



Ronald Bond/The Observer

The La Grande softball team celebrates at home plate after Alaina Carson hit one of four Tiger home runs during the second game of Friday's doubleheader against Baker. La Grande won 5-0 and 22-0 to earn a share of the GOL title.

Records fall for EOU in final regular season meets

Observer staff

Maggie Ledbetter continued her stellar freshman season for the Eastern Oregon women's track and field team, adding another first- and second-place finish to the docket and breaking a school record during the Portland Twilight Meet Friday.

Ledbetter won the discus with a throw of 146 feet, 9 inches, besting Joanna Everidge's 1989 record of 146-feet-3.

In addition to the victory, Ledbetter took second in shot put (40-feet-10-1/4).

EOU also added a 1-2 finish in the women's high jump, with Kaluluno Ngaida clearing 5-feet-5-3/4 to punch her ticket to nationals and take first, while Paige Dodd reached 5-feet-2-1/2 for second.

The 4x100 team of Payton Jolley, Kinnah Rhodes, Morgan Reddington and Elizabeth Herbes also came in second at 48.36 seconds, and Eastern added a 2-3 finish in the 100 hurdles with Dodd placing second (15.12) and Haley White third (15.20).

The Eastern men's team took second in both relays, with the 4x100 team of Brandon Phanmaha, Connor Young, Nicholas Griffin and Austin Hunter finishing in 42.80, and the 4x400 team of Derian Handfield, Devin Lewis-Allen, Young and Josh Wallin completing its relay in 3:20.29.

Individually, Alex Kosel took third in both the high jump (6-feet-0-3/4) and the long jump

(21-feet-2-1/2), and Lewis-Allen was third in the 400 (49.23).

On Saturday at the Linfield Open in McMinnville, the Mountaineers added three more victories — two on the women's side — to close out the regular season, broke another school record and sent more athletes to nationals.

The 4x800 relay team of Katie Jo Gebhardt, Faith Homer, Michelle Herbes and Megan Boals won in 9:16.40 to reach nationals and break the school record by nearly 12 seconds. Javelin thrower Kariarne Zollman took the top spot with a mark of 136-feet-6, which was an automatic qualifying throw for nationals. In second for the women's team was the 4x100 relay team of White, Rhodes, Reddington and Elizabeth Herbes in 49.18, and Reddington placed third in the long jump at 17-feet-11-3/4.

The men's team posted a victory in the pole vault from Darrian Walker at 15-feet-1. The 4x800 relay team of Handfield, Brennen LeBel, Braxton Wilson and Lane Inwards placed second in 7:49.03, and Hunter Scheiss was also second in the 3,000 steeplechase (9:51.15). Eastern rounded out the effort with the 4x100 relay team of Phanmaha, Young, Griffin and Hunter placing third (43.12).

Up next for Eastern is the Cascade Collegiate Conference championship meet Friday and Saturday in Ashland. ■

Business as usual for Tigers

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

There was little, if any, fanfare around the fact that the La Grande Tigers softball team had just clinched at least a share of the Greater Oregon League title for a third straight year.

Not when the team has much bigger expectations ahead in the coming weeks.

"Going back to Eugene and competing for a state championship is an expectation for this team. It's not a goal, it's an expecta-

tion," head coach Woody Wright said.

The Baker Bulldogs were just the latest hurdle to clear in pursuit of that expectation.

The Tigers continued their dominance of the GOL Friday, using home runs from two of their freshmen to spark the offense in a 5-0 win in the opener of a doubleheader on senior day before waking up in a big way for a 22-0 win in the nightcap.

"For the upperclassmen it gets pretty emotional with senior day, and you

expect that. That's what's nice about this team, the older kids struggled a little bit (in the opener), and the younger kids produced," Wright said.

La Grande largely struggled to find a rhythm in the batter's box in the first game, save for Kinzy Bowen and Grace Neer. Bowen hit a solo shot in the third inning for a 2-0 lead, and Neer doubled the margin to 4-0 with a two-run home run in the fourth.

"It was good to start them off and get the rally going," Neer said. "Every-

body was a little bit nervous (because of senior day)."

"All our hits were going straight to people, too," Bowen added.

Senior Kara Gooderham added a pair of sacrifice flies for LHS, which had just seven hits, though many of the outs were on balls hit right to a Baker defender.

The Tigers, though, could afford to have an off game at the plate, as Allie Brock added another dominant effort in the pitcher's circle. The junior struck out Bak-

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Bulldogs deny La Grande the GOL crown

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The La Grande Tigers baseball team was just one win away from locking up the Greater Oregon League title.

Instead, the visiting Baker Bulldogs exacted a measure of revenge for an earlier home sweep suffered against their rivals, using two strong pitching efforts to hand La Grande a rare home sweep, winning at Optimist Field Friday, 3-2 and 7-0.

"(Baker pitchers) Sam McCauley and Connor (Lay) did a good job on the mound. They swung the bats well, and put pressure on us. Unfortunately we made too many mistakes and couldn't bounce back from them," LHS head coach Parker McKinley said.

In the process, Baker not only thrust itself right back in the mix for a league title, but now owns the tiebreaker should Baker and La Grande, who are both currently 7-3 in GOL play, finish tied. The tiebreaker, according to McKinley, is head-to-head runs allowed between Baker and La Grande. In the four games, La Grande surrendered 16 runs, while the Bulldogs gave up 15.

The Tigers have a home doubleheader remaining against McLoughlin in GOL play, and Baker travels to Ontario for its final league set. La Grande would need a sweep and a win by Ontario, or a split and an Ontario sweep, to claim the league's top seed into the playoffs.

"We need Ontario to beat them now," McKinley said.

The Tigers, who were playing clean baseball during an eight-game winning streak that ended Friday, struggled on defense, committing a combined six errors in the contests,



Ronald Bond/The Observer

La Grande's Parker Robinson delivers a pitch during game two of Friday's doubleheader against Baker. The Tigers were swept, 3-2 and 7-0.

several of which proved to be costly. Two LHS errors in the fourth inning allowed what proved to be the winning run to score, and the Tigers committed three more errors in the nightcap, which led to three unearned runs.

"That was uncharacteristic of our defense to make that many mistakes," McKinley said. "We can make that a focus and keep moving forward."

La Grande also missed out on scoring opportunities it would typically cash in on, perhaps none more indicative of the way the day went

than in the fifth inning of the opener. Devin Bell singled and Justin Frederick walked to open the frame. But McCauley, who threw a two-hitter in the win, fielded a Wyatt Earp bunt and threw out Bell at third, then struck out Parker Robinson looking and forced Isaac Zamora to fly out to end the threat.

"We had several opportunities to play some small ball, move some guys around, and couldn't do it. We got a clutch hit from Riley (Miller) in the first game to score two runs and then couldn't string too many more

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LHS boys take first at Baker Invitational

Observer staff

The La Grande Tigers boys track and field team will head into next weekend's Greater Oregon League district meet on a high note, sweeping the relay races and winning six events in all on the way to a dominant victory at the Baker Invitational Friday.

The Tigers' 158.5 points were nearly double the amount scored by runner-up Baker (81.5 points).

Sajun White, Nick Tsiatsos, Josh Zollman and Hunter Youngblood grabbed the top spot for La Grande in the 4x100 relay in 43.64 seconds. White also ran on the winning 4x400 with Luke Bloodgood, Westin Blake and Eli McLean, with the team finishing in 3:32.00.

On the track, the Tigers added victories from Bennett Welch in the 1,500 (4:12.46) and Nathan Reed in the 300 hurdles (42.35), and in the field, Zach Wiggins won the high jump (6-feet-2) and Tsiatsos claimed first in

the long jump (20-feet-8). Tsiatsos, in fact, edged Youngblood for the top spot in the long jump by just one-half inch, with Youngblood finishing at 20-feet-7-1/2. The Tigers also had a second-place finish from Callum Ebel in the 110 hurdles (16.82) and from Jacob Huntsman in the discus (133-feet-2).

Meanwhile the La Grande girls, who scored 69 points for second place behind Baker (84.5 points) were led by a tie for second from Katie Brown in the 100 (13.27), a second-place finish by Abby Crews in the 3,000 (11:59.03), and a third-place showing by Corbyn Sexton in the 3,000 (12:33.41). The 4x400 relay team of Cece Aguilera, Kenzie Williams, Jacki Martini and Rachael Keniry (4:26.06) was also third.

The Joseph Eagles boys took fourth with 49.5 points, posting second-place finishes from Kade Kilgore in the pole vault

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