

Herald Sports



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC SINGER

Hermiston's Vaemu Ena poses with his mother Katelina and father Eti during a signing party Thursday at Hermiston High School. Ena signed a national letter of intent to play football at Western Oregon University.

Ena ready to be a Wolf

Hermiston senior signs with Western Oregon

By ERIC SINGER
Staff Writer

HERMISTON — For the past three years, Vaemu Ena has been a stud in the Hermiston defensive backfield.

And now for the next four or five years Ena will still roam the football field, but first he will trade in the Hermiston purple and black for the red and black of Western Oregon University. On Wednesday, Feb. 1, Ena joined 31 other high school seniors and signed a National Letter of Intent to play football for the Wolves, and celebrated the achievement with his family, friends, teachers, and coaches at a small party at Hermiston High School on Thursday.

Ena, who will major in criminal justice or computer science, said that he chose Western Oregon, a team that is coming off of a 4-6 season, over an opportunity to play at FCS Eastern Washington because of a better chance of playing time with the Wolves on top of a love for the small campus in Monmouth.

"I feel like the environment over there is similar to here at home (Hermiston)," Ena said Thursday. "The community is very similar to here just with a university instead of a high school. And I feel really good about the coaches and facilities over there. With what I've seen and my experiences over there, I've really enjoyed it."

In 24 career games for the Bulldogs, Ena tallied 119 total tackles and 10 interceptions originating

from his safety position atop the defensive sets. His best season came in 2015 as a junior, when Ena tallied 40 tackles and snagged five interceptions to help boost him to a Class 5A all-state honorable mention nod.

Western Oregon assistant coach and 2011 Hermiston graduate Tim Rude said that with the statistics that Ena produced on top of what the 6-foot-2, 180 pound safety showed in his game tape made him a perfect fit for the Wolves defense.

"He's very smooth and long with good ball skills already," Rude said Thursday. "He's not even close to done growing, so he has some huge physical upside. He moves well enough that he is capable of playing all over the defensive secondary."

"That's what's really exciting about him is versatility."

Before Ena smiled for numerous photos and laughed along with some friends while chowing down on cupcakes at the party on Thursday, he did admit that not too long ago he doubted himself on getting a chance to play college football.

"Last year (2016) during track season, (Coach David) Faaceteete told me that some coaches wanted to talk to me," Ena said, "but I never thought that I would ever be able to (play) and did not think I was big enough to play, so I never called them back. But then after this season just playing and realizing when we went to tournaments and stuff I was just as big as other kids, I just had to put on a little more muscle I could play and that's when it broke through my head and when I wanted to play."

Dawgs dig deep for wins

Bulldog teams lost to Pendleton last week, will get chance for revenge on Thursday

Hermiston Herald

HERMISTON — The Bulldogs were dealt a heavy blow Monday morning with the death of classmate and former teammate Brok Palmer, and were not very focused on the night's opponent in its Columbia River Conference boys' basketball game.

That didn't stop them from picking up the win, though, and Hermiston came on strong in the second half to beat The Dalles 77-62 in boys basketball at the Dawg House.

"It was a long day for Hermiston School District," said Bulldogs head coach Casey Arstein. "It's nothing you can prepare for as a coach, I would have preferred not to have a game. I was glad for the team to be able to have that opportunity to clear their heads, but it was just a long day. I'm proud of all the kids."

Hermiston (13-5, 3-1 CRC) pulled away in the third quarter by slashing to the rim against the man defense of the Riverhaws (3-12, 0-4).

Playing in his first game back from injury, Chance Flores scored 11 of his 17 points in the third quarter, and Xavier Rambo added eight of his team-high 22 in the frame.

"I went with five guards in the third and we were able to get to the rim," Arstein said. "I thought we were settling for too many outside shots against the man instead of driving, and in the third quarter we started to figure it out."

Jordan Ramirez also did most of his damage off the dribble and scored nine of his 12 points in the first half as Hermiston staked a 35-34 lead at the break. They had stretched that to 58-48 by the end of



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

Andrew James (15), of Hermiston, goes to the basket Monday night against The Dalles at the Dawg House.

the third quarter.

Kody Moss got the start for Hermiston and added nine points and six rebounds in what Arstein said was his best game of the season.

Dakota Murr scored a game-high 25 points to lead The Dalles, and Eric Flores added 17.

The Bulldogs played at Hood River Tuesday, but the score wasn't available by press time.

Hermiston's next home game is Thursday when it hosts Pendleton at 5:45 p.m.

The Bulldogs will be looking for a little revenge against their cross-county rivals after losing 64-43 in Pendleton a week ago.

The Buckaroos (8-4, 3-0 CRC) put together a very balanced and effi-

cient scoring effort in the game as star senior Caden Smith was held to single digits (eight points) for the first time all season.

After a fast-paced first quarter that saw the Buckaroos holding an 18-12 advantage, the game swung mightily into Pendleton's in the second quarter. The Bucks outscored Hermiston 15-1 in the second to sprint to a 33-13 halftime lead, as the Bulldogs went an ice cold 0-10 from the floor. Their lone point came on a made free throw by Thomas McCullough.

"Scoring one point in a quarter isn't going to win you many games," Hermiston coach Casey Arstein said. "I thought we were impatient there, jacking up shots early when we could've gotten to the

rim or a ball reversal ... but scoring one point we were going to have to play extremely well in the second half and we played average at best so we'll have to make some adjustments."

As balanced as Pendleton's offense was, Hermiston's was the opposite. Senior guard Xavier Rambo diced through and around Pendleton's defense to score 20 points in the second half — finishing with a game-high 26 points, or 60 percent of Hermiston's total points. Hermiston shot just 34 percent for the game, and went zero for its first 13 from 3-point range before Ryne Andreason nailed on with 1:15 left to play.

See BULLDOGS, A9

Riverside just short in loss to Burns

Hermiston Herald

BOARDMAN — The Riverside Pirates were just seconds away from an upset over Burns, but late-game magic and too many missed opportunities led to a Riverside defeat 42-38 in overtime on Saturday night.

Riverside (6-13, 2-7 EOL) led 38-35 with just seconds left in regulation when Burns attempted a 3-pointer. The shot missed, but bounced to Burns' Kai Dahl who stepped behind the 3-point line and put up a shot, one that banked into the basket just as the buzzer sounded, sending it to overtime.

"The kids played really, really hard and I'm happy for how well they played," Riverside coach Clair Costello said. "We just can't score right now and had some bad breaks."

Eon Castillo led Riverside with 12 points and five rebounds, while Ricardo Rosales had nine points. Zane Taylor led Burns with 10.

Riverside plays its season finale at Umatilla on Friday night at 7:30 p.m.

HEPPNER 73, WESTON-MCEWEN 53 — Heppner shot 48 percent from the field with four players reaching double digits to put away Weston-McEwen in Columbia Basin Conference boys basketball Monday.

Logan Grieb finished with 22 points, 12 rebounds and six assists to lead Heppner (11-5, 3-3 CBC), and Kevin Smith was 5 for 5 from the field to add 10 points. Jake Lindsay added 14 points, four assists and three steals, and Caden Hedman had 12 points.

Ethan Reger scored 22 points to go with seven rebounds to lead Weston-McEwen (11-8, 3-3), and Brett Speed added 16 points and nine rebounds.

Heppner led 41-19 at halftime.

Both teams play Friday night with Heppner at Pilot Rock and Weston-McEwen at Stanfield.

IRRIGON 58, RIVERSIDE 28 — A one-point loss to Umatilla on Tuesday exposed a weakness on the defensive glass for the Irrigon boys basketball team that coach Davy Salas was not going to let become a recurring theme as the Knights try to finish out the season strong.

"We were harping on them all week after that," Salas said. "Those offensive rebounds lead to second-chance points and that killed us against Umatilla."

The Knights responded how Salas had hoped, and limited Riverside to one look at the basket most of its trips down the court on Friday night for a 58-28 win in their Eastern Oregon League tilt.

"Today we did a good job boxing out," Salas said. "They have some really active kids and we did a good job of getting in position and squeezing the basketball."

Rebounding totals weren't available, but Irrigon (12-7, 5-3 EOL) was led on offense by Hayden White with 15 points and Johnny Phillips with 14. The Knights were up 27-11 at halftime and outscored the Pirates 19-8 in the third quarter.

Riverside (6-12, 2-6) was led by Ricardo Rosales with seven points.

Irrigon's next game is Friday when it hosts Nyssa at 7:30 p.m.

NIXYAAWII 65, ECHO 58 (OT) — With time running out, the Echo Cougars grabbed a rebound and hustled up the court to sink a game-tying layup at the buzzer on Thursday night against Nixyaawii.

Down four on its final possession

in overtime, there would be no heroics this time.

Shayden Hoisington snagged a steal going the other way and the Golden Eagles hit a three-pointer at the buzzer to give them a final tally of 65-58 in their 10th straight win that kept them undefeated in Old Oregon League play.

Mick Schimmel carried the game for Nixyaawii (13-4, 10-0 OOL) with 27 points, and Joseph St. Pierre and Noah Enright each added 10.

Schimmel sank the two-pointer that made it 62-58 late in overtime.

Morgan Marcum scored 19 points to lead Echo (6-14, 5-6), Klay Jenson added 14 and Devan Craig chipped in 10.

Echo lost to Powder Valley 77-43 on Saturday, and will wrap up the regular season at home Friday against Wallowa at 7:30 p.m. and on the road at Cove Saturday at 7 p.m.

GIRLS BASKETBALL

BURNS 46, RIVERSIDE 41 — At Boardman, the Riverside Pirates led for a portion of the fourth quarter, but did not have enough to hang on against the solid Burns Hilanders with a loss on Saturday.

"We played so poor (Friday) against Irrigon and then we played so well tonight and we should've had them (Burns) beat," Riverside coach Clair Costello said, "We just turned it over too much and didn't make enough baskets when we needed it."

Lacey Mashos led Riverside with 14 points and Alondra Caldera had 10 points. Skylar Wightman had six points and four assists.

See ROUNDUP, A9

IN BRIEF

Elk tag up for grabs at hunter banquet

An all-state elk tag is on the auction block during the Oregon Hunters Association Banquet, Raffle & Auction.

The Columbia Basin Chapter event, which also features a chance to win a D&B Treasure Chest and M2D Properties Youth Hunt, is Saturday at 5 p.m. at the Pendleton Convention Center, 1601 Westgate. It also features door prizes, raffles, games, a silent auction, live auction and dinner.

To donate items or ticket information, call Rebecca at 541-379-1074 or Terry at 541-231-4348. For more about the association, visit www.ohacolumbia-basin.webs.com.

Senior golf association gets set to tee-off

UMATILLA — The Columbia Basin Senior Blues Golf Association tees off monthly at courses throughout the region.

Open to men 50-and-older, the association will play the second Monday of each month, beginning April 10 at The Dalles. In addition, there's an opportunity for two special play dates.

Dues are \$85 for the season, which includes greens fees and the prize fund for each course. Golfers are responsible for their own cart rentals and food.

The fee must be paid by Friday, Feb. 17 at Big River Golf Course, 709 Willamette St., Umatilla. For more information, contact Megan Olsen at 541-922-3006 or megan@golfbigriver.com.