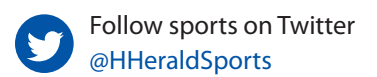


HeraldSports



Hermiston's Romero reflects on golden season



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Heppner's Hunter Nichols and Hermiston's Jazlyn Romero are the All-EO Athletes of the Year for Track and Field. Nichols brought home three first-place finishes for the Mustangs at the 2A State Track and Field Championships. Romero brought home the gold in the javelin at the 3A State Track and Field Championships and is ranked in the top 12 nationally.

Dawgs hire Maloree Moss as new girls basketball coach

By **BRETT KANE**
STAFF WRITER

The Hermiston High School girls basketball team will welcome a new leader this winter.

Maloree Moss, 25, will take the place of former coach Juan Rodriguez, Athletic and Activities Director Larry Usher announced last week.

"I'm extremely honored," Moss said. "It's something I've always dreamed of. I grew up with the program. As a kid, I watched the Hermiston girls play, then I played on the team, and now I get to coach that program. It's an awesome feeling that I never thought I'd get to experience."

Moss, a 2012 Hermiston High graduate, earned a degree in accounting at Eastern Oregon University. Instead of pursuing that career path, she became a business education teacher at Hermiston High School.

"I decided I wanted to teach and coach," Moss said. "It was a spur of the moment thing."

Moss is no stranger to coaching basketball. She's been the assistant varsity basketball coach for the past three seasons, the JV volleyball coach in 2017, and the freshman volleyball coach in 2016.

Not only did Moss put in the work on the Bulldogs varsity team during her high school career, but she also played as a guard all four years at EOU.

"I learned so much about basketball there," Moss said of her time as a Mountaineer. "I had a real connection with the team there. It was special."

As for Rodriguez, his career transition is less a step down, and more of a step up. This fall, he will take on the assistant principal position at Armand Larive Middle School.

"It's always been my career goal to move into administration," Rodriguez said. "I just didn't think it would happen so soon. I planned on coaching for a few more years, but it was an opportunity I couldn't pass up. While it was hard to let go of basketball, it's good for me and my kids. I'll get to spend more time with them."

Rodriguez had coached basketball in one capacity or another for the past 12 years. Seven of those were spent at HHS — three as the head coach.

The Bulldogs were 34-39 under Rodriguez, including a 8-14 record last season — their first in Washington's Mid-Columbia Conference.

"It was by far one of my most rewarding seasons," Rodriguez said. "So many aspects go into that — going into a new league, competing in a new conference, and having a lot of young, dedicated players work hard. We didn't finish where we wanted to, but the program set a good stage for moving forward in the MCC. I know that Maloree will continue that. From a tactical standpoint, she knows basketball in and out. The program is in good hands."

Usher will recommend Moss for the position at the next regular school board meeting July 8.

"I have really high expectations of the girls," Moss said. "I'm so lucky. I have an awesome team, and that's a big part of why I feel so honored. They've welcomed me with open arms. I'm really hoping we can get one of those playoff positions, if not more."

Hermiston's Jazlyn Romero and Heppner's Hunter Nichols had golden seasons

By **ANNIE FOWLER**
STAFF WRITER

Jazlyn Romero and Hunter Nichols could not be more different. Nichols is a distance runner, whereas a trip down the javelin runway is far enough for Romero.

The one thing that brings them together is that they are the best at what they do, which earned them the East Oregonian's Outstanding Athletes for Track and Field.

Romero, a junior at Hermiston, is one of the top high school javelin throwers in the nation. She is the first Oregon athlete to win a Washington state title.

"She wants to be on top (of the podium) every time," Hermiston coach Emilee Strot said. "I think a lot of people still think of her as a basketball player. She is much more."

Nichols, a senior at Heppner, dominated on the track all season. He struck gold at the 2A state track meet, winning the 800 meters, the 3,000 meters, and ran the anchor leg on the winning 4x400 relay.

"He is a hard worker," said Heppner coach Russ Nichols of his son. "I've never had to worry about that."

Hard to beat

When Hermiston moved from the OSAA to the WIAA this year, Romero already was on the national radar in the javelin.

This spring, she moved up into the top 10 at one point, and this week is ranked 12th with a personal best throw of 151 feet, 9 inches.

"Being 12th is still really exciting," Romero said. "My goal this season was to break the school record. A lot of the time this season, I forgot I had another season to do it. I'm striving to get it early next year."

Michelle Coombs holds the school record with a mark of 155-11, set in 2008.

Romero won the 3A state javelin title in May with a throw of 144-11. It was the second-longest winning throw in the 3A division at state in the past eight years.

"I went in confident, but not too confident," she said. "Going in, my mark was the furthest, and I had that security, but anything can happen."

Of the 12 meets she threw the javelin in this spring, there were only two she did not win. She was sixth at the prestigious Pasco Invite, and second at the Dean Nice Invite in Gresham.

While she excels at the javelin, she's also working on doing the same in the discus. She placed in the top three in seven of the 13 meets she entered.

Her season best was 114-3, and she missed out on a trip to state by one place. She finished third at the District 8 meet.

Romero also throws the shot put, but she said she'll leave that for teammates Paige Palzinski and Kendall Dowdy.

"We have strong shot put throwers, but coach will have me throw it in the smaller meets to get points for the team," Romero said. "Javelin and discus are my main focus if I want to throw at the college level."

Yes, there is an if. Romero's first love has always been basketball, but her success in track may be pushing the needle to the other side.

"I have always grown up with basketball, and that is super important to me," Romero said. "But I have grown to love track.

East Oregonian Track and Field Team
Girls MVP: Jazlyn Romero, jr., Hermiston
Boys MVP: Hunter Nichols, sr., Heppner

Girls first team

100M — Kaylee Young, so., Hermiston. **200M** — Ana Zacarias, sr., Irrigon. **400M** — Muriel Hoisington, fr., Pendleton. **800M** — Hannah Christman, sr., Griswold. **1500/1600M** — Madelyn Nichols, so., Heppner. **3000/3200** — Cydney Sanchez, fr., Hermiston. **100H** — Abigail Cardenas, so., Umatilla. **300H** — Elisabeth House, sr., Pendleton. **Shot put** — Paige Palzinski, so., Hermiston. **Discus** — Jazlyn Romero, jr., Hermiston. **Javelin** — Jazlyn Romero, jr., Hermiston. **HJ** — Rebecca Reynolds, jr., Stanfield/Echo. **PV** — Katie Vescio, sr., Weston-McEwen. **LJ** — Kaylee Young, so., Hermiston. **TJ** — Paige Palzinski, so., Hermiston.

Girls second team

100M — Patty Burres, jr., Umatilla. **200M** — Kaylee Young, so., Hermiston. **400M** — Ellie Scheibner, jr., Weston-McEwen. **800M** — Madelyn Nichols, so., Heppner. **1500/1600M** — Kaylee Cope, jr., Griswold. **3000/3200** — Kaylee Cope, jr., Griswold. **100H** — Kendall Bonzani, so., Pendleton. **300H** — Bryce Thul, sr., Weston-McEwen. **Shot put** — Kendall Dowdy, so., Hermiston. **Discus** — Eseta Sepeni, fr., Hermiston. **Javelin** — Lexie Cox, sr., Stanfield/Echo. **HJ** — Sarah Knop, jr., Ione. **PV** — Regina Thede, jr., Pendleton. **LJ** — Ellie Scheibner, jr., Weston-McEwen. **TJ** — Tymesha Douglas, jr., Umatilla.

Boys first team

100M — Aiden Patterson, sr., Pendleton. **200M** — Garrett Walchli, jr., Hermiston. **400M** — Aaron Luke, jr., Pendleton. **800M** — Hunter Nichols, sr., Heppner. **1500/1600M** — Trevor Antonucci, sr., Heppner. **3000/3200** — Hunter Nichols, sr., Heppner. **110H** — Lane Maher, jr.,

Pendleton. **300H** — Lane Maher, jr., Pendleton. **Shot put** — Derek Howard, sr., Heppner. **Discus** — Derek Howard, sr., Heppner. **Javelin** — Sam Jennings, fr., Pendleton. **HJ** — Shawn Yeager, sr., Pendleton. **PV** — Anthony Ibarra, sr., Umatilla. **LJ** — Edwin Linares, jr., Pendleton. **TJ** — Edwin Linares, jr., Pendleton.

Boys second team

100M — Garrett Walchli, jr., Hermiston. **200M** — Cam Sandford, sr., Pendleton. **400M** — Freddy Mendoza, sr., Hermiston. **800M** — Freddy Mendoza, sr., Hermiston. **1500/1600M** — Sisay Hurty, so, Stanfield/Echo. **3000/3200** — Zayne Troeger, sr., Umatilla. **110H** — Mathias Patrick, jr., Pendleton. **300H** — Saber Harp, sr., Pilot Rock. **Shot put** — Sam Carlson, sr., Griswold. **Discus** — Sam Carlson, sr., Griswold. **Javelin** — Christian Haskell, sr., Pilot Rock. **HJ** — Julian Gutierrez, sr., Umatilla. **PV** — Seth Buck, sr., Hermiston. **LJ** — Anthony Ibarra, sr., Umatilla. **TJ** — Donovan Wilson, so., Hermiston.