

Challenge of Champions brings bull riding to Hermiston

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
STAFF WRITER

It was hard to tell if the bulls or vice versa Saturday night, as the bovine competitors won the night at the Coastal Farm & Ranch Challenge of Champions Tour stop in Hermiston.

The event featured 35 professional bull riders, a junior event and two demonstrations of traditional Mexican Charreada bull riding in honor of Cinco de Mayo.

Jason Mattox, a former PCRB and PCA bull rider and the founder of the Challenge of Champions, said Saturday's event, held in the new arena at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center, drew from six different stock contractors, who each sent a selection of their best bulls. Unlike most rodeos, cowboys got to select the bull they wanted to ride instead of choosing via random draw.

Some cowboys may have regretted their draw, as only a handful of them managed



STAFF PHOTO BY JADE MCDOWELL

Justin Houston completes one of the only successful rides of the night at the Hermiston stop of the Challenge of Champions tour at EOTEC on Saturday.

to stay on their animal for the requisite eight seconds. The first of the night to do so was Jason Houston, who hung on for an 85-point ride on Lone Wolf of 2 Bucks Rodeo Co.

Houston ended in second place for the night, behind Jordan Sammons, who scored 87 points atop Electric Avenue of 2 Bucks

Rodeo Co., and in front of Zeb Lanham, who scored 80 points on Cowboy from Crozier Bucking Bulls.

On the junior side, which used smaller bulls, first place went to Dakota Briggs with 72 points, followed by Lane Vaughan with 71 points and Cauy Jackson with 65 points.

"The Challenge of Cham-

pions Tour is always about the youth," announcer Al Parsons told the audience Saturday. "You've got to build them while they're young."

Briggs's win was especially impressive, considering it was his first public ride since the 16-year-old aspiring bull rider from Days Creek was hospitalized with burns over 70 percent of his body following an accident last year.

"This guy's a stud," Parsons said, calling his comeback "absolutely amazing" after doctors weren't even sure he would live.

Mattox said he started the tour in 2009 after retiring and it has grown into an 18-stop tour around the Pacific Northwest. The invitation-only event gives cowboys a challenge in the off-season and gives up-and-coming junior bull riders a chance to shine.

"It's a very family-oriented show," Mattox said. "It's targeted to families. We want them to all come out together."

Butte Challenge: Get ready, get set ... go

Area runners and walkers are challenged to help support the Hermiston High School cross country team.

In its 19th year, the Butte Challenge (which doesn't involve running up the Hermiston Butte) is Saturday at 8:30 a.m. at Butte Park, 1245 N.W. Seventh St. Bib pick-up and race day registration begins at 7:30 a.m. The event features a 5K run, 5K walk and a 10K run. Awards, which includes medals for overall winners in each event, will be presented

at 10 a.m. In addition, age group winners will receive a ribbon and one item from the Runner's Soul. Door prize drawings will be held at 10:30 a.m.

The cost to pre-register is \$20 or a family rate of \$75 (for up to eight people). Race day registration is \$25 per person.

"It's the biggest fundraiser for the cross country team," said Jeanne Jewett, *Hermiston Herald*/East Oregonian multi-media consultant.

Jewett, who has been

involved with organizing the event since its inception, took the reins in 2005. It brings in several thousand dollars each year, she said.

Initially, the Butte Challenge donated proceeds to various nonprofit organizations. Jewett said when Jake Puzey returned to his alma mater as the cross country coach, he inquired about partnering for the event to become a fundraiser for the team.

With Puzey on board, Jewett said he organized

chip-timing and course markings. When Puzey left the position, Troy Blackburn, a Stanfield High School graduate, was hired as the cross country coach and has continued working on the Butte Challenge.

"It's a great family event," Jewett said. "Also, we have fabulous drawing afterwards. We have such generous participation from local businesses."

For more information or to register, visit www.buttechallenge.com.

PREP ROUNDUP

Hermiston drops pitchers' duel heading into final week

HERMISTON HERALD

HOOD RIVER — It was a pitchers' duel Friday in Hood River, as the Hermiston Bulldogs and the Hood River Valley Eagles went scoreless throughout five innings of play. Ultimately it was the Eagles that came out on top 1-0 after a lone run in the sixth topped the struggling Bulldogs, who are playing their last two games of the regular season Tuesday and Friday.

Hermiston's Lukas Tolan and Hood River's Greyson Losee each spent the entire game toeing the rubber. Tolan surrendered three hits and the only run while striking out three and walking three. Losee recorded 10 strikeouts while walking two batters and only giving up two hits.

Isaac Beamam scored for the Eagles (13-10 overall, 7-3 Columbia River Conference) and for the Bulldogs (7-15, 3-7), only Wyatt Noland and Landon Jones recorded hits.

Results from Hermiston's trip to The Dalles on Tuesday were not available by press time, but the Bulldogs will return to the field at Armand Larive Middle School for Senior Night on Friday. The first pitch against Pendleton is slated for 4:30 p.m.

Hermiston softball falls hard in Hood River

On Friday, the Hermiston Bulldogs were handed

an 11-1 road loss when they traveled to Hood River. As all four Columbia River Conference teams face each other one last time to finish out the regular season, the Eagles' latest victory over the Bulldogs (13-9 overall, 4-6 CRC) gave them the season series. The Eagles (18-4, 6-4) have now won four straight while the Bulldogs' losing skid moves to two consecutive games.

The Bulldogs also hit the road again Tuesday (results of the matchup against The Dalles were not available at press time) but will return to Rocky Heights Elementary on Friday for their final regular season home game.

Hermiston's Grace Blackhurst secure spots at districts

Grace Blackhurst will be the only Hermiston Bulldog competing at state golf as she clinched an individual spot with a ninth place at the 5A Special District 2 tournament at Sunriver Resort.

The senior shot an 88-96—184 and finished five strokes up on 10th place. The Bulldogs that missed the cut were Sonja Peterson (112-103—215), Madison McClanahan (108-108—216), Leslie Browning (115-105—220) and Mykah Krumwiede (105-122—227).

The OSAA 5A State Championships will be held on May 14-15 at Trysting Tree Golf Club in Corvallis.

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