

Nike revamps Mustangs uniforms

Kilkenny family brings latest uniforms to Heppner

By **ERIC SINGER**
STAFF WRITER

For more than two decades, the Heppner Mustangs football team has been one of the best and most consistent in Oregon.

Now in 2017, the Mustangs might also be the best dressed football team in the state.

This week, the Mustangs received brand new top-of-the-line uniforms from Nike thanks to a donation by the family of Robert Kilkenny, a long-time Heppner resident and Mustang football supporter who passed away in 2016. Nike supplied Heppner with four different uniform sets and the team also received four new helmet colors that give the team numerous combinations to choose from each Friday night.

“We couldn’t be more honored to have the brilliant minds at Nike design these uniforms for these amazing, hard-working kids on our football team in honor of our father and our town,” said Kilkenny’s daughter Kelly Hale in a press release. “Dad loved Heppner football — it was about who we were as individuals coming together as one for our community. It’s what we did growing up and it represented how we lived our lives.”

Heppner coach and athletic director Greg Grant said on Wednesday he was first contacted in April about the uniforms and asked if he was interested and would accept, which he was and he did.

“We’re humbled by the fact that (the family) would do this for us,” he said. “We have to realize that it won’t make us run faster or jump higher but it presents the kids with gifts they’ll never forget ... My No. 1 goal was that I never wanted the kids to look around and wish they’d played somewhere else and this puts it over the top.”

The jerseys are part of Nike’s Vapor Untouchable template, which is being used on the field



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this fall by most NFL and college football teams as well. Grant recalled being blown away when told of this, because at the time only the Oregon Ducks and Clemson Tigers had worn the Vapor Untouchable template, and now the small rural school of Heppner would be in the same gear.

“Not many schools get to wear this nice of stuff and we’re so thankful for it.”

Coach Greg Grant

“I was like ‘My team gets this?’ he recalled, being in awe. “And as a parent I knew this was something that gets kids excited and getting to watch the kids reacting would be special.”

Along with the traditional royal blue and white jerseys with blue pants, the Mustangs will now have a gold jersey with blue numbers and a gray jersey with blue numbers as well as gray, white and gold pants. Nike is also supplying

the team with the latest cleats and gloves that create an image of the updated Mustang logo when placed together.

On the helmets, the Mustangs will also be sporting one of two updated logos: the letter ‘H’ inside a circle branding iron and an image of a Mustang wrapping from side-to-side on the helmets. The ‘H’ logo also appears on the chest of the jerseys.

“We’re going to be the envy of Oregon and maybe the nation,” Grant joked. “Not many schools get to wear this nice of stuff and we’re so thankful for it.”

The team will also wear a decal on the back of the helmets of a three-leafed clover with the letters ‘BB’ inside it, honoring “Bad Bob” Kilkenny and his Irish roots.

“The Heppner football uniform was a special project for the Nike design team to work on, meant to honor Bob, his contributions to the community and the Kilkenny family,” Nike Creative Director Todd Van Horne said in the release. “We look forward to the Mustangs taking to the field in Nike’s latest football innovation and wish them all the success during the upcoming season.”

The Mustangs got their

first look at the uniforms in person on Wednesday night, and senior Beau Wolters, whose favorite combination is the gray-on-blue, said he is so thankful to have grown up in a town that supports him and his friends as much as the town and people of Heppner do.

“We are super fortunate to have sponsors like we do and to get brand-new Nike gear,” he said. “We had heard about them and didn’t really know how they were going to turn out. I honestly love the feel of the new jerseys, they are nice and snug and will fit very well on our pads.”

“I’m very excited to see what’s in store.”

But as Grant pointed out on Wednesday, the Mustangs football team is not the only ones affected, as the other teams such as volleyball, girls basketball and cross country received new uniforms and equipment from Nike as well. And as a school administrator as well as a parent to athletes (Grant’s son, Kellen, plays football and his daughter, Sophie, is on the volleyball team), Grant feels blessed that the student-athletes were treated so well.

“Being able to just also provide opportunities for all kids on all sports was special,” Grant said. “All kids in Heppner got a new pair of shoes; not one person had to buy cross country shoes, or volleyball shoes or football cleats and that’s really special.”

The jerseys will be unveiled to the public at Heppner’s home opener on Friday when the Mustangs host St. Paul at Les Payne Field. The Kilkenny family will be on hand for the game, and then will join fellow supporters at Bucknum’s Tavern following the game.

Heppner wore the familiar all-royal blue look for Friday’s game against St. Paul and will always wear white on the road, but after that they’ll “see how much fun we can have.”

“We’ll live it up and enjoy the privilege we’ve been given,” Grant said, “and we’ll wear these with pride and dignity.”

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Bulldogs boys soccer drop first game of season

Hermiston’s first loss comes at the hands of the La Grande Tigers

By **ALEXIS MANSANAREZ**
STAFF WRITER

The Hermiston boys soccer team returned home to a scorching Kension Field Friday afternoon after a brief one-game road stint looking to add to its hot start.

It entered the match against La Grande 2-0 with shutout victories to open the season, but fell 1-0 in a defensive battle.

From the first whistle, La Grande maintained control of the ball. The Tigers gave up few possessions early on and when the ball was in their own final third, the Bulldogs couldn’t find the net. They had enough chances, taking more than 10 shots on goal, but saves by La Grande’s junior goalkeeper Christian Waugaman or shots too wide and too high plagued the team.

“We just weren’t playing at our pace, we weren’t playing our game,” head coach Rich Harshberger said. “[The] first couple of games we came out and played our game and for some reason tonight we just couldn’t get it clicking. I’m not going to use any kind of excuse, it’s just

a tough one.”

The lone goal came off the head of junior midfielder Aaron Corsini. After a free kick near midfield went deep into the box, Hermiston’s senior goalkeeper Antonio Campos charged towards the ball. Before Campos could come close to it, Corsini’s head already made contact and the ball sailed into the back of the net in the 16th minute.

Despite the loss, the Bulldogs have the opportunity to bounce back and find their rhythm before league play begins in late September.

“This is a big test,” Harshberger said. “We’ve got a lot of season left and so we can decide how the rest of that season is going to go based on this.”

According to Harshberger, to bounce back from the loss the boys have to take a look at their goals, which are to repeat last season’s success and make a strong run in the post season. To do this, he added, the Bulldogs can’t dwell on Friday evening’s performance.

“We’re going to get out and if we’re going to go down, we’re going to go down playing our game and the way we know how,” Harshberger said.

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PREP ROUNDUP

Irrigon tops Hermiston junior varsity in volleyball

VOLLEYBALL

Stanfield falls to Helix on Thursday

HELIX — Helix topped both Stanfield and Mac-Hi with 3-0 victories in a tri-match on Thursday night, giving the Grizzlies five shutout victories on the season.

Against Stanfield (0-1), Helix (5-1) won 25-8, 25-21, 25-15 and then beat Mac-Hi 25-12, 25-15, 25-15. Sadie Wilson had a big night for the Grizzlies with 14 combined kills and seven serving aces picked up against Mac-Hi (0-2). Charmayne Bennett was also a standout performer from the serving line, coach Dianna Melton said.

Helix competed without senior hitter Kailey Mize, who was out with an ankle injury but libero Kyleen Stahancyk was back and that was a huge boost to the Grizzlies, Melton added.

Helix now has a week off until they host Riverside on Thursday evening.

IRRIGON 3, HERMISTON 1

IRRIGON — The Knights remain unbeaten in 2017 after beating the Hermiston junior varsity by a 3-1 score on Thursday night.

Irrigon (3-0) took the first set 25-8 and then dropped the next set 25-16, but finished off the Bulldogs 25-14 and 26-24.

“Our team battled, I am very proud of the performance of each and every girl,” Irrigon coach Lisa Connell said.

HEPPNER SWEEPS TWICE IN DUFUR

DUFUR — The Heppner Mustangs picked up a pair of victories on

Tuesday afternoon, Aug. 29, sweeping both the Dufur Rangers and Vernonia Loggers, 3-0 in Dufur.

Against the home Dufur team, Heppner (3-2) won 25-12, 25-18, 25-12 and then beat Vernonia 25-23, 25-16, 25-16. Stats were not available for the Dufur match, but against Vernonia it was Nicole Propheter that led the Mustangs with eight kills and Jacee Currin had five, while Sydney Wilson led with 16 digs.

As a team, Heppner was a stellar 94 percent on its serves and Madison Combe led the team with seven aces.

“Everything seemed to fall into place today for these girls,” Heppner coach Mindy Wilson said. “They continue to work on the little things and are improving daily.”

GIRLS SOCCER UMATILLA 3, MAC-HI 3

UMATILLA — Celeste Rodriguez scored two goals and Devina Monreal added one more as their Umatilla Vikings drew a 3-3 tie with the Mac-Hi Pioneers on Tuesday afternoon, Aug. 29.

“It was a fun match,” Umatilla coach Tim Lee said. “Our fitness level is still on the upswing ... we got tired early and Mac-Hi battled back, but we still saw some good things.”

Rodriguez and Monreal traded goals as the Vikings (0-1-1) took a 2-0 lead early, but Mac-Hi (0-1-1) scored two to tie the game up before the half. The Pioneers scored a go-head goal out of the break, but the Vikings tied the game on Rodriguez’s second of the game. Lee said the Vikings had a few opportunities to take a lead, but couldn’t finish the kicks.

“We’ll look at what we did well,” Lee said. “It was a step in the right direction.”

PREP FOOTBALL

Umatilla, Echo win season openers

Few successes in season-opening games

By **ALEXIS MANSANAREZ**
STAFF WRITER

It was a busy week for high schools across the state. Not only did last week bring the beginning of the 2017-18 academic year, but football teams took the field for the first time. However, for the schools in Eastern Oregon, it wasn’t the start many hoped for.

HERMISTON 21, UNION (WA) 35 — It was a tough Friday night for Hermiston. The Bulldogs (0-1) were hoping to avenge last year’s season-opening loss to Union (WA), but again their late efforts were too little too late.

The Titans (1-0) took the early lead, and by the half had a two-score advantage. Hermiston’s only first-half score came from a one-yard carry by junior quarterback Andrew James. The Bulldogs remained scoreless until the fourth quarter, when they cut the deficit and put up back-to-back touchdowns.

The first was with 7:12

left on the clock. James found senior wide receiver Dayshawn Neal for 16-yards and then converted the two-point pass to fellow senior Joey Gutierrez.

Later, Neal once again found the end zone with barely any time left. The three-yard touchdown pass from James came in the final 11 seconds of play.

Hermiston will have a chance to bounce back from this loss as it hosts Lewiston (ID) for its home opener Friday at 7 p.m.

UMATILLA 28, UNION 15 — The Umatilla Vikings didn’t have a problem pulling out a win on Friday. Under the bright lights, the Vikings’ (1-0) defense shined, and held off a last ditch effort from the Bobcats (0-1).

While the defense did its part to help secure the win, senior quarterback Kaden Webb and the offense lit up the scoreboard. Webb finished the night completing 9-of-12 passes for 149 yards and four touchdowns. He also racked up 13 yards on five carries.

Webb was aided by junior running back Trent Durfey, who tallied eight carries for 37 yards and was on the receiving end of five completions for 101 yards.

All in all, he ended with a team-high of two touchdowns.

The Vikings will spend another Friday on the road, this time facing non-conference opponent Rainier at 7 p.m.

AMITY 14, IRRIGON 0 — Irrigon’s efforts on defense were not enough to take down Amity at Hood River on Friday, when the Warriors (1-0) ground out a shutout victory over the Knights (0-1)

Amity scored on its first possession of the game and then again in the second quarter. While the defense was able to contain the Warriors for the remainder of the game, the Knights’ offense had trouble finding the end zone due to its youth and inexperience.

Statistics from the game were not available. Irrigon will host Pendleton junior varsity on Thursday at 7 p.m.

ST. PAUL 40, HEPPNER 0 — Nothing went Heppner’s way in front of its home crowd on Friday. The Mustangs (0-1) opened their season with an advantage, and played host to the St. Paul Buckaroos. Equipped with brand new uniforms from Nike, Heppner certainly looked the

part but just didn’t play the part.

The Buckaroos (1-0) slowly built up their lead, scoring only one touchdown in the first quarter. A 20-point quarter and 13-point quarter followed, respectively, to leave Heppner in the dust.

St. Paul kept the ball moving, scoring in all but one quarter. Heppner did not have the same success.

Led by freshman quarterback Jayden Wilson, the Mustangs only moved 120 yards the entire night and Wilson threw for 70 of those yards. Senior running back Coby Dougherty led Heppner in rushing with 38 yards on eight carries and Beau Wolters added 35 yards on eight carries.

The Mustangs will now have to rebound from this loss and travel for their first road game of the season this week. Heppner will face Grant Union on Friday at 7 p.m.

ECHO 34, ARLINGTON/CONDON 20 — The Echo Cougars opened the season with a win on Thursday, Aug. 31, over Arlington/Condon by a score of 34 to 20. The Cougars next travel to Lone to play the Cardinals at 7 p.m. Friday, Sept. 8.