



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston's Tyler Hunter, top, and Eric White, bottom, wrap up Churchill quarterback Jack Blackburn in the Bulldogs' 38-35 win against the Lancers in the 5A state championship game Saturday in Hillsboro.

## Dawgs' defensive aggressiveness pays dividends

**A knack for turnovers** helped the Hermiston defense do its part to bring home a state championship

By **ERIC SINGER**  
STAFF WRITER

HILLSBORO — A common cliché in football is that defense wins championships.

For the Hermiston Bulldogs on Saturday night against Churchill, it was more than just a saying. Their defense provided a pathway to the Class 5A state championship, just as it had all postseason long. The unit didn't exactly do their part in the sense of a dominant front seven that completely shut down the opposition, but instead earned it by a knack for creating turnovers in clutch situations.

The Bulldogs picked off Churchill quarterback Jack Blackburn twice and recovered one fumble, bringing their postseason tally to 13 forced turnovers in the four games and a season grand total of 34. The Bulldogs say credit goes to defensive coordinator Scott Hammond having his players prepared for every situation and a mindset to be great.

"It just goes back to what we started doing with our fundamentals," senior cornerback Tyler Rohman said after Saturday's win. "It was always aggressive, aggressive, aggressive. It's just the attention to detail and mindset we've developed. (Defensive coordinator Scott) Hammond always says at practice great players make MAD (Make-a-difference) plays and that's what we do."

Junior cornerback Youbani Razon was the first player to step up Saturday with a phenomenal interception in the second quarter. With Hermiston holding a 12-7 lead, Razon played soft coverage on his outside receiver and backpedaled a few yards after the snap. He read Blackburn's eyes and saw the slot receiver settle into a spot in the Bulldogs' zone defense roughly five yards in front of him jumped the route and beat the ball to the receiver.

It was a huge swing as the Bulldogs cashed in on the turnovers with a touchdown to make it a 18-7 game. On Churchill's first play of the

next drive, linebacker Jonathan Hinkle stepped in front of a short pass for an interception. Once again it set up a touchdown that Hinkle scored himself for a 25-7 lead with 2:34 left to play.

"It's that mindset that they have," Hermiston coach David Faaeteete said. "They don't believe that the play that just happened, happened, they just move on to the next. And you know, we got our hands on balls, we got some interceptions, put in the coverage we knew we were going to be thrown to and our guys came up big with turnovers."

However, Churchill continued to hang around with a late first half touchdown and in the second half the Lancers would seemingly answer each Bulldogs touchdown. Yet late in the fourth quarter, the Hermiston defense was able to sniff out a turnover to swing things in their favor for good.

With the Lancers facing second-and-seven at midfield trailing the Bulldogs 31-28 with just over five minutes left in the game, a wild snap evaded Blackburn and bounced around the turf to his right and Hermiston defensive end Eric White pounced on it.

The turnover gave the Bulldogs great field position, which the offense turned into the game-clinching touchdown pass from Andrew James to Dayshawn Neal.

"The ability to have a gut check," senior safety Joe Gutierrez said of the team's knack for turnovers. "And that's when our backs are against the wall, when we need a big play we'll make it because we've just got that in us."

When all was said and done, Churchill out-gained Hermiston 376-343, scored on all three trips to the red zone, and hung 35 points on the Bulldogs.

But the Lancers are the ones taking home a second place trophy while the Bulldogs make the 200 mile trip back east with first place because of a detailed preparation and a mindset that was second to none.



STAFF PHOTOS BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston coach David Faaeteete, background fourth from right, watches the action on the field during the Bulldogs' 38-35 win against Churchill in the 5A state championship game on Saturday in Hillsboro.

## Coach Faaeteete leaves his mark on OSAA

By **ALEXIS MANSANAREZ**  
STAFF WRITER

After the player and fan celebrations in the middle of the football field at Hillsboro Stadium began to settle down, Hermiston head coach David Faaeteete was able to catch his breath.

His Bulldogs just claimed their second Oregon state title after defeating the No. 4 Churchill Lancers 38-25. But he is no stranger to a big win or to these types of celebrations.

Faaeteete was the assistant coach in 2014 when then-head coach Mark Hodges led Hermiston to its first ever state championship.

The win then in many ways prepared him for Saturday's victory. He was better able to take in the moment, making sure he would remember each smiling face and every hug from players, friends and family.

But perhaps the most telling moment in all of this was the first words Faaeteete spoke to the media after Hermiston's triumphant rise.

"Shout out to Churchill and their staff," he said. "Those kids played hard and they didn't give up. Big ups to them. Those guys played hard. Those guys played tremendous in the second half, answered and made us really have to earn this one."

His quick praise of the efforts for the team that tried to take the title for themselves before that of the players on his own 50-man roster helps explain how the Bulldogs have been so level-headed throughout their OSAA Farewell Tour.

Faaeteete, just like any coach, recognizes every opponent at one moment or another after a game, but as he spoke highly of Churchill before mentioning Hermiston's dual-threat quarterback Andrew James or star wide receiver Dayshawn Neal, it wasn't hard to see where the rest of the team gets their winning attitude from.

When Faaeteete took over in 2015, he led the Bulldogs to their third consecutive league championship — fourth in program history — but it came with a losing record. Hermiston finished the sea-



Hermiston's Adrian Mendez leaps on the back of Churchill's Tyson Bennion in the Bulldogs' 38-35 win against the Lancers at the 5A state championship game Saturday in Hillsboro.



Hermiston's Andrew James hands the ball off to Peter Earl in the Bulldogs' 38-35 win against Churchill in the 5A state championship game Saturday in Hillsboro.



Hermiston's Joey Gutierrez is tackled by Churchill's Josh Hatten in the Bulldogs' 38-35 win against the Lancers in the 5A state championship game Saturday in Hillsboro.

son 4-6 after losing to Wilsonville 49-14 in Round 1 of the playoffs.

He responded the following year by going .500, finishing 5-5, also ending the 2016 season in the first round (a 12-7 loss to St. Helens). All the while the team was working out some kinks. Senior offensive lineman Beau Blake attributes some of the team's difficulties to the attitude even he admits he had.

There was some division, he shared the week leading up to the state championship game, that didn't allow the team to play to their full potential. That's where Faaeteete comes in.

The 2017 season proved to be different, in many ways.

Hermiston was preparing to play its last season as a member of the OSAA, as it will be joining the WIAA in 2018. The Bulldogs no longer had a first-year starting quarterback at the helm, and their talent of the roster grew exponentially from efforts in the weight room.

The goal remained the same: to get to the state championship game and raise the first place trophy after 48 minutes of play.

But there was a different feeling in the air. Just ask Blake.

"He's gotten better and it comes more natural to him," Blake said of what he's seen from Faaeteete over the last three years. "When he first started out you could tell that he had a lot of stress but now it's all natural to him and he's getting into his groove — his coaching groove."

"He's a positive energy," Blake added. "He's always wanting you to do better, and he always tries to pick you up. He's so knowledgeable about stuff and he's been able to make a great team out of his energy and his coaching staff. It's amazing what he's done."

That groove helped, as the Bulldogs wrapped up their best season under Faaeteete.

And as far as his players go, they have nothing but praise for their coach.

"I want to thank him," Blake said. "He is the best, I love him to death. He's so great. I just want to thank him for all he has done. He's helped me so much, he's helped this whole team and this program and I'm very proud of him for all he's done."

Said fellow senior Joey Gutierrez: "Thank you for pushing us and never letting us get down on ourselves, all those hard hours even though it sucked, it finally payed off and just hats off to him for keeping us all together and getting us here."



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston offensive linemen Chase Bradshaw, Jacob Liebe and Taylor Arnold block for Jonathan Hinkle, not seen, in the 5A championship.

## Offensive line powers Dawgs through title

**Hermiston's offensive line** paved the way for a breakout season for the Bulldogs' offense

By **ERIC SINGER**  
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston assistant coach Rick Wells posed for group photos with his offensive linemen on the field following Saturday night's game, smiling and looking around at each kid like a proud father.

"They're like my sons," Wells said Saturday night, holding back emotions. "I'm blessed with three daughters and a bunch of sons, really."

The bond between Wells and his players and amongst the players themselves played out to be a key factor for the Bulldogs this season, as a much-improved play from the linemen paved the way for an offensive barrage this season.

"I'm really, really hard on them, I absolutely demand their very, very best and they respond," Wells said. "They don't worry when something is wrong. They are so coachable and it's just amazing and more than anything, we have five or six guys that just love each other to death and play so hard."

Last season as Hermiston put together a middling

5-5 season, inconsistent play on the line led to an inconsistent season from the offense as a whole. The Bulldogs averaged 24 points and roughly 350 yards of offense per game in 2016, which ended

with a loss in the first round of the playoffs. But with four starters returning in 2017, the group decided to step up their game in the offseason to help their team reach the ultimate goal.

"We wanted the state championship, there was no other goal than that,"

Beau Blake | senior guard

in the second team. We don't miss a beat because we work together and we don't give up." And Huato's injury also showed the selflessness that the unit has. As a senior and two-year starter Huato was disappointed he was not able

to play, but he was thrilled to see Bradshaw fill in so well in his place and still be able to call himself a state champion.

"I'm in shock," he said. "This is the best feeling I have ever had playing football."

Churchill gave Hermiston's line perhaps its biggest challenge yet. After a relatively easy first offensive drive, the Lancers dialed up pressure with blitzes and stunts on nearly every snap to try and slow down the Bulldogs' red-hot offense.

"They're a dang-good football team and there was a reason they were 12-0," Wells said of the Lancers. "The biggest thing we had to do is keep ourselves calm and stick with it and be patient. There's going to be times when we'll get stuffed and bad things happen, but we continued our road forward and that's what we do."

Hermiston was held to just 181 rushing yards on 48 attempts against Churchill, its lowest output since a Week 3 loss to Mountain View, but it was more than enough for the Bulldogs to bring home the title.

"Big-time people make big-time plays in big-time games," Wells said, "and our guys do that and that's one of the reasons we're going to get a ring soon, so it's pretty special."

on to the field."

The area where the line's improvement was most notable was in the run game. The Bulldogs totaled 1,598 rush yards last season and topped the 200 yard mark in a game just three times as a team, with the highest being 257 yards. This season the Bulldogs tallied more than 3,300 rushing yards, including six games with at least 300 yards, thanks to the linemen sealing blocks to spring the likes of Jonathan Hinkle, Peter Earl and Andrew James free.

The line's bond was tested in the 5A quarterfinal game against South Albany, when Huato, the starting right guard, suffered a right knee injury in the second quarter and causing him to watch the last two games hunched over his crutches on the sideline.

Chase Bradshaw, a sophomore stepped in to the starting spot and the Bulldogs didn't miss much of a beat, showing the confidence that the group has in themselves.

"It means that we have a great program right here," Blake said. "No matter what, it's always the next guy up. We have such good players, even

in the second team. We don't miss a beat because we work together and we don't give up."

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### 2017 | SEASON RECAP • HERMISTON BULLDOGS

#### SEPT. 1:

**Union (WA) 35, Hermiston 21**

On the road in Yakima, this wasn't the start Hermiston had hoped for. The Bulldogs scored only one touchdown in the first half but showed promise in the last 10 minutes — scoring two touchdowns six minutes apart. Union went on to a 9-2 season in the WIAA's largest classification.

#### SEPT. 8

**Hermiston 26, Lewiston (ID) 0**

After a week of practicing indoors due to poor air quality from a string of wildfires, the Hermiston Bulldogs came out guns ablazing at Kennison Field in their only shutout victory of the season. A 300-yard lead performance from Andrew James led Hermiston and gave them momentum they desperately needed as the No. 1 team in the state was next up on their schedule.

#### SEPT. 15

**Mountain View 28, Hermiston 7**

No team was able to top No. 1 Mountain View during the regular season, not even your eventual state champions. After the tough loss on the road, Hermiston dropped to 1-2 on the season and outsiders were wary of just how successful the Bulldogs would be on their OSAA Farewell Tour.

#### SEPT. 22

**Hermiston 34, Summit 14**

Teams in the Special District 1 have been feeling the wrath of the Summit Storm since 2014. The former league powerhouse went undefeated in league play for nearly four years. That is until they welcomed the Bulldogs this season. The win at Summit was a turning point for Hermiston, and the start of its 10-game winning streak.

#### SEPT. 29

**Hermiston 40, Hood River Valley 14**

After a scoreless first quarter in Hermiston's first home league game in two weeks, the Bulldogs scored 34 unanswered points in the second quarter. Things began to click for James and company. "It shows us we have the ability to win but we still can't have a bad week," James said of the victory at the time. "We've just got to keep the same momentum, the same attitude."

#### OCT. 6

**Hermiston 48, Ridgeview 26**

The connection between James and the senior wide receiver Dayshawn Neal was highlighted in this Hermiston win in Redmond. The two connected six times for 97 yards and a touchdown. Despite giving up 300 rushing yards to the Ravens, Hermiston's steady offensive attack put them in solid play-off position for Week 6.

#### OCT. 13

**Hermiston 35, Bend 32**

The narrow victory over Bend was Hermiston's closest game to date. The Bulldogs held off the Lava Bear late efforts and this win on homecoming night was one for the books. "It was a great atmosphere tonight," head coach David Faaeteete said after the game. "There were big plays on both sides of the field and it was just a fun football game to watch and be a part of."

#### OCT. 20

**Hermiston 62, Redmond 14**

This blowout victory at home in Week 8 was just what the Bulldogs needed before their last matchup with cross-county foe Pendleton. After a 48-7 first half, Hermiston coasted on to its fifth consecutive win.

#### OCT. 27

**Hermiston 42, Pendleton 15**

One word: scoreboard. In their last meeting for the foreseeable future, The Bulldogs will hold on to the bragging rights after dismantling the Buckaroos at Round-Up Stadium. "I'm super elated," Faaeteete said with a smile on his face after the game. "Even when Pendleton tried to make it interesting, we responded and kept responding."

#### NOV. 3 (ROUND 1)

**Hermiston 47, La Salle Prep 21**

Setting in as the No. 3 seed with a full head of steam, Hermiston showed its power and potential in the first round of the playoffs. James threw four touchdowns to four different receivers and the win earned the Bulldogs one final week of putting on a show in front of their home crowd at Kennison Field.

#### NOV. 10 (QUARTERFINALS)

**Hermiston 40, South Albany 22**

The win to advance Hermiston to the 5A semifinals was its fourth consecutive game scoring 40 or more points, and its sixth of the season. The high scoring affair was thanks to big plays on all three sides of the ball, and the Bulldogs hope of leaving Oregon with a bang continued.

#### NOV. 18 (SEMIFINALS)

**Hermiston 35, Wilsonville 27**

For the talented senior class on the 50-plus man roster, playing at a neutral field in Hillsboro was a welcomed homecoming. The last time they stepped foot on the field at Hillsboro Stadium, they were celebrating the team's first ever state title. The win over Wilsonville, powered again by James, put them in a position to repeat their earlier success 200 miles away.

#### NOV. 25 (CHAMPIONSHIP)

**Churchill 35, Hermiston 38**

The Bulldogs worked all 48 minutes for their 2017 state championship trophy. After a tough game against a previously undefeated team, Hermiston's hopes for the season came full circle. James, along with Neal and senior Jonathan Hinkle shared under the lights of Hillsboro Stadium and the team surely still has smiles on their faces.