

## Seahawks unite a region

The Seattle Seahawks' epic 29-22 win over the Green Bay Packers in Sunday's NFC Championship game united the Pacific Northwest under a common blue-and-green banner that waved more emphatically than ever after one of the most thrilling comebacks in NFL playoff history.

Not to insert too much of what I thought about the game, but as soon as the Seahawks scored their second touchdown of the game to make the score 19-14, it was over. I knew that from The Dalles, where I was in my drive from Longview to Hermiston.

When Seattle finally won on Russel Wilson's touchdown pass to Jermaine Kearse, I got two texts, one from a Seahawks-loving friend, and one from my dad.

One read: "Dude." One word. It was my friend, and he was obviously shocked. He usually has more to say than just merely "Dude," so the one-word message spoke volumes.

My dad told me they were shooting off fireworks in Longview. It was the daytime. Fireworks are best at night, when the controlled explosions can be seen for miles, but the exciting game and the euphoria of the Seahawks returning to the Super Bowl lit the fuse to those fireworks.

People in Seattle lit off fireworks, too. It was an extremely festive occasion. It felt like V-E Day and the war in Europe had just ended. People were absolutely euphoric.

Here's something funny, though.

A number, not many, but a number of people left Century Link Stadium with Seattle down 19-7. Some left after Wilson's fourth interception of the day. That wouldn't be a terrible decision if re-entry were allowed at Century Link.

It's not, and people were forced to watch the stadium explode through 8-foot-tall glass windows. They are forced to remember that they could have been a part of the greatest comeback in Seahawks' history, but they forewent that place in history because they wanted to beat traffic.

It's a cautionary tale: Don't leave games early.

But I digress.

The Seahawks have given the Pacific Northwest something to cling to, something to



SAM BARBEE  
FROM THE SIDELINES  
Sports reporter

gather around, something that connect people from Seattle to Medford, from Brookings, Oregon, to Idaho.

Not everyone in that massive geographical area is a Seahawks fan, but the Seahawks are an obvious common denominator that connect people from all over the region.

College sports cannot do the same thing. Those are almost tragically regional. We, as a region, are separated by collegiate alliances that divide Washington and Oregon into halves. Under the blue and green of the Seahawks, Oregon and Washington are one. It's Seahawks country.

I can only imagine what it was like in Seattle Sunday. I can only imagine what it was like anywhere because I was in my car, in the rain, with not too many folks around me on the road. But I could feel the energy. I felt like the Pacific Northwest came together for a collective roar. They were one.

And that is why sports are special. That's why I love them so much. They bring people together because of some guys running around on a field. It's magical.

Commercials all throughout the game from Northwest-based companies talked about supporting the Seahawks in their bid to return to the Super Bowl. Many people felt included in the endeavor and pointed to a franchise that seemingly goes the extra mile to make its fans feel as such.

I disagree. It's the game that brings people together. Seahawks fans didn't start as Seahawks fans because Doug Baldwin was making sandwiches at a Seattle-area Subway last week. They're fans because they love what the team does in pads on Sundays.

It's sports, but it's so much more than that. It's community. It's passion. It's love. It's nerves. It's victory. It's defeat. It's hope. It's despair. And it's all done collectively.

That's sports.

— Sam Barbee is the sports reporter for the *Hermiston Herald*. He can be reached at sbarbee@hermistonherald.com

## Umatilla girls crush Stanfield

BY SAM BARBEE  
HERMISTON HERALD

The Umatilla girls basketball team isn't the same team in January that it was in November, October and December.

Head coach Scott Bow drew up a different starting lineup and different minute allocations, and a 77-17 win over Stanfield Tuesday night in Umatilla proved he pushed the right buttons and made the right changes.

"We talked about this before the game (Tuesday)," Bow said. "We needed a change. I made a change. The girls made a change. We had to do something different. I wanted the girls back I had in November, who were working hard in practice and getting after it in games. We lost that drive a little bit."

Kelly Barajas and Berenice Chavez, usually bench contributors, started for the Vikings Tuesday and were solid contributors. Barajas put up 12 points, and Chavez scored four.

"Everyone stepped up," Bow said. "There was no 'I.' It was all 'we.'"

Aleesha Watson, who scored 20

points, and Cassandra Galbraith, who had 14, led the way for the Vikings, and Sidney Webb added 10 to round out the double-figure scorers.

"We got shell-shocked the first few minutes, and then we got even more shell-shocked," Stanfield head coach Daniel Sharp said about his team's loss.

The Tigers employed a press game that did create a bit of havoc for Umatilla, but the Vikings led 27-1 after the first quarter and cruised to the finish.

Sharp says a game like Tuesday's is a good barometer of where his team hopes to be in the future.

"It's gonna take a lot of work in the offseason and lot of other stuff," Sharp said.

The Stanfield girls next play at Culver, beginning at 4:30 p.m. Saturday. Umatilla resumes league play against Nyssa at 4 p.m. Saturday at home.

SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Umatilla's Aleesha Watson (40) looks to score against Stanfield's Maddie Griffin during the second half of Umatilla's 77-17 win Tuesday night in Umatilla.



## Bulldogs now top-ranked in state after win over La Salle



EO MEDIA GROUP FILE PHOTO

Hermiston's Jansen Edmiston shoots the ball over Sunnyside's Natalia Trevino in the Bulldogs' 55-49 loss to the Grizzlies Jan. 13 in Hermiston. The loss spurred the girls into action when they defeated La Salle Friday. The Bulldogs enter league play this week.

### Big win over La Salle propels Bulldogs into CRC play

SAM BARBEE  
HERMISTON HERALD

In December, Hermiston girls basketball coach Steve Hoffert pointed to one game on the non-league slate that was important to his team: a trip to Portland to take on the La Salle Prep Falcons.

Prior to Friday, the Falcons were 12-0, the top-ranked 5A girls team in the state, and had essentially cruised through their schedule before hosting the Bulldogs, winners of 12 of 13 games.

The Bulldogs headed home the victors Friday night after topping the Falcons 61-57 and taking the No. 1 spot for themselves. It was a program-building win.

"It was big to see the girls bounce back after Tuesday's loss and go into La Salle and get the win," Hoffert said. "It was very fun to watch them and gratifying as a coach to see them play like they did."

Other than giving the Bulldogs the top spot in the state, the win completes a non-conference slate that was one of the toughest in 5A girls basketball. The Bulldogs' three losses were to strong Kamiakin, Beaverton and Sunnyside teams, which have a combined record of 33-7. The Bulldogs, however, have wins over traditional Oregon powers in Springfield and Willamette, in addition to the big win over the previously top-ranked Falcons.

"Wins and losses when the season started aren't what you predict," Hoffert said. "We got 12 big wins and ... what I think of our 15 games — 14 quality games. Kennewick was over quickly. We got exactly what I expected out of Beaverton all the way to La Salle. It's important to build early, win early and build confidence heading into league."

The Bulldogs know how to win close and extended games. In late December, Hermiston used two overtimes to down Iolani from Oahu, Hawaii, at the Nike Interstate Shootout in Lake

SEE BULLDOGS/A7

## Hermiston wrestlers fare well in Redmond

EO MEDIA GROUP

The state's first major team tournament of the season lent prosperity for the Hermiston Bulldogs.

Friday, Hermiston advanced from pool play with first- or second-place finishes at the Oregon Wrestling Classic at Deschutes County Fairgrounds.

The three-time reigning Class 5A champ Bulldogs re-assumed their tournament dominance sweeping their four-team pool with three lopsided dual victories.

Hermiston advanced to

the championship dual on Saturday against Hillsboro but came up short, 32-30, in a meet that came down to the final match.

Six Hermiston wrestlers opened Friday's group play with undefeated 3-0 records. Andy Wagner, CJ Hendon, Brock McDonough, Bob Coleman, Jesse Rodelo and Sam Colbray all swept competition Friday.

The Bulldogs put down Mountain View (52-19), St. Helens (44-18) and Silverton (64-9) to earn the group victory. On Saturday, Hermiston faced off against

Crater and Hillsboro in the semi-finals and finals. The Bulldogs dominated Crater 52-27 but ran up against a good Hillsboro team in the championship dual.

Andy Wagner (124), AJ Tuia (136), John-Henry Line (186) and Sam Colbray (220) all pinned their Hillsboro opponents, with Colbray's coming 29 seconds into the first round. Joey Gutierrez also topped his Spartan opponent in the 142-pound class 4-1, and Brock McDonough (164) won 10-4.

It was a good test for the Bulldogs, as Hillsboro

placed third at state in the 6A division last year and has dropped down to 5A for this season.

Wagner and Colbray each finished the weekend undefeated, with Wagner going 5-0 and Colbray 3-0. Line and McDonough each had one loss in the tournament. Colbray spent the least amount of time on the mat, using just 3 minutes, 5 seconds to record three pins.

Hermiston hosts The Dalles on Thursday in the Bulldogs' first CRC dual of the season. Matches begin at 7 p.m.

### SPORTS IN BRIEF

#### Echo Pasture Golf event next month

The Echo Pasture Golf tournament is slated from 8 a.m. to dark Feb. 15 at a location to be determined in Echo. The Echo Hills Golf Course will provide clubs and balls, and each hole will be made of PVC pipe surrounded by mowed grass. There will be nine holes, and a 10th will include prizes. It costs \$15 per person, and proceeds go to support the Echo girls basketball team. Call Phillip, 541-376-5525, for more information.

#### Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife looking for volunteers

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is looking for volunteers to serve on regional advisory committees as hunter or landowner representatives.

The position includes assisting in opening hunting land and improving wildlife habitats in the representative's given region. Other duties include attending up to four meetings per year to review Access and Habitat Program projects and possibly con-

duct other council business. Volunteers must be able to travel between several communities and should be willing to work cooperatively with landowners, sports groups, ODFW staff and representatives of other government agencies to facilitate the A&H.

People with interest and experience in outdoors conservation are encouraged to apply for one of two slots in the northeast region, which includes Umatilla County, at [http://www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/AH/get\\_involved.asp](http://www.dfw.state.or.us/lands/AH/get_involved.asp). The application period ends Feb. 13.

### GO SEE IT

#### Wednesday, January 21

No events scheduled

#### Thursday, January 22

##### Wrestling

Hermiston vs. The Dalles, 7 p.m.

#### Friday, January 23

##### Wrestling

Hermiston @ Reser's Tournament of Champions @ Liberty, 9 a.m.

##### Girls Basketball

Hermiston vs. The Dalles, 7 p.m.  
Stanfield @ Culver, 4:30 p.m.

##### Boys Basketball

Hermiston @ The Dalles, 7 p.m.  
Stanfield @ Culver, 6 p.m.

#### Saturday, January 24

##### Wrestling

Hermiston @ Reser's Tournament of Champions @ Liberty, 9 a.m.

##### Swimming

Hermiston @ Hood River, 11 a.m.

##### Girls Basketball

Umatilla vs. Nyssa, 4 p.m.  
Echo @ Helix, 4 p.m.  
Stanfield vs. Irrigon, 4 p.m.

##### Boys Basketball

Umatilla vs. Nyssa, 5 p.m.  
Echo @ Helix, 5:30 p.m.  
Stanfield vs. Irrigon, 5:30 p.m.