

PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Thomas rises above the competition

By ANNIE FOWLER
STAFF WRITER

While Hermiston was a welcomed addition to the Mid-Columbia Conference this season, the girls basketball coaches were a little unsure of the challenges that would come with the Bulldogs and their 6-foot-4 senior center Jordan Thomas.

"She was very difficult for us," said Kamiakin coach Lane Schumacher, whose team won the MCC title. "Not only does she have the height to make things difficult for us with her defense, but she also has a good touch on the offensive end. We tried to pressure the guards so they couldn't get her the ball."

Thomas was a cut above the competition this season, earning her the East Oregonian Player of the Year honor.

"It's a well-deserved honor for her," Schumacher said. "She is going to keep developing. Her best basketball is still ahead of her."

Thomas is joined on the first team by teammate Jazlyn Romero, Pendleton freshman Muriel Hoisington, Sydney Wilson and Jacee Currin from Heppner's 2A state championship team, and Ana Zacarias of Irrigon.

Heppner's Robert Wilson is the Coach of the Year.

Thomas averaged 15.5 points, 13.2 rebounds, 3.8 blocked shots and 1.2 steals a game for the Bulldogs, who advanced to the 3A regional tournament.

She also was named to the MCC's first team, and to the defensive team.

"It makes my job easy in terms of scoring options," Hermiston coach Juan Rodriguez said. "I think a lot of coaches would like to have a player like that, who can get a basket at any time. She's definitely a dominant



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Hermiston's Jordan Thomas is the East Oregonian Player of the Year. Thomas averaged 15.5 points and 13.2 rebounds this season for the Bulldogs.



Zacarias



Hoisington



Currin



Wilson



Romero

player, especially in this league. For the coaches to single her out and put her on the first team says a lot."

For Thomas, the switch to the MCC helped her game, and helped in preparation for taking her game to the college level.

"I found it more challenging," Thomas said. "I took that in a positive way. It was fun to play against those girls, they are so skilled. There was new competition, and I learned a lot. It was good to see new

things."

After three years of playing the same teams, Thomas said the hardest part of the move was scouting reports. "When you continually play Pendleton, The Dalles and Hood River, you know what to expect," said said. "We had like a day to figure out (the MCC) teams and adjust the best we could."

Thomas honed her skills last summer with the Oregon Elite team out of Portland, which Rodriguez appreciated.

"She is just unique," he said. "Some teams have big girls, but they don't always have the talent that gives people problems. People don't realize how hard she works. She puts in the work, she moves well, she can shoot the ball and can dribble pretty well. Playing with her traveling team gets her out of her comfort zone."

What the future holds

Thomas signed a letter of intent to play basketball at

Eastern Arizona College.

"I'm really excited," she said. "The campus was so beautiful and I like the atmosphere."

She also got to take in a game while she was in Thatcher, Arizona.

"They were down by 25 at halftime and won by one," Thomas said. "That takes dedication and coaching. It gave me a good feeling."

The Monsters are looking forward to adding Thomas and her 6-4 frame

to their lineup.

"A 6-4 girl is a like a 7-foot guy," EAC coach Cameron Turner said. "I will take her."

Turner said he first saw Thomas play last spring with her Oregon Elite team.

"I like Jordan because of her size and potential," said Turner, who noted that Thomas will be on full scholarship. "I never thought I had a chance to get her. I texted her in December and she came for a visit in February. I have big expectations for Jordan."

With Makenzie Bond signing to play for Cal State Bakersfield, Turner said Thomas will be called upon to make an impact this coming season.

"She will battle people her own size for the first time in her life," Turner said. "She will be tested. I'm super excited."

Thomas said she looks forward to the challenge.

"Playing against taller people will be good for me," she said. "I've never played with anyone taller than me, or my height."

Rodriguez has no doubt Thomas will continue to improve and have success at the college level.

"She is shy in new situations," he said. "But once she gets comfortable, she will be OK."

When that happens, it will be the other teams looking for some form of comfort.

All-East Oregonian Basketball Team
Player of the year: Jordan Thomas, sr., 6-4, Hermiston.

Coach of the Year: Robert Wilson, Heppner.

First Team
Jordan Thomas, sr., 6-4, Hermiston; Jazlyn Romero, jr., 5-9, Hermiston; Sydney Wilson, so., 5-8, Heppner; Jacee Currin, sr., 5-7, Heppner; Ana Zacarias, sr., 5-4, Irrigon; Muriel Hoisington, fr., 5-8, Pendleton.

Second Team
Natalie Neveau, so., Pendleton; JaLay Burns, fr., Irrigon; Taylor Durfey, fr., Umatilla; Katie Vescio, sr., Weston-McEwen; Faith McCarty, fr., Echo; Marie Chretien, sr., Ione.

Getting athletes on the field a priority for Hermiston

By ANNIE FOWLER
STAFF WRITER

The Mid-Columbia Conference spring sports season began with snow on the ground, but Hermiston High School did not let that deter it from trying to get its facilities playable for its athletes.

Hermiston facilities supervisor Martie McQuain and his staff put in long hours over a few days to get the snow off of Kennison Field, the track and the tennis courts.

"We got a head start on it the first couple of snowfalls and tried to stay ahead of it," Hermiston athletic director Larry Usher said. "The biggest message in our school district is, we are able to put in the extra time as adults so the kids can play."

Usher said the athletic, maintenance and grounds departments meet once a week to make sure everything runs smoothly.

"We want to make sure we get our fields and courts prepared and ready for the kids," he said.

Hermiston hosted fellow MCC schools March 9 in a soccer jamboree, then hosted three nonleague soccer games March 12.

"We had a league meeting (March 6), and everyone was asking who had a field we could play on," Usher said. "I said, 'We do.' That is how our league is, we look out for each other."

Walla Walla Athletic Director Dirk Hansen said the good will was not lost on them.

"I appreciate everything Larry and his staff did to get us out there," Hansen said. "Larry and his crew busted



Staff photo by Annie Fowler

The maintenance and ground crews at Hermiston High School worked long hours to remove the snow from Kennison Field and the track two days before the Bulldogs hosted a soccer jamboree March 9. The Hermiston track team will host the Bulldog Invite on Thursday.

"We got a head start on it the first couple of snowfalls and tried to stay ahead of it."

Larry Usher,
Hermiston athletic director

their tails. We appreciate them getting our kids out there to play."

In the Tri-Cities, Southridge High School has an on-site grass soccer field, which still is unplayable.

"We didn't have a place to play until last Friday," Suns Athletic Director Tim Wood said last week. "We have been practicing at Lampson (Stadium). We

won't play any games at Southridge until April. If we didn't play that jamboree in Hermiston, we would have not been able to play. No doubt that Hermiston gets after it."

Clearing a field the size of Kennison, not to mention the track, was no easy feat.

It took McQuain and seven other men two full days to clear the field and four lanes of the track.

But before they removed one snowflake, they consulted with the company Hellas Construction, which installed the turf and track in 2013.

"I read through the book on how to remove the snow, then I contacted them," McQuain said. "We used a 6-foot-wide rotary broom, which is suggested by Hellas. It's the same equipment

used to maintain the field. The snow was powdery, so it was pretty easy. Had we had a couple more inches, we would not have been able to do it."

To clear the tennis courts, they used a snow blower and plastic snow shovels so they would not damage the court surface.

McQuain said Hellas will be in Hermiston this summer to provide field maintenance, which will include an impact test, cleaning and sanitizing the field, and replacing any lost rubber particles.

"We have 12 tons of rubber," McQuain said. "We are going to be putting some back in. The nap of the field is 2-3 inches tall. You only see about half an inch. That's how much fill is there."

Hermiston's Colbray falls one win shy of podium

By ANNIE FOWLER
STAFF WRITER

Former Hermiston wrestlers Sam Colbray and Bob Coleman made their first appearances at the NCAA Wrestling Championships last week, and the tournament came with mixed results.

Colbray reached the quarterfinals of the NCAA Wrestling Championships, but two losses Friday put him out of the tournament, and left him one win shy of the podium in Pittsburgh.

Colbray, a 2016 Hermiston graduate who wrestles for Iowa State, lost a 6-4 quarterfinal match to Chip Ness of North Carolina in overtime at 184 pounds.

After a scoreless first period, Colbray took the down position to start. He maneuvered an escape within 9 seconds, then got a takedown with 48 seconds remaining.

Ness was out of Colbray's grasp in 2 seconds, then took Colbray down with just 5 seconds left in the round. Colbray got an escape at the buzzer for a 4-3 lead.

Ness started down in the third and got an escape 30 seconds in to tie the score.

In overtime, Ness took Colbray down with 5 seconds remaining.

In the blood round to stay alive for a spot on the podium and All-American status, Colbray dropped a 5-2 decision to Emery Parker of Illinois.

Colbray, a sophomore, finished the season with a 28-8 record.

Colbray, ranked No. 10, opened the tournament Thursday with an impressive 8-2 decision over Jack-

son Hemaure of Fresno State.

In the Round of 16, Colbray beat Dakota Geer of Oklahoma State 7-4.

Coleman, who won a Pac-12 title at 184 pounds, competes for Oregon State.

Coleman had to win his pigtail match against Christopher Kober of Campbell first thing Thursday morning to reach the main bracket.

Coleman posted a 9-0 victory over Kober, only to draw top-ranked Myles Martin of Ohio State in the first round.

Martin pinned Coleman in 3:22 to send him to the consolation bracket.

Coleman would lose his first consolation match, and finished the season 17-16.



Colbray



Follow us on Facebook!