

Edmiston eager for larger role on new college team

By **MATT ENTRUP**
Staff Writer

For Lewis-Clark State freshman Jansen Edmiston, leadership has always come naturally.

A four-year starter at point guard for the Hermiston Bulldogs, Edmiston had grown comfortable as that player others look to for guidance.

But when she joined the Warriors as the team's only true freshman prior to the 2016-17 season, the two-time All-East Oregonian Player of the Year was glad she had some established veterans to learn from.

"I think I've learned how to play a role," she said recently in a phone interview. "I was leader for so long in Hermiston, but playing behind a couple All-Americans you're going to learn from them and it was nice having that and having somebody else to step up and have them teach me. Every day they would make me better."

Like she did in high school, Edmiston made the transition to the next level quickly and appeared in all 37 games as the Warriors posted program records for wins and winning percentage, 35-2 (.946), and reached their first NAIA Championship. The Warriors lost in the championship game, 73-66, to Oklahoma City — which won its ninth title overall and third in four seasons.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LEWIS-CLARK STATE ATHLETICS

Warriors freshman Jansen Edmiston prepares to shoot a free throw during a game this season in Lewiston, Idaho. Edmiston led her team in free throw percentage going 31 for 36 (86.1 percent).

Edmiston went 2-for-2 from three-point range for six points and also had six rebounds in 11 minutes of playing time (about a minute more than her season average) in the title loss.

"I mean I got a lot of playing time for a freshman, I don't know that I thought I would play that much," she said. "I kind of just went out there with the mindset that it was just another game, I think. That's really why I played so well."

"When we went to nationals it was crazy how many people were there supporting us. It was amazing. ... When I came back (to Hermiston) and so many people were telling me they watched the game, you don't realize

how many people actually support you."

She said one of the reasons she chose the Warriors was their winning ways under coach Brian Orr, but she was still in awe of the team's accomplishment even weeks after the season ended.

"Thirty-five and two in a season, not many people can say that? Most wins for a season this year. It's going to be hard not to compare back to such a great season, and being your first year," she said. "But it's going to be different, it's going to be a new team."

"You know, a national championship is pretty huge. It would be awesome if we got there again, but during the season we made so much progress. We will have a bunch of people returning but we're going to miss four starters so that's going to be a little bumpy."

There will be room for Edmiston to carve out a larger role for herself as a sophomore. She'll be one of four returning guards, of which she was just behind junior Lauren Johnson for playing time.

Edmiston said she's eager to make the most of the opportunity and has been working hard to improve her jump shot and defense, as well as hitting the weight room with regularity. She also managed to find time to earn a 4.0 GPA her first semester.

BULLDOGS:

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just a confident kid and I'll take that every minute of every game, a guy that comes up and takes a deep breath and just does it."

After Schwirse departed the game, Ramirez came on worked himself out of trouble. The first Eagle batter he faced reached on an error and then a two-out walk set up a first-and-third situation with two

outs, with the run on first representing the tying run. But Ramirez escaped with an easy fly out to center-field to keep Hermiston on top.

Ramirez finished off the game in the seventh with two easy groundouts and an easy fly ball to left field for the final out. Hawkins said that this win could be a launching point for his Bulldogs.

"We know we can compete with teams like Hood River," Hawkins said.

"They've been very, very successful and it's good to get this one and the kids will build on it. Now we'll worry about getting the first one with The Dalles."

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(HRV) A. Cameron, I. Enriquez (4), (HHS) C. Schwirse, J. Ramirez (6) and S. Gritz. WP — C. Schwirse, LP — A. Cameron. 2B — I. Enriquez, C. Coerper (HRV); S. Gritz (HHS).

Contact Eric at esinger@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0839.

PACK:

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ward to it, building up and becoming a better player."

Blue Mountain coach Art Mota was also in attendance Wednesday, and said that the chemistry with the six guys was a big draw for him, though he's just excited about bringing in six quality players to help build the foundation of the program.

"I know that coach (Rich) Harshberger has been doing some great things here and this is evidence of that," Mota said. "These kids are well-coached, they know each other and it's going to be an easy transition for them to come in and help us take those first steps for the program."

The Bulldog players will be joined at BMCC by other players from Pendleton, Irrigon, Umatilla and Riverside high schools, which has Mota looking forward to getting the season started.

"I'm just happy to bring in talent from our area and I think all the young guys know what they're coming into," Mota said. "They're making history and I've told them all the same thing, what

ever standard you set is what everyone else has to follow. It'll be challenging because the NWAC is tough, but I think we're putting together a real good group for this first-year team."

Harshberger had a wide smile on his face as he stood back and watched his players sign their letters on Wednesday. His Hermiston teams have always had talent, but the opportunities in college were few and far between. He was happy when BMCC started up a soccer team and hopes that now with the college starving for local talent, this is just a start of a pipeline from Hermiston High to BMCC.

"Hopefully we keep seeing these kind of numbers going out, and seeking secondary education and realizing the opportunity is there for them," Harshberger said. "I feel like I've had this talent for several years, but always that college was somewhat unattainable but this is great because it shows you there are opportunities."

I try to tell them that if you want to play, there's a spot for you but I don't know that it speaks as loudly as actually having six, seven guys sign-

ing to play like today."

Also joining the six Bulldogs at BMCC will be 2016 Hermiston graduates Andy Corcuera and Ayden Prewitt, who are already enrolled at BMCC and are happy to be re-joining former teammates there as well. Prewitt said he always kept his eye on BMCC after he found out the school would be starting a men's team last season and knew it could be a good opportunity for him.

Corcuera said that when he left Hermiston, he figured his competitive soccer career was over but he is glad that he has another chance.

"I never thought I'd be playing at the college level, maybe just for fun instead," Corcuera said. "I'm just looking forward to the start of the season now."

Overall, seven of the Hermiston boys soccer seniors will be playing collegiately as Freddy Rodriguez signed with Walla Walla Community College in January. So after playing with Rodriguez for years, the six future T-Wolves will be playing against and trying to beat their friend during the NWAC season, a game they collectively looking forward to.

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