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Mustangs defeat Prospectors 47-14

By **BRETT KANE**
STAFF WRITER

Strong play on both sides of the ball powered the Heppner Mustangs to a 47-14 home win over the Grant Union Prospectors on Friday night. Heppner locked up the 2A-Special District 6 title with the victory.

Jayden Wilson led the Mustangs with 118 yards through the air and two touchdowns. He also rushed for 64 yards. Mason Lehman rushed 109 yards and one touchdown. He also had five catches for 75 yards and a touchdown.

Gavin Hanna-Robinson scored three times for Heppner — two on the ground and one in the air. He ended the game with 67 yards rushing on 10 carries along with two receptions.

The Mustangs held the Prospectors scoreless until late in the game. Russell Hodge scored Grant Union's first touchdown with less than 5 minutes left in the fourth quarter on a 7-yard run. Hodge ended up with 79 yards rushing on 15 attempts.

Jordan Hall intercepted a Heppner pass and ran it back 63 yards for the other score with about 2:25 left in the contest.

"It was a game where we made good plays, but also need to clean things up," said Mustangs coach Greg Grant. "The offensive line came up and blocked real hard. (Grant Union) scored late — our defense did a good job. We need to look at tonight's film and work hard and push each other at practice. I want to get better at everything."

Grant is excited about his team's performance not only against Grant Union, but for the season as a whole.

"I'm very pleased with our progress," he said after their Friday night win. "The kids have come a long way. I'm excited to see where they go."

The Mustangs are 6-2 overall and 3-0 for the 2A-SD6. Friday night's game marked the Mustang's sixth consecutive win. They have one more league game scheduled for Oct. 26 when they'll travel to Stanfield (1-6, 1-2) to close out the season. Grant Union (4-4, 2-1) wraps up district play against Weston-McEwen at home on Oct. 26.



Heppner quarterback Jayden Wilson stiff arms Grant Union's Devon Stokes while scrambling out of the pocket in the Mustangs' 47-17 win against the Prospectors on Friday in Heppner.



Heppner's Blake Wolters (26) and Jason Rea tackle Grant Union's Justin Hodge in the Mustangs' 47-17 win against the Prospectors on Friday in Heppner.



Heppner's Gavin Hanna-Robinson attempts to break free from Grant Union's Damion Young Friday in Heppner.

STAFF PHOTOS BY E.J. HARRIS

Dawgs stay in playoff hunt with overtime win

By **ANNIE FOWLER**
STAFF WRITER

The Mid-Columbia Conference playoff picture was murky before Friday night's games. Hermiston made it even muddier with an overtime win on the road.

Wyatt Noland scored four touchdowns and ran for 117 yards, including the game-winner, as Hermiston knocked off Hanford 42-35 at Fran Rish Stadium in Richland.

"That was one hell of a game," Noland said. "I knew we would have to come out and battle. We knew this would be the game."

The win put the Bulldogs at 5-2 in the MCC and 6-2 overall. They finish the regular season next week in a must-win game against Kamiakin at Kennison Field.

"Our kids are unwilling to quit," Hermiston coach David Faaeteete said. "Tonight, they decided to be a playoff team. Now, we have to prepare for a good Kamiakin team."

Chiawana leads the MCC at 6-1, while Hanford and Richland also are 5-2. All four teams are 6-2 overall.

Hermiston led 35-28 late in the fourth quarter, but Hanford came down and scored as Jared DeVine ran for his fourth touchdown of the night with 53.4 seconds left on the clock.

Faaeteete said there was no question who would get the ball when the Bulldogs had first-and-goal at the 7 in overtime.

"We wanted to take a shot right away," Faaeteete said. "Andrew's willpower got the first down, and Wyatt was able to run back to the right side. Football players make big plays, and he's a heck of a player."

After Noland gave the Bulldogs the overtime lead, Hanford had its shot. DeVine was stopped on first down, a penalty backed the Falcons up to the 42, and they fumbled on the next play, with Hermiston's Zane Davis coming up with the ball.

The game was scoreless in the third quarter, but the Bulldogs put three scores on the board in the fourth to take a 35-28 lead.

Noland scored on runs of 8 and 10 yards, while Youbani Razon caught a 19-yard touchdown pass from James, who finished with 170 yards in the air.

The Bulldogs stepped up their defense in the second half, putting Noland on the field.

He caused havoc in the backfield, and had fun in the process.

"When he told me I could play defense, I was excited," he said. "It worked out fine."

In a close first half, which saw the Falcons take a 21-14 lead, the Bulldogs struck first on their opening drive, moving the ball 67 yards in 2 1/2 minutes. Andrew James capped the drive with a 37-yard touchdown run up the middle for a 7-0 lead.

Hanford quickly replied, getting a 61-yard burst up the middle from Jared DeVine for a 7-7 game.

Hermiston looked to take a 14-7 lead on their next possession as James hit Wyatt Noland with a 43-yard scoring pass, but a holding penalty by the Bulldogs brought the ball back. On the ensuing play, Blake VanderTop intercepted James, and the Falcons took over at the Bulldogs' 27.

Five plays later, DeVine bullied his way into the end zone from 1 yard out and a 14-7 Hanford lead.

Noland got his first touchdown of the game on the next drive, taking the ball in from 1 yard out for a 14-14 game just 2 minutes into the second quarter.

DeVine scored his third touchdown of the game, again from 1 yard out with 2:33 left in the first half for a 21-14 lead.

Hanford was closing in on the end zone just before the half as Gabe Martinez caught a pass from Garrett Horner. Martinez was knocked out of bounds at the 3-yard line as time expired.

Hermiston	7	7	0	21	7	-	42
Hanford	14	7	0	14	0	-	35

Scoring
1Q
Her - Andrew James 37 run (Juan Carlos Navarrete kick)
Han - Jared DeVine 61 run (Xavier Valle kick)
Han - DeVine 1 run (Uvalle kick)
2Q
Her - Wyatt Noland 1 run (Navarrete kick)
Han - DeVine 1 run (Uvalle kick)
4Q
Her - Noland 8 run (Navarrete kick)
Her - Noland 10 run (Navarrete kick)
Han - Luke Sutey 18 pass from Garrett Horner (Uvalle kick)
Her - Youbani Razon 19 pass from James (Navarrete kick)
Han - DeVine 2 run (Uvalle kick)
OT
Her - Noland 7 run (Navarrete kick)
Statistics
Passing - HERHS, Andrew James 18-24-2-170-1; HANHS Garrett Horner 20-26-0-259-1
Rushing - HERHS, Andrew James 17-83, Wyatt Noland 24-117; HANHS Garrett Horner 8-21, Jared Devine 21-108, Dylan McElderry 7-21
Receiving - HERHS, Jordan Ramirez 8-76, Youbani Razon 2-20, Garrett Walchli 3-29, Wyatt Noland 4-41, Pitney 1-4; HANHS Blake VanderTop 4-49, Jared DeVine 3-29, Tyler Garcia 1-14, Gabe Martinez 5-66, Dylan McElderry 2-11, Isaiah Mitchell 2-20, Luke Sutey 2-33, Dandre Forbes 1-36

Hermiston's playoff hopes hinge on Friday's game

The Bulldogs must beat Kamiakin to advance

By **ANNIE FOWLER**
STAFF WRITER

It's all pretty simple. Hermiston beats Kamiakin on Friday, it is in the playoffs. Lose, and the Bulldogs miss the playoffs.

That's how things are shaking out in the Mid-Columbia Conference 3A race for two playoff spots. Southridge already is out of the loop, but Hermiston (6-2 overall, 5-2 MCC), Kamiakin (4-4, 4-3) and Kennewick (5-3, 4-3) still have something to play for.

"This is huge," Hermiston senior receiver/defensive back Jordan Ramirez said of Friday's game at Kennison Field. "To lose, that would suck big time after all the work we put in."

Kennewick, which has beaten Hermiston and Kamiakin, already has a berth locked up, but seeding still is on the line. If Hermiston wins Friday, it would have the top seed by virtue of a better league and overall record. A Kamiakin win would give the Lions the top seed and the Braves would be No. 2.

"Win and go on, that's pretty much it," Hermiston coach David Faaeteete said. "Kamiakin is a tough team. They are physical and they have a good running back. Our run defense has been our Achilles' heel."

Kamiakin, which won the 3A state title in 2016, is looking to get back on the big stage. "You tell the kids the No. 1 goal is to make the playoffs," Braves coach Scott Biglin said. "This is it. We have to win this one to go on."

Ramirez and quarterback Andrew James are two returning players from last year's 5A Oregon state championship team.

James, a three-year starter for the Bulldogs, said they have been watching film to learn what they can about the Braves, but ultimately, it will come down to playing their game.

"We just have to keep our composure," James said. "We have to have a solid week of practice and let people know the importance of this game. The seniors know what's on the line and know what needs to be done."

The Bulldogs kept themselves in the

playoff hunt with a huge 42-35 overtime win over Hanford last week.

Hermiston gave up a lot of yards to the Falcons (408), and Ramirez said they cannot do that again this week.

"We have to step up big time," Ramirez of the defense. "This will be one of our biggest weeks. We have to help out the offense."

Kamiakin running back Tuna Altahir has been a threat at times this season, but he only had nine carries for 49 yards last week in a 42-0 loss to Chiawana. On the season, he has 454 yards and three touchdowns.

The Braves are in the middle of the pack when it comes to offense in the MCC, averaging 279 yards per game. They are pretty balanced with the run (962 yards) and the pass (1,276), but know they will have to have an outstanding game to keep pace with the Bulldogs.

"We are struggling a bit offensively to find our identity," Biglin said. "You have to have more than one guy. Tuna is great — he is one of the best — but we are working through some things."

Hermiston running back Wyatt Noland is due for a new set of cleats after churning out 1,344 yards and 21 touchdowns in eight games. James is no slouch either when it comes to running the ball. He has 551 yards and 10 touchdowns to his credit.

"They have a good running back and an equally good quarterback," Biglin said. "They are a good 1-2 punch. You had better bring your lunch pail, it will be a long night."

In the air, James has thrown for 1,149 yards and 10 touchdowns - 365 of those yards have gone to Ramirez, who has scored four touchdowns.

"Our line has been getting better every week," James said. "They are getting to the point where they know what needs to be done."

Faaeteete appreciates what Noland and James do on offense, but last week when he put Noland in at defense end for a few plays here and there, the game took on a different look.

"Every time we put him on the field, he brings a different dynamic," Faaeteete said. "We will mix him in. Defensively, we have to get better and be more consistent. They will have four good plays, then look like dog feces."