

SPORTS

Bulldogs pound The Dalles

Wrestlers go undefeated on the mat, win 77-6

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

Despite a score that might indicate Hermiston cruised to an easy Columbia River Conference dual meet wrestling win over The Dalles Thursday, the Bulldogs had to fight and claw for each win.

Assistant coach Doug Tovey, filling in for Shaun Williams who was away at a conference, said wrestlers, including Sam Colbray and Liam Tarvin, have been dealing with some illnesses, mostly colds. Despite that, Tovey said the energy level was up and the focus good, as the Bulldogs topped the Riverhawks 77-6.

Hermiston had two first-time varsity grapplers win in sophomore Robert Crane and freshman Jake Palmer.

“I thought some of our young kids competed well,” Tovey said. “The Dalles is a little shorthanded, but they have some pretty good kids, some talented kids. Kids like Robert Crane — you’re a young kid, you’re wrestling up a weight, and he looked pretty good, and Jake Palmer, who’s a freshman — you’re out-gunned, and you do what you need to win.”

At 152 pounds, Palmer faced junior Mitchell Waters and held off a furious



Hermiston’s Sam Colbray (right) probes for an advantage against The Dalles’ third-ranked Joe Linebarger during a 220-pound Columbia River Conference match Thursday in Hermiston. Colbray won 3-2, and the Bulldogs won 77-6.

SAM BARBEE PHOTO

third-round charge by The Dalles’ junior and won 9-7. Up 7-5 heading into that final round, Palmer was taken down with about a minute left to cut the match score to 8-7, but Waters let him up immediately in an effort to score another two points and was unable to drop Palmer again.

A match before Palmer, Crane took on senior Colton Lee. Crane dominated, winning by techni-

cal fall in the third round. Crane had three near falls — one in the first round and two in the second — and secured the technical fall before the minute mark in the final period.

“For those guys, that was a good thing,” Tovey said.

The Bulldogs won each match. The only points garnered by The Dalles came by a double-forfeit at 106 because Hermiston’s wrestler wasn’t there. Other than

that, Hermiston had five pins, four coming consecutively.

Colbray continued his march through the 5A ranks this season, topping the No. 3 wrestler in the state, Joe Linebarger, 3-2.

Wrestling at 220 pounds, Colbray got a takedown in the first round and an escape in the third to lead 3-0, but a last second takedown by Linebarger brought the count to 3-2.

Colbray admitted he didn’t push himself to the brink against Linebarger, and he was just trying to “survive” the match.

“Just winning here against a good guy who’s No. 3 at 220, not being full speed (is good),” Colbray said. “I know that, in my mind, if I had to pull off the match, I could wrestle there at the end. It’s just a little bit of being cautious and not wrestling to my full potential.”

Hermiston wrestling keeps grinding through season

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

Hermiston’s wrestling season, on paper, has been a breeze.

The Bulldogs rolled through the Rollie Lane Tournament in Idaho and the Gut Check Challenge in Olympia, Wash.

Bob Coleman, Sam Colbray and Andy Wagner have all won tournaments in January, and the Bulldogs have been near perfect in dual meets this year, losing just the championship dual at the Oregon Wrestling Classic last week.

As good on paper as the Bulldogs have been, assistant coach Doug Tovey is happy they’ve done as well as they have.

“It is an absolute grinder,” Tovey said of Hermiston’s January. “This is the fourth week in a row that we’ve left Thursday night (for a tournament). We go Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Thursday, Friday, Saturday. So we are sick. We’re a little bit nicked. We got some injuries and whatnot. We build the schedule that way on purpose because we think that tests us.”

Since the Tri-State Tournament in December, Hermiston has essentially dominated its competition. Colbray is 21-0. Coleman is 19-4. Liam Tarvin is 15-4. Wagner is 23-6.

“As a team, we’re battling,” Colbray said. “Close matches here and there. That’s because we’re new. Other than that, there’s nothing our team can’t do. It’s just little mistakes, and when we fix those, it’s not

like there are big holes — guys not quick enough, fast enough. Once we just fix the little mistakes, we’ll be fine and be (going) full-speed by state,”

As a two-time defending state and national champion, Colbray has had a target on his back this season. He’s dealt with the spotlight well, as only two of his 21 matches were decided by one point.

He has been sick, though; his match against The Dalles’ Joe Linebarger Thursday was one Colbray said he merely “survived,” but he’s still happy with how his winter has gone, thus far.

“(It’s been) a pretty solid season (individually),” Colbray said. “(I’ve) pinned a lot of kids (and) done what I need to for the team and bring them points. I’ve won the same big tournaments I did last year and freshman year. I’m on a roll.”

Colbray isn’t the only guy who’s sick, though. Tarvin was down to 111.7 pounds last week after a bout of strep throat. Tovey said he “literally” walked out of the hotel room at the Oregon Wrestling Classic and went down to the mat “and got whipped” without any real training in the 117-pound bracket.

Tovey said that with these illnesses and good recent success, perhaps it’s easy to shut down a bit.

“I think, sometimes, when you’ve won for so long, it’s hard to get the energy to win a big dual that way,” Tovey said of illnesses at the Oregon



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Hermiston sophomore Bob Coleman (left) looks for control just after getting his opponent, The Dalles’ Jacob Schadt, to the ground during a 5A Columbia River Conference dual on Thursday. Coleman earned a pin at the 5:44 mark.

Wrestling Classic. “Hillsboro was pretty good, (but) it just didn’t seem like we had the energy, and we can blame it on being sick and those kinds of things ... but really I think it’s more that we’re so used to winning, that it’s hard to get jacked

up and excited, and that kind of cost us.”

Tovey later said maybe that championship dual loss reinvigorated the Bulldogs and gave them new energy. What Hermiston really has right now is depth. Tovey said that the Bulldogs brought a

full complement of 14 wrestlers — two in all 14 weights — to the OWC, the first time in Tovey’s three years in Hermiston they’ve done that.

He said the depth in the program is as good as he’s seen, and it’s setting up the Bulldogs to be as

good — or better than — some recent Hermiston teams.

“We’re really close to being really good,” Tovey said. “So those JV kids are probably better than we’ve ever had before. We’re pretty excited about that.”

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Then they won 15 and then 21 when they missed a state title by a basket. The next year they won 26 games and the state title. The rapid rise of Irrigon basketball isn’t lost on Stanfield.

“Irrigon used to be a doormat in our league,” Braithwaite said. “Now they’re on top, so we want to get up there, too, and show them that we belong

there, too.”

Both teams are also coming in with good momentum. Stanfield’s last two wins have been quality ones. On their home floor last week, and without the suspended Dylan Grogan, the Tigers used a huge third quarter to race past Heppner. Tuesday, they held off an attacking and hungry Umatilla team in Umatilla.

“The guys just kind of rallied (against Heppner),” Sharp said. “It was kind of ugly, and they just kind of

rallied. That was huge for those guys. It was kind of like, ‘Hey, we’re not a bad squad, even without our best player.’ There’s some confidence going into this game like, ‘We played with Heppner, (we have) our guy back.’ I just hope we play team basketball with Irrigon. You can’t go one-on-one. They have too many guys.”

Both Stanfield and Irrigon have similar styles and similar principles that dictate what they do on

the court. Neither team has great size — at 6-foot-3, Stanfield center Milan Davchevski will be the tallest player on the floor — but both teams move the ball around the perimeter quickly and both like to get into fast breaks and run. Both teams like to jump passing lanes, start those fast breaks and hopefully get layups on the other end.

For Stanfield, the key to the game is taking care of the ball, and not letting Irrigon get consecutive steals and

layups, which has helped the Knights win this season.

“I think the biggest thing for us is: Can we control our turnovers?” Sharp said. “When we’ve had a problem with them in the past, not necessarily bad games, but a bad quarter where we fall apart and turn the ball over a bunch, then we get into a deficit, and it’s hard to come back. So, I think the biggest thing is we can still play that way, but we have to play smart and not let them steamroll because

Irrigon capitalizes on that just so fast.”

To Sharp and his Tigers, today’s game is a mid-term exam, a barometer for where they are in the season at the end of January.

“I think the guys kind of have a perspective, there’s a race to the top of the league,” Sharp said. “It’s a game to see where we’re at. Where do we fit amongst those teams? We had Heppner here the other night. Now we have Irrigon to see where we’re at.”