

SPORTS

**HAWKINS:**

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Hawkins' attitude with his players is both relaxed and intense. He talks about his players like they're his sons, and he talks about his sons like they're his players. He said there's no difference in his mind. He cares and encourages, and he pushes and celebrates.

"I blame it on my dad," he said about his demeanor. "He made me a certain way."

At 25, Hawkins' first son was born. He went from a normal 25-year-old to a father in the blink of an eye, and suddenly, his perspective changed, he said. He now had responsibilities.

He became a teacher and a coach, and he shares these experiences and memories with his students and players. It helps him relate to them in a way that other teachers or coaches don't or can't, he said.

"I reflect," he said. "I reflect on my daily life. I reflect on my coaching and teaching. I usually wake up in the middle of the night, and my mind goes, 'You fix these things.' I reflect constantly. I think that's how you become a better dad, a better husband, a better whatever you want to be."

He wants his players to understand that baseball isn't life, he said. His two sons, Vaughan and Hayden, are in the military, and Vaughan is about to go to Ukraine.

He told his team exactly what's happening and what he's thinking.

"I said, 'Guys, I've got a lot of stuff on my mind, but I'd rather be here with



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

First-year Hermiston baseball coach Lance Hawkins (center) works with senior Dylan Caldwell on his swing Tuesday at Armand Larive Middle School.

you. Please remember this is a game. Life is happening around us and sometimes we don't know that," he said. "I told these guys I lost a close friend of mine when I was 25. In a blink of an eye, he was gone. Then you take things everyday, because you don't know."

As a baseball player, Hawkins wasn't the biggest Hermiston baseball player, or the fastest, but he worked hard. He was a three-time All-Intermountain Conference player and an all-state selection his junior year. He's one of two players from Hermiston to be selected to an all-state team in 50 years. He tried to play football at Blue Mountain Community College, although he said he was best at baseball, but he hurt his back and ankle and could never fully recover.

He said because he was

an all-state-caliber baseball player from the area, allows parents and fans to trust his philosophies as a baseball coach and as a teacher.

"(My accomplishments hold) credibility," Hawkins said. "Because I played the game here, they know what kind of athlete I was when I was a lot younger, but my mental approach was pretty good ... I think people see how hard you work as a kid and how hard you work going through the ranks."

For 14 years, Hawkins was an assistant baseball coach in Hermiston. He watched as head baseball coaches were hired, left and new ones came in to replace them. He never thought about being a head coach. It wasn't something he wanted to just jump into. He wanted to be ready. He wanted to know he could be

successful at it, he said

"I really didn't look at being a head coach when I was younger because I wanted to know the game, and I wanted to be mature enough," he said. "I had opportunities several times. People say, 'Well why didn't you put in for it? Why didn't you do this?' I wasn't ready. I wanted to do things, and I'm glad I came back and coached with the kid, Doug Taylor, and I reached a point and said, 'What better to do?'"

After 14 years of bidding his time, Hawkins is finally the head coach of his Hermiston Bulldogs after spending time under head coaches who let him roam and teach and grow in the game. Taylor, who was Hawkins' predecessor and current Redmond head coach, gave Hawkins the freedom to voice his input, to teach the game and to make decisions



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

First-year Hermiston baseball coach Lance Hawkins, a Hermiston native, takes a business-like yet fun approach to coaching baseball. He said if it's not fun, then he won't coach.

without looking over his shoulder, Hawkins said.

It's a similar approach he's taken this year with former Riverside head coach John Christy, who is now Hawkins' assistant coach. He's given Christy the freedom to teach and help make lineup decisions. He lets Matt Bergstrom coach the pitchers his way. Christy has head coaching experience and Bergstrom pitched collegiately. Hawkins said he wants their input.

"We all work together," he said of his coaching staff. "We talk about lineups, and ultimately I'm the one who makes the decision, and they realize that, but I want input. I surround myself with people who are gonna help me in whatever I'm lacking."

Hawkins stood in the dug-out recently, his arms folded over the railing, looking out down the right field line at outfielders taking swings off tees, every once in awhile yelling to players when he saw something he didn't like. He said he loves the game,

but partially because the group of players he has at his disposal make it easy for him.

He said there are no cliques on Hermiston's 2015 squad. Everyone gets along, and everyone wants to get better.

He's already spent time with them. He was the head coach over this past summer and had time to instill his philosophies. He's coached the seniors for the past three years as an assistant. There wasn't much of a transition for him or the players. It was merely a change in title.

"They know where I'm coming from," he said. "I have credibility with them. Coach Christy talks about this all the time: he goes, 'They don't know me. They don't know my background. They don't know how much I know.' ... For most of these seniors, I've had them for three years, but I know their folks. I think transition-wise, it's been really good. I have great support, great parents."

**BULLDOGS:**

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ally a pitcher, but he gets out there and he battled his butt off today. I was really pleased with that, and we rewarded him by putting him in the field and giving him an at-bat."

Hermiston didn't have many scoring chances, however. Lindell threw all five innings, striking out seven and walking four, while touching 90 miles per hour on the scouts' radar guns.

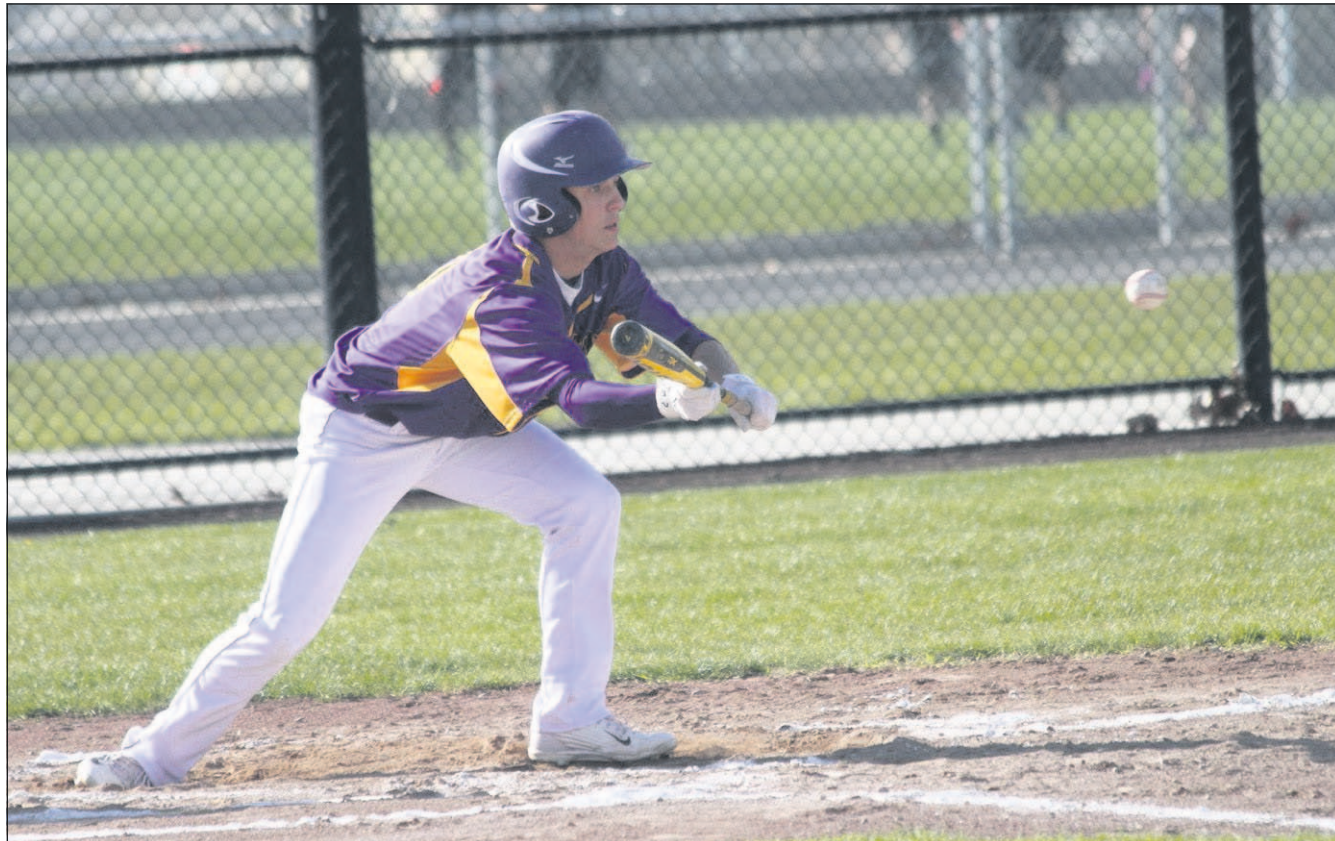
Chase Root ended the no-hitter bid in the bottom of the third when his sharp grounder to short took a bad hop and found its way into left field, and Cole Smith added another knock in the fourth on a line-drive up the middle. Both times, however, Hermiston helped Lindell wiggle out. Root's third-inning single came with one out and Kyler Mikami on first base, but an out later Mikami was picked off at second to end the inning. After Smith's single, Dylan Caldwell grounded into a smoothly turned 6-4 double play to give Lindell two quick outs in his penultimate inning. Hermiston just didn't have any answers.

"In baseball, you have

**Notes:**  
Hermiston will continue its glare-shortened game against Redmond on Friday at 11 a.m. in The Dalles. The action will pick up right where it left off last week: with Redmond up 14-5 and Hermiston batting with runners and first and second with one out.

to have a short memory because you have so many games," Hawkins said. "If you have a bad at-bat, we talk about flushing it and getting rid of it. It's mental. The guy pumped it pretty good, and our guys went up there and got their hacks. Were we outmatched? Yeah, I think we were at times. When you got a 15-year-old going against an 18-year-old in some cases, you could tell they've never seen anything like that. That's a good team. It should've been a little closer, I think, but they're a better team than we are right now. That's all there is to it."

West Linn scored three in the first, highlighted by a two-run triple to the fence in right field by Brayden Pene. West Linn added some in the third, when the Lions scored



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Hermiston's Mitchell Brown squares to bunt during the first inning of Hermiston's 13-0 loss to West Linn on Tuesday.

six runs on both Robles and Edmiston. The first two batters of the frame walked, and Pene came through again with an RBI single. After a walk, a strikeout and another walk, Cole Kinman doubled to plate two. Rudy Hughes followed with a single to make the count 8-0,

and, after an error, Chase Cosner grounded into a 6-4 fielder's choice to plate Jake Perkins, who courtesy ran for catcher Kinman.

In the next frame, West Linn put the game away with four. Nicholas Yokubaitis singled with no outs and a runner at

second to give the Lions a 10-0 lead, and Tate Hoffman flied out to center to plate Colton Cosner, who had previously singled. After an error and a hit-by-pitch to load the bases, Tim Tawa singled to drive in Yokubaitis to push the lead to 12-0, then Trevor Wells

reached on an error, allowing Hughes to trot home.

**WEST LINN 13, HERMISTON 0**

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K. Lindell and C. Kinman, R. Robles, H. Edmiston, C. Smith and L. Gammell.  
2B: C. Kinman (WL). 3B: C. Cosner (WL).

**COLBRAY:**

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job done. "I think it's pretty good for Sam, (too)," he added. "I think he deserves it. I don't think he gets the credit he deserves. He's a really talented wrestler, and he's really smart about it. ... As long as he keeps improving on the little things, he'll be OK."

The Hermiston junior wrestled in front of Cornell University coaches Rob Koll and Damian Hahn, who told Williams they were impressed with how Colbray wrestled. They have been actively recruiting the 195-pound national champion.

Colbray was one of four Bulldogs to win matches at

the NHSCA Nationals. Of seven Hermiston wrestlers competing, Colbray, Andy Wagner, at 126 pounds in the junior division, Bob Coleman, wrestling at 170 pounds in the junior division, and AJ Tuia, competing at 132 pounds in the freshmen division, won matches. Coleman was two matches from placing eighth, which would have earned him an All-American nod.

Colbray, though, was the story for Hermiston.

As the sixth-ranked wrestler in the tournament, he cruised through his first four matches. He beat Georgia's Jack Walsh 8-1 to start things off, handled Jalen Martin of Missouri 8-2, pinned New Jersey's Patrick Daly in 35 seconds and then pounded Tennes-

see's Benjamin Stacey 13-3 in the quarterfinals.

In the semifinals, however, Colbray faced Christian Araneo from New York, the 11th-ranked wrestler in the tournament, who gave Colbray some problems. The New Yorker had a style unfamiliar to Colbray, and Williams said it created a bad matchup for him until Colbray got a takedown midway through the third period for two points and rode Araneo the rest of the way for a 3-1 win.

"That was probably the closest match of the tournament," Williams said. In the finals, the matchup was better for Colbray, with Williams said, in his opinion the best two 195-pound juniors wrestlers in the national championship, and Colbray won going away.

In the other brackets, Coleman cruised through his first three matches until taking a 3-1 loss to Jalaa Darwish of New Jersey, the eventual runner-up. In the consolation bracket, Coleman won his first match but couldn't get past New Yorker Nick Garone in a 5-3 defeat.

Wagner topped Floridian Dylan Cameron 5-1 in the first round of the junior 126-pound bracket and lost to Matthew Sheetz from Georgia. On the back end, Wagner slipped past Texas' Mason Vidrine 5-3 in overtime but lost to Ryder Jones of West Virginia in a 3-1 decision.

Freshman Tuia, who almost didn't wrestle at districts because of illness, beat Tennessee's Thomas Hatcher 6-4 in his first-round match, but top fresh-

man 130-pounder Sammy Sasso of Pennsylvania handled the Hermiston freshman 20-5 in the second round. Tuia then lost his next match by fall in just 50 seconds to Joshua Brown of Pennsylvania.

Williams said community members and businesses deserved thanks for

helping pay for the seven wrestlers' trip to Virginia. Their contributions helped lower the wrestlers' individual costs.

"It was just overwhelming financial support from people within the community (who) I can't express enough thank you's to," he said.

**Super Crossword**

**Answers**

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**ADVERSITY:**

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do know something that's important: This team has

already learned from last year and is ready and willing to change it for the better. That's something to admire and something to keep your eye on over the

next couple of months. I won't go as far as saying the Vikings will challenge anyone for a league title, but they'll get better. I'm sure of that.

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