

SPORTS

# Challenges hamper Bulldog swim team's potential

BY SAM BARBEE  
HERMISTON HERALD

On any given weekday, Hermiston swim team members board a bus to go to practice. They pack up their things, make plans to be picked up or dropped off and head out of town.

They go to the closest indoor pool in the area — in Pendleton.

“We have a very limited amount of time in the water,” Hermiston head coach Kevin Hamblin said. “We get here about 4:30 p.m. and have only an hour in the water. We have to share the pool for a half hour with Pendleton High School. Then we have the pool to ourselves for half an hour. Then the Pendleton Swim Association comes

in and practices at 5:30 p.m.”

The PSA pays for its pool time, so it gets priority, Hamblin said. A few years ago, Hermiston and Pendleton made an agreement that Hermiston can share the pool with the Buckaroo swim team so it gets in an hour of practice time. That's still a far cry from the other teams in the Columbia River Conference, however, who get upwards of two hours of pool time.

That puts the Bulldogs at a disadvantage against league competitors Hood River, The Dalles and Pendleton, which all have indoor pools.

In turn, Hermiston struggles to have swimmers qualify for the state meet.



There is some hope in finding a pool closer to home, however. A bond recently passed in the last voting cycle to build an \$11 million recreation center, with a pool, in Boardman.

“It's a shorter distance, but they'll prob-

ably charge,” Hamblin said.

The new problem, then, is how the Hermiston swim team will afford to play for pool time. All the fundraising Hamblin's program goes toward travel expenses, which are numerous as

Hermiston has to travel up and down the Columbia River to attend meets and practice. This season, the Bulldogs had meets in Pendleton, Hood River, The Dalles and Baker City. Travel expenses for the Bulldog swimmers top out at about \$5,000, \$4,000 of which they raise themselves. Having to pay a pool fee would make things tougher for the cash-strapped team.

In the mean time, the Hermiston swimmers, including freshman Sydney Tovey and junior Jacob Snell, are preparing for their district meet Saturday in Hood River.

Tovey, the daughter of Hermiston assistant wrestling coach Doug Tovey, swims the 100- and 200-meter freestyle events. She is one of just

a few of Bulldog swimmers who swam growing up, participating in Pendleton and the PSA.

“She's actually probably the most-experienced swimmer,” Hamblin said.

Snell is far less experienced. While he only began swimming competitively two years ago, he has grown to 6 feet 4 inches tall this season and is showing great promise and potential, Hamblin said.

He said he doesn't anticipate Tovey will qualify for state this season but he thinks she has a really good chance these next few years. Hamblin said Snell's recent growth spurt has done wonders for his technique. “We just need to get him in a pool year round,” he said.

# Bulldogs run away with tournament

EO MEDIA GROUP STAFF

Nearly every wrestler Hermiston put on the mat brought home a medal from the Oregon City Invitational on Saturday, allowing the Bulldogs to run away with the team title in the Bulldogs' last tournament of the regular season.

Hermiston had 19 wrestlers place in the top five, including four champions, and scored 304 team points to easily hold off Hood River Valley in second place with 223.5.

Pendleton finished sixth at the nine-team event with 123.5 points, two champs and five top-five placers.

Hermiston's champions were Brock McDonough (160 pounds), Bob Coleman (170), John-Henry Line (182) and Jesse Rodelo (220). Two-time state champ Sam Colbray did not wrestle.

McDonough beat teammate Julio Leiva 5-3 in the championship bout,

and Leiva was one of three Bulldogs to earn silver. Robert Rodriguez (106) and Beau Blake (220) were the other two.

Coleman won his title with a 16-5 major decision over Oregon City's Ethan Holt. In the semifinals, he defeated Pendleton's Terrel Platt 6-1 in a rematch of Thursday's overtime bout, also won by Coleman.

Line beat Hood River Valley's Steven Swafford 7-0 in his title match, and

Rodelo earned gold by a 6-2 margin over Oregon City's Mack Civil. Placing third for Hermiston were: Jack Meads (113), Robert Crane (138), Mitchell Lincoln (182) and Brian Gutierrez (195). Fourth-place Bulldogs were: CJ Hendon (132), Jacob Dodge (145), Devin Bosner (152) and Kenny Bevan (170). Wade Fitzpatrick (126), Joey Gutierrez (138) and Emilio Landin (285) placed fifth for Hermiston.

# Umatilla girls snap recent losing streak

UMATILLA 36,  
NYSSA 31

		POWDER VALLEY 67, ECHO 45	
EHS (16-6)	8	8	
14	15	—	—
45			
PV (12-8)	14	19	
10	24	—	
67			

At Nyssa, on the heels of two straight losses, the Vikings (17-5, 5-2 EOL) averted a third with a comeback road win over Nyssa (7-14, 2-5) Saturday.

Umatilla only managed 16 second-half points, but the defense was relentless, allowing just eight points to the host Bulldogs to snap the losing streak. Each loss came to top-ranked Vale.

Nyssa led by four after one quarter and three at the half. Umatilla outscored Nyssa 8-4 in the third and fourth periods.

No Viking reached double figures in the victory.

UMATILLA 36, NYSSA 31		
UMA (17-5)	10	8
8	—	36
NYS (7-14)	14	9
4	—	31

UMATILLA — M. Paz 0, K. Barajas 2, I. Campos 5, B. Campos 1, S. Webb 7, K. Galbraith 6, C. Dohman 8, A. Watson 7.  
NYSSA — J. Martinez 0, S. Hartley 3, M. Mitchell 0, B. Arredondo 0, P. Hartley 4, B. Ramirez 7, S. Jaspersen 0, M. Jensen 6, C. Lancaster 0, A. Hernandez 0, K. Hernandez 4, K. Hashagen 0.  
3-point field goals — UMA 1, NYS 2. Free throws — UMA 11-19, NYS 3-6. Fouls — UMA 10, NYS 15. Fouled out — B. Ramirez.

POWDER VALLEY  
67, ECHO 45

At North Powder, the Cougars (16-6, 8-3 OOL) started slow and were unable to recover in their second-straight Old Oregon League loss Saturday.

Paced by Samantha Kerns with 20 points and 11 rebounds, Powder Valley (12-8, 8-3) led 33-16 at halftime.

Erika Parks and Kelsey Ranger each scored 15 points to lead Echo, which finishes regular season play on Friday against Wallowa. With the loss, Echo and Powder Valley are tied for first place atop the OOL, a game ahead of Wallowa and a half game ahead of Nixyaawii.

ECHO — Erika Parks 15, Kelsey Ranger 15, E. McCarty 7, D. Tarvin 4, L. Cox 2, H. Reese 2, T. Swaggart, B. Srofe, L. Wiggins. 16-58 FG

POWDER VALLEY — Samantha Kerns 20, A. Feik 15, S. Stephens 10, H. Feik 10, S. Blair 6, T. Martin 4, M. Hufford 2, A. Jimenez, K. Williams, S. Sexton, T. Baker. 28-58 FG

3-point field goals — EHS 2-8, PV 0-4. Free throws — EHS 11-26, PV 11-13. Fouls — EHS 18, PV 18. Fouled out — McCarty (EHS), Stephens (PV).

Boys Basketball  
POWDER VALLEY  
64, ECHO 54

At North Powder, the Echo boys suffered their third-straight Old Oregon League loss to Powder Valley 64-54.

No further details were reported.

With one game left, against Wallowa, the Cougars (10-10, 6-5 OOL) are a game ahead of Joseph for second place in the OOL.

NYSSA 61,  
UMATILLA 41

At Nyssa, the Umatilla boys basketball team wasn't able to extend its three-game winning streak as Nyssa ran away from the Vikings 61-41.

No further details were reported.

With the loss, Umatilla (11-11, 5-2 EOL) is a game behind Nyssa (13-9, 6-1) for first place and is a game up on Vale for second place. Umatilla hosts Riverside at 7 p.m. Thursday in its penultimate game of the season.

# PREDICTIONS:

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to take, especially considering how the Tigers beat Heppner last time. Obviously it didn't affect them that much as they went on to pummel Pilot Rock 75-43 a couple days later, but those ones stick in your head as a player and as a coach, and it's not necessarily negative. I can promise you that Stanfield will never ever foul in that situation ever again.

That loss eliminates some of the wiggle room Stanfield had in the Columbia Basin Conference. Now, at 6-2, the team is just a game above Heppner for second place. I think we can assume Irrigon will win it, but Heppner has games against Weston-McEwen and Culver, games it should win. Stanfield has Culver and Irrigon left. So, if we were to look a bit forward, Stanfield might finish 7-3, the same league record as Heppner. That would create a two-way tie for second with Heppner having a slightly better overall record. I'll do some digging to find out how that all works. It'll be interesting to see how that league plays out, but I wouldn't be surprised if Stanfield makes a run on things for a second-straight year. Those kids are talking about improving on last year's third-place finish and play hungry.

The Stanfield girls are in the opposite position. They're trying to build the program up to where the boys are.

They hold a record of 9-11 (4-4 CBC). I wrote a column some weeks ago about their turnaround and how I could relate. Well, they're now getting into games that will determine how they end the season. These games matter, and sometimes — especially if you've never played in these kind of games before — they can be difficult to play. You're thinking about seeding and scoreboard-watching and pressing. You're doing everything but focusing on the task at hand: winning a basketball game.



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 earlier this season in Umatilla. While the Umatilla girls have hit a rough patch of late, they will still likely make an appearance at state in the postseason.

I'm not saying that's what these girls are doing. On the contrary, they seem very focused on playing basketball. But playing games with lots of pressure is a very new experience for athletes who have never done it before. The Tiger girls are 5-3 in their last eight games, so they're obviously getting better. I'd say they're probably a couple years off from making some serious noise in the playoffs. But this season was a success already and will be a success when we look back on it. Success breeds success, and confidence breeds confidence. The Stanfield girls program is up and coming.

# ECHO

Since winning their first three Old Oregon League games of the new year, the Echo girls have gone just 3-4. Their struggles have been a combination of some bad breaks, some sickness and some poorly played games, and it took Echo from runaway league champs to tied for the top spot with Powder Valley and Nixyaawii nipping at its heels. The Cougars have lost their last two games — to Powder and to Nixyaawii — so they've opened the door for someone to swoop in last minute and snatch away the league title. Echo has time on its

side, though, with a home game against Wallowa on Friday. Echo really can't lose it. It can't finish a strong season with a whimper and a three-game losing streak. It wouldn't be catastrophic, but it wouldn't be good, either. It would be worrisome. It would create doubt, and Echo doesn't need doubt.

The Cougars are sort of in the same situation as the Umatilla girls, in a bit of a slump as the schedule concludes. My senior year baseball team did the same thing. We peaked early and couldn't recover. We won a playoff game — barely — but couldn't get out of districts. Echo should get out of districts, but the Cougars have a target on their backs now, and the question is how do they handle that?

For the boys, inconsistency seems to be the biggest issue. Now, I haven't had many opportunities to watch them play, but there are a couple of indicators that would suggest they are better than last year and currently improving.

First, they reached the 1,000-point plateau this year. They only got to about 800 last year. Second, they're in second place in league. Look at that. Nixyaawii has won the league. It's over. But Echo can secure the second seed and get a first-round bye. That's huge.

Inconsistency is still a problem, however.

Echo has lost its last three games but won the four before that. The Cougars clobbered Joseph early last month but lost to the Eagles at the end of last month. The same goes with Powder Valley. They split with Pine Eagle, too.

If the Cougars can finish strong by winning their last game against Wallowa, get the No. 2 seed and win their first playoff game, they're for real. But we'll have to wait and see.

This year of basketball has been fun, interesting, exciting and kind of weird at times. Let's hope the playoffs are more fun, more interesting, more exciting and even weirder.

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

# Super Crossword

## Answers

C	O	R	N	A	L	L	I	E	F	D	I	C	C	A	P	R	I				
A	P	O	O	P	O	I	N	T	D	I	N	O	A	L	I	E	N				
L	E	A	D	E	R	O	F	T	H	E	R	A	C	K	S	E	P	A	L		
A	N	D	O	N	P	E	W	E	N	O	E	L	S	A	P	E	R	S			
M	A	T	Z	O	S	R	O	L	L	I	N	G	S	T	A	T	I	O	N		
A	R	E	C	A	L	I	R	E	Y	V	O	N	N	E							
R	E	A	C	H	O	B	B	L	E	R	M	O	R	A	Y						
I	A	M	B	S	O	L	A	R	N	E	W	T	H	O							
C	A	M	E	L	O	T	F	U	L	L	R	A	G	E	A	D					
A	R	F	M	E	T	V	E	R	N	E	U	N	M	A	D	E					
B	U	R	N	A	H	O	L	E	I	N	O	N	E	S	R	O	C	K	E	T	
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I	M	A	G	E	N	O	R	A	I	N	N	O	G	A	I	N					
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E	P	E	E	S	D	E	P	T	T	E	N	S	E	L	E	N	D				