

## Youths make good baseball a great show

SAM BARBEE  
FROM THE  
SIDELINES



If you have some time today, head on down to Field of Dreams and watch some really good youth baseball.

Hermiston is hosting two state tournaments. That you probably already know. Hermiston doesn't have any teams playing, though. But you probably already know that, too.

But it's good ball and fun to watch. I spent about an hour down there Tuesday and had to peel myself away from it. Bend South, playing in the first 9/10-year-old semi-final, had played three scoreless innings with La Grande in a game filled with wonderful defensive plays and good pitching.

But there's more than just the on-field product when watching little guys play ball. There's a purity there that is absent at higher levels. There are no egos. There are no massive, time-consuming ticks at the plate. It's just full of kids grabbing their bat, stepping into the box and swinging at the first good pitch they see.

There's a rhythm to good baseball and it's hypnotic. Higher level baseball, with its between-inning entertainment and strange entitlement, has lost of some that, but it's there in doses.

But these kids play the game with a joy that made me smile.

Here's an example: In the second inning Bend South had runners at first and second with two out. On a solid base hit down the left field line, the runner at second hesitated while rounding third, and the throw beat him to the plate. He didn't slide, and the catcher applied the tag just in time in a bang-bang play for the third out of the inning and preserving the scoreless tie.

That's the good baseball. But here's the best part: the left fielder couldn't get to the dugout because his teammates mauled him on the skirt between his dugout and third base. His hat had come off and he was holding it, so he couldn't high-five like he wanted to. But teammates threw themselves into him; patted him on the back; raised their gloves so he might touch his to theirs.

The absolute joy in the kids' faces was what kept me for three innings. It shows the unadulterated happiness that youth sports can bring when done properly. Sure, it's the state tournament. The games matter. Mistakes would be corrected, and fast.

But you can't simulate children being excited for one another and congratulating one another. I saw a guy help the catcher put his shin guards on. Every third out, the teams would meet the fielder who made that final out, and greet him with smiles and well-wishes.

It was beautiful. And I hope you get a chance to go take some of it in. It'll be worth it.

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## Lady Bulldogs poised to dominate again

By SAM BARBEE  
Staff Writer

The Hermiston girls basketball team ended its dominant winter with a loss to La Salle Prep at Gill Coliseum in the 5A state championship game.

Hermiston lost a starter, Abi Drotzmann, and its sixth-man, Tavin Headings, to graduation, but retained first-team all-state selections Jansen Edmiston and Sara Ramirez, as well as underclass standouts Kynzee Padilla and Maddy Juul in addition to some role players.

If Hermiston's summer is any indication, the Bulldogs won't be rebuilding in 2015-16, they'll be re-tooling.

Led by Edmiston and Ramirez, who, according to head coach Steve Hoffert, have been dominant all summer, the Bulldogs pulled off an impressive summer that saw them win a couple tournaments and fared well in the rest.

"A lot of positives were seen in the younger girls over the summer," Hoffert said. "Even though some of those girls were on varsity last year, the minutes

weren't there because of who we had. They didn't get the minutes that they got this summer. From the Walla Walla tournament, which was June 6-7, to Medical Lake, which was July 8-10, the growth in all the younger girls was very impressive. I was very pleased."

Two of the biggest leaps were taken by Juul and Padilla, two returning starters with something to prove.

Padilla, a slashing wing and a rising junior, has come into her own as a perimeter scorer, Hoffert said.

"Kynzee Padilla is gonna be a stud," Hoffert said. "She's gonna be a force next year. Where people didn't see what she could do (last year), and this summer she kinda came out of it a little bit and carried us and dominated some games when we needed help."

Juul, a rising sophomore and skilled post player, is also poised for a productive season. At times, Juul looked tentative on the court this past season. But Hoffert said that is now a thing of the past.



Jansen Edmiston



Sara Ramirez

"Maddy's not a freshman anymore," Hoffert said. "She's not playing like a freshman anymore. She's taken the initiative. She's taking chances, and she's pushing herself. Just that year of maturity has really shown this summer."

Also players such as Sydney Moore, a back-up point guard; Shaelynn Gilbert, another backup point guard; Macey Foley, a senior forward; Rileigh Andreason, a junior guard; Makenzie Lind, a junior forward; and Kiana Heehn, a senior forward; all took steps forward with more minutes to go around.

But perhaps the biggest thing from Hermiston's summer is the dominance

of its electric backcourt pair: Jansen Edmiston and Sara Ramirez.

Already a pair of first-team all-state selections, the two Hermiston standouts have gone from quiet scorers to vocal leaders. Hoffert said they can feel their high school basketball careers slowly concluding, and they're ready and willing to do anything necessary to get over the state championship hump. Hoffert said they take no less than full effort and focus from their teammates and have essentially carried Hermiston through the summer.

They often lead the team in scoring, something they did last year, but they've also bolstered a defensive unit that aver-

age fewer than 35 points allowed in two different tournaments while scoring, on average, more than double their opponents.

"Jansen and Sara are playing like, obviously, first-team all-state players," Hoffert said. "They've both had great summers. Great growth in leadership and scoring. The same players you saw last year, you're gonna be impressed when you see them again. They've matured. They've kicked their game up a step. To have those two doing it is important because those are our senior leaders. Sara and Jansen have dominated games. As a coach, you just sit there and say, 'Wow, this is kinda fun.'

"They're very outspoken right now. They're very positive. They expect nothing less than everybody's best on the court. They tell their teammates, 'I'm a senior. I don't get to come back next year like you guys. I don't expect you to step on the floor without giving 110 percent. I can't afford that.' It's the right message for the right group."

## Farm-City Open to kick off rodeo week

By SAM BARBEE  
Staff Writer

In Hermiston, Farm-City Pro Rodeo is a landmark on the calendar. Piggy-backing on the success of and interest in the rodeo, a golf tournament sprung up.

The Farm-City Open, which is to be played Saturday, Aug. 8, at Big River Golf Course in Umatilla, raises money for college-bound students who are interested in rodeo. The tournament begins with a shotgun start at 8 a.m., after a registration period beginning an hour earlier, with appetizers at 11 a.m. and a pork loin lunch at the conclusion.

"The first couple years was for breast cancer awareness," organizer Kevin Fisher said. "This, the fourth year, we've been giving scholarships."

Last year, the Farm-City Open committee awarded 10 scholarships amounting to more than \$25,000.

"All proceeds are going to a good cause, but it's a tournament for the golfer," Fisher said.

That's because of the prizes that will be waiting at each hole. Broken up into foursomes based on their handicaps, participants will have chances to win various prizes ranging anywhere from new clubs, to Stetson hats, to belt



FILE PHOTO

Rodeo cowboys win buckles and so can participants in a the golf tournament named for the Farm-City Pro Rodeo. This buckle was one of the prizes in the 2011 Farm-City Open golf tournament.

buckles for contests such as closest to the pin, long put, and more. In all, about 70 prizes will be awarded. The par-3 ninth hole even has a car giveaway if an ace is made.

The teams, which are

to be selected Monday, Aug. 6, will be comprised of golfers at all skill-levels and handicaps. They will be tiered, though, so each team member from his or her corresponding tier will only compete against oth-

ers from that tier. This allows as many participants to win as many prizes as possible without a handful of golfers taking home everything.

"It's a good golf tournament for the area,"

Fisher said. "A lot of the guys in it have been in the area for a long time. It's a good gathering."

"They're there to have a great time. There's friends they haven't seen in a long time."

## Young duffers shine at junior golf tournament

HERALD STAFF REPORT

A couple local youth golfers walked away with some hardware after the City of Hermiston Junior Golf Tournament July 22 at the par 72, nine-hole Echo Hills Golf Course.

In the 6-9 year-old division, Colby Lerten ran away with the title, shooting a nine-hole score of 39 as an 8-year-old. He beat runner-up Wyatt Browne by seven strokes and third-place finisher Brayden Lacey by 18 strokes.

In the 10-13 year-old division, it was decidedly more tightly contested. Payton Gadsten shot 51 in nine holes, edging

runner-ups Cody Adams and Keeler Lawson by a single stroke.

Winners received a set of Dunlop drivers. Course pro Jason Speer said most of the participants also took part in the junior golf clinics that ran during June and July, and the tournament was a "culmination of what they learned."

STAFF PHOTO BY JEANNE JEWETT

Hermiston's Colby Lerten poses with his medal and prize clubs after shooting a nine-hole 39 Wednesday to win the City of Hermiston Junior Golf Tournament 6- to 9-year-old division at Echo Hills Golf Course.



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