

Eagles' upset bid of Nixyaawii falls short

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

For three quarters, the Joseph Eagles boys basketball team did what it needed to hang with the Nixyaawii Golden Eagles.

Nixyaawii, though, put together one of its patented runs, shooting 58 percent in the fourth quarter to turn a one-point lead into a 54-42 win over Joseph Saturday in the Old Oregon League title game in Baker City.

Joseph slowed the game down against high-flying Nixyaawii. As a result, the Eagles stayed within four points of Nixyaawii through the first three quarters, led 21-18 late in the second quarter and entered the fourth down just 33-32.

But the Golden Eagles started hitting shots at a dizzying rate, and the shots they didn't make they rebounded and put home. Mick Schimmel scored 10 of his 20 points in the final quarter, six of which came during a quarter-starting 13-0 run that gave Nixyaawii a 46-32 lead and complete control of the game. Joseph got no closer than 10 points the rest of the way.

Chase Murray and Mason Ferré led the Eagles with 12 points apiece — Ferré on 4-for-8 shooting from 3-point range. Hadley Miller added six points.

A layup by Miller capped a quick 6-0 run — one started by a Tyler Homan layup — that gave Joseph a 21-18 lead with less than two minutes to play in the half. Schimmel, though, scored the final four points for a 22-21 Nixyaawii lead at the half.

The Golden Eagles shot 48 percent to Joseph's 38 percent and owned a 31-20 edge in rebounding.

The loss sends Joseph (18-9 overall) to a first-round home playoff game against Dufur at 6 p.m. Tuesday. The teams met earlier this season — a

BADGERS

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Belle Blair added six points and seven steals for the Badgers. Shelby Sieckman also had six points, and Bingham added five steals.

Jamie Johnston led the Cougars with nine points. Shanna Rae Tillery added six points and nine rebounds.

JOSEPH 51, COVE 20

Sabrina Albee had 27 points, nine rebounds and five steals as the Joseph Eagles girls basketball team routed the Cove Leopards in the Old Oregon League semifinals Friday in Baker City, 51-20.

Madelyn Nelson added 13 points and six steals for Joseph, which put the game away early. The Eagles shot 40 percent in the first quarter for a 21-5 lead, pushed it to 32-11 at the half and rolled from there. They also forced Cove to commit 36 turnovers.

Elli Hines-Dunlap had eight points and five rebounds to lead the Leopards, and Lilly Perry added five points. ■

TIGERS

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The loss puts La Grande squarely on the postseason bubble. In class 4A, 12 teams, two from each league, are granted automatic state berths. The eight highest ranked teams remaining are given bids to play for the final four state berths.

As of Sunday, the Tigers (7-12 overall) are 20th in the OSAA rankings and would earn the final play-in bid. That could change, though, with more than a dozen games yet to be played at the 4A level before the final rankings are set Tuesday night. ■

Cougars top Cove, return to postseason

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

After three difficult years, the Wallowa Cougars girls basketball team is headed back to the state playoffs.

Jamie Johnston came close to a triple-double, finishing with 27 points, 12 rebounds and seven steals, as the Cougars never trailed in a 51-38 win over the Cove Leopards Saturday in the third-place game of the Old Oregon League tournament in Baker City.

"I'm just so proud of our girls," Head Coach David Howe said. "We've had our struggles both basketball-wise and mentally, but they hung in there."

The mental struggles were due in large part to Wallowa enduring through a three-year stretch when it went 9-58. Howe took over after

Annette Moeller resigned in the spring and helped lead the Cougars to a 14-11 record and their first playoff berth since 2015.

He gave Moeller a lot of credit, however.

"I don't know if I was the person for the job or not because Annette taught them a lot," he said. "I just kind of pushed them a little bit. I don't know how much I did."

On Saturday there were stretches when Wallowa dominated. The Cougars collected 19 steals, forced 31 Cove turnovers and used a 9-0 run in the third to take a 39-20 lead. Johnston had six points in the rally to help Wallowa build its largest lead.

Cove scored the next 12 points, with 3-pointers by Rebekah Farrell and Raegan Duby helping pull Cove with-



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Jamie Johnston nearly had a triple-double Saturday.

in 39-32 early in the fourth, but a 10-0 run, capped by a Shanna Rae Tillery layup, pushed the lead back to 17.

Tillery finished with 12 points and five steals for Wallowa, and Ashlyn Young added eight rebounds.

Maggie Frisch had 16 points and 12 boards for Cove. Duby and Farrell both had seven points.

Wallowa travels to Crane for a first-round game Wednesday, while Cove finishes at 12-12. ■

Badgers take down Elgin for playoff berth

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The Powder Valley Badgers boys basketball team shook off a game to forget Friday and rode a quick start and a dominant third quarter to a 72-55 win over the Elgin Huskies in the third-place game of the Old Oregon League tournament Saturday in Baker City. The win earned the Badgers a playoff berth for the fourth year in a row.

It was also a stark contrast to a week earlier, when the Badgers fell behind by double digits and saw a rally fall short in a 62-61 loss at Elgin in the teams' regu-

lar-season finale.

The Badgers shot 50 percent in the first quarter Saturday to take a 21-16 lead after one, then gradually built the lead to 38-22 in the second after a rebound and putback by Roper Bingham. Elgin hung around despite struggling from the floor in the first half, with a Tristan Simpson layup cutting the deficit to 40-27 at the break.

Another hot-shooting third quarter by Powder Valley — this time 64 percent — put the game out of reach. A layup by Kaden Krieger put the Badgers ahead 50-30, and an Ethan Stephens 3-pointer

extended the margin to 22 later in the third. The Badgers went on to lead by as much as 24 points in the fourth quarter.

Bingham had 19 points and nine rebounds to lead Powder Valley, which finished at 45 percent shooting. Dominick Grende had 18 points, and Reece Dixon scored 14. Tristan Simpson scored 16 points to lead the Huskies, who shot 31 percent. Kaden McClure scored 12 points, and Gage McKay had 11.

The Badgers (16-9 overall) visit Crane in a first-round game at 5:30 p.m. Tuesday, while Elgin finishes the season at 13-11. ■

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