

Umatilla hires volleyball and assistant football coaches

Umatilla High School will have two new coaches this fall. The Umatilla School Board approved recommendations to hire a volleyball coach and an assistant football coach on Thursday.

UHS math teacher and previous volleyball assistant coach Sonia Borders was promoted to the head position, and Dan Durfey was hired as an assistant football coach.

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were very generous with their time, and Coach Usher has talked to them a few times. Since our first day, we've sponsored a court in Spokane and we put our information in their packet in Spokane in that tournament." They even made up T-shirts with the tournament's name and dates screen printed on them and wore them around the tournament.

Hermiston isn't alone in piggy-backing its tourney on another's. Yakima's Hotshots 3-on-3 tournament advertises on Takin' It to the Streets' website for its August event.

The proactive exposure worked. Participants from 2005's Hoopfest saw T-shirts, packet information and the sponsored court and thought that would be a fun weekend, too. Usher has kept track of participants and teams and sends them an annual newsletter about the upcoming tourney.

Since that first fledgling weekend, Takin' It to the Streets is entering its 10th year, has grown into a 160-team tournament of teams comprised of second-graders through adults. Hotels fill up. Main Street is packed from Northeast 4th Street to Highway 395 and also fill the park behind Eastside Market.

"There's been a plateau, and were kinda figuring out," Thompson said. "I know from what I understand there are other tournaments that have had the same kind of thing happen this year where they've reached a certain spot where (participants) trying to figure out the cost of fuel and lodging, they're having to make choices. You got

to think outside of the box: How do you get them here? What do you do (when they're here)?"

One outside-the-box idea hatched last year was to hire an MC at center court. Thompson mentioned trying to attract bigger and better vendors so the fan experience is improved, as well.

"Everyone kinda does the same things, so were going, 'What can we do differently?'" Thompson said. "I guess were still trying."

But the relationship with Hoopfest is at the center of Takin' It to the Streets. It has been from the beginning and will be for the duration. Thompson said Hoopfest is very self-aware about what it's become, "the 'granddaddy,'" as he put it, and they are not unwilling to use their experience and expertise in helping other, smaller tournaments be successful.

That said, it still has a local focus. The money raised, outside of the local economic impacts at places like restaurants, hotels and gas stations, goes toward high school athletic programs or local AAU teams. Coaches from schools around the area bring their teams and get a cut of the funds. For Thompson, and many others, it's about exposure through fund-raising.

"It's a great family weekend," he said. "It's a way to bring the kids to town with mom and dad. Whether you're playing downtown in front of the Herald, or you're down here at Eastside, it's a great environment: shaded sidewalks are a great way to stay cool; great retailers downtown. It's a fun, positive environment ... It's a great way to get the family together and bring the town of Hermiston some exposure."

Columbia squad, 17-14, in the winner-take-all rubber match.

"They showed how they can work as a team, and get themselves where they need to go and what they need to do," manager Lorena Simpson said. "It's amazing (to qualify for state). The kids have worked really hard for it and they deserve it."

Offensively, Hermiston appears to be in a good place. In its last three games, the team has scored an average of 15.7 runs. But the real advantage Hermiston has entering the state tourney is its familiarity with the heat. Saturday and Sunday's temperatures in Gresham are predicted to touch 91 degrees, which is approaching standard summer desert temperatures.

"I think we will do very well with the heat," Simpson said. "It's an advantage. We've already played in it."

Echo hits skid at softball tourney

The Echo Outrage 18U softball team started well, but finished its weekend with three straight losses at a tournament in McMinnville.

The Outrage defeated the Salem Warriors, 8-3, to open play on Saturday,

but then fell to Mid Valley Explosion, 13-8. Their late efforts came up just short in a 7-5 loss to Forest Grove Rampage that began Sunday's action, and then Echo fell, 9-2, when it ran into the Explosion again in their tournament finale.

MacKenzie Gonzales pitched in the win over

Salem, and allowed one earned run on three hits while striking out six and walking five.

Marissa Pratt provided the most consistent bat and recorded at least one hit in every game. She finished 5 for 9 with two runs and one RBI.

Gonzales (2 for 5) and Kelly McLaughlin (2 for 7)

drove in a team-high three RBIs over the weekend, and each hit a home run. Erika Parks (4 for 8) hit two doubles, scored three runs and added two more RBIs, and Kenzie Blankenship (3 for 7) and Kendra Hart (2 for 7) each hit two RBIs. Blankenship led the team with four runs scored.

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three basketball.

That tournament was called Shake n' Bake, and ran the duration of SpudFest from 1994-1997. The tournament was running fine for the first couple of years with 50 or 60 teams signed up, but by 1997 participation dwindled to just about 10 or 15 teams, Joe Thompson said.

In addition to the waning attendance, Thompson said that SpudFest, as a whole, just didn't have the kind of community support that things like it have now. Plus, there just wasn't enough manpower to go around. The tournament was pawned off first to the high school, which didn't have enough staff. It was then, handed it to the fledgling Hermiston Parks and Recreation

Department, who also couldn't handle it. From there, it was shelved.

But in the early 2000s with the arrival of a Hermiston boys basketball coach and new athletic director, "fresh blood and fresh ideas" infused themselves into the fray. It was Larry Usher, then the boys basketball coach, who spearheaded Takin' It to the Streets. It was Usher who contacted Hoopfest in Spokane and built a

relationship.

Takin' It to the Streets, though the same base concept as Shake n' Bake, is "apples and oranges," Thompson said.

"There really isn't any tie from what was done then to what is being done now," Thompson said. "It was a way to bring funding for programs, bring families to town. That was more of its origin. It wasn't necessarily trying to bringing back the past."



A team member from team Durantulas, pictured in white, takes on a team member from team Never Seen Sunday during the ninth-annual Takin' it to the Streets three-on-three basketball tournament last summer on Main Street in Hermiston.

FILE PHOTO

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other's teamwork."

That teamwork was on display during a particularly grueling district game a couple weeks ago.

At the district tournament in Irrigon, Hermiston took on host Columbia during the largest heat wave to hit the West Coast in decades. Columbia jumped to a quick lead, but the resilient squad didn't back down. After a 1 p.m. start, the game was delayed due to the heat. Several Hermiston players were complaining of heat exhaustion, and the game was delayed to get them hydrated. It took about an hour for the ballgame to resume, and it finished around 6 p.m.

But the long day seemingly had no effect on Hermiston. They rebounded for the 11-4 win the next day, and held off a charging



PHOTO COURTESY HERMISTON LITTLE LEAGUE

Top row (from left to right): Breanna Simpson, Manager Lorena Simpson, Regan Hereford, Coach Brandy Findley, Eliza Rodriguez, Kendyl Inners, Coach Crystal Inners, Marybeth Hernandez, Breanna Reyes-Purcell. Bottom row: Abigail Findley, Akira Pierson, Cayleen Cummings, Alexa Kestler, Kaylee Billsborough.

THIS WEEK'S ANSWERS

Super Crossword

Answers

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