

Martinez makes a mark on Mariners

SAM BARBEE FROM THE SIDELINES



It was a little more than a month ago that the Seattle Mariners hired local legend Edgar Martinez as its new batting coach. It came at a time when the Mariners were swatting at baseballs like they were flies, and, like flies, the balls seemed to know the bats were coming and avoided them. It made for some rather frustrating baseball to watch. But days after Martinez was announced, I said that the M's offense is going to look better, and hopefully the Mariners win some games because of it. This was fully realized in my head at a wedding this weekend, when my dad turned to me and said, "You know, it's getting to the point where you can't just dismiss Edgar's presence as an aberration." He's right. The baseball has looked better. But the wins still aren't coming. Yet. The first major sign is the emergence of Mark Trumbo. When he came over from the Arizona Diamondbacks June 3, he was batting .259 with nine home runs. After he got to Seattle, his numbers dropped significantly. He stopped playing. He was flailing wilding at outside pitches. He was at his worst when swinging at pitches a foot outside. But then Edgar came. Trumbo started staying with pitches better. He started seeing the ball batter. His weak fly balls to left or double-play balls turned into line drives up the middle. Since July 3, when his season average was at a season-low .221, Trumbo has batted a sweltering .414 (12-for-31), with an on-base percentage of .452 and an OPS of 1.038. Maybe Trumbo, who is a good Big League hitter, finally got going. But he had been in Seattle a month before Martinez showed up, and his bat caught fire with Martinez as his tutor. Correlation doesn't equal causation, but I see some of the Edgar Effect in Trumbo. But it's more than just what Martinez can do to one hitter. Martinez has changed the whole mentality. I was at the first two games of the Detroit series last week, and it was different watching the Mariners hitters. They've quickly become better (still not great, though) at situational hitting: driving in the runner from third with fewer than two outs; hitting behind a runner at second to move him to third; not striking out when you need to put the ball in play. These are things we watched the Mariners do for three months, and they're starting to break those habits. They also don't care when they're down. On Monday, the Mariners were down 3-0 early until Logan Morrison tied things with a three-run shot. The next night, the Mariners were again down 3-0 until Austin Jackson lined one off the visitor's bullpen roof for a grand slam. I'm not ready to say that these aren't the Mariners of old, that they aren't going to come up short yet again. But at least they're fun to watch again. That has a lot to do with Martinez. Any player will say he's been a godsend with his talent for teaching. We'll see what the longterm benefits are, because they've been wonderful in the short term.

— Sam Barbee is a sports reporter for the Hermiston Herald and East Oregonian based in Hermiston. He can be reached by phone at 541-564-4542 or by email at sbarbee@hermistonherald.com. Follow him on Twitter @SamBarbee1 and follow Herald Sports @HHeraldSports.

3-on-3 to the 10th power

Spokane's Hoopfest instrumental in success of local event

By SAM BARBEE Staff Writer

Starting in 1990, Spokane, Washington has hosted a 3-on-3 basketball tournament called Hoopfest that has blossomed into a 7,000-team experience that describes itself as the biggest basketball event in the country, if not the world. Ten years ago, a small group of Hermiston residents decided to try its luck with a 3-on-3 tournament. In the fall of 2004, in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce, Larry Usher, Joe Thompson, Mike Kay and about 10 others met with the chamber to plan a tournament to take place that July. They settled on the third weekend of the month to avoid Hoopfest, but the chamber decided to go another route by winter and dropped out. So a small group of six or eight stayed with the project. Usher's wife, Karissa, came up with the tourney's name — Takin' It to the Streets — after the famous track by The Doobie Brothers of the same name. This year, Takin' It to the Streets invades downtown Hermiston Friday and Saturday for the 10th annual 3-on-3 basketball tournament. That small group, since the idea was hatched, has been in contact with Hoopfest. And Thompson said their help has been a huge part of their success and he couldn't say enough about the generosity and welcomeness they received from the giants of outdoor 3-on-3 basketball. "We reached out to them on our first day and they were extremely helpful and generous," Thompson said. "They

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FILE PHOTO

Two adult men's teams battle it out on the street courts last summer during the ninth-annual Takin' it to the Streets three-on-three basketball tournament on Main Street in Hermiston.



FILE PHOTO

Hundreds of people lined Main Street last summer to watch teams compete in the ninth-annual Takin' It to the Streets 3-on-3 basketball tournament.

Takin' It to the Streets is not a revival

By SAM BARBEE Staff Writer

To tell the origin story of Takin' It to the Streets, Hermiston's three-on-three basketball tournament, you must first start 20 years ago with a now-defunct town-wide event called SpudFest. If you recall, SpudFest was a weekend in Hermiston that included a car show, face painting, engraving, and three-on-

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Softball team reps Hermiston at state

By SAM BARBEE Staff Writer

The 10/11-year-old team is the only Hermiston softball squad to advance past districts, and that has them looking ahead to compete in the 10/11-year-old state tournament this weekend in Gresham. "It's just that we're the

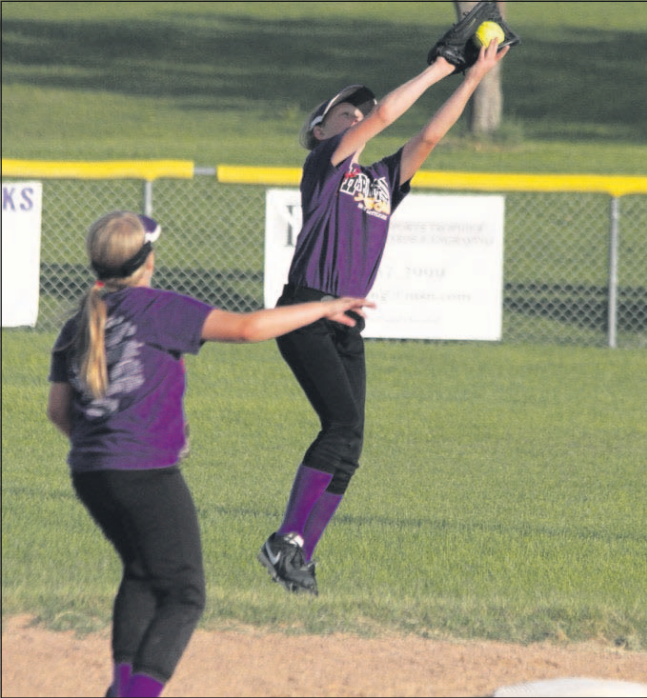
only Hermiston softball team going, which makes me even more motivated to win," shortstop Kayleigh Billsborough said. Simpson wouldn't single out any of the 11 players on the roster, saying that they've bonded as a team and "we hold onto each

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STAFF PHOTO BY SAM BARBEE

Akira Pierson of the Hermiston 10/11-year-old softball team headed to the state tournament this weekend, fields a ball at third base while shortstop Kayleigh Billsborough backs up Tuesday at Field of Dreams in Hermiston.



STAFF PHOTO BY SAM BARBEE

Breanna Simpson, center fielder for the Hermiston 10/11-year-old softball team headed to their state tournament this weekend, makes a catch in shallow center in front of teammate Abigail Findley at Tuesday's practice at Field of Dreams in Hermiston.

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