

Rooting for youth baseball

I read something that saddened me on Thursday.

The fields I learned the game of baseball on might be removed. They're in a not-so-wonderful part of Longview and aren't used for baseball anymore, and people are starting to use them for not-so-wonderful purposes.

I spent a huge part of my childhood at Central Cal Ripken Youth Baseball. My dad was president there for a few years, and I'd spend many week nights and Saturdays at the ballpark watching games, helping rake, working the scoreboard. I never had so much fun. But that experience is becoming more and more uncommon. With the rise of travel and baseball and soccer teams poaching players, it forces youth leagues like Central to fold or merge with others, leaving its facilities to the dogs.

There might be a few in Hermiston who share the nostalgic feelings about similar ballparks. Field of Dreams, Hermiston Little League's primary site, was built in 1998 and dedicated in April of that year. Those who grew up playing at the single-field site on East Hurlburt and Southeast Sixth Street have differing memories and experiences than those who have played at Field of Dreams, and a small group of people has played at both.

The beginning of Central's decline was when it merged with the other league in Longview — Western — to form Longview Youth Baseball, and the 3-year-old league primarily uses Western's old facility and uses Central's for various tournaments in the summer. My first ever hit came at Central. My first strikeout — at the plate and on the mound — were there. I umpired my first ever game there. I forged friendships there



SAM BARBEE
FROM THE SIDELINES
Sports reporter

and learned lessons. I grew up there.

It's almost like a piece of me is going away. I've never had the experience of driving by a place and seeing something new in its stead, forcing me to imagine what was replaced.

I didn't know about the Central's baseball fields when I went to Hermiston Little League's opening ceremonies April 4. But it makes that day even more special to me.

More than 600 players are registered in Hermiston's league. That's a fantastic number. In a good year, which tailed off significantly after I left, Central was lucky to have 250 to 300 players. Merged with another team on the other side of town, Longview produces about 700 Cal Ripken players. That's in a town almost twice the size as Hermiston.

In many places, youth leagues are ghost towns. Especially in Longview. Enrollment is down. There were something like three or four teams in the new, combined Longview Youth Baseball league last year. There were six majors teams at Central when I was 12. Before the merger, Central was pulling kids from the nearby towns of Wakhiakum, Clatskanie and Rainier just to fill teams. Those towns had trouble filling teams, too, and had to send their players to Longview just so they could play. The writing was on the wall.

When I played, it was normal to compete in a 12-team tournament, and sometimes those were considered small. One Memorial Day, we assembled an 11-year-old team (which wasn't a good idea, by the

SEE BASEBALL/A7

Bulldog boys bully Bucks

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

Hermiston boys tennis coach Shann West was hoping for a throwdown Tuesday against the rival Pendleton Buckaroos, but what he got was more one-sided.

Against a short-handed Pendleton team, the Bulldogs routed the Bucks 6-1 in their second dual match of the year. Pendleton brought just six players, and one of them — Jeremy Cochrane — sat out his usual No. 1 doubles match because of a sore shoulder.

"I know a lot of the guys weren't thrilled they only had six guys, and not knowing that ahead of time was kind of disappointing," West said. "Especially it being the rivalry, you would hope and expect that you have a full squad and a full lineup and go head-to-head to figure out what school's best. We didn't really get that today. So our minds were kind of out of it a little, and we didn't play our game."

The Bulldogs cruised through their singles matches with the closest match coming from an 8-6 decision between Bulldog Valentino Whitsell and Henry Holdman. Bulldog Jacob Snell got the nod as the No. 1 singles player over usual top guy Tyler Wadekamper, and Snell didn't disappoint. The lanky lefty handled Gareth Haug 8-3, and Wadekamper sailed past Cochrane 8-2.



SAM BARBEE PHOTO
Hermiston senior Tyler Wadekamper serves against Pendleton's Jeremy Cochrane during a No. 2 singles match Tuesday in Hermiston. Wadekamper won 8-2.

The senior Wadekamper was playing as the No. 2 because he missed the last couple available practice days to tour colleges, and Tuesday was his first day back. He took a quick 3-0 lead on accurate forehands and a strong serve, and handled the wind well down the stretch. He said he was a little rusty from missing a couple days, but overall was pleased with how he played.

"I thought my forehand was pretty on today," Wadekamper said, adding that the wind played a role in some of his missed

hits. "I thought it was a pretty good match overall."

In doubles action, Ayden Prewitt and Skyler Grigg ate the only Hermiston loss when Haug and Holdman beat the No. 1 doubles team 8-1. Race Latham and Cameron Meade's match was canceled because of shoulder injury, Stefano Peiris and Koby Grigg beat Holdman and Daniel Medina 8-4, and Hermiston's Patrick Wicks and Jason Morris topped Josh Mendoza and Peter Wallace 8-2.

The Haug-Holdman pairing was the first time

they played doubles together all year. For Hermiston, West said Prewitt and Grigg aren't used to such a long break before their matches, and that probably played a role in their loss.

The win was Hermiston's second in as many dual matches. It has been a slow start for the Bulldogs in terms of duals, and, with just two months of school left, their schedule is about to pick up. The Bulldogs have a dual against Hood River Valley later this week and two events each week for the rest of the season, including a two-day weekend tournament at Capital next week.

"We're gonna bust through them now," West said. "We've been practicing a whole lot, (and the feeling is), 'What are we practicing for? Nothing's happening.' Hopefully, we get rolling and get our competitive juices flowing and get ready for our opponents as they come on."

The girls tennis match pitting Hermiston and Pendleton against each other was rained out Tuesday. A makeup date has not yet been set.

Singles
Jacob Snell, HHS def. Gareth Haug, PHS 8-3
Tyler Wadekamper, HHS def. Jeremy Cochrane, PHS 8-2
Valentino Whitsell, HHS def. Henry Holdman, PHS 8-6
Caleb Jorgensen, HHS def. Daniel Medina, PHS 8-4
Doubles
Gareth Haug and Henry Holdman, PHS def. Ayden Prewitt and Skyler Grigg, HHS 8-1
Stefano Peiris and Koby Grigg, HHS def. Daniel Medina and Josh Mendoza, PHS 8-4
Patrick Wicks and Jason Morris, HHS def. Josh Mendoza and Peter Wallace, PHS 8-2

Hermiston track splits with Hood River Valley

Stanfield baseball defeats Weston-McEwen

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

In Hermiston's second dual meet of the season Tuesday, the Bulldog track team split with Hood River Valley.

Hermiston won the boys side, earning 70.5 points to Hood River's 60.5. The tables turned on the girls side, with the Eagles garnering 73 points to Hermiston's 63.

Chirs Behrendt, Sara Ortiz, Alexis Mercado, Melany Solario, Alexi Mercado, Emanuel Ibarra, Lillie Wheeler, Trysten Seavert, Luis Medina, Noa Ena, Ayleen Sandoval, Maddy Juul, Tyler McCabe, Sheridan Zumwalt and a relay team of Andrew Horn, Zumwalt, McCabe and Behrendt won events.

Hermiston's next meet is Friday at River's Edge in Umatilla. Events begin at 11 a.m.

On Saturday, Hermiston's Audrey Lincoln continued her stellar 2015 campaign by placing second in both her individual events at the Willamette Falls Invitational in Oregon City, Oregon.

The sophomore sprinter finished five hundredths of a second behind Julia Stepper of Woodland, Washington, in the 200-meter sprint, and three hundredths of a second behind Mylene Gorzynski of Corvallis in the 400-meters. Lincoln clocked a time of 26.32 seconds in the 200-meter and 59.88 in the 400.

As a team, the Hermiston girls placed ninth in the large-school division with 31 points. On the boys side, the Bulldogs notched 39 points, tying Pendleton for eighth. Host Oregon City won both the boys and the girls large-school divisions. Woodland won both sides of the small school division.

BASEBALL

STANFIELD 6, WESTON-MCEWEN 3

The Stanfield Tigers baseball team kept its winning streak alive with a 6-3 win over Weston-McEwen in a non-league game Tuesday evening.

Ryan Bailey took the ball and turned in another "great performance," head coach Bryan Johnson said. He threw six innings, fanned

11 and allowed no earned runs on just two hits.

It was almost spoiled by another "poor hitting" day with numerous "lazy" fly balls and runners left on base, Johnson said.

With the win, Stanfield moves to 8-3 (2-0) on the year, good for a tie atop the Eastern Oregon League with 10-3 (4-0) Vale. Nyssa isn't far behind at 5-3 (2-0). The Tigers are currently ranked sixth by the OSAA. "It was an ugly win for us," Johnson said. "Much improvement is needed."

Stanfield's next test is a showdown with 4A Valley Catholic Saturday in Stanfield. First pitch is at noon.

Over the weekend, the Tigers swept the Elgin/Imbler Huskies 3-1 and 4-0 Saturday in a 3A Eastern Oregon League doubleheader.

In the opener, sophomore lefty Klay Jenson went five innings, allowing an earned run on just two hits, walked one and fanned nine. Sophomore right-hander Dylan Grogan came in to slam the door, pitching the final two innings of shutout ball. Tyler Monkus led the way at the plate, going 2-for-4 out of the lead off spot and scored two of Stanfield's three runs.

Jenson was just as good at the plate as he was on the mound, notching two RBIs on a single.

In the nightcap, Tony Flores was nearly untouchable.

The sophomore righty went the distance on just 82 pitches, tossing a two-hit shutout while whiffing six. Grogan was 2-for-3 at the plate with two RBIs, and Steven Allan and Hunter Barnes each drove in runs, too.

Stanfield was held scoreless until the sixth, when Monkus was hit by a pitch, stole second and scored when Allan bunted to sacrifice him to third. Grogan then walked and came around on a two-out single by Barnes.

In the seventh, up 2-0, Grogan drove in Bailey and Jason Fitzpatrick on a two-out single to left field.

SOFTBALL

BAKER 5, ECHO 4

The Echo softball team dropped its second straight game Tuesday, coming up short in a 5-4 decision in Baker City.

Echo dropped to 6-5 (3-1) with the loss and into a tie for second with Enterprise/Joseph/Wallowa.

No further details were reported.

The Echo Cougars softball team split a weekend doubleheader with Elgin/Imbler on Saturday, winning the opener 8-6 in eight innings and dropping the night cap 11-4.

In the opener, Echo had to rally to pull out the win.

Headed into the bottom half of the fifth, things were knotted at three until the Huskies scored in the fifth and sixth, while the Cougars plated just one in the sixth.

Echo pushed across two in the top of the seventh to take a 6-5 lead, highlighted by a Jamie Christopher double. The lead was short-lived, though, as the Huskies came right back with a run of their own in the bottom of the seventh to send the game into extra frames. The Cougars wouldn't be denied, though, as Bailey Srofe, Monique Montoya and Christopher each had hits, Beth Milbrodt had an RBI and Echo plated two to take the 8-6 decision. Milbrodt's no-out sacrifice fly plated Srofe to put Echo ahead for good.

Christopher finished 2-for-5 with two RBIs, Montoya was 2-for-4 with a double and Mackenzie Gonzales chipped in with an RBI double. Gonzales threw all eight innings, allowing the six runs, one earned, on eight hits while striking out eight and walking just one. The lone earned run came in the bottom of the fifth inning.

In the nightcap, things didn't quite go Echo's way.

The Huskies, again facing Gonzales, plated four in the home half of the first inning and three in the third to take a commanding 7-3 lead they wouldn't relinquish. Of the 11 runs allowed, though, none were earned as Echo committed six errors. Echo managed just two hits in the loss, led by Montoya's 1-for-2 with an RBI and a run scored.

GOLF

The Hermiston boys tennis team came away with a third place finish at the Bend Invite on Monday.

The Bulldogs shot a plus-39 323, putting them firmly in third place, 12 strokes behind second-place Bend and 16 strokes ahead of fourth-place Mountain View.

Paden LaCoursiere finished third individually, carding a plus-4 75. He was just a stroke back of Summit's Jack Loberg for second place and two strokes back of Bend's

SEE ROUNDUP/A7

GO SEE IT

Wednesday, April 15

No events scheduled

Thursday, April 16

- Boys Golf**
Hermiston @ Pendleton Invite, 9 a.m.
- Softball**
Hermiston vs. Southridge (WA), 4 p.m.
Umatilla vs. Pilot Rock (DH), 4 p.m.
- Girls Tennis**
Hermiston vs. Hood River Valley, 4 p.m.
- Boys Tennis**
Hermiston @ Hood River Valley, 4 p.m.

Friday, April 17

- Track**
Hermiston @ River's Edge, 11 a.m.
Umatilla @ River's Edge, 11 a.m.
Stanfield @ River's Edge, 11 a.m.
Echo @ River's Edge, 11 a.m.
- Lacrosse**
Hermiston @ Summit, 8 p.m.
- Softball**
Umatilla @ Enterprise (DH), 3 p.m.
Echo vs. Grant Union, 1 p.m.
- Tennis**
Stanfield vs. Weston-McEwen, Helix, Condon @ Weston-McEwen, 4 p.m.
- Golf**
Echo tournament @ Echo Hills, 10 a.m.

Saturday, April 18

- Track**
Hermiston @ UO Relays in Eugene, Oregon, 10 a.m.
Stanfield @ Riverside, 11 a.m.
- Baseball**
Hermiston @ The Dalles (DH), 12 p.m.
Stanfield vs. Valley Catholic, 12 p.m.
- Softball**
Hermiston @ The Dalles (DH), 12 p.m.
- Lacrosse**
Hermiston @ Rigeview, 5 p.m.
- Tennis**
Umatilla @ McLoughlin, 9 a.m.