

Hermiston trapshooting finishes 7th in nation

Bulldog trapshooting competes well on national stage

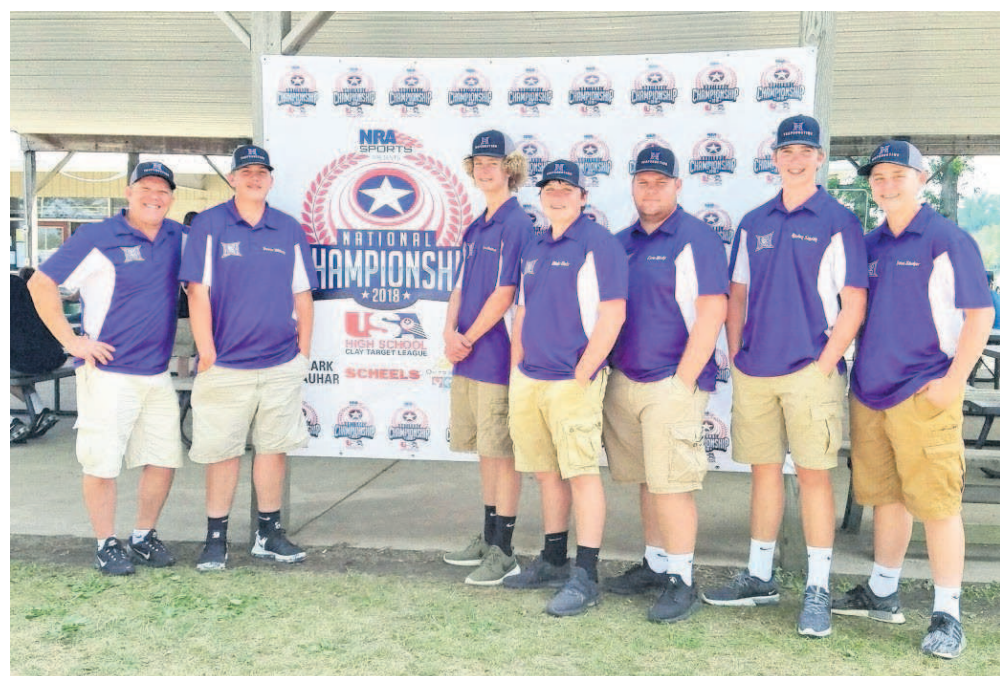
By **ERIC SINGER**
STAFF WRITER

Before Hermiston High School's trapshooting team departed for the USA High School Clay Target League National Championships in Michigan last week, Hermiston coach Slade Smith told himself that if Hermiston came home with a top 10 team finish "it would be something to be proud of and something to build on."

This is only the third year that Hermiston has been competing in the High School Clay Target League, and when it entered the first-ever USA National Championships in Mason, Michigan, the team knew it would face some tough competition from powerhouse schools in states such as Minnesota, Michigan and Wisconsin that have been competing in the Clay Target League for a decade.

Well, Hermiston in fact did come home proud.

After a No. 1 finish out of 180 schools in the team qualifying round on Friday with 484 points, Hermiston's five-man team of Thomas Mabbott, Case Hiatt, Blake Betz, Kaden Smith and Tyson Stocker slid down the standings a bit in the finals on Sunday as they shot 461 points to finish with a two-day score of 945, enough to stay in the top 10 to finish in seventh place.



The Hermiston High School trapshooting team wrapped up a seventh place finish at the USA High School Clay Target League National Championships in Mason, Michigan, over the weekend. Pictured, left to right: Coach Slade Smith, Trevor Wilson, Thomas Mabbott, Blake Betz, Case Hiatt, Kaden Smith, Tyson Stocker.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SLADE SMITH

Smith said that while he did believe some pressure did get to some Hermiston competitors on Sunday, he believes the difference

just came down to other schools shooting their best and Hermiston just couldn't quite replicate what it did on Friday.

"Our kids being on top of the leaderboard going into the finals should be an indicator of how outstanding they really did," Smith said. "The first-ever team event in the history of a high school national championship was won by HHS and nobody can ever take that away from our kids, our

community and our state.

"We did not do terrible in the championship round. Others did great and we did not do our best. It happens in trapshooting and the mental part of the sport is the last piece of the puzzle to a national title."

St. Michael-Albertville High School in Minnesota won the team championship with a two-day score of 968 followed by Delano (Minnesota) with 959, New Prague (Minnesota) with 956, Fen-

ton (Michigan) with 951, St. Peter (Minnesota) with 951, Chapparral (Kansas) with 950 and Hermiston.

"The Midwest put a lot of resources into their trap teams," Smith said, "and we are just beginning."

Mabbott, Hiatt, Betz and Stocker also made it through Saturday's individual qualifying round to join the top 400 competitors to go for a national championship on Sunday. Hiatt shot 98 targets and his reverse run tie-break placed him in 36th, while Mabbott (97) ended in 61st, Stocker (90) ended in 299th, and Betz (91) in 323rd.

But the weekend showed just how fine the championship line is in trapshooting, as Hermiston found out, as well as the level of competition there is in the country. Missing just two or three targets doesn't seem like a lot, but it can be the difference between winning a championship or finishing in 61st place.

"We expected big scores," Smith said. "I was very confident that it was going to take a perfect 200 to win the individual. ... Our kids broke several 98/100 this week and all of them broke big scores during the week. It is the mental part of the game we need to work on in order to be consistently 98 or better."

"The top 400 cutoff was 195/200. That is very impressive."

But even though Hermiston comes home without a championship trophy, the team does bring back a lot of pride, confidence and a list of things to improve upon for next time. Though being able to call Hermiston home to the No. 7 high school trapshooting team in the United States is still a tremendous accomplishment.

"The community should be proud of these boys," Smith said. "And our goal is to build community support and create opportunities for more of our youth."

Columbia Juniors represent at regionals

HERMISTON HERALD

It's been an "an emotional roller-coaster" for the Columbia Little League Junior team, in the words of head coach Travis Reeser.

The team had just finished a doubleheader with Warm Springs, which took the state championship with a 7-4 victory over Columbia on July 5.

Reeser, the team and parents who all made the trip to Clackamas were gathered around the bus loading up their gear and celebrating their efforts. Reeser was expressing how proud he was of the team's efforts despite coming up a few runs short when the tournament director approached him with news that would extend Columbia's season.

Warm Springs handed back the banner and accolades because it would not be able to travel to the regional tournament in Arizona. Instead, it would be Columbia, who were then named the new state champions.

"It was an emotional roller-coaster," Reeser said. "We went from sitting there talking about what they had accomplished to pulling all the parents together to talk about the situation and the trip to Arizona."

In Arizona, Flagstaff (Arizona) Little League's Jordan Wright hit a walk-off two-run single to lift Flagstaff over the Columbia (Juniors 12-11 at the Western Regional on Monday.

Columbia scored five runs in the top of the first inning and led 11-7 after five innings, but Flagstaff's offense was just too much for Columbia's pitching and defense as it scored five runs in the final two innings



Columbia Juniors player Taylor Longhorn fields a ball during the 2018 District 3 championship game in Pilot Rock in June. Longhorn and her Columbia teammates went to Arizona for the Little League Juniors regional tournament.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JENNIFER BROWN

to steal the win.

Zuri Reeser was Columbia's top hitter in the game, going 3-for-4 with a double, two runs and an RBI, while Taylor Longhorn was 2-for-4 with a run and an RBI. Zoe Ramos and Courtney Gregerson each had one hit and two runs scored, while Myla McAdams, Alexis Shelby, Jennifer Flores and Rheanna Rivera each had one hit. Ramos and Reeser both pitched in the game.

The loss wrapped up Columbia's stay at the regional, after it previously lost to Yuba City (California) 12-7 and Tucson (Arizona) 9-2 on Saturday.

The trip to Arizona wasn't cheap, but last week \$20,000 had been raised

and donations were still coming.

"I'm at a loss for words just regarding the generosity and support," team mom Daena Gaines said, "not just from the towns these girls came from, but we got donations from Pendleton businesses, even a family member of one of the girls that lives in Colorado."

"It was a frenzy but everyone kind of kicked it into gear."



COURTESY OF JENNIFER BROWN
Columbia Juniors' Taylor Longhorn at the plate.

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