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HERMISTON GEARS UP FOR

NATIONALS

Three-time trap shooting state champions now set sights on national title

By **ALEXIS MANSANAREZ**
STAFF WRITER

HERMISTON — There's a lot that stands out when it comes to Hermiston's Thomas Mabbot. He stands a few inches taller than his trap shooting teammates, his curly red hair can barely be contained under a hat with the well-known 'H' on the front and according to him, he competes in one of the most unique sports open to high schoolers.

"It's truly unique," Mabbot said when asked to try and explain it to those who aren't familiar.

Soon at the Hermiston Gun Club, Mabbot was joined by five other teammates, all of whom will be making this trip to the first-ever trap shooting national championships. The USA High School Clay Target League will bring together over 2,000 student athletes to compete for the sport's highest honor. It's been four years in the making, but the growth of the trapshooting isn't a surprise to Hermiston's shooters, who have seen their league grow since its start three years ago.

One of the biggest reasons for trap shooting's growth is its accessibility to both boys and girls as well as young adults with disabilities.

As the six teenagers are sprawled across a bench with trap houses evenly tucked away in the gravel behind them, they echo that very message.

"It's not hard to get into and there's lots of people to help you," one said across the table.

"Anyone can do it," another added.

"Even if you've never shot a gun before," Mabbot said, "you can come out and start trap shooting. It's not a hard sport to get into."

While some on Hermiston's team have been shooting longer than others, Mabbot picked up the sport in seventh grade and willfully admitted that up until this year, he wasn't good.

"I used to be terrible at it, and I guess this year I got



STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

The six members of the Hermiston trap shooting team that are going to the national championships pose in front of the Hermiston Gun Club. Left to right: Tyson Stocker, Case Hiatt, Thomas Mabbott, Kaden Smith, Trevor Wilson and Blake Betz.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JOHN ADAMS

Hermiston's Thomas Mabbott (right) and Mitchell Pimentel (left) show off their individual medals after claiming second and third place.

good," he said. "I used to think it was all about shooting, but it's all mental. That's the hardest part, you just have to get your brain right."

This season, Mabbot's brain and shot are right on

target as he had the best finish in the state tournament this past weekend. Mabbot led Hermiston to its third-consecutive state title with a second-place finish (99 points). He claimed the

No. 2 spot after a tie-breaking reverse run with Newberg's Ryan Kramer.

"It was some of the best I ever shot," Mabbot said. "I was really happy with it. I don't even know what else to say, it was really fun."

Also pitching into the three-peat was Mitchell Pimentel, who placed third (98); Tyler Pearson, who finished tied for seventh place (97); and Kaden Smith, who also finished in a three-way tie for 10th place (96). Cole Smith, Tyson Stocker and Chase Smith all tied for 13th place (95) with other athletes from Arlington, Madras, Mountain View and Estacada.

Hermiston has continued to dominated in a league that went from three teams in its first year to now nearly 25 teams across Oregon state. The team's lasting success is in part due to the knowledge of the coaching staff including head coach and long-time trap shooter, John Adams, and also their efforts both during the season and in their free time.

"Our coaches, a lot of us

have shot a long time and just a lot of practice," Mabbot attributed as the keys to Hermiston's success. "Right now, we're ranked third in the nation for high school teams and not a lot of people realize how many teams there are. There's 8,000 kids alone in Minnesota that shoot so there's a lot of teams."

Before the team had only one goal: a state title. Since successfully defending that title three times, Hermiston has set its sights on a national championship. One that is in reach for the six-person squad making the trip. With averages ranging from 23.7 to 24.7 — Mabbot again leading the group — Hermiston is in a good position to take home a national title.

"Last year I would have been really nervous," Mabbot said. "Maybe for some other people too, but this year I'm not. I know if I stick to my routine I'll be fine."

Nationals will take place July 12-15 at the MTA Homegrounds in Mason Michigan.

Riverside's Wightman earns district POY

HERMISTON HERALD

Riverside senior pitcher Skylar Wightman earned the 3A Special District 1 Player of the Year this season as she pitched and helped her Pirates hit their way into a second place finish and a spot in the state playoffs.

Wightman finished with a 2.60 earned-run average in 76 innings in district play, registering 135 strikeouts — a ratio of 12.4 strikeouts per seven innings — to just 12 walks. She also handled the bat well, hitting for a .564 average with a home run, six doubles and 20 RBI while also drawing 17 walks.

Echo/Stanfield head coach Bryan Bailey earned district coach of the year honors after leading the Cougars to the regular season and district titles.

Along with Wightman on the all-district first team was pitcher Alyssa Ray from Echo/Stanfield, catcher Alex Putman from Echo/Stan-

field, infielders Jordany Lambert (Weston-McEwen), Bailey Botefuhr (Irrigon), Michelle Weems (Echo/Stanfield), and Kendra Hart (Echo/Stanfield), outfielders Lauryn Journot (Umatilla), Marti Huff (Echo/Stanfield), Amber Weems (Echo/Stanfield), and utility players Charmayne Bennett (Weston-McEwen) and Alex Ford (Umatilla).

Seven of those players also earned spots on the Class 3A all-state team, voted on by the classification's coaches. Wightman was a first team selection at pitcher, while Hart (.500 avg., 20 XBH, 29 RBI, 51 runs), Lambert (.562 avg., 6 HR, 32 RBI, 31 runs) and Weems (.485 avg., 2 HR, 35 RBI, 38 runs) were second team selections. Ray, Putman and Botefuhr rounded out the teams on as honorable mentions.

Also representing Eastern Oregon on the teams were Grant Union's Bri-

anna Zweygardt (first team catcher), Mariah Moulton (second team pitcher/infield), Cody Jo Madden (HM pitcher), and Enterprise/Joseph/Wallowa's Madison Plew (HM infield).

ALL-SPECIAL DISTRICT 1 SOFTBALL

Player of the Year — Skylar Wightman, Riverside, sr.
Coach of the Year — Bryan Bailey, Echo/Stanfield

FIRST TEAM
Pitcher — Skylar Wightman, Riverside, sr.; Alyssa Ray, Echo/Stanfield, sr.
Catcher — Alex Putman, Echo/Stanfield, jr.

Infield — Jordyn Lambert, Weston-McEwen, jr.; Bailey Botefuhr, Irrigon, soph.; Michelle Weems, Echo/Stanfield, jr.; Kendra Hart, Echo/Stanfield, soph.

Outfield — Lauryn Journot, Umatilla, sr.; Marti Huff, Echo/Stanfield, sr.; Amber Weems, Echo/Stanfield, soph.

Utility — Charmayne Bennett, Weston-McEwen, sr.; Alex Ford, Umatilla, jr.

SECOND TEAM
Pitcher — Kendra Hart, Echo/Stanfield, soph.; Mya Chapman, Irrigon, sr.
Catcher — Amie Coffman, Weston-McEwen, sr.

Infield — Jada Burns, Irrigon, sr.; Monique Montoya, Echo/Stanfield, sr.; Karizima Luna, Irrigon, jr.; Charlene Alvarez, Umatilla, jr.

Outfield — Megan Hegar, Riverside, soph.; Whitney Roggerio, Weston-McEwen, sr.; McKenna Collins, Irrigon, fr.

Utility — Lily Rockwell, Riverside, soph.; Railyn Elliott, Riverside, jr.

HONORABLE MENTION
C Abby Hernandez, Riverside, sr.; IF JoJo Hernandez, Riverside, fr.; IF Tyree Burke, Weston-McEwen, jr.; UT Annalee Barnes, Echo/Stanfield, sr.



PHOTO COURTESY OF JORDAN MITTELSDORF

Riverside senior Skylar Wightman delivers a pitch during a game in the 2018 season. Wightman was the 3A Special District 1 Player of the Year and a all-state first team selection this spring.