

ON TAP



Dustyn Coughlin, left, Garrett Walchli, and Chase Bradshaw pose for a portrait on the football field at Hermiston High School in August.

Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Hermiston will open season against Pasco at Edgar Brown Stadium

By ANNIE FOWLER
STAFF WRITER

The Mid-Columbia Conference football teams try to avoid one another in the summer — they don’t want to give too much away. Try as they might, all nine teams ended up at the Eastern Washington University team camp. It’s not enough to get a full scouting report, but Pasco coach Leon Wright-Jackson saw enough of Hermiston to learn a couple of things.

“They are big and they are fast,” Wright-Jackson said. Hermiston will open its season Friday against Pasco at Edgar Brown Stadium in the battle of the Bulldogs. Game time is 7 p.m. “I think they are going to have good team speed, and they have good skill guys,” said Hermiston coach David Faaeteete, whose team won last year’s matchup 45-0. “It was cool to see that they are going to be hungry this year.” Hermiston, which has to replace a bulk of its offense with the graduation of quarterback Andrew James and running back Wyatt Noland, will look to sophomore quarterback Chase Elliot, who will get protection up front from senior all-league linemen Chase Bradshaw and

Dustyn Coughlin. Senior Garrett Walchli has speed, and the Bulldogs will use that out of the backfield, at receiver and on defense. “I think we have a solid core group of seniors who put in the work over the summer,” Faaeteete said. “We have size and speed. I’m excited to see them put it all together on Friday night.” Wright-Jackson is in his second year at the helm at Pasco — his alma mater. He has done his best to instill a sense of family and pride in the program. “I always felt Pasco had good team chemistry,” Faaeteete said. “They are just missing pieces here and there. They compete and they are athletic.” Pasco put in the work over the summer, getting in the weight room and

attending camps. “There were days we had 40 or 50 kids in the weight room,” Wright-Jackson said. “We did not have that last year. That’s progress.” Pasco will rely on second-year quarterback Armani Reyes to run the offense. He threw for more than 1,100 yards and eight touchdowns last year. Reyes will have an trio of receivers to throw to, including Des Licon, Alex DeLeon and Traeton Mitchell, while Sergio Avina will carry the ball out of the backfield. “It’s awesome to see what Leon has done with his program in his second year,” Faaeteete said. “I think Pasco is on the up and up. They are going to catch some of us this year.”

XC Fest invades Hermiston Saturday

More than 700 runners expected to compete

By ANNIE FOWLER
STAFF WRITER

More than 700 runners from middle school to high school will line up for the annual Runners Soul XC Fest on Saturday — one of the largest meets in Eastern Oregon. “It was the Hermiston Invite when I was in school,” said Hermiston coach Troy Blackburn, who ran at Stanfield. “It has been going on for 25 years or so. Right now, we have 23 high schools and 15 middle schools coming.” Among those on the list are Kennewick, Chiawana, West Valley (Yakima), Albany, Union, Stanfield and Heppner. The Union girls won the title last year, while the Union boys were second. “Our girls team is pretty good,” Union coach Steve Sheehy said. “We have 11 girls out. Success helps. Once you get rolling, it helps with recruiting and culture.” Sophomore Audrey Wells and senior Jaimee Baxter will lead the Bobcats on Saturday. The races, which begin and end at Sandstone Middle School, range from 2,500 meters for middle school runners, to 5,000 meters for the high school junior varsity and varsity races. The middle school girls races will begin at 10 a.m., followed by the boys. There will be a community race between the middle school and high school races. Community members will have a choice of a 1.5-mile course, or a 5K.

Both will begin at 10:50 a.m. The race is free and no registration is required. The girls junior varsity race is set for 11:30 a.m., with the boys at 12:10 p.m. Girls varsity follows at 12:50, with the boys varsity at 1:30 p.m. Awards will follow the races, and in spirit of Hermiston, watermelon will be available for all athletes and coaches. The Hermiston boys finished third in the boys varsity race last year, with senior Freddy Mendoza leading the way with a 15th-place finish. “We are pretty young,” Blackburn said. “We have a lot of freshmen and sophomores. Greg Anderson is back. He put in almost 600 miles this summer. He is looking strong and confident.” The boys race will be wide open. Last year’s champ, Tim Stevens of Union is now running at University of Idaho. Six of the top 10 finishers from last year graduated. The Stanfield boys return Rafael Orozco, Franklin Gomez and Sisay Hurty, who finished 16th overall last in last year’s race. The Hermiston girls were seventh, led by freshman Cydney Sanchez, who crossed the finish line in 11th place. “We stay healthy, we have a good chance to win it,” Blackburn said of his girls team. “Cydney is looking stronger than last year, and Amanda Nygard, who took last year off, is looking good. Julianna Joyce, who had surgery last year, is healthy again.” Nygard (25th) and Joyce (48th) both qualified for the Oregon 5A state cross country meet in 2017.

Experience, chemistry has Hermiston volleyball team looking for good things

Bulldogs open season Saturday, hosting Walla Walla

By ANNIE FOWLER
STAFF WRITER

Hermiston volleyball coach Amy Dyck is thankful to have six returning varsity players from last year, including two setters, two defensive specialists and two outside hitters. In the highly competitive Mid-Columbia Conference, any advantage is welcome. “We have all the components,” Dyck said. “The tricky part, is we have some young players in the middle. They are coachable, but young. Their learning curve will be cool to watch.” The Bulldogs open their season Saturday, hosting Walla Walla at 1 p.m. Hermiston has a handful of Saturday matches, as well as one on a Monday. “It’s tough,” Dyck said of the Saturday matches. “On one hand, volleyball is a game of momentum, and having the student section is a great motivator. On the other hand, it forces us to create our own motivation.” Among those returning for the Bulldogs are setters Kendall Dowdy and Courtnee West, who will share duties. Defensive specialists Hallee Stubbs and Emma Combes, and outside hitters Avery Treadwell (left) and Daisy Mad-



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Hermiston’s Kendall Dowdy sets the ball in the Bulldogs’ 3-0 Mid-Columbia Conference loss to Chiawana on Oct. 2, 2018, in Hermiston. Dowdy returns this season for the Bulldogs.

dox (right). “We have some size, and some athletic players,” Dyck said. “These are probably the most

focused and disciplined players we have had in a long time. Our leadership allows us to practice and train without fear of failure. They are able to push through the hiccups that can come with being such a young varsity team.” The Bulldogs spent Labor Day weekend in Sandpoint, Idaho, where they did team bonding exercises, played it the river, and practiced at the local high school. “We got to train in a different environment, which takes away from the distractions when you stay home on a holiday weekend,” Dyck said. One thing the Bulldogs did find out on their adventure, is that senior Josie Goodrich is competitive — at everything. “She wants to win at everything,” Stubbs said. “We had a scavenger hunt, and she was like ‘we are going to win this.’ It’s contagious. We are glad to have someone like her on our team.” Stubbs and Combes are in their third year at the varsity level, but they said this year is different. “It’s awesome; everyone is so close,” Stubbs said. “I believe in everyone, and that makes my job easier.” And having their setters back is a bonus. “No matter if we get a small touch, Kendall or Courtnee are there. They are so fast,” Combes said. “It helps take the pressure off, and our hitters are smart.”

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Amy Dyck, Hermiston volleyball coach