

A message to my mom



SAM BARBEE
FROM THE SIDELINES
Sports reporter

Sunday is Mother's Day. It's an opportunity for us to honor and thank those women who raised us and made us the people we've become.

For many boys, that means helping with sports, whether it's driving or bringing snacks or keeping score. They help make it happen just as much as the players and coaches do.

A couple of weeks ago, I told the story about the most amazing sports experience I ever had, a playoff baseball game my team had no business winning but somehow pulled off. My mom was there. She had her book to read between innings and watched the game as a fan. She knew I wasn't going to play, but she went and watched my team and rooted for my team. She was just as happy as I was that we had won. There was no disappointment or frustration that I didn't play. It was all about the team.

And that's been my mom. Very rarely has my mom been upset with my playing time, and when she was, it mostly had to do with politics outside of the team dynamic. When I was growing up playing for my dad, my mom kept score. She said my dad taught her how by giving her a score book and having her score Mariners games. That's where she learned baseball.

Actually, the reason I played quarterback at all in my football career was because of her.

I started playing football in fifth grade, the normal time then to start in Longview. The team that drafted me needed a quarterback, as the previous guy had graduated from Longview Youth Football. After the first or second practice, it was my mom's turn to pick me up, and she was late. So, to fill the time, the coach grabbed a football and asked if I wanted to play catch. I said I did, and I guessed I impressed him because I played quarterback that year. My mom arrived at the field huffing and puffing and embarrassed, but there we were, me and the coach I barely knew, throwing and laughing and getting to know each other. He later told me that catch session put me at the top of the prospective quarterback list.

Thanks for your tardiness, mom. She was my chauffeur, too. I remember in eighth grade I had just grown a couple inches and my mom had this Mazda Miata. They were fun cars, but man they were small. I went to private school, but in the fall I played football at a local middle school. I had to haul my gear around, and I could barely fit into my mom's car with my gear. That's when she decided to get the PT Cruiser, the car I drive now. It was in that car that she drove me to have my ankle looked at during spring football one year. I sprained it during a tackling drill, and she left work to come get me. I couldn't walk, and she helped me to the car. That's what moms do, I guess.

My mom made it a point to go to as many games as she could. That was important to her. I can count the number of games she missed on one hand. There was a freshman basketball game in Camas, Washington. There was a summer baseball game once, and there was a JV football game. I think that's it. She would get upset and apologetic if she ever missed a game. It was that important to her.

I admit this with difficulty, but sometimes I've taken my mom for granted. Her unconditional love became standard, became expected, and I stopped appreciating it. But as I get older, I'm realizing the intrinsic value that unconditional love brings. I always had someone in my corner, ready to fix my cuts and give me water and encouragement. I never had to look for that anywhere else. It was always right beside me.

So, Mom, thank you for everything you've done for me. I wouldn't be the person I am today without your constant love and support. From bringing me water at baseball games, to driving me places, to just being my mom. Happy Mother's Day. I love you.

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

Hermiston's Robles shuts out The Dalles

Bulldogs defeat Riverhawks 1-0

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

Midway through the 2015 baseball season, Hermiston first base coach John Christy sent head coach Lance Hawkins a detailed text message after a game that conceded perhaps the Bulldogs aren't a gap-to-gap doubles team — perhaps they're a win-with-good-pitching-and-defense team.

Friday night, they were just that. RJ Robles threw his second straight solid home outing, tossing a complete game shutout on just three hits in a 1-0 pitcher's duel over The Dalles at Armand Larive Middle School.

"It was big, especially for our seniors," Dylan Caldwell, whose fourth-inning sacrifice fly plated the game's only run, said of the win. "It's lose or go home right now ... All we can control is keep winning and keep doing what we can do and knowing we can do it and believe in ourselves."

Caldwell's sacrifice fly in the fourth broke open a scoreless game that had no end in sight. Robles was dominant, not allowing a runner past first base until the seventh. Riverhawks hurler Colton Walker was just as good, allowing just the one earned run on four hits in a six-inning complete game.

Hermiston did just enough offensively to not spoil Robles' outing.

"When you got to win every game to get into the playoffs,



Hermiston junior RJ Robles (2) is congratulated by teammates including Chase Root, right, and Lukas Tolan, center, after throwing a complete game shutout Friday evening to beat The Dalles 1-0.

I'll take two wild pitches and a sacrifice fly," Hawkins said. "I'll take that every time."

After missing two opportunities with runners in scoring position in the first three innings, Hermiston finally capitalized on Riverhawk mistakes. Lukas Tolan walked to lead off the fourth inning and was sacrificed to second by Jay Lindeman. Then, with Caldwell at the plate, Walker's 1-0 delivery got to the backstop, allowing Tolan to scamper to third. The next pitch, Caldwell connected with the ball and lifted it into left-center field, giving Tolan more than enough time to cross home plate for the game's only run.

"He gave me a little elevated fastball, and I just took advantage of it," Caldwell said of the sacrifice fly. "I trusted my hands like coach says and got the job done."

The run gave Robles all the room he needed. The junior lefty struck out nine batters, giving him 23 in his last two outings. The Dalles' three hits were scattered, and Robles walked just two Riverhawks. At one point, he retired 14 of the 15 Riverhawks he faced until the seventh.

After not allowing a runner past first base all game, Robles got in a huge jam in the seventh with Riverhawks occupying second and third base with just one out.

The junior never panicked. He got Boston Bate to ground out harmlessly to shortstop, keeping Walker at third, and he sawed off Dylan DesRochers for the final out of the ball game.

The outing was business as usual for Robles.

"It's awesome because we always know we're going to get

strikes and his best from him," Caldwell said of the lefty. "Anything he does, he's so concentrated in the dugout and always gives his best to everybody, so everybody wants to give their best in return to him."

Hermiston has just two games remaining on its schedule, and it must win both. The Bulldogs will host league champion Hood River Valley Tuesday at Armand Larive Middle School and closes out its season with the Pendleton Buckaroos in Pendleton Friday. Both games are set to start at 4:30 p.m.

HERMISTON 1, THE DALLES 0

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C. Walker and K. Mathisen; R. Robles and L. Gammell.			

Amie Zitterkob finds home on track

Umatilla senior went from manager to sprinter in one day

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

As a freshman, Umatilla's Amie Zitterkob wasn't interested in sports.

She describes herself as a "loner" that year, not willing to put herself out of her comfort zone in awkward situations.

"I just thought I wasn't going to be a high school athlete, and I just decided the next year to be (one)," the senior said. "I knew that if I branched and tried something new, I would have a lot of fun with it."

So, her sophomore year, she joined the volleyball team in the fall. It went well enough that she intended to play her junior year, as well. To help stay in shape in the off season, she decided to turn out for spring track.

So she approached sprinting and football coach Mike Mosher to ask if she could come on as a manager to just train and not run any meets. After one practice, Mosher told Zitterkob she had a new job on the team.

"I said, 'You're no longer a track manager. You're now a track sprinter,' and one thing led to another," Mosher said. "She learned how to run, and her athleticism showed when she learned how to run."

"I remember we were training for 200s, and he kept asking me where I was last



Umatilla track athlete Amie Zitterkob only started sprinting her sophomore year, but in her senior year she is the top 100- and 200-meter sprinter in class 3A.

year," Zitterkob remembered. "He always said I was dumb for not doing it my freshman year."

Still, for that first month, Zitterkob considered track as only a training period for volleyball. Her first meet was at the Grandview Invite in Washington, where she finished in 13.58 seconds in the 100 meters, a time she still remembers. She didn't run that

fast for another five meets, but the die was cast. Zitterkob had fallen in love with sprinting.

"I liked the training that we did," she said. "It just seemed to really click."

After that, Zitterkob's mentality went from using track to train for volleyball to using volleyball to train track before dropping volleyball entirely.

Her times began to drop, as well, and in an Eastern Ore-

gon League meet, she set her personal best of 13.29. She ran a 62.63 400-meter at that same meet, giving her a spot at state her very first season of sprinting.

Zitterkob said she has never been more nervous before a race than she was at her first state appearance.

"I was ready to throw up I was so nervous," she said.

She placed fourth in the 400.

Mosher said Zitterkob's work ethic was the catalyst for taking her from newbie to recording the fastest time 100 time in girls 3A.

"One thing that really stands out is her work ethic," Mosher said. "It's one of those things that really goes unseen. The extra stuff that she does, coming in in the morning to lift and run, doing the extra stuff that a lot of times people won't. It's a lot of things that when people aren't watching, she's doing."

The process has become Zitterkob's favorite part of track. She understands that good times aren't created at meets — they're created in the heat on a Tuesday afternoon when it's just the Umatilla Vikings athletes and coaches on the track.

"Just training as hard as I can and seeing how far I've come (is enjoyable)," she said. "I just kind of impressed myself with what I was capable of. I didn't know what I was capable of. Seeing my hard work in races has really been cool."

SEE ZITTERKOB/A10

GO SEE IT

Saturday, May 9

Lacrosse

Hermiston @ Sisters @ Sali Tournament, TBD

Track and Field

Hermiston @ Pendleton @ Pilot Rock (CRC Novice Finale), 10 a.m.

Stanfield @ Weston-McEwen, 11 a.m.

Echo @ Arlington, 10 a.m.

Tennis

Umatilla @ Sub-districts @ Hermiston, 9 a.m.

Stanfield @ Sub-districts @ Hermiston, 9 a.m.

Baseball

Stanfield @ Portland Christian, 11 a.m.

Stanfield vs. Clatskanie @ Portland Christian, 1 a.m.

Softball

Echo @ Portland Christian, 2 p.m.

Sunday, May 10

Lacrosse

Hermiston @ Sali Tournament, TBD

Monday, May 11

Boys Golf

Hermiston @ Districts @ Redmond, TBD

Tennis

Hermiston girls vs. Pendleton (from 5/8), 4 p.m.

Umatilla @ Sub-districts @ Hermiston, 9 a.m.

Stanfield @ Sub-districts @ Hermiston, 9 a.m.

Tuesday, May 12

Boys Golf

Hermiston @ Districts @ Redmond, TBD

Baseball

Hermiston @ Hood River Valley, 4 p.m.

Umatilla @ Sherman County, 4 p.m.

Stanfield vs. Irrigon, 5 p.m.

Softball

Hermiston vs. Hood River Valley, 4:30 p.m.

Umatilla vs. Walla Walla Academy (WA), 4 p.m.

Echo @ Irrigon, 5 p.m.

Wednesday, May 13

Track and Field

Hermiston @ Districts @ The Dalles, 4 p.m.