

RIVALRY

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the more important especially for people within the community that endured the years of defeat.

“You felt it more from the community than among (the players),” Barnett said. “There was also the pressure to perform (during the season) but you always wanted to raise up to the next level against Pendleton.”

A win was affirmation that the program was on the rise, Barnett added, and gave former players and alumnus a sense of pride that was missing for so long.

At this point in Hermiston’s history, defeating Pendleton was more rare than a winning season, and that’s saying something.

Before 1984, the Bulldogs had only eight winning seasons: 1953, 1954, 1955, 1960, 1965, 1971 and 1973. The most recent at the time, the 1973 season, saw Hermiston fall to Bend (19-14) and Pendleton (41-7).

Finally in 1984 for the teams’ 59th meeting, Hermiston was finally able to shake off decades of defeat. The 27-14 victory was highlighted by four unanswered touchdowns and the performance of running back Lance Hawkins, who rushed for 110 yards and two touchdowns.

But victories like this were still few and far between. Hermiston entered the turn of the century with wins you could count on one hand and wouldn’t reach double digits in the all-time series until 2012.

When Hermiston was able to top Pendleton, the atmosphere was electric.

Barnett remembers his sophomore year on the team, when Hermiston defeated Pendleton 33-21. It was only the Bulldogs third win over the Bucks and it’s something Barnett will never forget.

“I remember the bus ride



HH FILE PHOTO BY MITCHELL ZACHS

Luke Hansell and Tyler Harsteen celebrate after defeating Pendleton 20-17 in 2002 to complete the team’s first undefeated season and outright Intermountain Conference football title.

home was insane,” he said. “I never ever knew what winning at the level was like. There in high school that was the biggest game we ever played in.”

In 2002 Hermiston beat Pendleton for the first time at home. The Bulldogs won 20-17 when senior Dean Peters kicked a 40-yard field goal with 10 seconds left on the clock. John Barnett, Paul’s brother, was the placeholder for the winning kick. That year Hermiston finished with a perfect 9-0 record for the first time ever.

The following season was the first time in the rivalry that Hermiston won back-to-back years, but still only the sixth win for the Bulldogs in what was then a 76-game series. It ended the way any good rivalry should, with another dramatic finish.

The game went into overtime after Hermiston opted not to run the clock out in the fourth quarter despite having a 28-27 lead. Instead, the Bulldogs scored and gave Pendleton its chance to score. By the end of regulation, the scored read 35-35 and the 21-point deficit Hermiston had to overcome in the first quarter was almost for nothing.

Hermiston was able to hold off Pendleton for one

more year, claiming a 28-3 victory in 2004 but again would fall victim to the Bucks for four straight seasons.

It was the efforts of an outsider who wasn’t afraid to put the rivalry to bed that did just that.

Former head coach Mark Hodges didn’t have ties to Hermiston or Eastern Oregon. The fresh eyes and new outlook helped the Bulldogs in the end, no matter how controversial it was at the time.

Looking back on the beginning of what would be his seven year career as head coach, Hodges knows his opinion wasn’t the most popular but it got the job done.

“As long as we were talking about Pendleton, we were never going to get anywhere,” he said. “What we were doing is creating a culture and a mindset amongst the players that no matter what comes up whether it’s state championship week or whether it’s Pendleton week, no matter what it is, it’s just another game on the schedule.”

Hodges recognized a problem with the old way of thinking. He saw that everyone was transfixed on beating Pendleton, and in Hodges’ mind, that was thinking

too small.

He worked to change the vision and in turn that would change the culture, and instead of looking at beating Pendleton as the pinnacle on a season, the Bucks became just other opponent on the Bulldogs’ way to the post-season.

“It wasn’t dismissive,” Hodges added. “What it was — I knew that the distraction of the Pendleton week was having a negative effect (on the team).”

The changes Hodges implemented took years to sink in, but its success was instant. In his first year at the helm, Hodges coached the Bulldogs to their first league championship, and their first victory over the Bucks since 2004.

In 2008, Hermiston hosted Pendleton for its regular season finale. The Bulldogs entered halftime with an eight-point lead and went on to score 27 unanswered points to win 41-24.

Since then, the Bulldogs have won six of the last 10 contests.

Pendleton managed to sneak in a win during the 2010 season. The game went into double overtime for the first time ever. The teams were tied at 28 points apiece at the end of regulation. Pendleton scored first in the first overtime but Hermiston quickly tied things up with a quarterback sneak from Tim Rude. Both teams missed their point after touchdown, but Pendleton would score next to win 40-34. The Bucks won again in 2011, but haven’t been able to claim a victory since.

“I think the difference is now it’s expected that you’re supposed to win,” Barnett said. “Back when I used to play it was a Halley’s Comet type of thing.”

In 2012, Hermiston finally broke into double-digit wins with a 28-13 defeat. It was the Bulldogs first win since 2009.

Now, five years later Hermiston has a chance to hold on to bragging rights for what could be forever.

BY THE WAY



PHOTO CONTRIBUTED BY JUDY FORDICE

Virginia Beebe of the Hermiston Senior Center receives a donation from Wayne Harris and Larry Carrick of the Hermiston Elks Lodge.

BTW

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People are champing at the bit to get a taste of the new restaurant in the old El Cazador building (across from McDonald’s on Highway 395). Nearly a year ago, a sign indicated a sushi restaurant was “coming soon.” On Oct. 17 in a post on the Facebook group “Whats Happening Hermiston?,” building owner **Becky Wadekamper** said that progress is being made in the building. While she doesn’t know the exact date for the greatly anticipated opening, she did say, “they have done a wonderful job of renovating the interior and it’s beautiful and it will be an atmosphere like none other in town.”

Hermiston Police Chief **Jason Edmiston** and his wife caught their 15 second of fame last week on the Today Show during a vacation to New York City. Standing outdoors in the audience, they told anchor Hoda Kotb they were headed to see a Yankees game that night. “Are you happy?” Kotb asked. “I’m a Mets fan,” Edmiston admitted before the camera cut away.

A pair of longstanding members of **Hermiston**

Elks Lodge No. 1845 recently met with members of the **Hermiston Senior Center** to make a donation. **Larry Carrick**, a 52-year Hermiston Elks member, and **Wayne Harris**, 47-year member, presented a check for \$200 to **Virginia Beebe**, Hermiston senior center vice president. The money will go towards the seniors’ new center. The guests also enjoyed lunch with the seniors in the parish hall at Our Lady of Angels Catholic Church, the temporary lunch site while the new facility is under construction.

Hermiston High School Student **Ethan Atkinson** is collecting new and used shoes throughout the month of November, all of which he plans to donate to a charity that helps families in Haiti as part of his Eagle Scout project. Collection bins will be set up at various locations around town, including Columbia Bank, Atkinson Staffing, AgriLabor, Hermiston High School and Armand Larive Middle School.

You can submit items for our weekly *By The Way* column by emailing your tips to editor@hermistonherald.com or share them on social media using the hashtag #HHBTW. Follow the *Hermiston Herald* on Twitter at @HermistonHerald.



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