

Tigers edged in five sets

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The La Grande Tigers and Grant Union Prospectors traded rallies and points all night Tuesday.

In the end, it was the visiting Prospectors who strung together just enough points late to escape with a five-set win.

Grant Union used a 7-1 run in the final set to take the lead for good and went on to win a tight match against La Grande, 25-23, 26-28, 22-25, 25-18, 15-9.

"We knew Grant Union has a good team," La Grande Head Coach Melinda Becker-Bisenius said. "We knew it was going to be a tough match. At times we looked great, and at other times we weren't quite as mentally tough as we needed to be to win the rallies. I think that it was pretty evenly matched."

The coach said the mental toughness was the difference in the deciding fifth set, especially once the Prospectors built up the lead.

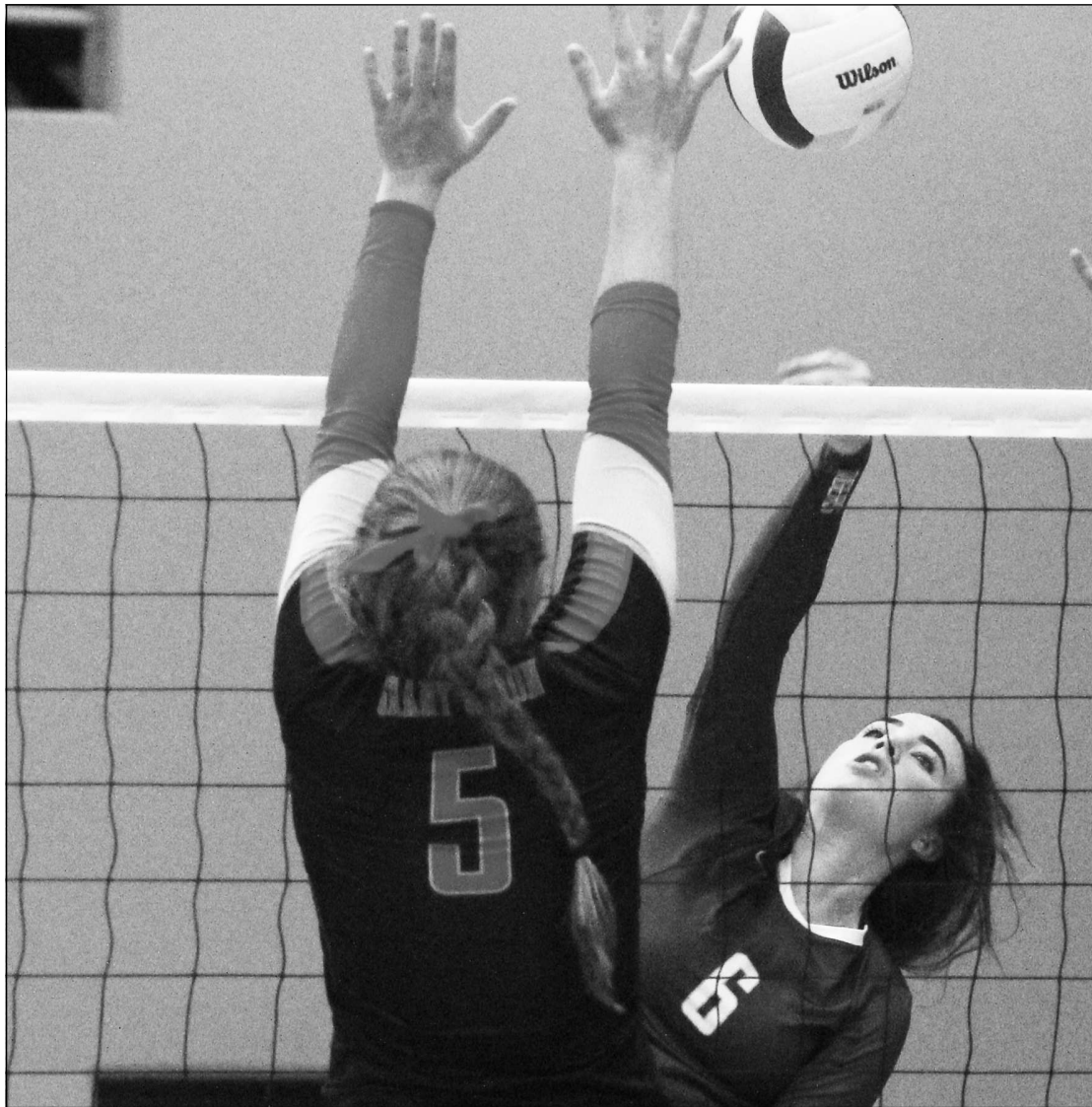
Grant Union's Hailie Wright had four kills in the fifth set, all at crucial times. She evened the score at 5-5 with a kill, then had back-to-back kills for a 10-6 lead. After La Grande rallied to get within 11-9 on a kill by Claire Hardy and an ace by Felicity Houston, it was another kill by Wright that started a 4-0 run to end the match.

Grant Union never trailed in the opening set, though the Tigers threatened to steal it from the Prospectors late. Riana Scott's kill evened the first-set score at 21-21, and Presley Justice's kill later made it 23-23 before Wright gave Grant Union the lead for good with a kill.

The Tigers got on the board in the second set, though not without having to withstand a Prospectors' rally. A kill and ace by La Grande's Jayce Seavert, and a Grant Union error, made it 21-15 Tigers. But the Prospectors pulled even at 22-all on a Taylor Allen ace and a La Grande error, and briefly took the lead at 25-24 and 26-25. But two Prospector errors gave the Tigers the lead back, and Jaiden Hafer finished the set with a kill.

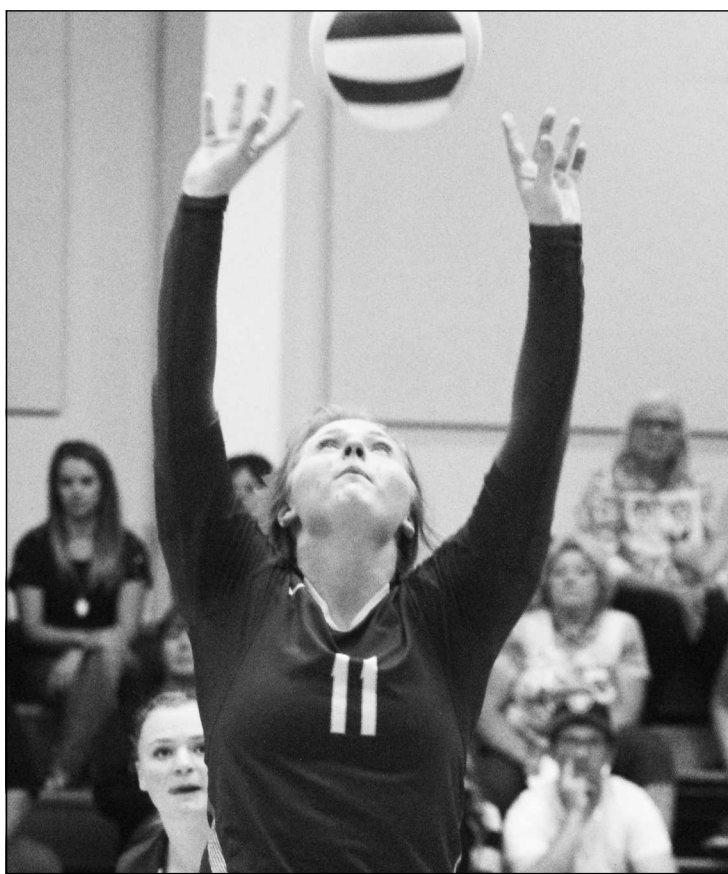
"We talk about taking it one point at a time, and not give up the little stuff," Becker-Bisenius said. "I feel like we battled for the most part."

La Grande withstood another Grant Union rally in the third set, then came back with one of its own. Two kills by Kenzie Williams helped give the Tigers an 8-2 lead early, but two Sydney Brockway kills tied the score at 11-11. The Prospectors used a 4-0 run to take a 21-19 lead, but the Tigers leveled the score two points later on an ace by Seavert. Two more Grant Union



Ronald Bond/The Observer

La Grande's Jaiden Hafer, right, puts a kill down past Grant Union's Trinity Hutchison Tuesday.



Ronald Bond/The Observer

La Grande's Kenzie Williams had 11 assists Tuesday night.

errors and a kill by Hafer gave the Tigers a 24-21 lead, and they finished the set two points later.

But Grant Union went on another big run to take the lead for good in the fourth set, and this time didn't let the Tigers rally. The Prospectors turned an 11-7 deficit into a 17-12 lead with a lengthy rally, capped by back-to-back blocks by Trinity Hutchison. La Grande got back within four on three occasions,

including at 18-14 on a block by Hafer and Seavert, but Wright had two late kills to help set up the final set.

Hardy led La Grande with 10 kills, while Seavert and Hafer had six each. Hafer also had three blocks. Seavert recorded 22 digs, while Houston had 17. Jacie Howton had 12 assists, Williams had 11 and Scott tallied three aces.

La Grande (3-1 overall) visits

Pendleton Thursday.

Also Tuesday

IMBLER SWEEPS COVE

Imbler opened Old Oregon League play with a home sweep of Cove Tuesday, defeating the Leopards, 25-15, 25-18, 25-22.

Caysie McGinness led the Panthers' attack in the win with eight kills, and also paced the back line defense with 14 digs. Karrington Troyer had a strong all-around match with 17 assists, 11 digs and six aces. Sydney Treat added five aces and three kills, and Chloe Birkmaier had 12 digs.

Stats were not available for Cove.

Imbler (4-3 overall, 1-0 OOL) travels to Pine Eagle Thursday, while Cove (2-2, 0-1) visits Enterprise Thursday.

JOSEPH ROLLS PAST ELGIN

Sabrina Albee had nine kills, Emma Hite added seven kills and seven aces, and Joseph opened Old Oregon League action with a sweep at Elgin Tuesday, 5-11, 25-8, 25-14.

Camille Crenshaw added six kills and five aces for the Eagles. Albee chipped in with three aces, and both Hite and Albee had three blocks.

Jayden Palmer had three kills and Taelynn Murrill had three digs to lead Elgin.

Joseph (7-5 overall, 1-0 OOL) travels to Wallowa Sept. 11, while Elgin (1-3, 0-1) visits Cove Friday.

Eastern men finish off undefeated road swing

Observer staff

Carlos Solorio scored the game's only goal on a penalty kick late in the second half, and Eastern Oregon finished its Arizona road trip 2-0-1 with a 1-0 victory over Ottawa Monday in Phoenix.

Solorio earned the penalty kick and put it home in the 74th minute to break a scoreless tie in what was an even matchup. The Mountaineers had a slight edge in shots (15-12) but Ottawa had the advantage in shots on goal (9-8).

Aidan Wright recorded seven saves in net for the Mountaineers (2-1-1 overall) who face Providence, Montana, Sept. 14 on the road in Butte Falls to begin Cascade Collegiate Conference play.

EOU women's soccer ranked 20th, volleyball comes in 21st

Observer staff

The Eastern Oregon women's soccer team, boosted by a top-15 win, moved up five spots to No. 20 in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics coaches poll, which came out Tuesday.

The ranking is the highest in the history of the women's soccer program. EOU was ranked 25th in the preseason poll, its first time ever in the top 25.

The Mountaineers opened 2018 2-0 with a pair of wins in Arizona, including a 1-0 shut-out over then-No. 14 Embry-Riddle, Arizona. Eastern garnered 193 points in the pool. Embry-Riddle now sits just ahead of EOU in 19th with 198 points.

Defending national champion Spring Arbor, Michigan, remains atop the coaches poll with 463 points.

The Mountaineers, the only Cascade Collegiate Conference team in the top 25, continue action today and Thursday with a pair of contests in Tahoe Vista, California.

The Eastern Oregon volleyball team dropped to No. 21 in the latest installment of the NAIA coaches poll, which was also released Tuesday.

EOU, which is off to a 6-4 start and is 1-1 in the Cascade Collegiate Conference, fell from No. 15 in the preseason poll. Despite the drop, the Mountaineers improved their streak of appearances in the top 25 to 44 consecutive polls, a run dating back to the 2014 season. EOU's four losses are also against teams currently ranked in the top 15, though three of them — Rocky Mountain, Vanguard and Providence — were unranked at the time they faced EOU.

Eastern, which had 183 points, is one of three ranked CCC teams along with No. 10 Southern Oregon and No. 14 College of Idaho. Park, Missouri, moved from No. 5 to No. 1.

EOU visits Multnomah and Warner Pacific this weekend.



Ronald Bond/The Observer

La Grande's Callum Ebel, right, races in to score his first goal during Tuesday's match against Pendleton.

La Grande boys, girls soccer top Pendleton

Observer staff

Callum Ebel scored two goals — once in each half — leading the La Grande Tigers boys soccer team to its first win of the season, 2-0, over Pendleton Tuesday at Community Stadium.

Head Coach Wade Wright said the team was "relaxed (and) played with a lot more confidence" than it did in its opening loss to Riverside a week ago.

"(Against Riverside,) we were a little fragmented and played hesitant. I thought our defensive line played with a lot more authority and confidence (Tuesday)," he said. "They did a good job of passing and retaining

possession."

Wright said the Tigers were also successful utilizing the additional size of the turf field at Community Stadium, which is bigger than the Tigers' regular home field at La Grande Middle School.

"One of our goals on this bigger field was taking advantage of the space that was there," he said.

Ebel scored the game's first goal in the 17th minute off a pass from Adam Endress. The lead held until the second half when Ebel again scored with Endress on the assist in the 57th minute — on a nearly carbon copy of the first half goal, Wright said.

Jacob Huntsman recorded three saves for the Tigers.

La Grande (1-1 overall) faces Tillamook in a neutral site game at The Dalles Saturday.

CARSON HAT TRICK POWERS LHS GIRLS

Alaina Carson tallied a hat trick, Katie Perry also scored, and the La Grande girls soccer team moved to 2-0 with a 4-1 win at Pendleton Tuesday.

"It was a good physical game," Head Coach Kristen Rice said. "It's what they needed just to test them (and) see where they were at."

All five goals were scored in the first half. Carson

headed in a ball off a free kick from Rachael Keniry, scored unassisted and later netted a goal off a feed from Caiya Chandler. Perry's goal came off an assist from Lexee Gomes.

The coach called it "awesome" that La Grande put away as many goals as they did in the first half, but she added she wants to see some more balance.

"We have to be able to split our goals and get some in first and second (halves)," she said.

Pendleton's lone goal came via a penalty kick.

The Tigers face Tillamook in a neutral site game at The Dalles Saturday.