

Ranks thin, but talent deep Heppner thinclads hit the cinders this weekend

Although the ranks may be a little thinner this year, Heppner High School's track team will not be lacking in individual talent as it enters the 1979 season.

This weekend, the Mustang thinclads will take part in a pentathlon meet in Pendleton, on Friday, then travel to Salem to take part in the highly competitive Willamette Relays on Saturday.

Only 10 boys and 6 girls are out for track this year, prompting Coach Dale Conklin—now mentor of both teams—to predict that Heppner's track program "won't be as strong a team as in the past couple of years, but we should be tougher individually...There's a heckuva lot of talent scattered in there."

Contributing to a small degree to the relatively low turnout on the boys' team is the fact that simultaneous participation in both baseball and track has been banned this year. Poor turnout on the girls' side is even more difficult to pinpoint, Conklin indicated. "I don't know what the reasons are," he said. "We have some very talented girls here who are not going out. It's a shame, since we're dependent on kids going out for more than one sport. When they don't go out, I think it hurts the other programs, as well as track." Persons with a fall or winter sports specialty "can't lay around and do nothing, and expect to excel," the coach added.

But prospects appear bright for many of those who opt to take part in this year's track program.

On the boys' team, returning seniors include Richard Schmidt, who placed second in the triple jump and fifth in the high jump in the state finals last year. Schmidt will again compete in those two events, and take on the long jump event as well. "I'm looking for great things from him," Conklin said.

Another senior, three-year letterman Bryan Marlin, will return to the field this year, after qualifying for the state finals in the long and triple jumps last season. In addition to those events, Marlin "looks great in the javelin, and we may make a hurdler out of him," Coach Conklin said. Senior Scott Sherer, who took fourth in the district in the two-mile last year, may shift to the 880 this year, and classmate Kevin Gray, in his first year of track, will join Conklin's stable of distance runners. Gray ran cross-country while a student at The Dalles several years ago.

Juniors include distance man Larry Palmer, who placed the two-mile at district competition last year. Another long-haul running standout, Dan Nix, will return to the cinders, following second place finishes in the mile and two-mile runs at last year's district showdown. Rounding out the junior class contribution to the track squad is weightman Jim Parker, who placed in district discus and shotput action last year, and is "throwing well already this season," according to Conklin. Parker is also expected to participate in the triple-jump. The Mustangs will have to

depend on the sophomore class to rack up points in the sprinting events. The three sophomores out for track this year—Mike Jones, Buck Estes and Bruce Sheehan—are the only Mustangs training for the sprints. Jones and Estes are lettermen.

This year's abbreviated track squad, due to its lack of numbers, can be expected to have difficulty racking up points in district action, dimming odds for a repeat of last year's district crown. The Mustangs are fielding no pole vaulter, as yet, and have no seasoned hurdlers. Relay teams may suffer. But the squad should remain a contender in the distance races, jumping and weight events. "We should still place in the top two or three," said Conklin. "and we may have a better chance to place higher at state," since individual strength remains high.

The addition of Wahtonka to the league schedule is expected to provide another obstacle on the road to retaining the district trophy.

The Mustangs will also miss the talents of 1978 graduates Marty Smith and Sam Myers—district champions last year.

The girls' track program will field only one returning senior, state high jump champion Maureen Healy, who also "looks strong in the long jump" this year, according to Conklin. Last weekend, Maureen took third in the high jump at the Kick-Off Girls Invitational in Pendleton, against

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Play ball

Cardinal baseball coach Jerry Martin conducts a little fielding practice while part of the lone team takes batting practice behind him. The lone baseball team begins their schedule Tuesday, April 10 against Arlington. Tennis at IHS starts this weekend and track gets underway on April 7. Pre-season stories on all lone sports in next week's Gazette-Times.

Mustang Boosters to elect officers next Wednesday

Mustang Booster Club will hold an organizational meeting Wednesday, April 4 at 7:30 p.m. in Room 7 at the High School.

More than \$125 has been received in memberships so far according to club organizer Robb Rush. The basic membership fee is \$1 with

donations of any amount accepted.

Club Officers for the coming school year will be elected at this meeting and fund-raising committees established. It is hoped the Mustang Boosters can raise some funds for student scholarships to sports camps for this summer.

Town Team League lists Sunday's results

Tom Day exploded for 20 points to spark Van Marter to a 61-44 victory over Watkins in Town Team Basketball League action Sunday.

The win allowed Van Marter to maintain its unbeaten season record, and retain control of first place. Also scoring in double figures for Van Marter were Laverne Van Marter with 11 and Daryl Spivey with 10. Topping the scoring for Watkins was Mark Huddleston with 16, followed by Karmon Bjella and Clayton Wilson with 10 each.

Second place Eckman handed Smith a 66-29 trouncing, with three Eckman players tallying double figures.

They were Dave Allstott with 15, Jim Lankford, 14, and Dave McLaughlin, 13.

Marvin Lane and Pat Campbell each racked up 16 points to boost Lane to a 67-49 win over Greenup. Two Greenup players, Jamie Sands and Steve Ball, also scored 16 points apiece in the contest.

In other action, Forest Service defeated Johnston, with Mark Cutsforth taking high point honors for the winners with nine.

On Sunday, Eckman will meet Watkins, Greenup will face Forest Service, Smith will challenge Van Marter and Lane will take on Johnston.

Season opener Saturday

Prospects look good for Mustang diamond gang

Heppner High School's baseball season gets underway this weekend at Pilot Rock, when the Mustangs take part in a four team tourney with Pilot Rock, Prairie City and Gervais.

The Mustangs will meet Prairie City at 10 a.m. in the second game of the tournament, then, if successful, will take on the winner of the Gervais-Pilot Rock contest.

Prospects look good for the Mustang nine this season, according to Coach Dale Holland, with many lettermen returning to the diamond following a good season last year. The Mustangs tied for first place in their division during the 1978 season, but co-champion Condon scored more AZZI points to go on to post-season competition.

Returning veterans include senior Dennis Peck, all-league last year, at shortstop and the mound. Senior Lionel Wood will shift from the infield to the outfield this season, and will also be a member of the Mustang pitching staff. Another all-league player, Mike Stookey, will return to first base, and fellow seniors Scott

McEwen and Randy Cole will round out the outfield.

All-league catcher Dale Holland, a junior, will return to his duties behind the plate, and sophomore John Bier will make his contribution from the mound. Fellow sophomores Rick Cole and Ken Stookey will hold infield slots.

Two rookies—freshman Doug Holland and John Murray—promise to be welcome additions to the Mustang roster, following outstanding performances during last summer's Babe Ruth League competition. "They'll be playing a lot of baseball this year,"

said Coach Holland.

A total of 25 players turned out for the jayvee and varsity baseball this year. Practice began at the first of March.

With Wahtonka included among regular season opponents this year, "the league ought to be tougher," according to Holland. Condon should once again prove to be a major threat, and Ione is expected to field a more favorable team this season, he added.

Mustang baseball enters regular season play on April 14, against Wasco County. Here is the schedule for the full 1979 season:

Mustang baseball

- March 31—Pilot Rock Tournament—10 a.m., Pilot Rock
- April 12—Arlington (2)—2:30 p.m., Arlington
- April 14—Wasco (2)—1 p.m., Heppner
- April 17—Ione—4 p.m., Heppner
- April 21—Condon (2)—1 p.m., Condon
- April 24—Sherman—4 p.m., Moro
- April 28—Wahtonka (2)—11 a.m., The Dalles
- May 1—Wasco—4 p.m., Maupin
- May 4—Ione—4 p.m., Ione
- May 8—Condon—4 p.m., Heppner
- May 12—Sherman—1 p.m., Heppner
- May 15—Wahtonka—3 p.m., Heppner



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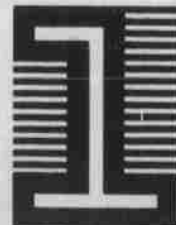
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