

Losing hurts... for now

I stood on the left-field line and watched as the other team celebrated. My hands were jammed in my jacket pockets and my cap was pulled down low.

"That should be us," I kept thinking. "That should be us. That should be us. That should be us."

Eventually, the head coach wrapped his arm around my shoulders and led me to the dug-out. My high school sports career was over. We lost in an elimination playoff game; the winner went to state, the loser went home. We went home, and all I could think was, "That should be us."

Flash forward six years, and I'm standing at midfield at Liberty High School as Davy Salas addresses his Stanfield Tigers after a frustrating 34-20 loss at the hands of the Kennedy Trojans Saturday night in the 2A football semifinals. The boys in white and blue were despondent, the boys in all red were overjoyed. I'm sure more than a few had the same thoughts as I did, watching a team we should've beat celebrate what we should've been celebrating.

The ends of seasons are always tough. Always. After my last football game I wept bitterly. The realization I'd never play another football game again hit so hard I couldn't keep my composure. The same happened after my final baseball game as I watched a league rival jump around and congratulate each other.

But a lot gets lost in those moments. The disappointment and sadness always drowns out the pride and closeness developed with teams. I'll never forget junior teammates of mine giving me a hug and telling me they were glad they played with me, that they were proud of the things we accomplished. In the moment, those are kind words from a sympathetic figure. In reality, those are the most important words a teammate could give to another. Many an "I love you, man" was uttered, said into the ear of weeping seniors. It's become almost a tradition of sorts.

I watched as seniors Jason Fitzpatrick, Jared Warren and Cody Livingston walked off a high school football field for the final time, and in all likelihood walked off a football field for the final time (no offense to you guys if you want to keep playing — go for it, do it big, as they say).

The same things I was feeling six years ago those three were feeling Saturday. It's the double-edged sword of sport: you win some, you lose some. And boy, does the losing hurt.

But now, as I look back on those years, I don't remember the losing, and there was a lot of it at R. A. Long High School while I was there. I remember the friendships, the funny stories, the things we accomplished. My class helped turn around an awful football program that is respectable now. My class, as eighth graders, watched the high school baseball team win two games, then by the time we were seniors we were state-ranked.

That final baseball game still sticks out in my mind, and I remember just how I felt. But no longer does that sentiment drown out the rest of my career — the fun, the memories, the people.

It's those three things that sports are about, and don't let anyone tell you differently. Stanfield accomplished something this season. Salas said as much to me after the game. It's important those guys remember that.

In time, they will.
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Colbray commits to Iowa State

Senior will wrestle for gold medal-winning coach

By **SAM BARBEE**
Staff Writer

Sam Colbray has made it official: he will attend Iowa State University next season to wrestle collegiately.

Colbray, a senior at 195 pounds, is listed by flowrestling.org as the second-ranked high schooler at that weight and is the No. 10 high school recruit in the Class of 2016, committed this weekend to compete collegiately at Iowa State University, IAWrestle.com reported.

The three-time Oregon state champion is also an NHSCA Junior Folkstyle national champion, a 2015 Junior Freestyle runner-up,



FILE PHOTO

Hermiston senior Sam Colbray (top) committed over the weekend to wrestle collegiately at Division 1 power Iowa State.

and was the 2014 runner-up in both Greco-Roman and freestyle. Colbray joins a highly touted recruiting class at Iowa State with four top-100 recruits including Colbray. The program is coached by Kevin Smith, who has been at the helm since 2010.

Heppner will attempt to repeat as 2A champs

Mustangs score 26 unanswered points after trailing 3-0 against Regis

By **SAM BARBEE**
Staff Writer

The No. 2 Heppner Mustangs and the No. 3 Regis Rams entered halftime separated by just three points. The Rams, who beat Heppner 21-14 in the semifinals two years ago, were making life difficult for the Mustangs.

Or was it the other way around? At the end of the second quarter, Heppner's offense began to hit its stride, and the Mustangs scored 26 unanswered points to advance to its second straight 2A football state championship game with a 26-3 win over Regis at Liberty High School on Saturday. The No. 2 Mustangs host the No. 4 Kennedy Trojans (10-1) at 6 p.m. this Saturday in Hermiston.

"Our coach does a



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Heppner's C.J. Kindle gets wrapped up by Regis' Eric Gustin and Brandon Piete (11) in the Mustangs' 26-3 win against the Rams on Saturday in Hillsboro.

good job of making sure that we always keep our mental focus sharp, a know to never give up," senior Patrick Collins said.

It took Heppner some time to get going. Head coach Greg Grant said his team was pressing, "trying too hard."

"They care so much," he said. "But sometimes when you care so much you get so amped and so excited, I think that's

what we saw."

Kaden Clark threw his second interception of the game with about a minute left in the first quarter, and Regis moved easily to the Heppner 8-yard line on a ten-play drive. But the Mustangs came up with a stop when Rams backup quarterback Adam Wiltsey's pass was nearly intercepted in the end zone. An offensive pass interference penalty was declined, forcing

Regis into a 25-yard field goal, which Adair Pelayo knocked through.

It was a rare deficit for a Heppner team that had an average margin of victory of 41.5 points.

"We had a lot of penalties," senior CJ Kindle said. "So many things could have gone against us. But we kept battling." From there, everything changed.

After a Heppner punt, Regis Pelayo fumbled at

his own 27, giving Heppner a short field and momentum. It took seven plays, but CJ Kindle eventually forced in a 1-yard touchdown run to put Heppner back ahead. Weston Putman dropped the two-point conversion, leaving the Mustang lead at three going into the break.

"I wasn't unhappy with anything they'd done (in the first half)," Grant said. "I was just coaching them to do the next thing better."

"We dominated the first half, so let's go dominate the second."

And boy, did they. Regis couldn't get anything going offensively with starting quarterback Bryce Piete out with an ankle injury. He went down rather early in the first quarter, and spent the rest of the first half pacing up and down the near sideline in an attempt to walk off the pain. He never returned and removed his shoulder pads at halftime.

In Piete's stead, Wiltsey struggled against the aggressive and experi-

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Stanfield's historic run ends

Kennedy capitalizes on Tiger mistakes, wins 34-20

By **SAM BARBEE**
Staff Writer

It had been 58 years since Stanfield had played in state championship football game, and soon it'll be 59.

The Kennedy Trojans used a brutal rushing attack and an opportunistic defense to beat the Tiger 34-20 Saturday night in an OSAA Class 2A football semifinal at Liberty High School in Hillsboro.

"That was a great game," Stanfield first-year head coach Davy Salas said. "We get them everything we had."

"The mistakes just killed us tonight."

Those mistakes cost Stanfield dearly.

After quarterback Brett Traeger hit Jack Suing for a 17-yard touchdown pass to take a 28-20 lead midway through the third quarter. Thylor Monkus, the normally sure-handed junior running back, fumbled the kickoff and it was recovered by Kenne-



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Stanfield quarterback Dylan Grogan gets wrapped up by Kennedy's Owen Seiler in the Tigers' 34-20 loss to the Trojans on Saturday in Hillsboro.

dy. The Trojans couldn't score, but the ensuing drive took four minutes off the clock and forced Stanfield to start deep in its own end after a turnover on downs.

Stanfield's other glaring mistake cost the Tigers points, momentum, and an even halftime score.

With six seconds remaining, Kennedy lined up from its 36-

yard line on first down. The drive before, Stanfield tied Kennedy at 14 when Dylgan Grogan muscled in a 1-yard scoring run, then hit Justin Keeney in the corner of the end zone on the two-point conversion to tie things at 14.

Kennedy got the ball with 20 seconds left at its own 32, and in two plays was already at the Stanfield 36. Bishop Mitchell

ran for eight yards on first down, but fumbled into the awaiting arms of a teammate. Kennedy got a first down on the play. Then Traeger hit Suing for 22 yards to set up the Trojans' final first-half gasp with six seconds.

Mitchell ran a wheel route up the far sideline, and Stanfield read it perfectly. Cornerback Monkus was stride-for-stride with the speedy Mitchell, and safety Justin Keeney came over the top to try to jump the route. But instead, Keeney and Monkus ran into each other and the ball fell right into Mitchell's arms. He trotted into the end zone and Kennedy's cheering section went crazy. Stanfield would only ever get within a point, but never tie or take the lead.

"In a big game, in the biggest moment of our lives, we made one too many mistakes that we couldn't come back from," Salas said. "I told my boys, 'With two evenly matched teams, it's not always the best team that wins. It's the team that makes the least amount of mistakes. Tonight we made too many mistakes and

See **TIGERS, B2**

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