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STAFF PHOTO BY ERIC SINGER

Hermiston senior Hayden Meyers, center, smiles as she signs her National Letter of Intent to play basketball at Blue Mountain Community College. Surrounding her are her parents, left, Hermiston basketball coach Juan Rodriguez, and sister Regan Meyers, far right.

Hermiston's Meyers signs with BMCC basketball

By ERIC SINGER
Staff writer

Hayden Meyers' final week as a Hermiston High student was one to remember.

Not just because graduation was on Saturday and her graduation party was on Friday, but what happened on Monday, June 5, pushed it over the top. Surrounded by dozens of friends, family and fellow Bulldogs, Meyers signed her National Letter of Intent to play basketball at Blue Mountain Community College in a ceremony in the Hermiston High commons.

"This was the perfect way to start it and end it," Meyers said of her final week at Hermiston, with a wide smile on her face.

Meyers was known more for her defensive abilities than her offense in the Bulldogs uniform, which is what helped her get noticed by BMCC coach Adam Driver. After watching a game in person, BMCC's fourth-year coach caught Hermiston's game against Pendleton on Feb. 9 on television and liked what he saw from Meyers.

"He told me I did a good job guarding (Pendleton's) Haley Greb," Meyers recalled. "I was

like 'Thank you' and said any time you need me to come practice I will. I then got a text asking me to come to open gyms, right after my senior season ended.

"I've always wanted to be a basketball coach, which is why I've been pushing myself to be in college athletics."

Blue Mountain is coming off a forgettable 2016-17 season in which the Timberwolves finished in the basement of the NWAC East Region with a 3-20 overall record and a 1-15 regional record. But the Timberwolves have only a few returning players from last season's squad, and after allowing an average of 78.7 points per game — highest in the NWAC — Meyers hopes she can use her defensive abilities right away.

"I'm hoping to fill a big role, a defensive role at least is where I'd like to see myself," Meyers said. "But I'd also like to see myself do more offensively than I have in the past. I've been trying to push myself and I'm going to get in the gym with (HHS athletic director) Larry Usher this summer and push myself to be more of an offensive threat."

She won't be the only local athlete suiting up for the Timber-

wolves though, as Umatilla's do-it-all guard Aleesha Watson also signed with the program, which has Meyers excited to get started.

"What excites me is there are only two returners and (Driver) has been looking at girls around here which is nice because in the past there hasn't been many from Hermiston or Pendleton," Meyers said. "I'm excited to play with (Watson) because I know her. The two girls returning are really good and I'm excited, maybe we'll build a bond to bring up more girls from local teams and make it bigger and better."

What excites Meyers the most, though, is the opportunity to pursue a dream and remain close to home. Her younger sister, Regan, will be a senior at Hermiston starting in the fall and Hayden wants to be there every step of the way.

"I'd like to watch all of her senior nights because she got to see all of mine," Meyers said, "so staying close to home was really important to me. We're like best friends, so that was the big push to BMCC and not another community college."

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Hermiston grad a part of junior hockey history

By ERIC SINGER
Staff Writer

The Everett Silvertips and Victoria Royals of the Western Hockey League made history earlier this year.

The teams battled in a seemingly never-ending game that took nearly five full overtime periods to complete on April 4. When Everett's Cal Babych scored the game-winning goal at the 11:24 mark in that fifth OT, it capped a Canadian Hockey League record for longest game in history with 151 minutes and 36 seconds of game play.

Keith Anderson, a 2015 graduate of Hermiston High School, was in the middle of the action as a winger for Everett as he is in his third season playing in the major junior league ranks. Anderson recalled that game recently, saying that when the goal horn sounded for the game-winner he was happy it was his team that won, but was more relieved that the game was finally over.

"It was the hardest thing I've ever had to do endurance wise," Anderson said. "I didn't think it would ever end, honestly. We were mentally exhausted and our legs were about to collapse. We snacked and chugged Gatorade every intermission."

"I personally hit a post (with a shot) in the fourth overtime that would've ended it, and the team just couldn't seem to bury any chances. But then Babych jumped on a breakout with their defenseman who was really tired on the backcheck and he put it home. We were all so tired but that goal definitely sparked a ton of energy and excitement into us as we all skated onto the ice and jumped on top of him. It was so cool."

The game length broke the previous playoff record of 136 minutes and 53 seconds of play, which was set back in 2003 between the Kamloops Blazers and Kootenay Ice, as well as the CHL record for longest game ever that went 146 minutes and 31 seconds in 1999 between the Victoriaville Tigers and Hull Olympiques.

"After the fourth overtime, they made an announcement in the arena as we walked back into the room 'This is officially the longest game in league history. Thank you for staying with us fans!'" Anderson recalled. "During that moment we all smiled, realizing we were a part of history."



Keith Anderson

The win clinched a playoff series win for Everett, four games to two over Victoria, and sent the Silvertips into the second round. Everett's playoff run stopped there, though, as Seattle ousted them and went on to win the Western Hockey League championship.

Anderson played in just 10 games for the Silvertips, where he registered no points and a +2 rating while tallying 21 penalty minutes. The win over Victoria is what will stand out from this season, though, as the Royals were the team that originally drafted Anderson in the sixth round of the WHL Bantam draft back in 2012. He spent parts of three seasons with Victoria spanning 39 games, where he tallied one goal, five assists and an even plus-minus rating before moving on with Everett.

"I would consider myself a power forward," Anderson said. "I'm a big player, good at using my body to create offense. I love to hit, and have fought a few times."

Anderson was born in Kansas City, Missouri, which is where his father, Jeremy, got him interested in hockey as a child. Jeremy, now a sports medicine and orthopedic doctor in Hermiston, played some club hockey in college and in various adult leagues. The Andersons moved to Hermiston in 2008 when Keith was 8-years-old and a lack of youth hockey programs or interest almost led Keith to quit the sport.

"I decided to give it a try in the Tri-Cities," Anderson said. "I watched an Americans game for the first time and knew that I wanted to play in that league right away ... it was sort of my childhood dream."

But once Anderson got to high school he realized that his chances of developing enough and getting noticed were slim, so he moved away with stops at different high schools in Phoenix, Arizona and Spokane, Washington. While he was in Spokane he got drafted by Victoria and signed his entry-level contract when he was 16.

The contract worked like a full-ride scholarship to a school of his choice on top of a small monthly stipend. When he signed his contract, it eliminated any chance of ever playing Division I college hockey because he was no longer an amateur in the eyes of the NCAA.

SPORTS BRIEF

Bulldogs have full slate of youth camps

Hermiston High School is offering a wide array of youth camps this summer, and registration is open.

Here is a list of summer camps

offered with their dates, grade range and registration fees: Softball (June 19-20, grades 3-8, \$45); Marching Band (June 19-23, grades 7-8, \$15); Volleyball (June 20-22, grades 3-8, \$65); Basketball (June 26-28, grades 3-8, \$65); Soccer (July 31-August 3, grades

3-8, \$40); Youth Football (Aug. 7-8, grades 2-6, \$20); Football Development (16 dates spanning from June 19 to July 20, grades 7-8, \$75); Tennis (Sept. 7-9, grades 3-8, \$55).

Registration can be completed online at HermistonAthletics.com.

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