

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Hermiston's Josh Fernandez plays during a Saturday, March 20, 2021, game against Kennewick at Kennison Field in Hermiston.

NATURAL PROTECTOR

Josh Fernandez is the heart of the Hermiston offensive live

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — When the ball is snapped, Josh Fernandez goes into protection mode.

The 6-foot-3, 340-pound senior guard for Hermiston High School doesn't want anyone going through him to get to quarterback Chase Elliott. During the Kennewick and Hanford games, Elliott did not get sacked once.

While Elliott appreciates the protection, not many notice the efforts of the offensive line.

"Linemen don't really get in the spotlight," Fernandez said. "You never get your

name in the paper."

Hermiston coach David Faeteete, who played on the defensive line at the University of Oregon, said it doesn't matter what level you play at, linemen are the last to make the headlines.

"It's a glory less job," he said. "You don't get the big articles in the paper. You hang your hat on keeping your quarterback clean and opening holes for the running backs. Without the trench warfare, it's not the same game."

Fernandez is a two-year starter on the offensive line. It would have been three had he not injured his right knee at the start of his sophomore year.

"He is steady Eddie," Faeteete said. "He

has been great to have. Linemen are pretty humble. They are natural protectors — it's something that sets linemen apart from skill guys and how they play. They are able to be caring and nasty at the same time."

While Fernandez typically lines up at guard, he also has played center. He just asks that you don't put him at tackle.

"I prefer both," he said. "I don't like tackle. You need to be faster and agile."

In his first full year at quarterback, Elliott said he appreciates everything Fernandez has done this season.

"His build is a luxury and a comfort to have," Elliott said. "Just having him back

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PENDLETON FOOTBALL

Bucks look to stay on top of SD1 standings

Pendleton-Redmond matchup is a Davis family affair

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Pendleton is sitting pretty atop the Special District 1 standings with a 3-0 record, but if the Bucks want to stay there, they will have to get past Redmond on Friday, March 26.

"We truly believe Redmond is a very good team," Pendleton coach Erik Davis said. "They are fast, physical and they throw the ball more than other teams we have faced. They run a fast-paced, no-huddle offense that can be tough when your kids play both ways."

The Bucks are coming off a big 26-6 win over Hood River Valley last week. They have a backfield full of weapons, led by senior Tyasin Burns, who is in good company with Payton Lambert and Zaanan Bane.

"Our team speed is as good as it has ever been," Davis said. "We have a dual threat quarterback (Brogan Biggerstaff). We aren't going to throw for 300 or 400 yards a game, but you have to be balanced to play off our run game. Our offensive line did a good job of handling Hood River's big bodies. We ran for 200-plus yards."

The great thing is you never know who will carry the ball.

"We are a little more run heavy, but the different formations and the different people we have running, they can't key on one player. I know we have to score because Redmond can put some points on the board."

Pendleton scores an average of 30 points a game, but the stat that opens

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Heppner, W-M put perfect seasons on the line

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

HEPPNER — Weston-McEwen is putting its 3-0 record on the line Saturday, March 27, against 2019 2A state champion Heppner.

Then again, the Mustangs are putting their 3-0 record on the line in the Blue Mountain Conference game.

"Two undefeated teams playing against each other in March," W-M coach Kenzie Hansell said. "When was the last time you could say that. It should be fun. We are looking forward to it."

Heppner coach Greg Grant said it should be a fun game for the players.

"They are a formidable opponent," Grant said. "They have been successful, and they will be bringing a lot of effort and talent to the field."

The TigerScots are coming off a 33-6 win over Riverside. They also have wins over Stanfield and



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Weston-McEwen's Theo White (15) catches a touchdown pass. The Weston-McEwen TigerScots defeated the Riverside Pirates 33-6 in Athena on Friday, March 19, 2021.

Umatilla, but know playing Heppner will not be like the other games.

"We are going to have to run the

ball to throw the ball, and throw the ball to run the ball," Hansell said.

"We will have to limit our mistakes

with the football. That will be important to control drives."

The Mustangs have outscored their opponents 116-16, but Grant said his team still has a few kinks to work out.

"Our kids have been playing hard and putting out a good effort," Grant said. "Maybe we could tackle better and make better decisions on defense. Just small things like that."

If nothing else, Hansell is excited to see how his team compares to one of the best small-school teams in the Northwest.

"All respect to Heppner," Hansell said. "We respect what they have done. Coach Grant is a great coach, and his program is going in the right direction. As a younger coaching staff, we respect what he has been able to build."

STANFIELD AT MCLOUGHLIN: The Tigers (1-1), who played with 12 players last week in a 20-0 win over Umatilla, will move

forward with their small squad the rest of the season, starting Friday, March 26, against the Pioneers.

"Barring anymore injuries, this is what we have going forward," Stanfield coach Davie Salas said. "I told my kids we are going to play as hard as we can and not make excuses. This is who we have, and this is who we are going to finish with. You can't complain about playing time right now."

The Tigers have gotten good production from senior running back Enrique Arellano, and sophomore Gator Goodrich has played a multitude of positions.

Also stepping up to play unconventional roles are sophomores Isaiah Lemmon and Bodie Braithwaite.

"Isaiah was a running back, and when we had injuries, we had to move him to guard," Salas said.

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SPORTS SHORT

Betting sites offer software blocks for compulsive gamblers

By WAYNE PARRY
Associated Press

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. — Some sports betting companies are offering tools that allow compulsive gamblers to block themselves from most online sites.

Unibet last week announced it was making software from U.K.-based Gamban available to customers in the U.S. The tools allow customers to in effect ban themselves from gambling sites across multiple devices.

On Wednesday, March 24, FanDuel did so, as well. The software blocks thousands of licensed and unlicensed gambling sites and is constantly updated to add new ones as they appear.

"Educating customers about the importance of gambling responsibly and within limits is a business imperative and ethically the right thing to do," said Carolyn Renzin, chief risk and compliance officer with FanDuel Group. "Offering Gamban's software to those customers signaling they need help adds another layer of protection for our customers, our program, and to the industry."

"This is a massive moment for the industry and one we've been pushing to achieve since the launch of Gamban," added Jack Symons, Gamban's co-founder.

Most licensed sports betting and online casino companies already offer

ways for compulsive gamblers to either pause or halt their behavior, including "cool-down" periods in which customers can have their accounts suspended for a length of time.

And states, including New Jersey, offer state-administered self-exclusion lists where gamblers can prohibit themselves from gambling for differing periods, or permanently. While they are on the list, casinos and sports books cannot accept bets from them or send them marketing materials enticing them to gamble.

Unibet's parent company, Kindred Group said last week that its provision of blocking software to its customers is "an important step for the industry."

Game	Time	Team 1	Team 2	Odds
MENS COLLEGE BASKETBALL	MAR 8 7:00 PM	854 MICHIGAN	855 MARYLAND	-1.5
	MAR 8 7:00 PM	856 ILL	857 ILL ST	-2.5
	MAR 8 7:00 PM	858 MIAMI FLA	859 VA TECH	-1.5
MENS COLLEGE BASKETBALL	MAR 8 1:05 PM	877 VALPARAISO	878 LOYOLACH	-1.5
	MAR 8 3:35 PM	879 BRADLEY	880 MO STATE	-1.5
	MAR 8 7:05 PM	881 ILL STATE	882 DRAKE	-2.5
	MAR 8 9:00 PM	875 ST JOE'S	876 VA COMM	-3
	MAR 8 9:00 PM	885 PEPPERDINE	886 LOY MARYMNT	-1.5
	MAR 8 8:35 PM	883 NO IOWA	884 S ILLINOIS	-4.5

Wayne Parry/Associated Press, File

A betting board lists the odds on college basketball games in the sports betting facility at the Tropicana casino in Atlantic City, N.J., on March 8, 2019.