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Bucks, Dawgs shine in opener

Teams wrap up first competition with high expectations

By **ERIC SINGER**
Staff Writer

On Thursday afternoon, more than 700 athletes from more than 15 schools from eastern Oregon descended on Pendleton High School for the 25th annual Buck Track Classic.

It marked the first opportunity for athletes to get a crack at competition in the 2016 season, as well as the first time for coaches to really see the progression and development of their run-

ners, throwers, and jumpers after only a few weeks of practice.

"It gives the kids a mark to work at the rest of the season," Pendleton coach Dustin Breshears said. "It also gives us coaches points on what to do and where to go with our workouts and practices moving forward."

After everything was completed, the Pendleton Buckaroos and Hermiston Bulldogs could only smile at their results as each team

had very successful days.

For Pendleton, the team did much better than the coaches had anticipated.

"I was very pleased and surprised ... a lot of the kids did way better than we had expected," Breshears said. "We had kids hitting (personal records) and beating times from last year in just the first meet, which is very exciting as a coach."

One of those surprises was junior sprinter Soren Wolf, who in his first year

as a member of the track and field team, earned the top time in the boys 100 meter dash at 11.69 seconds, and was a key cog in the Buckaroos 4x100 meter relay team that earned the top time of 45.11.

"He's been a part of our cross country team for the last two years and we finally got him to come out for track this year," Breshears said. "He's very talented but still very raw in the sport, but he's a true gamer and will do whatever we ask."

Two performances the

ters (4:16.95), while Clem breezed to victories in the 1500 meters (5:17.84) and the 3000 meters (11:27.55).

For Hermiston, the Bulldogs showed that their strengths in 2016 are in the sprints on the girls side and distance and field events on the boys side.

Junior sprinter Audrey Lincoln just barely took the top time in the 100 meter dash with a 12.99 — barely beating Monument freshman Sophia Pettit's time of

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STAFF PHOTO BY
E.J. HARRIS

Pendleton senior Lukas Johnson clears 11 feet 6 inches in the pole vault Thursday during the Buck Track Classic in Pendleton.

Spring power rankings: First edition

The schedule usually governing the monthly prep power rankings was disrupted due to the end of winter sports bleeding over into March. With that in mind,

I'll do the first edition of the spring power rankings now, and we'll get back to it in a couple of weeks. We're a week into the spring sports season now, so we have some data to use in ranking these.

Before we jump in, let's take a look at the final winter power rankings, shall we?

1. Hermiston wrestling: state championship (10x), four state champions (Sam Colbray 4x, Andy Wagner 1x, Bob Coleman 1x, Valen Wyse 1x).

2. Hermiston girls basketball: 24-4, fourth place in 5A OSAA Tournament

4. Stanfield boys basketball: 16-6, 3rd in Columbia Basin Conference

5. Hermiston boys basketball: 13-13, lost 87-45 to Wilsonville in play-in round

Let me first say how excited I am it's again spring. I love baseball more than I should, and the smell of leather and pine tar is one of my favorites. Okay, now that I've had my moment, let's look at the area teams.

1. Stanfield baseball: 3-0, OSAA No. 13

This stat will surprise you. It surprised me and I knew it. In three games, the Tigers have scored 48 runs and allowed...zero. Yeah. Three games. Three shut outs. Three ten-run rules. That's domination. That's a team that has something to prove. Included in this tear is a perfect game (from Dylan Grogan in five innings, but still a perfect game. I don't care what you say). They've scored 22 runs in a game. They've hit three triples in a game. They've had a guy get two triples in a game. This is a really good baseball team, folks, and I would suggest going to watch them play. They can do it all: play solid defense, throw strikes and get guys out, they hit line drives, they bunt, they run the bases well. It's just a good baseball team. As someone who appreciates and loves good baseball, Stanfield is a dream. Again, I would suggest making the 10-minute drive and heading down to Madigan Field. It'll be worth it.

2. Umatilla baseball: 2-0, OSAA No. 1.

I tweeted this out on Monday. I know it's early. I know. But this is awesome for a struggling program. The Vikings are 2-0 and the top-ranked team in the 3A division. How cool is that? How cool is that for the players, who came to practice every day last year while they lost most of their games? How cool is it for the coach, Dave Dever, who has cultivated improvement so soon? How cool is it for the school, that they can boast successful athletics in each of the three seasons? Now, let's not get ahead of ourselves here.

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GROGAN GOES PERFECT IN 2016 DEBUT

Junior righty strikes out 12 in five innings

By **SAM BARBEE**
Staff Writer

Stanfield baseball coach Bryan Johnson is depending on talented right-hander Dylan Grogan to be a foundational piece to the Tigers' pitching staff in 2016 as they endeavor to win their third straight 3A Eastern Oregon League title.

If Thursday's performance was any indication, Johnson won't have to fret much about the lanky junior. Grogan spun an abbreviated perfect game in his 2016 debut, tossing five full innings allowing zero baserunners while striking out 12 Union Bobcats in just 57 pitches as the Tigers throttled the Bobcats 16-0.

"You can't ask for much more out of the gate," Johnson said of the win. "The kids were focused and dialed it in."

Grogan was effective and efficient from the first pitch. His mid-80s fastball was too much for Union hitters, and he deftly mixed in change-ups and breaking balls to keep the hitters off balance. He relied on the heater though, not wanting to speed up the Bobcat bats, which were consistently behind the hard fastball. In the top of the second inning, Grogan struck out the side using nothing but fastballs against the four, five and six hitters in Union's order.

It was a demonstration of what Grogan can do if he throws strikes, something he struggled with as a sophomore. Of the 57 pitches, 46 were strikes. He threw three or more balls in an inning just twice.

"Dylan's biggest thing this year was just throwing strikes," Johnson said, adding he threw about 80 percent strikes. "And he did that. Good velocity. He was dialed in and it was good."

Grogan, though, wasn't overly excited about his stellar pitching



STAFF PHOTO BY SAM BARBEE

Stanfield baseball coach Bryan Johnson (in blue) greets junior Dylan Grogan (20) after the right-hander struck out 12 during a perfect game in a 16-0 win Thursday over Union.

performance. The normally level-headed and quiet Grogan, who also stars in football and basketball, was more focused on his team than his individual statistics.

"The most important thing is Stanfield won," he said.

He said he received a bit of ribbing from his teammates about letting some at-bats go too long, but most of it was good-natured.

Offensively, Stanfield was balanced, well-rounded and received contributions from the entire order. Six Tigers had two or more hits. Three Tigers had two or more RBI, and eight Tigers had at least one run batted in. Eight Tigers scored runs, and Stanfield batters struck out just four times.

It was a departure from the beginning of last season for Stanfield, which Johnson described as "lazy fly ball disease." The Tigers struggled staying on top of the ball, popping everything up. Stanfield lost its first three games of 2015.

"That's sort of been our goal, see how many balls we can hit hard," Johnson said. "In practice we're tallying that up in (batting practice). We had eight to 10, I think. So, that's some good quality at-bats."

Brody Woods had the standout offensive performance, going 2-for-4 with a double and four RBI in his varsity debut. Tyler Monkus was 2-for-3 with two runs scored and an RBI, and Keith Wampler was 3-for-4 with a run, an RBI and a nice bunt single to start the bottom of the second.

Monus led off the first with a looping single into left, and eventually scored on a Grogan fielder's choice to take a 1-0 lead. The one-run lead would last until the third, when Stanfield broke things open in a big way.

The Tigers sent 15 batters to the plate in the third, scoring ten runs on eight hits. Grogan had two hits,

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STAFF PHOTO BY SAM BARBEE

Stanfield righty Dylan Grogan delivers a pitch Thursday during his perfect game and a 16-0 Tiger win over Union at Madigan Field.

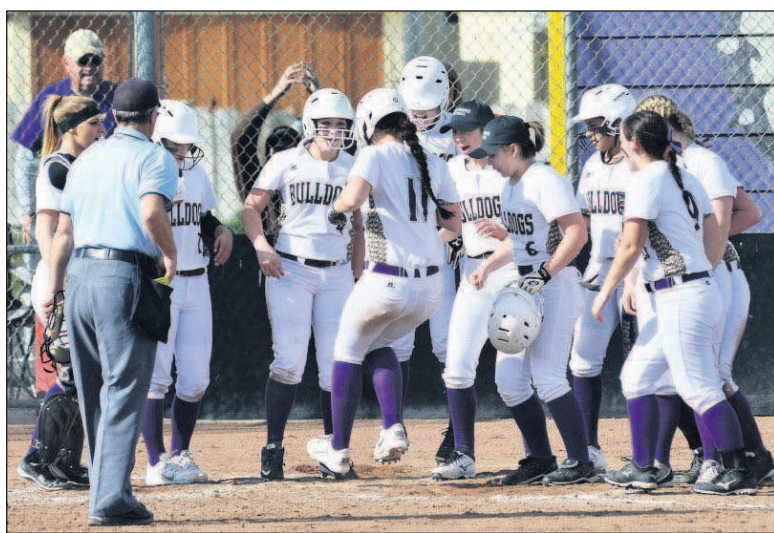
Hermiston sweeps aside Liberty

Bulldogs get strong performances from Kopacz, Naylor

By **SAM BARBEE**
Staff Writer

The Hermiston Bulldogs used a seven-run second inning in the opener of a doubleheader to down the Liberty Falcons 9-2, then got a three-run go-ahead double from Breyanna Naylor in the bottom of the third to give them a 6-4 win in five innings and a sweep of the Falcons on Friday at Rocky Heights Elementary in Hermiston.

"I couldn't be more excited," Hermiston coach Kate Greenough said. "The girls carried over their enthusiasm from Game 1 to Game 2, and they didn't stop. There was not one point where I thought they would cool down. So I couldn't be more proud of them, and it's every exciting for them to win two games for them to know that they can."



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston Mikayla Kopacz is greeted at home plate hitting a three-run homer in the Bulldogs 9-2 win against Liberty in the first game of a doubleheader Friday in Hermiston.

The theme of Friday's games was capitalizing on mistakes. Liberty committed five errors in Hermiston's 6-4 win, and booted four balls in the Bulldogs' 9-2 victory.

It was a reversal of fortune from Hermiston's 10-3 loss to

Ridgeview earlier this week, when the Ravens scored four unearned runs in the first inning.

Friday, it was the Falcons' turn to hand the opposition outs, giving Hermiston ample opportunities to score runs, which it did consistently. Hermiston turned a

Falcon error into a run three separate times over the course of the doubleheader.

"That's what happened on Tuesday, but it was the other way around," Greenough said. "We gave away outs, and they scored runs. So, today it was our turn. But we didn't stop. We didn't just score on those errors."

Hermiston's offense was led by Mikayla Kopacz who was 5 for 6 with a double, a homer, three RBI's and three runs scored. Breyanna Naylor added a 3-for-5 day with a double, three RBI and two runs scored.

Down 2-0 early in the opener, Kopacz led off the second with a single, and Julissa Almaguer followed with a walk. Naylor singled to load the bases and Alex Barton walked to bring in Kopacz. Kiersten Miller reached on an error, scoring Almaguer. Then Kylie Hinkley singled, driving in Naylor. After Jamie Hinkley popped up, Becca Englebrecht walked home Barton and Sydney

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