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## February Power Rankings

Just when I think I have a handle on time, it shocks me again. It's been four weeks since we've visited the power rankings, and I feel like I wrote that column yesterday. Then again, the Earth does spin at 1,000 mph. Do we know anything that goes that fast? Other than light?



Sam Barbee FROM THE SIDELINES

But, I digress. I'm good at that. We have just about a month left of the winter sports season, and the landscape is beginning to form. Before we jump into February's list, here's January's: 1. Hermiston girls basketball; 2. Hermiston wrestling; 3. Stanfield boys basketball; Umatilla girls basketball; 5. Stanfield girls basketball.

Let's jump back into it, shall we?

1. Hermiston girls basketball — 14-3, 2-0, OSAA No. 6. Last month: 5-0

These girls haven't done anything to warrant moving them down. They've been consistently good all season, from the opening tip to now. January was no different, with five wins and is plus-95 in point differential in those games.

Hermiston is second in the state in points per game (56.5) behind La Salle Prep at 64.5. Hermiston has unsurprisingly jumped to the top of the Columbia River Conference with two blowout wins over Hood River and The Dalles. The only close result last month was a 63-62 win at Sunnyside (WA) who is 13-3 on the year and beat the Bulldogs last season in Hermiston.

Though just two league games are under the Bulldogs' belt (it'll be three when this column is published but due to deadlines it won't be reflected here), Hermiston has once again demonstrated its leagues ahead of the rest of the conference. I'd expect a sixth straight CRC title and another run in the playoffs. But as coach Steve Hoffert told me last week, things can happen, injuries can happen. It may not be prudent to start planning your trips to Corvallis, but keep it in mind. Hermiston will most likely be there again.

2. Hermiston wrestling — last month: 2nd at Reser's Tournament of Champions, 1st at Oregon Wrestling Classic, 1st at Gut Check Challenge, 5th at the Clash.

It was a busy month for Hermiston wrestling with four tournaments and its first district dual of the season, and the Bulldogs exited the month as the probable odds-on favorite to win another state championship.

Sam Colbray is dominant, as usual, posting a 28-1 record. But he isn't alone. Fellow senior Bob Coleman is 28-2. Valen Wyse has taken several steps forward at 152 pounds, winning his bracket at the Tournament of Champions and posting a 26-4 mark, third-best on the team. Colbray has won every bracket he's entered this season — with his lone loss coming in December to Trevor Eichner of Post Falls — and Coleman has won two of the three individual brackets.

It's pretty amazing to see how much depth Hermiston can call upon. Colbray can do either 195 or 220 pounds, and Coleman can bump up to 195 from 182. Hermiston boasts four guys with more than 20 wins (Colbray, Coleman, Wyse and CJ Hendon) and has two more (Isaiah Aguilar and Beau Blake) who are close. Add in Julio Laiva (13-4) and Devin Bosner (12-6) and there are a handful of guys who can win any match they enter.

With just the Oregon City Tournament two duals remaining before the Special District 4 tournament Feb. 19 and 20 and

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# Heppner boys hold on to beat Stanfield

## Stanfield girls ease past Mustangs

By SAM BARBEE  
Staff Writer

The play worked exactly as it was supposed to.

With one second remaining and the Stanfield Tigers boys down 44-43, the Mustang defense collapsed down on Stanfield junior Dylan Grogan on the baseline inbounds, leaving Brody Woods open from eight feet out. The lob was accurate, Woods caught it and tossed it at the rim in one motion, but it went off back iron, giving Heppner an exciting one-point win Saturday evening.

"What can you ask for? We had the chance, had the opportunity," Stanfield coach Victor Baros said. "Like I told the boys, 'You can't predict how the ball is gonna bounce. It'll go in or go out.' We had the opportunity."

"I knew by setting up that play that the ball was probably gonna end up in Brody's hands. I knew they'd be tight on Dylan. That's exactly how it happened, but the ball didn't bounce the right way."

For Heppner (16-2, 6-1), it was a quality win, especially considering the motivation Stanfield (13-5, 5-2) had after Heppner walloped the Tigers 83-65 Jan. 9.

"We knew coming in it was gonna be a dogfight," Heppner coach Jeremy Rosenbalm said. "That's two really good basketball teams that gave everything they had. I can't ask anything more from my team in terms of effort or hustle. We've worked so hard to get to this point, and to have big road wins like this (is huge)."

It was a back-and-forth affair all night that was rather mistake-free. There were only a total of 15 turnovers committed by both teams combined, and, for the most part, there weren't any silly fouls, either.

Heppner led by 10 points once when CJ Kindle hit a 3-pointer with 5:45 in the third quarter to put the Mustangs up 31-21, but it wouldn't get any bigger. Stan-



Stanfield's Tony Flores (20) rises over Heppner's CJ Kindle for Stanfield's first basket during the Mustangs' 44-43 win Saturday in Stanfield.

field's biggest lead of the night was four after Tony Flores hit a 3-pointer with 5:09 left in the second quarter.

Stanfield's lead was brief.

Entering the second quarter up 13-8, Heppner watched as the Tigers' defense ratcheted up, forcing three straight turnovers while embarking on an 11-2 run to take the 19-15 lead on Flores' 3. The possession prior, Thylor Monkus converted a three-point

play to take a one-point lead at 16-15, then Flores hit his 3 for the four-point lead.

Then Weston Putman took over.

The 6-foot-2 senior scored 10 of Heppner's last 13 points as Heppner closed the first half on a 13-2 run to take a seven-point lead into the break.

"A couple of (guys) didn't play their best game (Friday) night (in a 49-42 loss vs. Irrigon),



Heppner's Caden Hedman (12) attempts a layup as a host of Stanfield Tigers defend during the Mustangs 44-43 win Saturday in Stanfield.

and so they were amped up and ready to redeem themselves tonight," Rosenbalm said. "Weston was one of those guys. He was pretty upset last night with the way he played and we wanted to come and show our fans what he can play like."



Stanfield's Cynthia Curiel (3) is defended by Heppner's Jacce Currin (10) and Rylee Kollman during the Tigers' 38-24 win Saturday in Stanfield.

The Mustangs largely controlled the action in the second half, grabbing the 10-point lead

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# Bulldogs blast Eagles at home



Hermiston senior guard Sara Ramirez (with ball) drives around Hood River Valley's Emily Curtis during the Bulldogs' 78-43 win Friday night in Hermiston.

## Hermiston scores 54 in first half, cruise to easy win

By SAM BARBEE  
Staff Writer

At the varsity level, competition is generally very even. Parody, as it's known, usually prevents teams from treating games as glorified scrimmages where they can work on new plays, lineups or whatever.

That wasn't the case Friday night, when Hermiston thoroughly dominated the Hood River Valley Eagles 78-43 at The Dawghouse.

Anticipating an easy win over a team devoid of talent and numbers — Hood River (3-12, 0-2) suited just nine players — Bulldogs coach Steve Hoffert wanted to use Friday's game as an opportunity to try new rotations, new plays and the press. He liked what he saw.

"I tried to look for and look on our reaction time to running a play, running a press, getting into something after a made basket, getting into this defense after a miss," he said. "We kept switching defense based on misses, makes and free throws. So I was looking for if we got into the position we were supposed to."

The Bulldogs (14-3, 2-0 CRC) dominated from the opening jump, scoring 30 first-quarter points en route to a 34-point halftime lead. Opening in a full-court press, something Hermiston had yet to do this season, the Bulldogs forced four Eagle turnovers in the first minute

and a half of game time.

The Bulldogs stayed in the press most of the first quarter, and Hood River couldn't figure it out. In total Hood River coughed it up 13 times in that first period as Hermiston jumped to a 30-8 lead.

"We have to make sure we send our message early and get it done early," Hoffert said. "We let The Dalles hang around. They're a good team, but I don't think we played well enough where we put them away."

"You want to make sure you play well enough and you put the teams away that you should just so they lose that confidence factor."

The starters played the rest of the first half, with some future talent getting some run, as well. Hannah Thompson was the first deep reserve to see the floor Friday night, and she scored four points.

Jordan Thomas, a 6-foot-1 freshman forward, started the third quarter for Hermiston, and showed why there is so much optimism surrounding her. She netted eight points, battled for rebounds and played tough defensively. Edmiston said the improvement is obvious.

"She never gives up," Edmiston said of the freshman. "She keeps running down the court and she always tries for every rebound. And she's usually there for the pass."

But that's not all. "She's starting to jump," the senior laughed.

Also getting significant minutes were freshman Sidney Stefani and

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