

Mustangs finish fifth in state

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Caden George shoots during the game against the Pioneers. -Photo by Tylynn Cimmiyotti

saw the Mustangs only cut into the lead by a point and as the fourth quarter started the Mustangs trailed 31-28. The Mustangs turned up the defensive pressure in the final quarter and took the lead in the game 32-31 two minutes into the fourth. A three-pointer by Caden George took the lead to 35-31 and that score lasted until the two-minute mark. Mannahouse scored to cut the lead to 35-34 with only a minute to play. Heppner scored another basket and then made several clutch free throws at the end to seal the victory 41-34.

Caden George led the Mustangs in scoring with 14. He also had six rebounds in the game. Tucker Ashbeck had another double-double, scoring 11 points and 12 rebounds. David Cribbs scored seven points and had eight rebounds. Landon Mitchell finished with three points and Trevor Nichols had two points and six rebounds.

Next up for the Mustangs was a semifinal matchup with the defending 2A champions, the Western Christian Pioneers. Heppner trailed after the first quarter 10-7 and 23-16 at halftime. Heppner got two three-pointers from Nichols to pull to within one point twice early in the third quarter, and then a basket by Ashbeck gave the Mustangs the lead 26-25 with five minutes left in the quarter. A push by the Mustangs saw them lead 33-28 with 1:38 to play in the third. A pair of three-pointers by the Pioneers gave them 34-33 at the end of the quarter. The Mustangs outscored the Pioneers 17-11 in the



David Cribbs goes up against a Pioneer on his way to the net. -Photo by Tylynn Cimmiyotti

quarter. The fourth period went back and forth and saw the Pioneers take a six-point lead half way through the quarter. Heppner fought back to close the gap but couldn't get the score any closer and lost the game by the score of 43-38.

Ashbeck recorded another double-double for the team with 12 points and 11 rebounds. Cribbs and Nichols each scored nine points in the game, and Cribbs had five rebounds. Mitchell and Cameron Proudfoot each scored three points, with



Three Heppner boys accept the sportsmanship trophy on behalf of the Mustangs. L-R: Caden George, Tucker Ashbeck and David Cribbs. -Contributed photo

Mitchell also having four rebounds. George scored two points and had four assists for the team.

With a loss in the semi-final game, the Mustangs were set to play the Kennedy Trojans in the third/fifth-place game on Saturday. Kennedy came out firing and hitting their shots early in the contest. The Trojans led 20-5 after the first quarter and 37-17 at the half. The Heppner team never quit or gave up as they battled the entire game. Heppner trailed 51-26 at the end of three and



Tucker Ashbeck is blocked by a Pioneer player as he goes for the hoop. -Photo by Tylynn Cimmiyotti

the final score of the game was 65-30.

Cribbs led the team in scoring with 14. He also had six rebounds in the game. Ashbeck had eight points and hauled down 13 rebounds for the Mustangs. Mitchell scored five and Nichols finished with three.

It was a tremendous season for the team. They finished with a 21-7 record and a fifth-place trophy at the state tournament. They brought home the sportsmanship trophy and made Heppner High School

and the entire community very proud of them. Also recognized individually were Tucker Ashbeck and Landon Mitchell, who were both selected to the all-tournament second team. The award is voted on by the other coaches in the tournament.

The team will lose three seniors from this year's team—Tucker Ashbeck, David Cribbs and Trevor Nichols. They will certainly be missed on the court and in the locker room. The Mustang basketball team will return eight members of this team for next year.

County transit hits speed bump

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on additional requirements. "To apply, we're going to have to move forward with a plan, and what all that entails, I don't know yet," said Tucker.

Ducote said he saw a couple of options. First, the county could develop a transition plan over the next six months so it will be ready when this grant opportunity comes around again. Another option was that he and Tucker could try to put together a one-page summary of some ideas at this point.

"But it seems like a lot to spit-ball that at this meeting before even a second meeting" he said, "but if we had something we could submit, we could at least buy ourselves some more time to work on it further."

He said if that wasn't possible, he is also working on a congressional grant for the transit center, and he could switch that up and ask for the 90 percent from Congress.

"We can at least see what happens. It won't be a total dead-in-the-water moment," said Ducote.

Current plans for Morrow County transit include a fixed-route loop within Boardman and a fixed Heppner-Boardman connector. Connector routes to Hermiston, Pendleton and the Tri-Cities would be contracted with Kayak.

"With that, is there maybe an opportunity to go through Kayak and see what they have done for their green, zero-emissions, so we can mirror off of that?" asked Morrow County Commissioner Roy Drago.

Tucker said he could reach out to Kayak for that information.

Drago also asked if the Heppner-Boardman connector would need to have a bus at both ends, because an electric bus might not be able to make it both ways on a single charge.

"If you could use that against the low emissions, zero emissions, and maybe take it to a low emission with a diesel hybrid?" Drago asked.

Tucker said that had been part of the discussion between he and Ducote, and that he would love to test an electric bus on that route.

"Because nor do I believe it would make it," Tucker said. "And we're talking about three to four times a day, making that circle. What is the feasibility and how effective is that?"

"And I'm just hoping we can use that as leverage, getting away from a no-emission to a low-emission," replied Drago.

After some discussion, the board voted unanimously to have Tucker and Ducote proceed with the application they had with an addendum to fulfill the additional emissions-plan requirement.

"I personally would be comfortable with approving what's here and you guys supplementing with whatever you think meets the requirements for your application to be even looked at," said Morrow County Commissioner Jeff Wenzholz. "That's my take-away; if you don't have something, they're just going to round file it."

The board also voted to have Ducote move forward with a grant application for Congressional funds for the transit project.

Also on the topic of transit, the board of commissioners approved an

easement request by the city of Boardman for land owned by the county. The county purchased the Boardman lots, located on Columbia Ave., for The Loop transit facility project discussed earlier in the meeting.

The city is requesting an easement for sidewalk construction along Columbia. The City of Boardman had previously approached the board about the easement, but there was concern over whether the city's plans would mesh with the county's plans for the property.

Tucker and former transit manager Katie Imes met with the City of Boardman regarding the proposed easement on lots 300 and 400 and Tucker said they reached an agreement.

"After we were all able to sit down in a room and look at the maps, look at the overlay, talk with the planner about how our construction project would impact that area," Tucker said, "we determined that the sidewalk construction project would be beneficial to both the city and public transit construction."

Tucker did say they had further discussion on the access, because the city's plans had requirements that would not necessarily be possible for the way the easement was written. A new access was drafted, and Morrow County Counsel Justin Nelson has already looked it over.

The board voted unanimously to go with the recommendation and approve the easement.

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Junior high wrestlers end season strong

Martin and Tarvin place second at regionals



Irellynn Tarvin tries to break the hold of opponent.

The Heppner junior high wrestlers finished their season strong at the 2023 Eastern Oregon Middle School Regional Championship at Riverside High School March 4. Lady Mustangs Zariah Martin and Irellynn Tarvin both excelled, securing second place in their weight classes.

Zariah Martin, who wrestled in the 110 girls weight bracket, received a bye in her round one and quarterfinal rounds. She won by fall over Reyna Miranda of Nyssa in a semifinal match that lasted less than a minute, before losing by fall to Avrey Robinson of La Grande in a hard-fought final match.

Wrestling in the 160-pound girls bracket was Irellynn Tarvin. She lost her round one match by fall to Kate Norton of Baker, but rallied to win by fall over Hazel Nuxall of Joseph and Marely Diaz-Ureta of Milton Freewater in two quick rounds to secure



Shane Angelikas prepares to spar with Dante Martinez of The Dalles

her second-place slot.

Also wrestling for the Mustang girls were Emillia Cavan-Harris at 125 pounds and Laila Jones at 220 pounds. Cavan-Harris made it to the consolation semifinals before losing by major decision to Averi Fisher of Echo. Jones received a bye on her first two consolation rounds before falling in the consolation semifinals to Grace Aufdermauer of Umatilla.

In the boys' side of the regional tournament, Heppner was represented by several strong junior high wrestlers but fell short of a spot on the podium.

Kayden Hudson, 95 pounds, lost his quarterfinal match but made it to consolation round three before losing by decision to Sebastian Tejada Garza of Hermiston.

Lincoln Ellsworth, 102 pounds, lost championship round one in sudden victory but then scorched his way



Laila Jones locks up with opponent to start the match.

through the consolation rounds before losing by decision to Kallen Blakely of La Grande in the consolation semifinals.

Shane Angelakis, 175 pounds, made it through the quarterfinal match before losing by fall in the semifinal and by sudden victory to Dante Martinez of The Dalles in the consolation semifinal round.

Elijah Quilter, 195 pounds, lost his round one match but then wrestled his way through the consolation rounds before losing by fall to Jaime Zarco-Ramirez of Echo in the consolation semifinal.

Also wrestling for Heppner were Brody McDaniel and Quaid Jensen, both in the 125-pound bracket; Joe McMasters at 140 pounds; Haden Cimmiyotti at 150 pounds; Mason Seitz at 160 pounds; Kooper Miller at 195 pounds; and Tyler Rice at 220 pounds.