

## East holds on to win wild shootout

By Ronald Bond  
The Observer

Wallowa's Gus Ramsden said the finish to the 30th annual eight-man all-star football game was the kind of ending a player would dream of — though in the moment it was certainly nerve-racking.

Ramsden accounted for 424 total yards and four touchdowns as the East all-stars rallied in the second half — then held on in the final seconds — for a 48-44 win over the West Saturday at Community Stadium in La Grande.

"It was one of my favorite games ever. It came down to the wire," said Ramsden, who was named the game's MVP after passing for 228 yards and rushing for 196. "They had the ball at the end (with a chance to win). This was a freaking game right here. It was awesome."

Rodrigo Madera of Bonanza, who rushed for 80 yards and scored two touchdowns, reached paydirt for the second time on a 3-yard run to give the East a 48-38 lead with 3:36 to play.

The West responded quickly to stay in the game. Austin Luzier of Elkton found Austin Burgess of Falls City for a 9-yard TD pass — the duo's third connection of the game — to cut the margin to four with 1:43 to go.

The East recovered the



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Wallowa's Gus Ramsden, right, accounted for 424 total yards and four touchdowns — three passing, one rushing — as the East beat the West in the 30th eight-man all-star game Saturday.

onside kick but was unable to get a first down to run out the clock, giving the West one final chance with less than 30 seconds remaining. The East defense stood tall, and a couple big penalties on the West backed them up deep into their own territory and effectively ended their comeback hopes.

"It's what you dream about," Ramsden said of the finish. "In the moment you're thinking, 'I wish we would

have got that first down,' but looking back on it, that was awesome having to play defense on them (at the end)."

A big part of the game — and the week — for Ramsden and the all-stars was coming together with athletes on a team that they would otherwise consider enemies on the field.

"It was so cool to play with kids that — I wouldn't say you hated — but you kind of hated all four years (of

high school), and then your last high school game ever you play with these guys," he said.

Elgin's Ian Smith spoke similarly about the experience.

"We were playing against each other (before). It's weird to come together as a team (and be) playing with each other. It's cool to link up and ball out one last time," he said.

Like Ramsden, Smith considered it among the best

games he has played in.

"This is my top (game ever). I got to play with the all-stars of the East. Hard hits, everybody's flying around, everybody's having fun," he said.

The game opened with the looks of turning into a historic shootout. The teams combined for four touchdowns in the first four minutes, and six total in a wild first quarter that ended with the West ahead, 24-20.

Ramsden scored on a 2-yard keeper and later found Smith for a 28-yard score on fourth down, while Wallowa's Austin Brockamp scored from a yard out for the East's scoring. The West countered with a 65-yard touchdown pass from St. Paul's Justin Herberger to North Douglas' Caleb Parks, a 55-yard Herberger strike to Burgess, and the first connection between Luzier and Burgess, a 38-yard TD pass.

The defenses regained their footing in the second to hold the score level at 24-20 at the break before the East surged ahead for good. Madera ran it in from 37 yards for a 26-24 lead just 43 seconds into the third quarter. Ramsden then hit Abraham Kilby of Dufur for two scores — one of 21 yards just moments after Madera's score, and a 36-yard hookup on the first play of the fourth — for a 40-24 lead and, seemingly, control of the game.

But the West quickly responded to stay close and set up for the fun finish. Luzier and Burgess connected for a 61-yard TD and Herberger ran it in from a yard out to get the West within 40-38 with 8:54 to play.

While the offense slowed down after the hot start, it did end up being the third-highest scoring game in the

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Ronald Bond/The Observer

Sandy's Brooke Dodge, a future Eastern Oregon volleyball player, reaches out to make a play during Saturday's all-star game in La Grande.

## Volleyball all-stars take Quinn

Observer staff

A trio of former Northeast Oregon volleyball standouts — one of whom will continue to play in the region — and an athlete who will begin to make herself known in La Grande, were all part of the champion Team Shyanna — coached by Sandy High School's Shyanna Davis — at the sixth OACA all-star volleyball series Saturday at Quinn Coliseum.

Former La Grande and fu-

ture Eastern Oregon University volleyball player Claire Hardy played a vital piece for Team Shyanna, which went undefeated in straight-set wins over Team Lesli — coached by St. Paul's Lesli Hiller — and in the championship Saturday afternoon by Team Ali — which was led by Grant Union coach Ali Abrego. Hardy was joined by Imbler teammates Caysie McGinness and Karrington Troyer to round out the local

athletes who were part of the title squad.

"It was just so amazing to even have the opportunity to play with some of the best high school athletes in the state. There was so much talent all in one gym," Hardy said. "To be a part of the winning team was just inconceivable. I went in knowing that there was going to be tough competition, but after the first and only practice

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Claire Hardy, of La Grande, who will play for EOU in the fall, sets to serve Saturday.

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