

Finding a reasonable, viable solution

The ending, if you could call it that, to Hermiston's baseball game against Redmond Monday was weird, and it should never have happened.

The game was called because of the sun glaring off the roof of a storage building behind home plate, something I've never heard of being done. But I went out to the mound and to the umpire's infield positions and looked toward home. Sure enough, the glare was blinding. Not only could I not see, but it was so bright my vision was becoming spotty like I was staring into the sun. It wasn't safe, and something had to be done to prevent an accident from occurring. We don't want players or umpires taking line drives in the face because they can't see.

That wouldn't be good.

But just walking off the field wasn't a good option, either. That's what the umpires did: They simply walked off the field. They said it was a liability issue — it was. But they said the game didn't matter — it did. With how Oregon School Activities Association rankings work, every game matters, and every game matters to every team on any given schedule. So it was really a bad thing to just call that game because of the fallout. Redmond lost out on a near-sure win and a nine-run explosion, and Hermiston has to spend more money on gas and the athletes have to miss more class time because the teams have to make up the game at a neutral site, preliminarily in The Dalles.

It really wasn't the right decision.

After talking to people who have a great deal of knowledge about the baseball complex at Armand Larive Middle School, I learned nothing like that had ever happened before. Hermiston Athletic



SAM BARBEE
FROM THE SIDELINES
Sports reporter

Director Blaine Ganvoa said, in the construction process, officials thought about glare coming off the roof of the building in question and the color painted was chosen specifically for that reason: to avoid glare.

So, in the two or three years that baseball field has been in use — both for high school and Babe Ruth games — no game had been in jeopardy due to any sort of glare.

My first reaction was the field wasn't situated properly. In the afternoon, the sun is behind home plate, putting it in the eyes of everyone on the field, save the catcher and home plate umpire. Then there's the metal roof which, according to Ganvoa, was painted its dark brown color on purpose.

But it didn't work. It still happened. And though it's only happened once, a game was still called prematurely, and a contingency plan has to be thought of on the fly. It's not an ideal situation, and it's one that could have been avoided.

A good portion of the blame, though, has to be put on the umpires. There was no thought on their part about what might happen if they walked off the field. They didn't consider waiting for the sun to move in the sky to eliminate the glare. They had a single purpose, and that was getting off the field. They did players and coaches a disservice in not trying to find an immediate solution. They took the easy road, and it was the wrong one.

Fixing the potential glare issue — it's not an issue yet, but it could become one — isn't as simple as throwing a tarp on the roof and calling it good — mostly because tarps are reflective, too,

SEE SOLUTION/A11

Schimmel leads Cardinals to Sweet 16

Former Hermiston player and current Louisville Cardinals guard Jude Schimmel helped lead her third-seeded squad to a 60-52 win over No. 6 South Florida Monday night, putting Louisville into its third straight NCAA Sweet Sixteen.

Schimmel scored 13 points on the night, with eight coming in the final

three minutes and six in the final 69 seconds.

"I knew that I had to be a leader," Schimmel told the Associated Press. "At that point, we needed somebody to step up and I said 'Why not me.'"

Louisville takes on seventh-seeded Dayton at 2 p.m. Saturday in the Albany, New York regional semifinal.

Dogs look to retool this season

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

The Hermiston baseball team has some shoes to fill.

Last year, Hermiston had arms it could rely on to eat up innings whenever possible in pitchers Austin Monahan, Nychal Gritz and Sean Smith, who helped carry Hermiston into the playoffs. Those players have graduated, and first-year head coach Lance Hawkins doesn't know yet who will step into those shoes.

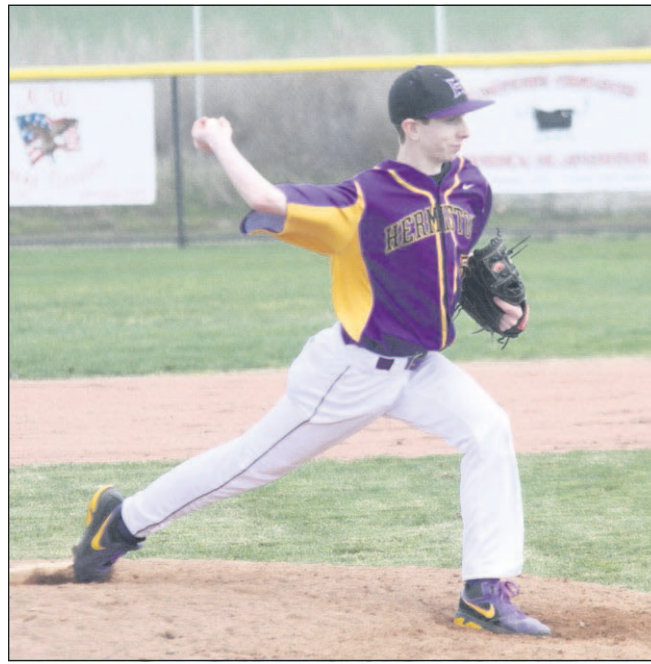
He's got some candidates, however. Junior left-hander RJ Robles threw four scoreless innings in the season opener March 17, a 9-4 loss to Ridgeview, and Tyler Sexton, a big righty, allowed just two runs over six innings in an 8-2 victory over Pasco March 18.

Other than those two players, and some relief arms, Hawkins isn't sure what kind of staff he has yet.

"In the past, we've had guys that you can say, 'They're gonna throw 120 innings,'" Hawkins said. "We don't have that this year. We don't have that ace. That's why we're gonna play five games in eight days and figure out who can throw."

Hermiston, however, has other players on whom it will rely this season.

Two-time all-league outfielder Cole Smith is roaming right field and bats third. Senior Jay Lindeman, who primarily played in the outfield last



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Hermiston righty Hayden Edmiston delivers a pitch during a non-league baseball game between the Bulldogs and the Redmond Panthers Monday. The game was called in the bottom of the sixth due to glare, and it is uncertain if the game will be finished.

season, has made a case to take over behind the plate and went 3-for-3 in his first game as the starting catcher. Landon Gammell is in the mix for the catcher spot, too. Dylan Caldwell and Sexton are battling it out at first base, and junior Chase Root is going to start at shortstop "for the rest of his career," Hawkins said.

The other two outfield spots are also up for grabs. Senior Michael Gossler started in center against Ridgeview. Freshman Dayshawn Neal got the start in left March 17 until Robles was relieved, and Neal figures to get outfield innings as well.

Neal isn't the only freshman getting playing

time, though. Lukus Tolan is on track to secure the third baseman slot for the next four years.

Hawkins said he is excited about certain pieces of his team puzzle, but he's not yet sure how to fit other pieces together.

Hawkins isn't shying away from tweaking his starting lineup from game to game according to matchups, he said. He'll start his best nine, not his nine best.

"I'm not really sure what to expect," Hawkins said. "We got some guys that just play hard. Are they true baseball players? I'm not sure, but they're gonna give you everything they have. I'd rather work with guys

like that than have prima donna baseball players."

With a strong and athletic roster, Hawkins wants to keep the game moving. He's going to have his players bunt. They will steal. He's going to move the defense around and try to the Bulldogs score runs any way possible.

His focus isn't game to game or even inning to inning. It's pitch to pitch, he said, and, so far at least, that plan has been received well.

"We're gonna play the game," Hawkins said.

Hawkins said he is pushing urgency this season: urgency in preparation, urgency is mindset, urgency at the plate, in the field, on the mound, on the bases. He said, however, not all the players are acclimated to that style of baseball yet.

In the game against Ridgeview, Ravens catcher Even Remick tapped one up the first base line. Robles fielded, took his time and just barely got a hustling Remick at the bag for the first out of the inning. Hawkins came out of the dugout to preach urgency. He firmly instructed the pitcher he wanted him to make a play like that like it was the final out of the game, not the first of the third inning.

"I've been trying to set this idea in them: We're gonna battle every pitch, every inning — not show up, and the next thing you it's the fifth inning and you get your urgency," he said. "We're gonna have urgency right now."

Hermiston doubleheader comes to frustrating close

Second game called because of glare

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

The doubleheader between the Hermiston baseball team and the Redmond Panthers came to a strange end Monday afternoon.

With Redmond leading 14-5 in Hermiston's half of the sixth, the game was called due the sun's glare coming off a shed behind home plate. Redmond had scored nine runs in the top half of the sixth before the field umpire called the game. In the front end of the doubleheader, Hermiston squeaked out a 2-1 win behind a solid pitching performance from RJ Robles.

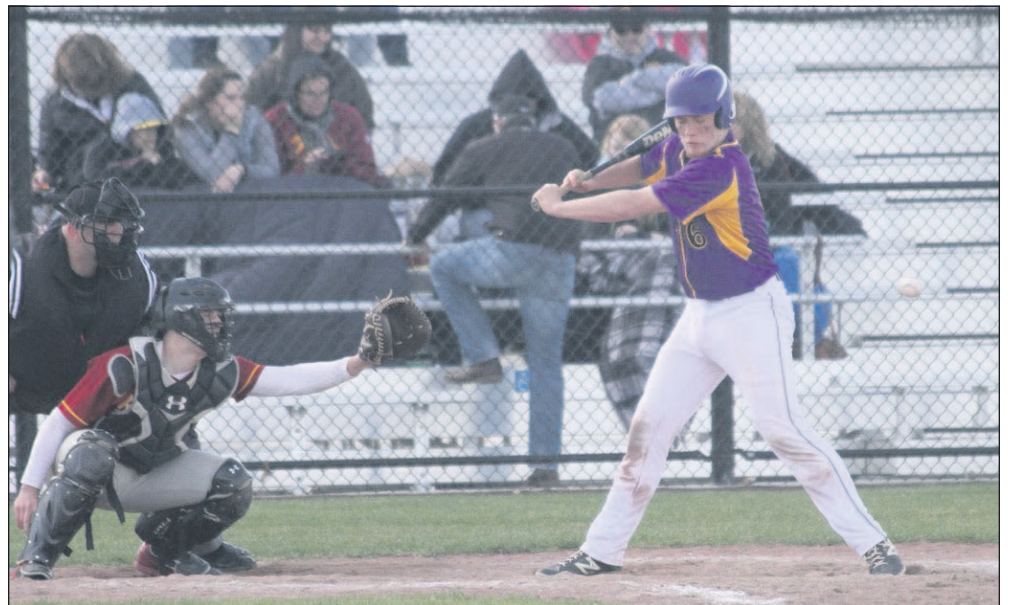
The day's end frustrated first-year Bulldog head coach Lance Hawkins frustrated.

"My frustration comes down to ... this season we give up the big inning," he said after the second game was called. "It's how we do it. We're not mentally in the game. Physically, sometimes you have some mistakes, but the mental part of the game, we talk about it enough, the kids should know what they're doing, and we're not competing a full game. We talk about being great in doing all the little things, and we're not doing that right now — that's from seniors all the way down."

Hawkins had an extra long talk about that with the seniors after the games Monday. Hawkins challenged them to be more mentally focused and prepared for each game.

Hawkins pointed out one play as a prime example of the Bulldogs' lack of focus.

With three runs already in and the bases loaded with one out, Redmond's Brock Penhollow bounced one back to Michael Gossler at the



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Hermiston's Landon Gammell turns away from an inside fastball during the sixth inning of the second non-league baseball game between the Bulldogs and the Redmond Panthers. The game was called two batters later due to glare, and it is still uncertain as to whether the game will be finished.

mound, who should have sent the ball home to start a 1-2-3 double play but instead froze and held the ball, allowing one more run to score. Redmond found new life after the play, which opened the flood gates.

"That's I guess getting caught up in the game, but it should just be a reaction deal," Hawkins said. "It's thinking about the game too much, probably thinking about at-bats and thinking about other things. You can only control the things you can control at that time. And that's a double-play ball ... The baseball gods frown upon mistakes like that."

The game wasn't a total wash, though. Hermiston took a 1-0 lead in the first when Dylan Caldwell doubled home Robles. Redmond came back for five in the top of the third, highlighted by Hunter Smith's RBI triple, however.

The Bulldogs responded in the bottom half of the third, plating four of their own to tie things at five. With one out, Cole Smith reached on

an error, and Caldwell was beamed. Both moved up on a passed ball, and Lukus Tolan singled to score both to pull Hermiston within a run at 5-4. Freshman Keegan Caldwell then doubled to left center, scoring Tolan from second, which knotted the score.

"I think we did a great job there (getting back into it), but after you tie the game up, there's nothing," Hawkins said. "It was almost like 'Hey, we did a great job. We came out (and) scored (four),' and then they were complacent again."

Two innings later, Redmond scored its nine runs, and the game was called in the bottom of the sixth.

In the opener, Redmond got on the board early when Hunter Smith tripled to deep right and scored on a wild pitch. Hermiston answered an inning later when Robles walked, Kyler Mikami doubled and then Mitch Brown singled. The game remained tied until the fifth, when Chase Root reached on an error, moved to second on an another error and scored

when Caldwell doubled down the right field line with two strikes to take the 2-1 advantage.

Robles threw 5.2 innings and tossed more than 90 pitches. He allowed just one hit — the lead-off triple, one run, walked five and struck out six.

Despite the win, Hawkins wasn't satisfied.

"It's how you approach the game," he said. "You keep battling and you keep your team close. We had some chances to get some timely (hits), and we didn't again. Again, those are approaches. I gotta put the kids, in practice, (in) those uncomfortable situations where they're ready for the game."

Hermiston next takes the field at 4 p.m. today for a date at Kamiakin (Washington).

HERMISTON 2, REDMOND 1

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| RHS | 100 | 000 |
| 0 — 112 | | |
| HHS | 010 | 010 |
| 0 — 240 | | |

WP: RJ Robles LP: Daulton Graham
2B: K. Mikami (HHS), D. Caldwell (HHS); 3B: H. Smith (RHS), C. Smith (HHS)

GO SEE IT

Wednesday, March 25

- Lacrosse**
Hermiston vs. Richland, 5 p.m.
- Baseball**
Hermiston @ Kamiakin, 4 p.m.
- Softball**
Echo vs. Knappa @ Heppner, 10 a.m.
Echo vs. Clatskanie @ Heppner, 2 p.m.

Thursday, March 26

- Baseball**
Stanfield vs. Union, 11 a.m.
- Softball**
Echo vs. Colton, 3 p.m.

Friday, March 27

- Baseball**
Hermiston vs. Century (DH), 12 p.m.

Saturday, March 28

No events scheduled