

PREP TRACK • PREP BASEBALL • PREP VOLLEYBALL • SCHEDULE

Hodges leaves big cleats to fill



SAM BARBEE
FROM THE SIDELINES
Sports reporter

Rarely does a person become synonymous with an organization. It's happened in the past. John Wooden is synonymous with UCLA basketball. Don James is synonymous with Washington Huskies football. Ken Griffey Jr. is synonymous with the Seattle Mariners.

In Hermiston, Mark Hodges is synonymous with Hermiston football.

His record is the best in the program's history. He's won the most games, he's won league titles, and he won the big one: a state championship.

It came as a surprise to many that he finally gave way to his hips and announced he was stepping down this week. It was sudden, too. Bulldog radio voice Erick Olson said he would have expected Hodges to step down in the fall after the football season ended. He had been sitting on the news for a while and wanted to wait for the right time.

Wednesday was the right time.

When I first came to Hermiston, Hodges was one of the first names I learned. I was told Hermiston football was a big deal, and he was at the center of it. I heard he was intense, and the first time I saw him I understood why. I was nervous covering that first game against Kamiakin. Hodges and I had spoken on the phone, but meeting someone is always different. Yes, he was intense, but he was also willing to give his time. He was a busy man, and I could understand that, but he always answered questions the best he could.

After we spoke this week, I thanked him for being good to a rookie reporter. He said as long as I was fair and respectful, he would give me time. He never blew me off.

That's consistent with the man Hermiston knows. Joe Thompson and Olson both had glowing things to say. Player Luis Medina called Hodges his dad at school. Quarterback Chase Knutz said he could think of no other coach he would rather play for.

Those comments don't fade away. They slowly crescendo as time moves along, slowly creating a myth. Perhaps Hodges is deserving of that status. After all, the evolution of Hermiston football occurred with him in charge, with him stalking the practice field, intently observing the action, praising good plays and correcting bad ones.

His ability to relate to teenagers was a skill. He is wise, he's intense and he's passionate, but he's also got a great sense of humor and a self-awareness about him. He's comfortable in his own skin and is true to himself. As a player, you're drawn to those guys. It's easy to play for someone who is willing to be authentic for you. The best coaches I ever had were ones I knew as people, not just as coaches. Hodges' players knew him as a person. They could talk to him about personal matters and that respect showed. Guys have been visiting him in his office or in the weight room to say a few words, to ask him how he's doing.

They say people aren't measured by what they say but what they do. What Hodges has done has deeply affected his players to the point he'll stay with them forever.

"He taught me how to be a man," Medina said.

I wish Hodges the best of luck in his upcoming hip replacements, his recovery and his choice to do what's best for him and his family. His passion and enthusiasm about the game of football are obvious and infectious.

"I think it's the greatest game that's ever been invented," Hodges said of football. "I think it's the greatest thing for young men to be involved with. I just think the lessons you can learn from football and leadership are just irreplaceable."

What Hodges failed to mention is the impact a person can have on young men. The lessons the boys learned from football are irreplaceable, sure, but stories like Medina's take it an extra step.

Hodges won't just be remembered as a historically great football coach in this town. He'll also be remembered as an historically great person in this town. That's the most important thing.

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

Hermiston's Ena inks with Centralia

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

Before the start of the 2014 volleyball campaign, someone asked Hermiston head coach Becky Wadekamper if senior outside hitter Noa Ena could play at the next level.

She said Ena could if she found the right team. Apparently she did. This week, Ena inked her intentions to play volleyball at Centralia Community College in Centralia, Washington, where she will join former Bulldog teammate Kim Nevil. The Trailblazers compete in the West Division of the Northwest Athletic

Conference under head coach Susan Gordon.

For the Bulldogs, Ena was a leading force offensively, frequently leading the team in kills. She was also a leader on and off the floor, providing energy and laughs when they were needed, Wadekamper said.

"I'm grateful for this opportunity," Ena said Thursday at Hermiston High School. "I'm really excited and hope to do the best I can. I want to thank my parents for bringing the pain but pushing me to my best; my coaching staff

SEE ENA/A8



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Hermiston senior Noa Ena, flanked by her parents, holds a volleyball and the letter announcing her intent to play for Centralia Community College next school year at her signing ceremony Thursday.

Robles powers Hermiston to split

Junior strikes out 14 in complete game

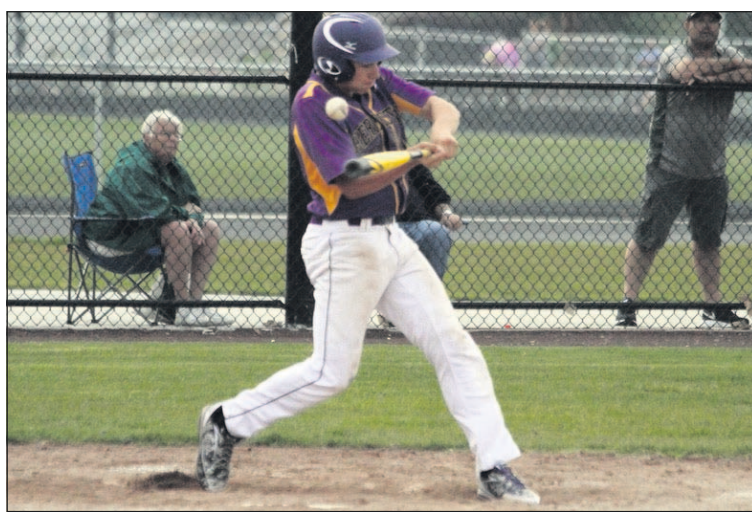
BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

Under a beautiful red sunset, Hermiston junior RJ Robles capped off a beautiful performance.

The left-hander tossed a complete game Friday night, striking out 14 batters while allowing just two earned runs on five scattered hits in an 8-2 win over rival Pendleton. The win salvaged the doubleheader after an 8-0 loss earlier in the day.

"He's a Bulldog," head coach Lance Hawkins said of Robles. "He gets up there and doesn't say three words, but he battles every time he gets out there. That's what we need."

Hermiston (9-10, 2-6) remains in fourth place in the Columbia River Conference and must win out to secure a playoff birth. Pendleton (8-13, 4-4) sits in second. Kyler Mikami had two hits for the Bulldogs, and Cole Smith a triple and two RBIs. Caden Smith tripled for the Bucks and drove in



SAM BARBEE

Hermiston freshman Daniel Gossler fouls off a high fastball Friday evening during an 8-2 win in the second game of a doubleheader with Pendleton at Armand Larive Middle School.

two runs, and Brandon Hergert doubled as well.

Robles had every facet of his repertoire working Friday night. He was locating his fastball early in the count and getting ahead of hitters, and he threw his offspeed pitches for strikes, keeping the aggressive Pendleton hitters off balance.

Robles struck out the side in the top of the first on 12 pitches,

setting the trend for the rest of the night. It wasn't smooth sailing, however.

Pendleton put Robles in a jam in the second when Jack Peterson worked a leadoff walk and Brandon Hergert doubled into left-center field to put Buckaroos on second and third with one out. Robles struck out the next two batters, however, on eight pitches to end the threat.

After Hermiston plated three in the bottom of the second on RBIs from Jay Lindeman, Michael Gossler and Mikami, Pendleton came right back with two of its own.

Hermiston's bats then came alive. The Bulldogs scored two more runs in the bottom of the third when Tyler Sexton laced a 1-1 pitch through up the middle, scoring both Daniel Gossler and Cole Smith.

In the fourth, Hermiston got three more, chasing Pendleton starter Brady Smith. Mikami had his second of two hits with one out, Chase Root walked and Smith rocketed a triple to the right field fence for two more runs. After Sexton walked, Landon Gammell shot one through the left side of the infield, allowing Smith to ease across the plate for Hermiston's eighth and final run.

"All year (the players) are saying 'We gotta do it,'" Hawkins said. "The second game, they did that. Great pitching, timely hitting, (10) hits, no errors — that's going to get us to be successful."

Hermiston heads to Pendleton on Tuesday for the conclusion of the home-and-home three game series. First pitch is set for 4:30 p.m.

Dawgs in good field position for district track tourney

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

With the track and field district tournament approaching, the Hermiston Bulldogs are feeling good about the rest of the season.

Traditionally, the sprinting section of the Hermiston track and field team has been the weakest of the disciplines. In 2015, however, sprinting has played a huge role in the Bulldogs' success.

Led by the boys 4x100-meters relay team of Ethan Snow, Chris Behrednt, Sheridan Zumwalt and Tyler McCabe, and sophomore Audrey Lincoln for the girls, the Bulldogs are collectively in a good place as the district meet looms.

"We're getting a good group of kids to really buy in," first-year head coach Emily Strot said Wednesday. "It's a challenge, but the kids are doing great, and my staff is amazing. It's a challenge because the perception of track and field in Hermiston isn't necessarily what I want it to be. I want track and field to be the combination of every sport

at Hermiston High School that's not going in the spring. I think it can be that. I think it can be the program that can bring the entire athletic department together."

The 4x100 boys team, full of football players, is currently ranked second in the state. The group's time of 43.46 seconds at the Kiwanis Invitational last weekend stands as the second-best mark in the state behind only a 43.40 time by a Summit group. The Bulldogs have never had a successful boys sprinting team, and Snow, Behrednt, Zumwalt and McCabe have a good chance to place state in a few weeks, Strot said.

Though Snow has run each 4x100 race this season with Behrednt, Zumwalt and McCabe, Cory Adams will run the first leg of the event at districts today in Spokane because he beat Snow in the 100 meters at a meet Wednesday. It was close — less than half a second — but sprinting coach Mark Hodges decided to reward Adams.

Lincoln, who has had a breakout sophomore season, has

SEE TRACK/A8



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Hermiston freshman Maddy Juul unleashes a javelin throw Wednesday at the Grizzly-Knight-Bulldog 3-way daul at Kennsion Stadium. Juul's 103-03 missed a personal best by an inch.

GO SEE IT

Saturday, May 2

Girls Tennis

Hermiston @ Bend Tournament, TBD
Umatilla @ Helix Tournament @ Hermiston, 10 a.m.

Stanfield @ Helix Tournament @ Hermiston, 10 a.m.

Boys Tennis

Hermiston @ Madras Tournament, 9 a.m.
Umatilla @ Helix Tournament @ Hermiston, 10 a.m.

Stanfield @ Helix Tournament @ Hermiston, 10 a.m.

Track and Field

Hermiston @ Central Valley (Spokane), 9 a.m.

Echo @ Portland Christian @ 1A Track Classic (qualifier), 10 a.m.

Echo @ Joseph, 1 p.m.

Lacrosse

Hermiston vs. Mountain View, 3 p.m.

Softball

Echo vs. Nyssa @ Echo Tournament, 1 p.m.

Golf

Echo @ Union @ Buffalo Peaks, 10 a.m.

Sunday, May 3

Lacrosse

Hermiston vs. Bend, 1 p.m.

Monday, May 4

Umatilla tennis, TBD

Tuesday, May 5

Tennis

Stanfield vs. McLoughlin, 4:30 p.m.

Baseball

Hermiston @ Pendleton, 4:30 p.m.

Stanfield vs. Tri-City Prep, 5 p.m.

Umatilla vs. Heppner (DH), 2 p.m.

Softball

Hermiston @ Pendleton, 4:30 p.m.

Umatilla @ Heppner, 4 p.m.

Boys Golf

Hermiston @ Hermiston Invite @ Big River GC, 10 a.m.

Wednesday, May 6

Boys Tennis

Hermiston vs. Hood River Valley, 4 p.m.

Girls Tennis

Hermiston @ Hood River Valley, 4 p.m.