

# EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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## MCC HONORS

# Hermiston athletes earn accolades in three sports

Conference soccer, baseball and tennis teams released

By ANNIE FOWLER  
*East Oregonian*

Hermiston had four players selected to the Mid-Columbia Conference all-conference boys soccer teams.

Midfielders Emilio Leal and Coleman Solano were named to the first team, while goalie Juan Carlos Navarrete and defender



Navarrete



Ramirez

Matt Mendez were named to the second team.

In eight MCC games, Navarrete's goals against average was .888. He had shutouts against Southridge and Kennewick. In

three playoff games, he allowed two goals.

Walla Walla forward Julio Tapia was named the Player of the Year.

Chiawana's Riley Dodson was named Coach of the Year. The Riverhawks finished the regular season 8-0.

The Bulldogs finished 5-3 in MCC play and earned the top 3A seed to the District 8 playoffs.

Hermiston defeated Kennewick 1-0, then topped Kamiakin 3-1 in the championship game.

The Bulldogs lost in the first round of the 3A state playoffs,

dropping a 2-1 game to Mountain View in a shootout.

### Baseball

The Mid-Columbia Conference baseball honors included just one Hermiston player — senior outfielder Jordan Ramirez, who was named to the first team. The Bulldogs struggled in their first season in the MCC, finishing 1-15.

Chiawana junior Riley Cisne was named Player of the Year. Kamiakin senior Trystan Vrieling was named Pitcher of the Year.

Kamiakin's Steve Woods was

named Coach of the Year after leading the Braves to a 14-2 regular-season record.

### Tennis

Hermiston senior Hayden Cisna was named to the Mid-Columbia Conference second team. Cisna, who has signed to play for Treasure Valley Community College, made it to the semifinals of the MCC tournament before losing.

The MCC boys Player of the Year is Etienne Chaillot of Walla Walla. The girls top player is Quinci Fisher of Richland.

# Bucks ready for playoffs



Pendleton's Aspen Garton fields a ball during a game against La Grande on March 19, 2019, at Steve Cary Field.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney, File



Staff photo by Kathy Aney, File

Irrigon pitcher Zack Henrichs has a perfect game, a no-hitter and a 0.90 ERA entering the 3A state tournament.

## Irrigon opens state playoffs against Taft

By ANNIE FOWLER  
*East Oregonian*

It's game day for the Irrigon baseball team, and that means "dinger French toast" for breakfast at the Henrichs.

"I'm superstitious, and so is half the team," Irrigon coach Randy Henrich said. "Not many ballplayers aren't. Every morning the day of a game, grandma (his wife Marie) has to make French toast."

They can always count on their grandson Zack Henrichs to make an appearance, and assistant coach Fredy Vera. Other times, half the team shows up.

"She doesn't mind," Henrichs said of Marie. "There's no bigger fan than her."

The Knights (20-4) will host Taft (16-10) at 4 p.m. Wednesday in the first round of the 3A state baseball tournament.

"It should be a good game," Henrichs said. "The boys are focused and I see us playing really good. But as a coach, you are always nervous. I have to try and not overthink things."

The Tigers are the No. 3 team from Special District 2, behind Rainier and Warrenton.

The Knights, who won the Special District 5 regular-season and district titles, know that each game from here on out is a loser-out game, so choosing a starting pitcher is key.

"You don't win the first game, there are no second chances," Henrichs said. "I'm not sure if we will go with Zack (Henrichs) or Matthew (Moreno). We know what Zack can do, and Matthew has gotten his groove back."

Zack Henrichs has a perfect game and a no-hitter to his credit this season, and his ERA is 0.90. The defense has been stellar behind both pitchers, allowing just 87 runs in 24 games (3.6 runs a game).

Offensively, the Knights have scored 297 runs (12.3 per game).

"We have worked hard on everything," coach Henrichs said. "Defensively, they work on the little things — bunt coverage, hit-and-run coverage — and it has paid off. We have scored a lot of runs, but so have they (249)."

## Pendleton softball starts their first post-IMC playoff run this afternoon

By BRETT KANE  
*East Oregonian*

Last year was Pendleton softball's concluding chapter in the Columbia River Conference, and they shut that book with a bang.

The Buckaroos dropped just two games overall, and won 28. They ended the season with a 7-0 shutout against Putnam to claim the state championship.

This year, they said goodbye to the CRC in favor of the Intermountain Conference, a league that head coach Tim Cary said has some of the toughest teams in the 5A division. Four of the top 10 teams in the division, Pendleton included, hail from the IMC.

Ridgeview is ranked No. 1, Hood River Valley is No. 2, Pendleton is No. 5, and The Dalles sits at No. 9.

But that isn't a bad thing. "It's an advantage," Cary said. "There are no days off. There's a lot of pressure and stress, and no gimmies. That challenge will help us going into the postseason."

This afternoon, the battle-hardened Bucks (16-9, 9-6 IMC) are embarking on their first state playoff run coming out

### IF YOU GO

Cheer on the Bucks softball team as they kick off their 5A state playoff run.

**WHEN:** 4:30 p.m. Wednesday

**WHERE:** Sunridge Middle School, Steve Cary Field, 700 S.W. Runnion Ave., Pendleton

of the new conference. They'll host the Midwestern League's third-ranked Thurston Colts for the first round.

It's an opportunity that Pendleton fought to secure. It all came down to their home doubleheader against The Dalles on Saturday, May 11.

Had the Bucks lost both games, or even split, they would have dropped to No. 4 in the IMC standings and missed out on their shot at the playoffs.

Instead, the Bucks won the opener 8-3, and the closer in a 17-1 blowout.

"It was good for us as a team to see that we could pull through in those high pressure situations," Cary said. "I think that should add to the girls' confidence."

The sweep earned Pendleton the No. 3 spot in the IMC standings, and a trip to the state playoffs. It wasn't always smooth sailing to get there, especially

considering that the Bucks rarely met their match at all last season.

"We've traveled to the Bend-Redmond area three times this year," said senior shortstop Aspen Garton, who has been on the softball team all four years. "Those rides are hard to recover from. Bus legs against the No. 1 team in the state (Ridgeview) is a tough situation."

Cary said that the IMC was a league where any team could win at any given time, and that little is known about Thurston, who the Bucks haven't faced since the mid-2000s.

"We're not very familiar with them," Cary said. "They're obviously capable of winning games. They're a team we're taking very seriously."

Cary said that his team has spent recent practices polishing up their regular game plan. The team has found their footing on both sides of the ball, whether

it's at bat or in the circle. Freshman right-hander Sauren Garton has tallied 57 strikeouts on the season so far, and will open today's playoff game.

"In the last eight games or so, we've done a much better job of eliminating runs (allowed)," Cary said. "That was a problem for us earlier in the year."

They also have two batters hitting .500 for the overall season: sophomore Natalie Neveau and senior Kila Solomon.

"Early on in the year, we didn't know what we could do as a team," said Solomon, a catcher. "We've always pushed each other, and we never let the score affect us. I've noticed throughout the year that we've all connected better."

Should the Bucks win the playoff's first round, they're in for another road trip. A game against the winner of today's Churchill-West Albany game awaits them in Albany — 278 miles from their home Steve Cary Field.

"We're a much better team than we think we are," Garton said. "We have to come together for a team win. As long as we play together, we'll be just fine."

The Bucks will take on the Colts at 4:30 p.m. Wednesday.