

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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OSAA 5A STATE CHAMPIONSHIP: HERMISTON 38, CHURCHILL 35



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Hermiston head coach David Faateete hugs AJ Fernandez after the Bulldogs' 38-35 win against Churchill in the 5A state championship game on Saturday in Hillsboro.

DAWGS GONE

Hermiston says goodbye to the OSAA with state championship win

By ERIC SINGER & ALEXIS MANSANAREZ
East Oregonian

HILLSBORO — Four years ago, Tyler Rohrman stood with his fellow Hermiston students in the south end of the bleachers at Hillsboro Stadium, watching the Hermiston Bulldogs win the first state football championship in school history.

He remembers the game well, sitting through cold and rainy weather, and he distinctly recalls rushing the field to celebrate with his classmates and thinking 'I want that.'

Three years later, Rohrman and his 2017 Bulldog teammates got that feeling that they craved with a 38-35 victory over Churchill on Saturday night at that same stadium to clinch the Class 5A state championship.

"It's indescribable," Rohrman said on the field, smiling and proudly wearing a state champion medal around his neck. "I can't put it into words right now. It hasn't hit me yet and I can't wait for when it does."



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Hermiston's Youbani Razon attempts to avoid Churchill's Lucas Schwin during a kick return in the Bulldogs' 38-35 win against the Lancers in the 5A state championship game on Saturday in Hillsboro.

Senior Joey Gutierrez, who was one of the players responsible for setting up Hermiston's first scoring drive, shared similar feelings.

"It doesn't feel real," he said, "to think that we ended out on top, just a bunch of guys just playing ball and end up right here, it's just crazy."

And to make the championship win even sweeter, Hermiston's OSAA Farewell Tour ends with the Bulldogs on top.

They have talked nonstop since preseason about how they wanted to end their membership in the OSAA as champions. And after a slow start to the season, the Bulldogs backed

up their talk with 10 straight wins to bring home the trophy.

"Ever since January we've been talking about winning the state championship, and it hasn't been out of arrogance but out of confidence for each other," Rohrman added. "We always talked that we were going to get to state, we wanted to

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practice on Thanksgiving and no matter what adversity happened we had faith that we were going to do what it took to get the job done and we did it."

That job Saturday night, however, was a little tougher than Hermiston's previous post season victories.

Instead of getting off to a quick start like the Bulldogs have in each of the past two weeks, their run game took a while to develop with workhorse Jonathan Hinkle in the backfield and the first time quarterback Andrew James tried to get the ball out, it fell incomplete.

But the iffy start lasted only a few minutes as James quickly made up for that incompleteness by connecting with Gutierrez on a wheel route on third-and-8 to set up Hermiston's first scoring drive.

Churchill answered like a then-undefeated team should and scored in 10 plays to take a 7-6 lead.

"Churchill's a tough team," James said. "You have to give it to them, they didn't back down once. But it's that drive, it's that drive we've had since day one, all of the

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Sports shorts

Rohrman plays through the pain

In the semifinal win over Wilsonville on Nov. 18, Hermiston senior defensive back Tyler Rohrman suffered a sprained AC joint in his left shoulder.

A visit to his doctor ended with a recommendation to not play in the championship game because taking a hit in the wrong spot could potentially make the injury much more severe, and cause him to miss the spring track season as well.

After Friday's practice, Rohrman had the idea he would not be playing. However after a re-assuring talk with different medical professionals and a feeling he felt getting on the bus Saturday morning swayed his decision to play.

"That feeling of 'I'm going to get to play and have an impact' was too much," he said after Saturday's game. "And right now in my life it was probably the best decision I've ever made."



Rohrman

"It just helps to know your whole community is behind you. It just means so much when they're all there and they believe in you ... It feels like all of Hermiston just came down the Gorge and is here and that's what it was."

— Tyler Rohrman

Hermiston senior defensive back on the community members, students and fans that packed Hillsboro Stadium on Saturday to support him and the Bulldogs at the 5A state championship game.

James puts cap on phenomenal junior season at quarterback

The improvements of Hermiston quarterback Andrew James from his sophomore to junior seasons are evident and have been previously reported on.

On Saturday, James battled through constant pressure from Churchill's defense to put on a show and help his team to the title.

James threw for 162 yards and two touchdowns, with just four incomplete passes and completed five crucial passes on third or fourth downs — including the

game-sealing touchdown pass in the fourth quarter. He finishes his season with more than 3,000 all-purpose yards with 40 total touchdowns and only six turnovers.

"His game has grown up tremendously," senior wide receiver Dayshawn Neal said. "It's his mind. He's calm in the pocket, I love him."



James

GAME BOX SCORE

| CHS | 7 | 7 | 14 | 7 | 35 |
|-----------------|--|----|----|---|----|
| HHS | 6 | 19 | 6 | 7 | 38 |
| PASSING | — (CHS) J. Blackburn 14-29, 204 yds, 3TD, 2INT; (HHS) A. James 11-15, 162 yds, 2TD. | | | | |
| RUSHING | — (CHS) D. McDaniel 23-130; T. Bennion 8-37; L. Schwin 2-10; J. Blackburn 3-(5), TD; (HHS) J. Hinkle 22-116, 3TD; A. James 17-51; K. Mikami 2-13, TD; P. Earl 3-7; D. Neal 1-4; J. Gutierrez 1-0. | | | | |
| RECEIVING | — (CHS) L. Schwin 7-88, TD; J. Arnold 4-41, TD; M. Tucker Jr., 2-60, TD; D. McDaniel 1-15; (HHS) D. Neal 5-80, 2TD; J. Gutierrez 2-36; J. Ramirez 2-33; K. Mikami 1-11; L. Walchil 1-2. | | | | |
| SCORING SUMMARY | | | | | |
| First quarter | 8:03 HHS — Hinkle 18 yd run, PAT failed, 6-0; 5:56 CHS — T. Bennion 4 yd run, PAT good, 7-6. | | | | |
| Second quarter | 6:34 HHS — K. Mikami 6 yd run (2-pt conversion failed) 12-7; 3:21 HHS — D. Neal 3 yd pass from A. James (2-pt conversion failed) 18-7; 2:34 HHS — J. Hinkle 6 yd run, PAT good, 25-7; 0:23 CHS — Arnold 8 yd pass from Blackburn (Groves PAT) 25-14. | | | | |
| Third quarter | 6:48 CHS — Schwin 46 yd pass from Blackburn, PAT good, 25-21; 2:38 HHS — Hinkle 6 yd run, PAT failed, 31-21; 1:02 CHS — Tucker Jr. 48 yd pass from Blackburn, PAT good, 31-28. | | | | |
| Fourth quarter | 2:52 HHS — Neal 23 yd pass from James, PAT good, 38-28; 0:33 4Q — Blackburn 1 yd run, PAT good, 38-35. | | | | |