

# Herald Sports



HH FILE PHOTO

Hermiston's Scout Reagan looks at the timer's clock during the 2018 OSAA State Track and Field Championships as she crosses the finish line of the 5A girls 100-meter dash finals. Track and field remains the most popular girls high school sport in Oregon.

## Prep sports participation drops

Oregon participation hits a five-year low in 2017-18

HERMISTON HERALD

Participation in high school sports was down in the state of Oregon for the 2017-18 season, with the number dipping below 100,000 for the first time since 2012-13.

The National Federation of State High School Athletic Associations released its annual nationwide athletics participation report on Friday, where it reported that there were 99,907 total participants in Oregon athletics last year — 55,572 boys and 44,335 girls. All

three numbers are down from the previous year, with 102,762 participants — 57,651 boys and 45,111 girls.

It is a continued trend of fewer boys and more girls participating in athletics, however, as girl participation has risen six percent since the 2009-10 season, while boys participation has dropped 7.5 percent.

The most popular sport in the state was football yet again with 12,419 players between the 11-man and 8-man ranks; however, that total is down 17 percent from the 15,009 players from 2008. Rounding out the top five for most popular boys sports were track and field (9,526), basketball (7,620), soccer (6,397) and baseball (5,596).

While football's decline grabs the headlines, base-

ball and boys golf continued its troubling, and surprising, drop-offs. In baseball, participation has dropped each of the past four seasons, from 6,071 in 2015 to 5,596 this season, and it has dropped 17 percent from 2008 when 6,766 kids played.

Meanwhile, golf's 2017-18 participation number of 1,464 is down 32 percent since 2008 when 2,162 kids teed off.

Track and field keeps its spot as the most popular girls sport with 7,289 players, which is a 11 percent increase over the past 10 years. Following track is volleyball (7,086), basketball (5,824), soccer (5,398) and softball (4,568).

Girls swimming was the only major team sport in the state that saw an increase in participation last sea-

son, with 2,685 swimmers increasing from the 2,512 in 2016-17.

Nationally, boys and girls participation increased for the 29th consecutive year and reached an all-time high of 7,979,986, with 3,415,306 girls and 4,564,680 boys.

Football is still king, as well, even as the numbers continue to drop. There were 1,034,942 kids playing 11-man football last season, down from the 1,057,382 participants in 2016 and down seven percent from the 1,112,303 kids that played in 2008.

Soccer was the biggest gainer nationally for the boys, with 6,128 more participants last season, while competitive spirit had the biggest gain for the girls with 18,426 more participants.

## Echo switches to six-man football

Echo ready for debut in six-man football

By BRETT KANE  
STAFF WRITER

The Echo Cougars may be short on football players this year, but their spirits are as high as ever.

The team will hit the field with six core players this year as opposed to the eight that is traditional for the Class 1A schools in the OSAA. This transition for Echo came about when the school noticed that the amount of boys participating in their program dropped from the previous year.

In 2017, the Cougars had 18 players — 12 were seniors, and the remaining six were made up of younger students. Now that those seniors have graduated, the team is only comprised of 12 players total, three of whom are new to high school football.

The decline in participation doesn't stem from a lack of interest in the sport, however. Echo High School's male student population is significantly lower than in years past.

"There's four boys in my class out of 12 students," said Echo's sophomore center Luke White.

Echo will be joining 14 other small Oregon high schools in the Class 1A to compete in six-man games this season, including Prairie City, Joseph, and the Mitchell/Spray/Wheeler co-op. It is part of a two-year pilot program from



STAFF PHOTO BY BRETT KANE

Echo football players run through a tackling drill at Thursday's practice in Echo. The Cougars are one of 15 teams in the state preparing for their first year playing six-man football as part of a two-year OSAA trial for some of the state's smallest schools.

the OSAA that was offered to Class 1A schools with adjusted enrollments fewer than 89. At the end of the two years, the coaches will decide whether or not to continue forward with it.

Echo's eighth-year head coach Rick Thew says his team has had to completely re-strategize how they play. The Cougars' offense will have to pass or hand the ball off before a play can be made, whereas before, their quarterback could simply take the ball and run.

Thew doesn't see this change as a disadvantage, but instead, an opportunity.

"Everyone gets the chance to catch the ball, to block — to do a little bit of everything," he said. "It



STAFF PHOTO BY BRETT KANE

Echo head football coach Rick Thew, right, guides his team through drills during practice on Thursday in Echo. The Cougars are one of 15 teams in the state preparing for their first year playing six-man football as part of a two-year OSAA trial for the state.

makes for a really well-rounded athlete."

Echo senior Devan Craig has been on Echo's varsity team since he was a fresh-

man, and says that his team has been adapting well to the decrease in size.

"It's a different feel," he said. "But it'll be a lot of fun. As a player, you have to be dynamic."

Positivity is a cornerstone of the Cougars football team. In fact, it's push-ups if you're overheard saying anything negative about your performance.

"Just because you're from a smaller school doesn't make you any less of an athlete," Thew said. "I'm excited. Echo's had a tradition of eight-man football. You don't always want to try something new, but this season is going to be fast and exciting. The kids are going to have a blast."

### BRIEFS

#### Holiday weekend features free fishing

The Oregon Department of Fish & Wildlife encourages people to reel in some fun during the Labor Day weekend.

Free fishing is available Saturday and Sunday throughout the state. People can fish, crab or clam anywhere in Oregon without a license or tag. However, anglers are reminded that fishing regulations and bag limits still apply.

For more information, contact Jenny Ammon at [jenny.lammon@state.or.us](mailto:jenny.lammon@state.or.us), 503-947-9081 or visit [www.myodfw.com](http://www.myodfw.com).

#### Firefighters to chip in for Mark Johnson

Area firefighters and paramedics are teeing off to help Mark Johnson as he's receiving treatment for lymphoma.

A Hermiston native, Johnson has worked as a paramedic and firefighter in Hermiston with the Umatilla County Fire District for the past 18 years. In addition, he's a member of the statewide Disaster Medical Assistance Team, which provides medical support at federal events and is deployed to help during hurricanes and other natural disasters.

Now, Johnson needs help from the community. Members of L-2752, the local firefighters union, invite area golfers to join them during the Mark Johnson Charity 4-Person Scramble Golf Tournament. Money raised will provide assistance to Johnson and his family as they have added expenses related to his cancer treatment.

The tournament is Sunday, Sept. 16 with registration from 8-10 a.m. at Big River Golf Course, 709 Willamette Ave., Umatilla. The cost is \$65 per person and includes green fees, lunch, a raffle and prizes. In addition to the golf scramble, there will be contests for the closest to the pin and longest drive.

For more information, to donate raffle prizes, provide sponsorship or to register for the tournament, call Trevor Phillips at 541-561-8013 or send a message via the firefighters' Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/L2752](http://www.facebook.com/L2752).

To reserve a golf cart, call Big River's clubhouse at 541-922-3006. Also, there is a GoFundMe campaign where people can make donations to help the Johnson family.

#### Locals compete in Klickitat County rodeo

GOLDENDALE, Wash. — Local participants in the 75th Annual Klickitat County Fair & Rodeo in Goldendale were hoping to earn money and solidify their position in the NPRA standings before the NPRA Finals Sept. 21-22 at the Crook County Fairgrounds Indoor Arena in Prineville.

Area participants at Goldendale included NPRA top-12 contenders Jordan Minor, Jade Crossley, Bailey Patterson, Jake Stanley, Andy Carlson, Tyler Smith, Tate Gentry and the Pederson brothers, Michael and Preston, of Hermiston.

Hermiston husband and wife Andy and Britni Carlson enjoyed tremendous success on Saturday. Andy and his roping partner, Tyler Smith, also of Hermiston, finished in third place in team roping with a time of 5.5 seconds, and the duo is ranked 10th in the NPRA standings with three events remaining. Carlson/Smith notched a second place in team roping July 7 at the La Pine rodeo and won the 2017 NPRA team roping championship.

Britni competed in barrel racing and rode her gelding quarter horse Winston swiftly around the course, clocking an impressive time of 17.5 seconds to take second place on Saturday and earn \$600.

After leaving Goldendale, the Carlsons traveled to Davenport, Washington, to compete in their second rodeo Saturday. Britni continued to have even more success there as she took first place while clocking a season-best time of 16.92 seconds. Andy and Tyler took seventh place in team roping.

Cowgirl sisters Jordan Minor and Jade Crossley of Hermiston competed in breakaway roping, but they didn't enjoy success at Goldendale as they both recorded a no time mark.

## Knights pick up volleyball wins over Mustangs, Vikings

HERMISTON HERALD

The Irrigon Knights volleyball team began the 2018 season with a pair of victories on Friday, defeating Heppner 3-1 before knocking off its league rival, Umatilla, 3-0 as well.

Against Heppner, the Mustangs (1-1) took the first set 25-20, but Irrigon came back to win the next three sets 25-21, 25-20, 25-20.

Haley White led the Knights (2-0) with 13 kills, Emma Muller had seven and Brianna Rice had six, while Makenna Collins led the team's defense with 16 digs. Sydney Wilson led the Mustangs with six kills.

Then against Umatilla, Irrigon won easily 25-15, 25-11, 25-13.

Heppner also matched up with Umatilla (0-2) on Friday, where the Mustangs won 3-0 with scores of 25-11, 25-8 and 25-14. Jenna McCullough led the

Mustangs in the match with nine kills and Nicole Prophet had four, while Claire Grieb, Wilson and Prophet each had four serving aces.

"We played hard and today showed us what we need to work on," Heppner coach Mindy Wilson said.

#### Echo wins twice at 1A Preview

The Echo volleyball program started off 2018 in a good way, winning two of its three matches at the 1A Season Preview Tournament on Friday afternoon.

The Cougars (2-1) started the day with a 2-1 win over Prairie City (25-18, 25-20, 15-12), then defeated Country Christian 2-0 (25-22, 25-20), but finished the day with a 2-0 loss to Hosanna Christian (25-14, 25-15).

The Cougars continued the tournament on Saturday against Days Creek, North Clackamas Christian and McKenzie.