

Echo Tigers split double header with Prospectors

EO MEDIA GROUP

SOFTBALL

In a 3A Eastern Oregon League doubleheader on Friday, the Echo softball team had a couple of slow starts, but it rallied to salvage one of them.

Against the Grant Union Prospectors, Echo spotted them five runs in the first inning of the first game and two in the first inning of the second. Echo rallied from a 7-2 deficit in the opener to win 9-8, but couldn't muster the bats in an 8-2 loss in the nightcap.

Echo (7-4, 4-2) retains sole possession of second place behind still undefeated-in-league Vale. Grant Union sits in fourth place.

Monique Montoya was 1-for-4 with three RBIs and Samantha McQuown was 3-for-4 out of the eight hole. McKenzie Gonzales continued to pitch well, throwing all seven innings and allowing eight runs, four earned, on eight hits and fanned 11 and walked six.

GU sent 10 batters to the plate in the bottom of the first, and Echo responded with six of its own. Down 5-0, Montoya reached on an error to plate both Christopher and Hannah McCarty to cut the

lead to 5-2. After GU extended the lead to 7-2 in the second, Erika Parks scored on a wild pitch in the third and was followed shortly thereafter by Gonzales, who scored on an error to make the count 7-4.

From this point, Echo would score five of the next six runs in the game to take control. With Alyssa Ray aboard at first base, Kenzie Blankenship doubled to plate the Cougar's fifth run, and Montoya drove in Blankenship an out later to cut the lead to just one at 7-6. Gonzales stole home in the fifth to tie things up at seven apiece, and Parks singled home Christopher in sixth to take an 8-7 lead. It wouldn't last, as GU pushed across the go-ahead run in the top half of the seventh, but Ray walked with one out and came around on Christopher's two-out walk-off single to hand Echo a 9-8 come-from-behind victory.

GRANT UNION 8, ECHO 2

In the second leg of the doubleheader, Grant Union again struck early but this time held on for an 8-2 win Friday afternoon in Echo.

The Prospectors scored in four innings and plated multiple runs in three of those four. GU had a 4-0 lead after the first three innings, and Echo's two in the sixth was offset by three Prospector runs that frame. Echo managed just three hits and committed six errors, leading to five unearned runs.

Ray got the start in the circle, but went just 2.1 innings, allowing three runs, two earned, on just one hit but walked five. Gonzales came in to relieve Ray in the third, and went the final 4.2 innings allowing five runs, just one earned, on five hits, walked four and struck out three. Christopher, Parks and Bailey Srofe had the three hits for Echo in an otherwise forgetful affair.

Echo got its two when Christopher scored on a passed ball with nobody out and Montoya reached on an error, allowing McCarty to scamper home.

The Cougars are set to play again Tuesday when Heppner comes to town. First pitch is at 4 p.m.

SOUTHRIDGE 6, HERMISTON 1

The Bulldogs struck first, but couldn't keep its offense rolling as Southridge (WA) came from behind for a 6-1 win in non-league softball action on Thursday.

It was Hermiston's final league tune-up, and there were positives despite the outcome, coach Kylee Lete said.

Bunting was one of them, and the Bulldogs (6-7) scored their only run in the first inning on a squeeze play that brought Kaleen Wheeler in from third.

Julissa Almaguez and Taylor Betz also pitched well, Lete said, but were let down by a defense that committed five errors.

"(Southridge) had some good hard hits, but errors were definitely a big factor to this game," she said. "Almaguez and Betz) threw the ball well, we just made too many errors behind them and left some runners on base."

Hermiston had its three-game winning streak snapped, and will look to get back above .500 when it travels to The Dalles on Saturday to take on the Riverhawks in a league-opening doubleheader that starts at noon.

SOUTHRIDGE (WA) 6, HERMISTON 1

BOYS GOLF

Paden LaCoursierre took top honors for the Hermiston Bulldogs at the Pendleton Invitational, but it was the home Buckaroos that earned the team win Thursday at Pendleton Country Club.

The Bulldog senior carded an identical 5-over 77 to Buckaroo golfer Reilly Hegarty, but LaCoursierre won a playoff off hole and Hegarty was forced to settle for second. Three others arrived at the clubhouse one stroke off of LaCoursierre and Hegarty. The Buckaroos Brayden Pulver, Hermiston's Anders Lind and The Dalles Chase Snodgrass all shot 6-over 78. Snodgrass was awarded third place.

Pendleton finished four strokes better than rival Hermiston to win the nine-team competition. The Dalles took third.

Nathan Som and Jared Geier bolstered the Buckaroos winning scores, shooting 9-over and 14-over respectively. Zac Adams and J.D. Thacker rounded out the Bulldogs top four.

Mac-Hi finished in sixth place. Sterling Sandberg turned in a team-best 19-over 91 for the Pioneers.

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Sydney Stoner and Ryan Mullaly. Julissa Almaguez, Taylor Betz (3) and Kaleen Wheeler. W — Stoner. L — Almaguez. 2B — Breyanna Naylor (Hermiston).

Girls Tennis HERMISTON 7, HOOD RIVER VALLEY 1

At Hood River Valley, the Bulldogs were one singles match victory from pulling off the sweep of the Eagles Thursday.

Katelyn Millard, Jaycee Ternes and MacKenzie Hill dropped just three combined singles sets to earn victories in the top three singles matches. Devyn Wolfe took the lone loss, falling in three sets that concluded with a 10-7 tie-break set.

All four doubles teams won in straight sets. Brianna Wolfe and Cheyanne Peterson won the top singles match, Kylie Marckwick and Whitney McMahon the No. 2, Athens Reid and Tanya Jamie-Sanchez the third team, and Reed Middleton and Breana Wadekamper the final doubles match.

Hermiston will play Pendleton in a make-up league dual on Monday at 4 p.m. at West Hills.

SWARAT:

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knit community there. When Blackburn learned Swarat was leaning toward NNU, he added his support.

"I was all for it," Blackburn said. "He came to (assistant coach) Sean (Williams) and I, and both of us know the coach over there. He thought about it more than I (did) before I went to college. He was like, 'Hey, I'm going to go check it out. What do I need to say to the coach?' All these

questions. I was like, 'Man, he's really thought about this.' That's what makes him a great person — he's thought out, he's planned."

Swarat, a cross country runner and saxophonist in the pep band, was thrilled when NNU gave him the opportunity to pursue both interests. In his junior year, Swarat visited Nampa, where his sister is currently a student, but the cross country team was at a meet and the coaches were unavailable. The counselors and professors passed his name

along to the cross country coaches, who shortly after expressed interest in Swarat. Eventually, NNU assistant cross country coach and distance track and field coach Jake Perry approached him after a meet and told Swarat the Crusaders were interested in him.

The road to becoming a collegiate athlete was a bumpy one for Swarat.

In each of his first three years, he started his seasons strong before getting injured and unable to run at the crucial end of the season. His

senior year was his first full season.

His breakthrough moment came at the Kyle Burnside Wildhorse Invite in Pendleton in October, when he ran his best 5,000-meter time: 16 minutes, 49.21 seconds, which was good for ninth place and his best finish of the season.

It was then that Swarat wondered if he could run at the next level. Once Perry formally told Swarat NNU was interested in him and he ran with the Crusaders on his second visit to Nampa, he

said that he fully realized he could make the next step. He said on his first run with the team as a recruit, he looked around and thought, "I'm no different."

"We're the same," he said. "We're just runners. We can go out and do the same thing and be a team."

Flanked by his father and his coach Wednesday, Swarat smiled as he penned his name, accepting his scholarship. He smiled as he described his recruiting process and smiled when he thought about the future.

He even smiled when he explained his situation on the team: He's one of the youngest members of a squad that graduates both its seniors from the 2014 roster. The other five returners are freshmen or sophomores.

Swarat acknowledged it will be a challenge for him to break in, but it's one he's already accepted.

"I know that I've done the work," Swarat said. "I know that I want it. I want to be a champion. I really felt that confidence in myself. One race is all you need."

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