

# Herald Sports

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FILE PHOTO

Hermiston's Dayshawn Neal turns up fields as Pendleton's Aiden Patterson prepares to make the hit in the Bulldogs' 13-12 win against the Bucks in Hermiston during the fall of 2016. If Hermiston is moved up to a larger classification, that game could potentially have been the last time Hermiston would host Pendleton in a football game.

## OSAA may move Hermiston to its highest classification

By ERIC SINGER  
Staff Writer

Hermiston School District is the second-fastest growing school district in the state, according to a 2016 report by the Oregon Department of Education, ranking 29th overall out of the 212 total districts.

Because of that enrollment increase, the Hermiston High School athletics programs will likely be moving to the highest classification in the OSAA beginning in 2018.

The OSAA began its reclassification meetings and evaluations for the 2018-22 classification block in October 2016, and with three meetings adjourned and numerous proposals submitted, Hermiston has been slated to move to the highest level each time.

Hermiston athletic director Larry Usher said the likely move comes with mixed emotions within the school district.

"You take the good with the bad to be honest, while a lot of school districts have declining enrollment, we are increasing enrollment," Usher said. "Our district is healthy and our community is pretty happy about it," he said. "At the same time the move up will be tough for us with travel and possible missed class time for the student athletes."

In the most recent proposal, Hermiston would join the Mt. Hood Conference along with Portland-area schools including Barlow, Centennial, Central Catholic, Clackamas, David Douglas, Gresham, Oregon City and Reynolds. The amount of trips to the

Portland area that change would necessitate is a concern for Usher.

"As it is right now we do a lot of travel to the west side of the state for non-conference games, but we do anticipate a significant increase in our travel expenses," Usher said. "And because the RPI and Colley Rankings force us to play teams in our state and in our classification, we would still continue to have half of our non-conference games played on the west side of the state."

"So for some of our team sports we'd be looking at anywhere from 13, 14, or 15 trips to the Portland area, which is a big concern for us."

Usher says his concerns are shared by several athletic directors from Mt. Hood Conference schools he's been in contact with.

"It was the topic of conversation at one of their meetings recently and it's not a move that they'll completely oppose, but it's not something they're all in favor of," Usher said. "When you start looking at traditional Tuesday and Friday schedules for sports like volleyball, basketball, softball, and baseball, are they going to be excited about having to travel out to Hermiston on a Tuesday night? Probably not."

"I think that when it comes around, hopefully schools over that way would be open to some creative scheduling ideas to limit the amount of missed class time or else it could be devastating for the student-athletes."

See **BULLDOGS, A14**

## Bulldogs win overtime thriller

Rambo scores 21 as Hermiston holds off Dallas

By ERIC SINGER  
Staff Writer

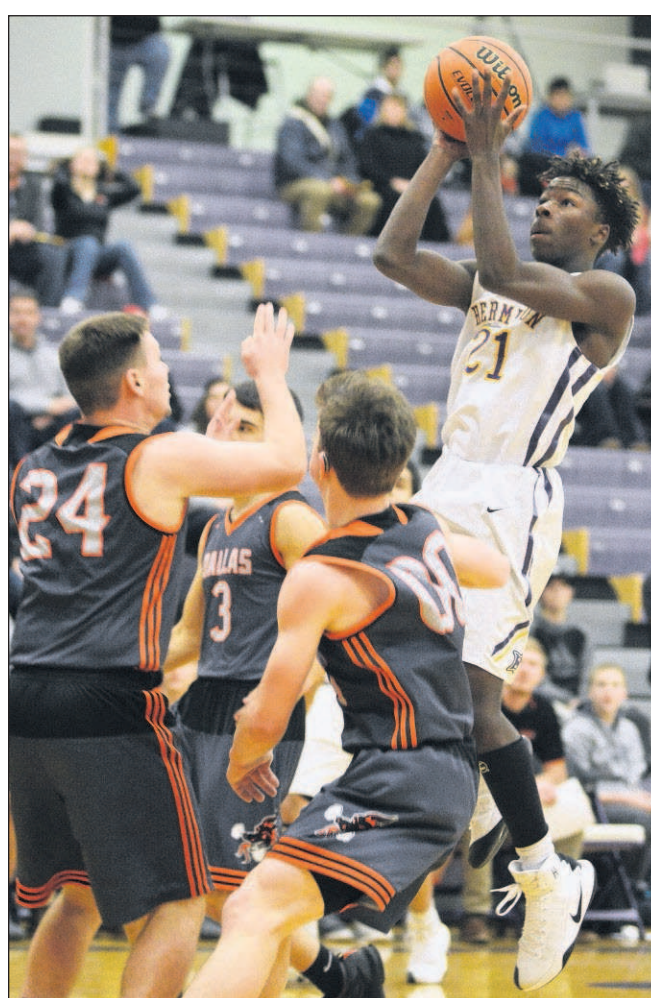
Suspense filled the Dawg House Friday night as the Hermiston Bulldogs possessed the ball while staring at a 49-47 deficit with just 12.5 seconds left to play against the Dallas Dragons.

As the seconds started to tick off the clock, the ball found its way into the hands of senior guard Xavier Rambo — who had been the go-to scorer for Hermiston in the game. As Rambo possessed the ball, he scanned the floor and saw an opening in the middle and drove past his defender toward the basket and avoided traffic to lay it in off the glass to tie the game at 49-49 and send it to overtime.

Then in the extra period with Hermiston ahead 52-51 with 50 seconds remaining, Rambo skied to grab a rebound off a missed Dallas 3-pointer and then sped down the court past two Dallas defenders for a wide-open lay-in to help Hermiston clinch a 54-51 non-league victory over the Dragons. Rambo said he knew once he got to half court he was going to make the shot.

"When I got to halfcourt, I knew I was gone and I'm not going to pass it since I'm going in and I'm a pretty fast guy," he said with a smile.

Hermiston (9-3) coach Casey Arstein admitted that he thought about calling his



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston's Xavier Rambo shoots the ball over Dallas' Zach Wallace (24) and Jake Collins (00) in the Bulldogs' 54-51 win over the Dragons on Friday in Hermiston.

final timeout after the rebound to set up a play, but quickly realized that Rambo had the game in his hands.

"We had one timeout and looking out there, I was thinking about pulling it out but as he (Rambo) kept going and he kept passing guys ... I knew we'll take it," he said. "He does a good job of attacking. Everyone made some interesting shot decisions tonight, including him, but when it counted he did the right thing and that's go to the rim and I

was proud of him."

It was a pretty up-and-down game overall for Hermiston, who played their second game without star senior guard Chance Flores who is out indefinitely with a broken right hand. Rambo, who finished with a game-high 21 points, said that the team is still adapting to some new roles without Flores on the court.

"It's a different game without Chance," he said. "He's a big help defensively and offensively but

we're all hard workers so we get it done.

"And I'm the leader now. (Chance) is usually the leader but now I'm the leader and we have to go do big things."

The game featured 14 ties and 14 lead changes as neither team could sustain a lead. Hermiston took the early momentum and turned it into a 15-9 lead after one quarter and pushed the lead up to 19-9 early in the second quarter.

But that's when Dallas (5-5) made its first real push, going on a 14-0 run to take a 23-19 lead with three minutes left in the half. Hermiston snapped the scoreless drought with a floater by Andrew James at the 2:31 mark, but still trailed 25-24 at halftime. The second half played out very back-and-forth, with neither team holding a lead larger than three points the entire way.

"It was an interesting night," Arstein said of the game. "Dallas is better than their record and it was a good battle and I just thought we played sloppy, but we'll take the win at home and in overtime."

Along with Rambo's 21 points, Andrew James pitched in 10 points, while Kody Moss and Jordan Ramirez each had six. Moss also had a big game inside, extending numerous Bulldog possessions with offensive rebounds and controlling the glass defensively as well.

"Kody did all the little things well, the things we've been struggling with," Arstein said.

See **THRILLER, A14**

## Heppner's Flynn wins Jo-Hi title

Antonucci second for Mustangs

Hermiston Herald

Despite road closures around the region, the Heppner/Ione and Echo/Stansfield wrestling teams were able to make their way across the mountain for the two-day Jo-Hi Tournament, which began on Friday.

Heppner's Cord Flynn pinned his way to the 195-pound championship for his third tournament win in a row and Mustangs 113-pounder Trevor Antonucci placed second to lead Heppner to an 11th place finish out of 17 teams.

Echo also had two placers as Kyle Ranger took fourth at 120 and Mason Smith was sixth at 170.

Flynn's title bout came against a familiar opponent as he would meet Culver's Jaiden Jones, who had pinned him to win the 2015-16 OSAA state championship match.

Jones won that one with a pin, and the Ione senior returned the favor on Saturday using a head-and-arm hold to stick Jones on the mat at the 3:15 mark. After initially falling behind 6-1, Flynn ended a spirited first round with a 7-6 lead.

Heppner coach Mark Lemmon said Flynn was able to roll Jones into a

cradle from the top starting position in Round 2, and then spent the next minute working for the pin without giving up any points.

Flynn won his first two matches by pin (1:06) over Enterprise's Drew Widenor and a 19-3 technical fall over Culver's Cylus Hoke.

Trevor Antonucci wrestled his way into the final round with an injury default in the quarterfinals, then a pin (3:36) of Culver's Johan Jaimes in the semis.

He ran up against defending district champion Shane Lund in the championship where he fell 5-0. The first round ended with a scoreless tie as the wrestlers fended off each others'

shots. A takedown gave Lund the lead in the second round, and a reversal and penalty point on Antonucci in the third gave the match its final score.

Ranger went 4-2 with every match decided by pin. He made it to the third-place match with a pin (1:30) over Imbler's Seany Willis, but lasted just 51 seconds against Adrian's Marcus Furtado. Smith's placing came despite an 0-3 record.

Heppner will join several other local teams at the Oregon Classic on Friday-Saturday at Deschutes County Fairgrounds. Echo will wrestle at the Bonanza Tournament on Saturday.

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