

Herald Sports

Follow sports on Twitter
@HHeraldSports

New-look Tigers win baseball opener

Stanfield beats White Salmon in five innings

By ERIC SINGER
STAFF WRITER

STANFIELD — Under a blue sky and a light breeze on a warm Monday afternoon, Stanfield/Echo junior Devan Craig put together a quiet performance in the batter's box. He finished the day 0-for-1 with one strikeout but reached base twice via a walk and a hit-by-pitch.

However, Craig's performance was still notable: it was the very first baseball game of his life. After participating in track and field as a sophomore, Craig decided to give baseball a try this spring and made his debut as Stanfield's starting right fielder Monday.

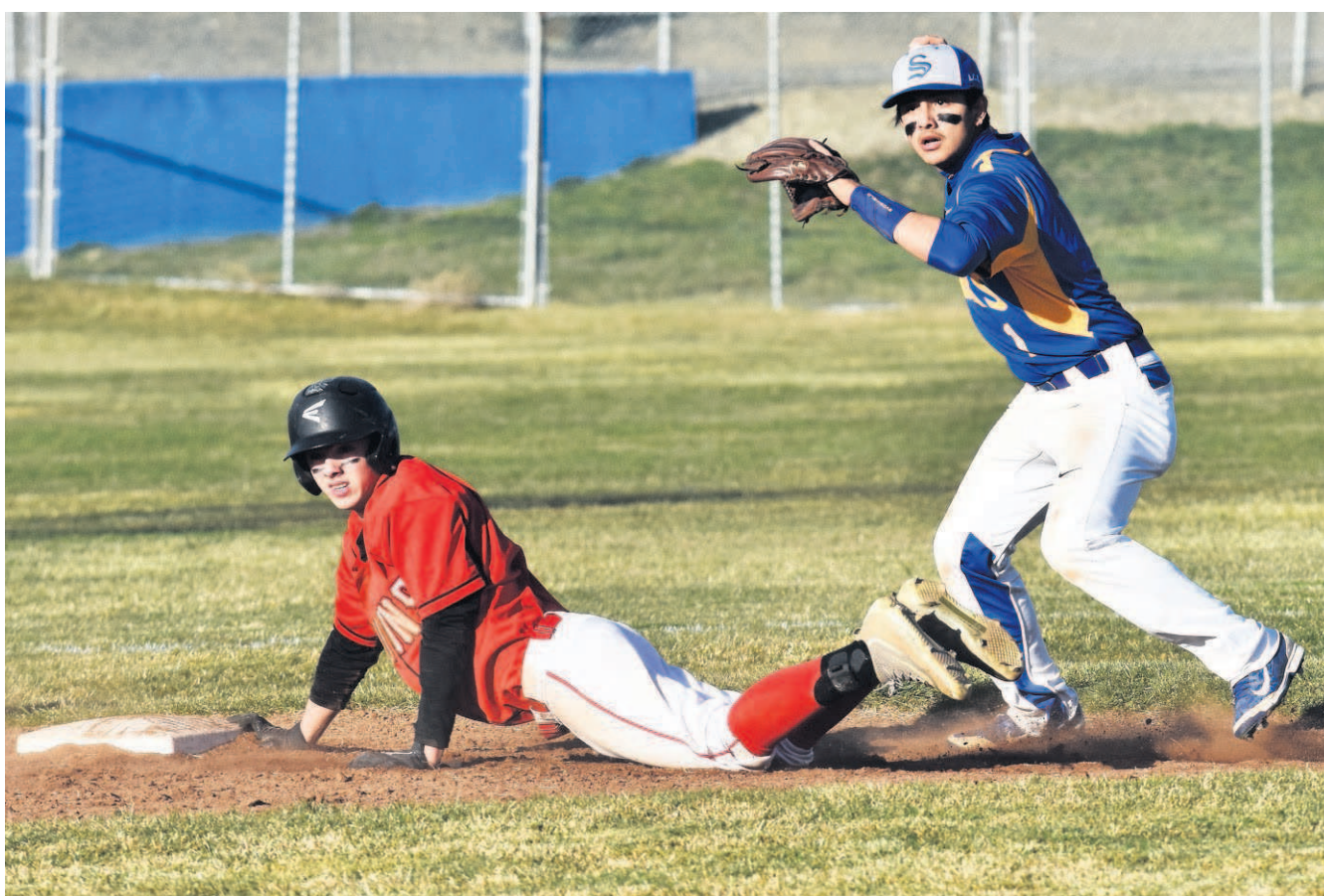
"I was really nervous in the beginning," Craig said, "but I got over it after that."

He was part of a new-look Stanfield lineup that saw six new starters from last year's opening day lineup. But even with the new faces, the Tigers brought home a familiar result as they defeated Columbia White Salmon 12-2 in five innings.

"It just feels great," Craig said of the victory. "We wanted it really bad."

Craig also made a pair of tough outs in right field during the game, making the correct reads on line drives — with the sun directly in his line of sight — which can be difficult plays, no matter the experience level.

"He's an athlete out there in right field," head coach Brad Rogers said of Craig. "He's been working really hard, our outfield coach (Scott) Morris has been



Stanfield's Damien Curiel looks to throw home after tagging White Salmon's Davis Koester out at second base in the Tigers' 21-2 win against the Bruins on Monday in Stanfield.

STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

working hard with him and we're really happy to get him."

Stanfield (1-0) scored all of their runs in the second and fifth innings, using a mix of patience at the plate and aggressiveness on the base paths. The Tigers had only four hits for the game, but worked 10 walks, four hit-by-pitches and stole six bases.

Eight of the 12 runs came in the second inning when the Tigers sent 14 batters to the plate and worked through three different Bruins pitchers. Justin Keeney gave the Tigers their first lead at 2-1 with an RBI single up the middle and TJ Smith made it a 5-1 game with a two-RBI single that skipped past the

third baseman. Later in the inning, Damien Curiel — who finished 2-for-2 with two runs, three RBI, three stolen bases and two walks — busted it open to a 7-1 lead when he flipped a single into shallow right-center field that brought in a pair of runs. Makiah Blankenship's sacrifice fly brought home Shayne Keltz to close the scoring in the inning.

After going down quietly in the third and fourth innings, the Tigers got some offense started again following an error on White Salmon to get Keeney on base. That brought up Brody Woods, Keltz and Curiel — all of whom worked walks to bring in one run and load

the bases with two outs with a 8-1 lead.

Blankenship appeared to end the inning with a grounder to shortstop, but the throw short-hopped the first baseman and allowed Woods to score and Keltz and Curiel, too, after the throw to home got by the catcher to seal the victory.

"This feels great," Rogers said of the victory. "I was just looking for us to come out and compete, and get better and have fun."

Stanfield's pitchers had a solid day's work on the mound, as Woods, Smith and Curiel combined to no-hit the Bruins.

Woods, Stanfield's lone returning pitcher with major varsity experience, got the

start and allowed one run, struck out four and walked three in two innings. He struggled to command his fastball in the first inning, walking the first three batters of the game to load the bases. However, he induced an easy groundout and notched two strikeouts with his curveball to escape with only one run allowed.

He came back in the second locked in, breezing through a 1-2-3 inning with two strikeouts and a flyout on only 15 pitches.

"He's got that toughness," Rogers said of Woods. "To be honest, we were going to tell him he was coming out after the first with 30-ish pitches, but he said 'I want to go another

UP NEXT

Stanfield travels north to take on Tri-Cities Prep for a doubleheader on Saturday beginning at 11 a.m.

Local slate

PREP BASEBALL

Friday
Heppner at Irrigon (DH), 11 a.m.
Umatilla at Portland Christian (DH), 3:30 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Riverside, 4 p.m.
Saturday
Stanfield at Tri-City Prep (WA) (DH), 11 a.m.
La Salle Prep at Hermiston, 12 p.m.

PREP SOFTBALL

Friday
Enterprise at Heppner (DH), 1 p.m.
Irrigon at Pendleton Freshmen (DH), 3 p.m.
Umatilla at Portland Christian (DH), 3:30 p.m.
Hermiston at St. Helens, 4 p.m.
Saturday
Tri-Cities Prep (WA) at Echo (DH), 11 a.m.
Hermiston at Hillsboro, 12 p.m.
Pendleton at St. Helens, 12 p.m.

PREP TRACK AND FIELD

Friday
Riverside at Ontario Icebreaker, 3:45 p.m.
Saturday
Irrigon at Richland Track and Field Jam-boree (WA), 11:30 a.m.

PREP TENNIS

Thursday
Umatilla vs. Weston-McEwen, 3 p.m.
Hermiston at Southridge (WA), 3:30 p.m.
Stanfield/Echo at Riverside, 4 p.m.

(inning). So we gave him another inning and he came back and proved himself.

"Kind of a slow start, but first game of the season, you're going to have some of that."

Aside from being the season opener of his second year as the varsity baseball coach at Stanfield, Monday's win also had a special meaning to Rogers on a personal level. Rogers is an alumnus of Columbia High School, and the current Bruins team featured several kids that are the children of Rogers' high school friends.

"That was pretty neat to see," Rogers said.

	CWS	SHS	101 00	080 04	R	H	E
WHITE SALMON	—	S. McMahon, J. Musgrove (2), D. Raether (2) and T. Webster.	2	0	5		
STANFIELD	—	B. Woods, T. Smith (3), D. Curiel (4) and A. Renner. W — B. Woods, L — S. McMahon.	12	4	3		

Mansanarez: All-Star Classic a taste of what's to come

KENNEWICK, Wash. — Add a 7-foot-3 senior, mix in 19 first-time all-conference selections and throw in a junior who is nearing 1,700 career points to get nearly four hours of some of the most entertaining basketball all season.

No, it was not a playoff game or a state championship nor was it a rivalry game that spans decades and decades. On Saturday, the best of the best from Yakima and Tri-Cities donned white and black uniforms and played alongside each other in the SWX Right Now All-Star Classic.

Marked as the inaugural event, Saturday's game at Kamiakin High School also starred some familiar faces. Both Maddy Juul and Ryne Andreason of Hermiston, and Pendleton's Kalan McGlothlin, made the 30-plus mile trip north. But for the Bulldogs, it was more than just a case to lace up their sneakers and take the court again.

Next year, Hermiston will be facing a new crop of competition when it moves to the WIAA and players from seven of the eight Mid-Columbia Conference schools were in attendance.

Within the 10-minute quarters, the local kids fared well. Juul notched two points, grabbed two rebounds and dished out one assist.

Juul shared time with two-time first team All-South Central Athletic Conference players in Ali Martineau and Aaliyah Anderson and 6-foot-4 senior Alicia Oatis of Kennewick, who is the No. 2 MCC scorer with 17.5 points per game.

While the seniors accounted for nearly half of the team's 91 total points — 44 points split between seven players including Juul and McGlothlin — and had impressive performances, it was this year's junior class that showed up and will give the Bulldogs some trouble next year in league play.

Take Kamiakin junior Oumou Toure. The 5-foot-11 guard is a two-time MCC Player of the Year and has scored 1,686 points in her high school career. On Saturday, she scored 14 points in almost 16 minutes of play.

Or Toure's teammate, Alexa Hazel. The fellow junior has netted over 1,000 points

herself and was selected to the first team All-MCC. The duo made big contributions to the Braves, who narrowly lost their quarterfinal matchup in the Class 3A state tournament.

Or Clare Eubanks, who has no immediate relation to Oregon State freshman Drew Eubanks. The two-time All-MCC selection averaged 10.9 points for Chiawana this season, which finished 19-5 overall and 13-1 in conference play to finish atop the MCC.

The talent of the handful of girls on the court Saturday is just a taste of what Hermiston will face. Moving from just a four-team conference where their only real competition was their cross-county rival, the Bulldogs will have their work cut out for them this offseason.

But it's not just the girls that will see a jump in the level of competition. On the boys side, Andreason shared the ball with guys who he'll have to battle against next year.

While still plenty of talented seniors graced the boys roster, again it was the junior class that shined.

Perhaps the most impressive was Chiawana's Matthew Kroner. He came to the All-Star Classic in a unique pair of shorts, gray and black camouflage, and had the most energy of any player despite telling other players how tired he was at each break.

Kroner only scored nine points in the game but during the season he averaged 13.4 points for the Hawks, who made it all the way to the quarterfinals of the Class 4A state tournament.

It's not just Kroner who Hermiston will have to look out for. Pasco's Diego Gutierrez, the team's top scorer and Taylor Hamada of Walla Walla that stands at 6-foot-3 are just a few other names that will start to sound familiar come next year.

While the Division I prospects of the senior class playing Saturday will grace televisions next year and the OSAA will be short two talented squads, watching the Bulldogs compete with higher caliber teams paired with a shorter travel time should make next season a fun one.



ALEXIS MANSANAREZ



PHOTO COURTESY OF AMANDA RAY/YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC

Action from the boys SWX Classic all-star game between teammates on the Tri-City team, including Hermiston's Ryne Andreason (1) and Chiawana's Matthew Kroner (12) at Kamiakin High School in Kennewick, Wash., on Saturday. Yakima defeated Tri-Cities, 131-106.