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Staff photo by E.J. Harris  
Hermiston's Adrian Mendez shoots the ball guarded by Hanford's Luke Sutey in the Bulldogs' 58-52 loss to the Falcons on Friday in Hermiston.

## Dawgs lose lead, key game to Hanford

By ANNIE FOWLER  
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston made sure it held Connor Woodward in check Friday night, but Hanford in turn used its entire arsenal of weapons to sneak past the Bulldogs in Mid-Columbia Conference action.

The Falcons used a 19-7 run in the fourth quarter to overcome a six-point deficit to start the fourth quarter and post a 58-52 victory over the Bulldogs (12-5, 8-5 MCC) at the Dawg House.

"We didn't finish plays, knock down free throws and get crucial stops," Hermiston coach Casey Arstein said. "At times we stopped Woodward, but guys would get free in the paint. We held him better than last time."

Woodward had 31 points the first time around, but had just 16 Friday to lead the Falcons (8-10, 6-8 MCC).

"That was a really good game," Hanford coach Paul Mayer said. "It was a great environment and a lot of energy. Everybody is hounding him (Woodward). I'm proud of the guys for stepping up and getting things done. Conner Milliken and Blake VanderTop came off the bench and did good things for us."

Hermiston led 45-39 heading into the fourth quarter, but the Falcons scored three quick baskets to tie the score.

Cole Smith hit a big 3-pointer for the Bulldogs with 4:02 to play, and they led 50-47 with 3:15 remaining.

Luke Sutey hit a free-throw line jumper to pull the Falcons within a point, and a pair of free throws by Dan Izquierdo gave Hanford the lead for good with 1:55 to play.

The Bulldogs were 0 for 4 from the free throw line in the fourth quarter, and they shot a dismal 3 for 13 for the game.

"It wasn't the smartest game we played," Arstein said. "We kind of gave it to them. We had plenty of chances and the guys played hard. We didn't shoot the ball well, which is something you can't always control."

Both teams looked good at the start of the game, exchanging 3-pointers. A deep ball by Cesar Ortiz gave the Bulldogs an 11-6 lead, and Hermiston stretched the lead to 16-10 before Hanford hit some free throws to make it 16-13.

The teams were tied at 20-20 and 22-22 in the second quarter, but baskets by Ryne Andreason, Jordan Ramirez and Adrian Mendez gave the Bulldogs a 28-25 lead at the half.

Hermiston twice led by seven points in the third quarter, and led by six heading into the fourth.

Ramirez led the Bulldogs with 15 points, while Ortiz had 12 and Andreason eight.

"I thought our defense was good,"

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Staff photo by E.J. Harris  
Hermiston's Jordan Thomas draws contact from Hanford's Sarah Ellis (52) while rebounding the ball in the Bulldogs' 52-43 win against the Falcons on Friday in Hermiston.

By ANNIE FOWLER  
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston coach Juan Rodriguez has pleaded with his team all season to feed the ball inside to 6-foot-4 post Jordan Thomas. Friday night, the Bulldogs did just that.

Thomas finished with a game-high 21 points to lead Hermiston to a 52-43 Mid-Columbia Conference victory over Hanford at the Dawg House.

"It's happening," Rodriguez said of utilizing Thomas more. "Other players made some good plays too."

Hermiston (7-10, 5-8 MCC), which already has secured a regional playoff berth, beat the Falcons (2-16, 1-13) for the second time this season.

The Bulldogs controlled the game from the start, with Thomas scoring the first five points. They led 14-0 before Abby Robinson got the Falcons on the board with 45 seconds remaining.

Mati Byrd added a basket for Hermiston, and Sarah Ellis scored for Hanford with two seconds left for a 16-4 game at the end of the first.

"First, we wanted to come out and suck the energy out of them, and not let them steal some early baskets," Rodriguez said. "Second, we did not want to put them at the free-throw line. The first half was good."

The two teams played a pretty even game the rest of the way. Thomas had 10 points in the second half, while Jazlyn Romero scored seven of her nine in the first half.

Byrd scored six points off the bench, and Jayden Ray scored five of her seven points in the second half.

Hermiston committed only one foul in the first half, keeping the Falcons off the free-throw line. Hanford shot all four of its free throws in the fourth quarter, making each one.

Iliana Moran led the Falcons with 13 points. She was the only player in dou-



Staff photo by E.J. Harris  
Hermiston's Sydney Stefani drives on Hanford's Teresa Sijgers in the Bulldogs' 52-43 win against the Falcons on Friday in Hermiston.

ble figures.

"Our zone was a little more aggressive," Rodriguez said. "We preach deflection."

### Hermiston at Richland

Freshman Mia Hernandez is starting to get more comfortable with the Hermiston offense since her move from Sunnyside just before Christmas.

Hernandez had 10 points on Saturday, and Jordan Thomas added 12 points and hauled down six rebounds, but the Bulldogs still came up short in a 68-58 Mid-Columbia Conference road loss to Richland.

"Mia is starting to get comfortable," Hermiston coach Juan Rodriguez said. "She has come a long way and has done a good job of adjusting. This was a good game for her."

The Bulldogs (7-11 overall, 5-9 MCC) held their own against the Bomb-

ers (11-8, 8-7) in the first. They trailed 16-9, but two baskets by Thomas and one by Kaylee Young made it 16-15.

Gracie Pierce, who led Richland with 12 points, hit a 3-pointer with 1:09 remaining, but Kendall Dowdy matched that with a three-point play for a 19-18 game. Nicole Gall scored with 26 seconds left in the quarter for a 21-18 lead.

Richland would add two more points to its lead in the second to hold a slim 33-28 lead at the half.

Hermiston pulled within one point twice, and tied the score at 27-27 with a pair of free throws by Sydney Stefani with 1:37 to play in the first half.

Two consecutive baskets by Halee Pierce gave the Bombers a 31-27 lead with 41 seconds remaining.

The Bombers opened the third quarter on a 9-2 run to take a 42-30 lead just 2 minutes into the action.

"I thought we started the game really well," Rodriguez said. "When it got to double digits, they stopped competing. As a coach, that is disappointing."

Jordan Clark scored eight of her 11 points in the fourth quarter as the Bombers were able to keep their lead intact.

Jazlyn Romero added eight points and eight rebounds for the Bulldogs, who hosted Kamiakin on Tuesday after deadline. Jayden Ray added seven points and seven rounds, and Paige Palzinski five points and five rebounds.

### Box Scores

**Hermiston 52, Hanford 52**  
Hanford 4 7 11 12 — 43  
Hermiston 16 10 11 15 — 52  
**HANFORD** — Moran 13, Beattie 8, Robinson 2, Nelson 6, Davis 8, Harlow 2, Ellis 4.  
**HERMISTON** — Young 2, Ray 7, Byrd 6, Stefani 5, Hernandez 2, Romero 9, Thomas 21.  
**Richland 68, Hermiston 58**  
Hermiston 18 10 13 17 — 58  
Richland 21 12 18 17 — 68  
**HERMISTON** — Young 5, Ray 7, Byrd 2, Stefani 6, Palzinski 5, Dowdy 3, Hernandez 10, Romero 8, Thomas 12.  
**RICHLAND** — Jor.Clark 11, Garza 15, Smith 2, H.Pierce 4, Gall 11, Jay.Clark 11, Davis 2, G.Pierce 12.

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