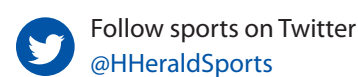


HeraldSports



LACROSSE

Hermiston Lacrosse looks toward a field of their own

By **BRETT KANE**
STAFF WRITER

Most sports in Hermiston have their place. Soccer has Butte Park. Baseball has the Field of Dreams. But the lacrosse program has long been in search of a permanent home.

Hermiston's lacrosse club, which consists of age groups from kindergarten through high school, has grown from 40 members to over 150 in just four years. They practice at Sandstone Middle School, and play home games and tournaments at elementary and middle schools all across town. As the program continues to grow, so does the need for its own field.

"It goes back to a problem that all of our youth sports are having," former Hermiston Lacrosse Association President Scott Purswell said. "No one has enough grass. We're all fighting for it. It just doesn't work. We're beggars. We get the scraps. We talked about buying grounds, and someone asked, 'Why not EOTEC?'"

The lacrosse team plays most of their away games in the Tri-Cities, Spokane, and Yakima, but their home field is always changing.

Purswell said EOTEC has the kind of clean, buildable grounds that a lacrosse field would need. The program has been serious about their search for a location for the past two years, and the EOTEC board took an interest.

"EOTEC is a possible longterm solution," Hermiston Parks and Recreation Director Larry Fetter said. "(The lacrosse program) has had some very noticeable growth over the years, and it looks like its popularity will only grow. They need a home."

Hermiston's AYSO soccer teams went through the same dilemma over 30 years ago, before Butte Park became its home for local matches.

"Lacrosse doesn't have that benefit right now," Fetter said. "They have to hunt for any



Hermiston's Ty Knutz (17) looks for a loose ball among a swarm of Selah defenders during a lacrosse game at Kennison Field in Hermiston in 2017.

Contributed photo by Kari Christiansen

scrap of turf they can. They're going to be around for a long time."

Of the 100 acres on the EOTEC property, the lacrosse program is eyeing 20 of it to construct their proposed field, which will include fresh turf, lights, and a sprinkler system. Once built, they hope to host all local practices, games, and tournaments at the location.

The program has been working with the city of Hermiston,

EOTEC, and EOTEC's private management company VenuWorks to set things in motion, but it's a process that has taken longer than intended.

"We had hoped to start last year after the (Umatilla County Fair) ended. That's when we wanted to start the earth work," Purswell said. "It takes four months to get the grounds cleaned and sprinklers set up."

The lacrosse team's fall season is played up in the Tri-Cit-

ies, but their spring schedule, which kicks off at the end of February, is played locally. Purswell said the goal is to make even more progress before then.

"I hope it would be soon," he said of construction. "Our season is in the spring — we need to get the grass established."

The team is funded entirely by donations. Purswell noted that they are only able to cover expenses for pipes and sprinklers alone. Their dream, he

said, is to install their own lighting system, as well.

"We're looking for help to build this project," he said. "(Lacrosse) has elements of soccer, hockey and football. There are kids who were meant for baseball. They'll play it no matter what. But there's a lot of kids just sitting inside. We're seeing growth year after year. They love lacrosse. We're running out of room for them. We want to get the kids active."

HALL OF FAME

Mayor of Hermiston gets inducted into the Fastpitch Hall of Fame

By **JESSICA POLLARD**
STAFF WRITER

He's the mayor, he's your local optometrist, and last week he was inducted into the North American Fastpitch Association Hall of Fame.

Dr. David Drotzmann was presented with the honor alongside seven other players during the NAFA A-Major tournament in Mankato, Minnesota.

Drotzmann has been playing fastpitch softball for over 30 years. Back in the day, he played basketball and volleyball. He wasn't introduced to fastpitch until after high school, as he prepared to head to college.

"Some friends of mine were playing this game called fastpitch. I had no idea what it was about, and they invited me to play," Drotzmann said. "I played, and I wasn't very good. But I found it fun, and I stuck it out."

The hard work eventually paid off. Today, he plays with the Lacey A's of Lacey, Washington.

"We're probably one of the most competitive teams in the Northwest," Drotzmann said.

He noted that the team usually fares well during



HH File Photo

Drotzmann

Nationals, but this year they underperformed.

Next season, Drotzmann will also be eligible to compete in Masters tournaments through NAFA, as he heads towards his 50th birthday.

Drotzmann, along with other experienced members of the Lacey A's, provide leadership and guidance for the team.

He's also got 20 years of coaching behind him.

In the past, Drotzmann has acted as an assistant and pitching coach for high schoolers, first in his hometown of Yakima, Washington.

When he moved to Hermiston in 1998, he resumed coaching the following year. Drotzmann

was coaching the Bulldogs when his daughter Abi was on the team. They took second to the Sandy Pioneers at the state championship in 2013, 1-0.

Drotzmann took a 9-year break from his own fastpitch career as his children went through school, and resumed recently as they've begun college. He doesn't seem to be slowing down anytime soon.

"I go out and throw for an hour, an hour and a half against a concrete wall by myself three nights a week," he said. "That's the kind of dedication it takes to be successful."

Drotzmann said the sport helps him destress from his day-to-day, as mayor of Hermiston and at Lifetime Vision Source, where he is an optometrist.

"I get to hang out and be an average Joe, joking around. It helps to make me more level-headed," he said.

And while he does put in hours of personal practice, Drotzmann said he never would have made it this far without his teammates and family.

"It's not a one-man sport," he said. "I couldn't have done it without my family or my teammates."



Photo contributed by David Drotzmann

David Drotzmann was inducted into the North American Fastpitch Association Hall of Fame last week.