

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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HEPPNER

Nike overhauls Mustangs football uniforms

Uniforms sponsored by Kilkenny family

By ERIC SINGER
East Oregonian

For more than two decades, the Heppner Mustangs football team has been one of the best and most consistent in Oregon.

Now in 2017, the Mustangs might also be the best dressed football team in the state.

This week, the Mustangs received brand new top-of-the-line uniforms from Nike thanks to a donation by the family of Robert Kilkenny, a longtime Heppner resident and Mustang football supporter who passed away in 2016. Nike supplied



Mock-ups of the Heppner Mustangs new Nike football uniforms courtesy of Nike. Along with the four new jerseys are four new colors of pants, four new helmets, as well as brand-new cleats and gloves.

Heppner with four different uniform sets and the team also received four new helmet colors that give the

team numerous combinations to choose from each Friday night. "We couldn't be more

honored to have the brilliant minds at Nike design these uniforms for these amazing, hard-working kids on our

football team in honor of our father and our town," said Kilkenny's daughter Kelly Hale in a press release. "Dad

loved Heppner football — it was about who we were as individuals coming together as one for our community. It's what we did growing up and it represented how we lived our lives."

Heppner coach and athletic director Greg Grant said on Wednesday he was first contacted in April about the uniforms and asked if he was interested and would accept, which he was and he did.

"We're humbled by the fact that (the family) would do this for us," he said. "We have to realize that it won't make us run faster or jump higher but it presents the kids with gifts they'll never forget ... My No. 1 goal was that I never wanted the kids to look around and wish they'd

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PENDLTON

There's no place like home



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The new lights are on at the athletic field above Pendleton High School on Wednesday evening. New lights is just one upgrade made over the summer to the sports complex at the school.

Pendleton unveils upgrades to high school athletic field



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

The brand-new scoreboard at the PHS athletic field, paid for by the Buckaroo Boosters.

By ERIC SINGER
East Oregonian

For years, the Pendleton football team has had trouble scheduling non-league home games at the start of the season.

Their usual home football field, the Pendleton Round-Up Grounds, is not available until after the rodeo in early September. So the alternative was to play games at the PHS athletic field, which did not have lights. That meant games had to be played at 3 p.m. under the hot, summer sun, which was a deal-breaker for most potential opponents. However, it will not be an issue any longer.

On Wednesday evening, the school unveiled its upgraded athletic field that

sits north of the high school campus, which included a brand-new track surface, brand-new scoreboard, and perhaps most importantly, lights. The upgrades were shown to the public at the school's Fall Sports Preview, where all the players from each fall team were introduced to the Buckaroo fans.

The football team will get to play its first night game at the field on Friday night when it hosts La Grande at 7 p.m. for the 2017 season opener. The Buckaroos then have three more home games in September at the field before moving back to the Round-Up in October. Senior quarterback Nick Bower said on Wednesday that he and his teammates can't wait to

See PENDLETON/2B

PENDLETON

Bucks ready to take on Tigers

Pendleton opens season against La Grande on Friday

By ERIC SINGER
East Oregonian

After three weeks of practice and preparation and a summer of tireless work, it's finally game-week for the Pendleton Buckaroos football team.

The Buckaroos will host the La Grande Tigers on Friday night at 7 p.m., which will also be their first game under the new lights at the upgraded Pendleton athletic field.

That part is exciting to the Buckaroos but

for head coach Erik Davis he is excited to showcase a team that he really, really likes.

"You're going to see a lot more athletic Buckaroos team than you have in the past," Davis said at practice on Tuesday. "As a whole, we have more team speed ... so hopefully what you see is a little more polished team, especially week 1."

"Just with this spring and summer, I think we've built a great platform to really come in on all cylinders and not feel like we have to babystep it."

La Grande is an opponent Pendleton is very familiar with, as the teams have played in Week

See BUCKAROOS/2B

HERMISTON

Hermiston aiming for better result in rematch with Union

The Bulldogs face Titans again in Week 1

By ALEXIS MANSANAREZ
East Oregonian

In his third year as Hermiston's head coach, David Faaeteete is working toward repeating the history achieved by his predecessor, Mark Hodges.

Before Hodges brought glory back to what was a lackluster program with its first ever state championship in 2014, one thing had to happen: the players had to

buy in. That's what Faaeteete is asking of his team this year, as the Bulldogs are slated to start their final season in the OSAA.

After weeks of training under the blistering summer sun, Hermiston will travel to Camas, Washington on Friday — 15 miles east of Vancouver — to open the 2017 season against Union. The game will feature a large Bulldogs' senior class with plenty of talent and others who, according to Faaeteete, still need to buy in.

"We have had a good core group of guys trust the process, at the same time not everyone was showing up consistently but," he emphasized,



Prep Football
Hermiston Bulldogs (0-0)
Union (WA) Titans (0-0)
• Friday, 4:30 p.m.
• at Vancouver, Washington
• Radio: 1360 KOHU

"we have a great leadership group lead by the seniors — 19, 20 guys showing up and putting in the work. Our core is there, we just need to bring in some of the outside guys that have been on the fringe and suck them into our family unit."

The leadership group made up of the large senior class gives the Bulldogs experience they have lacked in the past. Issues like lack of execution, the inability of close out games, and undeveloped mental toughness plagued the team during its 5-5 2016 season and its losing 4-6 season a year prior.

After opening last season with 32-27 defeat at the hands of the Titans on home turf, junior quarterback Andrew James and the 10 other boys that take the field Friday have been working toward that not happening again — and Faaeteete and his staff of 11 are making sure of it.

"We are preaching attention to detail, preparedness, being ready, execution — finishing blocks, finish practice, finishing everyday," Faaeteete said.

Despite losing stars like defensive linemen John-Henry Line and Damian McLeod, who combined for 166 total tackles last year, and linebacker Bradlee Giusti, Hermiston is returning its offensive line and key playmakers in the backfield. Add the year of starting experience James gained last season and wide receiver Dayshawn Neal's explosiveness and reliability to the mix and the offense hopes to get in front

See HERMISTON/2B