

Making — and sharing — memories

This past year, local athletes made memories. They experienced things they'll never forget, for better or worse.



SAM BARBEE
FROM THE SIDELINES
Sports reporter

say as motivation, told us it was an omen.

For what? None of us knew.

The game dragged along, and our rivals scored when our left fielder, who was my age, lost a ball in the sun and allowed a run or two to score. Our rivals' shortstop hit a home run in the top of the seventh off our nasty sidearm reliever to take a 4-1 lead and seemingly seal the ballgame. I remember thinking that I would have to give back this varsity jersey I got days before. I was sad it was over. I think we all were.

Then crazy stuff happened. Somehow we got the bases loaded with two outs and our shortstop batting. This guy worked a full count, allowing the runners to take off at the pitch. Normally a singles hitter with some gap power, he went out of character and hit one to the fence in left center. This scored the runners at third and second easily, and the guy at first could run, so he scored standing up, too. This set up a play at third to get our shortstop, who could also run. Their shortstop, who hit the apparently game-ending dinger, tried to be a hero and make the play at third, but his throw sailed high and hit the dugout facing, giving our guy home plate and us an improbable 5-4 win. We dog piled on the plate, and one our rival's players literally ripped the bill off of his hat with his hands. It's the most impressive/terrifying thing I've ever seen.

But that's not even the best part of the story. On contact, the 15 or so of us players — and all the coaches — piled out of the dugout and watched the play unfold from the skirt. We had this big 6-foot-6 pitcher who was flailing his arms in joy, and he caught me across the face. He had a brief moment of altruism and stopped to make sure I was OK (I didn't even feel it from the adrenaline) and went back to flailing his arms, this time a safe distance from my head.

When the errant throw

SEE MEMORIES/A8

Hermiston Little League opens 51st season

More than 600 youth attend

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

Amid more than 600 youngsters and under new lights, Hermiston Little League commenced its 51st season Saturday in front of a crowd that packed the space between fields at the Field of Dreams complex off Diagonal Road in Hermiston.

Hermiston League President Rich Devin said the turnout was fantastic for an opening day.

"I was very impressed with the way everyone came out and helped out and volunteered," he said. "That said, we could always use more umpires ... We couldn't have a better opening day. The weather was beautiful. Everybody showed up."

Player agent Kelly Schwirse said more than 600 players are registered in Little League, filling 53 teams in baseball and softball: 15 softball teams, 26 baseball teams, one challenger team and 11 T-ball squads.

The 2015 season will be the first with Hermiston moving to District 3 with Pendleton, La Grande, Milton-Free-water, Pilot Rock, Stanfield, Umatilla, Irrigon, Boardman and other communities. Hermiston moved from Dis-



COURTESY PHOTO

Hermiston Little League President Rich Devin (left) and Field of Dreams Maintenance Director Jeff Gritz (second from left) give Rhonda and Jeb Cummings the 2015 Hermiston Little League Volunteer of the Year award for their help with various projects and the concession stand.

trict 5, which encompassed The Dalles, Hood River and the rest of central Oregon.

The new lights, which were recently installed for the new season, were a major project this offseason as the old ones had to be replaced. Devin thanked Good Shepherd Community Heath, Shelco Electric, Winebarger Welding and Irrigation, Umatilla Electric, Wild Horse Foundation, the City of Hermiston, United Rentals and Far West Steel and Local 29 International Association of Bridge, Structural and Ornamental Iron Workers for their contributions to the new lights. Representatives from the nine companies each threw out simultaneous first pitches to recognize their ef-

ports Saturday.

In addition to regular games, Hermiston will also host the 9/10-year-old and 10/11-year-old state baseball tournaments starting July 25. The 11/12 baseball state tournament will be in Klamath Falls starting on July 18. No other state tournament sites have been disclosed.

Beginning at 11 a.m. Saturday, each of the 53 teams were introduced. Excitement abounded as a T-ball player lost his shoe as he ran in from the outfield to join his team, but he picked it up and kept it moving.

"He just knew he had to get to the infield," Devin joked.

Once each team was introduced and gathered on the

infield dirt, Girl Scout Troop No. 51425 presented the colors, and Lisa Jones gave a rousing rendition of the national anthem. Then, led by Devin, the 21 board members were introduced.

Next, emcee Joe Thompson honored a Hermiston couple who were named the 2015 Hermiston Little League Volunteers of the Year: Rhonda and Zeb Cummings.

The Cummings have spent the past six years helping in any way they can, whether it's "a new construction project that needs skilled hands or organizing one the of the busiest areas of the Field of Dreams (concession stand) from night to night, they are there to help," he said.

The Cummings "built" the Double A softball program from an idea to a staple, Thompson said, and Devin said they are invaluable to his league.

"Rhonda and Zeb are kind and willing to do anything," he said. "They always have a helping hand. They're essential to making Little League go in Hermiston. They're just really great people. It's nice to have someone who always has a smile on her face."

With a large contingent of players and volunteers, new lights, state tournaments and a full slate of baseball and softball, Devin, Schwirse and the rest of Hermiston Little League are ready and excited for a new year of ball.

Umatilla tennis splits with Ione

No. 1 boys doubles match comes down to tiebreaker

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

After a schedule that didn't sufficiently challenge the Umatilla tennis team before, Tuesday brought one for the Vikings.

The Vikings played host to the Ione Cardinals on Tuesday and walked away about even. The Umatilla girls won 4-3 and the boys tied 5-5.

"I think we played OK," head coach Calvin Meade said. "The big thing is we played a team we actually stack up pretty well with. So this is actually giving us a really good look."

On the girls side, No. 1 girls singles player Sidney Webb downed Karina Rios, but Ione's Babali Peterson beat Umatilla's Natali Armenta 8-4, and Ione's McElligott beat Umatilla's Brenda Mendoza 7-5 to wrap up girls singles matches.

In girls doubles action, No. 1 girls doubles pair Alejandra Munoz and Esperanza Garcia lost to Katelyn Bass and Maia Fuchs 7-2. Fatima Sanchez and Yesenia Garcia beat Hannah Flynn and Rylee Wagoner 7-3, Yesenia Garcia and Alejandra Munoz beat Erica Nelson and Kelsey Van Os 6-2,

and Esperanza Garcia and Brenda Mendoza beat Reiah Waite and Natalie Grigg 6-1.

On the boys side, Elian Armenta lost to Jon Glasen 8-3, Gio Arenta lost to Bryan Fowler 8-4, Douglas Gomez beat Tom Gould 8-1 and Stephen Morris beat Enrico Macciola 8-0.

In, doubles action, Umatilla No. 1 boys doubles pair Ramiro Rubio and Alejandro Madrigal lost to Ione's Kai Arbogast and Daichi Walters 9-8 (7-2). Edgar Madrigal and Junior Coria beat Tim Gould and Amir Bayanayev 8-2, Gage Bourrie and Joel Escamilla beat Tom Gould and Jared Snyder 8-2 and Tristen Cole and Quentin Cordona lost to Ione's Tim and Tom Gould 6-3.

The best match of the day, though, came from the boys No. 1 doubles pairings. Umatilla seniors Rubio and Alejandro Madrigal, who normally play singles, took on Arbogast and Walters, who were playing their first doubles match together.

"The thing that I liked was the fact that they never gave up," Meade said of his No. 1 boys doubles team. "They stuck in the game the whole time, but the one thing I talk to them about afterwards was mental preparation, and they even told me that."

In a very evenly contested match, neither side could take control. Neither side

ever led by more than one game, and the lead changed hands eight times and there were eight ties.

Umatilla jumped to a quick 1-0 lead, but it was short-lived as Ione, helped by two Viking double faults, quickly evened things up at one. Then, with serve, Ione took a 2-1 lead, but Umatilla answered with a narrow 40-30 game win to tie things up at two apiece. That was how the match went for its entirety.

Then, late in the match, Umatilla led 8-7 and had just won the previous two games after trailing 7-6. But more unforced errors and a double fault while deuced handed Ione new life and an 8-8 tie, setting up a tiebreaker. Bolstered by another double fault and more unforced errors from Umatilla, Ione won the last four points of the tiebreaker to take the match 9-8 (7-2).

After the match, Meade spoke with his pair of seniors to see what they thought of the match.

"The first thing they said was they didn't mentally show up," he said. "I would totally agree with that. There were a ton of unforced errors — silly, silly mistakes. Things I wouldn't expect from a pair of competitive seniors. And they know that those are things they need to work on and will be completely unacceptable when we get to districts and state...With that, though, if we fix our double faults and

unforced errors, we'll be just fine."

Filling in as the No. 1 boys singles player was Armenta, who took on German foreign exchange student Glasen. Despite the 8-3 decision, Meade said he thought Armenta handled the call up well enough for a freshman.

"You've got to lose a lot to win a lot," Meade said of Armenta. "You've always got to challenge yourself to play players that are better than you, because that will really help you figure out the areas you need to work on and improve as a player. Even though he lost, I still thought he played the best match he's played all season."

On the girls side, Webb's 8-2 win wasn't a surprise. The junior took a quick 4-1 lead and built on it, winning four of the next five games to run away from Rios.

"Dual matches are fun, it's a great experience," Meade said. "But moving forward into districts and state, you're always going to be playing someone who's as good as or better than you, and so learning how to close points quickly rather than rallying back and forth and waiting for the other person to screw up, those are just things that all of us need to work on — even our top players. We have a lot of season left."

Umatilla hosts Helix on Thursday at 4 p.m.

GO SEE IT

Wednesday, April 8

Boys Tennis
Hermiston vs. The Dalles, 4 p.m.
Girls Tennis
Hermiston @ The Dalles, 4 p.m.

Thursday, April 9

Girls Golf
Hermiston @ Pendleton @ Pendleton CC, 9 a.m.
Tennis
Umatilla vs. Helix, 4 p.m.
Stanfield vs. Riverside, 4 p.m.

Friday, April 10

Baseball
Hermiston vs. Parkrose (DH), 3 p.m.
Umatilla @ Nyssa (DH), 1 p.m.
Softball
Hermiston vs. Lakeridge, 3 p.m.
Umatilla @ Nyssa (DH), 1 p.m.
Lacrosse
Hermiston @ Richland, 7 p.m.
Tennis
Stanfield @ Sherman County, 2:30 p.m.
Golf
Echo @ Pendleton @ Pendleton CC, 12 p.m.

Saturday, April 11

Track
Hermiston @ Willamette Falls Invitational @ Oregon City, 10 a.m.
Stanfield @ Dick Horyna Invitational, 11 a.m.
Echo @ Dick Horyna Invitational, 11 a.m.
Softball
Echo @ Imbler, 1 p.m.
Baseball
Stanfield @ Elgin (DH), 1 p.m.

Hermiston softball thrashes Senators

Following a strong offensive performance Friday afternoon against Reynolds, the Hermiston softball team had its best offensive day of the early season Tuesday in Portland despite some tweaks in the lineup.

The Bulldogs tossed up 22 runs in a 22-2 five-inning non-league drubbing of the Madison Senators at Delta Park. The win gives Hermiston (4-6) after losing three straight. The Bulldogs are 3-3 in their last six.

Bobbi Hofbauer led the way at the plate, going 3-4 with four runs scored. Breyanna Naylor took the ball in the circle, throwing four innings of shutout ball on one hit, while walking three and striking out two. Hermiston pounded out 14 hits, all sin-

gles.

"The girls are making huge improvements," head coach Kylee Lete said. "We tried to capitalize early. The girls are making those adjustments. Right now, we hope to keep making those adjustments and making those improvements and let the rest take care of itself."

Hermiston certainly struck early. After a scoreless, but not quiet, first inning, Hermiston plated four in the second frame, capped by an RBI single from Jaime Hinkley, who occupied the two slot instead of her normal lead-off role.

The Bulldogs got three more in the third, with McKenzie Juul, the six hitter, Julissa Almager, the seven hitter, and Hofbauer, in the eight slot, all notching base hits.

Those three each scored, as well.

Hermiston really broke things open in the fourth, batting around almost twice and scoring nine runs to take a 7-0 game and make it 16-0. Abi Drotzmann, Hofbauer and Mikayla Kopacz each had hits in the frame, and all but two Bulldogs crossed the plate safely. Hermiston added six more in the fifth, with Hofbauer adding her third hit of the day and Kalene Wheeler getting in on the action with a single.

Hermiston plays again Friday at 3 p.m. against Lakeridge.

HERMISTON 22,
MADISON 2

HHS 043 96-22 14 0

MHS 000 02-243
V. White-Elk and M. Dike; B. Naylor, T. Betz and
ZB. T. Bohannon (MHS).

WESTON-MCEWEN
11, ECHO 1

The Weston-McEwen TigerScots beat the Echo Cougars 11-1 in a non-league softball game Tuesday in Athena.

No further details were reported.

WESTON-MCEWEN
21, UMATILLA 2

The Umatilla softball team lost a non-league game to Weston-McEwen 21-2 on Tuesday in Athena.

No further details were reported.

SEE ROUNDUP/A8