

SPORTS

ENA:

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— they're amazing; my family for being my support system; and I want to thank my Heavenly Father for this blessing and this opportunity."

Ena originally planned to attend Brigham Young University to prepare for her Mormon mission after deciding at the time she wasn't going to pursue a career in volleyball past high school. Then Centralia coaches, through Wadekamper, began expressing interest in the athletic outside hitter, and Ena changed her mind.

Ena faced one last hurdle, however. Because of Ena's faith, she observes Sundays as a holy day and she asked Gordon and staff if they practice or play on Sundays. If yes, it would be a problem. Luckily for Ena, however, the team takes Sundays off, giving Ena the answer she hoped to hear.

"I just felt like it was the right decision," she said of signing with Centralia. "Religion was a huge part ... Me and my family thought this would be a good place for me for the next two years."

Coach recalls amusing moment with Ena

A few years ago, Wadekamper took her volleyball team to a corn maze in the Portland area. It was a haunted corn maze with various people dressed up in scary outfits with or without props to make it a convincing show.

Wadekamper said as the Bulldog volleyball players cautiously made their way around the mud-soaked maze, an actor with a chain-less chainsaw jumped out and scared Ena so badly that she dragged Wadekamper down into the mud with her.

As Wadekamper told this story at Ena's signing ceremony Thursday afternoon at Hermiston High School, the Centralia-bound outside hitter buried her head in her hands and periodically looked up with an embarrassed smile. Teammates giggled at the memory, and most all in attendance gave at least the slightest of chuckles. That's the Noa Ena that Wadekamper and her teammates have come to know and will miss.

"Noa's a fun kid," Wadekamper said. "(I will miss) her smile, her sense of humor. She's a good kid."

That was in November. It wasn't until over spring break this year that Ena finally committed to Centralia, however. After weighing all the options, Centralia fit each criterion set by her.

It took Wadekamper some prodding to finally get Ena to open up about her decision. Wadekamper said Ena wouldn't come right out with it, and once she did, the now-retired coach was thrilled.

"(Wadekamper said), 'It's about time,'" Ena said, laughing.

"I was just real happy

for her," Wadekamper said.

It also helped Ena that Centralia is of comparable size to Hermiston. As of 2010, Centralia had a population of just more than 16,000, making it a bit smaller than Hermiston. The city is roughly halfway between Portland and Seattle and is a short drive from the coast, as well. The four-hour drive played a factor, too, as Ena wanted to be far enough away to branch out but close enough to home to visit periodically.

"I think they're ex-

cited. They want me out of the house," Ena joked about her parents. "I think they'll keep saying that until graduation day."

Other than Nevil and Gordon, Ena won't know anyone in Centralia. It's not a situation that's foreign to her, however. Ena and her family moved from Stanfield her freshman year, and she described herself as a "hermit" in that first year.

It will be a similar experience in western Washington.

"I'm excited to meet new people," she said. "I don't like talking to new people, but I'm excited to learn that attribute and characteristic, but I'm excited to see who I will become later in life."

As a volleyball player, though, Ena is set up for good things.

"She just loves to learn," Wadekamper said. "She's a terrific athlete. She's gifted that way. She's very coachable, and she loves to learn new stuff and she's very competitive."

"I would fully anticipate her graduating from there and probably going on from there, even," Wadekamper added. "She's got a bright future and should be fun to watch her."



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Hermiston sophomore Audrey Lincoln pulls away from the pack during her lone race Wednesday, the 300 meters, at the Grizzly-Knight-Bulldog three-way dual at Kennison Stadium. Lincoln finished in 42.17.

Bulldogs track tune-up a success

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

The Hermiston Bulldogs welcomed the Helix Grizzlies and Irrigon Knights to Kennison Stadium Wednesday afternoon for a tune-up track meet, and the Bulldogs walked away happy.

The meet gave Hermiston an opportunity to trot out athletes in a low-pressure situation on a day that was as much about training as competing, head coach Emily Strot said.

There were some surprises. Sophomore sprinting standout Audrey Lincoln didn't run either the 100 or 200 meters, but ran a 300-meter race and beat her intended mark. Sprinting coach Mark Hodges said he wanted Lincoln to finish in 43 seconds, and she crossed the line in 42.17.

The boys 100-meter sprint was the closest race of the day. The top-five finishers all came within .18 seconds of

each other in what was nearly a dead heat. Chris Behrendt, with a time of 11.34, just edged Tyler McCabe's 11.38. Irrigon's Carlos Zacarias and Hermiston's Cory Adams tied for third after finishing in 11.45, and Sheridan Zumwalt wasn't far off the pace at 11.52.

Hermiston's Elias Arenas dominated the boys discus, spinning a 129 foot, 1 inch toss to win by 15 feet. Maddy Juul broke 100 in the javelin with a 103-03, and Jazmin Gutierrez set a personal record with 90-10, more than 16 feet better than her previous best. In the boys javelin, Nathan Hunsaker continued to impress, launching a 146-01 effort. Freshman Tyler Rohman finished second with a personal best of 132-07, nearly seven feet better than his previous mark.

Hermiston will compete at the 2015 Strandberg meet at 8:30 a.m. today at Central Valley High School in Spokane.

TRACK:

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run the third-best 100 meters in the 5A ranks with a time of 12.52 seconds and the eighth-best 200 time — 26.10.

"Our boys team is doing so good," Strot said. "We have five to six guys who are competing for that (fourth relay) spot. Our boys sprints are tough. We have six really fast guys, (only) four get a spot on the relay."

The sprinters aren't the only group setting themselves up for a state run. The throwers are also having a splendid 2015 campaign, with first-year thrower Trey Neal taking the lead, followed by Jazzmin Gutierrez, Maddy Juul and Noa Ena for the girls.

Neal, a football and basketball player, has posted the fourth-best shot put toss in the state — 51 feet, 3.75 inches — despite never competitively throwing before. He's

not in the top 10 in discus or javelin, his other two events, but is 12th in the discus with a throw of 143-04.

Meanwhile, both Gutierrez, who also plays basketball, and Juul, who plays volleyball and basketball, are in the top 10 in the shot. Gutierrez sits sixth with a top throw of 36-08 and Juul is ninth with a toss of 36-06.5.

"I gotta give a shout-out to my throws squad," Strot, a thrower herself,

said. "They're tough. Right now, if you look at the top 10 in districts, we have seven of the top 10 in the girls shot put, and seven of the top 10 in girls discus, and you can only bring three (to state). Imagine if you could bring the whole crew."

Hermiston's last meet before the district tournament is today at the 2015 Strandberg meet at Central Valley High School in Spokane. Events begin at 8:30 a.m.

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