

Mustangs hoping to get over hump

HEPPNER BASEBALL

COACH: Jim Kindle, 3rd year
2015 SEASON: 9-11, 5-7 SD6 (4th)
POSTSEASON STORY: The Mustangs have not had a winning record or made the postseason since 2011.

RETURNERS: C Weston Putman, sr.; P/INF Patrick Collins, sr.; UT C.J. Kindle, sr.; OF Kevin Murray, jr.; INF Jake Lindsay, jr.

The Heppner Mustangs haven't had much time together as the 2016 season draws near, as the teams' practices were set back by the basketball team advancing to the state playoffs.

Head coach Jim Kindle said that the team will have only had six practices before their first game.

"The guys have done a lot to get their arms in shape," he said. "We'll probably have to throw several (pitchers) in the first game because all of their arms won't be ready."

Heppner loses only two starters from last years' squad in infielder Zach Irons and outfielder Cade Arbogast, but return plenty of experience all over the field. Leading the pack of returners is senior utility player C.J. Kindle, who hit for a .326 average, scored 25 runs, and stole 22 bases to land on the first team all-league roster.

The Mustangs also return seniors Weston Putman and Patrick Collins, as well as juniors Kevin Murray and Jake Lindsay to help bolster the offense and defense.

Pitching will be a big question mark for the Mustangs heading through the season, as the staff allowed more than seven runs per game in 2015. The team has not had a winning season since 2011, and has hovered around the .500 mark for the past two seasons. So what does Kindle think it will take to get the Mustangs over the hump?

"Cut down on the errors and put the ball in play," he said. "We can make good contact, we just need to find some space in the field."

Heppner's district landscape



In this May 19, 2015 file photo, Jake Lindsay, of Heppner, dives for home plate as pitcher Freddie Vera waits for the ball during a game in Irrigon.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

2016 SCHEDULE

Mar. 15	vs. Weston-McEwen	4 p.m.
Mar. 29	vs. Pilot Rock	4 p.m.
Apr. 1	at Weston-McEwen (DH)	2 p.m.
Apr. 4	at Pilot Rock	4:30 p.m.
Apr. 12	at Grant Union	4 p.m.
Apr. 16	vs. Grant Union (DH)	11 a.m.
Apr. 19	at Dufur*	4 p.m.
Apr. 23	vs. Dufur* (DH)	11 a.m.
Apr. 26	vs. Irrigon*	4:30 p.m.
Apr. 30	at Irrigon* (DH)	11 a.m.
May 3	vs. Sherman*	4:30 p.m.
May 7	at Sherman* (DH)	11 a.m.
May 10	at Culver*	4:30 p.m.
May 14	vs. Culver* (DH)	11 a.m.

*League game

changed a bit for the 2016 season, as the Mustangs' home Special District 6 has two less teams after both Pilot Rock and Weston-McEwen have been relocated to Special District 7.

Dufur has also added a co-op with South Wasco this season, and Arlington/Sherman has added

Condon High School, with Sherman taking the lead.

"It'll be a different look, for sure," Kindle said. "But we still have to play against Sherman and Dufur, and we still have to drive to Culver, so we'll still have to play well."

HEPPNER SOFTBALL

COACH: Petra Payne, 3rd year
2015 SEASON: 3-19, 1-11 SD6 (7th)
POSTSEASON STORY: The Mustangs have not made the playoffs since its back-to-back appearances in 2012 and 2013.
RETURNERS: P Meranda Lemmon, jr.; P Onna DeLoach, jr.; 3B Jessica Kempken, sr.; C Caitlyn Bailey, sr.

The Heppner Mustangs have struggled to find winning consistency in each of the last two seasons, mustering just five total wins overall.

Coach Petra Payne is hoping for a turnaround in 2016, as the team returns all of its starters and most of the contributors from the 2015 team.

"We have 16 girls out for the team this year, and that should help us," she said. "We have a couple of new dynamics to make us tougher, and our returners are getting better and stronger."



Heppner will have three strong pitching options this year, with junior Meranda Lemmon as well as newcomers Cassidy McCullough and Dakota Durphy.

So what does Payne want to see from her team in 2016?

"We're going to need to be able to beat the top teams in our league to hopefully boost some confidence," she said. "I'm really hoping for some solid defense, continued improvement, and being able to put some runs on the board."

2016 SCHEDULE

Mar. 17	vs. Umatilla	4:30 p.m.
Mar. 23	vs. Hermiston JV	Noon
Mar. 23	vs. Enterprise	TBD
Mar. 24	vs. Knappa	TBD
Mar. 24	vs. Enterprise	TBD
Mar. 28	vs. Echo	4:30 p.m.
Mar. 31	at Umatilla	4:30 p.m.
Apr. 1	at Grant Union (DH)	1 p.m.
Apr. 9	at Echo	11 a.m.
Apr. 12	at Burns*	3:30 p.m.
Apr. 16	vs. Burns* (DH)	1 p.m.
Apr. 19	at Union*	4 p.m.
Apr. 23	vs. Union* (DH)	11 a.m.
Apr. 26	vs. Pilot Rock*	4:30 p.m.
Apr. 30	at Pilot Rock* (DH)	11 a.m.
May 3	at Irrigon*	4:30 p.m.
May 6	vs. Irrigon* (DH)	10 a.m.
May 10	vs. Culver*	4:30 p.m.
May 14	at Culver* (DH)	11 a.m.

*League game



EO file photo

Caitlyn Bailey of Heppner is one of the team's top returners for 2016.

HEPPNER TRACK & FIELD

COACH: Russ Nichols & Laura Winters, 1st year

POSTSEASON STORY: The Mustangs qualified eight individuals in 10 events at the state meet, where the girls finished tied for 30th and the boys finished 29th.

KEY RETURNERS: (BOYS) Kaden Clark, sr.; Skyler Palmer, sr.; Alex Lindsay, soph.; (GIRLS) Kaelyn Lindsay, sr.

The Heppner Mustangs had a successful trip to the district track meet in 2015, qualifying eight individuals for the state meet in 10 different events. However, that success

did not translate into results at the state meet, where the Mustangs highest finish on the boys side was Skyler Palmer finishing seventh in the 800 meter run and Kelly Wilson finishing eighth in the triple jump on the girls side.

But the Mustangs return six of those eight qualifiers in 2016, with Kaden Clark (200 meter dash), Alex Lindsay (triple jump, 4x400 relay), Len Havermeier (high jump, javelin throw), and Kaelyn Lindsay (100 meter hurdles) all looking to better their results from 2015.

2016 SCHEDULE

Mar. 17	Buck Track Classic	1 p.m.
Apr. 2	Sherman Invite	1 p.m.
Apr. 9	Stanfield Invite	11 a.m.
Apr. 14	Mustang Invite	1 p.m.
Apr. 23	Pepsi Invite (Union)	10 a.m.
Apr. 27	Bulldog Invite	4 p.m.
Apr. 30	Condon Invite	11 a.m.
May 6	Baker Invite	10 a.m.
May 13	Districts (at Athena)	11 a.m.
May 19	State Meet (at Eugene)	8 a.m.
May 20	State Meet (at Eugene)	8 a.m.

HEPPNER GOLF

In this May 13, 2015 file photo, Heppner's Logan Grieb chips during the 2A district golf tournament at the Pendleton County Club.



EO file photo/ E.J. Harris

COACH: Greg Grant, 26th year
POSTSEASON STORY: The Mustangs had a successful season, as the boys team finished third at districts and seventh at the state tournament, and the girls finished second in the district and second in the state tournament.

LOSSES: Jesse Corbin, John Propheter, Paige Grieb, Maddie Lindsay, Emily Rae,

RETURNERS: (Boys) Logan Grieb, jr.; Brian Rill, sr.; Tommy Bredfield, sr. (Girls) Sophie Grant, soph.; Amanda Rea, jr.

Heppner returns three boys and two girls from the state qualifying teams from one year ago, and are poised for another successful season.

On the boys team, Logan Grieb returns for his junior season coming off of a fourth-place finish at districts and a 16th-place finish at state. Also back for the Mustangs are seniors Brian Rill and Tommy Bredfield who earned 40th place and 36th place finishes at the district tournament respectively.

On the girls team, Sophie Grant returns for her sophomore season after a stellar freshman year saw her earn top-ten finishes at both the district and state tournaments. The only other varsity player returning is junior Amanda Rea, who finished 11th in the district tournament and tied for 24th with former teammate Maddie Lindsay at the state tournament.

The district tournament is back at Pendleton Country Club again for the 2016 season, and the 4A/3A/2A/1A state tournament will be held at Emerald Valley Golf Club in Creswell.

2016 SCHEDULE

Mar. 17	at Willow Creek CC	2 p.m.
Mar. 18	at Echo Hills GC	10 a.m.
Mar. 28	at Pumpkin Ridge GC	Noon
Apr. 1	at Pendleton CC	9 a.m.
Apr. 8	at John Day GC	11 a.m.
Apr. 12	at La Grande CC	Noon
Apr. 15	at Big River GC	10 a.m.
Apr. 22	at Buffalo Peak GC	10 a.m.
Apr. 29	at Alpine Meadows GC	11 a.m.
May 8-10	Districts (Pendleton CC)	8 a.m.

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GOOD LUCK TO IRRIGON KNIGHTS!

Best of Luck Knights!

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