

Power Rankings: January Edition

Despite a harrowing drive with constant reminders of the icy conditions strewn about the freeway, I'm back on the east side after a week-long vacation. I hope everyone's holidays were as fun (and safe, of course) as mine, but now it's time to jump back into the local winter sports scene with the January edition of my monthly power rankings.



Sam Barbee FROM THE SIDELINES

Here's December's before the season started:

1. Hermiston Wrestling;
 2. Hermiston girls basketball;
 3. Stanfield boys basketball;
 4. Echo girls basketball;
 5. Umatilla girls basketball;
- Honorable Mention: Stanfield girls basketball.

And now, the first power rankings of the new year.

1. Hermiston girls basketball, 10-3 (8th OSAA)

At 10-3, the Bulldogs have played the most games in 5A (13) and have the second-most wins to top-ranked South Salem, which is 11-1. After playing in two top-tier tournaments — the Nike Tournament of Champions in Phoenix and the Nike Interstate Shootout in Lake Oswego — the Bulldogs have the third-best RPI, but just the 15th-best colley ranking because of the number of out-of-state teams they've played. That's why they're eighth. But one loss is to Springfield, a 5A school in a 44-39 decision in both schools' final game at Lake Oswego, and Hermiston took two more losses to Oregon City — the second-ranked 6A squad — and Chaparral (AZ), which is 10-5 with considerably more size than Hermiston. As the Bulldogs play more in-state schools — especially with league play quickly approaching — expect that ranking to shrink and expect the Bulldogs to again be a top seed at March's state tournament.

2. Hermiston wrestling

Under first-year coach Kyle Larson, the Bulldogs have steadily improved. A dual loss to Post Falls (ID) sparked a second-place finish at the heavily-attended Tri-State Tournament in Couer d'Alene and a dual win over Kuna (ID) which bested the Bulldogs the last two seasons in Hermiston. Most recently, Hermiston held its own at The Clash, a match play-style tournament with brackets of dual meets. Hermiston finished fifth there against some of the best high school teams in the country, with the dominance of second-ranked 195-pounder Sam Colbray leading the charge, as usual. With a couple big tournaments still to attend — Gut Check Challenge in Bremerton, Washington, Reser's Tournament of Champions and the Oregon Classic — the Bulldogs can still stake their claim as a top — or the top — team in Oregon.

3. Stanfield boys basketball, 6-1 (17th OSAA)

After taking most of the holidays off, Stanfield is sort of lagging behind the rest of the 2A field despite just the one loss, a 54-52 game to Union that saw the Tigers shoot very poorly. But if we take a closer look at what goes into the rankings, you'll see Stanfield's 17th spot sort of lies. They have the best RPI in the 2A ranks, which means they've faced the toughest schedule in their seven games. However, their colley ranking, which measures the Tigers directly against fellow 2A opponents, is 30th. That's the largest spread in the state. For some context, top-ranked Imbler (9-0) has the second-best RPI and the best colley, so Stanfield isn't that far behind. They just are yet to play enough 2A teams to

up the colley and the OSAA ranking. First-year coach Victor Baros' style is working for the Tigers; an up-tempo, three point-oriented attack designed to take advantage of Stanfield's relative lack of size and athletic ability. Irrigon (8-3, 4th) is still good, though, and Heppner (10-1, 5th) has players all over the place, so the Columbia Basin Conference is probably a three-horse race between the Tigers, Knights and Mustangs. Circle Jan. 9 and 16 on your calendars for the first meetings between these schools as the first real litmus test for the Tigers.

4. Umatilla girls basketball 10-4 (12th OSAA)

The Vikings are sort of in the same place as the Stanfield boys team: they've got a good RPI (8th), but the colley ranking is lacking (18th) despite a concerted effort to improve it from last year. Back-to-back losses to Salem Academy and Creswell have hurt it, but the Vikings will start league play soon and Umatilla is the top-ranked team from the Eastern Oregon League with Nyssa 14th, Vale 15th and Riverside at 34th. Leading scorer Aleesha Watson has had a lid on the bucket all year despite getting good looks and the Vikings are still 10-4.

5. Stanfield girls basketball 4-3 (20th OSAA)

Another team with a good RPI (9) and a not-so-good colley (29). A three-point win (38-35) over Tri-Cities Prep already shows improvement from last year's team that stepped into relevance for the first time in years, maybe a decade, even. The Jaguars beat the Tigers by 19 last season, so hurdling that barrier this early in the season is a good sign. It'll take some time for the Tigers to build the program-wide skills and belief that already marks some of the more consistently successful programs in the area, but you can already see the foundation being laid. Stanfield is one of two teams above the water in the CBC, the other being Pilot Rock at 9-5, so it's feasible — at least now in the first week of January — to make the state tournament. That would be a huge achievement for Daniel Sharp and Co., but you can't count out Heppner, Weston-McEwen and Riverside, either.

Honorable Mention: Hermiston boys basketball (6-6, 25th)

Wanna know something weird? Hermiston has a better record than rival Pendleton, but the Bucks (4-5) are ranked 19 spots higher than the Bulldogs. Numbers, man. I don't understand them. That said, I like what Dave Ego has done with the Bulldogs. Through 12 games last year, Hermiston was just 2-10 and struggling to figure itself out. This season, the Bulldogs appear to have a better idea of what they want to do and are doing a better job of doing that. Austin Naillon is running an aggressive fast-breaking offense. Chance Flores is providing scoring and tough defense. Andrew James has been a pleasant surprise as a freshman, landing in the starting lineup after just one game. Brok Palmer and Tre Neal have been solid at the block, and Hunter Walls and Dayshawn Neal add minutes, as well. At 6-6, Hermiston has the best record in the CRC, and the three War-on-84 meetings will most likely determine who wins the league. Don't miss those.

Vikings cruise after slow start

Umatilla girls take down Mac-Hi

By SAM BARBEE
Staff Writer

All season long, the Umatilla Vikings girls basketball team has struggled with slow starts. Monday night while hosting the Mac-Hi Pioneers, it was no different.

The Vikings scored just seven points and led by one after the first quarter, but turned it on in the second and third to propel a 54-30 home win in their final game before the start of league play.

Sidney Webb led the way with 14 points and four assists, and Aleesha Watson with 10 points, nine rebounds and five assists. For Mac-Hi, Brittney Erb led the way with nine points and three steals.

"We usually do have a slow start," Webb said, "but in the second half we come back. I don't know why we do that, but we do. It's something that needs to change because against better teams (it's a problem)."

The slow start was mainly due to turnovers. Umatilla (10-4) committed



STAFF PHOTO BY SAM BARBEE

Umatilla senior guard Sidney Webb (right) looks to pass while defended by Mac-Hi's Brooke Smiley during the Vikings' 54-30 home win Monday night.

seven in that first quarter, allowing the Pioneers (7-5) to hang around. Umatilla didn't shoot well that quarter, either, going 3 of 12 from the field, 1 of 6 from 3-point range and 0 for 2 from the free throw line. The Vikings benefited from a Mac-Hi team that did largely the same thing — six turnovers, 3-of-15 shooting, 0 for 4 from the charity stripe.

Things changed quickly in the second quarter, though.

Two Brenda Campos free throws to opened the quarter's scoring to put Umatilla up 9-6, then Aleesha Watson hit a runner two minutes later and Gaby Contreras was good for two points on the next pos-

session, and Umatilla never really looked back. Already up 15-11, an 11-2 Vikings run all but put the game out of reach for the Pioneers.

Umatilla led 26-13 at halftime and continued to build its lead in the third quarter and Webb 3-pointer extend the Viking lead to 36-15 midway through the period.

The game, which took only 40 minutes of real time to play the first half, bogged down significantly in the second half due to more fouls and timeouts. As a result, the turnovers were cut down some, but were still at alarmingly high rates for both sides. Mac-Hi finished with 20, while Umatilla had 21.

"I feel like we did

Moss rewarded for big games

EOU guards named CCC Player of the Week

A triple-double and an outstanding fourth-quarter performance helped senior guard Maloree Moss garner Cascade Collegiate Conference (CCC) Red Lion Player of the Week honors, the league announced on Monday afternoon.

On Dec. 30 Moss tallied 10 points, 10 rebounds, and 10 assists to lead the Mountaineers

past Northwest, 79-64. A short time later, the Hermiston native recorded nine of her team-high 14 points in the fourth quarter to lift EOU over Evergreen, 70-55, on New Year's Eve.

On the season, Moss is averaging 5.4 points, 3.7 rebounds, and 3.2 assists per contest.

EOU has won eight of its last 10 games and sits in a three-way tie for second place in the CCC.

The Mountaineers return to the hardwood on Friday against Warner Pacific College. Tipoff in Portland is set for 5:30 p.m.

Deadline nears for adult league signups

The registration deadline for adult volleyball and basketball leagues through Hermiston Parks and Recreation is Thursday.

The registration fee is \$145 per team for volleyball and \$415 for basketball. Coaches must register the team's players. Limited space is available in both leagues, though late-comers can put their name on a waiting list.

For more information, visit www.hermistonrecreation.com. To register, call 541-667-5018 or stop by the recreation office, 180 N.E. Second St., Hermiston.

Bulldogs finish strong at The Clash

After two wire-to-wire duals the Hermiston Bulldogs put a choke hold on the fifth-place round robin Saturday at The Clash XIV in Rochester, Minnesota.

The Bulldogs' first two duals weren't clinched until the very end of their wins over Jefferson City (MO), 40-29, and Prior Lake (MN), 31-18. But a run on pins put the final opponent, Hastings (MN), away early in a 55-15 thumping.

After losing its first dual in Friday's bracketed round, Hermiston finished on five straight wins and 220-pounder Sam Colbray and 138-pounder C.J. Hendon left Minnesota unscathed with perfect 6-0 records at The Clash.

Many Bulldogs did more than tread water in the land of 1,000 lakes and Bulldogs Valen Wyse (152), Bob Coleman (182) and Andy Wagner (126) went 5-1 with Adrian Tuia (132), Beau Blake (285) and Liam Tarvin (120) going 4-2.

Blake got Hermiston started on Saturday with a first-round pin over Jefferson City's Ryan Mohlman in 1:32, and the Bulldogs threatened to run away with the win early when Ruben Madrigal and Isaiah Aguilar followed with pins of their own to make it 18-0.

The teams traded the next six bouts, but where Hermiston earned decisions, Jefferson City picked up pins and major decisions before back-to-back wins cut the deficit to just four points.

Logan Moriarty pinned Brock McDonough in 1:41 in the 170-pound match to make it 30-26, but Coleman got those points right back with a third-round pin (5:10) on Rashaun Woods to make it 36-26 with two bouts to go.

Jefferson City 195-pounder Jalen Martin would earn his team a victory in the next match, but by avoiding the pin in a 5-1 decision, Hermiston's John-Henry Line secured his team's victory by giving up just three points.

Not that it would have mattered, though, because Colbray never let his opponent score in a 10-0 major

decision to finish off Jefferson City.

Hermiston also needed until the penultimate bout in the Prior Lake dual to make victory a mathematical certainty.

The Minnesota school opened the dual on two straight wins, and although the Bulldogs took the next four, regained the lead with a three-win streak that was capped by a 3-2 win by Ian O'Connor over Hermiston 160-pounder Joey Gutierrez to make it 15-13 with five weights to contend.

McDonough and Coleman ended Prior Lake's victory streak with major decisions to put Hermiston back on top 21-15, but Sam Brunkow gave his team a shot with a 5-2 win over Line.

Colbray did the honors for Hermiston this time, though, and scored another major decision, 11-3, over Collin O'Brien that made it 25-18. Blake capped the win with the only pin of the dual in 1:39 over Alex Nopola.

After getting just six wins by pin in their first two dual on Saturday, the Bulldogs tallied eight against Hastings. A five-pin rally in the middle weights erased any hope Hastings had for a rally and McDonough made the win official with a 3:06 pin over Kyle Erickson that made it 43-3 with five weights

to contend.

Hermiston's next action will occur at the Gut Check Tournament at the Kitsap County Fairgrounds in Bremerton, Washington on Jan. 8-9.

PREP SCHEDULE

Thursday, January 7	Echo @ Joseph, 7:30 p.m.	p.m.
GIRLS BASKETBALL	GIRLS BASKETBALL	Stanfield @ Heppner, 5:30 p.m.
Umatilla @ Riverside, 6 p.m.	Stanfield vs. Pilot Rock, 6 p.m.	Echo vs. Nixyaawii, 5:30 p.m.
BOYS BASKETBALL	Echo @ Joseph, 6 p.m.	GIRLS BASKETBALL
Umatilla @ Riverside, 7:30 p.m.	Saturday, January 9	Stanfield @ Heppner, 4 p.m.
WRESTLING	WRESTLING	Echo vs. Nixyaawii, 5:30 p.m.
Echo vs. Irrigon @ Stanfield, 5 p.m.	Hermiston @ Gut Check Challenge, 9 a.m.	Tuesday, January 12
Friday, January 8	Echo @ Riverside Rumble, 9 a.m.	GIRLS BASKETBALL
WRESTLING	Swimming	Hermiston @ Sunnyside, 5:45 p.m.
Hermiston @ Gut Check Challenge @ Bremerton (WA), 9 a.m.	Hermiston @ The Dalles @ Hood River, 11 a.m.	Stanfield @ Echo, 6 p.m.
BOYS BASKETBALL	BOYS BASKETBALL	Hermiston @ Sunnyside, 7:30 p.m.
Stanfield vs. Pilot Rock, 4:30 p.m.	Hermiston vs. Summit, 3:15 p.m.	Stanfield @ Echo, 7:30 p.m.

Hermiston 40, Jefferson City 29

285, B. Blake (H) pins R. Mohlman, 1:32 (6-0)
106, R. Madrigal (H) pins G. Butel, 1:44 (12-0)
113, I. Aguilar (H) pins S. Martin, 1:57 (18-0)
120, P. Kuster (J) pins L. Tarvin, :34 (18-6)
126, A. Wagner (H) def. C. Mayberry, 7:2 (21-6)
132, T. Irwin (J) def. A. Tuia, MD 14-4 (21-10)
138, C. Hendon (H) def. Z. Hurley, 6:3 (24-10)
145, G. Dewitt (J) pins W. Sharkey, 2:45 (24-16)
152, V. Wyse (H) pins D. Barnes, 2:52 (30-16)
160, J. Brune (J) def. Joey Gutierrez, MD 12-2 (30-20)
170, L. Moriarty (J) pins B. McDonough, 1:41 (30-26)
182, B. Coleman (H) pins J. Woods, 5:10 (36-26)
195, J. Martin (J) def. J. Line, 5-1 (36-29)
220, S. Colbray (H) def. T. Sage, MD 10-0 (40-29)

Hermiston 31, Prior Lake 18

106, C. Raney (P) def. R. Madrigal, 12-8 (0-3)
113, C. LeMair (P) def. I. Aguilar, 6-1 (0-6)
120, L. Tarvin (H) def. V. Mosher, 8-1 (3-6)
126, A. Wagner (H) def. T. Smith, 5-2 (6-6)
132, A. Tuia (H) def. A. Hanson, 3-1 (9-6)
138, C. Hendon (H) def. W. Benson, MD 10-2 (13-6)
145, G. Charbonneau (P) def. W. Sharkey, 8-7 (13-9)
152, K. O'Neil (P) def. V. Wyse, 9-7 (13-12)
160, I. O'Connor (P) def. J. Gutierrez, 3-2 (13-15)
170, B. McDonough (H) def. K. Kaisersatt, MD 15-7 (17-15)
182, B. Coleman (H) def. C. Sund, MD 11-3 (21-15)
195, S. Brunkow (P) def. J. Line, 5-2 (21-18)
220, S. Colbray (H) def. C. O'Brien, MD 11-3 (25-18)
285, B. Blake (H) pins A. Nopola, 1:39 (31-18)

Hermiston 55, Hastings 15

113, C. Mader (HA) def. I. Aguilar, 6-4 (0-3)
120, L. Tarvin (HE) pins D. Edwards, 1:39 (6-3)
126, A. Wagner (HE) pins J. Schill, :56 (12-3)
132, A. Tuia (HE) def. L. Wilson, MD 14-1 (16-3)
138, C. Hendon (HE) def. S. Kopp, 10-5 (19-3)
145, W. Sharkey (HE) pins M. Wilson, 1:19 (25-3)
152, V. Wyse (HE) pins A. O'Connor, 1:24 (31-3)
160, D. Bosner (HE) pins C. Leffler, 1:11 (37-3)
170, B. McDonough (HE) pins K. Erickson, 3:06 (43-3)
182, B. Coleman (HE) pins B. Waswick, 1:39 (49-3)
195, J. Miser (HA) def. J. Line, 4-3 (49-6)
220, S. Colbray (HE) pins D. Guck, :29 (55-6)
285, J. Schichel (HA) def. B. Blake, 3-1 (55-9)
106, M. Myers (HA) win by forfeit (55-15)