



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Heppner coach Greg Grant gives a hug to senior Saul Erickson as time runs off the clock in the Mustangs' 48-0 rout against Kennedy in the state 2A championship game Saturday in Hermiston.



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Heppner's Tommy Bredfield, bottom, and Jacob Wallace wrap up Kennedy quarterback Brett Traeger in the Mustangs' 48-0 rout against the Trojans in the state 2A championship game Saturday in Hermiston.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Heppner's Weston Putnam goes over the top of Kennedy's Bishop Mitchell in the Mustangs' 48-0 rout against the Trojans in the state 2A championship game Saturday in Hermiston.



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Heppner's C.J. Kindle falls into the end zone for a touchdown in the Mustangs' 48-0 rout against the Trojans in the state 2A championship game Saturday in Hermiston.

MUSTANGS:

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"We tackle well and our defense is really quick," said Grant. "They are smart kids and they all did their jobs really, really well tonight."

Junior defensive lineman Kevin Murray led the Mustangs with 11 total tackles, while Tommy Bredfield added 10 tackles and Putman had nine and earned a sack. Senior linebacker Patrick Collins also contributed eight total tackles one sack and 2.5 tackles for loss.

The Mustangs also forced four Kennedy turnovers — two interceptions and two fumbles — and turned three of the four into touchdowns.

The first came on the first play of the second quarter, when Traeger's pass over the middle of the field was picked off by Heppner's Caden Hedman at midfield. A few plays later, Kindle dove into the end zone on fourth-and-goal to put the Mustangs up 14-0 in the second quarter.

That's when the snowball started for Kennedy.

The Trojans fumbled on the first play of the ensuing possession and the ball was recovered by Mustangs defensive lineman Kevin Murray at the Trojans' 15 yard line. And then on Heppner's first play, junior Logan Grieb took a receiver sweep around the left edge of the Mustangs' offensive line and sprinted all 15 yards for the touchdown and a 28-0 lead for Heppner.

As the teams headed into half-time, Putman said there was a defi-

nite buzz in the Mustangs locker room, but he knew their job was not finished quite yet.

"I knew we couldn't let up because one play could give (Kennedy) the momentum back," he said. "We were in the locker room and I told every one 'we scored 34 in a half, they can too' so we just have to keep the pedal down."

In the second half, the Mustangs scored just two times on a pair of touchdown passes by Clark — the first a 38-yard bomb that was perfectly placed to receiver Logan Grieb and the second a 24-yard connection to a wide-open Kindle on a cleanly-run post route in the middle of the field.

Clark finished the game 6-8 with 153 yards and those two touchdowns, contributing a chunk of Heppner's 386 total yards of offense. Putman led the Mustangs ground attack with 110 yards on 15 carries, while Grieb added 73 yards as well as 75 yards receiving.

"We were like a well-oiled machine tonight," said Clark. "We got on the backs of our offensive and defensive lines and just rode them to victory, so that was pretty cool."

After the final horn had blown, the trophies were handed out, and celebrations had calmed, the Mustangs lined up for several team photos which featured 36 players and numerous coaches grinning from ear to ear, taking in a moment which Grant told them to embrace.

"I think it's great for these kids, and fantastic for the community," said Grant. "I think the kids and community are going to have this memory forever."

RANKINGS:

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Thyler Monkus — are back, and bolstered by some more guys with size and skills. With Daniel Sharp moving away from the boys program to focus on the girls, Victor Baros takes over with a run-and-gun style that will put five guards on the floor at all times. I can't wait to watch them play. I had fun watching them practice. You'll have fun watching them in action.

4. Echo girls basketball

The Cougars have lost two key parts of their district-winning team from last season: leading scorer and rebounder Elizabeth McCarty, and head coach JD Brazil. McCarty graduated and is throwing at Eastern Oregon, and Brazil moved to the Midwest when his wife got a job there. So Michael Swanson takes over a team that thinks highly of itself for good reason. Just McCarty and Bailey Srofe are the departed regulars, and most of the rest of the roster returns. Swanson takes over and will institute a more defensive scheme with his small but athletic roster. He knows expectations are high and entering a situation with lots of recent success is difficult. But the girls have walked this road before and know what kind of shoes they need. They'll be fine.

5. Umatilla girls basketball

Head coach Scott Bow has usually had some pretty good teams and pretty talented rosters. This year, however, he's the most optimistic he's been because he hasn't gotten bogged down in installation in the first few practices. That's huge for a group that's trying to break through the Nyssa barrier

and the get-to-the-state-tournament barrier that's been seemingly insurmountably high. Aleesha Watson can flat-out score, Sidney Webb is versatile, and Courtney Dohman and Brenda Campos are a load on the block. Add in more 3A opponents to help out their colley ranking, and I think these Vikings can make a run this season. Maybe fifth is too low. I don't know enough to be sure. We'll all find out together.

Honorable mention: Stanfield girls basketball

"But they didn't have a good record last year!" you'll say. "They didn't even make it past the district tournament!" You're right on both accounts. But in talking to Sharp and a player or two at practice, I have a feeling these girls will take a noticeable step forward — even larger than last year. I remember an interview I did with then-junior now-senior Yazzmin Chavez after a win last year and I asked her if she felt like a basketball player instead of someone who just plays basketball. She agreed, and that sentiment has moved into this season. As Sharp is quoted in the winter sports preview section (check it out inside today's issue, it's got a lot of great stuff) they went to southern Idaho and got waxed. But it was good. They've broadened their basketball horizons, which is never a bad thing. Maybe they'll be good, maybe they won't. As the old cliché goes: That's why they play the games. This will be a fun season.

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.

Lunch date.



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SPORTS CALENDAR

Wednesday, December 2

BOYS BASKETBALL
Umatilla @ Irrigon, 7:30 p.m.
GIRLS BASKETBALL
Umatilla @ Irrigon, 6 p.m.

Friday, December 4

BOYS BASKETBALL
Hermiston @ Kamiakin, 7:30 p.m.
Stanfield @ South Wasco
Tournament, TBD
Echo vs. Monument/Dayville @
Fossil, TBD
GIRLS BASKETBALL
Hermiston @ Kamiakin, 5:45 p.m.
Stanfield @ South Wasco
Tournament, TBD
Echo vs. Monument/Dayville @
Fossil, 3 p.m.

Saturday, December 5

BOYS BASKETBALL
Stanfield @ South Wasco

Tournament, TBD

Echo vs. Condon/Wheeler @ Fossil,
TBD

GIRLS BASKETBALL
Stanfield @ South Wasco
Tournament

Echo vs. Condon/Wheeler @ Fossil,
4 p.m.

WRESTLING

Hermiston @ End of the Oregon
Trail Tourney (Oregon City),
9 a.m.

Echo @ Irrigon Tournament, TBD

Tuesday, December 8

BOYS BASKETBALL
Hermiston @ Hanford, 7:30 p.m.
Umatilla @ Weston-McEwen, 7:30
p.m.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

Hermiston @ Hanford, 5:45 p.m.
Umatilla @ Weston-McEwen, 6
p.m.