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STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston's Dayshawn Neal attempts to leap away from Pendleton's Aiden Patterson in the Bulldogs' 13-12 win against the Bucks on Friday in Hermiston.

BULLDOGS BLANK THE PIONEERS

Hermiston wins play-in game, advances to state playoffs

By ERIC SINGER
Staff Writer

The first 40 minutes of Saturday's 5A play-in game against Sandy were frustrating for the Hermiston Bulldogs boys soccer team.

Hermiston controlled the ball for almost the entire first half and put together numerous scoring opportunities to take advantage of the game. However, each time the Bulldogs came away scoreless. Whether it was an unlucky bounce off the goalpost, or a chip shot attempt that sailed over the crossbar, Hermiston could not bury the ball into the net.

But in the 49th minute, the Bulldogs' luck changed.

Junior Joel Mendez gathered the ball and, standing nearly 25 yards away to the left of the goal, he fired a powerful strike off his right foot that scooped past Sandy's goalkeeper into the corner of the net for Hermiston's first of an eventual three goal performance to help the Bulldogs beat Sandy, 3-0, under the lights at Kennison Field.

"(Joel) just kind of pulled that out of nowhere," Hermiston coach Rich Harshberger said. "I saw him get that chance and he took that chance and wow, what a goal. We needed that goal as a team, we had lots of opportunities but we weren't finishing ... but to get that, now we can take a breath, now we're on the right track and we know what we're doing."

Hermiston (11-3-1) played add-on first in the 63rd minute when Freddy Rodriguez headed in a Hermiston free kick over the Sandy (7-5-3) goalkeeper's head and into the net for the 2-0 lead, and then in the 65th minute Hermiston had the most impressive goal of the night when junior captain Mark Mejia lined up a shot from more than 30 yards out and blasted one past the goalkeeper for the 3-0 lead.

"Yeah I was just feeling it," Mejia said of his goal. "We had a set play planned out but (Sandy's) defensive line was just a little bit behind the wall so I had to think of a different plan so I just decided to shoot it and the odds went my way I guess."

Harshberger jokingly said Mejia's goal was just the way the play was drawn up.

"It was awesome, that's all I could say. We know Mark has that quality but it's tough to be that consistent from that distance and he was just feeling it, he took it, and what a goal."

The Bulldogs also had strong play from goalkeeper Antonio Campos on Saturday, stopping all five shots he faced to pitch the team's eighth shutout this season, which was a big positive in Harshberger's eyes.

"It's always important, it's a game-by-game goal to come out and get a shutout," Harshberger said. "Antonio was huge getting a couple key saves in there because (Sandy was) going, they were fighting for pride and all the props to Sandy, they brought it tonight and played a great game."

Hermiston now advances to the 5A state playoffs, where they slot in as the No. 7 seed and will host No. 10 Ashland on Wednesday afternoon. The Bulldogs made it to the quarterfinals in 2015, but are determined to make a deeper push this year.

"Our mentality is just do better than we did last year," Mejia said. "Go in, give it all we got and come out with the win every game, that's all it is."

Contact Eric Singer (541) 966-0839. Follow him on Twitter @ByEricSinger.

Bulldogs survive wild finish

Failed conversion sinks Bucks in rivalry battle

By MATT ENTRUP
Staff Writer

Both teams said anything could happen when the Hermiston Bulldogs and Pendleton Buckaroos met on the gridiron for the 91st time in the cross-county rivalry on Friday at Kennison Field.

When Pendleton pounced on an onside kick with 17.3 seconds left in a wild fourth quarter, it looked like just about everything had. Then the Buckaroos lined up for a 64-yard field goal with the game on the line.

The craziness stopped there, though, as the kick only traveled about half the distance needed, and Hermiston celebrated a 13-12 victory that was their fifth in a row over their rivals.

"It was fun and exciting," said Hermiston senior John-Henry Line. "Those guys work hard, they're good. They gave us a fight."

"We knew they were going to bring their best because it was their last game, they've got nothing to lose."

The tone was set early in the game when both defenses came out with aggressive game plans that had the opposing quarterbacks running for their lives.

Led by the four solo sacks of Line and two interceptions by senior Vaemu Ena, the



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston's Bradlee Giusti chases down Pendleton's Nick Bower in the Bulldogs' 13-12 win against the Bucks on Friday in Hermiston.

Hermiston defense dominated for three and a half quarters and Pendleton's offense had accrued just two first downs (one on penalty) and less than 100 yards before its rally in the final six minutes.

Pendleton's defense also came to play, and was constantly in Hermiston's backfield.

The Bulldogs were unable

to make the most of some good field position on its first two drives, and quarterback Andrew James was never able to get into a rhythm finishing just 11-of-30 for 122 yards with one interception and one touchdown.

"(Pendleton) played a really tough game and you've got to give it to them playing a game like that," said James,

who got his first win in the rivalry series. "It feels great."

Unlike the Bucks, the Bulldogs were at moving the chains with some success, and finally broke through on consecutive passes just before halftime.

Ena intercepted a floating pass from Pendleton's Nick Bower (8-20-1, 78) at the Pendleton 39 with 3:28 left before halftime, then on first down Jerry Ramirez made a diving catch on a tipped ball over the middle to get the Bulldogs down to the 23.

James lofted a pass to the corner of the end zone on the next play, and Dayshawn Neal hauled it in for his 12th touchdown of the season. He entered the game tied for the season lead in Class 5A.

A missed extra point kept the lead at 6-0, but with the way Pendleton's offense was playing, it was a lead that appeared safe.

The Bucks had only moved the chains once in the first

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Local teams prepare for playoffs

Hermiston, Stanfield and Echo play Friday

By ERIC SINGER
Staff Writer

After Hermiston defeated Bend three weeks ago, the Bulldogs were in

the driver's seat.

The victory bumped Hermiston up the OSAA rankings to the No. 6 spot, ensuring that if Hermiston could win its final two games at Redmond and then at home against Pendleton, the Bulldogs would likely host a first

round playoff game at Kennison Field.

However the final two weeks did not play out like Hermiston had hoped. The team took a step back in the loss to Redmond. Then, even a

See PLAYOFFS, A9

Hermiston bounces Milwaukie in hard fought battle

Bulldogs keep season alive in 5A play-in win

By ERIC SINGER
Staff Writer

Saturday's girls soccer play-in game for Class 5A was mostly a defensive affair, as neither Hermiston nor Milwaukie were able to get many clean shots at the net.

Milwaukie's defense finally made a mistake at the 45th minute, when the Mustangs' goalkeeper squibbed a rolling ball off the side of her foot which spun backward off the turf and rolled into the net for an own goal and a 1-0 Hermiston lead.

"You don't like to take own goals, but it's a goal," Hermiston coach Danielle Turner said.

That goal proved to be the game-winner, though the Bulldogs did add an insurance goal later in the game and hung on for a 2-0 shutout over Milwaukie on a chilly day at Kennison Field.

The game was also an exciting moment for Hermiston senior Makayla Akers, who saw the first postseason



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

Shaelynn Gilbert (8), of Hermiston, races toward Milwaukie's Alice Mendez (18), who prepares to kick the ball during Saturday's game at Kennison Field.

action of her career on Saturday. Akers spent the first three years of her career at Pendleton High School and transferred to Hermiston for her senior year.

"Honestly this feels amazing," Akers said after the game. "It's wonderful playing with this team and I'm excited to see where we go next. We've been working really hard for this."

Akers has been a consistent force for Hermiston this season and proved it again on Saturday, using her speed



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

Makayla Akers (4), of Hermiston, prepares to kick the ball during Saturday's game against Milwaukie High School at Kennison Field.

to beat Milwaukie defenders and make some plays in space. Akers nearly gave her team a lead in the 30th minute, when she got behind the Mustangs' back line of defense with the ball and fired a

shot at the net — but it sailed wide right.

Then with her team already up 1-0 in the 76th minute, Akers repeated the same situation from earlier, got behind the defense and dribbled towards the net. But this time Akers fired a grounder to the left of the Mustang goalkeeper that rolled into the corner of the net for the 2-0 lead.

"It felt really great," Akers said. "These past couple games I haven't been making as many, but as soon as I made that goal I was like, 'I know I got this again,' and now I'm just ready to go to the next level and (score) some more goals."

Milwaukie registered all of seven shots on goal for the game, though none were real scoring threats as goalkeeper Kylie Harrison stopped all of

them with relative ease.

Hermiston advanced to the 5A state playoffs, but drew the unlucky No. 16 seed. The draw means they played

Tuesday in first round game against No. 1 seed La Salle Prep (11-1-2), but results were not available at press time.

STUDENT OF THE WEEK

Katherine Soto

STANFIELD SECONDARY SCHOOL



Stanfield 11th grader, Katherine Soto, has rightfully earned the honor of Student of the Week. She is nominated by her Strength and Conditioning teacher who says her work ethic and drive in the weight room is AMAZING. She is goal-oriented and incredibly focused on improving each week. Katherine is excelling in the classroom this year and is an example for others in her ability to overcome obstacles and adversity. We are very proud of Katherine and so pleased to have her represent Stanfield Secondary School as our Student of the Week.

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