

Mountaineers open nationals with two day-one all-Americans

Observer staff

Two members of the Eastern Oregon University women's track and field team claimed all-American recognition during day one of the NAIA national

championships Thursday in Gulf Shores, Alabama, and several more athletes put themselves in position to secure all-American nods later in the weekend.

Payton Jolley landed the top

finish during the opening day for EOU, placing sixth in the pole vault by tying her personal best of 11 feet 11-3/4. Teammate Karriane Zollman got on the scoreboard by taking eighth in

the javelin with a throw of 140 feet 2, which according to EOU Athletics was a personal best by nearly 4 feet.

The Mountaineers' women's 4x800 relay team qualified for

the finals later in the weekend, as the team of Katie Jo Gebhardt, Faith Homer, Michelle Herbes and Megan Boals placed fourth in the preliminaries in a

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Ronald Bond/The Observer

La Grande's Jaiden Hafer connects on her home run in the third inning of the Tigers' 12-2 win Wednesday.

Tigers win scary blowout

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

Scary is not a word that would normally be equated with a 10-run, six-inning victory, especially one where the outcome was never really in doubt. But there definitely were a couple frightening early moments for the top-seeded La Grande Tigers softball team as it began its bid for a second consecutive 4A state championship with a 12-2 win over the Mazama Vikings Wednesday at Sam Marcum Field in La Grande.

In the bottom of the first inning, LHS ace Allie Brock, standing in the on-deck circle, took a screaming line-drive foul ball off the left shoulder that ricocheted and knocked her

helmet off.

"It was concerning from the get-go," head coach Woody Wright said. "Allie took a heck of a shot, but Allie's a warrior and stepped up and did her job. She's got seams on her shoulder (from the ball) and everything."

In the third inning, Lexee Gomes, attempting to score the game's first run on a squeeze bunt, got caught in a rundown between third and home. The senior made an effort to score but took a high and hard tag to the face that briefly left her on the ground dazed.

Both athletes, though, stayed in the game.

"The kids are tough," Wright said. "They're competitors and they want to play."

Shortly after, La Grande delivered a knockout blow to the Vikings, which senior Kara Gooderham said showed how the team was able to keep up the pace with Brock and Gomes dinged up.

"We have each other's backs. When Lexee went down, we hit (the ball). We scored (seven) runs and had her back," Gooderham said. "We always are there to pick each other up."

One batter after Gomes' play at the plate, Gooderham connected on a two-run single to get the Tigers on the board. Jacie Howton then hit a two-run single, Jaiden Hafer connected on a two-run home run to center field, and Kinzy Bowen roped an RBI double to give La Grande a 7-0 lead.

The margin was more than enough for Brock. The junior, who had struck out the game's first three batters, battled to recover the form before the shot to the shoulder but still overpowered Mazama's batters. Brock finished with 11 strikeouts, walked two, and al-

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Despite Robinson gem, LHS baseball falls in playoff opener

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

Starting pitcher Parker Robinson turned in one of the more dominant post-season performances in recent memory for the La Grande Tigers baseball team, which is saying something considering the gems the team has delivered in the last few seasons.

Robinson, who took a no-hitter into the seventh inning, struck out 14 batters, allowed just one hit and walked two batters, one intentionally.

"His mindset was spot-on today," head coach Parker McKinley said of Robinson. "He wanted the ball. He knew he needed to execute his pitches. We had plans for pitches and pitch sequences. He's been working really hard on his off-speed pitches and throwing them for strikes. ... His mindset today was exactly what we wanted from the guy on the mound."

The one hit, though, proved to be the difference in the Tigers' first-round 4A playoff game against Sweet Home, as Travis Thorpe hit a one-out RBI double to break a scoreless tie in the top of the seventh.

This hit boosted the Huskies past La Grande, 2-0, Wednesday in a pitcher's duel at Optimist Field in La Grande.

"A couple things there didn't go our way. We could say that about the seventh, we could say that about our at-bats and some of the balls we hit," McKinley said.

Robinson struck out the side in order to open the game, and at one point retired 18 of 19 batters, 15 of them in a row. The only hitter to get on base through six innings did so on an error leading off the second inning. The junior overpowered the Huskies with a fastball humming in the mid and sometimes upper 80s and complemented it with a nice blend of off-speed pitches.

Zachary Luttmmer ended the dominant stretch when he got on board via a hit by pitch to open the seventh, a point at which Robinson said the game changed.

"I hit that kid, and I felt everything shift," Robinson said.

Luttmmer moved to second on a wild pitch before Robinson came back to

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Eagles' baseball wins on road

Observer staff

The Wallowa Valley Eagles baseball team took control in the first at-bat of Wednesday's first-round 3A playoff game against Horizon Christian and never let up.

Gus Ramsden hit a lead-off home run to spark the offense, Coy Aschenbrenner tossed a five-hit shutout, and the Eagles won in the first round for the second year in a row, topping Horizon Christian on the road, 8-0.

Ramsden's was the first hit in a 10-hit onslaught for the Eagles. Christopher Nobles added RBI singles in the first and sixth innings, Aschenbrenner helped the cause with a two-run double in the third, and Flynn Nave, who went 4-for-4, hit an RBI single and later scored on a passed ball. Kaden McClure also hit an RBI single in the third inning, with the hit putting Wallowa Valley ahead, 5-0.

Aschenbrenner worked into and out of trouble most of the afternoon but managed to keep Horizon Christian off the board. He walked three and struck out four. Horizon Christian got multiple runners on base several times, including runners on second and third with nobody out in the fourth, but failed to score.

The Eagles (16-7 overall) visit top-seed Pleasant Hill in the quarterfinals today.

OUTLAW SOFTBALL OUSTED IN OPENER

The Enterprise Outlaws softball team was ousted in the first round of its first 3A playoff appearance in four years, fall-



Kristi Wade photo

Enterprise's Ella Anderson squares up a pitch during Wednesday's playoff game.

ing at home to the Yamhill-Carlton Tigers Wednesday, 11-8.

The Tigers took the lead for good with a run in the third inning to go ahead 4-3, then added five runs in the fourth to extend the margin to 9-3. The Outlaws rallied, getting as close as 9-7 in the sixth, but were unable to complete the comeback.

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