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'WE CAN'T GET ENOUGH'

More than 150 teams compete in Hermiston's Takin' It To The Streets

By **BRETT KANE**
STAFF WRITER

The only thing burning hotter than the sun over downtown Hermiston over the weekend was the passion for basketball.

More than 150 teams from across the Pacific Northwest competed from sunrise to sunset in 90-degrees-and-sunny temperatures in the city's annual 3-on-3 basketball tournament, known as Takin' It to the Streets. This year marked the 14th year that Hermiston's Main Street has hosted the competition, where teams compete against one another in 20 different brackets depending on age and skill level, and winners are awarded with assorted athletic gear.

Funds raised over the course of the weekend are then used to support Hermiston High School's basketball programs.

"We had teams come from all over the region this year," said tournament organizer Juan Rodriguez. "Some came from as far as Portland, Spokane, and even Boise."

Rodriguez, also in the midst of his third year as Hermiston High School's varsity girls head coach, says that basketball is part of the community.

"We keep this tournament going because we love the game," he said.

And judging by the turnout, he's right. Main Street was packed day in and day out with players and their fans, friends and family.

Ages of the athletes ranged from adults and all the way down to the second grade, and even included players from Hermiston High, hoping to keep their skills in tune during the offseason.

Xavier Rambo, a 2017 Hermiston boys basketball alumnus,



Players battle for the ball Saturday during the Takin' it to the Streets 3-on-3 basketball tournament.

has been Takin' It to the Streets every summer since he was in elementary school.

"It's tradition," he said. "You get the same squad together every year and you get to play basketball with your best friends."

Rambo's team, Purosho, could be spotted sporting custom grey jerseys with the team's logo printed on it. Purosho ended

up taking home the championship titles for both the 12th Grade Boys and Men's 6-foot-and-under divisions.

"We'll be back next year," he said. "There ain't no stopping us now."

Perhaps the most heated of games came in the Men's Open championship rounds on Sunday.

The division is often comprised of former high school and

college athletes, all of whom bring their burning competitive spirits to the courts.

The division title was ultimately claimed by Fox Harvesting after an intense 30-minute game and a close score of 15-13.

"We've done this every year since it started," said Brad Irwin of Fox Harvesting.

Irwin, 27, along with teammates J.J. Ross and Luis and Alex



STAFF PHOTO BY KATHY ANEY

Trae Garcia, of the TCB team, concentrates as he takes a free throw Saturday during Takin' it to the Streets. For more photos from the event, see A15.

CHAMPIONS

- Second/Third Grade Boys: 509 Ballerz 3B
- Fourth Grade Boys: Hermiston Savage
- Fifth Grade Boys: Defenders
- Sixth Grade Boys: Hustle Hoops
- Seventh Grade Boys: The Nicks
- Eighth Grade Boys: Natural Born Ballers
- Ninth Grade Boys: Excelerators
- 10th/11th Grade Boys: \$KEETERZ
- 12th Grade Boys: Purosho
- Third/Fourth Grade Girls: Baby Braves
- Fifth Grade Girls: Lower Valley Ladies
- Sixth Grade Girls: Prosser Elite
- Seventh Grade Girls: Fast and Furious
- High School Girls: 509 Ballers
- Adult Co-Ed: LOB
- Men's 6U Rec #1: Killer 3's
- Men's 6U Rec #2: Team Loaded
- 6U Competitive: Purosho
- Men's Rec: ASAP
- Men's Open: Fox Harvesting

Ortiz, met through eighth grade basketball, and have been playing together ever since.

Nowadays, Irwin spends a lot of his time working at Columbia Auto Body & Paint, but still finds the time to get his friends together to shoot some hoops.

"We love this sport, and we can't get enough," he said. "We're going to keep going until we're 40."



STAFF PHOTO BY DAWN HENDRICKS

Zach Telford, 14, of Idaho poses with the kart he sometimes races at the Hermiston Raceway.

Program aims to make football safer

By **ERIC SINGER**
STAFF WRITER

Greg Grant felt it was time for a new perspective.

As a member of the OSAA's Football Ad Hoc Advisory committee, Grant, the longtime head football coach at Heppner High School took part in discussions between the experienced coaches on the committee on ways to make the game safer and more enjoyable at the youth level.

"It became really evident that there needed to be a better way to introduce kids to tackle football," Grant said recently.

The discussion soon centered around Rookie Tackle, a new initiative from USA Football that aims to bridge the gap between flag football and 11-person tackle football at the youth level. The Tualatin Valley Youth Football League, which covers the Tualatin Valley and Portland metro areas and includes more than 6,500 players, were part of the 2017 Pilot Program for Rookie Tackle, and the feedback was positive.

Grant decided to research it further with the possibility of bringing it to Heppner this fall. Unlike most youth leagues, Heppner has not started tackle football until fifth grade, but even then Grant said he and the youth coaches sometimes thought it was still too early.

"We always struggled with making sure kids didn't sour early with tackling," Grant said. "And when I saw this (Rookie Tackle), it's just like a natural progression. Plus I also felt like it's time to look at things a little bit differently ... because it's not all about teaching kids to hit each other hard."

Grant pitched Rookie Tackle to his youth coaches and the group liked the idea. So starting this fall, Heppner will keep its flag football program for grades 3-4, implement Rookie Tackle for grades 5-6 and then will implement 11-man tackle football beginning in seventh grade.

Here is an overview some of the key components of Rookie Tackle:

- Smaller field: Rather than playing on the regulation-sized 100-by-55-yard football field, the field is split into two 40- by-35-yard fields, with a gap in the middle for the coaches to watch the action.
- Smaller rosters: Teams will have six, seven or eight players per side and all will play multiple positions during the game. The smaller rosters and position rotation maximizes space on the field and allows for more playing time and skill development and fewer kids standing on the sidelines.
- Rule changes: There are no three-point stances for either offensive or defensive line positions.

Instead, players at those positions will start in upright, two-point stances, which will decrease the chances for blows to the head coming out of the three-point stances.

OSAA Assistant Executive Director Brad Garrett, who sits on USA Football's Board of Directors, said in an interview that he believes Rookie Tackle could be a good way to help participation in football at the high school level increase again.

According to the National Federation of High School Athletics Association surveys, participation in 11-man football at the high school level in Oregon has decreased each of the last four years, from 13,212 players in 2013 to 12,185 in 2016.

Heppner hosts a Rookie Tackle Jamboree on September 8 with John Day and Stanfield youth programs committed to playing, and he said Boardman is also interested. Pendleton Youth Football president Ron Smith said that he and others have looked into Rookie Tackle, but it's not something that they have discussed as a board as of yet.

"It's definitely worth a look," Smith said. "We're noticing a decline in our numbers over the last few years, some kids just moving away, some kids playing other sports and others because of the concussions fear. ... It's definitely on the table, maybe in the next two years."

Week 8 Hermiston Raceway 7/21/18

Hornets

- 1st #77 Devin Taylor
- 2nd #77 David Knowles
- 3rd #11 Joe Dunn
- 4th #12 Kris Marlow
- 5th 09 Travis "Baby Huey" Durfee
- 6th #1 Rob "Ricky Bobby" Cassano
- 7th #24 Justus Zamudio
- 8th #21 Owen Berglund
- 9th #5 Keith Boyd
- 10th #69 Cody McDonald
- 11th #7 Tracy "Snoop" Howell
- 12th #18 Karin Pitzer
- 13th #4 Mason Markee
- 14th #43 Jack Guier
- 15th #27 Jose Medina
- 16th 883 John Pittman

Street Stock

- 1st #68 Bart Hector Sr.
 - 2nd #46 Terry Osborn
 - 3rd #18 Adam Baker
 - 4th Kaylynn Jeffery
- ### Mini Stock
- 1st #36 Ken Bonney
 - 2nd #49 Angel Oseguera
 - 3rd #29 Andy Pierce
 - 4th #29 Megan Harley
 - 5th #71 Logan Mullen
 - 6th #23 Ashley Harley

Super Mini Stock

- 1st #00 Brad Rhoads
- 2nd #73 Dan Nelson
- 3rd #11 Chris Kohler
- 4th #27 Ron Wilbur
- 5th #50 Joshua Henne

Legends

- 1st #24 Jose Zamudio
- 2nd #3 Neena Kik
- 3rd #66 Austin Snodgrass
- 4th #42 Dillon Huffines
- 5th #68 Greg Corrtaberria
- 6th #43 Bill Kik
- 7th #13 Donnie Rabbit
- 8th #10 Lloyd Biggler
- 9th #9 Donovan Barr
- 10th #33 Leonard Maine
- 11th #01 Brock McDonough

West Coast Late Models

- Fast Time #42 Garrett Huffines 15.902
- 1st #39 Jake Klingenberg
- 2nd #3 Andy Beaman
- 3rd #12 Rick Girrard
- 4th #42 Garrett Huffines
- 5th #14 Rich Peters
- 6th #02 Todd Connell
- 7th #72 Brad Tidrick
- 8th #29 Jr. Minor
- 9th #21 Bobby Stewart Jr.

SPORTS BRIEFS

Columbia River Heat sets tryouts

Girls who are 14 and under as of Dec. 31, 2018, are invited to try out for the Columbia River Heat ASA softball team.

The event is Saturday at 9 a.m. at Umatilla High School. The team is a competitive travel softball club made up of girls from Boardman, Echo, Heppner, Hermiston, Ione, Irrigon, Lexington, Stanfield and Umatilla.

For more information, contact Joe

Tovar at 541-371-4153 or columbiariverheat@gmail.com.

Columbia Storm announces tryouts

The Columbia Storm Fastpitch is holding 16A team tryouts

To be eligible, girls must be 16 or younger by Jan. 1. The tryouts are Saturday, Aug. 18 at the Stanfield Little League softball field. Pitchers and catchers are from 9-10 a.m.; fielding, hitting, speed and agility

runs from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Coaches are looking for players for all positions. The team will begin play with the 2018 fall schedule and continue with various exposure and national tournaments for the 2019 season.

To register for the tryouts, contact Saul Castro at castro3972@msn.com, 541-571-3342; Candice Castro at cccastro1989@gmail.com, 541-571-5807; or Jim Whalley at jimwhalley@yahoo.com, 541-561-5736.