

Herald Sports



A friendly plea for feedback

I want to have a discussion with you guys. I don't like sitting at this desk and seeming like I'm pontificating. I'm not the Pope. That's not my job. I do get this space weekly to share my opinions and what I've seen. That's what a column is for, I suppose.

But I can't shake this feeling that there's a glass wall between us. I can see you and you can see me, but that's where the relationship ends. I feel cut off from you. I have no idea what you think about what's going on in the world of local high schools sports.



Sam Barbee
FROM THE SIDELINES

I've tried to toss some things out to you. I was interested in some of your best sports memories. I shared a story of the funnest, most unexpected and ultimately lasting sports memory of mine, a comeback in a high school baseball playoff game that sent the state's No. 1 team home early. I asked you to tell me your stories, and got nothing.

Two weeks ago, I gave you the sports stories I thought told the story of 2015 best. I lobbed an offer to you to give me your lists so that perhaps we could run them.

Again, nothing.

I understand how this could be perceived: that I'm lazy and want to do less work. I can assure you I'm not trying to lighten my workload by crowd-sourcing content.

All I'm doing is simply trying to reach out to you, the readers, to learn a little about you as people. I've written a lot about myself and the experiences I've had and what I've learned along the way.

But that feels so one-sided, for you and for me. Sometimes I don't know to whom I'm writing, and that can make things difficult. Language is a generational thing, and sometimes I don't know which to use. A lot of that comes from knowing your audience, but I don't know you guys.

A sportswriter I very much respect once said that writing is the loneliest part of the job. And he's so right. To combat that, I really want to establish a larger relationship with you than you seeing my name and picture in the paper every week or you seeing me at a game I'm covering.

There used to be a firm wall between readers and reporters, but that's lessening. Social media has given people direct lines to anybody, from athletes to actors to politicians. Comment on a story on Facebook or hit me up on Twitter. I want this to be a two-way street.

I'd still love to hear your fondest sports memories. They can be just little anecdotes in an email or a full-fledged column. It doesn't matter to me. I just want to get to know you guys better. — 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.



Hermiston's Tre Neal sacks Coeur d'Alene sophomore quarterback Colton Yankoff during a game this season at Kennison Stadium.

STAFF PHOTO BY GARY L. WEST

Hermiston's Neal goes from 1A to FCS

Two-time CRC Defensive Player of the Year commits to Eastern Washington

By **SAM BARBEE**
East Oregonian

Before his junior season, Tre Neal was contemplating a transfer.

The 6-foot-3 defensive lineman, then listed at 215 pounds, decided that if he wanted a better shot at continuing his football career, a better education, and "a better challenge," as he put it, then he would have to go to a bigger school.

He transferred to Hermiston, where he quickly gained 15 pounds of muscle, was named

the Columbia River Conference Defensive Player of the Year, and after a senior season — now weighing 250 pounds — that saw him repeat as CRC DPOY and a first-team all-state selection, Neal has committed to play football at Eastern Washington in Cheney, Washington.

"For Tre it was the best move he ever made," former lone football and basketball coach, current Hermiston assistant coach and longtime mentor of Neal Dennis Stefani said. "He blossomed big time. There really weren't any weight programs at Lone ... He was a big kid already but it helped him a ton and helped him flourish and helped his speed and every-

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STAFF PHOTO BY SAM BARBEE

Hermiston junior Chance Flores goes up for a layup during the second half of Hermiston's 53-47 loss Friday night to La Salle Prep. Flores led all scorers with 19 points.

COMEBACK FALLS SHORT



Hermiston sophomore Dayshawn Neal leans back for a fadeaway during the Bulldogs' 53-47 loss Friday night to the La Salle Prep Falcons.

La Salle built 14-point lead in second half

By **SAM BARBEE**
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — In their last home game, the Hermiston Bulldogs overcame a deficit to come away with a win in a nail-biter at home. Friday, it was the same story but a different result.

The La Salle Prep Falcons built a 14-point lead in the third quarter and held on during a furious Bulldogs rally to earn a 53-47 win at The Dawghouse.

"We were just trying dig ourselves out of a hole that we dug," senior point guard Austin Naillon said. "That was a game that we should've had — home game and they were nothing special."

"They were big, they were long, they were athletic. How they were 3-8, I don't know," interim head coach Dave Ego added.

La Salle (4-9) boasted 6-foot-7 junior center Mathew Berger, 6-3 forward Jason Burns and 6-2 guard Stew Robertson against Hermiston's small lineup. The Bulldogs (7-8) again started five guards, and early on had a tough time containing La Salle's shooters Robertson and Ange Toki.

The pair hit four 3-pointers between them in the first quarter, pushing the visit-

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Bulldogs dominate dual meets at OWC in Redmond

Hermiston wrestlers win second straight tournament

By **SAM BARBEE**
Staff Writer

The Hermiston Bulldogs turned in a dominant performance this weekend at the Oregon Wrestling Classic in Redmond, going 4-0 in dual meets and taking home the team championship

with a convincing 45-12 championship round win over Hillsboro. The Bulldogs outlasted the Spartans for last season's 5A team championship.

Hermiston eased through pool play, notching blowout wins over Ridgeview (78-6), Mountain View (60-21) and St. Helens (68-9) on Friday. Saturday, in bracket play, Hermiston handled Central (71-6) and Crater (51-18) before handily beating Hillsboro in the final.

"Our guys wrestled hard, ex-

actly how we want to," first-year coach Kyle Larson said.

How Larson wants his guys to wrestle is attacking, going forward and scoring lots of points. The Bulldogs were a bit too defensive early in the season, highlighted by a dual loss to Post Falls (ID) in December.

At the Oregon Classic, Hermiston was most certainly attacking.

Of the eight wrestlers who took the mat six times, five went undefeated and two did it without

forfeits. Valen Wyse (four pins), Andy Wagner (four pins, technical fall) and CJ Hendon (five pins) each went 6-0 to lead Hermiston.

Sam Colbray (6-0, five pins), Bob Coleman (6-0, three pins), Joey Gutierrez (6-0, five pins), each had a forfeit to add to their totals.

"We want to dominate and we want to put pressure on guys and break 'em," first-year head coach Kyle Larson said. "And that's what they did this weekend."

"We want to go out there and

we want to dominate," Larson reiterated. "We want to beat guys by major decisions. We want to get pins and tech falls."

Hermiston did just that. In the first three duals, Hermiston won by pin in 25 of its 27 wins with eight forfeits.

Larson especially praised the efforts of Valen Wyse and Bob Coleman.

Wyse, who has been steadily near-dominant all season, showed

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