

HEPPNER

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# Gazette Times

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## Lady Mustangs win 2A state championship

By Russ Nichols

Four years ago when Robert Wilson took over the coaching helm for girls' basketball, he had only 13 girls and the team finished with a 2-17 record. Just four years later the Lady Mustangs were competing for and winning a state title. The amazing transformation concluded with winning the 2A state championship in Pendleton on Saturday night against the highly favored Coquille Red Devils.

The state tournament began late Thursday night with an opening game against the third ranked Oakland Oakers. Oakland had only three losses in the year but that did not stop the Mustangs who handily beat the Oakers 48-39. The Mustang's leading scorer was Sydney Wilson who had 21 points and eight rebounds. Senior Jacee Currin had another solid game with 15 points, six assists and eight rebounds. Madison Combe added seven points, Madison Ashbeck had three points and Madelyn Nichols contributed two points.

In the semi-finals match on Friday, the Lady Mustangs met up with league opponent the Enterprise Outlaws. The two teams had already met three times in the season with the Mustangs holding a 2-1 edge in those games. All the games had been close, so Coach Rob Wilson said he knew it would be a battle. Even though it was another close game, the Mustangs led from the start and never looked back winning by a 39-32 margin. Sopho-



Sydney Wilson takes the ball down the court.

more Sydney Wilson had a double-double with a game high 16 points and 11 rebounds. Jacee Currin added nine points along with two steals and two assists. Madison Combe scored six points and had two rebounds. Jenna McCullough had five points and five rebounds. Sophomore Madelyn Nichols had three points and secured six rebounds. Madison Ashbeck, Marlee Mitchell and ZaBrena Masterson all added valuable playing minutes.

The two victories set up a championship game against the one loss Coquille Red Devils. The Red Devils who had been a 3A school, just dropping to 2A, placed 4th in the 3A tournament just one year prior. The Mustangs knew the game would be tough, but Coach Wilson

assured them that if they played their game, they had a good shot at the title. The Mustangs had a slow start getting down early by a score of 14-4. A solid defensive 2nd quarter brought the Lady Mustangs back in the game trailing by only two at half time. The Red Devils started the 3rd quarter on a hot streak extending their lead to 31-19. With one-minute left in the quarter the Mustangs trailed by a score of 33-22. A couple quick baskets and the Mustangs pulled to within seven points starting the 4th quarter. The huge contingent of Heppner fans and students ignited the building with their support and cheers.

Starting the final quarter, the Mustangs' defense became a showcase of hustle and determination. The Red Devils struggled to score while the Lady Mustangs offense continued to roll. With less than two minutes to go, the girls pulled away with a four-point lead. With under a minute to play the Red Devil's top player Morgan Baird completed a three-point play to close the gap at 41-40. The Mustangs could not convert on a one and one free throw attempt which gave Coquille a chance. The girl's defense was up for the task, stopping Coquille thanks to an incredible block by Jenna McCullough. As the ball was loose on the floor, the Red Devils managed a questionable time out. This gave Coquille one final chance at victory. A 10-foot jumper by Coquille was no good and a mad scramble for the ball ensued. In the

## Heppner wrestlers compete at state tournament

Trevor Antonucci and Carson Brosnan competed in the OSAA State Wrestling Championships held at the Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Portland Feb. 22 and 23. The two-day tournament hosted all divisions of high school wrestling in the state of Oregon with a total of 952 male wrestlers. For the first time, the state championships had a separate division for female wrestlers where 56 women competed in fourteen classes.

Trevor started the day off in the 113-pound class, wrestling the number three seed from Reedsport, Christian Solomon and ended up losing a tough match 12-5. Carson wrestled the number two seed from Coquille, Brayden Clayburn, in the 160-pound class and lost by pin at the 3:59 minute mark. These losses put Trevor and Carson in the consolation bracket.

Next Trevor wrestled Tony Florez from Coquille and won by a pin in just

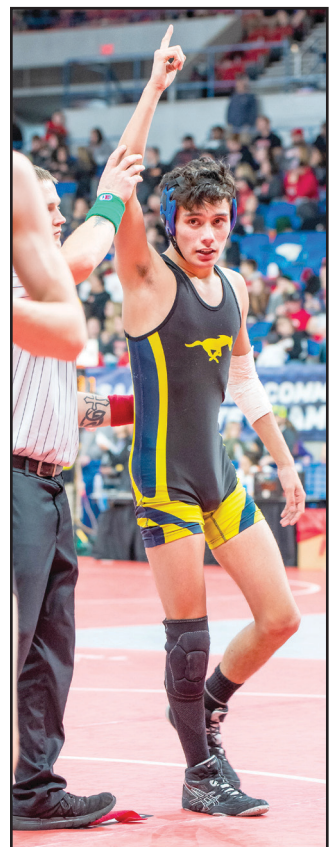
one minute. Carson then wrestled Hepner Forster of Vernonia, beating him. He and Hepner battled for almost four minutes before Carson pinned him.

Since both boys survived the first day, they would wrestle on Saturday in the consolation finals. Antonucci wrestled first against Shawn Long of Vernonia, pinning his opponent quickly in just one minute and 57 seconds. Brosnan then wrestled number four seed from Colton, Joseph Moore. The match went the full distance with Carson



Carson Brosnan is named the winner in his match.

winning by major decision, 14-4. These two victories put both Antonucci and Brosnan in the championship round for third and



Trevor Antonucci is awarded the win.



Above: Heppner Lady Mustangs, 2019 2A state champions. Below: Everyone celebrates the win.

end Madelyn Nichols secured the ball as the clock expired, giving Heppner the victory.

As the buzzer sounded, the team, coaches and fans rushed the court. The cheering was loud enough to be heard back in Heppner. The Lady Mustangs had secured the first girls basketball state championship in 33 years, and the school's 6th state title ever in all sports. The Mustangs leading scorer was Sydney Wilson with 22 points and 12 rebounds. Jacee Currin added 10 points, seven rebounds and five assists. Senior Jenna McCullough had four points, nine rebounds, two blocks and two assists. Madison Combe added three points and Madison Ashbeck two points. Madelyn Nichols and Marlee Mitchell combined to shut down Coquille's guard play, and freshman ZaBrena Masterson provided a spark off the bench securing two rebounds.

Following the victory, the trophy presentation and all tournament teams were



announced. Sophomore Sydney Wilson and senior Jacee Currin were both selected to the first team all-state tournament teams. The team then commenced with the net cutting ceremony and photo shoot.

"I am speechless," said Coach Wilson. A sentiment that was shared by many who would have never

believed this could happen this year. Coach added, "I knew if we played our game as a team and used the tools that we learned throughout the year, we would be competitive." The team motto for the year was: Trust your coaches, trust your players and trust yourselves. This proved to be the winning recipe.

## Mustangs previous state championship win - 1986



Coach Mike Royer, Missy Eubanks, Lana Reid, Cindy Stroeber, Penny Connor, Theresa Lindsay, Cathy Martin, Sandy Turner, Tina Davidson, Dana Reid, Missy Turner and Andrea Ball celebrate Fillies first place finish in state tournament. -Archive photo.

fourth place.

Trevor wrestled Denak Towne from Glide with the match going back and forth for the first two rounds. Then Dennak caught Antonucci and pinned him at the five-minute mark. Carson

wrestled Sebastian Garcin from Lowell, the number three seed, and lost by a pin at the three minute, 11 second mark. These losses put both boys in fourth place position.

A spokesperson told the

Gazette, "Antonucci and Brosnan represented Heppner with pride, hard work and perseverance and both came away with medals and many memories of a thrilling state championship experience."

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