

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

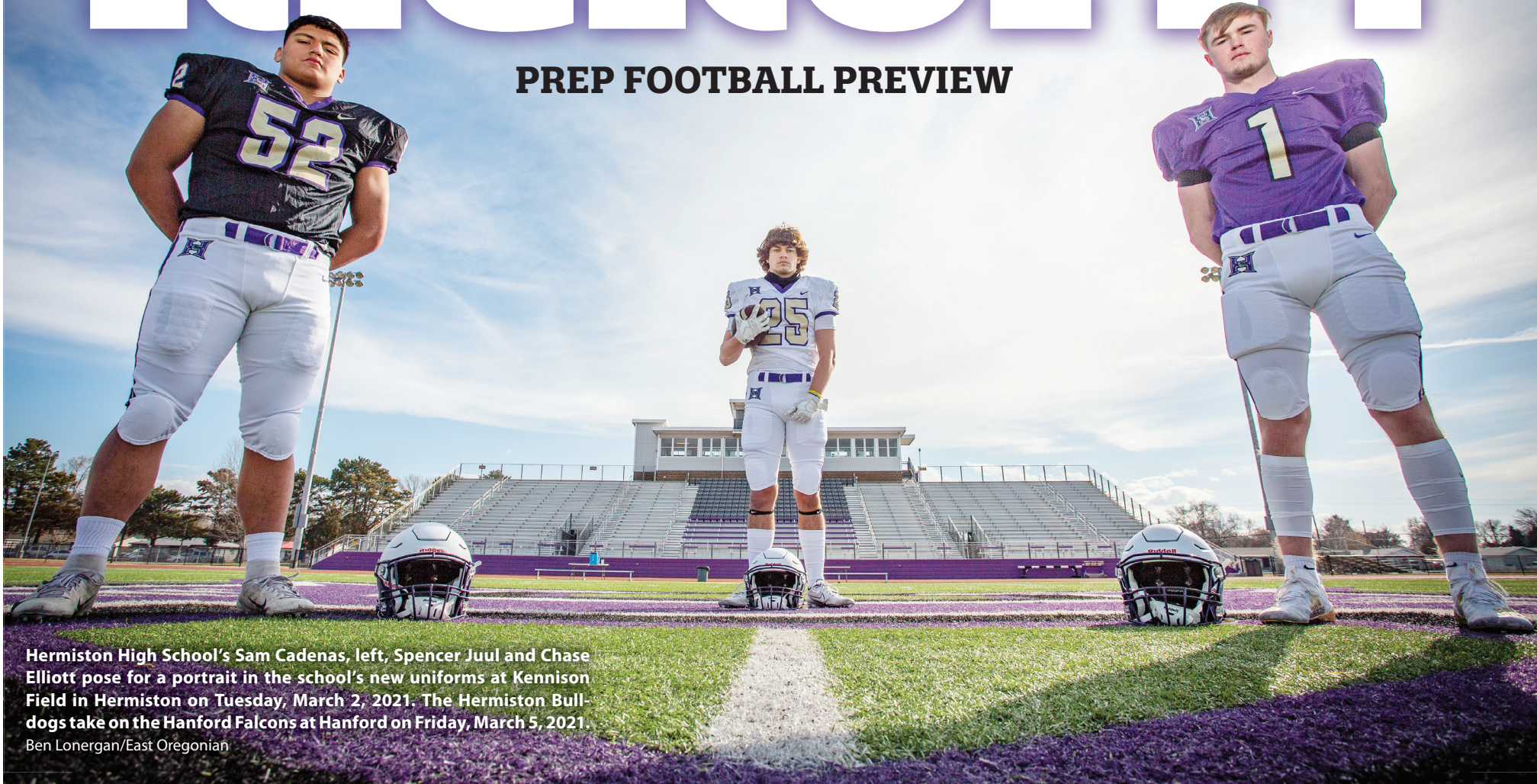
THURSDAY, MARCH 4, 2021

FOLLOW US ON TWITTER @EOSPORTS | FACEBOOK.COM/EOSPORTS

A7

READY FOR KICKOFF?

PREP FOOTBALL PREVIEW



Hermiston High School's Sam Cadenas, left, Spencer Juul and Chase Elliott pose for a portrait in the school's new uniforms at Kennison Field in Hermiston on Tuesday, March 2, 2021. The Hermiston Bulldogs take on the Hanford Falcons at Hanford on Friday, March 5, 2021.
Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Hermiston will be without Trevor Wagner, who plays five positions

By ANNIE FOWLER
For the East Oregonian

HERMISTON — Chase Elliott is excited to get back on the football field. The Hermiston High School quarterback suffered a leg injury in the first quarter of the season opener in 2019 against Pasco and was sidelined the rest of the season.

A junior, Elliott spent the spring and summer honing his skills, and now is ready to put them to good use.

“Fun would be a good word for it,” Elliott said of playing again. “This year, I’m a lot more relaxed in the pocket. There is trust. I have known them (teammates) a lot longer, they respect me and have my back. We will be OK.”

The Bulldogs will open their season on Friday, March 5, against Hanford in a Mid-Columbia Conference game in Richland, Washington. No fans will be allowed.

“Four games is all we have, so we have to maximize it,” Elliott said.

While having Elliott back is a bonus, the Bulldogs will be without talented senior Trevor Wagner, who had shoulder surgery during the offseason. Wagner is a receiver, linebacker, kicker, punter and kick return man.

“It would have been nice to have him,” Hermiston coach David Faaeteete said. “Trevor would have been able to do a lot for us. We will see if we can get him back for a couple of games this season.”

A NEW LOOK

The Hermiston Bulldogs will debut their new uniforms Friday. They have three new looks — white jerseys with gold numbers trimmed in purple, purple jerseys with gold numbers trimmed in black, and black jerseys with gold numbers trimmed in purple. They also have new pants and helmets. “There are a lot of smiles,” Coach David Faaeteete said of his players. “Rocking new jerseys is pretty exciting.”

The Bulldogs do have many other options on offense.

In the backfield, seniors Daniel Faaeteete (6-0, 220) and Thomas Reagan (5-10, 195) will share time. Reagan missed last season with an injury, while Faaeteete missed time with a knee injury.

“They are lightning and a bulldozer,” coach Faaeteete said. “Thomas is the fastest kid on the team, and Daniel really well, they are physical runners and they complement each other well.”

Elliott and his running backs worked hard to get back on the field.

“They stayed the course and continued to work hard so when the season got started they were ready to go,” Faaeteete said. “Chase and Thomas missed

See Hermiston, Page A8



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

Pendleton's Zaanan Bane gets yardage while trying to evade Blake Morkert (1) and Drake Kramer (3), of Scappoose, on Sept. 27, 2019, at the Round-Up Arena.

Bucks excited about new backfield threat

By ANNIE FOWLER
For the East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Pendleton coach Erik Davis has a young team this year with just eight seniors on his roster, but at this point, he doesn't care if there is one or a dozen.

“I’m just excited for the kids to do something, to allow them some sense of normalcy” said

Davis, whose team opens its season Friday, March 5, at Parkrose in a Special District 1 showdown. “We are excited to have six games, which is better than zero.”

Oregon Gov. Kate Brown eased restrictions on outdoor contact sports on Feb. 10, opening the door for the Bucks and every other football team in the state.

“We have practiced in every

See Bucks, Page A8

Heppner locked and loaded for opener at Grant Union

By ANNIE FOWLER
For the East Oregonian

HEPPIER — Heppner coach Greg Grant is not one to mince words.

As the defending 2A state champion Mustangs inch closer to the Friday, March 5, opener at Grant Union, Grant admits they still have some things to work on, and replacing the size and experience on the lines will not be an easy task.

“My biggest concern is replacing the experience up front,” Grant said. “We have one offensive lineman (Roy Collins) back. We have some older kids with some experience. Every year is a different puzzle. We just have to wait and see how they grow and come together.”

Offensively, the Mustangs have several of their weapons back that



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

Heppner linebacker Jace Coe (20) intercepts a pass in the third quarter. The Mustangs defeated the Kennedy Trojans 12-7 to win the 2019 OSAA Class 2A state title on Nov. 30, 2019, at Kennison Field in Hermiston.

helped them go 13-0 and win a state title.

Quarterback Jayden Wilson, who has signed with Western Oregon University, returns under center. The 6-foot-6, 205-pound senior threw for 1,282 yards and 23 touchdowns, and ran for 797 yards and 14 touchdowns last season.

Defensively, Wilson had 32 tackles, three interceptions and three fumble recoveries. He was a first-team all-state selection on both sides of the ball.

Senior running back Blake Walters rolled up a team-high 999 yards and 16 touchdowns. As a defensive lineman, he had 70 tackles and four sacks.

Jackson Lehman, a senior tight end/receiver/linebacker, had 345 receiving yards and seven touchdowns. He also had 42 tackles and two interceptions.

Other key returning players include junior Kason Cimmiyotti at defensive back (23 tackles, 6 interceptions), junior Jace Coe at linebacker, and junior Brock Hisler at linebacker.

“I’m excited to see them step into their roles,” Grant said. “They complement each other well.”

The Prospectors lost six seniors from last season's 3-7 team, with the biggest loss being all-state two-way lineman Drew Lusco, who also was a two-time state champion wrestler.

With the COVID-19 pandemic shifting the start of sports and nixing state championships, Grant said his team has come to the realization that winning another title this year is not in the cards.

“They will always wonder,” Grant said. “I just want them to

See Heppner, Page A8