

Hermiston rallies to down No. 4 Summit

Bulldogs use 12-3 fourth-quarter run to complete game-long comeback

By **SAM BARBEE**
Staff Writer

After trailing most of the game, the Hermiston boys basketball team rallied in the second half to down the No. 4 Summit Storm 56-53 Saturday in Hermiston to give the Storm just its second loss of the season.

Before taking a 41-39 lead with 49 seconds left in the third quarter, the Bulldogs' (8-6) last lead was 5-4 in the first quarter. For interim head coach Dave

Ego, the comeback was an indication of the improved "attitude and work ethic" displayed by his group, which started last season 2-12.

"It says our attitude's getting better," he said. "Not hanging your head, and doing the things that we need to do. They kept working hard and it was a good effort down the line."

Early on, Summit's size gave Hermiston some problems. Playing without Tre Neal, Summit's tall front line affected numerous Hermiston shots at the rim, but led just 16-14 after the first quarter. Hermiston started a small lineup — five guards — and wanted to run the Storm into oblivion.

It wasn't quite working, though, and Summit's Jack Hurley hit a 3-pointer with 4:01 on

the clock in the second quarter to take its largest lead of the game of eight points at 24-16.

But, as happened all afternoon, Hermiston rallied to cut the half-time deficit to just three at 30-27 behind the aggressive fast-breaking offense Ego employs, and a strong effort by 6-foot-5 senior Preston Peterson off the bench.

"Going small like we did, we knew we could out-run 'em," Ego said. "That worked out for us. Peterson came in and played well and ran the floor well for us defensively, and that was necessary for us. It was a good team effort."

Summit tried to extend its lead in the third quarter, leading by as many as five after Cam Baker's putback with 2:51 left to move the count to 39-34, but a 7-0 Bulldogs run gave them its first lead

since the first quarter, and the fourth quarter began with things tied up at 41.

Then Hermiston's offense came alive with help from its defense.

"We did a good job of closing out and contesting," Ego said of his team's defense against a Summit squad that likes to, and can, shoot 3s, holding the Storm to just four. "We did a pretty good job of getting the post people inside. That's another weakness for

See **RALLY, A10**

STAFF PHOTO BY SAM BARBEE

Hermiston guard Chance Flores (1) rises for a layup over Summit's Nick Mason during the Bulldogs' 56-53 win Saturday in Hermiston.



Hermiston grapplers win Gut Check Challenge

Colbray, Coleman take home individual titles

By **SAM BARBEE**
Staff Writer

The Hermiston wrestling team continued its recent success this weekend, winning the Gut Check Challenge at the Kitsap County Fairgrounds in Bremerton, Washington, just across the Puget Sound from Seattle.

Hermiston completed the tournament with two individual wins and 163 points, besting the other 24 scholastic team present. The only team to score more — Japan's Junior National Team — scored 228 points, but was not awarded the Gut Check championship as it was an all-star team. Orting (WA) finished third with 147 points and Yelm (WA) was a distant fourth with 126 points.

Sam Colbray topped Clarkston's (WA) Dylan Beeler in a close 2-1 match for the 220-pound championship, and Bob Coleman beat Taisei Matayuki of Japan for the 195-pound title 4-2.

Valen Wyse finished third at 152 pounds with a 2-1 win over Henley's Daine Taylor, and Andy Wagner beat Chris Joner of Battleground (WA) by fall in the third round in the third-place match at 132 pounds.

Overall Hermiston went 23-20, with 11 of those wins coming in matches ending in decisions and 12 wins coming in matches ending in falls.

Road tested: Dawgs rack up miles in December

Preseason travel helps Hermiston girls appreciate Dawghouse

By **ERIC SINGER**
Staff Writer

When any basketball coach or athletic director puts together a season schedule, they typically like to keep things balanced. Plenty of home games, but still enough road games to test the team.

However, Hermiston girls basketball coach Steve Hoffert wanted to give this year's team a challenge — a tougher, unbalanced schedule that he believes will help the Bulldogs in the long run.

Hermiston has completed 14 games in the 2015-16 season so far, and only four of those games have been played in Hermiston. In 10 away games played in the month of December the Bulldogs have traveled more than 2,800 combined miles by bus and plane, traveling to destinations such as Lake Oswego and Phoenix, Arizona for a pair of intense preseason tournaments.

The tournaments came almost back-to-back with each other, with the Bulldogs playing in Arizona from Dec. 18 until Dec. 22 and then in the Portland suburbs from Dec. 27 through Dec. 30 — with just enough time in between to spend a few days at home for the holidays.

"We're road tested now," Hoffert said last month, "which I think can only help us come playoff time."

So when the Bulldogs finally took the court again at The Dawghouse on Jan. 2 — a long 21 days after their previous home game — the players were relieved and even had a new perspective on the feeling of playing home games.

"It's definitely more rewarding now," said Hermiston senior Jansen Edmis-



The Hermiston girls basketball team spent most of the holiday season abroad, playing games in Arizona and Lake Oswego before returning Tuesday for a home game against La Grande, its first in nearly a month.

STAFF PHOTO BY SAM BARBEE

"It reminded me of playing AAU (basketball), but bigger. With staying in hotels, playing a lot of games with a lot of teams. It was cool."

— **Jansen Edmiston**
Hermiston Senior

ton. "We didn't appreciate (playing at home) as much before, it was just a game, and now we do. It brought a calming effect."

In that first game back at home, the Bulldogs gave their fans plenty of satisfaction on the court, defeating Kennewick (WA) 71-38. Just three days later, Hermiston took the floor again at home and again took the win, defeating La Grande 56-42 to improve their overall record to 11-3.

And although the team was happy to get back home, the road trip is an experience the Bulldogs' players will remember for a while, and it started all the way back in the spring of 2014.

Hoffert, the eighth-year Bulldogs coach, had been trying for several years to

challenge and reward his team with a trip to an out-of-state preseason tournament. But for the last three years his team had sat on a waiting list, one that is judged partially off previous year successes.

Twice Hoffert anticipated an invitation, and twice he was left disappointed.

However after the Bulldogs made their run to the state championship game last spring, Hoffert finally received the coveted invitation — a trip to the Nike Tournament of Champions in Phoenix — which was an offer he quickly accepted.

"I didn't want to travel with a team that I knew wouldn't compete, but this (team) would do really well," he said.

When Hoffert broke the news to the girls in April

of last year, he said they thought he was joking.

"I had been talking about it for three years so they didn't want to get too excited," he said.

But after he showed them the official invitation, the girls' excitement shot through the roof, especially for Edmiston and her senior teammates.

"I was super excited," she said. "It's my senior year and getting to travel, have a vacation and play basketball was pretty cool."

The tournament was a unique experience for the Bulldogs. It featured 90 total teams originating from 18 different states split into six brackets for competition.

Hermiston competed in a bracket with schools from California, Arizona, and Colorado and won three out of the four games they played for a ninth place finish.

"It reminded me of playing AAU (basketball), but bigger," Edmiston said. "With staying in hotels, playing a lot of games with a lot of teams. It was cool."

The tournament also brought in more than 80 registered college basketball coaches, ranging from

the NAIA level up to prestigious NCAA Division I schools such as Stanford, Michigan State, and Maryland — presenting a great opportunity for players to possibly get noticed for the next level.

Hoffert said the tournament helped teach the team about where their skills stand right now as it got a taste of different styles and paces of play, something that Edmiston and her teammates enjoyed a lot.

"We got to see a lot of different defenses and things like that," she said. "The teams were quicker than a lot of the ones we face and it helps us get in better shape."

But aside from the on-court play, the Bulldogs also got to do some team bonding in Arizona. Hoffert took them to a Phoenix Suns NBA game and an Arizona State women's basketball game, as well as a few shopping trips to the local malls.

The girls also did some things by themselves in their free time, often gathering to watch a movie, more shopping trips, or goofing around at the resort golf course.

More than 20 Bulldog family members traveled to both tournaments as well, making the experience that much better.

"It was way more relaxing," said Edmiston.

The lone drawback of the tournament was its proximity to Christmas, where the lacking holiday atmosphere and warm desert weather was a little different than the colder climate of Oregon the players were used to.

"It didn't feel like Christmas there," Edmiston said. "With no Christmas lights on houses and warm weather ... it felt odd."

Hermiston returned home from Arizona just a few days before Christmas, and then hit the road again as quick as they got in for the three-hour drive west to

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Riverside leaves Echo 3-way dual 2-0

Echo/Stanfield, tops Irrigon

By **SAM BARBEE**
Staff Writer

Dual wrestling meets are rare for small school programs, as size differences and travel make them more difficult to pull off than, say, Hermiston's program which is used to the team-based events.

Even so, Irrigon, Riverside and Echo/Stanfield got together for a 3-way dual Thursday night that saw the Pirates go 2-0, and the Cougars 1-1, and the Knights 0-2.

Riverside used its experience to beat Irrigon 36-21 and Echo/Stanfield 33-12, and Echo beat Irrigon after the meet ended in a 30-30 draw. The Cougars, though, won on the tiebreaker because they scored 24 points in head-to-head matches while the Knights scored just 12. The rest of the points came from forfeits.

In the first dual of the day — Riverside vs. Irrigon — the first match wrestled was Irrigon's Damon Sawyer against Riverside's Ulises Calvillo with the Pirates up 18-6 on forfeits. Already up 11-2, the Pirate 145-pounder pinned Sawyer with a minute



STAFF PHOTO BY SAM BARBEE

Echo's Damien Curiel (top) looks to control the back of Riverside's Ulises Calvillo during a 3-way dual at Stanfield High School Thursday night. Calvillo beat Curiel 13-7.

left in the final period, setting the tone for the rest of the

dual. Pirate 152-pounder Ivan

Escobedo followed Calvillo's pin with one of his own, this one coming in the first period over Alex Walls. Irrigon came back with a win, though, when Jeff Patton slipped past Jason Navarro 5-4 to move the count to 30-12. Irrigon then won a forfeit, coming within 12 at 30-18.

To close out the meet, Riverside just needed to not lose by pin and they had it, and that's how it worked out. Christian Michaels of Irrigon topped Zach Ferguson of Riverside to move the team scores to 30-21, then, after a double forfeit, Riverside's Anthony Kernal stuck Tucker McAllister to end the day

at 36-21.

Riverside then got the upstart Echo/Stanfield club, which is vastly improved from last season. Kyle Ranger lost a close match 7-5 to Pirate Gabriel Romero with several hand-locking penalties going against the Echo sophomore. Down 5-0 after one round, Ranger tied it at five in the third round, but two hand-locking penalties gave Romero two points and the win.

"Kyle Ranger's come a long way," Raymon Smith said. "To lose it on a hand-locking is a mental

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