



Ronald Bond/The Observer

A jubilant La Grande volleyball team celebrates after winning Saturday's first-round state playoff match against Marshfield. The Tigers rallied from down two sets to defeat the Pirates and earn a berth to the state tournament in Forest Grove.

Late score, defense lifts Imbler to playoffs

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

Every fan in Community Stadium likely expected Imbler running back Ryan Patterson to get the handoff on the potential game-winning touchdown.

His own teammates expected it. The play was even called for him.

But a read by quarterback Chance Goodman — on a play he said he messed up, no less — resulted in the winning score and sent the Panthers back to the state playoffs.

Goodman scored on a four-yard keeper with 44 seconds remaining to lift the Imbler football team to a thrilling 30-26 victory over the Crane Mustangs in the Special District 3 playoffs Friday at Community Stadium.

"It's been a couple years since we've gone (to the playoffs)," Goodman said. "I haven't been able to go, and we just missed out a couple times, so to be able to go back is awesome. I'm so proud of our guys."

Goodman's winning score capped a comeback from a 12-point fourth-quarter deficit for Imbler, which had spotted Crane a 26-14 lead after Chase Joyce recovered a fumble — his third recovery of the game — and returned it 93 yards for a touchdown on the first play of the final period.

Imbler didn't blink. Instead, the Panthers followed with an 82-yard drive, which Goodman finished with a score from a yard out, to get within 26-22, then forced Crane to punt and got the ball back with 5:49 to play.

Patterson, who rushed for 274 yards in the win, did yeoman's work on the winning 55-yard drive, carrying the ball on eight straight plays at one point, including down to the four-yard line with less than a minute left.

The senior was set to get the ball a ninth straight time, but said Goodman made the correct read on keeping the ball. While Patterson stuffed behind the line, Goodman skated untouched to the left for the score.

"The last play call was a two-dive right up the middle, but the quarterback read it right, pulled the ball and bootlegged out to

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Tigers rally, roar to state

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The disappointment that ended the season for the La Grande Tigers volleyball team the last four years — a postseason loss at home — seemed likely again Saturday in the first round of the Class 4A state playoffs.

The Marshfield Pirates appeared on their way to victory after taking a two-set lead. Their attack was powerful and on-point — so much so that at times a kill or ace was hit so hard it knocked back a Tiger defender who tried to make a play on it.

Instead, the Tigers found the grit to fight back and, fueled by a crowd that got progressively

louder down the stretch, pulled off a stunning comeback to reach the state quarterfinals, topping Marshfield in five sets, 21-25, 19-25, 25-20, 25-22, 15-8.

"Our bench stepped it up, the kids out on the floor stepped it up, and it was amazing to see," Head Coach Melinda Becker-Bisenius said. "I can't tell you how proud I am of the team."

After winning set three, the Tigers scored the final four points of the fourth set on a Jayce Seavert kill and three Marshfield errors to send the match to the deciding fifth set.

La Grande quickly took control in the final set with a 7-1 run

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Ronald Bond/The Observer

La Grande's Felicity Houston had 29 digs for the Tigers, which as a team collected 121 digs in the match.

Elgin rolls, earns playoff berth

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

Elgin Huskies Head Coach Jeff Rysdam started to choke up when mentioning previous Elgin football players who never had an opportunity to reach the playoffs during a five-year stint as an independent program.

Being at this point — playing in a district playoff with a chance to make the state playoffs — was a future goal even during those seasons when they were ineligible to do so.

That goal has been achieved, and the Huskies are playoff bound for the first time since 2008.

Ian Smith caught two touchdown passes and returned an interception for a score, Tristan Simpson also accounted for three touchdowns and Elgin ran away in the second half for a 42-14 win over the Enterprise Outlaws Friday morning in the Special District 3 playoff at Community Stadium.

"The guys busted their butts today, and I'm proud of them," Rysdam said. "It's good for the community."

The coach said several former players — some of whom played with athletes on the current squad — had texted him in the lead-up to the game, expressing



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Elgin's Ian Smith looks to juke a defender Friday against Enterprise. Smith scored three touchdowns in the Huskies' 42-14 win.

their desire for the team to get the win.

"I told my guys, 'These guys

want it as bad as you,'" he said. The message resonated.

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Ronald Bond/The Observer

Wallowa's Zeb Ramsden (21) tries to make the corner against Dufur Friday. Ramsden scored two touchdowns as Wallowa fell, 22-12.

Big plays doom Cougs

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The Wallowa Cougars football team hung toe-to-toe with the three-time defending champion Dufur Rangers, giving Dufur its toughest contest in nearly two seasons.

Two costly plays to start the third quarter, however, doomed Wallowa's upset bid.

Dufur's Tanner Masterson broke loose for an 80-yard kickoff return for a touchdown to open the second half

and a fumble by Wallowa on the ensuing kickoff led to another Rangers' score, which gave Dufur all it needed to come away with a 22-12 win over Wallowa in the Special District 3 championship game Friday night at a soggy Community Stadium.

"Special teams was the difference," Cougars' Head Coach Matt Brockamp said. "We played tough, played physical and I'm proud of the kids. (We need to) clean up a couple special

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