

SPORTS

Ridgeview defeats Hermiston, Echo pounds Heppner

SOFTBALL

RIDGEVIEW 12, HERMISTON 7

With a freshman making her first varsity start, the Hermiston Bulldogs couldn't rally past the Ridgeview Ravens, dropping the season opener 12-7 Tuesday.

A big sixth inning propelled the Ravens past the Bulldogs, who led 4-3 at the time. In that inning, the first two Ravens found their way aboard and around the bases to take a 5-4 lead, and then a parade of Ravens followed. Hermiston freshman pitcher Julissa Almaguer went a little more than five innings.

"She threw well," Hermiston head coach Kylee Nichols said.

"She held her composure."

At the plate, Hermiston was led by Ashley Moser, who went 2-for-3, an RBI and two runs scored, and Mikayla Kopacz, who went 1-for-3, with an RBI and two runs scored. The two seniors were involved in both the second-inning rally that plated three and the sixth-inning rally that scored three, in part, helped by Moser and Kopacz.

Hermiston's next time out is a double header against Post Falls (ID) at 3 p.m. Friday at Rocky Heights Elementary school.

ECHO 15, HEPPNER 4 (7)

Tied at three with one out and the bases loaded, Echo junior Kenzie Blankenship lined a 2-1 pitch into left field, plating three

and breaking open the Echo softball team's debut this season at Heppner Monday.

The Cougars would score seven runs that inning on the way to a 15-4 drubbing of Heppner.

Echo racked up 11 hits in the win, and sophomore Mackenzie Gonzales, making her first start this season, was dealing. She threw all seven innings, walking seven, but she allowed just six hits and struck out 11.

Blankenship, who went 1-for-3 at bat with three RBIs, and sophomore Samantha McQuown, who was 3-for-5 with two RBIs, led the way at the plate.

"Mentally it helps them," third-year head coach Bryan Bailey said of winning big in the first outing, adding it also helps confidence. "Heppner doesn't have the

pitching they've had in the past and they were kind of hampered by 13 walks. But more so on our side, we were hitting with runners on. We only stranded five base runners. We were hitting the ball when we needed to and scoring runs."

Echo's next ballgame is against Union/Cove in Echo today. First pitch is set for 3 p.m.

TENNIS

The Umatilla tennis season got off to a good start after it split its boys and girls matches with Pendleton on Monday.

Led by Ramiro Rubio and Alejandro Madrigal, the boys beat Pendleton despite splitting the three matches, while the girls

dropped a tough one 8-2.

First-year head coach Calvin Meade said the best match of the day, though, came from junior and No. 1 Umatilla singles player Sidney Webb. Playing against Mattie Cittadini, a club-tennis-playing foreign exchange student from Italy, Webb was up after a set but broke her strings and had to use a teammate's racket. Cittadini would rally, winning the next two sets and taking the match.

It was an encouraging first match for the Vikings, who have a number of both returning tennis players and first-year participants. Meade said there is excitement surrounding the program, which is a good first step to building a winning season.

RECREATION REPORTS

Reports from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife:

FISHING

Weekend fishing opportunities:

• Steelhead continue to enter the Umatilla River in record numbers, and anglers should be able to find fish scattered throughout the river. Last week anglers averaged 3.6 hours per steelhead caught.

* Water conditions in the John Day are in great shape, and steelhead are being caught between Service Creek and the town of John Day and in the North Fork up to Monument.

* The Imnaha, Grande Ronde and Wallowa rivers are all producing steelhead at catch rates better than 10 hours a fish.

BULL PRAIRIE RESERVOIR: rainbow and brook trout

Remains open to fishing all year. The reservoir is frozen but proceed with caution as the ice may be too thin to support anglers. Approximately 200 trophy rainbow trout were stocked last fall and should provide fishing all winter. Brook trout are also available.

GRANDE RONDE RIVER: steelhead

Steelhead anglers on the Grande Ronde continue to be successful with a variety of gear types. A healthy proportion of two salt fish has resulted in a large average size this year. So, expect a few larger fish and some screaming drags! Remember, only adipose-fin clipped rainbow trout may be retained and all bull trout must be released unharmed.

HOLLIDAY PARK POND: rainbow trout

Remains open all year. The pond is now free of ice. Carryover trout are being caught and should provide fair angling until stocking occurs in April.

IMNAHA RIVER: steelhead

The Imnaha is in great shape to catch fish. With the current weather it's a great time to catch a

steelhead while getting sunburned. Fishing will continue to produce into the season-ender on April 15. Don't forget to try Big Sheep Creek too while fish move toward the hatchery facility. Flow data for the Imnaha can be found on the Idaho Power website.

NORTHEAST ZONE HUNTING

OPEN: COUGAR

Wolves are protected by state law and it is unlawful to shoot them. Coyote hunters in northeastern Oregon need to take extra care to identify their target as wolves can look like coyotes, especially wolf pups in the mid-summer and fall. Please report any wolf sightings or wolf sign to La Grande office (541) 963-2138 or online with the Wolf Reporting Form. Use the Oregon Hunting Map to see where to hunt.

UMATILLA COUNTY Bears will be distributed in forested stringer areas throughout the mid elevations. Low to mid elevation forest roads are accessible from numerous access points throughout the county, thus providing an earlier opportunity for scouting those mid elevations for upcoming spring bear season. Foraging bears can be observed by glassing open hill slopes with a south/southwestern aspect.

Earlier in the season bears can be observed throughout the day. Bear numbers will begin to increase towards last half of April and should persist until the end of the season. Hunters are reminded all bears are required to be checked in within ten days of harvest.

Turkeys are scattered throughout the forested areas of Umatilla County, look for turkeys along ridge tops crossing between drainages. Listen for gobbling turkeys within early hours of daylight from atop high elevation spots above those drainages. Less than average snow levels may provide earlier access to

mid and upper elevations.

Cougar are well distributed in forested areas of the Walla Walla, Mt. Emily and Ukiah units. Hunters will have best success by finding a fresh naturally made kill and sitting on it, or by using predator calls. Some success has come from following tracks until the cougar is located.

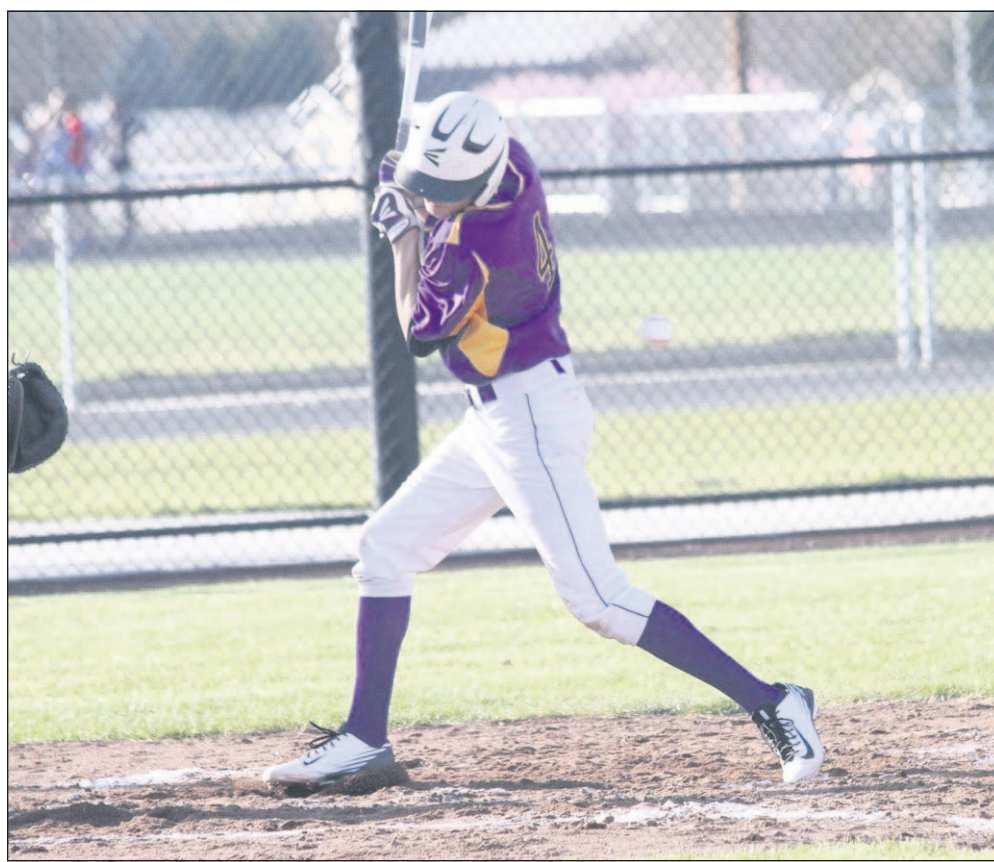
Coyote are numerous throughout the county, and hunters should have good success calling. Remember to ask permission before hunting on private lands.

NORTHEAST ZONE WILDLIFE VIEWING

UMATILLA COUNTY

Spring like conditions through January and February have provided early green up in mid elevations along the Blue Mountains. Deer and elk are distributed throughout the mid and upper elevations foraging on early green-up of annual grasses. Large groups of elk can be viewed for the next few weeks during early and late hours of daylight. These groups will be on or near the boundary of the Forest Service intermingled between open grass slopes and timbered drainages. Deer will be more widespread and dispersed in smaller groups amongst the low to mid elevations. Bears will be distributed in similar areas of the Blue Mountains and are many different colors other than black and provide a unique viewing opportunity.

Migratory birds are migrating north and have been observed in the low to mid elevations habitat of the County. Federal, State and Tribal wildlife areas and refuges and public road access throughout the county provide good viewing opportunities for Ferruginous, Rough-legged, Red tailed, Coopers and Swainson's hawks, along with both Bald and Golden eagles. Riparian and wooded corridors and large grassland areas can also provide good viewing opportunity for Warblers, Robins and Sparrows.



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Hermiston senior Jay Lindeman is tagged with a pitch from Ridgeview's JT Edmonson during the second inning of the Ravens' 9-4 win Tuesday at Armand Larive Middle School. Lindeman went 3-3 and reached base all four plate appearances.

BULLDOGS:

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Bulldogs pay. Shade Gritz relieved Robles and allowed consecutive singles to Bryce Barker and Even Remick.

Then the wheels came off.

Second baseman Mikami committed consecutive errors that allowed both Barker and Remick to score, and then Garret Dewolf and Collin Runge reached on errors and scored on wild pitches.

Before they knew it, the Bulldogs were down 4-3.

Hermiston tied it up in the fifth after Gossler doubled down the right field line, Gritz sacrificed him to second and Lucas Tolan singled him home. Tolan, though, was thrown out at second trying to stretch his bloop single into a double, killing Hermiston's rally and swinging the momentum back to Ridgeview.

Ridgeview's four runs in the sixth came on six hits — all singles — with sent nine guys to

the plate. The frame was ended when Runge was thrown out at the plate by Robles in left, but it was too little too late for Hermiston. The Bulldogs couldn't get anything going in the sixth or seventh, sending just seven hitters to the plate in the final two innings.

Hermiston heads to Pasco for a 5 p.m. date today with the Bulldogs, and Hawkins said simply the focus is on mental preparedness.

"We'll be ready to play tomorrow," he said.

BASKETBALL:

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Those three losses turned into fuel for the Bulldogs, which they capitalized on.

"What crossed my mind was: We just lost to the top-ranked team in 6A, and lost to Kamiakin, who should be one of the top teams in Washington, and we should've won both games," Hoffert said. "Being here and being with this team as long

as I have, the panic button really never pushed more me. It was gonna be OK. I knew we were gonna be fine, but we still had to convince the girls of that."

The Hermiston girls were quickly convinced as they rattled off 11-straight wins before losing to Sunnyside and reeled off 13-straight before the state title game.

Hermiston now finds itself among a small, select group of teams that compete each and every

season for a state championship. Right now, the list is three: Hermiston, La Salle and Corvallis. Those are Hermiston's rivals, Hoffert said.

"Pendleton's not a rival," Hoffert said. "When you beat somebody that many times, it's not a rivalry anymore."

With its foundation and its core returning next year, Hoffert expects his girls will again play for a state title. Now, however, they have a hunger to return.

TIGERS:

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week, as a player to watch. The sophomore speedster will do just about everything on the diamond. Johnson said he'll play center field, where he can run down almost everything in Stanfield's spacious outfield. He'll play some second base, and he'll catch and pitch. He's a classic utility player, who can hit for power and average at the leadoff spot, Johnson said.

As a freshman, Monkus hit .416 on his way to a first-team all-league selection and had an impressive on-

base plus slugging of 1.140. His on-base percentage was .569. He led the team in runs scored with 41 and was third in hit by pitches

with 12. In 62 chances in the field, he made just three errors.

"He's a five-tool guy," Johnson said.

Johnson also pointed out Grogan, who was the everyday third baseman last year. The lanky sophomore figures in at third again this year, when he isn't pitching, but will again man the hot corner and fill in at shortstop when Flores is on the bump. Grogan was named a second-team all league performer last season after leading Stanfield in batting average (.419), RBIs (34) and hits (36). Johnson said Allen, who was largely a junior varsity player for three years, has continued to develop and has the inside track to the catcher spot this year.

The biggest thing for Stanfield this year is bal-

ance. There won't be drop off in the order after the first four or five hitters, Johnson said. He said Jason Fitzpatrick could surprise people with the bat. Lefty Klay Jensen had a good summer, too, and has put himself in the conversation at first

base. Sophomore Hunter Barnes earned himself at-bats with his summer, as well.

"I think we'll have some other guys kind of surprise us, as well, who had good summers," Johnson said.



balance throughout the order and on the pitching staff.

Echo is full of leadership and grit, and the Cougars showed it off in a 15-4 drubbing of Heppner Monday. I like that Cougars team. They're flying under

the radar in 3A, and I think they're gonna jump up and nip some people.

There will be much more to come about track, golf, tennis and lacrosse in the near future. I'm just pumped to be thinking

about baseball again. Here's to a great spring.

—Sam Barbee is the sports reporter for the Hermiston Herald and can be reached at (541) 564-4542 or sbarbee@hermistonherald.com

Super Crossword

Answers

A	B	S	O	R	B	S	P	I	R	I	T	S	T	W	I	R	L	S				
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players are sophomores — Dylan Grogan, Tyler Monkus and Tony Flores, and the Tigers have good