



Hermiston senior Beau Blake poses for a photo with his family during a football state championship ring presentation ceremony on Tuesday in Hermiston.

STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

## Bulldogs get their bling

Hermiston receives state champ rings

By ERIC SINGER  
STAFF WRITER

HERMISTON — Joey Gutierrez could not stop smiling on Tuesday night. Exactly 67 days after the Hermiston Bulldogs' football team captured the Class 5A state championship, Gutierrez and his teammates received their shiny state championship rings during a presentation at halftime of Tuesday's Hermiston-Pendleton varsity basketball game.

"Oh man, it's such a good feeling to have it," Gutierrez said, smiling. "It's a memory we're always going to have and it definitely looks a lot better in person than in the pictures."

"Not a lot of people can say they have a state championship football ring, so it gives you an even better feeling than before."

The ring displays a rectangular face with the words 'State champions' emblazoned in silver split among the top and bottom edge, with shiny stones lining the left and right edges. In the middle is the Hermiston 'H' logo in purple and gold with the Bulldog head in the middle.

Gutierrez, an all-state defensive back this past season, said that a group of seniors had a little bit of input into the design, though they soon realized the ring they envisioned was a bit too flashy and would be too expensive. The final design was scaled back, but still got the approval of the players.

"(Coach David) Faeteete kind of made it look

nicer, I think," Gutierrez said.

After receiving the rings from their families on the basketball court in front of a packed crowd at the Dawg House, wide smiles instantly lit up each players' face before heading back up to their seat in the bleachers to show it off to their friends and family.

"It feels so amazing to have it," senior and all-state lineman Beau Blake said. "All of our hard work paid off and now we get to look at this ring and remember all of the good times from this year."

And receiving the championship rings in front of their rival Buckaroo students and fans made the night even that much better.

"Get to rub it in their face a little bit," Blake joked. "Not too much, but just enough to make them mad."

## WRESTLING

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and I have a lot to lose because after this I'm not doing any spring sports ... so I had to leave it all on the mat."

Butler joins four other Cougars who will be making the trip to Portland on Feb. 16. Fellow senior Kyle Ranger, who made it to state in 2016 but was knocked out in the second round, will have one last chance to take the podium.

Ranger's fate would again come down to a bout against Mohammed, as the two met again in the third place match. He improved after their first showing and pinned Mohammed in 1:34.

The Cougars had three wrestlers make it to the finals, all guaranteed a spot at the state tournament. Senior Hayden Hilliard (132) and junior Mychael Pointer (145) finished in second place, and in one of the final matches of the day, senior Kenneth Bevan (195) earned Echo's only first place finish.

### Riverside Pirates

Andrew Barker, a senior in front of his home crowd, defeated Nyssa's Raul Ruiz 10-7 to earn his first ever district title.

Five other Riverside



Echo's Kenneth Bevan puts Irrigon's Brady Harrington into a cradle in the 195-pound match at the 3A district tournament.

STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

wrestlers will join Barker at state, starting with sophomore Fernando Ortega, who won the 106-pound district title by fall in 3:04 over Nyssa freshman Efrain Caldera. Joining them will be Abraham Silva (2nd place, 113), Christian Reyes (3rd, 132), Ethan Snyder (3rd, 138) and Ivan Salgado (2nd, 182).

"At the beginning of the year, I didn't know if we could get more than five (wrestlers to state), so getting six we overachieved," head coach Richard Rockwell said.

### Irrigon Knights

Irrigon brought 12 wrestlers to the district tournament, and all 12 placed in the top six of their respec-

tive weight class.

Seven Knights are going to state, including Alex Miranda-Walls. Juniors Silvestre Vasquez and Kyler Shelton were guaranteed the trip when they both made it into the 126-pound finals. Vasquez would go on to defeat his fellow Knight, and win the district title by an 11-2 major decision.

Shelton, along with Harrington — the Irrigon junior that was defeated by Bevan — and junior Kaleb Kendrick (285) each finished in second place.

Nyssa, the reigning district champions for the past three years, continued its reign by handily taking home the team district title with 270 points.

## GIRLS

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Then with three minutes left in the third, fellow senior Jodi Thomasian did a spin move around her Bulldog defender for a lay-in that put the Riverhawks within two possessions of their first lead of the night.

The Dalles wouldn't get that close to Hermiston again until two minutes into the fourth quarter. Another three, this time by junior Molly Taylor, put visitors within one point of Hermiston.

The narrow 37-36 lead was extended when the Bulldogs outscored the Riverhawks 7-2 over the next three minutes. But The Dalles weren't done yet.

With 2:14 left in the game, The Dalles would once again come close to finally topping Hermiston.

Sophomore Jazlyn Romero made a falling lay-in to put the Bulldogs up 46-41, but Thomasian answered with a layup of her own as she waited inside for a between-the-legs pass that put the Riverhawks back within one possession.

A solid defensive performance and four made free throws from Romero sealed the deal for Hermiston, but the win wasn't an easy one to come by.

Friday, the winter flu bug caught up with some players and regular starter, junior Maddi Wilson had to sit out. "Defensively, we had to change stuff up because Maddi Wilson wasn't playing," Rodriguez said.

# Hermiston boys suffer two tough losses in a row

By ALEXIS MANSANAREZ  
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston lost back-to-back games for the first time since early January last week, falling at home to Pendleton 51-44 on Wednesday and on the road to the Dalles 91-85 on Friday.

Against the Bucks, Hermiston held a 24-18 lead going into halftime.

Junior Ryne Andreason helped Hermiston extend its advantage by scoring 11 of his 15 points in the first half. He finished with a team-best performance, and was the only player on Hermiston's roster to reach double digits.

The Bucks' found a new focus in the second half and outscored the Bulldogs 15-4 in the third quarter.

Pendleton switched from zone to man defense, and forced Hermiston into some uncomfortable shots. The Bulldogs uncharacteristically missed threes and then struggled to stop the Bucks in transition, hurting their chances of handing Pendleton its first league loss since 2016.

"It's all about knowing who you're playing against and what their strengths are and taking them away," Pendleton head coach Kyle Tedder added.

Hermiston tried and succeeded in taking its lead back in the final five minutes of play. Sophomore Andrew Earl came off the bench a hit all three of his free throws after senior Shaw Jerome fouled him on an attempt behind the arc. The three-point play tied the score at 36-36.

A minute later, senior Andrew James knocked the team's first 3-pointer since the first quarter to put the Bulldogs up 39-38.

With 2:22 left in the



Hermiston's Ryne Andreason shoots the ball guarded by Pendleton's Richard Scott in the Bucks' 51-44 win against the Bulldogs on Tuesday in Pendleton.

STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

game, senior Cesar Ortiz — who is normally knocking down multiple threes a night — hit his lone bucket to again put Hermiston up by one, 42-41.

After Ortiz's three, Hermiston's next shot would come too late. The Bulldogs were down by seven points when junior Jordan Ramirez split defenders for a lay-in in the last four seconds of the game.

Hermiston hit the road just days later to face The Dalles, where again the Bulldogs held a halftime lead they would give up.

After the Riverhawks trailed for the first two

quarters, The Dalles put on an offensive show in the second half to defeat Hermiston 91-85.

The Riverhawks were led by Dakota Murr, who scored a game-best 28 points. Jacob Hernandez chipped in 18 and Josh Nisbet scored 17 of his own.

For the Bulldogs (7-11, 2-2), Cesar Ortiz had a team-high 27 points — knocking down half of the team's total 3-pointers (10) — and received help from Ryne Andreason (18 points) and Andrew James (13).

Hermiston hosted Hood River Valley on Tuesday. Results were unavailable at press time.

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