



Hermiston's Robert Sloan makes a handoff to a fellow player during a drill on the first day of Hermiston football practice Wednesday afternoon.

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Hermiston's Ramirez taking his game to California

By ANNIE FOWLER
STAFF WRITER

Jordan Ramirez was a standout football, basketball and baseball player at Hermiston High School, but the recent graduate put his focus on baseball his junior year in hopes of getting a chance to play at the college level.

That day has come.

Ramirez signed to play at Santa Barbara City College three weeks ago after making a visit to the California school.

"I went for a visit and it was nice," Ramirez said. "The coach (Jeff Walker) was really cool. I had interest from Blue Mountain, and no offense, but this is a better experience."

Led by pitcher Ian Churchill, the Vaqueros finished 24-15 last year, including a 13-7 record in the Western State Conference North. They have reached the play-offs nine consecutive years.

Ramirez is coming off his senior year, where he was a first-team all-Mid-Columbia Conference outfielder. He hit .396 and struck out just four times in 48 at-bats.

"Jordan deserves to go play (at the college level)," Hermiston coach Kevin Moore said. "It also lets people in the Hermiston community know that a kid can go play college baseball. It makes our program look good."

The 5-foot-11, 170-pound Ramirez, who was a receiver in football and a guard on the basketball team, said it will be good for him to focus on just one sport.

"I can't wait to get down there and show my skills," he said. "Since my junior year, I chose baseball to be my main priority. I had a

good season and I'm looking forward to it."

The Bulldogs struggled in their first year in the MCC, but Ramirez said the quality of pitching he faced will help him at the next level.

"The Washington kids throw fast and know where to place the ball," Ramirez said. "I think what really threw me off was all the left-handed pitchers — and their ball moves."

Blue Mountain and Columbia Basin College in Pasco showed interest in Ramirez, but he was hoping for a little more. Moore was able to help him out.

"When you are in a coaching community, you know coaches in certain areas," Moore said. "I called around, and someone gave me the name of the Santa Barbara coach. They had a couple of openings. I made the connection, it was up to him."

Moore said Ramirez, who also pitched a few innings this past season, is well suited for the outfield.

"There is space for him to roam," Moore said. "He has a lot of range and a strong arm. This will be a good opportunity for him. In California, you can play all year around."

Ramirez, who plans to study business, knows he couldn't have reached the next level without a little help, and he was quick to give credit to his coaches along the way.

"I want to thank coach (Lance) Hawkins and coach (John) Christy for believing in me my sophomore year and helping me develop my game," Ramirez said. "And coach Moore, for making me trust the system. I learned a lot of things from him."



Ramirez

Hermiston football opens camp

By ANNIE FOWLER
STAFF WRITER

When 118 high school guys show up for football practice at 5 a.m., that is commitment.

Hermiston coach David Faaeteete was pleased to see so many players bright-eyed and bushy tailed last week as the sun was rising.

"It was super energetic," Faaeteete said on Aug. 21. "They were all on the same field and had a lot of energy. It brought smiles to the coaches' faces. It was fun with a lot of positive energy. Not a bad first day."

The players weathered a strong wind and rain in the afternoon practice session, but they did not seem to care.

"Honestly, by the grace of God, we got a bad day," senior Garrett Walchli said of the weather. "You find out who the dogs are, and who the pups are. We've been training and lifting, and to finally get the helmets on, that is the first step. I think kids are getting an idea of what Hermiston football is all about."

The Bulldogs, who will be entering their second season in Mid-Columbia Conference, are having to replace their backfield with the loss of three-year starting quarterback Andrew James, and running back Wyatt Noland. The secondary also was depleted by graduation.

There will be battles for all jobs.

"I've been in this coaching game 11 or 12 years, and you don't know what you have until you get into camp," Faaeteete said. "Other teams have to get ready too. Other teams lost players, but we lost the most."

Walchli and senior offensive lineman Dustyn Coughlin said senior leadership will be key until the younger players learn the ropes.

"You see the older kids dancing and feeling good," Walchli said. "We have worked for this moment. Now we need to see who will fill the spots — who will step up. We are here to help them."

The Bulldogs open the season Sept. 6 against Pasco

at Edgar Brown Stadium.

The volleyball team will open its season Sept. 7, hosting Walla Walla.

The boys and girls cross-country teams also began practice Monday, as did the girls soccer team. The girls swim team was in the pool Tuesday.

The girls soccer team begins MCC action Sept. 7 against Kamiakin at Lampson Stadium in Kennewick.

The cross-country teams will have their first meet Sept. 7, hosting the Runner Soul XC Fest.

The swimmers will be in the pool in Richland on Sept. 6 for a twilight meet.

Complete schedules for all teams can be found at www.mid-columbiaconference.com.

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