

Hermiston's Elliott is back in action

Standout sophomore is on the basketball court 4 months after breaking his leg in football

By ANNIE FOWLER
SPORTS EDITOR

Chase Elliott still remembers the pain.

The Hermiston sophomore quarterback was making his first start in the opening game of the season. The Bulldogs were at Pasco and things were looking pretty good late in the first quarter with a 14-0 lead and possession of the ball.

Elliott had dropped back for a simple pass play when everything went awry.

"I remember Trent (Pitney) was open," Elliott said. "I stepped through, I was snapped down pretty fast and I hit the ground hard. It was the worst pain I have ever had."

A Pasco defender had rolled into Elliott's left leg just as he threw the ball. Elliott suffered a hairline fracture of his femur and chipped the growth plate in his knee.

"I could not imagine had it (femur) snapped in half," Elliott said. "I didn't have surgery, it would have closed off my growth plate. They let it heal on its own and told me not to do anything stupid."

Elliott was helped off the field by coach David Faaeteete and trainer Dan Emery.

"When they were carrying me off the field, my one question was 'Why,'" Elliott said. "I did the summer weight program, I ate right, and bonded with my team. Sitting there watching my team struggle (during the season) and knowing there was nothing I could do about it was hard."

Almost four months to the day that he got hurt, Elliott laced up his sneakers and started his first basketball game for the Bulldogs — Jan. 3 at Southridge — much to the delight of first-year coach Drew Preuninger.

"I was at that (Pasco) game," Preuninger said. "It was my first Hermiston game ever. I was a little late, and it was the first play I saw. When he went down, I told him my heart stopped. I knew he was going to be my starting point guard. I was disappointed he got hurt. I felt bad for him. He came back a lot quicker than anyone thought. It surprised all of us."

Elliott scored just two points in his first game,



Hermiston's Chase Elliott (10) watches his shot float toward the basket during a Jan. 3 game as he and Southridge defender Justin Brown fall backwards.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney, File

but over the course of six games, he is the Bulldogs' second-leading scorer with 67 points (11.17 per game).

"He has a different speed, a different gear that the other guys don't have," Preuninger said. "That's why he has been able to step in and take over. I'm still kind of amazed. It doesn't seem like he has lost a step — he's aggressive and plays tough."

A lost season

Elliott was injured with 1:50 to play in the first quarter against Pasco, and Hermiston was on top 14-0. The sophomore quarterback had completed 6 of 7 passes for 95 yards and a touchdown to Garrett Walchli to open the game.

"It's a shock to your confidence," Faaeteete said. "It's nothing you expect to happen. At the time, we said we'd see what the doctors say, then have a plan from there. When we found out, we had to go back to the drawing board."

While Robert Sloan finished the Pasco game, it was junior Sam Schwirse who

finished the season under center.

"I think Sam did more than an efficient job," Faaeteete said. "Chase was there for Sam, and that was good. It's good to see a kid continue to show up. He was still invested in his teammates. That's who he is. It sucked for him — he's always used to competing — but he found a way to be of help."

On Sept. 10, Elliott was told his football season was over. He tweeted "definitely tough to hear about the sport I love but God's got a plan for me and I'll be back next season better than ever"

Elliott had a pretty serious looking brace on his leg for a couple of weeks, but it was more for stabilization, and would not allow him to bend his leg.

He used a wheelchair at school for some classes, and crutches for others. And, he was there for his team.

"I tried to go to practice as much as I could," said Elliott, whose mom Shantel was his chauffeur. "I was trying to help Sam when

I saw something, and was there for quarterback talk. My mom felt the pain for me. She made sure I stayed on top of everything."

Return to action

Elliott followed his doctor's orders, and put in the work to make sure he could get back on the basketball court as soon as possible.

"I got cleared Dec. 16 or 17," Elliott said. "I did what I could. Every day during Christmas break I would come in (to the gym) with Coach P and get my practices in. He was pretty excited to have me back, and I was happy with full activity and being able to run."

And just like football, Elliott was there for his teammates.

"When he was hurt, he was there every day," Preuninger said. "It was good to see him there even if he couldn't play. He puts in the work. He's in the weight room every day at 6 a.m. He's got a good work ethic."

He also was able to relieve his mom of her chauffeur duties after Thanksgiving.

Lions shut down Dawgs in 2nd half for big win

By ANNIE FOWLER
SPORTS EDITOR

Hermiston has played some good basketball as of late, and last week it looked as if the Bulldogs might be in the hunt for another upset.

The Bulldogs trailed 30-25 early in the third quarter on Jan. 14, but Kennewick clamped down on defense and pulled away for a 68-40 Mid-Columbia Conference victory at the Lions Den.

"We lost our will to compete, I think," Hermiston coach Maloree Moss said. "We couldn't find the bucket after we cut it to five. We kind of rolled over when things didn't go our way."

The Lions (11-1, 8-1 MCC) are at the top of the MCC standings with Chiawana, and handed the Riverhawks their first loss last week.

"I can't complain," Lions coach Daron Santo said. "They are really coming together as a team, especially defensively."

After a slow start that saw the Lions take an 11-3 lead, the Bulldogs (7-6, 4-5 MCC) got a three-point play from Bailey Young, and 3-point-

ers from Jazlyn Romero and Katelyn Heideman to pull within 15-12 at the end of the quarter.

Hermiston kept the pressure on in the second, getting 3s from Heideman, Romero and Mia Hernandez to trail 30-23 at the half.

"I'm super proud of the way we played in the first half," Moss said.

Young hit a basket to open the third quarter and pull the Bulldogs within 30-25, but they would not score again for 4 minutes. In the that span, the Lions went on a 9-0 run.

In the final 27 seconds of the quarter, Madeline Gebers and Maya Thornton drained 3s to give Kennewick a commanding 46-30 lead.

"We switched it up defensively and went more man," Santo said. "They struggled with that. That third quarter was huge, we got our momentum back."

The onslaught continued in the fourth quarter as the Lions went on a 22-10 run.

Jayden Ray and Hernandez each had four points in the fourth for the Bulldogs.

"They are No. 9 in the state for a reason," Moss

said of the Lions. "Their coach is good, and their players trust it."

Hernandez led the Bulldogs with 13 points, while Heideman added 10.

Gerbers scored 10 of her game-high 19 points in the fourth quarter. Meilani McBee, who has committed to Hawaii, chipped in 17 points, and Avery Fiander added 15.

"I was really proud of Madi," Santo said. "She really struggled in the first half."

MCC boys basketball

KENNEWICK 83, HERMISTON 35 — Kennewick's Ayoni Benavidez scored a game-high 26 points to lead the Lions to an MCC win over the visiting Bulldogs.

The Lions led 23-5 at the end of the first quarter, and 42-16 at the half.

"The biggest concern for me is the kids' effort," Hermiston coach Drew Preuninger said. "I need to find a group that will give a consistent effort. I think they can give me a little more."

Hermiston (2-11, 1-8 MCC) played without Ivan Rangel (ankle injury), who

was injured in the Richland game last week.

"We hope to get him back next week," Preuninger said. "He is a big body, and he's physical."

Chase Elliott led the Bulldogs with 12 points, while Jaiden Ruloph and Tyler Lin each had six points.

Benavidez, the MCC's leading scorer, needed just seven points before the game to join the 1,000th-point club.

Benavidez hit two free throws, a basket, and a 3-pointer from the top of the key just 2:53 into the game to reach the milestone.

Jack Pyu added 11 points for the Lions (8-4, 6-3 MCC), who had all but one player score.

GIRLS BOX SCORE

Hermiston 12 10 7 10 — 40
Kennewick 15 15 16 22 — 68
HERMISTON — Heideman 10, Ray 4, Hernandez 13, Romero 6, B.Young 7.
KENNEWICK — Av.Fiander 15, Ai.Fiander 4, Flores 3, Thornton 7, McBee 17, Gebbers 19.

BOYS BOX SCORE

Hermiston 5 11 11 8 — 35
Kennewick 23 19 20 21 — 83
HERMISTON — Ruloph 6, Pitney 2, Lin 6, Elliott 12, Ramos-Barron 2, Moreno 3, Jai, Ramirez 4.
KENNEWICK — Pyu 11, Benavidez 26, Chavez 9, Moses 5, Dickinson 3, Collier 9, Mayer 3, Mayovsky 6, Knapik 2, Bai.McElroy 5, Bra.McElroy 4.



Photo contributed by Cody Bettencourt

The Elks Northeast District Hoop Shoot contest was held Jan. 5 in Hermiston. Pictured are (back) Nick Bettencourt, Oregon State Elks Association vice president Northeast District, Corey Sweeney, Oregon State Elks Association Northeast District Hoop Shoot chairman, Julie Hull, Jason Hull, Doug Riggs, Oregon State Elks Association trustee Northeast District; (front) Charlotte Hansell (representing Milton-Freewater Lodge #2146), Ciciley Stefani and Cooper Stefani (both Heppner Lodge #358) and Christian Sanchez-Lamas (Hermiston Lodge #1845).

Youths get nothing but net in Elks hoops contest

HERMISTON HERALD

11/25)

The Elks Northeast District Hoop Shoot contest — which represents Elks in Hermiston Lodge #1845, Heppner Lodge #358, Milton-Freewater Lodge #2146, Hood River Lodge #1507, The Dalles Lodge #303, Condon Lodge #1869, Enterprise Lodge #1829 and Baker Lodge #338 — was held Jan. 5 in Hermiston. There were 34 kids representing seven of the lodges that competed at the district contest. The local age group winners included:

Boys 8-9: 1 Cooper Stefani (Heppner, 17/30) won in shoot off; **Girls 8-9:** 1 Ciciley Stefani (Heppner, 16/25).

Boys 10-11: 1 Christian Sanchez-Lamas (Hermiston, 16/25), 3 Brody McDaniel (Heppner, 16/30); **Girls 10-11:** 3 Healy Hisler (Heppner,

3 Mason Orem (Heppner, 17/30); **Girls 12-13:** 3 Araceli Madrigal (Hermiston, 14/30)

The first place contestant in each age group will compete at the State Elks Hoop Shoot contest Feb. 8 in Silverton. The winner in each age group will move on to compete at the regional contest in March in Pasco — these kids will shoot free throws against winners from the Elks Area 8 states of Alaska, Washington and Idaho. Regional winners will then compete at the national level in Chicago.

For more information about the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks, the Hermiston Elks Lodge will host an open house Saturday, Jan. 25 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Appetizers and beverages will be available.

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