

Herald Sports



Bulldogs rollick on opening day

Hermiston sweeps Hood River in dual track meet

By **MATT ENTRUP**
Staff Writer

For the first time in what seemed like months, the Hermiston Bulldogs were greeted with lots of clear skies and sunshine as they arrived Thursday, March 16, at Kennison Field to take on the Hood River Valley Eagles in a dual meet to open the 2017 track and field season.

Stuck indoors through much of the offseason, the Bulldogs showed they'd still been hard at work and swept the Eagles on the team scoreboard. The boys took an 85-50 victory and the girls won by a similar margin 81-47. The Bulldogs' junior varsity teams followed suit the boys winning 57-48 and the girls winning 55-43.5.

Bulldogs coach Emilee Strot said the wins might have been the least important part of the day.

"With how much snow and stuff, we literally didn't have a track to train on all winter long, so we were running inside in the hallways, on the carpet, trying to do what we can," she said. "And so the last three weeks we've had to put in a lot of hard work, and our kids are beat up, they're tired. So today I just told them to have fun and compete."

Hermiston junior Tyler Rohrman said the clear skies made it much easier to do that.

"We kind of came out here and we were kind of surprised we were in Hermiston, Oregon. I mean, it's a different world with all this rain," he said. "But it's great, the track heats up, you can smell the track, and you just feel like track season is here."

Rohrman was one of several Bulldogs to win two events on Thursday and blew away his competition in each of the hurdles events while also placing second in the 100 meters and the 4x100 relay.

In the 110-meter hurdles, Rohrman came out smooth from start to finish as he glided over each hurdle for a 15.34-second time to win by more than 20 meters. His 300 had a couple of hitches in his stride, but he still cruised to a five-second win with a time of 42.30.

"I feel like where we are in the season, we've just been trying to get our hips in shape for the hur-

dles, so I haven't got a lot of 300 work in. But I'm really happy with it. I took a lot of hurdles on my off leg, which is really big for me," he said. "I feel like we came out the 4x1 was great, 100 solid. I feel like I came out and did what I needed to do today."

Bulldogs junior Isaac Sanchez also won two events and picked up his first victory by a large margin in the 1,500 meters with a time of 4:30.46. He wasn't exactly thrilled with the time, but considering he was 80 meters ahead of second place by the time the race ended he wasn't judging himself too harshly.

"It's about 20 seconds from my personal record, so I could have done better but it's tough to run by yourself," he said.

Sanchez got the race he was looking for in his next event, the 800 meters.

He dropped back to third to start as Hood River's Jesse Wiley set a fast pace, but started to close in after the first lap. With 200 meters to go Sanchez and Wiley were running shoulder to shoulder, and Sanchez pulled ahead with 125 meters to the finish. Wiley stuck with him, though, and for the last 100 meters the runners were stride for stride before Wiley leaned in at the finish to win by .04.

"I was dead, I was stumbling through the finish. That was a tough race. That was crazy," Sanchez said. "I really didn't know what to expect because the previous track seasons the Hood River guys didn't really race much 800, so I didn't know what to expect this race. It was a great race though."

He wasn't completely tapped out though. After a break Sanchez returned to the track in the final event of the meet to anchor the boys' 4x400 relay team.

Like the 800, the race began with Hood River setting a fast pace and opening up big leads before the Hermiston runners would reel them in over the last 200 meters. Hermiston found itself behind at each hand-off though, and when Hiram Maciel passed the baton to Sanchez he had about 15 meters to make up.

Hood River's Nathan Schmidli gave an initial push to double that, but Sanchez began pulling him back right away and overtook the lead with 150 meters left. This time Sanchez continued to pull away to give the team a four-second win.

Also taking home

See **TRACK, A10**



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC SINGER
Hermiston's Sydney Stefani touches home plate while scoring off a hit by Ellery Jones during a game against St. Helens on Friday at Rocky Heights Elementary in Hermiston. Hermiston won 16-6.

BULLDOGS WIN BIG OVER ST. HELENS

Hermiston wins home opener against Lions

By **ERIC SINGER**
Staff writer

The 2017 softball season did not start the way the Hermiston Bulldogs wanted it to, after Ridgeview handed them an 11-run loss in the season-opener on March 14.

So when the Bulldogs gathered at the field at Rocky Heights Elementary on Friday, March 17, for the team's home opener, there was a little extra motivation to bounce back. And facing the St. Helens Lions, the Bulldogs were able to rebound in a big way with a 16-2 victory in five innings.

"I think it had a lot to do with the atmosphere here," Hermiston coach Kate Greenough said. "The girls were excited to have a lot of people here and they were drilling the ball all game."

Hermiston (1-1) tallied a total of 14 hits in the game and four of the 10 batters in the game finished with at least two hits. Sydney Stefani and Ashley Cameron led the Bulldogs with three hits apiece, with Stefani adding three runs scored and an RBI and Cameron smashing two triples with two RBIs.

"The girls were just patient today and they drove the ball," Greenough said. "They hit it where it was pitched, we didn't swing at bad pitches ... they waited for the pitch and drove them."

Another Bulldog that had a big day at the plate was Ellery Jones who went 2-for-4 but reached base in all four at-bats. She also added three RBIs and scored four runs on the day. Jones credited her success,



STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC SINGER
Hermiston coach Kate Greenough gives instruction to Hermiston players on Friday in their game against St. Helens at Rocky Heights Elementary in Hermiston.

and her team's success, at the plate with the ability to read the pitches well from St. Helens pitcher Brooke Scheer.

"I was reading it really fast out of the hand so that made it really nice," Jones said. "But we were able to hit it to the right side, the left side wherever the pitch was and I think seeing the ball was a big part of that."

Jones scored the first run of the game on a throwing error by St. Helens' right fielder in the first inning, and Hermiston added one more run in the first behind an RBI single by Kalei Smith to make it a 2-0 game. St. Helens (0-2) then answered with a run in the top of the second on an RBI groundout to cut the lead to 2-1.

In the bottom of the

second, Jones stepped to the plate with runners on second and third and two outs and smashed a two-run single into left field to make it a 4-2 game. Both Bailee Noland and Ashley Cameron added RBI hits in the inning as well, to give Hermiston a 6-1 lead after two.

St. Helens looked like it might get some offense going in the third inning, drawing back-to-back walks and a bloop single to right field to load the bases with nobody out. However, Hermiston was able to escape the jam after allowing just one run, as Bulldogs pitcher Julissa Almaguer re-focused and induced two easy groundouts and a strikeout.

"That was huge for us," Greenough said. "It was

nice too because it's early in the season and that might be a time where you see kids get nervous and sit back a little on their heels, but it was huge for her (Julissa) to go after the ball and great for the defense because they were ready for anything."

"That's something we've really worked on is to stay strong in situations like this," Jones added, "we don't back down and we continue to work. I think we really just backed our pitcher up there and we were able to come back from that and get out of the inning."

Almaguer had a solid day in the pitching circle, tossing four innings and giving up just three hits, two runs and two walks with a pair of strike-

See **SOFTBALL, A10**

Hermiston gets walk-off win in opener

Hermiston sneaks by Ridgeview on passed ball

By **ERIC SINGER**
Staff writer

Representing the winning run in the March 14 season-opener against Ridgeview, Hermiston senior Slade Gritz stepped off third base to take his lead, creeping up to the baseline to get every inch that he could.

"I knew we needed to score there and as soon as I got an opportunity I was going to be hauling it as fast as I could," Gritz said.

Sophomore Jordan

Ramirez was at the plate for Hermiston with two outs in the seventh inning, meaning Gritz represented Hermiston's last opportunity to win the game without going to extra innings. And as Ramirez evened the count at 2-2, Gritz kept waiting for a chance to sprint home.

And after Ridgeview pitcher Nolan Merritt fired that 2-2 pitch toward home plate, the opportunity finally came. The pitch squirted out of the glove of Ridgeview's catcher and rolled behind home plate, causing the catcher to have trouble locating the ball. And as soon as Gritz saw the ball squirt out of the glove, he was off, sprinting as hard and as fast as he could

toward home plate where he finished off with a head-first slide across the plate to give Hermiston the 7-6 win over Ridgeview on Tuesday afternoon at Armand Larive Middle School.

It is the first season-opening win for Hermiston since 2013, when the Bulldogs took down Oregon City by the same 7-6 score and have since lost two-straight openers to Ridgeview prior.

"It feels really good to get the dub," said Gritz, who went 0-3 with two runs scored at the plate. "The last few seasons we've kind of choked out of the gates and we put up a lot of runs today so it was nice."

Hermiston (1-0) scored its

seven runs on a total of seven hits and also with the help of four Ridgeview errors. Kody Moss and Wyatt Noland led Hermiston's offense with two hits apiece, while Moss added two runs scored and an RBI. Daniel Gossler also went 1-for-4 at the plate with an RBI, one run scored and a stolen base.

"We're 13 guys strong and that was a good team win," Hermiston coach Lance Hawkins said. "We're going to need all 13 guys throughout the year, and everybody played today, everybody got involved. We made our fair share of first-game mistakes, but I expect that and I'll take a win any way we can get it."

Hermiston had a pair of

solid performances on the pitching mound as well Tuesday as the duo of Lukas Tolan and Kody Moss got the call in Game No. 1. The junior right-hander Tolan started the game and finished with three hits and three runs allowed over four innings with three walks and three strikeouts. He showed some first-game jitters to start, allowing all three runs, two hits and two walks in the first two innings, but over his final two innings he allowed just one hit with two strikeouts.

"I just tried to throw strikes and give our defense a chance to make some plays," Tolan said of his performance. "It's not good to walk anybody either so I tried to stay away

from that."

Moss came on in relief in the fifth inning and had some immediate struggles, allowing four-straight batters to reach base safely and eventually allowed three runs to score in the inning. But like Tolan, Moss settled in after that and shut down the Ravens. Hawkins said he was very satisfied with what the pitchers showed.

"I think with Lukas, his velocity's up and he'll battle a lot," Hawkins said. "He only had like 7 innings last year, so he's our most experienced guy, but if he focuses he'll throw well for us. And Kody coming in, his last inning was

See **BASEBALL, A10**