

## Brock, Neer combine for perfect game

By Ronald Bond  
The Observer

Allie Brock wasn't aware she had started a perfect game, and teammate Grace Neer didn't know she was finishing one.

"I think we were just focused more on hitting than (what we were doing) in the field," Brock said. "We were really pumped up on hitting."

It wasn't until after the La Grande Tigers' 15-0 win over Ontario in game two of their Greater Oregon League softball doubleheader sweep Friday that the duo learned they had tossed

a combined perfect game, retiring all 15 batters they faced.

"I think it's really cool that we worked together to accomplish that," Brock said.

Brock struck out half of the 12 batters she faced in four innings, with three of the strikeouts looking. She struck two batters in both the first and fourth innings.

Neer took over in the fifth with the Tigers well ahead and proceeded to open the inning with a strikeout looking and then record a pair of groundouts to complete the perfect effort.

"I just tried to stay relaxed and

calm," Neer said. "I can't really mess up anything. We had a lot of runs."

Nobody on the team, in fact, was aware the perfect game was taking place.

"I had no idea," outfielder Kara Gooderham said. "I knew (they) didn't have many people on, but I think we were all so focused on the game and doing well and getting a win."

Head coach Woody Wright said he learned of it early in the fifth inning.

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La Grande's Allie Brock delivers a pitch during the first inning of game two Friday. Brock and Grace Neer combined for a perfect game.



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La Grande's Wyatt Earp, left, tags out Ontario's Chance Palmer at third base to end the opening game of their doubleheader Friday. The Tigers rolled to a sweep of Ontario, winning 4-1 and 7-1.

## Tigers finding a groove

By Ronald Bond  
The Observer

The La Grande Tigers baseball team struggled to finish off the Ontario Tigers when they met three weeks ago in Ontario, which led to a split of the doubleheader.

There were no such issues in the rematches Friday.

"(In) those first two games we played down there we didn't have near the energy we have now," pitcher Isaac Zamora said. "We also learned how to finish a game, which we didn't do down there. Everything has just been going up since then."

Zamora and Parker Robinson both tossed complete games and shut down Ontario, and La Grande scratched out enough offense to win both games of Friday's Greater Oregon League doubleheader, 4-1 and 7-1, to win their home openers after a lengthy season-opening road trip.

"Both those guys are really settling in," head coach Parker McKinley said. "And they throw a lot of strikes. We've got good defense behind them, kids are making plays."

The contests were entirely different than the meetings in Ontario, a 7-6 loss and a 12-10 win that saw La Grande give up nine runs in the

seventh inning of the two games.

La Grande has given up eight runs total in six games since.

"Down there both games in the bottom of the seventh we struggled to finish and get that last three outs, but today everyone wanted the last out," Robinson said. "Wyatt Earp had a great day at third and (short-stop) Justin Frederick made some great plays. Overall the team wanted the win. That's why we were able to finish."

The wins also resulted in a milestone as they were the 100th and 101st victories for McKinley at La Grande, boosting his record at LHS to 101-49.

"I've been pretty blessed with some pretty good baseball players coming through the program," the sixth-year coach said. "It's been fun, all the way from 2014 having a group that won a couple playoff games and got things going to having some years with some pretty phenomenal success and kids that show up and want to work hard. It's fun to have little milestones like that."

"Knowing we were able to be a part of that fills our hearts," Robinson added of the 100th win. "It was pretty cool."

And like many of the previous 99, the tried-and-true recipe of pitching and defense was on full display in both contests.

"When you have confidence in your defense to be able to throw strikes it goes such a long way, and both of those guys are doing a really good job for us," McKinley said.

Ontario loaded the bases with one out in the first inning of the opener against Zamora, but the senior forced a flyout and a groundout to get out of the jam, then found a groove as those two outs started a string of nine batters in a row he retired.

I just got in the zone, knew I had to throw strikes and trusted my defense."

And when Ontario finally did break the streak with back-to-back singles in the fourth by Nick Esplin and Jake Hartley, Zamora responded with back-to-back strikeouts to end the inning.

Meanwhile, La Grande took the lead for good on a two-run double by Robinson in the third inning, then added a run in the fourth when Brody Kincade doubled and scored on a wild pitch and in the sixth on a

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## Walk-off hit ends Eastern's season on a positive note

By Ronald Bond  
The Observer

Fittingly, a senior had the game-winning hit for the Eastern Oregon softball team in its season finale on senior day.

But it was a freshman who had come through with a clutch tying hit earlier in the inning to help set the stage for the walk-off heroics.

Haley Ebner's seventh-inning home run tied the score, and Hannah Rothwell hit a walk-off RBI single three batters later to lift the Mountaineers to a 7-6 win over Oregon Tech in its final game of the weekend and the season Saturday at Peggy Anderson Field.

"We've continued to work hard, so I think that was the determining factor on us being able to compete this weekend," Rothwell said.

Oregon Tech had claimed the series' three Cascade Collegiate Conference games, winning 8-5 and 9-2 Friday, and 6-1 in Saturday's opener, and was up 6-5 entering the bottom of the seventh in the final game.

But Ebner hit the tying home run, a redemptive solo shot to left field. The freshman was 0-3 on the day and was 1-for-13 in the series prior to the at-bat.

But she said she had the seniors in mind when she connected for the home run, which came after OIT had scored a run in the top of the seventh.

"I just really focused on swinging for them and having that last at-bat for them, doing everything

I could to help tie up the game," Ebner said.

Head coach Erin Dickhausen said Ebner has poise and isn't one to let a game's earlier events get to her.

"She had been struggling today, but she's not going to let any of her previous at-bats dictate the way she approaches the plate," Dickhausen said. "As a freshman, she's solid. She's going to be good for this program the next few years."

Sarah Bonner and Jordan Henley followed with singles of their own before Rothwell singled to score pinch-runner Julie Hernandez and send herself and EOU's seven other seniors off on a high note.

"I really wanted to clutch up for my team. Had runners on, no outs, and it was the perfect opportunity to show my hard work," Rothwell said.

The victory served as a positive end to a tough series and a rocky season, as the Mountaineers finished with just 13 victories and will miss the CCC tournament for the first time since 2015.

"This is a good OIT team, so (it) definitely (was) not an easy win. We had to grind. We had to push everything we had to scrape together those runs. Definitely proud of the seniors," Dickhausen said. "It's definitely not the picture-perfect season. Unfortunately we're done now. This is a team I think deserved to go further, but there were some games that we weren't able to do what we just did."

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## LHS boys track wins at Buck Track Classic

Observer staff

The La Grande Tigers boys track and field team turned in 18 top-three finishes on its way to a victory at the Buck Track Classic Friday in Pendleton.

Nick Tsiatsos paced the Tigers by taking first in the long jump (21-feet-3-1/2), second in the triple jump (43-feet-6) and running a leg on the third-place 4x400 relay with Luke Bloodgood, Hunter Youngblood and Sajun White (3:36.50). Owen Kreutz added La Grande's other victory in the javelin (149-feet-4), while White was second in the 400

(52.63 seconds), Westin Blake placed second in the 800 (2:04.76) and Nathan Reed, in his first event of the spring, was second in the 300 hurdles (43.57).

Five Tigers added two individual third-place finishes apiece: Bloodgood in the 200 (23.61) and the 400 (53.08), Cristian Mendoza in the 800 (2:06.76) and the 3,000 (9:46.98), T.J. Clay in the 300 hurdles (43.62) and the high jump (5-feet-8), Zach Wiggins in the long jump (19-feet-5-1/4) and the high jump (5-feet-8) and Keith Oswald in the shot put (38-feet-11-1/2)

and the discus (107-feet-1). Callum Ebel was also third in the 110 hurdles (16.07).

The Enterprise Outlaws, which were fourth, picked up a win in the 3,000 (9:28.24) and a second-place finish in the 1,500 (4:20.38) from Zac Knapp, and also collected a second-place showing from Riley Masters in the discus (107-feet-4) and the 4x100 relay team of Shane Lund, Foster Hobbs, Jericho Peters and Garrett Thorne (45.61). Dylan Marr added a third-place effort in the high jump (5-feet-8).

The Elgin Huskies,

which placed fifth, won both relays, with Wyatt Hallgarth, Geoy Greenlee, Jordon Palmer and Tristan Simpson finishing the 4x100 in 45.56 and Hallgarth, Greenlee, Clay Wilhelm and Simpson taking the 4x400 in 3:35.37. Hallgarth was also third in the 100 (11.83).

The Union Bobcats placed ninth, and dominated in the pole vault for most of their scoring as Carter and Jaxon Blackburn tied for first in the event, both clearing 11 feet.

On the girls side, Enterprise finished in second and

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Ronald Bond/The Observer

EOU's Hannah Rothwell, center, gets mobbed after collecting the walk-off hit in the Mountaineers' season finale against Oregon Tech Saturday.