

Hermiston goes 2-1 in Week 2 of season

Bulldogs play Kamiakin, Lakeridge and Kennewick

By ALEXIS MANSANAREZ
STAFF WRITER

HERMISTON — If anyone would have checked the Hermiston baseball team's schedule early on the afternoon of March 20 and late into the evening, a matchup versus the Mid-Columbia Conference Kamiakin (WA) Braves did not yet exist.

In fact, head coach Kevin Moore found out about the game by way of a call from the athletic director at 1 p.m. Tuesday and later confirmed its existence during class when one of his players brought up the late addition to the schedule.

But Moore couldn't complain.

"I would rather play than practice," he said Wednesday.

In the Bulldogs' season opener last Saturday, Hermiston rallied and escaped with a 6-5 victory. This time, however, the Bulldogs were on the losing end of a one-run game falling 5-4 to Kamiakin at Armand Larive Middle School.

Kamiakin got out to a 5-0 lead in the top of the second, but Hermiston quickly answered to cut its deficit to 5-4 after three innings of play.

The Bulldogs didn't let the Braves add on to their lead thanks to the work of Wyatt Noland, who entered the game in the third and threw four shutout innings of relief. Noland allowed only one hit while striking out five and walking three. His performance was just one of the positives Moore takes away from Wednesday.



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston pitcher Caden Schwirse throws from the mound in the Bulldogs' 13-3 win against Lakeridge on Friday in Hermiston.

"We did a lot of good things today," Moore said despite the loss. "You take a look at the second inning, we gave up five but it could have been a lot worse."

Brylee Dufloth started on the mound for Hermiston and got out of trouble early in the first inning when Kamiakin's Payton Flynn hit a line drive to right field for the Braves' third out that left two runners stranded in scoring position.

Hermiston went 1-2-3 in the bottom of the inning to bring the middle of Kamiakin's lineup to the plate, and with it even runs to take a lead it would never relinquish.

The bases were loaded in

the second after two singles and a walk. With no outs on the board, Dufloth was in trouble and made his first mistake of the game.

A pitch hit Conner Banta and advanced all runners to give the Braves their first score. Another walk and another hit by pitch sent the Braves around the bases to take a 3-0 lead.

After Nolan Degarno hit an RBI single to add to Kamiakin's lead, Hermiston had a 5-2-3 double play to help stop the bleeding.

Before a fly out to center field to end the inning, Flynn hit a grounder that was bobbed giving Degarno enough time to score.

Despite letting five runs



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston's Joel Mendez steals second base as Lakeridge's Cameron Clayton waits for the ball in the Bulldogs' 13-3 win against the Braves on Friday in Hermiston.

go, Moore was pleased with the Bulldogs' efforts.

"I stress defensive situations in practice and guess what? Fly ball we communicate and ground ball we get a double play and we're out of the inning," he said.

It wouldn't take long for Hermiston to add runs of its own.

A walk with the bases loaded in the bottom of the second finally put the Bulldogs on the board, and three more in the third gave Hermiston a chance at another comeback win.

Daniel Gossler, Trevor Wagner and Dustin Maddox all contributed — Gossler and Maddox each with an RBI single and Wagner with an RBI double.

"It was a team effort to come back," Moore said. "We did a lot of good things, but again we just need that one hit to break the game open and we almost had it."

In the sixth inning, Hermiston's Caden Schwirse stepped up to the plate. Schwirse was responsible for a two-run RBI single in Saturday's win and was close to another with runners on first and second. But Schwirse's line drive went straight to the left fielder to

end the inning.

In Wednesday's game, the Bulldogs fell behind early and needed a comeback to win but instead fell just short.

"One thing I stressed was to not dig ourselves into a hole like we have the last couple of games," Moore said.

On Friday afternoon's non-league game against Lakeridge, Hermiston made sure it wouldn't need to orchestrate a comeback to earn a victory, scoring 13 runs in the first two innings for an easy 13-3 victory.

Along with the runs, the Bulldogs had the benefit of a terrific outing from starting pitcher Schwirse. The senior right-hander gave up just six hits and three runs in five innings with two strikeouts and one walk.

"Caden pitched to contact and positive things happened," Moore said.

Noland led the Bulldogs' offense by going 2-for-4 with one run and one RBI. Joey Gutierrez also had a strong game going 1-for-3 with one run and two RBI, while Joel Mendez scored three runs and Landon Jones scored twice.

Noland tied the game at

1-1 in the first inning with an RBI single to right and the Bulldogs took the lead when Tolan and Noland scored on a Lakeridge error.

One day removed from its 13-3 victory over Lakeridge, Hermiston went right back to work on Saturday, and this time in better conditions.

Under the afternoon sun at Armand Larive Middle School, the Bulldogs held their own against a tough opponent in the Kennewick Lions, but came up short in a 8-2 Lions' victory.

"Kennewick capitalized on our errors," Moore said of the loss. "When a team gives you outs, you better take advantage of it and unfortunately that's what happened to us."

After a scoreless opening inning for both teams, the Braves (5-1) got out to an early lead in the second when Kaleb Stevenson's hit grounded out for the team's second out but not before Easton Stevens scored for the 1-0 advantage.

The Bulldogs (2-2) answered with two runs of their own, a RBI single off the bat of Dufloth and a sacrifice fly from Jordan Ramirez to bring home Schwirse. However, Kennewick struck for two more runs in the fourth and added five more runs over the final two frames to keep the Bulldogs away.

Noland, Gossler and Dufloth all fared well at the plate despite Hermiston's loss. All three batters went 2-for-3 and each notched at least one single. Lukas Tolan was given the loss after going four innings allowing three runs on seven hits with a long strike out and one walk.

The Bulldogs will return to the diamond Thursday in the Volcano Stadium Tourney at Salem-Keizer Volcano Stadium.

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