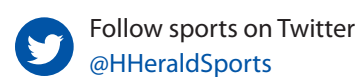


HeraldSports



Pederson wins all-round title

SOFTBALL

Hermiston loses playoff positioning with losses to Richland

By ANNIE FOWLER
STAFF WRITER

The Hermiston Bulldogs lost their position in the Mid-Columbia Conference's seeding for the 3A playoffs Tuesday after dropping a pair of games to league-leading Richland at Columbia Playfield.

The Bombers rallied to win the first game 15-5, then took the nightcap 18-3 to remain undefeated on the season at 14-0. The Bombers have won 28 consecutive MCC games dating to last year.

"We needed both wins to get the No. 2 spot, now we have to wait and see what happens," Hermiston coach Kate Greenough said.

The Bulldogs (10-6) are finished with conference play, while Kennewick (9-5) hosts Pasco on Friday. Southridge swept Walla Walla on Tuesday to improve to 10-4, and will host Richland on Friday. Kamiakin is out of the playoff discussion.

Hermiston overcame a 3-0 deficit in the first game, taking a 4-3 lead in the top of the third inning.

Sydney Stefani led off with a walk, and Sam Atilano reached on an error. A single by Bailee Noland sent Stefani across the plate, while Halle Pennington drew a bases-loaded walk to pull the Bulldogs within 3-2.

Brecella Nash's fielder's choice put another run on the board, and Grace Studer's RBI single gave Hermiston a 4-3 lead.

The Bombers got the run back in the bottom of the inning for a 4-4 game.

Hermiston kept the bats moving in the fourth inning with consecutive singles by Atilano, Ashley Cameron and Noland to load the bases.

A sacrifice fly by Jamelle Almaguer drove in Atilano for a 5-4 lead, but a groundout by Pennington left two runners stranded.

The Bombers broke out the bats in the bottom of the fourth, scoring seven runs on eight hits to take an 11-5 lead.

Richland invoked the 10-run rule in the sixth with four more runs, including a two-run homer by Taylor Clark.

"We knew they were a good team, and we knew they could hit," Richland coach Casey Emery said.

"I thought they would score four, five or six runs — they are that good of a team. They forced us into some mistakes."

Noland and Almaguer each had two hits in the game, while Stefani hit a double in the fifth inning.

"I think we had four earned runs, and took advantage of walks and bunts and put them on their heels," Greenough said. "I don't know if they had a lead change like that this year."

Emery said they had not. "All year, we have only had one close game until now," he said. "The score does not reflect how competitive the game was. Both pitchers had a tough strike zone, but they battled through it."

In the second game, the Bulldogs jumped out to a 2-0 lead but could not keep the Bombers at bay.

Richland scored five runs in the first, and five more in the second to pull away for good.

Clark limited the Bulldogs to four hits, two by Noland, and a triple by Stefani.

Addison Pettit hit two doubles and drove in six runs for the Bombers, while McKenna Ozuna and Rylee Gavaert each drove in three runs.



Photo courtesy of Robert McLean

Blue Mountain's Preston Pederson leaps off his horse Ocho during the tie-down event at the Northwest Region Finals last weekend in Hermiston. Pederson finished second. He will represent BMCC at the College National Finals Rodeo in June.

By ANNIE FOWLER
STAFF WRITER

A basketball player, a Marine and an Aussie. Put them in a rodeo arena and you have yourself the makings of a championship team.

Blue Mountain Community College coach Shawn Eng did just that, and it paid off with a Northwest Region title, an all-around champion and three event winners in Hermiston during the last weekend in April.

"I went out and recruited Oregon, Washington, Nevada and Idaho high school finals," Eng said. "I reached out to see if they wanted to come. I worked hard to get them guys."

Hermiston native Preston Pederson roped and wrestled his way to the all-round title, finishing second in tie-down roping and third in the steer wrestling. He piled up 1,999 points to take home the top prize. Teammate Bryce Harrison was second (1,531 points).

"We definitely pulled through at our hometown rodeo in winning the team title," said Pederson, a 2016 Hermiston grad. "We have practiced hard all year and stayed focused."

BMCC will take five to the College National Finals Rodeo June 9-15 in Casper, Wyoming. In addition to Pederson, Payton Wright of Stanfield will compete in bareback riding, Harrison (Condon) will compete in steer wrestling, Dun-

can Mackenzie (Baker City) is in the tie-down, and Aussie Clay Hall will ride bulls.

"We definitely pulled through at our hometown rodeo in winning the team title. We have practiced hard all year and stayed focused."

Preston Pederson, Roping, Wrestling

Wright, Harrison and Hall won regional titles in their respective events.

"It was kind of a slow start to the season in the fall," Eng said. "Then with the winter we had, we weren't getting in the practices we wanted. As it got closer to our rodeo, things started to fall together. Of these five, three are freshmen and two are returning students."

With a strong group of five athletes to take to the CNFR, Eng is looking for good things in Casper.

"Going back with these five guys — two in rough stock, one in multiple events and three in roping — we are looking at a national title if

everything falls into place. In the past 10 years, we have not had a (men's) national team title, but we have had a lot of individual champions."

Head and shoulders above the rest

Pederson is not your typical rodeo athlete. At 6-foot-6 and 210 pounds, he was a natural on the basketball court for the Bulldogs, and he has learned to use his size to his advantage in the rodeo arena.

He finished second in tie-down roping with 801 points, well back of Trey Recanzone of Central Washington (1,181 points).

Pederson compiled 686 points in steer wrestling to finish third (top three each event advance to the CNFR). Harrison won the title with 1,079 points.

He also will compete in team roping with Rayna Longeway of University of Idaho.

"Since their women are going, they got to add another person and it was Rayna, and she chose team roping," said Pederson, who is the header of the team. "I roped with her all year. She could have picked anyone, and she picked me. I'm excited. We have a blast roping together."

Pederson, who is making his third trip to the CNFR, will have a busy week in Casper, but

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SOCCER

Cadenas clutch for Dawggs

By BRETT KANE
STAFF WRITER

The Mid-Columbia Conference's latest addition is now on their way to the district championships.

The Hermiston boys soccer team took down the Kennewick Lions 1-0 in a District 8 playoff matchup Saturday at Kennison Field, clinching a spot in the upcoming championships.

But it wasn't the easiest climb to the top.

"Our first couple of games made me question if we were even there," said coach Rich Harshberger. "We knew we could be competitive in the MCC, but that didn't materialize right away. Some doubts started creeping in. But all credit to the boys. The results speak for themselves."

Saturday marked the third meeting between the Bulldogs and the Lions, and the Bulldogs had won both times before. But with the score even at 0-0 going into the half, all bets were still off.

It wasn't for a lack of trying — Hermiston had seven shots on goal, three of which came from Coleman



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Hermiston's Moises Pablo attempts to dribble around Osbaldo Alcantara, of Kennewick, during Saturday's MCC soccer game.

Solano.

"We came out and stuck to the game plan," Harshberger said. "We just had trouble putting the ball in the net. Last time (a 5-0 victory over the Lions), we scored a couple in pretty quick succession. We weren't able to do that today. That got to their heads early on."

With 22 minutes left in the second half, Emilio Leal passed the ball to midfielder Che Cadenas, who found an opening and drove it into the bottom left corner of Kennewick's net.

"I wanted us to have at least one goal in the first half," Cadenas said. "But we didn't have any-

thing. I started getting nervous. We would've come out with more confidence if we had scored in the first half. We needed a goal. I saw the left side open and I just kicked it in."

Cadenas tried his luck at another goal a few minutes later, but sent the ball too far left. No matter — Kennewick never found the net, sending Hermiston on in the district playoff bracket.

"This feels really good," Cadenas said. "It's great to beat these Washington teams as a team from Oregon."

Solano ended the day with five shots on goal. Goalkeeper Juan Navarrete posted four saves.

Hermiston (7-7) will host Kamiakin in the district championship game Tuesday.

Hermiston has clashed with the Braves twice this season so far, winning the first and dropping the next.

"We just need to work on finishing the game," Harshberger said.

"You can't rely on a 1-0 lead. But the boys never hung their heads and they never gave up. That's why we're in the championship game."

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