

## August means new football season near

SAM BARBEE  
FROM THE  
SIDELINES



The month has officially turned to August, and that means fall camps are soon to be underway.

I'm rather excited for my second season of covering northeastern Oregon prep football. Last year was a memorable one, with Hermiston winning its first state title, Stanfield making progress, and young Umatilla and Echo teams gaining valuable experience.

So we start with a bunch of changes. Mark Hodges is retired (for now, at least) and David Faeteete is in at Hermiston. At Stanfield, Dominique Coffin is out after he returned to his alma mater Cascade in Leavenworth, Washington, to take an athletic director/head football coach job there.

Hermiston will be a different team this season. Gone are the quarterback, tight end, a running back, all five offensive linemen, two receivers, two defensive backs, three members of the defensive front four, and a line backer. That's a lot of bodies to replace on a defending state title team. A guy I've been excited about is quarterback Dayshawn Neal, the younger brother of defensive standout Tre Neal. He suited for the playoffs, but never saw any game time behind 5A Offensive Player of the Year Chase Knutz. Even if he doesn't earn the starting job, it's likely he'll get some snaps.

But it's not all new faces. A mainstay from last year's group is again going to be rumbling through opposing defenses. Running back Sam Colbray is likely to garner more carries this season than last due to his backfield mates of Cory Adams and Luis Medina graduating. Nick Daschel of the Oregonian named Colbray one of the top 10 most interesting running backs entering this season. Everyone knows that Colbray is going to get touches. The challenge for Hermiston is to get him touches in places he can do damage. In most cases, those will be simple hand-offs, but that won't be enough.

In Stanfield, the only similarity is the new head coach. The Tigers retain two of their best players: quarterback Dylan Grogan and running back Thyler Monkus. Grogan, though, missed much of last season with a bad back, forcing Monkus to take all the snaps at quarterback in Grogan's absence. But Stanfield still has to replace three offensive linemen, its tight end, a running back and a receiver after going 3-6 (2-3) last season.

Grogan and Monkus are just two pieces of a talented junior class that is competitive in just about every sport. Davy Salas, who was on Coffin's staff last year, takes over as Stanfield's new head guy with a talented roster that was one injury away from making noise in the 2A Columbia Basin Conference.

And that brings us to the two area schools with returning head coaches: Umatilla and Echo.

Umatilla is such a young team that they have nowhere to go but up after a frustrating 0-9 season. Quarterback Jesus Ramirez is only going to get better after his electric sophomore campaign, senior H-back Tristen Sanguino will be a load in the open field, and senior running back Kasen Manley also looks to improve on an all-league campaign from a year ago.

In Echo, the Cougars are coming off a 1-7 campaign and lost some of the team's best players, namely: running back Danny Tappo, defensive end Noah Taylor and tight end Dustin Goldie. But a few athletes remain. Klay Jenson has done nothing but produce and lead in his first two years as a varsity competitor, and the junior quarterback, who put up good numbers as a sophomore, is probably one of the best quarterbacks in his league. Along with senior receiver Brock Moffit and senior Michael Thompson, Echo is looking to take strong winter and spring seasons into fall with an improved 2015 season.

More information about the upcoming fall sports season is coming in a few weeks. Be looking out. In the meantime, enjoy the rest of your summer. Fall will be along soon.

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# Hermiston Super Oval racing to get fans back in the stands

By SAM BARBEE  
Staff Writer

Local car race tracks have found themselves in a tough position. The fervent and loyal fan base that once flocked to Saturday night races has diminishing due to time, among other factors.

But that doesn't mean that the Hermiston Super Oval is going anywhere.

"I think this year has been really good," said Bryson Tarr, owner of Hermiston Super Oval. "It's the third year I've been running it, and we've had a lot of really good improvements. This year the attendance has been the best we've had over these last three years. It's headed in the right direction."

Part of the improvement has been the willingness from Tarr and Dan Nelson, HSO's director of operations, to not rely solely on late-model, super-late-model, sprint cars or any other form of traditional racing. Instead, they've looked to alternatives to



STAFF PHOTO BY SAM BARBEE

Despite a shrinking auto racing industry in the area, Hermiston Super Oval is having its best year attendance wise since Braydon Tarr bought the struggling track three years ago.

get fans, especially the all-important 26-34 male demographic, to come enjoy the race track on a summer Saturday evening.

Included in those alternative events is a month HSO is calling the "Month of Destruction." Beginning with HSO's first school bus race on Aug. 15, which is also, as far as Tarr and Nelson know, is the first race of its kind in the Northwest, the Month of Destruction will also include a

figure-eight trailer race on Aug. 22, and a demolition derby on Aug. 29.

"If we don't put on a show, then the fans won't want to watch," Nelson said. "So, the whole object of this whole year is: How do you get people in the seats and what do they want to see? You watch the highlights. The highlights are the wrecks, the crazy stuff, and who won. So how do we produce more

wrecks, more carnage, more cool stuff, but not put people in danger and not destroy a bunch of really expensive stuff?"

The answer? Novelty races with vehicles not ordinarily seen on the racetrack. HSO has raced cars with boats trailing loosely behind them, large moving targets for other racers.

"So you had guys cutting

See OVAL, A10



STAFF PHOTO BY SAM BARBEE

An old bus sits in front of Desert Lanes Family Fun Center in Hermiston in anticipation of Hermiston's first-ever bus race on Aug. 15 at Hermiston Super Oval.

## These buses to go to track, not school

By SAM BARBEE  
Staff Writer

The Hermiston Super Oval, formerly known as the Umatilla Speedway, was once one piece of a strong auto racing scene in the region. It was one of several race tracks from here to the Tri-Cities and to Yakima, but attendance at race tracks has slowly eroded to almost nothing, and Tri-Cities Raceway ran its last race more than 10 years ago and fields that used to have upwards of 50 race cars is down to maybe 15 any given weekend.

"We probably only had 400 people in the grandstands last week," Hermiston Super Oval Director of Operations Dan Nelson said.

The decline of auto racing in the region has forced Hermiston Super Oval to take creative measures. Nelson and Bryson Tarr, owner of the Hermiston track, put their heads together three weeks ago and came

### IF YOU GO

What: School Bus Race  
Where: Hermiston Super Oval  
When: Saturday, Aug. 15. Gates open at 5 p.m., fan appreciation at 6 p.m., race at 7 p.m.  
How: Adults: \$20; Student/Military/Senior: \$14; Ages 5-12: \$5  
For the absolute best deal, text "HSO" to 313131 to be put on a text list and receive the best deals on tickets and more.

up with an idea: how about they race mini-vans? Then the idea moved to motorhomes, and, eventually, school buses were pitched. Now, at 7 p.m. on Aug. 15, as many as eight school buses will race a figure eight around Hermiston Super Oval in an attempt to raise attendance and save the track from the declining interest in attending race days.

"Tri-Cities Raceway closed and all of us don't want to

travel three or four hours to go race somewhere," Nelson said. "Let's take care of the last little racetrack we got within 100 miles of us. So what you've seen is a bunch of guys come together and support the place."

Nelson, Tarr and the rest of the local auto racing industry are fighting technology. Results and standings are posted on the Internet. Races at HSO are tracked with transponders, and those can be accessed on smartphones to watch the races with lap times. No longer do fans have to go to the racetrack to watch a race.

So the challenge has become how to get folks in the seats.

Three weeks ago, Nelson and Tarr were thinking through ideas, starting with the mini-vans and ending with the buses, and saved it for the middle of August, when school is about to return.

The track acquired the buses when a sizable Tri-Cities church replaced a number of their buses.

"They're all '70s Internationals," Nelson said. "They're not sufficient to drive around with little kids in them to take to church, but they're just fine for what were doing."

Nelson, who has a lifetime of race experience, says he owns about \$2,500 of safety equipment — race suit, helmet, gloves, shoes, neck restraint, seat belt — that he takes with him everywhere that will be installed in the buses. All the drivers have extensive race experience, creating a much safer event at its core than it appears to be on the surface.

"We haven't had any driver seriously injured in the last three years at all," Nelson said. "The perception is that it's very dangerous, and the reality

See BUS, A10

### SPORTS IN BRIEF

#### Half marathon opens registration

Registration is open for the Columbia River Power Half Marathon, which will be run this year on Saturday, Oct. 3.

The course will again begin and end at Big River Golf Course and crosses the McNary Dam.

Along with the half marathon, racers can enter the 8-kilometer walk/run and the Half Marathon Relay.

More information on the course route and registration forms can be found online at ColumbiaRiverMarathon.com.

The Columbia River Power Half Marathon is sponsored by the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce.

#### Golf scramble benefits local Special Olympics

The 10th annual Special Olympics golf scramble will be held on Saturday, Aug. 8 at Echo Hills Golf Course.

Teams of four will compete over 18 holes while raising money for the Hermiston/Pendleton Special Olympics program.

Cost is \$120 per team and the field is capped at 18 teams. The entry fee is tax deductible.

Play will begin at 9 a.m., and the day will feature side games for men and women and continental breakfast and lunch.

Mulligans and scoring

enhancers will also be available for purchase.

For more information call Kristi or Mark at 541-567-1546.

#### Youth pheasant hunt coming to Hermiston

Registration for youths (aged 17 and younger) is open for a free pheasant hunt at the Irrigon Wildlife Area on September 26 and 27 beginning at 8 a.m., and with a second session at 1 p.m.

The hunt itself is free, but participants need a valid hunting license that can be purchased for \$14.50, and a

Harvest Information Program validation, which is free.

Hunters ages 14-17 require an upland bird validation (\$8.50). An adult older than 21 must supervise the participants on the hunt. Children must have passed a hunter registration class to participate.

Both hunter and supervisor must wear an orange hunter hat with eye protection and an orange vest, and the items will be provided if necessary. Contact Pendleton ODFW at 541-276-2344. You may register at [http://www.odfwcalendar.com/?tribe\\_events=free-youth-pheasant-hunt-irrigon-2](http://www.odfwcalendar.com/?tribe_events=free-youth-pheasant-hunt-irrigon-2).

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