

# KOPACZ:

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til you play with real talent you don't know."

She said she dreamed of perhaps playing in Eugene at the University of Oregon, but realized realistic thinking may be a better route.

"Everyone wants to go somewhere big," she said. "I thought playing at U of O would be cool, but that's a big dream. That's a chasing dream."

When it came time to

choose a college, Kopacz received some quality advice from her eldest brother, Chance, redshirted two years at Walla Walla Community College, transferred to Campbellsville University in Kentucky, then once again transferred to Concordia University, Irvine. Kopacz other brother, Austin, played two years at Walla Walla CC, as well. Chance, she said, advised to go somewhere where you wouldn't redshirt, or sit out a year to save eligibility.

Kopacz said she's nervous about having a starting spot

so early, but is also confident in her abilities to fill the role. She isn't sure yet if she'll stay the full two seasons or if she'll transfer to a four-year school early.

"My coach really assured me that he's going to push me somewhere else," she said. "He gave me a lot of scenarios. The school I was looking at in North Carolina, if they're shortstop blew out a knee something, Todd, the coach there, could call Adrian and ship me right out. He's going to get me somewhere else."



STAFF PHOTO BY SAM BARBEE

Mikayla Kopacz (center) of Hermiston smiles with her parents Kristi (left) and Marek after the senior signed her National Letter of Intent to play softball at Columbia Basin College in Pasco.

# Local AAU tournament draws massive crowd

By SAM BARBEE

Staff Writer

More than 1,000 AAU basketball players from across the region from 3rd-8th grade descended on Hermiston last weekend for the Best of the West basketball tournament hosted by Hermiston Basketball Club.

Best of the West is quickly becoming one of the most popular youth basketball tournaments in the region. Coming from the Tri-Cities, Moses Lake, Walla Walla, Yakima, Lewiston, Tacoma, Boise and more, 101 teams comprised of 1,060 players participated. To compensate, the club used gymnasium facilities at Hermiston High School, Armand Larive Middle School, Sandstone Middle School, Desert View Elementary, West Park Elementary, Stanfield High, Stanfield Elementary and Columbia Court Club. In total, there were 15



PHOTO COURTESY HERMISTON BASKETBALL CLUB

The Moses Lake Chiefs pose after winning the 8th grade girls division bracket at the Best of the West, a large AAU tournament hosted by Hermiston Basketball Club.

courts going at 10 different sites.

In addition to the size, the amenities offered by the club have set it apart from other tournaments in the area.

HBC announces play- ers pre-game, with dimmed

lights included. Games are livestreamed through ALMS TV, a mobile app with all pertinent information, coaches gifts, and an All-Star game for one division where the top two players from each team are selected to play in an ex-

hibition game.

"This tournament is good for the club and great for the community," Traci Gammell, HBC treasurer, tournament director and registrar said in an email. "We hear time and time again that motels are sold out each weekend, restaurants are swamped and gas stations are busy. Hermiston Basketball Club is very proud of the hundreds of hours of volunteer work we do to benefit the club and the community!"

HBC's next tournament is the For the Love of the Game tournament Feb. 13-14.

**Champions:**  
Boys — 3rd grade: GW Hoops. 4th grade: Baker Bulldogs. 5th grade: Kennewick Lions. 6th grade: 509 Ballerz. 7th grade: ML Warriors. 8th grade: Moses Lake Chiefs.  
Girls — 4th grade: NW Heat. 5th grade: Wildcats 5. 6th grade: Pasco. 7th grade: HD Basketball. 8th grade: Moses Lake Chiefs.  
**Runners-up:**  
Boys — 3rd grade: Hermiston Heat. 4th grade: Richland Gunners — Praino. 5th grade: Cayuse Young Chiefs. 6th grade: LC Elite. 7th grade: Richland Gunners. 8th grade: TC Firehawks.  
Girls — 4th grade: Hoop Dreams Blue. 5th grade: Underdogs Elite. 6th grade: White Swan. 7th grade: Lady Braves. 8th grade: Grandview Wildhounds.



STAFF PHOTO BY SAM BARBEE

Echo's Hannah McCarty (14) rises for a layup in front of Griswold's Bethany Newtonson (24) and Sadie Wilson during the Grizzlies' 33-30 win Saturday in Echo.

# City to make offer on property for new skate park

By JADE McDOWELL

Staff Writer

The city of Hermiston is planning to purchase property for a new skate park across the street from the police station.

On Monday the city council authorized staff to make an offer of \$40,000 for a triangular-shaped piece of property directly across South First Street from the Hermiston Safety Center, which houses the police, fire department and municipal court.

For 2015-2016 the city had budgeted \$35,000 for land acquisition for a skate park and another \$50,000 for capital

improvements. City Manager Byron Smith said preliminary discussions with Pendleton Grain Growers, which owns the property, indicate that the co-op will accept an offer of \$40,000.

Mayor David Drotzmann applauded staff for finding a piece of land that fits the needs of a new skate park, which has been a goal for the city council for years.

"What an exciting opportunity for the city of Hermiston," he said.

On Monday the council also approved a contract amendment for C&E Trenching, moving forward a crucial

piece of the project to certify the Port of Umatilla's water right and increase irrigation to local farmland.

"This is the best birthday present I could ever ask for," Northeast Oregon Water Association director J.R. Cook told the council.

C&E Trenching has been under contract with the city to extend the Regional Water System to the Hermiston Agricultural Research and Extension Center. The \$664,000 contract extension approved Monday hires the company to install an additional pump at the Regional Water System's river intake station and create

a flush system.

Cook said the project should be ready for testing in March.

Prior to the regular city council meeting, city councilors, staff and budget committee members attended a work session titled "City Budgeting 101" to discuss the laws and policies surrounding city budgets.

City finance director Amy Palmer said budget requests from department heads are due March 4 and the budget should be completed by April 22, with budget committee meetings on May 18-19 and a public hearing June 13.

# ECHO:

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giving, and the Cougars had to foul to stop the clock. Junior point guard Macey Tullis made both free throws with 7.8 seconds left, and Echo couldn't get a good shot at the buzzer to tie.

With the win, Helix stays in sole possession of second place in the OOL, a game back of Nixyaawii for first place. Flerschinger said he was satisfied with the win in Echo, as, in his experience, it's always a tough gym to win in.

For Echo, meanwhile,

Swanson sees improvement, but Saturday's loss was "a heartbreaker."

"This was a heartbreaker, for everybody," Swanson said. "We were right on a two-game winning streak and we were playing together and playing tough. We gave them everything we had and just fell short."

**GHS (13-4, 6-1) 8 6 14 - 33**  
**EHS (9-10, 2-5) 13 5 3 - 30**  
GRISWOLD — M. Mize 9, P. Flerschinger 9, S. Wilson 9, E. Fehlrenbacker 4, M. Tullis 2, H. Christman, A. Krol, A. Wood, C. Bennett, B. Newtonson, M. Espy, K. Mize.  
ECHO — H. McCarty 10, K. Ranger 8, T. Swaggert 5, E. Parks 4, L. Cox 3, D. Tarvin, S. Stone, L. Wiggins, B. Milbrodt. 3-pointers — GHS 0, EHS 3. Free throws — GHS 5-11, EHS 3-18. Fouls — GHS 16, EHS 15. Fouled out — P. Flerschinger (GHS), H. McCarty (EHS). Technical fouls — Helix bench.

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