

Trail Blazers reach conference finals for first time since 2000

By Arnie Stapleton
The Associated Press

CJ McCollum scored 37 points and the Portland Trail Blazers overcame a 17-point first-half deficit to beat the Denver Nuggets 100-96 on Sunday to advance to the Western Conference Finals for

the first time since 2000.

Evan Turner, who scored just four points in the first six games of the series, added 14 points, including 10 in the fourth quarter. The Trail Blazers advanced to face the two-time defending NBA champion Golden State Warriors,

beginning Tuesday night in Oakland, California.

Turner corralled the rebound when Nikola Jokic's desperation 3-pointer hit the rim and dribbled out the clock, sending the stunned crowd streaming to the exits at the Pepsi Center, where the Nug-

gets owned the best record in the league during the regular season but where they lost twice to Portland in the series.

The Nuggets raced to a 39-22 lead and Game 7 was beginning to look a lot like Game 5, when Denver blew out Portland by 26 points

in this building. But Blazers coach Terry Stotts called a timeout with 7:26 left in the second quarter and his team began chipping away.

"There wasn't going to be any quit," Stotts said. "I didn't think they ever stopped believing."

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DISTRICT TRACK AND FIELD CHAMPIONSHIPS



Ally Tsitsos photo

The La Grande Tigers boys track and field team won the Greater Oregon League title by almost 90 points and secured 25 automatic berths to next weekend's state track meet in Gresham.

Huskies boys bring home district title

Observer staff

The Elgin Huskies boys track and field team has been on the rise in recent years.

Their ascension took another positive step as the Huskies had four victories and three runner-up efforts to win the Special District 4 championship Friday in Baker City.

The seven automatic qualifiers helped boost Elgin's score to 121 points, which bested the second-place Joseph Eagles (99.5 points).

Tristan Simpson and Geoy Greenlee played a big part in Elgin's success Friday. Individually, Simpson won the javelin with a personal best of 172-foot-4, a

mark that was the highest in the state during district weekend, while Greenlee won the 100 in 11.64 seconds. The two also ran on Elgin's winning 4x100 relay team with Wyatt Hallgarth and Jordon Palmer (44.80) and on the second-place 4x400 relay squad with Hallgarth and Clay Wilhelm (3:35.00).

Chris Hanson and Kiefer Ivins added a 1-2 finish for the Huskies in the shot put with marks of 40-foot-2 and 39-foot-4, respectively, and Wilhelm placed second in the 400 (52.62).

The Huskies also added a wildcard bid to state as Brandon Caldwell placed third in the 110 hurdles

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Domination continues

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The defending state champion La Grande Tigers boys track and field team will head into next weekend's state track meet coming off yet another dominant performance.

La Grande claimed 25 of the Greater Oregon League's 34 automatic bids to state and scored 152 points to run away with the GOL title at Saturday's district track meet in La Grande.

"I knew they would be great, but they were even better than I expected," head coach Julie Bodfish said.

The Tigers, who were well in front of runner-up Baker (64 points), qualified at least one competitor to state in all 17 events, starting with a record-setting day in the pole vault and wrapping up with a blowout in the 4x400 relay.

"You can go on and on about them, because they are so amazing," Bodfish said of the boys team.

Jacob Huntsman not only shattered his own personal best in the pole vault, but set a new district meet record with a mark of 14-foot-3. The height is the top mark in 4A entering the state track meet.

"My previous record was 13-foot-7-1/2, so I was pretty excited when I cleared 14 feet," Huntsman said.



Ronald Bond/The Observer

T.J. Clay won the high jump and the 110 hurdles for La Grande.

It was one of two district titles for the junior who also claimed top honors in the discus at 125-foot-10.

The Tigers' track dominance — La Grande won nine of the 10 running events — was started and finished, literally, by Sajun White. The senior ran the opening leg of La Grande's 4x100 relay, which he, Nick Tsitsos, Josh Zollman and Hunter Youngblood won in 43.98 seconds, and he closed out the 4x400 relay, anchoring a run

along with Owen Kreutz, Youngblood and Westin Blake that won in 3:32.83.

In between, White won the 200 in 23.35 as part of a 1-2 finish with Josh Zollman (23.62) and the 400 (52.14) in a 1-2-3 finish with Luke Bloodgood (53.14) and Kreutz (53.83).

"It makes it pretty competitive, you're friends with your teammates, but as soon as you get on that line, only two make it, so you're putting in

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Outlaw boys, girls place second

Observer staff

The Enterprise Outlaws girls and boys track and field teams each punched eight automatic tickets to the state meet by placing second at the Special District 5 track and field meet Friday in John Day.

The Lady Outlaws scored 134 points to trail only champion Grant Union (182 points). Kyla Hook led the way individually by claiming the district title in both the 1,500 (5:20.64) and the 3,000 (12:14.80), and she also ran on the Outlaws' winning 4x400 relay. Hook, Hero Peters, Karli Bedard and Shelby Moncrief took the top spot in 4:15.56. Moncrief added Enterprise's fourth win on the day as she took the top spot in the 200 in 26.82 seconds.

The Outlaws added four additional second-place finishes, which garnered automatic state berths — two from Bedard, who was second in the high jump (4-foot-11) and in the 300 hurdles (50.18). Also, Pe-

ters placed second in the 100 (13.00) and EHS's 4x100 relay team of Peters, Savannah Vaughn, Ashlyn Gray and Moncrief took home second (50.82).

The Enterprise boys swept the sprints on their way to 121 points and a second-place finish behind Heppner (137). Foster Hobbs won both the 200 (23.29) and the 400 (50.34) and will enter state as the top-seeded 400 runner, while Garrett Thorne (11.56) grabbed the top spot in the 100.

Enterprise took second in five more events, including both relays. Shane Lund, Hobbs, Jericho Peters and Thorne were second in the 4x100 relay (44.67), and Josef Ramirez, Lund, Austin Brockcamp and Hobbs came in second in the 4x400 (3:36.85). Placing second individually were Colby Harris in the triple jump (29-foot-11-1/2), Dylan Marr in the

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Fantastic five: La Grande baseball adds yet another GOL title to the docket

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

A day after getting the help it needed in the form of an Ontario split against Baker, the La Grande Tigers baseball team took advantage of the second chance it was given to claim the Greater Oregon League title.

And La Grande did it in an emphatic manner.

The Tigers limited McLoughlin to just two hits in Saturday's doubleheader, including a no-hitter by Parker McKinley in the second game, on the way to a 24-0 and 22-0 sweep of the Pioneers.

"We had a really good week of practice," head

coach Parker McKinley said. "We put pressure on ourselves. We had a distinct approach we wanted to carry into the game today, and we carried that approach all through the week."

The sweep gave the Tigers a third consecutive outright GOL title, a stretch that is extended to five championships in a row when including the shared titles LHS had in 2015 and 2016.

"It really comes down to how much they trust each other and how much they believe in each other," McKinley said of the team. "When you start getting that kind of chemistry it makes a team re-

ally dangerous."

This title, though, has a different feel to it.

"We knew from the beginning of the year ... that it was going to come down right to the end," McKinley said. "All of the last three have felt a little different. We were 11-1 two years ago and 12-0 last year. This year it (came) down to the last two games and (the title relied) on a split from our league opponent. The one thing that has been consistent is the kids want to play for each other."

Kyler Malone, one of La Grande's seniors, said the growth in the team is one of the characteristics that

has stood out this season.

"We have a lot of new kids who have stepped into big positions and taken big roles. It's cool to see us start working together and become a family," Malone said.

On Saturday, Robinson, Isaac Zamora and Brody Kincade all drove in four runs in the first game, with Zamora's coming as part of a four-hit contest. He also allowed two MacHi singles and struck out six batters in five innings.

La Grande took the lead for good in the first on Wyatt Earp's RBI double two batters into the game and added on from there.

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Tiger softball finishes perfect league slate

Observer staff

The La Grande Tigers softball team finished off a second consecutive undefeated Greater Oregon League season and reached 20 victories for the third year in a row with a road sweep of the McLoughlin Pioneers Saturday, 3-0 and 15-7.

Allie Brock allowed just two hits, walked two and struck out 12 batters in the opener. The Tigers didn't get on the board until the fifth inning when Alaina Carson, who had three hits, doubled home a run for a 1-0 lead and then scored on Kara Gooderham's RBI single. Carson scored again in the second on an error for the final margin.

The offense found a

rhythm in the nightcap, scoring six runs in the first inning and adding on from there for the blowout win.

The Tigers had 16 hits, including a 4-for-5 game by Jayce Seavert and a three-hit effort by Gooderham.

Brock and Jacie Howton hit RBI singles in the first, and Kinzy Bowen capped the frame with a two-run double for a six-run lead. Gooderham's two-run double in the four-run third helped stake La Grande to an 11-1 lead, and both Sophie Bell and Lexee Gomes hit run-scoring singles in the sixth, with Gomes' two-run hit making it 14-4.

Seavert's RBI double in the

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