

## November power rankings

It's yet another month, so that means it's time for yet another edition of the monthly sports power rankings. Let's jump right in.

1. Stanfield football (8-1, 4-1), OSAA #5, Last month: #1

The Stanfield football team, even with a 60-6 loss to Heppner, stays atop the power rankings for November. That game against the Mustangs entirely got away from the Tigers, as a 14-6 game turned into a 30-6 game in a heartbeat. Stanfield closed its scheduled with two wins over Pilot Rock and Culver, clinching the second spot in the Columbia Basin Conference. In the playoffs, Stanfield gets Vernonia, a team that has cruised through its schedule to a 9-0 (3-0) record including a 72-0 throttling of Culver. Vernonia's schedule, though, is considered weak as the Loggers are ranked ninth while Stanfield is fifth after playing in the competitive CBC.



Sam Barbee FROM THE SIDELINES

The Loggers are gonna throw — a lot — which has been Stanfield's weakness defensively. That said, the Tigers are still deserving of the top spot right now. What a season and what a bounce-back year after the struggles of 2014.

2. Hermiston boys soccer (11-2-2, 4-1-1), OSAA #4, Last month: #2

It's tough to gauge how good Hermiston is because of Hood River Valley dominating the 5A ranks. But the Bulldogs are good. While hosting Hood River a couple of weeks ago, Hermiston gave Hood River all it could handle in a 2-2 draw, a match head coach Rich Harshberger would take any day. The Bulldogs have exercised one minor demon already, winning the play-in round game to move into the 16-team tournament. That plus their record will make this one of the best Hermiston boys soccer teams in recent memory.

3. Hermiston cross country Boys: 5th in state, Girls: two participants Last month: #5

To the Hermiston boys cross country team, a fifth-place finish at state was disappointing. That's just where the internal expectations are of the program. They expect to compete for state titles year in and year out, and 2015 just wasn't their year. Naging injuries and illnesses kept the Bulldogs from reaching peak form and it showed at Lane Community College in the rain and muddy conditions. But the fact that the Bulldogs sent two girls to state as individuals is a step in the right direction for the program as a whole. The girls were once an afterthought to the powerful boys program, but that appears to be evening.

4. Hermiston football 4-5, (3-0), OSAA #16, Last month: NR

Yeah, I know they're under .500, but I don't care. These guys deserve some recognition for how they finished the regular season. I mean, how cool is it that they lost their first five games — which weren't close, mind you — then win their last four and get a home playoff game? Answer: Really, really cool. The Bulldogs knew they would have a chance to do something like this, as they play in one of just five four-team leagues and the only one in the 5A ranks. Wilsonville will be an extremely tough test for Hermiston as the Wildcats' quarterback, a junior named Connor Neville, is a top-level recruit with offers from Boise State and Washington State. The Bulldogs think they can win. Friday night will be fun.

5. Umatilla boys soccer 7-5-1, (6-2), OSAA #17, Last month: NR

Before the season started, head coach Pedro Ortiz said it would be a long season. Well, it certainly didn't live up to the recent success to which the Vikings have grown accustomed. Blowout losses to Riverside demonstrate who's best in that league, but Umatilla was still a good team, finishing second in the league with two losses to Riverside's none. They really missed Dany Ayala and the rest of the multitude of players who graduated from last year's league title-winning club. It took some time for Umatilla to get rolling and even then it could never get over the Riverside hump. The Vikings get St. Mary's in Medford, and the Crusaders have won 13 straight with six shutouts, including 16-0 and 9-0 wins.

Honorable mention: Echo volleyball

Last season, the Cougars started strong and faltered down the stretch. This season, the Cougars started strong but didn't falter, finished third in the Old Oregon League and advanced to the playoffs, where they couldn't get past Dufur, 3-1, in the play-in round. After a match in early October, I asked head coach Janice Scott what was different about the 2015 season and why they wouldn't ruin the good start. She said everything. The leadership was better. The attitude was better. The success the basketball team had last winter would help in playing late meaningful games. It all worked. It was too bad they couldn't get into the bracket proper, but that's fine. Having a better season than the last is always a good thing.

Sam Barbee is a sports reporter for the Hermiston Herald and East Oregonian based out of Hermiston. He can be reached by email at sbarbee@hermistonherald.com or on Twitter @SamBarbee1. Follow Herald Sports @HHeraldSports.

## Bulldogs score three unanswered, advance with win

Hermiston plays either Marist or Woodburn on Saturday

By SAM BARBEE Staff Writer

It was a nightmare start. At least, that's how Hermiston boys soccer coach Rich Harshberger described it.

In the opening round of the 5A state playoffs, the visiting Crescent Valley Raiders scored in the third minute when junior defender Isaac Wilson headed in a corner kick.

It was reminiscent of Hermiston's last match against Hood River Valley, when the Eagles scored early. In that match, Hermiston responded to take a 2-1 lead in a match that ended 2-2.

Tuesday evening, Hermiston

scored thrice unanswered to down the Raiders, 3-1, at Kennison Stadium. The Bulldogs will play the winner of Marist and Woodburn.

"I wasn't worried about it, because I remembered Hood River," Harshberger said. "We came back and did the exact same thing tonight ... I was just like, 'OK, nightmare start again.' But then I was like, 'Wait a minute, I've had a nightmare start before this season, and we recovered from that.' So I had full confidence we could come back from it."

He said his players were mindful of it, too.

"They understood there was a lot of game left and it doesn't take long to score a goal," he said.

Two of Hermiston's goals were utilized by on-the-ground through balls. Crescent Valley had more size than Hermiston, but the Bulldogs were quicker and more



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston's Freddy Rodriguez and Crescent Valley's Isaac Wilson chase down the ball in the Bulldogs' 3-1 win against the Raiders on Tuesday in Hermiston.

skilled. They capitalized on those advantages by sending balls low and letting forwards Freddy Rodriguez and Edwin Rosales go get them.

In the sixth minute, En-

rique Leal found Freddy Rodriguez streaking down the near sideline and all the way to the end line. He spun and dumped it to Edwin Rosales, who was all alone in the center of the box, and he drilled it into the net to equalize.

"Since we see we have a shorter team against taller teams, we think it's smarter to play on the ground instead of through the air," Rosales said. "So, I went and I knew my teammate Freddy would give it to me right where I needed it."

Hermiston added its second goal not too long afterwards when, off a corner, Leal hooked one to Rodriguez at the far post, but Wilson stepped in front to try to clear it. Instead, it bounced off his chest and past Raiders keeper Logan Olbrich for Hermiston's second. Rodriguez added Hermiston's third

See SOCCER, A13

## Cardenas repeats as champ

Hermiston boys finish fifth

By SAM BARBEE Staff Writer

EUGENE — Fabian Cardenas rounded the final curve at Lane Community College with nothing but blue track in front of and behind him.

After winning last fall's 3A/2A/1A state championship and last spring's 3,000-meter run, the Umatilla senior had just 200 meters between him and his third state championship and second straight cross country title.

No one would catch him. Cardenas pulled away from the field in the first mile and never looked back, clocking a time of 15 minutes 50 seconds to win by 25 seconds over Jefferson sophomore Hassan Ibrahim and 37 seconds better than Weston-McEwen's Hayden Scott.

"It's just like last year, it feels really good to win



PHOTO BY JOSHUA BESSEX/EO MEDIA GROUP

Umatilla senior Fabian Cardenas receives his medal as OSAA 3A/2A/1A cross country state championship Saturday at Lane Community College in Eugene.

again," Cardenas said. "Especially because this year was a little tougher, it's a little windier than it was last

year. This year there were a couple more guys up there with me, like Hassan. He was the only guy with me at 60

meters, I knew he was gonna challenge me, at least for part

See RUNNERS, A13

## Bulldogs beat Bucks for league crown

Hunsaker, defense lead Hermiston over Pendleton

By ERIC SINGER Staff Writer

For the fourth-straight season, the Hermiston Bulldogs are Columbia River Conference champions.

And for the fourth-straight year, the Bulldogs defeated the Pendleton Buckaroos in their rivalry game to do so, defeating the Bucks 28-12 on Friday night.

"It feels great," said Hermiston quarterback Nathan Hunsaker after the game. "Way better than earlier this season. We're digging ourselves out (of the hole)."

The road the Bulldogs (4-5, 3-0 CRC) took to get here was littered with potholes early, but it still carried them to the playoffs.

On Oct. 2, Hermiston suffered a 42-10 loss to Coeur d'Alene to drop the Bulldogs to an 0-5 start to the season and made a playoff spot near impossible. Now fast-forward 28 days later



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston quarterback Nathan Hunsaker breaks out of the pocket and rushes the ball Friday in the Bulldogs' 28-12 win against the Bucks in Pendleton.

and the Bulldogs rattled off four-straight wins to wrap up the season and give the team

some steam heading into the postseason.

"It keeps momentum

building and confidence for players," said Hunsaker "We were pretty inexperienced players coming into the season, and confidence helps and keeps our streak alive."

Hunsaker's performance propelled the Bulldogs to victory, carrying the ball 13 times for 158 yards and three touchdowns as well as tossing for 145 yards and one touchdown.

"He did a great job, we're really excited about him," said Hermiston coach David Faateete. "He did a great job running the offense and had some big running touchdowns. It was beautiful."

While Hunsaker had a big game offensively in the first half, the Buckaroo defense clamped down on the Bulldogs run game in the second half, limiting them to just 75 yards on 18 carries, and limiting the Bulldogs offense to zero points as well.

"I think it was just gut-check time for them," said Pendleton coach Erik Davis. "The things were already in place for them to be successful, and I think they just ex-

See BULLDOGS, A13

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FOOTBALL: Bulldogs beat Bucks for CRC crown  
The Hermiston Bulldogs (4-5, 3-0 CRC) clinched the North-Columbia River Conference title with a win over the Pendleton Buckaroos (5-4, 1-2 on the season) Friday night.

