

Tigers secure playoff berth

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The La Grande Tigers girls basketball team was able to shake off last week's tough loss to the Baker Bulldogs, top the Ontario Tigers for the third time and get back into the state playoffs.

Camryn Collman led the way with 18 points, Ella Dunlap was a point shy of a double-double, and La Grande shut down Ontario's offense for a wire-to-wire 41-22 home win Thursday in the semifinals of the Greater Oregon League District Tournament.

"It's fantastic," LHS Head Coach Brian Wright said of the playoff berth, La Grande's first in three seasons after being knocked out in the play-in round the last two years. "We're really a young team. Our two seniors are combining for about 12 minutes a game. Our young kids are doing the majority of our scoring, rebounding, etc. At the start of the season we talked to the kids and said we have a goal, we want to be playing on the last day of the season. This is a big step toward that."

The last time La Grande took the court was six days earlier when it was on the short end of a 63-24 blow-out loss to Baker. Dunlap, who had nine points and 14 rebounds on Thursday, said the team had to get past that contest before the matchup with Ontario.

"We just went to practice, we had good attitudes and we accepted the fact that we didn't do too good and moved on," she said.

La Grande never trailed in the victory Thursday, getting what Wright called a tough third straight win over the visiting Tigers.

"It's hard to beat a team three times in a row — I don't care how much you beat them by the previous time," he said.

Collman sparked the offense early with eight



Ronald Bond/The Observer

La Grande's Camryn Collman scored a game-high 18 points to lead the Tigers to a 41-22 win over Ontario Thursday. The win clinched a playoff berth for LHS.

points in the first quarter and 11 in the opening half to give La Grande a 22-10 lead at halftime. She drained two early 3-pointers — the second for a 12-2 lead midway through the first — and hit a third just before halftime to push the lead back to double digits.

That trifecta came as part of a 10-0 La Grande run spanning the second and third quarters that turned a seven-point margin into a 27-10 lead. Ontario pulled no closer than 11 the rest of the way.

The scoring run, in fact, came after a field goal drought of more than eight minutes, during which time La Grande scored just one point. It didn't matter, though, as Ontario had its own offensive issues and couldn't take advantage of the opportunity.

"At times we struggled, but we played well enough to get a win," Wright said.

And La Grande locked down Ontario defensively. The 22 points was the second fewest La Grande has allowed in a game this season, and the Tigers held



Ronald Bond/The Observer

La Grande's Grace Neer puts up a jumper during the Tigers' win over Ontario Thursday night.

Ontario to 8-for-50 shooting. La Grande, by comparison, was 16-for-50.

"We did a really good job keeping up on the ball and not letting them drive as much as they did last game," Dunlap said.

Wright attributed the defensive effort to film study, especially, he said, given the team practiced just once this week after resting on Mon-

day and then having practice canceled Wednesday because of the inclement weather and road conditions.

"For the most part we did a pretty good job," Wright said. "We did a lot better job of controlling penetration from the point."

La Grande also had a hey-day rebounding. Dunlap's big night crashing the boards

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Joseph rally part of a wild day at OOL district tourney

■ Elgin boys also win a tight battle while Cove, Wallowa girls advance to semis

Observer staff

Chase Murray scored the game-winner on a putback with less than five seconds to play and the Joseph Eagles boys basketball held on for a 35-34 come-from-behind win over the Imbler Panthers Thursday in the opening round of the Old Oregon League district tournament. Murray's field goal completed a rally from a 28-24 deficit Joseph faced entering the final quarter, but wasn't the last bullet the Eagles had to dodge. Grant Slater was fouled on a last-second 3-pointer and had a chance to give Imbler the win or force overtime, but missed all three attempts.

The Panthers' stingy defense had locked Joseph down after the opening quarter. The Eagles had a 16-8 lead after one, but Imbler allowed just eight points over the second and third quarters as it rallied for the four-point lead.

Tyler Homan added six points for Joseph, while Will Coston had 11 and Jayce Burnette scored eight for the Panthers, who went 2-for-8 from the free-throw line in the fourth.

Joseph (17-8 overall) faces Powder Valley in the semifinals today, while Imbler finishes the season with a record of 8-13.

Also Thursday
ELGIN 45, COVE 40

The Elgin Huskies boys basketball team pulled away in the final moments to earn a 45-40 win over the Cove Leopards Thursday in the first round of the Old Oregon League district tournament in Baker City.

The teams were tied at 40-40 with about two minutes

to play before Elgin scored the final five points to reach tonight semifinals.

Elgin held a 25-24 half-time lead in the tightly-contested matchup, and was up 33-30 after three quarters.

Tristan Simpson scored 15 points to lead the way for the Huskies. Gage McKay added 13 points and both Kaden McClure and Ian Adams had seven.

Blake Witten scored 15 points to lead Cove. Cameron Dillman added eight points and Dawson Gaertner had seven.

Elgin (13-9 overall) faces Nixyaawii tonight, while Cove finishes the season at 12-10.

Girls tournament
COVE 51, NIXYAAWII 48

Raegan Duby led the way with 11 points, Maggie Frisch added 10 points and eight rebounds and the Cove Leopards girls basketball team rallied in the third quarter then held on late for a 51-48 win over the Nixyaawii Golden Eagles Thursday in the first round of the Old Oregon League district tournament in Baker City.

Cove trailed by three at the half, then outscored Nixyaawii 19-10 in the third quarter to pull ahead 36-33. The Leopards were up by four late before Nixyaawii hit a 3-pointer to get within one in the closing seconds. Cove, though, finished off the win at the free-throw line.

Cove, in fact, won the game in large part due to its free-throw shooting. The Leopards were 19-for-33 at the line — Nixyaawii was 6-for-10.

Kierra Moore added

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Trail Blazers head into All-Star break with win over Warriors

The Associated Press

With a drama-filled victory over the Warriors that included the ejection of Golden State coach Steve Kerr, the Portland Trail Blazers got a confidence boost heading into the All-Star break.

Damian Lillard scored 29 points and the Blazers snapped Golden State's five-game winning streak with a 129-107 win Wednesday night. Jake Layman added 17 points off the bench for the Blazers, who rebounded after a two-game skid.

"It's really important when you

can collect yourself and come home against the best team in the league right now, and just get it done," Lillard said. "I thought that said a lot about our team, our growth."

Kevin Durant and Stephen Curry each had 32 points for the Warriors, who rested DeMarcus Cousins following a victory at home over Utah the night before. Despite the loss, which ended an 11-game winning streak on the road, Golden State still goes into the break with the best record in the Western Conference.

After a tight three quarters, Layman's long jumper gave Portland a 104-101 lead in the final period before Zach Collins blocked Damion Lee's layup on the other end.

Collins and Klay Thompson exchanged words, and the frustration spilled over to players from both sides. The two players were given offsetting technical fouls.

Portland led 110-103 before Draymond Green was called for a flagrant foul on Collins with 3:54 left. Kerr reacted angrily, throwing his clipboard to court and yelling at

the officials before he was ejected.

Lillard made the three technical shots and Collins made his free throws to give Portland a 115-103 lead. Layman added a 3-pointer to all but seal the win. The Warriors finished with just 12 points in the final quarter.

Green praised Kerr for standing up for him: "That was amazing, he was great. I enjoyed that."

Kerr said he was shocked when officials looked at the replay and determined it was a flagrant.

"We'll obviously get an explana-

tion from the league, but I just thought it was a good, hard foul," Kerr said. "I guess I was wrong."

In addition to Cousins, the Warriors rested guard Shaun Livingston and forward Andre Iguodala. Kerr said before the game that Cousins and Livingston got the night off because of the back-to-back games, and Iguodala was additionally a "little banged up."

The Warriors started Kevon Looney in Cousins' place.

Durant led all scorers with 16

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