

# State: Dirtbags dominate Hustlers

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 Dallas High's Tanner Earhart went 3-for-7 during the two games, scoring six runs and had five stolen bases.  
 The Dirtbags, which finished second in the Area 3 standings, enter the state tournament winners of five of the last six games.  
 "We really hit our stride toward the end of the season," Weaver said. "Hopefully we can keep that going through the end of the summer. We're confident. Everyone knows their job and we're getting after it."  
 The Dirtbags face the Bi-Mart Challengers from Eugene in the first round of the double-elimination tourna-

ment at Volcanoes Stadium in Keizer Wednesday (today) at noon. The Challengers defeated the Dirtbags in the state semis in 2015.  
 Eight teams advanced to the state tournament.  
 The tournament runs through Sunday. That gauntlet of games is difficult to conquer, but Weaver said they are ready to handle the pressure and the stress of the tournament.  
 "We're an experienced group of guys," Weaver said. "We have to stay relaxed and confident. We're buying into what we've done all summer. It's a matter of staying with that and not letting the moment get to us."  
 The Challengers skipped

regional play thanks to winning the Area 4 regular season championship.  
 The two teams did not face each other during the regular season.  
 The Dirtbags came close to a state title in 2015, falling in the semifinals. Players are excited to write a different ending.  
 "We have to stay focused on every pitch, not only for me, but our team. If we can stay focused and execute, we'll do what we need to do," Mendazona said. "We know we're one of the best teams in the state, and we have a good chance for a title. We're going to go out there and see if we can get it."



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer  
**Tucker Weaver throws a pitch against the Hustlers on Saturday afternoon.**

## MS: Registration open

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 Bike MS returns to Western Oregon Aug. 5-7, but you don't have to be a hardcore cyclist to take part in the event — or experience the power that it brings.  
 "When people come for the first time, they think they're just going to a biking event," Garred said. "I'm doing this because I'm honoring my mom's memory. They may see the camping, drinking beer and the singing, but they don't think about the connections they'll create as a result of that and the heartfelt feeling. It's a community centered around a common cause, not just a ride."  
 For cyclists looking to join, registration is still open to ride either solo or as part of a team at [www.secure.nationalmssociety.org/site/SPageServer/?page-name=BIKE\\_HOM\\_splash](http://www.secure.nationalmssociety.org/site/SPageServer/?page-name=BIKE_HOM_splash). Cost is \$50 with a \$250 minimum of fundraising.  
 If riding isn't your cup of tea, volunteers are always

needed, from checking in cyclists to setting up and cleaning. There are also options for donating online.  
 Things kick off Aug. 5 with dinner and karaoke. Saturday, Aug. 6 will offer several routes to choose from with fully-stocked rest stops every 10 to 15 miles. The first day ends at WOU for a campout with a meal, massage, and musical entertainment offered. Aug. 7 concludes the event with breakfast and one last ride, including a celebration after crossing the finish line.  
 Distances range from easier, flat rides, including one from Monmouth to Dallas, to more challenging rides, including a 100-mile ride.  
 Through the years, volunteers have seen teams grow in size. Team Road Kill, based in Vancouver, Wash., had four people its first year, Garred said. The team now counts more than 100 people.  
 "It's almost like a family

reunion," he said. "It's very intimate. People get to know each other, set side by side in tents and have a camaraderie because of the reason why we're here."  
 That reason is to raise money for MS research.  
 Bike MS raised \$741,000 in 2015. They're hoping to crack \$800,000 this year.  
 "Almost everyone knows someone affected by MS," he said. "We want them to live the best possible life. When you see people who have MS, some of them can't, everyone feels inspired."  
 Many people come anticipating a fun, cycling weekend. Almost everyone leaves feeling something else entirely.  
 "People walk away from the weekend, I would say, transformed," Garred said. "You see the power of people who come together around a common idea and who want to do something good in the world. It feels really, really joyful."

## County: Cycling tourism seen as opportunity

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 Independence installed two bike repair stations earlier this year.  
 One is located near the fountain at Riverview Park, with the second at a campground near the river.  
 "It has a rack you can sit your bike on so it's off the ground," Independence Economic Development Director Shawn Irvine said. "All the different tools you need to work on a bike are attached by cables, including wrenches, tire changing tools — all that kind of stuff."  
 The campground gives cyclists a place to stay overnight.  
 "We've been wanting to appeal more to the cycling community," Irvine said. "We see bicycle tourism as a good economic opportunity for us. We wanted to do some things to bring more bicycles to Independence.

That's where the bike campground came from."  
 Monmouth created a bike-pedestrian committee to look at a variety of potential projects, including installing bike repair stations and increasing signage.  
 "I think the area provides great rural views for cyclists with a range of routes and topography for all skill levels, all of which is located within an hour or so of major urban centers in the Willamette Valley," Monmouth Community Development Director Mark Fancey said. "In addition, Polk County has done a good job with local road paving."  
 Monmouth, Independence and the Dallas Area Visitor's Center matched a \$10,000 grant provided by the Rural Tourism Studio to create tourism promotion items, including a cycling video and photos, Fancey

said.  
 The cycling video is filming this week and will be ready for viewing later this summer.  
 Dallas Recreation Coordinator David Brautigam said the city is trying to organize a cycling group to meet regularly. The Polk Pedalers, a group that holds monthly rides throughout the year, also meets for a variety of rides that take them around the county.  
 The effort has not been lost on cycling groups, including Bike MS and Cycle Oregon.  
 "We've always thought the area was bike friendly," Garred said.  
 The goal now is to showcase the county as a cycling destination — and attract cyclists from around the state.  
 "It's something we're always thinking about," Irvine said.



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