

# Bulldog boys looking to improve after tourney losses

BY SAM BARBEE  
HERMISTON HERALD

As the Hermiston boys basketball team exits the Barlow Tournament in Portland Tuesday, the Bulldogs feel they have taken two steps forward then one step back.

"I thought the first two days we played well, we competed," Hermiston coach Jake McElligott said. "I thought we got over some things."

A recent focus of his has been players getting the ball inside, working the offense inside and out and getting open perimeter looks for the likes of Dillon Zimmerly, Chase Knutz and others.

Unfortunately, the Bulldog offense at the Barlow Tournament had players rushing early perimeter shots and not dumping the ball into capable post scorers Keegan Crafton and Trey Neal.

Against Barlow, the Bulldogs battled a tall front line and came up short, losing 59-43. The next day, Crafton had a good game against Thurston, netting 13 points and numerous rebounds in a 53-49 win. Neal was drawing double teams and freeing up 3-pointers for Zimmerly and Knutz.

"It was kind of the team we've seen flashes of this summer and a team we ex-

pected to be disciplined, take good shots, good back-line defense, putting ourselves in positions to be successful," McElligott said. "(Before), we didn't understand individually what we could do and could not do."

Then, against Sunset in the finale, they went away from that strategy and lost big, 63-39.

"I thought we took a step back, a little short-handed," the first-year coach said. "I'm not an excuses guy. We just didn't play very well."

He said the defense was rotating slowly without communication. The offense was out-of-sync, taking quick perimeter shots, maybe a little tired due to a couple guys missing from the lineup.

Knutz, Crafton, Neal and Landon Gammell are still not up to speed after starting the season late from football season. McElligott said they've been working their way into basketball shape for the last few weeks, but are still a little behind. Couple that with some flu and bronchitis rolling through the program, and depth suddenly became an issue with three games in three days.

"It's just about getting them into shape and main-

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# Hermiston girls keep rolling

BY SAM BARBEE  
HERMISTON HERALD

The Hermiston girls basketball team has put its two early-season losses in the rear view mirror and have never looked back.

Winners of nine-straight, the Lady Bulldogs are fresh off claiming four games in a four-day tournament in Lake Oswego that ended with a happy trophy presentation, Tuesday. Af-

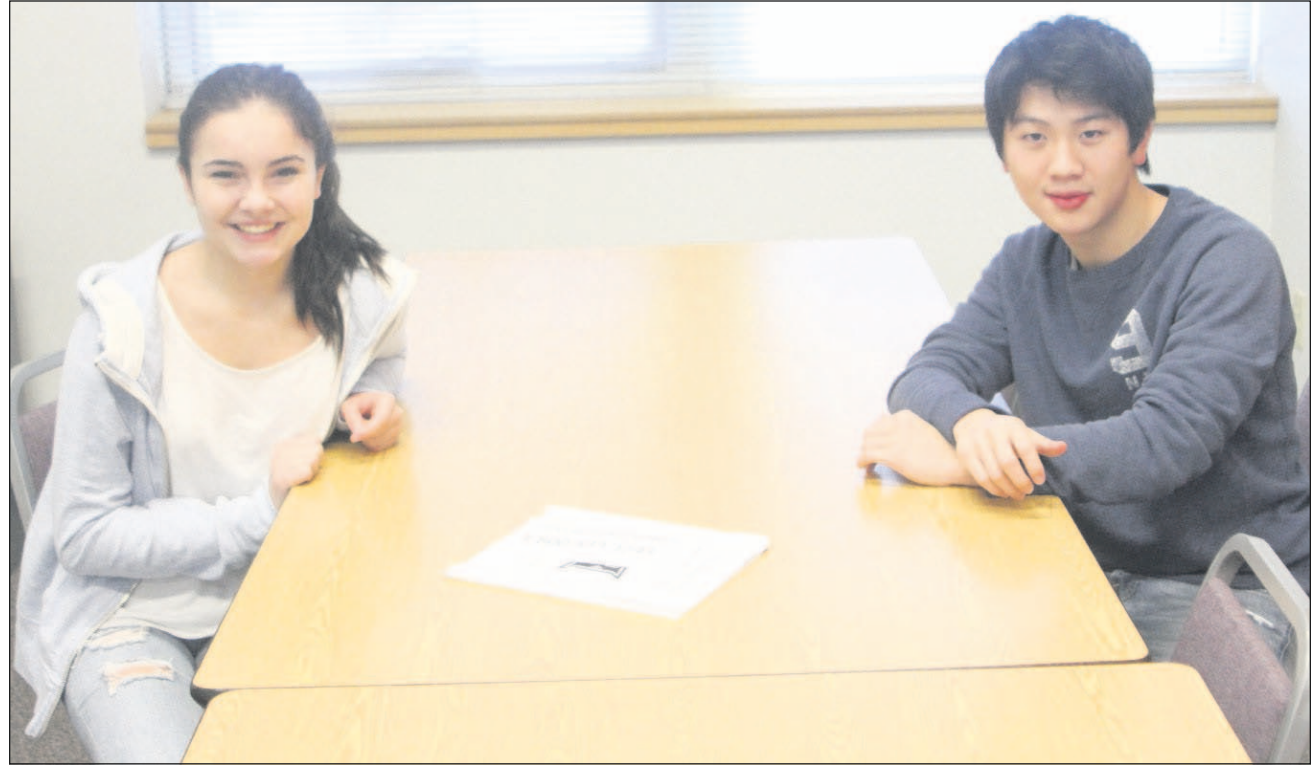
ter two years of losing in the finals of the Nike Interstate Tournament presented by Les Schwab in Lake Oswego, the Lady Bulldogs finally pulled it off, downing Centennial 43-37 in the final.

"I guess the third time's a charm," Hermiston coach Steve Hoffert said. "Even getting to the finals the last two years was an accomplishment. You always want to win it. We played better in the finals than we had in

past years. It is really gratifying for the girls to play that hard and that well and beat some quality teams."

The consistency issues that plagued the Lady Bulldogs in the early-season losses against Kamiakin and Beaverton — and even some early-season wins — have disappeared. They can now sustain runs on both ends of the floor and have stopped

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SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Hermiston High School's two foreign exchange students, Austria's Franciska Katterbauer (left) and Italy's Nick Wang played volleyball and soccer, respectively, are swimming in the winter and will play tennis and run track in the spring.

## American sports give exchange students new perspective

BY SAM BARBEE  
HERMISTON HERALD

Before exchange students Franziska Katterbauer and Nick Wang came to the United States, they thought they had the United States pegged.

"Lazy," Katterbauer said, smiling. "Sometimes it fits. I was like, 'Yeah, I'm lazy, too. I think I'll fit in great.'"

When they got here, however, they were both surprised by the exact opposite when they competed

in Hermiston High School athletics.

Katterbauer played volleyball in the fall, is swimming in the winter and will play tennis in the spring, and Wang played soccer, is currently swimming and will run track. They said

they were not necessarily taken aback, but were surprised at their busy schedules.

In Austria, Katterbauer played a little volleyball, but only for fun. She said

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# Echo boys headed on the right track



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Echo's Michael Thompson (23) gets a layup to go while defended by Stanfield's Dylan Grogan (22), Milan Davchevski (42) and Erik Galarza in the team's nonleague game in December. Thompson had 27 points.

BY SAM BARBEE  
HERMISTON HERALD

It's not very often a team loses four seniors and improves. In the Echo boys basketball team's case, that is not a reflection of the four departed players from the 2013-14 squad but an indication of the Cougars' youth last year.

Seven of the twelve players were freshmen or sophomores last year, and the youth really showed.

With another year's worth of varsity experience now under their belts, the Echo Cougars look to improve on last year's disappointing ninth place finish in the Big Sky League.

"They definitely learned from last year," head coach Ben Campbell said. "They learned a lot of the issues they dealt with last year didn't need to be dealt with, and we're not doing that this year. They're dealing with basketball things."

One of thing that is no longer a problem is having a consistent roster. Campbell said he's had the same roster for every game so

far this season, something he didn't have last year.

"We've had the same group from start to finish, and they're just now starting to get to where they play well together," he said.

With that continuity, the Cougars have had significantly more success than last year. As of Tuesday, they are 4-5 overall, 1-1 in the Old Oregon League, and have almost matched their win total of five from last season.

Campbell said the progress is obvious. "We're making good progress," he said. "I feel really confident with where we're at right now compared to where we were last year at this point. We still have a lot of things we need to work on, but I feel pretty good about ... league."

The most obvious point of improvement is Echo's team scoring. Last season, the Cougars averaged a dismal 38 points in 21 games. They were outscored by 400 and lost by 68 to Irrigon.

This year, things are different. The Cougars haven't scored fewer than 35 points and haven't scored fewer than 50 in their

last five games. The points per game average is up to 53, and the wins are up as a result.

The main problem for Echo is defense. Three of the Cougars' five losses came in games where they allowed more than 60 points. Echo doesn't have a lot of size and has to focus on defensive rotations and backside help to keep offenses out of the paint. So far, the Cougars have struggled with rotations.

"They're starting to see where the rotations need to be," Campbell said. "We're just a step behind. As soon as we can start to react to it, things are gonna change quite a bit."

In a new league, Echo finds itself as an unknown. That may end up being an advantage, as the best record in the new OOL is just 4-4. Pine Eagle is 3-5 but 2-0 in league and sits on top with a sub-.500 record.

Campbell, though, likes where his team sits at this point.

"We're right where we want to be," he said. "Hopefully we peak in mid-January and go from there."

## GO SEE IT

### Saturday, January 3

#### Boys Basketball

Hermiston @ Kennewick, 7:30 p.m.  
Echo vs. Tri-Cities Prep, TBA.

#### Girls Basketball

Hermiston @ Kennewick, 5:45 p.m.  
Stanfield vs. Baker, 5:30 p.m.  
Echo vs. Tri-Cities Prep, TBA.

#### Wrestling

Hermiston @ Rollie Lane Tournament @ Nampa, Idaho, 9 a.m.  
Echo/Stanfield @ Joseph Tournament, 10 a.m.

### Sunday, January 4

No events scheduled

### Monday, January 5

No events scheduled

### Tuesday, January 6

#### Boys Basketball

Hermiston vs. La Grande, 7 p.m.  
Stanfield vs. Riverside, 7:30 p.m.

#### Girls Basketball

Hermiston @ La Grande, 7 p.m.  
Stanfield vs. Riverside, 6 p.m.

### Wednesday, January 7

No events scheduled

# Echo girls moving up 1A ranks

BY SAM BARBEE  
HERMISTON HERALD

The Echo girls basketball team are setting itself up for a couple of 1A Old Oregon League showdowns with Nixyaawii this month and next.

Cougar wins against Nixyaawii will be an important factor in whether they are crowned the OOL girls basketball league champ. So far, the Cougars are 10-1, and, after winning their first two games by a combined eight points, they haven't won by fewer than 13 points.

"My varsity squad is playing so well together as a unit," head coach JD Brazil said. "(Recently) at practice we had one of those 'Ah-ha' moments where it just kind of clicked and you knew you were seeing something. You knew you were watching a team that was really hitting right now and just looking sharp."

Last year ended rather disappointingly for the Cougars.

They got out to a slow start but won seven straight games as they rode into the playoffs, where they lost to Portland Lutheran 48-46 in the first round of the state tournament. They closed with a record of 18-8 on the year but weren't satisfied with how they finished.

The Cougars' efforts this season, including their 8-0 start, put them in good position to improve on last year.

The Cougars have already won two league games, over Helix and Pine Eagle, and currently sit atop the Old Oregon League with Powder Valley and Nixyaawii. Powder Valley is also 2-0 and Nixyaawii is 1-0, although Echo's overall record is better than both those clubs. Powder Valley sits at 6-4 with Nixy at 7-3.

Echo wraps up non-league play with a tilt against Tri-Cities Prep at 4 p.m. today before league play starts in earnest, and Jan. 10 and Feb. 6 matchups against the Golden Ea-



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Echo's Elizabeth McCarty (23) grabs a rebound over Arlington's Bethany Tutuvanu during the second half of the Cougars' 58-34 win over the Honkers on Monday in Echo.

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