

Hermiston wins defensive battle over Liberty

Bulldogs get past play-in round behind strong defense

By **ERIC SINGER**
Staff Writer

On a gloomy Saturday afternoon, the Hermiston Bulldogs' boys soccer team finally got over their postseason hump, defeating the Liberty Falcons 3-1 in an OSAA state play-in game.

In each of the last two years the Bulldogs lost in the play-in round, getting shut out both times. But the performance on Saturday was a big relief for Bulldogs coach Rich Harshberger.

"It was good, we needed to get this monkey off of our back," he said after the game. "Definitely a cloud looming over us getting past the play-in round especially with last year. It was a big result for us."

On paper, the game appeared to be an easy win for Hermiston (11-2-2) as Liberty came in with just a 4-9-1 overall record and a No. 23 ranking in the OSAA. But the Falcons gave the Bulldogs all they could handle in the game.

"All credit to Liberty, they came out and pressed us and made it hard for us to play our game," Harshberger said. "But we got the result, which I'm ecstatic about, but we definitely need to calm it down and impose ourselves throughout the rest of the playoffs."

Liberty came out of the gates and immediately put pressure on the Bulldogs, as the Falcons had the Hermiston defense somewhat scattered. Hermiston goalkeeper Antonio Campos had to make several aggressive plays and stops to keep the game scoreless.

"With the formation it's always a bit risky, but my back four and the goalkeeper are outstanding. They've done a good job," said Harshberger. "The results we get and where we're at right now is really up to them."

Then about midway through the first half, the Bulldogs began to find their groove on offense, and at the 34-minute mark Bernardo Arujo and Liberty goalkeeper Jacob Thompson collided wide left of the goal, resulting in a yellow card on Thompson and a penalty kick for Arujo.

Because of the yellow card, Thompson was removed from the game for the penalty kick, replaced by defender Roberto Salinas. Arujo took advantage of the PK, and drilled it past Salinas to give the Bulldogs an early 1-0 lead.

The goal swung some momentum in the Bulldogs' favor, as just seven minutes later the Bulldogs struck again on a close-range goal from Ayden Prewitt to give Hermiston a 2-0 lead with 27:54 left in the first half.

But just as Hermiston appeared to be gaining momentum, Liberty used a quick transition down the field as Emmanuel Alejandro found Ronaldo Dominguez with a nice cross pass to the left of the goal as Dominguez then lofted one over the top of Hermiston's goalkeeper for a goal to cut the Bulldog lead to 2-1 with 25:14 left in the half.

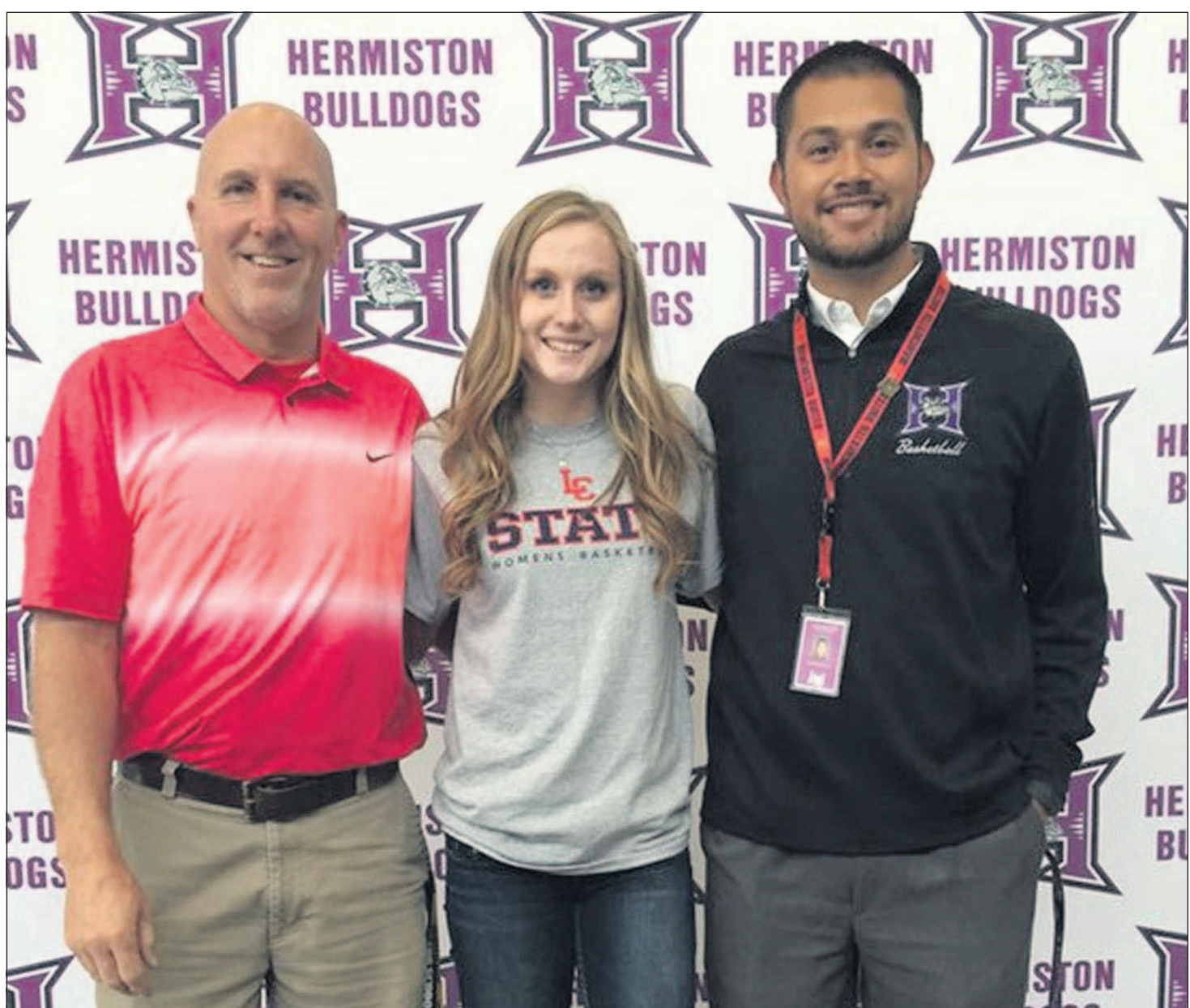
The second half played out as a defensive stalemate, as neither side could get enough pressure offensively to rack up many scoring opportunities.

Hermiston senior Enrique Leal had the best chances for the Bulldogs, sending a 20-yard blast off the crossbar, and then later sending a free kick just left of the goal.

But Hermiston got the clincher with 4:40 left in the game, when Joel Mendez found Edwin Rosales all alone running down the right side of the field. Rosales made a quick crossover of the Liberty defender and then rolled one past the Liberty goalkeeper with his left foot to give the Bulldogs the 3-1 lead.

When the third goal hit the net, Harshberger let his team and the crowd know just how big that was for his team.

"I don't know if anyone saw me, I try to be reserved, but I kind of let it go a little bit," said Harshberger on his celebration. "It was a huge weight off my chest to get that third goal to seal the deal."



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO BY JANSEN EDMISTON

Hermiston senior Jansen Edmiston poses with head girls basketball coach Steve Hoffert (left) and his assistant Juan Rodriguez after signing her National Letter of Intent to play basketball at Lewis-Clark State on Oct. 28.

Bulldogs' Edmiston inks with Lewis-Clark State

Hermiston senior to join Frontier Conference power

By **SAM BARBEE**
Staff Writer

After Jansen Edmiston's freshman year, one in which she was thrust into the starting point guard role after never playing a minute at the high school level, Hermiston head coach Steve Hoffert knew she could be a good college player.

As she enters her senior season this winter, Hoffert now thinks she can be a great college player, and will have a chance to do so at Lewis-Clark State University in Lewiston, Idaho after signing her national letter of intent on Oct. 28. Edmiston plans to study either mathematics or "something in the health field."

She said her first high school season was a trial by fire.

"How I did it (was), 'Either you're gonna survive it, or you're gonna die,'" Edmiston said of that freshman year. "So you can do whatever you had to do to survive."

She may have seen it as survival, but it was clear to Hoffert she had the talent and smarts to play at the next level.

"The smarts is the big thing. Basketball IQ is huge," he said. "She sees the game like I do at times. She sees the game the way you want and recognizes things. She's starting to take initiative in herself and direct traffic."

Edmiston said Hoffert's guidance has been the key to her current opportunities.

"If I didn't have Hoffert, I wouldn't have been pushed into varsity freshman year," she said, "and that helped me realize, 'Oh,

you need to start doing more drills.' But also he helped my love for basketball because he makes practices fun and more enjoyable."

Lewis-Clark State, known as L-C State or simply L-C, competes in the Frontier League of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics and is one of the better NAIA programs. The Warriors will start this season ranked 19th in the preseason coaches' poll. Last season, L-C finished 21-11 and lost 86-80 in the quarterfinals of the Frontier League Tournament to No. 23 Great Falls, then played eventual national champ Oklahoma City in the first round of the NAIA Division I National Championships, losing 63-61.

Under the direction of 15-year veteran Brian Orr, the Warriors have dominated the Frontier League. Orr has an overall record of 343-119 (.742) and a 192-35 (.846) record at home. Between 2006 and 2012, Orr led the Warriors to six straight national finals appearances while compiling a 252-77 (.765) mark and is the all-time winningest coach in L-C women's basketball history.

"They make it to the national tournament every year," Edmiston said. "I didn't want to go somewhere (with little success) because I don't like losing."

Edmiston was also interested in Northwest Christian University where Hoffert's daughter attends, but L-C and the surrounding town won out after a recruiting trip at the beginning of fall.

Edmiston said the success of the Warriors program also influenced her decision. She said she didn't want to go from a program with a lot of local support and success to a program without



FILE PHOTO

Hermiston's Jansen Edmiston looks to create space for a shot during the first quarter of Hermiston's 53-44 win over Pendleton last season.

those things. L-C provides both. The town of Lewiston, with a population of about 32,000, was reminiscent of Hermiston with two rivers and a similar climate. She practiced with the Warriors while on her trip and thought that was the best choice for her.

"They're really supported, like our girls basketball is supported (L-C's) is really supported," Edmiston said. "It kind of just reminded me of home, and the girls are super nice and the coach is super nice."

Edmiston was offered a full scholarship following her campus visit. Hoffert said he and Edmiston talked several times before she eventually took the offer.

She didn't commit right away, and she wasn't asked for a commitment right away. Orr gave her two weeks to decide, though she

didn't take all the time.

"I said, 'You know what? Here's the deal: We can tell this guy (Orr) we can wait, but what are we waiting for? If you like the place, if you like the girls, you like the team, you like the (coach), what are you waiting for? Because he's offered you everything,'" he said. "Think about saying no and waiting for the next (offer). How stressful would that be?' I was happy she took it."

So, at the beginning of the month, Edmiston notified Orr of her decision.

"I kind of just want to say thank you to everyone who supported me on my way since third grade, all my coaches, my parents," Edmiston said. "Thank you to everyone who supported me."

Hermiston silenced by Putnam in play-in round

Bulldogs unable to score in rematch with Putnam

By **ERIC SINGER**
Staff Writer

It just wasn't Hermiston's day.

That's what Bulldogs' coach Danielle Turner reiterated several times, fighting back a few tears, following the Hermiston Bulldogs' 1-0 loss to the Putnam Kingsmen on a soggy Saturday afternoon for an OSAA state play-in game.

"I honestly thought we would come out with a lit-

tle more intensity than we did," said a somber Turner. "We've kind of been on a high the last two games. Came out and shut out Hood River, put Pendleton away, etc. I don't know what it was, just not our day I guess."

On paper, Hermiston (4-7-6, 4-1-1 CRC) appeared to have the advantage in the game as Putnam held a 2-7-5 overall record coming into the game — with one of those ties coming to the same Hermiston team back on Sept. 19.

Turner doesn't believe that familiarity for either team played a real factor in the game.

"There was a couple

players we knew that were pretty good for them, but each team is different every day regardless how many times you play them," she said. "I told the girls that yeah we understand their strengths and weaknesses, but if we play our game, we're tough. Unfortunately I don't think we were on our best game today."

Just like the first game, the Bulldogs were held in check for the majority of the game by the stingy Putnam defense, as Hermiston was limited to very few legitimate scoring opportunities.

Perhaps Hermiston's best scoring chance came with 15 minutes left in the

game when Lesley Riseno drilled a free kick from about 30 yards out toward the net, but it sailed just high of the goal.

"We just weren't on offensively," Turner said. "We weren't finding our combinations. When Hannah (Thompson) and our midfielders are working together and (Hannah's) on, it's pretty hard to stop. But like I said it was just an off day and unfortunately it came at the wrong time."

The two teams played through the first 40 minutes at a stalemate, as rain fell intermittently throughout the half.

Putnam finally broke the 0-0 deadlock less than

9 minutes into the second half, when Maleah Maier camped in front of the net and buried a header over top of Hermiston goalkeeper Kilie Harrison off of a perfect pass from the right corner for the 1-0 lead.

As much trouble as Hermiston had getting the offense going, its defense played a solid game — save for the only goal against. Goalkeeper Kilie Harrison made some key stops and the rest of Hermiston's back line were positioned well enough to keep the game close for all 80 minutes.

That unit's performance was the one positive that Turner and the Bulldog coaches took away from

the game. "Once again our defense stepped up for us, and they have all season," said Turner. "We have that core group all coming back next season so that'll be good for us."

The loss ends the season for the Bulldogs with a second-straight early exit in the postseason, and will give Turner plenty of time to regroup and think about where her team needs to go for next season.

"Put in some work in the offseason and I think we'll be alright," she said. "It's just frustrating kind of taking a step back after what we've done for the past couple weeks."