

Mustangs Do It Again!

THE GAZETTE-TIMES

Heppner, Oregon 97836, Thursday, March 13, 1969 Sec. 2

Two Tight Wins Bring 7 A-2 Title

"We're the Champs!" boasted the banner behind the Heppner rooters at the district tournament in La Grande, and the Mustang five proved it again. They nosed out the fighting Wahtonka Eagles, 51-50 Saturday night to represent Greater Oregon at the state A-2 tourney in Coos Bay, March 17-19.

Twelve times during the tight battle the lead changed hands. The greatest margin either the Eagles or the Mustangs could manufacture was a mere five points—Wahtonka's best effort in the first quarter and Heppner's brief lead early in the last quarter.

Specialists in winning games (or losing them) by the narrowest of margins, Heppner squeaked into the finals of the tournament by two points, as they defeated Vale, 49-47, Friday night in overtime.

A great team effort Saturday night won the game, the trophy, and the trip to Coos Bay. Gary Kemp and Cal Ashbeck were veritable jumping jacks, combining an all-out defense effort on the taller Eagles with 27 crucial counters. Steady Jon O'Donnell tallied the final vital two points to bring his evening's scoring to 12, and quick-handed fighting Larry Pettyjohn dumped in another 12. While not scoring, John McCabe made an amazing 22 assists and showed great defensive play to earn an All-Star berth.

With 3:50 to go, Bruce Wilkes had put the Eagles a point ahead (50-49) and they froze the ball. But the determined Mustang defense trapped an Eagle, who was whistled for holding the ball too long. A jump ball was called, Heppner controlled, and O'Donnell pumped in the game's final basket. Again a tremendous Mustang defense forced a jump ball. Again Heppner controlled the ball, then for 72 seconds the Mustangs zipped the ball back and forth in such a dazzling keep-away that the Eagles could not reach the player with the ball for a desperation foul.

With a second left, Steve Herman finally fouled McCabe, who missed his shot. Wahtonka got the rebound. After a time-out to plan strategy, the Eagles put their tournament hopes on a long pass to 6-7 Bruce Schmidt. But the Mustangs fought for the ball and the Eagle basket try came after the final whistle.

At least a third of the capacity crowd were Mustang rooters, and they were supported by Vale, who dumped Grant Union to take the consolation honors. Vale also won the sportsmanship trophy, and a mighty yell went up from the Heppner crowd when Vale's name was announced.

For the past five years Heppner has won a berth in the district tourney, and each time they have won the first game so that they have gone into the championship play-off. Three times—in 1965, 1968, and this year—they have downed the best that the rest of the district could put up against them, to make the long trip to the eight-team state tournament.

The smallest A-2 school in Oregon, Heppner High has so far not won a state tourney game, but it has scared the daylights out of the likes of Phoenix and Rogue River before going down to narrow defeat.

First Game was 'Sizzler'
The sizzling opener with Vale Friday night was equally tight with O'Donnell ripping the game winning basket on a long cool shot from near the sideline with three seconds remaining in overtime.

Lead changed hands in the opener 13 times with the speedy Vikings holding a slim advantage through much of the first half, but Heppner came on to hold a small margin through much of the second half.

With five minutes to play in the second quarter, Vale led by six points, 22-16, and with six minutes played was in front, 24-18. The Mustangs rallied to score seven straight on a free throw by McCabe, a jumper by O'Donnell, another jumper in the key by McCabe and a driving layup by Pettyjohn. Thus with 22 seconds to go in the half, Heppner pulled in front, 25-24.

However, Randy Hawkins of the Viks evened it up by half, three when he hit one of two free throws on a call against Ashbeck.

In the third period, Ashbeck blazed a two-handed jumper to set Heppner going just six seconds after the tipoff. Ron Jacobs countered for Vale with a drive and jump to knot the score again at 27-27 and Steve Kenison, who tallied 24 for the Viks in a great night's production, put in a layup to send Vale back in front at 29-27. O'Donnell knotted it again with the quarter half gone when he popped another jumper. Kemp sent the Mustangs in front with a free throw on a Steve Kenison personal, and O'Donnell gave the Heppner five a three point bulge with two more gifts

DISTRICT A-2 TOURNAMENT (Final Standings)

Champion—Heppner Mustangs
Runner-up—Wahtonka Eagles
Third Place—Vale Vikings
Fourth Place—Grant Union Prospectors

TOURNEY SCORES

Friday night — Heppner 49, Vale 47, Wahtonka 55, Grant Union 52.
Saturday night—(Consolation) Vale 55, Grant Union 47.
(Championship) Heppner 51, Wahtonka 50.

TOURNAMENT ALL-STAR TEAM

(As chosen by coaches at Eastern Oregon College of Education)

Jon O'Donnell, Heppner, 6-0 Senior
John McCabe, Heppner, 5-10 Junior
Bruce Wilkes, Wahtonka, 6-2 Senior
Steve Kenison, Vale, 5-11 Senior
Dave Dieker, Grant Union, 6-5 Senior

SPORTSMANSHIP TROPHY:

(Presented by La Grande Retail Merchants Association)
VALE VIKINGS

tosses on Jacobs' infraction, 32-29, Kenison hit again, but Pettyjohn, who has developed a knack of closing a period by scoring, pitched one in from the baseline with one second left, giving the Mustangs a 3-point lead at the end of the quarter, 34-31.

McCabe connected on two free throws at the start of the fourth on Steve Kenison's third personal and the Mustang lead went to five, 36-31. Dennis Kenison hit, but O'Donnell countered, and the five point margin held, 38-33, with 1:05 played in the final stanza.

But just as the Mustangs appeared to be getting things under control, the Kenison brothers roared back and very nearly bombed Heppner out of the ball game. Dennis fired a long pusher, Steve plunked a jumper and came back 25 seconds later with a push through the key. Steve roared in again for another pusher, and thus in a space of two minutes, the Kenisons had moved Vale from a five point deficit to a three point lead, 41 to 38, with less than four minutes to go in the ball game.

Steve missed a chance to build up the lead when he failed to hit a free throw, and O'Donnell, Heppner's clutch kid, brought the Mustangs back with a pop from the left side and a long pusher to make it 42-41 for Heppner. Steve Kenison, the dynamo for Vale and dynamite against the Mustangs, tallied on a layup and the Viks took a one-point edge, 43-42, with 2:20 to go, but O'Donnell put Heppner back on top, 44-43, with a pusher.

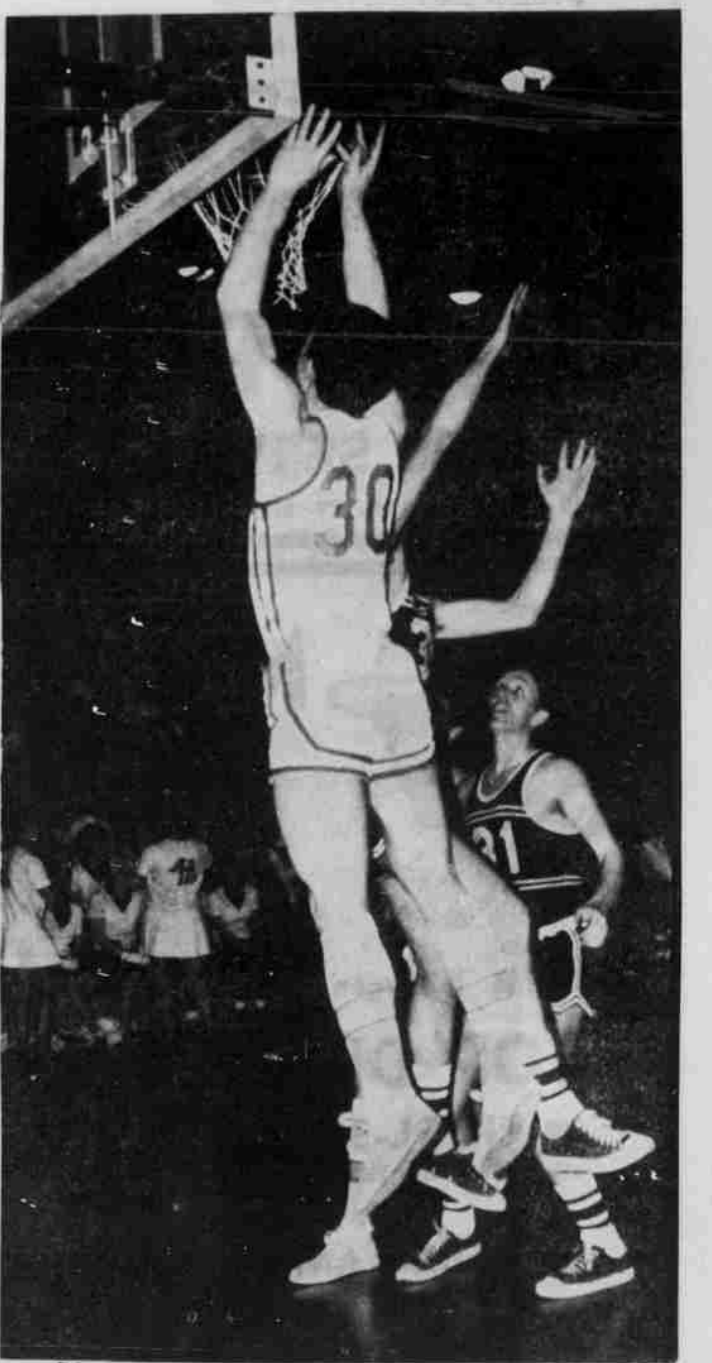
Dennis Kenison recaptured a one point edge for Vale on a jumper, 45 to 44, and with 39 seconds to go, Mark Freeman fouled the wrong man—O'Donnell. Jon sank the first of two free throws, but missed the second and the score was tied, 45 to 45. Just before the buzzer at the end of the regular playing time, O'Donnell came through with a steal, went down the floor but missed a chance to end it there.

In the overtime, the Viks took off with two free throws, Hawkins getting one of two tries and Steve Kenison doing the same, giving them a two point lead, 47-45. With 1:10 to go, O'Donnell caged a long two-hander and the game had its sixth tie score. As tension mounted with the big crowd on its feet most of the time, the count held there. Jacobs fouled McCabe, but John missed his try with eight seconds left. Heppner gained possession after Vale headed down court. Pettyjohn spotted a hole in the Viking defense, passed to O'Donnell who was alone near the left sidelines. Jon fixed his eyes on the target, went up with a slight hesitation move and arched his shot. It was good from the moment it left his hands and hit the target circle dead center, swishing through with three seconds on the clock. A Viking tossed a desperation try at the basket, almost floor-length, but it missed by two or three feet, and Heppner had gained its first-round victory towards the tournament championship.

| | OT |
|----------|-----------------|
| VALE | 13 12 6 14 2-47 |
| HEPPNER | 9 16 9 11 4-49 |
| HEPPNER | 13 16 17 5-51 |
| WAHTONKA | 12 15 16 7-50 |



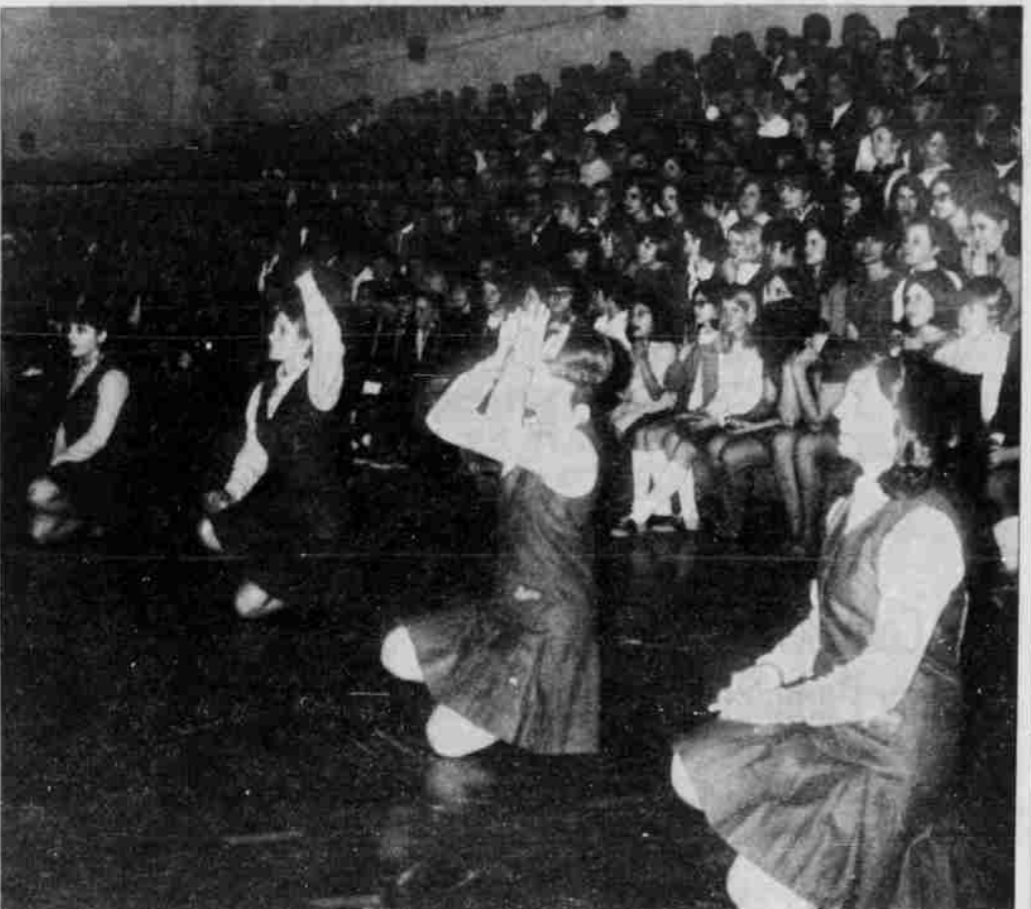
JOHN MCCABE (20), one of Heppner's all-stars, lofts a shot out of this crowd of players against Vale. Teammates Cal Ashbeck (40) and Gary Kemp (44) watch for a rebound while Ron Jacobs (13) of Vale stands at left. (HHS Photo).



HOT HANDS of Jon O'Donnell were a big factor in winning the district crown. Here he goes up for two against Vale while three Vik defenders fail to stop him. Steve Kenison (31), Vale all-star, is the only one identifiable. (HHS Photo).



DR. HOWARD RICHARDSON, head basketball coach and athletic director at Eastern Oregon College, presents the district 7 A-2 tournament all-star team. Jon O'Donnell (31), Heppner, comes up to receive his award and join teammates John McCabe (to O'Donnell's right), Steve Kenison of Vale and Dave Dieker of Grant Union are at O'Donnell's left and Bruce Wilkes of Wahtonka is partially visible in front of O'Donnell. (HHS Photo).



MUSTANG CHEERLEADERS had moments of agony as well as ecstasy at the tournament. Things didn't look too good against Vale at the moment of this picture, but they kept up the spirit. From left are Sherri O'Brien, Lynda Orwick, Sara Miller and Jody Rugg. (Note gal with head in hands in front spectator row—but it all came out fine!) (HHS Photo).



HEPPNER'S PEP BAND, under the direction of Arnie Hodman, kept up lively support throughout the tournament, clad in their new gold and blue outfits. (HHS Photo).

(Box Scores and Other Games

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