



Ronald Bond/Observer file photo

La Grande's Gabe Shukle, right, shown during last week's match against Parma, Idaho, had one of the Tigers' 10 wins by fall during their 63-9 drubbing of Ontario in a dual Wednesday at LHS.

Tigers bury Ontario

Observer staff

The La Grande Tigers wrestling team entered Wednesday's home dual against Ontario ranked third in the state. The visiting Tigers were ranked eighth.

The disparity between the top 10 teams, though, couldn't have been more extreme.

La Grande won 11 matches — 10 by fall, including seven in a row late in the contest — on the way to a 63-9 win at LHS.

"Our kids came out really tough (Wednesday) night," LHS Head Coach Klel Carson said. "They were tough on top. It was fun to watch if you were a blue Tiger fan."

La Grande won the first three matches — a close 5-4 decision by Cody Hibbert (113 pounds) over Alijah Huerta, and wins by fall from Ezra McIntosh (120) and Braden Car-

son (126) — for a 15-0 lead. Ontario grabbed two of the next three matches — the lone LHS win a pin by Casey McCall (138) — before the hometown Tigers went off. Keith Oswald (152) and Parker Robinson (160) opened the seven-match onslaught with second-round pins. Grayson Livingston (170), Spencer Gerst (182), Chris Woodworth (195) and Lincoln Clark (220) then needed a combined 4:24 to collect four first-round pins, and Gabe Shukle (285) added his own first-round win by fall for a 63-6 lead.

"We beat some really good kids," the LHS coach said.

Carson added while the big win does seem to indicate a disparity in talent between some of the top teams in the state, LHS will get a more accurate gauge of where it stands at this weekend's Oregon Classic in Redmond.

"The Classic is basically the state tournament for dual meets," Carson said. "We'll find out. It'll give us a test to see where they're really at."

PANTHERS WIN FIVE MATCHES

Before the La Grande-Ontario match, the Imbler Panthers took part in a handful of matches against JV wrestlers, collecting five wins, all by fall.

The Panthers earned wins by Logan Butcher (145) over Ontario's Nathan Schnett, Tel McBride (160) over Allen Romero of Ontario, Bryce Sullivan (182) over Ontario's Fernando Gastelum, and Zach Brown (220) over Ontario's Brian Parades.

Kraiger Muilenburg (126), after an earlier loss, rebounded for a win by fall over Ontario's Brigham White.

La Grande travels to the Oregon Classic this weekend, while Imbler is off until Jan. 25 when it travels to John Day.

Offense leading the way for conf. title game teams

By Rob Maaddi
The Associated Press

Offense wins championships in the new NFL.

For the first time since the league expanded to 32 teams in 2002, none of the teams playing this weekend in the conference title game has a defense ranked in the top 10 in total yards. Only New England is among the top 10 in fewest points allowed.

But the Chiefs, Patriots, Saints and Rams do possess the four most prolific offenses in the league. That's the first time the four highest-scoring teams play for the conference championship during the Super Bowl era.

It's fitting one of those teams will win the Vince Lombardi Trophy because offense dominated in 2018. The 1,371 touchdowns scored were the most in a season in league history and the 11,952 points scored were the second-most ever.

The two teams with the stingiest defenses reached the playoffs — Chicago and Baltimore — but lost at home in the wild-card round.

"You have explosive players in the postseason, guys who are extremely talented, guys who are represented in the Pro Bowl, the All-Pro team," Saints coach Sean Payton said Wednesday.

The success starts at quarterback with Tom Brady, Drew Brees, Patrick Mahomes and Jared Goff leading the way. Brady's Patriots are the only team of the four that didn't average at least 30 points, scoring 27.3. Kansas City led the way at 35.3 with Mahomes throwing 50 touchdown passes. Los Angeles was next at 32.9 and New Orleans averaged 31.5.

Elite QBs aren't the only thing these teams have in common. The Rams, Patriots and Saints were among the top six in rushing.

C.J. Anderson (123) and Todd Gurley (115) had big games as Los Angeles ran for 273 yards in a 30-22 win against Dallas in the divisional round.

Sony Michel ran for 129 yards and three TDs in New England's 41-28 victory over the Chargers last week. Brady also threw for 343 yards.

Alvin Kamara and Mark Ingram combined for 124 yards rushing as New Orleans held on to beat Philadelphia 20-14. Brees had 301 yards passing and two scores.

"They can beat you in both ways, they can run it or they can throw it," Rams coach Sean McVay said of the Saints. "That's what really presents such a great challenge because they've got a Hall of Fame quarterback and they got an elite running back, and they've got a great system."

The Chiefs were in the middle of the pack on the ground during the season, but Damien Williams had 129 yards in a 31-13 rout over the Colts.

"Andy's an offensive coach so the offensive plays they get on special teams and the offensive plays they get on offense, when you combine all of that together, it's a lot of firepower and a lot of explosive plays," Patriots coach Bill Belichick said of the Chiefs. "Andy's teams are always tough, well-disciplined. They don't make a lot of mistakes. They make you beat them and that's hard to do because they're sound, and he gets good players and he coaches them well and they're tough."

Other than Belichick, each team has offensive-minded coaches. Payton, Reid and McVay earned their way on that side of the ball. The 32-year-old McVay is the youngest coach to win a playoff game.

Both games are re-matches from thrilling, high-scoring contests in the regular season.

The Patriots (12-5) beat the Chiefs (14-3) 43-40 at home in October. The Saints (14-3) defeated the Rams (14-3) 45-35 at home in November.

Here's a look inside more numbers heading into championship Sunday:

Three's company: The Patriots are trying to join Buffalo (1990-93) and Miami (1971-73) as the third team to reach the Super Bowl three consecutive seasons.

Home field advantage: If the Saints and Chiefs win, it'll be the 14th time since 1975 that the two top seeds meet in the Super Bowl and the fifth time in six years.

Ducks score upset, OSU falls at ASU

The Associated Press

Paul White scored 16 points and Victor Bailey Jr. added 13, helping Oregon hold off Arizona 59-54 Thursday night.

The once-fast Ducks have had to slow down in recent games due to a string of injuries, relying on their defense rather than outscoring opponents.

Oregon (11-6, 2-2 Pac-12) got Kenny Wooten back after missing four games with a broken jaw, though he played limited minutes and star freshman Bol Bol was on the bench in a walking boot.

The Ducks still stuck to their shut-them-down game plan, hounding Arizona (13-5, 4-1) into one miss after another while building a 13-point lead midway

through in the second half.

The Wildcats found an offensive rhythm and pulled within 55-51 on Dylan Smith's 3-pointer with 1:24 left. Smith hit another 3 to get Arizona within 57-54 with four seconds left, but Payton Pritchard hit two free throws to seal it.

Chase Jeter led the Wildcats with 12 points and 10 rebounds.

Arizona took control of the early Pac-12 race after an uneven nonconference schedule. The Wildcats opened conference play with wins over Colorado and Utah at home and had a road sweep of the Bay Area schools last week.

The Ducks had a rough start to the Pac-12, losing to rival Oregon State and blowing an eight-point lead in the final 45 seconds of

an overtime loss to UCLA. Oregon bounced back with a 21-point win over USC in one of its best all-around games of the season.

The Ducks were good on the defensive end against Arizona, holding the Wildcats without a field goal for nearly eight minutes while building a nine-point lead. Oregon held Arizona to 23 points, 8-of-27 shooting, including 2 for 11 from the 3-point arc and forced nine turnovers to lead by eight at halftime.

ASU EDGES BEAVS

Rob Edwards' 13 points included two clutch free throws in the final seconds, and Arizona State held on to hand Oregon State its first Pac-12 loss of the season, 70-67 on Thursday night.

The Sun Devils (12-5,

3-2 in Pac-12) have won 10 straight games over the Beavers at Wells Fargo Arena.

Zylan Cheatham had 10 points and 13 rebounds, and five Sun Devils scored in double figures to offset a pair of 21-point performances from Oregon State's Tres Tinkle and Ethan Thompson.

Oregon State rallied from an 18-point second-half deficit to trail by one and almost took the lead.

Cheatham slammed home a missed shot for a 68-64 lead, but Tinkle hit from distance again to make it a one-point game with 22 seconds left. Oregon State stole the ball on the inbounds pass after a timeout but turned the ball over a moment later.

With a stunned crowd on

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