

HERMISTON

Hermiston tops Pendleton in doubleheader

Bulldogs enter play-in round with momentum on their side

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HERMISTON — The story of the season has been one of lasts. The last year Hermiston will play in the OSAA. The last chance to win bragging rights over Pendleton. The last opportunity to win an Oregon state title.

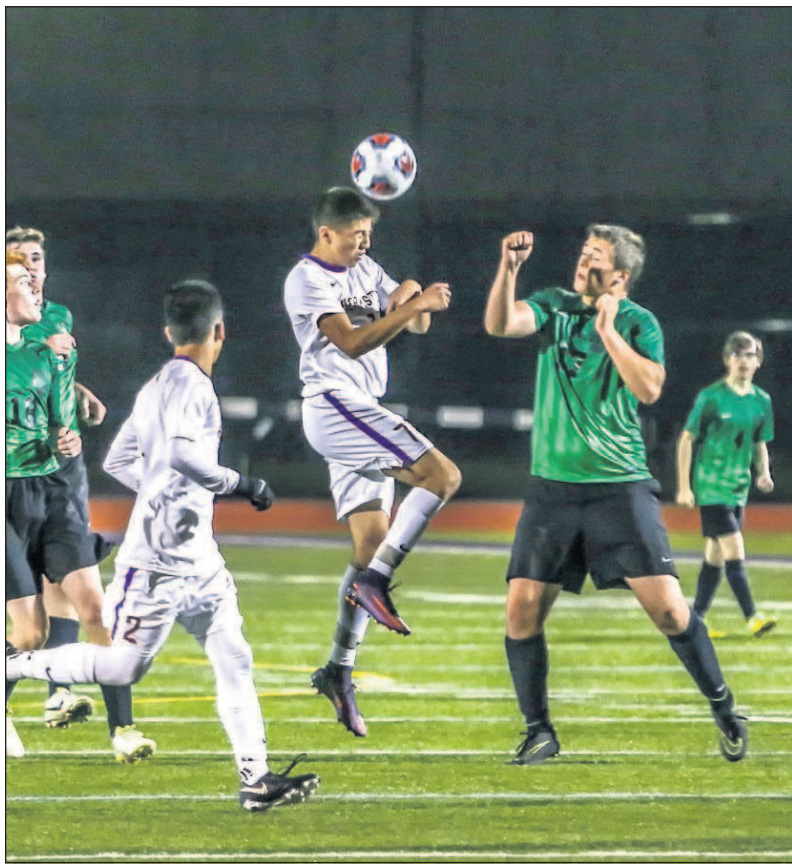
For the Hermiston boys soccer team this season has also been about playing its own game and the Bulldogs proved how successful they can be when they do just that.

The 8-0 shutout victory over Pendleton at Kennison Field on Tuesday was redemption from the draw they were dealt on the road a few weeks ago.

With the help of a senior class that head coach Rich Harshberger calls the spin of the team and a more complete mentality and performance from their last outing, the Bulldogs were able to hold on to bragging rights in the Hermiston-Pendleton rivalry.

From the start, Hermiston took and maintained control of the game. The Bulldogs (8-3-3 overall, 3-0-3 Columbia River Conference) pushed the pace, and rarely gave up possession of the ball. They put Pendleton's defense to work early. The Buckaroos (1-11-1, 0-5-1) fended off a handful of shots on goal early on, but in the end couldn't stop Hermiston's attack.

"We were just able to establish ourselves a little bit better," Harshberger said. "History shows that this is going to be a game we are going to win, and Pendleton brought it in that last game so we were definitely focused up. For us, this is as big as Hood River. We can't drop the ball here and that was the message coming in this



Joel Mendez (7), of Hermiston, heads the ball during Tuesday's game against Pendleton at Kennison Field.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

entire week and preparing for this game and I think the boys came out here and executed really well. I think they were fired up and they were ready for it."

Senior Joel Mendez capped off his senior night with a hat trick. His efforts came early as he scored first goal of the night — a quick tap in — with just under 25 minutes until halftime. The Bulldogs scored two more goals in a 10 minute span to enter the break with a 3-0 lead. Junior Emilio Leal sent the ball flying into the left side of the goal, and Mendez earned his second with another tap in but this time off a short pass from fellow senior Noe Silva.

After the intermission, Pend-

leton didn't stand a chance. While the Bucks were able to make their way into Hermiston's half of the field several times in the first 40 minutes of play, the second half was almost entirely played in Pendleton's backfield.

The Bulldogs didn't waste any time increasing their lead. Silva scored on the second effort after sophomore Coleman Solano sent the ball flying toward the goal.

Sophomore Oliver Paredes followed that up with a goal of his own. After some action in the box, the ball came directly to Paredes' feet, he had time to settle it, and sent the ball into the opposite side of the goal which forced Pendleton to substitute in a new goalie.

One after the other, shots were finding the back of the net. Mendez completed his hat trick with what he considered his favorite shot of the night, a goal scored on his own accord from farther away.

The Bulldogs put two more in before the night was over to claim the 8-0 victory, and will now get ready for a quick turnaround.

On Saturday, Hermiston will host a play-in game. While the Bulldogs don't yet know who they will play, one thing is for certain. Behind the efforts of a strong senior class, there is nothing standing in the Bulldogs way.

"I think there's no reason why we can't challenge for a state title this year," Harshberger said. "As long as we can stay focused, as long as that group of seniors can stay focused and keep the drive going with this team I don't see any reason why we can't be challenging for that state title."

GIRLS SOCCER

In the first of Hermiston's doubleheader, the girls soccer team was able to squeak by Pendleton 2-1 to end the regular season. It was also the home finale where 11 seniors were honored. One of whom had the best night of the bunch.

Senior Hannah Thompson scored Hermiston's only goal of the night. The second goal was off the foot of a Buckaroo, and it was Pendleton's own-goal that saved the Bulldogs from a draw.

Thompson and fellow senior forward MaKayla Pacheco were moving down the field at an even pace when senior defender Quin Latham sent the ball to Johnson's side of the field. A quick move past the defender, and John found the back of the net.

"It was nice to get one for myself but a lot of it was for my team because I wanted to beat Pendleton our senior night," she said. "It was

for all of us seniors and all over us graduating and finishing soccer."

Even with the win under their belt, the Bulldogs didn't play their best and will need to clean up play moving forward into the postseason.

"It's one of those (games) where its tough because we came out with the win," head coach Danielle MacBride said. "There were spurts you know when we moved the ball we did it well and we scored and we had opportunities but its one of those days you wish you could go back and do it again but all you can do is move forward and hope it doesn't happen again."

The win pushed Hermiston's record to 6-6-2 overall and 3-1-2 in league play. The Bulldogs earned a home play-in game on Saturday, and will hope to rebound from Tuesday's performance.

"It was just one of those off days for us," MacBride said. "You hope to set a standard for yourself and play to that standard regardless of who you're play. You don't want to play down to your opponent, but it happens and kudos to (Pendleton). They never gave up and they put us on our heels a couple of times and there are certain times we could have played a little harder but we move forward still."

The Buckaroos (1-9-2, 0-6) have struggled to get anything going but were able to put up a fight Tuesday, and get on the board for only the second time in league play. Junior Denisa Senkerikova scored Pendleton's lone goal in the second half to prevent the shutout.

Like the boys, the girls will find out Wednesday who they will face in the play-in at home Saturday.

"We take this as a positive and will come back and redeem ourselves," MacBride said.

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WORLD SERIES: Game time of 2 hours, 28 minutes the fastest since 1992

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throwing it was up and down a lot, which was good. It got us into a rhythm a little bit. I think for me personally, it helped out a lot."

Brandon Morrow worked a perfect eighth and Kenley Jansen breezed through the Astros in the ninth for a save in a combined three-hitter. The Dodgers' dominant relievers have tossed 25 straight scoreless innings this postseason.

With both aces throwing well, the opener zipped by in 2 hours, 28 minutes

— fastest in the World Series since Game 4 in 1992 between Toronto and Atlanta. Jimmy Key and the Blue Jays won that one 2-1 in 2:21.

It certainly was unusual for this postseason, when games had been averaging 3 hours, 32 minutes — up 18 minutes from two years ago.

Chris Taylor gave the Dodgers an immediate jolt in their first Series game since 1988 when he hit a no-doubt home run on Keuchel's very first pitch. Taylor was co-MVP of the

NL Championship Series with Turner, and they both kept swinging away against the Astros.

"Just getting that momentum early is huge," Kershaw said. "And let the crowd kind of feed off that. It was definitely as good a start as we could have hoped for."

The loss left the Astros still without a single World Series win in their 56-season history. In their only other Series appearance, they were swept by the White Sox in 2005.

Game 2 is Wednesday

evening, with AL Championship Series MVP Justin Verlander starting against Dodgers lefty Rich Hill.

Kershaw has almost every imaginable individual accolade on his resume — five ERA titles, an MVP trophy, a no-hitter and seven All-Star selections — but also was dogged by a shaky October past.

He began this outing in the twilight with a 6-7 career playoff record and an unsightly 4.40 ERA. He improved to 3-0 in four starts this postseason.

"I don't know if you

can decipher between a postseason start and a World Series start. The adrenaline, I feel like every game is so much more magnified," Kershaw said.

A Series opener that served as a showcase for several of the game's best young hitters — Jose Altuve, Carlos Correa, Cody Bellinger and more — instead was dominated by Kershaw.

"Couldn't be happier for him," Turner said.

Facing a team that had the fewest strikeouts in the majors this year, Kershaw

fanned more Houston hitters than any starter this season. And he helped the Dodgers, who led the majors with 104 wins and a \$240 million payroll, improve to 8-1 this postseason.

"Tonight is about Kershaw," Astros manager A.J. Hinch said.

It was 1-all when Taylor drew a two-out walk in the sixth. Turner followed with his drive off the bearded Keuchel.

"Keuchel was really good tonight. He was just a pitch or two less than Kershaw," Hinch said.

BUCKAROOS: Slot into 5A bracket as No. 12 seed, face No. 5 Sandy

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Spartans (4-16) on the ropes. However, Pendleton came out in the third set a little relaxed and instead of putting the Spartans away, it let them right back into the match with a 25-12 victory.

In that set, Pendleton dropped a couple of points to start and then things

seemed to snowball into a 7-0 hole and later a 15-5 deficit. The Buckaroos continuously gave away points to the Spartans, with spike after spike sailing out of bounds, failure to control digs and bumps putting the offense all out of sorts, and on top of that every break seemed to fall the Spartans' way. The Buckaroos did

rally to get within six points at 17-11, but Hillsboro hung on for the win.

"We just kind of relaxed a little too much and didn't push back and fight on," Lapp said.

In the fourth set, Pend-

leton took control early with a 7-0 start of its own and never relented. Davies tallied five kills in that set

alone as the Buckaroos settled back into their groove to finish off the victory. Lapp said that prior to the fourth set, she gave a short pep talk to try and re-spark the intensity that the team played with to start the night.

"They had to get back to playing Buckaroo volleyball," Lapp said. "The

intensity needed to jack up a lot, the match was slow. All I was asking for them was to move quick and go back to basics like we've been talking about all year. When you start getting out of control and losing some points, you have to go back to basics, figure out what's wrong and work through it."

The win puts Pendleton into the state tournament as a No. 12 seed, where it will face No. 5 Sandy on the road on Saturday. Game time is TBD.

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RIVALRY: Hermiston ended 62-year drought with 13-point win in 1984

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community than among (the players)," Barnett said. "There was also the pressure to perform (during the season) but you always wanted to raise up to the next level against Pendleton."

A win was affirmation that the program was on the rise, Barnett added, and gave former players and alumnus a sense of pride that was missing for so long.

At this point in Hermiston's history, defeating Pendleton was more rare than a winning season, and that's saying something.

Before 1984, the Bulldogs had only eight winning seasons: 1953, 1954, 1955, 1960, 1965, 1971 and 1973. The most recent at the time, the 1973 season, saw Hermiston fall to Bend (19-14) and Pendleton (41-7).

Finally in 1984 for the teams' 59th meeting, Hermiston was finally able to shake off decades of defeat. The 27-14 victory was highlighted by four unanswered touchdowns and the performance of running

back Lance Hawkins, who rushed for 110 yards and two touchdowns.

But victories like this were still few and far between. Hermiston entered the turn of the century with wins you could count on one hand and wouldn't reach double digits in the all-time series until 2012.

When Hermiston was able to top Pendleton, the atmosphere was electric.

Barnett remembers his sophomore year on the team, when Hermiston defeated Pendleton 33-21. It was only the Bulldogs third win over the Bucks and it's something Barnett will never forget.

"I remember the bus ride, how it was insane," he said. "I never ever knew what winning at the level was like. There in high school, that was the biggest game we ever played in."

In 2002 Hermiston beat Pendleton for the first time at home. The Bulldogs won 20-17 when senior Dean Peters kicked a 40-yard field goal with 10 seconds left on the clock. John Barnett, Paul's brother, was the

placeholder for the winning kick. That year Hermiston finished with a perfect 9-0 record for the first time ever.

The following season was the first time in the rivalry that Hermiston won back-to-back years, but still only the sixth win for the Bulldogs in what was then a 76-game series. It ended the way any good rivalry should, with another dramatic finish.

The game went into overtime after Hermiston opted not to run the clock out in the fourth quarter despite having a 28-27 lead. Instead, the Bulldogs scored and gave Pendleton its chance to score. By the end of regulation, the scored read 35-35 and the 21-point deficit Hermiston had to overcome in the first quarter was almost for nothing.

Hermiston was able to hold off Pendleton for one more year, claiming a 28-3 victory in 2004 but again would fall victim to the Bucks for four straight seasons.

It was the efforts of an outsider who wasn't afraid to put the rivalry to bed that

did just that.

Former head coach Mark Hodges didn't have ties to Hermiston or Eastern Oregon. The fresh eyes and new outlook helped the Bulldogs in the end, no matter how controversial it was at the time.

Looking back on the beginning of what would be his seven year career as head coach, Hodges knows his opinion wasn't the most popular but it got the job done.

"As long as we were talking about Pendleton, we were never going to get anywhere," he said. "What we were doing is creating a culture and a mindset amongst the players that no matter what comes up whether it's state championship week or whether it's Pendleton week, no matter what it is, it's just another game on the schedule."

Hodges recognized a problem with the old way of thinking. He saw that everyone was transfixed on beating Pendleton, and in Hodges' mind, that was thinking too small.

He worked to change

the vision and in turn that would change the culture, and instead of looking at beating Pendleton as the pinnacle on a season, the Bucks became just other opponent on the Bulldogs' way to the postseason.

"It wasn't dismissive," Hodges added. "What it was — I knew that the distraction of the Pendleton week was having a negative effect (on the team)."

The changes Hodges implemented took years to sink in, but its success was instant. In his first year at the helm, Hodges coached the Bulldogs to their first league championship, and their first victory over the Bucks since 2004.

In 2008, Hermiston hosted Pendleton for its regular season finale. The Bulldogs entered halftime with an eight-point lead and went on to score 27 unanswered points to win 41-24.

Since then, the Bulldogs have won six of the last 10 contests.

Pendleton managed to sneak in a win during the 2010 season. The game went into double overtime for the

first time ever. The teams were tied at 28 points apiece at the end of regulation. Pendleton scored first in the first overtime but Hermiston quickly tied things up with a quarterback sneak from Tim Rude. Both teams missed their point after touchdown, but Pendleton would score next to win 40-34. The Bucks won again in 2011, but haven't been able to claim a victory since.

"I think the difference is now it's expected that you're supposed to win," Barnett said. "Back when I used to play it was a Halley's Comet type of thing."

In 2012, Hermiston finally broke into double-digit wins with a 28-13 defeat. It was the Bulldogs first win since 2009.

Now, five years later Hermiston has a chance to hold on to bragging rights for what could be forever.

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