

# Herald Sports

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## Hawkins resigns from Bulldogs baseball

Longtime coach ready to watch from stands

By **MATT ENTRUP**  
Staff writer

Lance Hawkins has resigned after three seasons at the helm of Bulldogs baseball, Hermiston Athletic Director Larry Usher announced on Thursday.

The Bulldogs made two 5A play-in round appearances under Hawkins, but missed the postseason in 2017 after going 10-15 and finishing last in the Co-

lumbia River Conference. But with just four seniors graduating, optimism is high going into the summer American Legion season that the team can begin to build what could be one of its best seasons in ages for 2018.

That's why Hawkins, 51, decided now would be the time to step away after 18 years in the program.

"I think the program is probably in the best shape it has been in some time and I just wanted to leave on a pretty good note. Next year's team is going to be pretty talented, and I just want to leave it in good



HERALD FILE PHOTO

Hermiston baseball coach Lance Hawkins is resigning.

shape for whoever steps in," Hawkins said.

"Lance has given 18 years of baseball to the Hermiston School District and we are very thankful

for all the time and energy he has provided," Usher said in a statement. "Lance has been a great mentor to kids in our district as he made their time in the

baseball program not only rewarding, but very enjoyable as well."

Hawkins, who also coached about 15 years of football, will continue to teach at Sandstone Middle School while taking in as many Bulldogs games as possible, but said he's got some shifting priorities in his personal life that also made him realize it was time to stop coaching.

"I told Larry it's a retirement," he said. "I've been coaching here for 18 years and it was just time. Life is just happening, I'm going to be a grandpa in July.

"It takes a lot of time and effort, and you've got to realize those things before people start pushing you out.

"I'm going to go out and watch every game. I'll come up and support them and watch them this summer, it's just time to watch from the stands."

Hermiston went 34-40 in Hawkins' three seasons as head coach, posting a 14-22 mark in league play and 0-2 in postseason play.

Their best season under Hawkins was in 2016 when they went 13-12 and finished second in the CRC with a 6-6 mark.

## Bulldogs will play across the border in 2018

Hermiston to join WIAA for athletics, activities

By **ERIC SINGER**  
Staff writer

Adios, Oregon School Activities Association.

Hermiston High School's petition to leave the OSAA and join the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association was approved by the association's executive board at its meeting on Sunday, making Hermiston the first out-of-state full member to join when it does so for the 2018-19 school year.

The Bulldogs will be in the WIAA's 3A classification, the second largest, and will compete in the Mid-Columbia Conference with the Tri-Cities schools such as Richland, Southridge, Chiawana, Kamiakin, Hanford, Pasco and Kennewick, as well as Walla Walla High.

"This move to the WIAA is the right thing for our students," said Larry Usher, Hermiston High School athletic director, in a press release. "Our situation will be much improved in regards to travel distance, lost instructional time, and budgets."

Travel distance and lost instructional time were the prime reasons for Hermiston exploring membership with the WIAA. The school first petitioned membership to the WIAA in January as the OSAA's proposed reclassification for 2018-22 time block set the Bulldogs up in a league with Portland and Bend-area schools and an average round-trip travel distance of more than 400 miles for league games, which meant plenty of missed class time for athletes.

Now, Hermiston's average travel to play conference games in the Mid-Columbia will be just 80 miles and almost no missed class time.

"The most impressive thing about this," Usher said, "is the OSAA executive board and the WIAA executive board, between the two you have 26 adults that work in the world of education that made a decision that wasn't easy and is probably very controversial, but they made a decision to improve the lives of kids they've never met and that is powerful to us. They don't know our kids but they stepped up to make a decision that was right for the kids and we're excited that they felt that way about our community."

The WIAA executive board approved a set of guidelines at its April meeting that would allow an out-of-state school to seek membership, after having numerous discussions with both the OSAA and the Idaho High School Athletic Association. The board also reached out to associations in California, Arizona, Nevada and others who currently have out-of-

state members as well.

"This was a unique situation for both Hermiston and the WIAA," said Mike Colbrese, WIAA executive director, in a press release. "The Executive Board worked closely with the OSAA and IH-SAA to put measures in place to evaluate the situation at hand, and set a standard going forward."

The WIAA's decision didn't come without some back-and-forth discussion, though. Usher said on Monday that the school had not received specific details on the vote or the board's discussion, but was told it was a "two-hour long spirited debate."

The move north will bring some changes to Hermiston's sports landscape. Boys and girls soccer and boys and girls swimming will both split up, with boys soccer moving to the spring season and girls swimming moving to the fall. Also, bowling will be added to Hermiston's lineup as it is a sanctioned sport by

the WIAA, and Usher said that the school already has a popular bowling club team that is excited to make the move.

It remains to be seen just how much Hermiston's traditional cross-county rivalry with Pendleton will be affected, as though the two schools will no longer be conference rivals they will still likely play in most sports.

"Reducing travel time and loss of instructional time is something we are very committed to and it does mean we'll be exploring non-conference games as close to home as we can, like with Pendleton," Usher said. "It'll be no different from any other Mid-Columbia team that comes down to play us and Pendleton ... if we're given the choice of having to travel to Spokane or Vancouver or Yakima, or travel to Pendleton, obviously Pendleton will be a good choice for us."

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