

Hermiston team heading to nationals

Bulldogs placed seventh in the nation last year

By ANNIE FOWLER
STAFF WRITER

Haylee Hamilton has only been shooting trap for two years, but she is a quick learner.

The incoming senior at Hermiston High School is ranked second among the Bulldogs on the squad, and is part of the contingent headed to the USA High School Clay Target League National Championship this weekend in Mason, Mich.

"I'm very excited to be going," Hamilton said. "It's crazy to me to be out there and shooting with the high shots on the team, and getting to go to nationals. I'm excited to see what I can do. I'm not just another pretty face."

Hamilton will be joined at nationals by teammates Thomas Mabbott, Kaden Smith, Mitchell Pimentel, Tyson Stocker and Trevor Wilson.

All six will compete in the individual portion of the event Saturday. All but Wilson will compete in the team event Friday.

Hermiston had 22 shooters qualify for nationals with their average, but coach Slade Smith said they aren't quite ready for the competition they will face.

"Last year, the cut off to make finals was 95 or 96," Smith said. "They aren't in a position yet to give themselves a legitimate chance to make the finals."

Last year's finals saw a handful of shooters hit all 100 targets in the prelims, and all 100 in the finals, forcing a shoot-off.

The Bulldogs took a team to nationals last year, placing seventh. They were ranked No. 1 going into the finals.

"They weren't satisfied with that," Smith said. "It takes a couple of special days to win it. These kids shoot a lot more trap than a lot of kids, and that's important. I think they are very prepared."

How it works

The shooters in the individual portion of the tournament had to qualify with their average attained during



The Hermiston High School trapshooters nationals team (left to right) Tyson Stocker, alternate Trevor Wilson, Mitchell Pimentel, coach Slade Smith, Kaden Smith, Thomas Mabbott and Haylee Hamilton pose for a portrait at the Hermiston Gun Club.



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan
Tyson Stocker shoots at a clay target during a Monday night practice. The Hermiston High School trapshooters compete at the national tournament in Mason, Michigan, this week.

the six shoots during the regular season. They had to participate in every shoot.

There is no distinction between boys and girls, or wheelchair athletes. Every-one shoots from 16 yards.

"Wheelchair athletes compete with the able-bodied kids," Smith said. "Everyone is the same. There is a lot of diversity. This is a sport kids can come out for who aren't cut out for other sports."

There will be approximately 180 teams and 2,000 individual shooters from around the nation at the event. The top 80 teams and top 1,800 individuals will advance to the finals.

Each shooter brings their own gun (the Hermiston athletes all shoot a Browning trap shotgun) to nationals. Teams let the tournament know what ammunition they

would like, and it's there when they arrive.

The guns are put on the plane with the other luggage. Each gun has to be in a locked gun case and receive a special sticker.

Hermiston will have a practice round Wednesday at MTA Homegrounds (tournament facility), then will have team activities Thursday.

Hermiston will compete in the first flight of the team shoot at 8 a.m. Friday (50 shots per athlete), with the second flight at 11 a.m.

Individual prelims are Saturday, with finals for both Sunday. Prelim and finals scores are combined.

"One target makes a difference," coach Smith said. "They shoot their average, they can be top 10 in the nation."

Mabbott has the high

to people and what you do the night before."

And, just like any sport, there is trash talk.

"Some of us have gotten pretty good at it," Mabbott said. "One of the worst things you can say to get in their head is, 'the targets are flying funny.'"

Practice makes perfect

While Hamilton has only been shooting for two years, most of the guys on the team have been shooting for many more.

"Some people pick it up pretty quick," Mabbott said. "I was not one of them. I've shot for a long time. I've been shooting since seventh grade, but didn't get heavy into it until my freshman year. Tyson, Kaden and I have been shooting together for a long time. Kaden used to shoot better than all of us — it's all in his head."

Hamilton said her dad, Derek, taught her to shoot.

"My dad is a very good shot, and he's taught me 90 percent of what I know," she said. "The guys are extremely supportive. They are by my side to make sure I have everything I need. I never feel left out."

There's still that one burning question.

"I can beat my dad now, any day of the week," Hamilton said.

It takes a village

The trap team is a club sport, but it still receives support from the school district, which is covering lodging at nationals.

The Hermiston Gun Club offers support, and the team has a grant from the Blue Mountain Chapter of Friends of the NRA, which supplies the ammo and targets for the team.

There also are private donors, and the team has gotten support from the high school booster club.

Local athletes compete in Youth League Championship

HERMISTON HERALD

Some of the area's top young track athletes put their talents on display at the TrackTown Youth League Championship on Saturday at Lane Community College.

Hermiston's Alyssa Thomas finished second in the girls 7-8 turbo javelin with a toss of 43 feet, with Aubrey Savage of Hermiston third (39-0).

Umatilla's Emily Salinas was third in the girls 9-10 100 meters in a time of 14.91 seconds. The winner was Abigail Sondag of Richland (14.20).

Other girls placing in the top 10 include Avery Bockert of Milton-Freewater in the 100 (7-8, 4th, 16.52); Samantha Lamb of Irrigon in the 100 (7-8, 9th, 17.10); Mia Rose Garcilazo of Umatilla in the 100 (11-12, 7th, 14.81); and McKenzie Shelden of Pendleton in the 100 (11-12, 8th, 14.82).

Placing for the boys were Chase Swanson of Hermiston in the 100 (7-8, 4th, 16.78); Camren McCann of Stanfield in the turbo javelin (13-14, 6th, 90-2); Easton Berry of Athena in the long jump (11-12, 7th, 13-6½); and Marcos Cooper of Umatilla in the turbo javelin (13-14, 8th, 80-7).

Participants competed in the 100 meters, 400 meters, 800 meters, 1,500 meters, the turbo javelin and the long jump.

The event was the culmination of 15 free youth track meets throughout the state, including events in La Grande, Hermiston and Prairie City. More than 1,800 youth from throughout the Northwest participated in the 2019 season.

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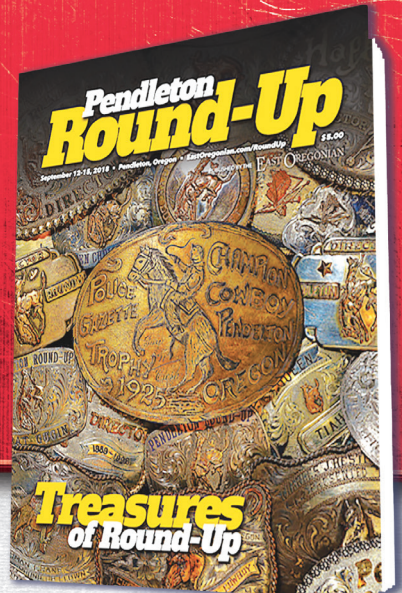
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