

# Dawgs win districts, on to state meet

11 athletes, four relay teams will compete at historic Hayward Field for last time

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STAFF WRITER

HERMISTON — When Hermiston senior AJ Fernandez walked toward his parents in the bleachers along the shot put pit at Hermiston High on Wednesday, he was very clear on how he wanted to finish his heat at the Columbia River Conference Track and Field District Championships.

“I want 50,” he said.

In his first attempt in the finals Fernandez nearly hit the mark, recording 49 feet even. After throwing everywhere from 45 feet 7 inches to 48 feet 10 inches on his next three attempts, the fifth time was the charm.

Fernandez secured first place with a throw of 50 feet 7 inches and a sweep of the shot put and discus throw. CRC’s newest champion knew he secured the title before the shot hit the dirt.

“As soon as I threw it — I watched that line every day at practice so I try and hit it every day, but finally hitting it was not as good as a state championship but still pretty good,” Fernandez said.

Earlier in the discus throw, Fernandez threw 140 feet 6 inches on his second attempt, and matched it on his sixth and final attempt, to claim the top spot to defend his district title.

“Considering it’s my senior year and that I have improved a lot since last year, I’m really happy with it (my season),” he added.

Joining Fernandez at state after the first of the two-day meet will be Jackson Morgan and Jazlyn Romero. Morgan won the boys high jump district title after clearing 6 feet 2 inches to edge out some tough competition from The Dalles and Pendleton. Romero was also challenged in the girls javelin throw as she battled a Buckaroo, Emanuela Casadei, to see who could come away with the title.

“Well, coming in I knew she was the one I needed to beat,” Romero said, “and my PR was like nine feet below hers and I was like, ‘I got to throw big today.’”

Casadei and Romero went throw-for-throw but it was Romero who first distanced herself from the competition by recording 135 feet 5 inches on her first attempt. Casadei answered with the javelin landing just a few feet in front of Romero’s mark. The Buck followed that up with a huge throw of 143 feet 3 inches, which meant Romero had to come up with a big number to try to move into first place.

“Honestly, I wasn’t sure if I was going to throw big like this today,” Romero said. “I knew I was already throwing big for where I’m at and I threw 140 and I was like, ‘Okay, I have another one coming I can feel it,’ and then I threw the 142 and I saw where it landed and thought, that’s pretty far.”

Romero’s best of 142 feet 10 inches wasn’t enough to claim a district title, but it earned her a state berth.

On the second and final day of the Columbia River Conference Track and Field District Championships, a brief spout of rain drenched Kennison Field.

The short storm came around 5 p.m. when the track events were starting and several field events were taking place.

First up was the girls 4x100-meter relay. Members of Hermiston’s team each settled into their spots and with Scout Reagan at anchor, the cold weather drew some concern.

“Cold weather has always been a terrible thing for me,” she said.

So, Reagan turned toward the fence and saw head coach Emilee Strot, who had an important message for the Bulldogs’ top sprinter.

“As soon as I looked at coach Strot she goes, ‘We train for this, Scout, you just remember, you know what you’re doing,’ and I looked at her and I was like, ‘Oh yeah, okay. Who cares about the rain, let’s get after it,’” Reagan added.

She went on to lead the relay team to a first place finish (50.63) and also pitched in to the girl’s team title with two more top finishes in the 100-meter dash (12.55) and the 200 meters (25.61).

It’s the third consecutive year the Hermiston girls have won the district championship.



Hermiston's Elsa Torres punches her ticket to state in the 400-yard dash during the CRC Track and Field Championships at Kennison Field with a time of 1:01.46 minutes.

STAFF PHOTOS BY KATHY ANEY



Hermiston's Tyler Rohrman races in the 110-meter high hurdles at the CRC Track and Field Championships at Kennison Field. Rohrman posted the winning time of 14.28 seconds.



Hermiston's Isaac Sanchez leads the 800 during the CRC Track and Field Championships at Kennison Field. Sanchez won the race with a time of 1:58.36 minutes.



AJ Fernandez of Hermiston won both the discus and shot put Wednesday at the CRC District Track and Field Championships in Hermiston.

“They deserved that, we’ve had some huge performances,” Strot said. “Our girls just put in the work continually and stepped up.”

On the track, Elsa Torres earned the district title in the 400-meter dash after clocking 1:01.46. The 4x400-meter relay team handily took first place (4:14.68) with Reagan, Torres, Amanda Nygard and Madi Wilson all contributing.

Wilson, who was named Female Track Athlete of the Year, swept the field in the hurdle events. First, in the 100-meter hurdles her time of 14.73 was a new meet record and just an hour later she turned around to finish the 300-meter hurdles in 48.17 — over a second faster than the rest of the field.

“It was hard coming back from that 100,” Wilson said. “It was

good. Out of the blocks I felt good, the wind was very hard against my head, so it was a hard head wind but it was all God’s strength — it was just him. That turn was great and that last stretch was just giving it 100 percent.”

There was another Bulldog sweep in the field events after Stephanie Mears won both the shot put (41-5) and discus throw (116-11) to round out the top performances on the girls squad.

For the Hermiston boys, who took second overall with 69 points, their top finishers were the usual suspects.

Tyler Rohrman swept the 110-meter and 300-meter hurdles and Isaac Sanchez won the 800-meter race. The 4x100-meter relay team was close to a top finish but when

Jonathan Hinkle pulled up with an injury at the end of his leg, the Bulldogs weren’t able to make up the time.

They finished in second place (44.44) to still qualify for state, and had to quickly make adjustments for the 4x400-meter relay that closed out the meet.

“We called a kid up, had him step up and we knew it was going to be tight against us and The Dalles and Hood River,” Strot said. “(Guioner) Garay stepped up huge for us today and to get out on something like that for the boys to qualify for state is such a high note.”

For the members of the team, there were no nerves with Garay stepping in for Hinkle.

“We had talked about this,”

Rohrman said. “I wasn’t too worried. I felt confident that we would get second. I didn’t think it would be as close as it was but we still go it done. I see Garay, he puts in work every day.”

Garay wasn’t the only Bulldog to come out of the woodwork. The lone Hermiston title in field events went to Carson Wrathall in the pole vault. Wrathall cleared a new personal best, 13 feet 2 inches, to distance himself from the field.

A number of Pendleton athletes also earned state berths Thursday. For the boys, Lane Maher finished second in the 300-meter hurdles (40.98) for the final qualifying spot and Edwin Linares will now be competing in multiple events at state after leaping to second in the triple jump (42-3.50).

On the girls team, the 4x100-meter relay team placed behind Hermiston in 52.23 seconds to punch their ticket to state. Hunter Kiele finished second in the discus throw recording a whopping 155 feet and again Emanuela Casadei added to her state schedule by recording a jump of 33 feet 7.50 inches in the triple jump. Casadei finished second after narrowly beating Hermiston’s Mckayla Pacheco by half an inch.

The athletes will be one of the last Bulldog teams to close out the final year in the OSAA, and it will be the last time Hermiston will compete at the historic Hayward Field at the University of Oregon. Competition will begin Friday for Hermiston, with finals in various field events including the girls javelin throw — which will feature Romero — and the boys discus and shot put, which Fernandez will be competing in.

On Saturday, all track athletes will compete in the finals if they are able to qualify after Day 1 and Mears, Morgan and Wrathall will wrap up competition in their respective field events.