

Mustangs take second place in district tournament

By Jennifer Wilson

The Heppner Mustangs got one more chance at the Union Bobcats after splitting with them in league. After a close game, the Mustangs captured the 53-47 win to advance to the championship game on Saturday. "We're one team, we have one goal and if we play together, that goal will be met," said Cody Orr.

The Bobcats were up by seven to zero before the Mustangs came together. Led by the defensive effort of Chris Lien, the Mustangs rallied around a five second call in their favor and eventually tied up the game 9-9. At the end of the first quarter the Mustangs trailed by a basket.

Brent Eckman started the second quarter with a three point bucket to put the Mustangs up by one. With the game tied at 22-22, Cody Orr went to the free throw line and was good for one point and the lead.

The next two points for the Mustangs came when Brent Eckman tipped the ball, dove on it to keep it from going out of bounds, and then kicked it up the court to Kyle Fuchs for the lay-in. Bryan Holland checked in for Chris Lien who got into some early foul trouble.

The first half ended tied 29-29 and the end of the third quarter was also tied, 40-40.

With one more tie halfway through the fourth quarter, the Mustangs finally



Heppner Mustang Chris Lien keeps the action going as he heads for the basket in the district championship game against Pilot Rock. The Mustangs lost to the Rockets 55-51. -Photo by Sandy Matthews

took control of the game with a three point bucket from Jared Huddleston. With the time ticking and the Bobcats trailing, their only option was to foul to regain possession of the ball and stop the clock. However, sending Chris Lien to the line five times damaged any hope for the Bobcats as he was 100% from the free throw line in the fourth quarter.

"We played 32 minutes of tough, intense basketball. This was a team effort," said Coach David Norton.

In the championship game, the Mustangs were up against long time rivals, the Pilot Rock Rockets. Players and fans from various teams in the league joined the Heppner cheering section and donned the blue and gold in hopes of an upset.

The Mustangs came within four points, but time ran out in the fourth quarter and they couldn't quite overcome the Rockets. The Rockets took the 55-51 win. The Mustangs did, however, secure second place and a state playoff game at home this Friday.

Mustang wrestlers bring home two district championships and one runner up

The Mustangs competed in the 10 team district championships last weekend in Halfway. Last year Heppner finished in eighth place at the tournament.

This year the Mustangs took 16 competitors that included nine freshman, two sophomores, three juniors and two seniors. Of those 16 wrestlers, 10 brought home medals and the team finished third, just three points behind second place Joseph. Had Heppner won one more match or Joseph won one less match along the 149 wrestled bouts of the tournament, Heppner could have finished in second place.

The Mustangs' total of 10 individual placers was the second highest behind district champion Crane's 14. Seven of the 10 Mustang district placers are underclassmen. Joseph only had seven placers, but four of those were district champions, all of whom are seniors.

Three Mustangs advanced to the tournament championship finals. Sophomore Jarreid Miller became the first Heppner wrestler ever to become a district finalist when he scored a reversal right at the final whistle of the semifinal match to win 7-6 over the number two seed at 130 pounds. Miller's previous match in the quarterfinals was an equally exciting 6-4 overtime win. "I like to make my matches exciting and give the crowd their money's worth," laughed Miller after he squeaked through the semifinals. He eventually lost in the cham-

ampionship bout to a senior from Union and finished second.

Chance Day, 152 pounds, was the second Heppner wrestler to qualify for the championship finals, facing Clancy Warnock from Joseph. The score was tied at 1-1 with six seconds remaining when Day blasted a double leg shot, lifted Warnock off his feet and dropped him to his back for five points. With that Day became the first Mustang to stand on top of the podium at a district tournament and won an automatic birth to the OSAA championships at Memorial Coliseum.

The very next match on the championship mat was Heppner's Wacy Coil versus Daniel Lode from Adrian, ranked third in Oregon at 160 pounds and the district's number one seed. Coil had lost twice during the season to Lode, both by fall, including the championship match at the Bank of Eastern Oregon Invitational in Heppner. This time Lode was no match for Coil. Coil dominated him for five and a half minutes and was ahead by 13 points before pinning him with 28 seconds remaining in the bout. Coil became the second ever district champion and state qualifier from Heppner.

Heppner's next highest placer was Tyler Robinson who finished third and champion of the consolation bracket with a 3-1 record for the weekend. The consolation championship bout at 145 pounds featured two Mustangs, Robinson and Garrett Gibbs. Gibbs, a freshman, became the un-

predicted placer for Heppner by winning the consolation semifinals in a come from behind pin with just 39 seconds left in the bout.

Heppner's other medal winners were Cody Nelson, 4th at 112 pounds, Grant Smith, 5th at 119 pounds, John Nelson, 5th at 125 pounds, Conner Pappas, 6th at 140 pounds and Drew Brannon, 5th at 160 pounds. Other Mustang competitors were Zach Yocom, Curtis Martin, Andrew Bara, Dillon Lucher, Alex Fuentes and Zach Hintz.

Coach Troy Morgan was pleased with his Mustangs' district showing. "We set four team goals at the beginning of the year—win a dual, finish in the top four at districts, have eight district placers and send wrestlers to state. Since we accomplished all four goals, next year we are going to have to set new ones. Of our 10 district placers, nine will be returning next year, including all three finalists. The fact that we can have freshman step into varsity roles and be competitive shows the value of our junior high and Colt wrestling programs. We are going to be a force to be reckoned with in our district for years to come."

The state championships for 2A/1A through 6A will be held in Memorial Coliseum in Portland on February 26-28. The 2A/1A wrestling begins Friday morning. Fans can see the brackets online now and can follow the tournament's progress during the competition at www.osaa.org.

Lady Mustangs take third place at district tournament

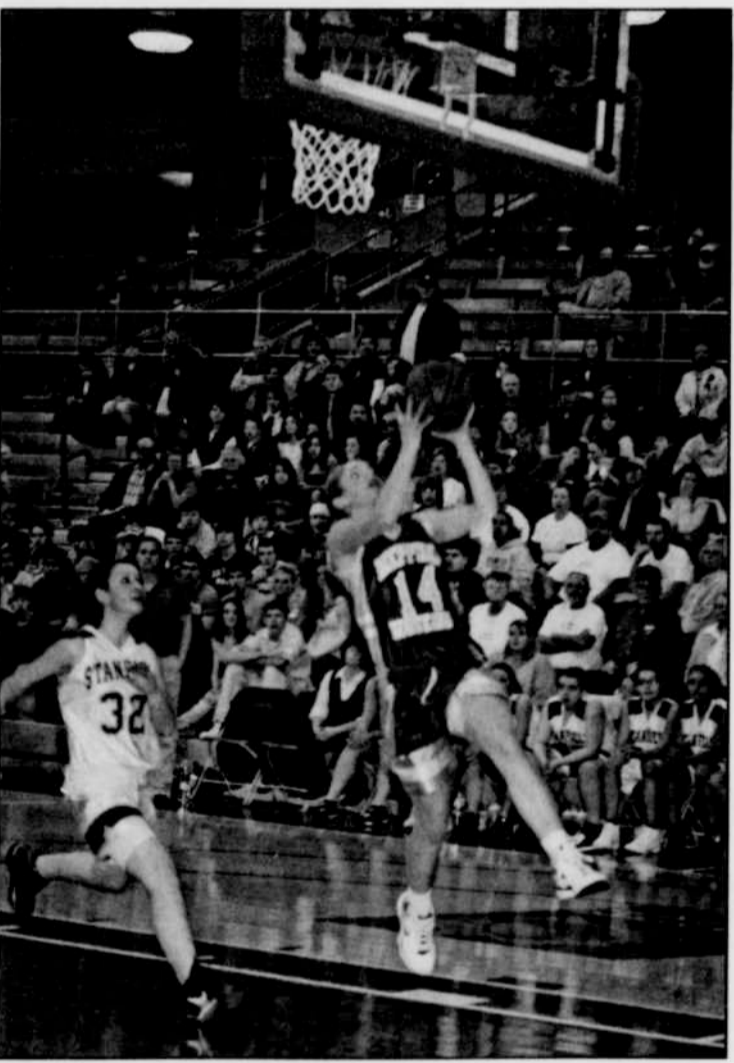
By Jennifer Wilson

The Lady Mustangs started out with a great first half against the Stanfield Tigers last Friday. The Mustangs had a comfortable buffer at half time, leading 22-5. However, the Tigers weren't going to give up a chance to play for third place on Saturday that easily. The Tigers made a fourth quarter surge and closed the gap to just nine points. The Mustangs defensive effort held off the Tigers for the 47-38 win and moved the Mustangs into a face-off for third place against Pilot Rock on Saturday.

On Saturday, the Lady Mustangs started the game out slow and allowed the Pilot Rock Rockets eights points before sending Erin Price to the line for two free throws. Brynna Rust, Erin Price, and Taighler Dougherty were to only Mustangs to score in the second quarter and all three shots were three pointers.

By the end of the third quarter, the Mustangs were only down by one point. The effort in the final quarter determined who continued on. The Mustangs took a three point lead, but Pilot Rock quickly tied the score at 22-22. Pilot Rock pressured the Mustangs to see if they could get their hands on a turnover but the Mustangs stayed strong.

With the Mustangs up by two, Pilot Rock scored a three point bucket to put them up by one. One last attempt was put up by the Mustangs and it was no good, but Catherine McEligot was there for the weak side rebound and the put back just seconds before the final buzzer rang. The Mustangs won the game 27-26 and will advance to a state playoff game. "We came



Erin Price goes for a lay-in during the district tournament in Pendleton this past weekend. -Photo by Autumn Morgan

to the district tournament collaborative team quote with nothing to lose and summed up the weekend for everything to gain," and that the Lady Mustangs.

Hams named first team for Big Sky Conference



Matt Hams, a senior at Ione, made first team for the Big Sky Conference All Star Team this weekend during the basketball district tournament this past weekend. Zac Orem, a junior at Ione, received an honorable mention. -Photo by Theresa Crawford

Cardinals finish season with 12-4 league record

The Ione Cardinals bowed out of post-season play with two losses at the Big Sky District Tournament last weekend, losing to Dufur on Friday afternoon and South Wasco on Saturday. The Cards ended the 2008 campaign with a 12-4 league record and a 14-12 mark overall.

Dufur came out sizzling in the Friday, February 20 match-up. With barely one minute gone, the Rangers swished the first of nine three-pointers as the Cardinals struggled from the field. The Cardinals trailed by nine after one and by 16 at the half 41-25.

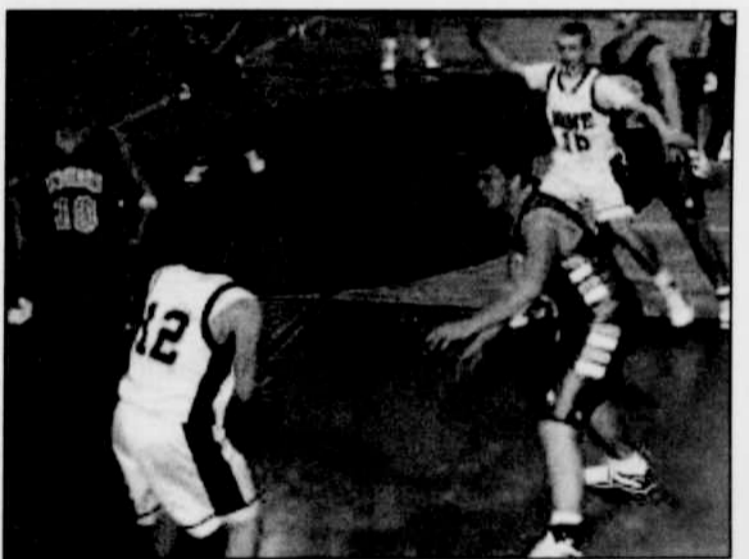
Any hopes of a second half rally were squelched early on as Dufur opened the third quarter with an 11-2 run. RJ Ramos provided a spark for the Cards late in the third to cut the Ranger lead back to 15 but Dufur erased all doubt in the fourth quarter, out-scoring Ione 31-13 to take the 89-54 win.

Matt Hams led the Cardinals in scoring with 19. RJ Ramos and Zac Orem each added seven and Clay Morter had six. The Cards had a cold night from the field, shooting 29% while the Rangers shot 43%, both from inside and outside the three point line.

"We didn't show up ready to play," said Coach Dennis Stefani. I was mostly disappointed with our defensive effort. We never did get our movement or ball rotation going."

The Friday loss set up a do-or-die game against South Wasco on Saturday. The winner advanced to sub-state playoffs and the loser got an early start for spring sports.

Matt Hams made



RJ Ramos gets a shot off during district tournament action this past weekend. -Photo by Theresa Crawford

eight of the Cardinals first quarter points and the Cards led 10-8 after one. The Cardinals stuttered in the second, scoring just five points and the Redsidies led at the half, 25-15.

The Cards made some moves in the third quarter, pulling to within eight points twice but were not able to close the gap. South Wasco built the lead to 18 in the fourth and went into their trademark slowdown game. The Cards chipped away at the lead but ran out of time as the Redsidies took the win, 57-47.

"I felt we played better than Friday night," said Coach Stefani. "However, we still did not have the

intensity we had during the season."

Matt Hams led the team in scoring with 18 points. Tanner Rietmann added 10. The Cardinals shot 37% from the floor and had the same number of field goals as the Redsidies. South Wasco had one more three pointer than Ione but the Redsidies went to the free throw line 23 times, making 11 while Ione made just two of eight.

Clay Morter led the Cardinals in rebounds with 12, tallying rebound number 300 for the season. Zac Orem had five assists and Cory Peterson added five while Matt Hams led in steals with three.

Mustang Varsity Baseball Schedule

Following is the Heppner High School varsity baseball schedule for the 2009 season:

-March 17: Pendleton JV, 2 p.m.
-March 21: at La Grande, 12 p.m.
-March 24: Mac Hi/Salem
-March 27-28: Colfax Tourney.

-Apr. 4: Burns, 1 p.m.
-Apr. 7: at Baker, 2 p.m.
-Apr. 11: at Irrigon, 11 a.m.
-Apr. 14: Pilot Rock, 4:30 p.m.
-Apr. 18: Weston McEwen, 11 a.m.
-Apr. 21: at Stanfield, 11 a.m.