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Andrew James, of Hermiston, goes up for a shot during Saturday's game against La Grande.

STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

## Bulldogs fend off undefeated Tigers

Hermiston finishes preseason slate with tough win

By ERIC SINGER  
Hermiston Herald

HERMISTON — The Hermiston Bulldogs boys basketball team knew they were in for a battle on Saturday night.

They welcomed the La Grande Tigers into the Dawg House, the No. 3 ranked team in Class 4A for its non-league finale and it turned out to be just as advertised.

The teams swapped momentum throughout the game which stayed tight until the end, when Hermiston was able to pull out the 62-54 win.

"Both teams played hard but we got stops when we needed to and we executed well when it was tight," Hermiston coach Casey Arstein said. "La Grande's a great team and there's a reason they were unbeaten coming in here, they'll dominate their league and I'm pretty sure they'll get down to the 4A state tournament, but this is what we need. We want these types of hard games and hopefully that gets

us ready for league."

Hermiston (10-3) benefited from another strong performance by senior Xavier Rambo, who netted a game-high 23 points including eight points in the fourth quarter to help the Bulldogs seal the victory. Rambo's quickness on the court and the ability to evade defenders and drive to the basket consistently has become a real weapon for Hermiston.

"It's nice having an athlete like him," Arstein said, "though he defi-

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## Bulldogs win Oregon Classic

Hermiston Herald

REDMOND — The Hermiston Bulldogs won the first major state wrestling title of the season over the weekend at the Oregon Classic, book-ending its tour with wins over Mountain View for the 5A championship.

The Bulldogs' perfect run through the bracket at Deschutes County Fairground came with four spotless individual performances. Seniors C.J. Hendon (152 pounds) and Valen Wyse (160) both were 7-0, as was junior Kenny Bevan (220), and junior Adrian Tuia (138) went 6-0.

Pendleton placed eighth for 5A teams while Mac-Hi (4A), Riverside and Irrigon (3A) and Hepner/Lone (2A) also competed.

Hermiston (11-7) beat Mountain View 43-22 in the championship dual after having opened the pool round by beating the Cougars 48-18.

In the finals, Mountain View was still in it late when Luke Schulz edged Joey Gutierrez 9-6 in the 182-pound bout to trim Hermiston's lead to 28-22.

The Bulldogs would take the final three matches, though, and erased any doubt of the outcome with back-to-back pins by John-Henry Line and Bevan at 195 and 220, then a 3-1 win by Beau Blake at 285.

The loss was Gutierrez's only of the tournament as both he and Blake went 6-1, as did Julio Leiva (170). Line was 5-1, and Wade Kirkpatrick (145) and Ruben Madrigal each went 5-2. Gage Shipley (113) and Jesus Rodriguez (126) were both 4-3, and Sean Stewart (195) went 1-0.

Hermiston beat Bend 65-6 in the quarterfinals, and then had its toughest dual of the tournament with a 35-33 win over Dallas in the semifinals.

That match saw the Bulldogs trailing 33-23 with only two matches to wrestle when Treve Earhart beat Line 7-1 at 195.

Bevan gave the Bulldogs six points with a pin over Bryce Jordan in 1:44 in the next match, then Blake secured the win with six more when he pinned Ashten Brecht 3:28 into their 285-pound match.

Also earning wins over Dallas wrestlers were Tuia with a 23-8 technical fall, Hendon with a 10-4 decision, Wyse with a pin (3:27), and Gutierrez with a 11-7 decision.

Hermiston's other wins in the pool round were 40-36 over Sweet Home, 67-10 over McMinnville and 71-10 over Phoenix.

RIVERSIDE — The Pirates won their first two duals but then lost their last three to tie for eighth place.

Riverside's wins were over Burns, 55-24, and Glide, 40-34. Its losses were to North Marion, 51-27, Creswell, 44-33, and Dayton, 54-27.

Aristotle Rockwell led the Pirates going 5-0 at 132 and 138 pounds, and Jacob Harris went 1-0 at 132. Going 3-2 were Abraham Silva (113), Andrew Barker (120), Ivan Escobedo (160) and Ruben Villa (285).

IRRIGON — The Knights went 0-5 with losses to Crater JV, 42-36, Willamina, 60-18, Mac-Hi, 45-35, Harrisburg, 51-24, and Glide 66-9.

Jose Romero led Irrigon going 4-1 at 138 pounds, Fabian Miranda-Wells (152) was 3-2, and Tucker McAllister (220, 195) and Luke Meyers (285) were each 3-3.

HEPPNER — The Mustangs placed sixth at the 2A/1A level with their only win coming 36-12 over Elgin.

Hepner lost to Lowell, 72-12, Redmond JV, 36-33, Neah-Kah-Nie, 48-27, Myrtle Point, 42-36, and Monroe, 27-21.

Senior Cord Flynn (195, 220) went 5-1 to lead the team, and Jacob Wallace (170, 160) matched him in wins going 5-2. Leo Waite (126, 132) was 4-2 and Charles Cason (145, 152) was 3-2.

## Lady Dawgs take hot streak into league play

By ERIC SINGER  
Hermiston Herald

HERMISTON — Hermiston coach Juan Rodriguez had two reasons to smile on Saturday night.

The first reason being that his Bulldogs team was actually able to get on the floor after two games last week were called off due to inclement weather. The second reason was that his Bulldogs team pulled out a 61-51 win over West Valley out of Yakima, Wash., in its final non-league tuneup before Columbia River Conference play starts up this weekend.

The victory marked Hermiston's fourth straight win on the season as well, as Hermiston (6-7) has rebounded well after a hitting a rough patch in early December.

"Everybody is well aware of our struggles through that middle part of the preseason," Rodriguez said, "and I think we've corrected some of those. But we're still a long way where we want to be, but it's just nice to keep building momentum and that's huge for us right now."

West Valley gave Hermiston a fight early on, hanging with Hermiston basket-for-basket and held a 10-9 lead over the Bulldogs at the end of the first quar-



Maddy Juul (20), of Hermiston, goes up for a shot under pressure from West Valley's Kaitlyn Gasseling (10) on Saturday in Hermiston.

STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

ter. The Bulldogs took the lead at 11-10 in the second quarter and held the advantage for the rest of the half, but West Valley used its full-court pressure defense to force a flurry of Hermiston turnovers to get back into the game in the third quarter. Overall, Hermiston had 21 turnovers with many forced by the full court press, though Rodriguez said the miscues are not a concern moving forward.

"Normally we're pretty good against the press but I

just think once we got tired we got lackadaisical and we think that nobody will be behind us sometimes," he said. "Our girls have to understand that teams are going to press us and we have to take advantage of that on the other side."

But in the end, Hermiston was able to regain its composure and pull away for the win, which is a sight that Rodriguez was very pleased to see.

"Our girls, that killer mentality is finally coming back after it was lost at the beginning of the year," he said. "The middle of the year we probably would've lost this game because we had no leader to step up and go get the ball and now we have several girls stepping up into that role, which is big for us going into league play because we're going to be in some dog fights and we have to have somebody that's going to calm things down."

Hermiston saw its best success with its half-court offense and being able to attack the basket. As a team, the Bulldogs shot 22-32 from inside the 3-point line for a staggering 68 percent clip. Leading the way was sophomore forward Jordan Thomas with 17 points, while Ril-

eigh Andreason scored 12 points and Maddy Juul 11 points.

Thomas' outburst gave Bulldogs a glimpse at the potential that has been waiting to ooze out of her 6-foot-3 frame.

"I've told her since she was a freshman that she has the potential to be unstoppable inside and it just takes the mentality and she's finally realizing it," Rodriguez said. "The biggest thing for me is she doesn't make me change our defensive scheme. Sometimes with taller girls coaches have to go to a zone, but she's worked so hard on her footwork and her speed that she can switch off to a guard on the perimeter and that definitely makes our life easier."

Hermiston now prepares for the start of league play at home against The Dalles Friday.

"We have to get ready for a really tough league that's really kind of up-in-the-air as of right now," Rodriguez said.

WV 10 10 18 13 — 51  
HHS 9 17 16 19 — 61  
WEST VALLEY — E. Teske 11, N. Rasmussen 11, K. Gasseling 7, N. Nagle 7, S. Curtis 6, K. Kruger 4, L. Fetzler 3.  
HERMISTON — J. Thomas 17, R. Andreason 12, M. Juul 11, K. Padilla 8, J. Romero 5, H. Meyers 4, S. Gilbert 3.  
3-pointers — WV 4, HHS 3. Free throws — WV 6-8, HHS 7-21. Fouls — WV 18, HHS 10.



Raleigh Andreason (12), of Hermiston, passes to a teammate during Saturday's game against West Valley in Hermiston.

STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY