway is a re-purposed conveyor belt from the local potato mill that is covered pockmarks caked with the residue of spring puddles.

"And I just put sand in there," Thompson said of the pit. "We've been jumping into thorn patches forever."

"It's a money issue. We don't have a lot of money in Morrow County, especially for our school district and it's hard to justify sometimes coming up with half a million dollars because that's what it takes to put a facility together."

So the Knights make due, and have found ways to make upgrades where they can.

"Our shot put ring, it didn't have a toe board my first two years of high school," said Irrigon senior thrower Luke Meyers. "I didn't have a toe board to practice with until I went over and dragged one out from somewhere else and drilled it into the concrete there."

"We've gone and moved a lot of dirt, and we've cleaned up a lot of stuff. We try and just take good care of what we have. It's hard to upgrade without having a lot of money, and so we just take good care of what we've got."

Meyers is one of the Knights holding a top 10 ranking in the state and his season-best 43 feet, 10 inches in the shot put is tied for eighth in 3A.

Senior jumper Justin Iveson is ranked No. 4 in



Alex Walls takes the baton from Jose Romero during the 4x100 meter relay at this month's Carnival of Speed track meet in Milton-Free-water.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

triple jump (41-6), and 10th in long jump (19-7). Junior Ammon Byers is tied for fourth in pole vault (11-6), and sophomore Alex Walls has the No. 3 time in the 100-meter dash (11.57).

The girls are paced by sophomore Ana Zacarias, who is ranked fifth in the 200 (27.41), tied for sixth in the 100 (13.31) and is eighth in the 400 (1:02.88). She's also the first leg in the No. 8 4x400 relay team (4:29.29) that also includes Natalie Romero, Gabriela Arellano and Olivia Luna.

Those are impressive numbers no matter what conditions they come under, but keeping in mind the Knights are also largely self-taught amplifies their magnitude.

Between himself and assistant coaches Nikki Kroske and Richard Moore,

Thompson said there's maybe one year of high school track experience.

"I've always teased people about being a Youtube coach, but I've kind of turned into a Youtube coach with this sport, because I know absolutely nothing," Thompson said. "I'm a wrestling and football guy."

Thompson said he treats his upperclassmen more like advisors than subordinates, and they've taken on a lot of the responsibility when it comes to teaching younger athletes the finer points of their events.

"I really don't do anything unless I run it by them, and it sounds kind of crazy for a coach to do that, but I've got great leaders," Thompson said.

Meyers is the team's throwing coach, senior Jose Romero takes the lead in hurdles and sprinting

drills, and Iveson has been doing his best to impart some knowledge on the jumpers. Even Zacarias has stepped into a coach-like role as a sophomore, and it's not something that comes naturally to all of them.

"It's been tough. We've always been a little nitty-gritty and so we've been able to have the tenacity to keep going, but having to coach yourself pretty much through Youtube videos and other just small tidbits you see on the track, it can be tough," Romero said. "I've re-watched the same video like 20 times, just small tidbits every single time. Like, oh, well I notice this is different and now I see why he's doing it like this. It's a lot of trial and error."

Iveson's approach is the same, and he said that while he sometimes struggles with the added responsibilities, he thinks it's helping him become a better athlete.

"I'm not too great of a teacher," he said. "It helps you out a lot, recognizing what you need to do better and what you need to teach the kids early on so that they don't make the same mistakes as you along the way."

Meyers said the set-up has led to greater team camaraderie, and is breeding natural leaders as well.

"There's a lot more positive competition and everyone knows everyone a lot better on the team because of it," he said. "I've got a couple of kids that I coached last year as freshmen that have been helping. It's just natural to them to help out the other freshmen this year as sophomores."

Despite all of these challenges, the Knights' program is growing.

The girls' team more than doubled its numbers this season, and Thompson estimated about 90 athletes total when the high school and middle school programs are combined.

"They've seen that we have shown progress," Romero said. "We've shown results with no track, no facilities, we still managed to win two straight district titles."

That's why the team is hopeful a fundraising push will finally be able to deliver a track to Irrigon.

"We are putting a committee together. It's going to be school district people, it's going to be city people and then just people from the community and parents," Thompson said. "We're getting a plan of action together and then we're going to start attacking it here at the end of the season."

"We have some places in the area that are very supportive of us. We're going to approach them. We've just got to put the right package together, be able to present it to people, and get a move on it."

Until then, the Knights will just continue to use their situation as motivation for more personal records and district titles, and Thompson will go on feeling like one of the luckiest coaches around.

"They're teenagers, they may complain a little bit," he said. "They never complain about not having facilities. They never complain about coaches. They are some of the easiest kids to coach ever."

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