

NICHOLS: Hunter representing Mustangs at state meet on Saturday

Continued from 1B

to just get the kids something else to do," Toni Nichols said. "We weren't totally sure what our own kids would decide, but it's been really good for a lot of the kids. We've seen them grow so much in the last three years, giving some of those kids that didn't have sports at all that didn't quite fit into the football or fit into this, it's been good for them."

Now, in the program's third season another Nichols is the star of the show. Hunter Nichols, a junior at Heppner High, qualified for state after finishing in the top-5 (17:01.3) at the district meet Friday. Hunter took the fifth-and-final individual qualifying spot, despite not running his best.

"It was a really loaded race," he said. "I've never really competed with that fast of a group before, but we've always run together. I didn't have the best race of my life, but I throw everything out there."

Hunter was well prepared, clocking miles throughout the week of practice leading up to the district meet. But he felt under the weather the day of the race, something he says is no excuse. He knew the Union boys he'd be up against we're going to push the pace and provide tough competition, something he never expected from the

parents coaching."

For his parents, coaching in a small town means coaching the same kids in various sports. Toni explains that two and three sport athletes are common and its often because there is a need for players to fill rosters. But whatever the sport, whomever the child, the message is the same.

"The things we try to teach them: responsibility, being respectful, having fun and building relationships with other kids — that's our big thing — and work hard. It just always amazes me how hard they push themselves and how good they are because they push themselves and work hard and take a lot of pride in the work that they have done."

The hard work is paying off, as the success of runners like Hunter has helped grow the team from only seven runners to more than 20. Proving that being a good role model is just as important as being a good runner.

"That's another thing we try to teach them," Toni said. "We tell them, 'remember those kids you admired so much that were older when you were younger, you want to be that.'" Hunter has a chance to be just that. As he gets ready for the 3A/2A/1A state championship meet on Saturday at Lane Community College in

Eugene, he was one goal in mind. "Top-10," he said. "I want to medal, I would love to get top eight."

Is he nervous? "Not as nervous as I was for districts. Going into districts I was scared because, you know, if I had a bad race I knew there would be people behind. At state, you've got nothing to lose." Hunter will return to state for the second consecutive year — last year he finished in 15th (17:19) — and when he enters his senior year he will pass on the torch to his younger sister, Madelyn, who as a freshman at Heppner is one of the top runners on the girls team.

"She's another good role model," Hunter says of his younger sister, who despite not qualifying for state has finished as Heppner's No. 1 or No. 2 runner all season. The one thing that is tough for Madelyn is she never had anyone to run with before joining the team, her father explains.

"If you train with tough people and fast people, you get yourself faster," Russ said. "We didn't have that for a while, especially on the girls side but we do now."

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Heppner's Madelyn Nichols leads a group of runners during the Kyle Burnside Memorial Invite at Wildhorse Resort golf course recently in Mission.

and it's something that motivates him.

"It gets kind of hard sometimes not that I need the attention, but I try to make

them feel good — making them feel like they're doing the right thing," he said. "I've never really experience anything other than my

TRADES: Miami sends former Boise State star RB Ajayi to Philadelphia

Continued from 1B

first round next year or try to acquire a proven starter such as Kirk Cousins in free agency.

Instead, coach Kyle Shanahan and general manager John Lynch decided to strike early and put the fate of their franchise in the hands of a quarterback who has started just two games in four NFL seasons. Garoppolo, a second-round pick in 2014, is in the final year of his contract. By acquiring him now, San Francisco gets a head start on negotiating a long-term deal to keep him or can use the franchise tag on him in free agency.

Garoppolo won two starts in place of a suspended Tom Brady at the start of the 2016 season. He completed 42 of 59 passes for 496 yards, four touchdowns and no interceptions. He got hurt in the second quarter of his second start and has thrown just four passes since then.

The Eagles sent a 2018 fourth-round pick to the Dolphins for Ajayi, who has 465 yards rushing and is averaging 3.4 yards per carry with no touchdowns. He went to the Pro Bowl last season after running for 1,272 yards, including three 200-yard games.

Dolphins coach Adam Gase signaled his displeasure with Ajayi last week after Miami was routed 40-0 at Baltimore, noting missed blocking assignments in pass protection.

LeGarrette Blount leads Philadelphia with 467 yards rushing and is averaging 4.7 yards a carry with two touchdowns.

The Eagles (7-1) have the fifth-ranked run offense and have won six straight games heading into Sunday's game against Denver (3-4), which has lost four of five.

Benjamin immediately becomes the Bills leading receiver with 32 catches for 475 yards and two touchdowns this season. Overall, he's scored 18 touchdowns in 40 games, and the 6-foot-5, 245-pound Benjamin provides quarterback Tyrod Taylor a big target, particularly in the red zone.

It's the fourth significant trade by Buffalo since August, when the Bills dealt starting receiver Sammy Watkins to the Los Angeles Rams and starting cornerback Ronald Darby to Philadelphia. On Friday, Buffalo traded its highest-paid player, defensive tackle Marcell Dareus, to Jacksonville.

Also, the 49ers sent cornerback Rashard Robinson to the New York Jets for a 2018 late-round draft pick.

It was unclear if Robinson would be available for the Jets' game Thursday night against Buffalo. He provides depth — and a potential starter — for New York. Morris Claiborne is dealing with a sore foot and Buster Skrine is in the league's concussion protocol.

WORLD SERIES: Darvish will start Game 7 for Los Angeles, McCullers gets the ball for Houston

Continued from 1B

10-inning slugfest under the roof at Minute Maid Park, pitching dominated.

George Springer's third-inning home run against starter Rich Hill had given a 1-0 lead to Verlander and the Astros, trying for the first championship in their 56-season history. On Halloween night, a championship for a team with orange in its colors seemed appropriate.

But it served only to set up the 10th blown lead of the Series, the fifth by Houston, as Verlander fell to 9-1 with Houston.

Dodgers relievers combined for 4 1/3 scoreless innings. Brandon Morrow retired Alex Bregman on a grounder to strand the bases loaded in the fifth, winner Tony Watson got Marwin Gonzalez to fly out with two on and two outs in the sixth, and Kenta Maeda escaped two-on trouble in the seventh when third baseman Justin Turner gloved Jose Altuve's grounder and threw a one-hop throw that first baseman Cody Bellinger scooped just in time.

After wasting a ninth-inning lead in Game 2 and losing Game 5, Kenley Jansen retired six straight batters for the save and ended by striking out 40-year-old pinch-hitter Carlos Beltran.

This will be the third World Series Game 7 in four years. Ten of the last 12 teams that won Game 6 to force a seventh game also won the title, but the Dodgers lost the previous six World Series in which they trailed 3-2. They



Los Angeles Dodgers' Joc Pederson hits a home run off Houston Astros relief pitcher Joe Musgrove during the seventh inning of Game 6 of the World Series on Tuesday in Los Angeles.

have won just one of their six championships at home, in 1963.

A heat wave over, the temperature dropped to 67 degrees at game time from 103 for last week's opener. The San Gabriel Mountains were occluded by heavy clouds.

Los Angelenos with a laid-back reputation were more energetic and on their feet for two-strike counts against Astros batters, a wave in Pantone 294 — also known as Dodger blue. Stadium organist Dieter Ruehle greeted the Astros with "Hotel California" for the start of batting practice, but there was an un-LA-like drizzle in the middle innings.

"We feed off the crowd, for sure," Taylor said. "We feel we have a huge home-field advantage."

Yuli Gurriel, who made a racist gesture toward Darvish in Game 3, was booed loudly during introductions and

each time he batted, Verlander has 11 postseason wins but dropped to 0-4 in the Series with Detroit and Houston, which acquired him from the Tigers on Aug. 31 to win on nights like this. The 2011 AL MVP and Cy Young Award winner, Verlander allowed just one baserunner before Austin Barnes singled leading off the sixth. Verlander bounced a pitch that hit Chase Utley on the front of his right foot, and Taylor sent a 97 mph fastball down the right-field line as Barnes came home. Seager followed with a sacrifice fly to the right-field warning track, a ball that likely would have landed in the pavilion in last week's hot air.

Verlander prevented more damage when Turner fouled out and the right-hander fanned Bellinger, who struck out four times for the second time in the Series. Springer homered for

the third straight game and fourth time in the Series, one shy of the record set by Reggie Jackson in 1977 and matched by Chase Utley in 2009. While it silenced the Dodger Stadium crowd, Astros fans erupted at a watch party in Minute Maid Park. Los Angeles has allowed home runs in all 14 of its postseason games.

Brian McCann singled leading off the fifth and Gonzalez doubled past Turner and down the left-field line. Hill struck out Josh Reddick and Verlander, and Springer was intentionally walked to load the bases.

Morrow relieved as the crowd booed Roberts' decision, and Hill slapped at four cups of liquid in the dugout, sending them spraying against the wall.

"With Verlander on the mound, I felt that was going to be the game," Roberts said.

Appearing in his sixth straight Series game, Morrow got Bregman to ground to shortstop on his second pitch.

Watson walked Reddick leading off the seventh, Evan Gattis pinch hit for Verlander and Maeda relieved. Gattis bounced to shortstop, just beating Utley's throw from second to avoid a double play. Springer reached on an infield single that bounced off Seager's glove at shortstop and into left field, and Bregman's fly to deep center allowed pinch-runner Derek Fisher to tag up and advance to third, bringing up Altuve. Walking down the dugout steps after his groundout, Altuve slammed his helmet.

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