

Don't give up, don't ever give up



SAM BARBEE
FROM THE SIDELINES
Sports reporter

On a hot day, the air-conditioned dojo in Stanfield was packed with parents and friends of Marcos Madera for a benefit break-a-thon to raise money to help his mom shuttle him to Portland and back for treatment. He was diagnosed with brain cancer several months ago, and his mother, who was six months pregnant at the time of diagnosis, was struggling financially to get him west to see to doctors.

So for three hours on Saturday, students broke boards, instructors broke bricks, and fun was had.

But there was an overarching lesson in the whole deal. There were a few, actually, but there's one that really stuck with me. It was about perseverance.

My connection to cancer was mentioned in a column I wrote in December about my uncle. I've seen it up close, how the medication can slowly bury the person you once knew, how the pain can slowly strip away any happiness that might have remained.

And the same can be said for breaking boards.

I picked a couple of them up and inspected them. They weren't made of especially soft wood nor were they especially thin, and some would put up a rather humorous fight.

But no one quit. No one threw up their hands and said, "I'm done with this nonsense." Everyone finished with a pile of broken boards at their feet and smiles on their faces.

And the whole time, Marcos watched smiling, too. It was certainly good for him to get some distracting entertainment in a time where distractions are needed.

There was one little guy, probably about 7 years old, who caught a board wrong on one of his strikes, and he grabbed his hand in pain. Tears began to leak out of his eyes, the pain in his hand obvious to everyone watching. Owner and operator Erwin Watson gave him a couple seconds to gather himself and asked if he would like to continue. After some gentle encouraging, he agreed, and broke the board on the next attempt.

That's the lesson right there. It may not be fun, or entirely pleasurable and comfortable, but going forward is the most important thing. Watson himself lost his mother to cancer, and he told the story of his mother's last days when she said she was tired — tired of the pain, tired of being tired, tired of the grind.

Watson implored her to keep fighting, to stay the course.

She was gone soon after. Watson talked a lot about showing his students what it means to give back, why it's important to use your skills and talents to help others.

But I saw something larger. I saw a bunch of peers showing Marcos what it looks like to not quit. Neither is more important than the other — they're both critical values to learn as children.

But Marcos has to look no further than the 7-year-old whose hand was hurting and who broke the board anyway. Perseverance is key.

It was shown in a very public way by Jim Valvano, a college basketball coach who was diagnosed with cancer and who gave a rousing speech imploring everyone in the audience to never quit.

"Cancer can take away all my physical abilities," he closed, his body failing him. "It cannot touch my mind, it cannot touch my heart and it cannot touch my soul. And those three things are going to carry on forever."

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



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Marcos Madera (center) holds the funds raised by Eastern Oregon Family Taekwondo after the benefit break-a-thon Saturday.

Breaking cancer

Eastern Oregon Taekwondo breaks boards and bricks for McNary boy with cancer

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

A couple months ago, Erwin Watson was on his rounds as a Coca-Cola distributor. One of his regular stops was the McNary Market in Umatilla, and he always saw a happy woman named Margarita Madera working the counter.

One day, though, Madera was absent. It wasn't like her to be gone on Tuesdays. She was gone the next time and the time after that. He asked the shop owner why Madera had been missing work. The owner said Madera's son, Marcos, had been di-

agnosed with brain cancer, and she was shuttling him to Portland for treatment.

Some time later, Watson had a chance meeting with Madera at Wal-Mart. He was there filling his orders, saw Madera and approached her. He apologized and asked if Madera had any help with her son. She said she didn't and that she was six months pregnant. He started for his truck in the Wal-Mart parking lot and made it outside of the store. Something turned him around, however, he said. He felt like he had to help.

So he returned to the store, found Madera and offered his help. He knew he could use his side business — Eastern Oregon Family Taekwondo — to give some kind of assistance, and he knew exactly what he was going to do.

"I've always wanted to do a break-a-thon for cancer," Watson said. "I've wanted to do this for breast cancer or prostate



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Erwin Watson's oldest son, Tyler, holds a board for a student to break Saturday in Stanfield at a break-a-thon for Marcos Madera, a Umatilla boy who's been diagnosed with brain cancer.

cancer. Now's my chance to see how it's gonna go. My tool is I know a lot of people, and my students, it's a good experience for them to go out and to help another kid their own age and learn how to give back."

A couple weeks later, with the event being organized and funds being

raised, he finally met Marcos. It was, again, at Wal-Mart, and Marcos was sitting alone on a bench in the apparel department. Chemotherapy had made him weak, so he couldn't follow his mother around the store. He couldn't take his glasses off either, as his eyes have become sensitive to light.

To raise money for Marcos, Watson sent his students, of which there are about 30, to get pledges for each board they would break using their martial arts training. The students raised more than \$2,800 and presented an oversized check to

SEE CANCER/A7

Hermiston rallies to down Stanfield, 19-14

Bulldogs led 10-2 in fifth, trailed 14-12 after seven

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

Heading into the top of the eighth inning, Hermiston, made up of Bulldog juniors and younger, had lost momentum. The Bulldogs, playing in their first game of the summer, saw their 10-2 lead erased and faced a 14-12 deficit.

No matter. Hermiston sent 11 batters to the plate in the eighth, scored seven runs and held on to win a wild affair over Stanfield, 19-14, in 104-degree heat Monday. Tyler Sexton led the way for Hermiston, going 3-for-4 with a double, five RBIs and a walk, and also started on the hill and tossed four innings, allowing two runs on three hits, walked one and struck out three.

"A couple times I thought we were gonna bail, but they bowed their backs, and that's what I'm looking for," Hermiston coach

Lance Hawkins said. "I want guys to bow their backs and go, 'We're gonna keep competing.' Stanfield did. I take my hat off to them. They kept going and they pushed us a little bit."

Hermiston scored in every inning, forcing Stanfield to do the same. The Tigers didn't, but scored 11 runs in the last four innings to turn a laugh into a barn-burner.

"We made a game," Stanfield coach Bryan Johnson said. "We could've got 10-runned a lot quicker, but we got some guys on base, and they gave us some runs. (We) would've liked to get off to a better start pitching-wise. There were a lot of walks."

Stanfield found itself in trouble early because of walks. Stanfield starter Tony Flores walked eight in 2 2/3 innings. It started in the first, when Sexton doubled home RJ Robles, who walked, and Lukas Tolan, who reached on an error. In fact, of the eight times Hermiston batted, six times the lead-off batter reached, five times it was on a walk and four

SEE BULLDOGS/A7



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Hermiston's Tyler Sexton delivers a pitch early in the Bulldogs' 19-14 win over Stanfield Monday. Sexton allowed two runs over four innings and drove in five runs at the plate.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Charity golf tournament Saturday

The Umatilla Police Officer's Association is hosting its third annual charity golf tournament Saturday at Big River Golf Course.

The cost is \$200 for a four-member team. Players may register as a team or as individuals. The cost includes lunch but does not include carts, up to two

of which can be reserved. Registration begins at 7 a.m. the day of, and the tournament begins at 8 a.m. with a shotgun start. Mulligans are also available for \$5.

Scramble for Scholarships coming up

The 22nd Annual Scramble for Scholarships will be Friday

at Big River Golf Course in Umatilla.

The four-person scramble is limited to 120 players with a cost of \$70, which includes a boxed lunch, barbecue dinner and prizes. Players may register as teams or individuals. Forms can be picked up at Big River Golf Course and should be returned to Caitlin Armein at Good Shepherd Community

Health Foundation, 600 N.W. 11th St., Hermiston. Checks should be made payable to Good Shepherd Community Health Foundation.

Check-in and team/hole assignments begins at 11:30, followed by a box lunch at noon and a shotgun start at 1 p.m. The barbecue, awards ceremony and prize raffle start at 5 p.m.

GO SEE IT

Wednesday, June 10

Baseball
Hermiston vs. Richland, 5 p.m.
Hermiston Little League game, 6 p.m.

Thursday, June 11

Baseball
Hermiston Little League games, 5 p.m.
Stanfield vs. Sunnyside Christian (DH), 4 p.m.

Friday, June 12

Baseball
Hermiston Little League games, 6 p.m.

Saturday, June 13

No events scheduled

If you have any other sports events, contact Sam Barbee at sbarbee@hermistonherald.com