



Ronald Bond/The Observer

La Grande's Cecelia Aguilera, right, fires home one of her three goals in La Grande's 9-0 win over Ontario Wednesday.

Tigers keep on rolling

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The La Grande Tigers completed the ultimate perfect home slate in the 2019 regular season — undefeated and no goals allowed. And they did it as they have done with each victory this fall — dominating fashion and multiple goal scorers. Audrey Garlitz and Cecelia Aguilera both recorded hat tricks, Starra Ullman scored twice, and the Tigers crushed Ontario, 9-0, Wednesday in a matchup of the top two teams in the Greater Oregon League. “We came in aware of how they had played, who they played against and how they had done,” head coach Sam Brown said. “Heightened awareness, I suppose, would be a good way to put it. Not taking anything for granted. Let’s go play our game (and) bring it to them.” Aguilera said the team was prepared for Ontario, and that the players knew they would have to show up

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and have a strong outing. “We knew this was probably going to be one of the toughest games we have for league, so we knew we couldn’t come out with a mindset of, ‘Oh, we have it (won),’” she said. The win put La Grande in sole possession of first place and moved the Tigers closer to a ninth consecutive GOL title. It was also the Tigers’ sixth consecutive shutout, seventh on the season, and sixth in six home games. In fact, it is La Grande’s 13th straight shutout in regular season home games dating back to the 2017 season. During that run, La Grande has outscored its opponents 65-0. It’s a fact that can be attributed to the play of the defense and La Grande’s high-possession scheme, Brown said. “We don’t want to give them the ball, ever. It’s hard to score when you don’t have the ball,” he said.

La Grande needed only six minutes to get on the board when Garlitz scored on a long shot off a turnover, then scored five times in 10 minutes to turn what on paper figured to be a tighter battle than La Grande had faced lately into a blowout. Garlitz scored in the 20th, found Ullman and Aguilera for goals in the 25th and 27th, then completed her hat trick a minute later. “She had a goal for herself today to assist a few,” Brown said of Garlitz. “We call it buttering somebody else’s bread.” Ullman then dribbled in and scored her second goal in the 30th, and Katie Williams added a goal in the 35th to push the margin to 7-0 at the half. Aguilera scored on a pair of breakaways early in the second half for the final margin. “We all try to pass the ball and give the player who’s open the best opportunity to score, and that’s what made

our team work,” Aguilera said of the team’s balance on offense. “We pass a lot and we’re not just dribbling by ourselves.” La Grande’s offense was perhaps the most efficient it had been all season, with its nine goals coming on 15 shots on goal. The defense, while pressured a bit more than in recent contests, still produced a clean slate, with both Alexyss Chamberlain getting a save and Brenna Strand tallying two saves. The Tigers (7-1 overall, 3-0 GOL) begin a series of five road games Saturday against 5A Corvallis, and likely won’t play on the home pitch again until a first-round playoff game Nov. 5. “I thought all around it was a strong match. We’re looking forward to Saturday’s game against Corvallis,” Brown said. “Didn’t want to overlook Ontario by any stretch of the imagination, but now we can look ahead to Corvallis.”

Ontario clips La Grande for first in GOL

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The Ontario Tigers spoiled La Grande’s senior night and took over first place in the Greater Oregon League in the process. Marc Salas scored two second-half goals that proved to be the difference makers, and Ontario stopped La Grande, 3-1, Wednesday night in the battle of the top two teams in the GOL and two teams that entered near the top of the OSAA rankings. “We came out lackadaisical,” head coach Sid Rangel said. “We weren’t connecting our passes. We weren’t playing the (brand of) soccer that we’re used to.” La Grande entered as the No. 1 team in the OSAA 4A rankings, but was challenged all night by a fast Ontario team, ranked sixth coming in, that scored early, controlled possession much of the night and caught La Grande on a day it wasn’t well focused. “Our heads weren’t in it, I feel like,” senior James Thurman said. “We were slow to respond, not going to the first balls as hard as they were. I think they were more motivated.” Adrian Nunez scored the opening goal just seven minutes in to give Ontario an early lead. It was the first time La Grande had trailed since its second game of the season, though Rangel said the early deficit didn’t impact the team. “I think it was the way we performed overall. It was the way we started the game, and the way our tempo wasn’t there,” he said. “(That) played a huge factor.” La Grande’s inability to connect passes



Ronald Bond/The Observer

La Grande's James Thurman, left, battles for possession with Ontario's Julian Tellez Wednesday night.

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— perhaps, the coach said, due to the team not being sharp mentally — was the bigger problem Wednesday. The Tigers struggled to find a flow on offense and saw most of their possessions stalled either by an errant pass or, at times, good play by the Ontario defense. “We’ve been training hard, but the past couple of days I don’t know that it’s been there. Our level of complacency was so high that our intensity in practices (and) our intensity in terms of mental preparedness wasn’t there,” he said. Thurman offered a similar assessment. “We had a lot of individual errors all around the field. We just could not connect. Our chemistry was all messed up, and I think that all sprang from not being

prepared,” he said. La Grande, despite the struggles, stayed within a goal until the latter stages of the second half when Nunez scored his two goals 10 minutes apart to ultimately give Ontario an insurmountable lead. Thurman assured La Grande wouldn’t be shut out by putting home a penalty kick in the final minutes, but it was the only shot attempt the Tigers put by Ontario keeper Jose Anguiano, who had two saves. La Grande, in fact, only managed five shots on the night. Ontario, by contrast, had 18 shots and put 10 on goal. The coach said, though, that the loss is something the team can use moving forward.

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EOU teams move higher in NAIA coaches' polls

Observer staff

The Eastern Oregon volleyball team heads into this weekend’s matches with its highest ranking ever. The Mountaineers, who have a record of 17-1 surged to fifth in the latest NAIA coaches poll, which came out Wednesday. It surpasses the No. 6 ranking EOU has reached on several occasions, the last time during the 2016 regular season. “It is very exciting to be recognized for what we have accomplished so far this season,” head coach Kaki McLean-Morehead said. “At the end of the day, it’s just a number, and we have to go to work and concentrate on improving every day and every week.” EOU is also the highest ranked of four Cascade Collegiate Conference teams, three of which are in the top 10. Corban, which is the only team to defeat EOU this season and is currently first in the CCC, is ranked seventh. Southern Oregon, which had reached fifth earlier this season, dropped to 10th. “I think the poll is pretty accurate, and it shows how tough our conference has become over the last few years,” McLean-Morehead said. College of Idaho rounds out the CCC teams, coming in at 23rd. The only unbeaten teams at the NAIA level are among the four teams ahead of EOU in the coaches poll. Missouri Baptist (17-3) is the top-ranked team, followed by 18-0 Northwestern (Iowa), 20-0 Indiana Wesleyan and 17-3 Viterbo (Wisconsin). The volleyball team is

not the only EOU squad to reach an all-time high rank. The Eastern women’s soccer team also surpassed the No. 7 ranking it earned earlier this year by moving up to No. 6 in the poll Wednesday. “I think our ladies have put in a lot of hard work to get where they are,” head coach Jacob Plocher said. “We as a staff are extremely proud of them. We hope to keep taking steps to improve.” The Mounties, who at 5-0-2 are one of just four unbeaten teams in NAIA women’s soccer, jumped from ninth to sixth in the poll and, like the volleyball team, is the highest ranked CCC squad. Southern Oregon, the only other team from the conference in the poll, is in 23rd. The women’s soccer team moved into the top 10 for the first time earlier this season when it reached No. 7 following a 3-0-1 start against Top 25 opponents. Eastern briefly dropped to ninth after a tie at Corban, but jumped after a win at College of Idaho and three losses by teams ranked above it. Keiser (Florida) is the top-ranked team, followed by defending national champion William Carey (Mississippi), Northwestern Ohio, Southeastern (Florida) and Lindsey Wilson (Kentucky). The EOU volleyball team hosts Warner Pacific and Multnomah this weekend, while the soccer team hosts Montana schools Carroll College and Providence. Meanwhile, the EOU See EOU / Page 8A

Huskies earn sweep at home

Observer staff

Jayden Palmer had eight kills and five aces, helping the Elgin Huskies to a sweep of the Griswold Grizzlies at home in Old Oregon League play Thursday, 25-16, 25-13, 25-19. Maddison Harvey added four aces in the win as the Huskies had 16 total. Shelby Sannar had 11 assists, Kaelin Evans had two blocks and Tymra Anderson added two digs. Elgin (7-9 overall, 3-4 OOL) hosts Joseph today. OUTLAWS FALL IN FOUR The Enterprise Outlaws fell short on the road in a Blue Mountain Conference matchup Thursday, 25-14, 25-18, 20-25, 25-17. Carsyn Miller had four aces, Claire Farwell added 29 digs and Ashlyn Gray recorded five kills for the Outlaws (7-9 overall, 0-4 BMC), which travel to John Day for a three-way match against Grant Union and Pilot Rock Saturday. EAGLES SWEEP SPARTANS Sabrina Albee had nine kills, six aces and three blocks to lead the Joseph Eagles to a 25-8, 25-17, 25-8 sweep of the Pine Eagle Spartans at home in Old Oregon League play Thursday. Molly Curry added three kills, and Madelyn Nelson

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had nine assists and two kills. The Eagles (8-11 overall, 2-3 OOL) visit Joseph today. UNION DOWNS ROCKETS The Union Bobcats finished the first half of Blue Mountain Conference play undefeated with a road sweep of the Pilot Rock Rockets Thursday, 25-5, 25-12, 25-22. Stats were not available. Union (14-2 overall, 6-0 BMC) visits Stanfield on Thursday. COVE WINS IN FOUR The Cove Leopards earned a four-set win on the road against Nixyaawii in Old Oregon League action Thursday, 25-26, 23-25, 25-16, 25-11. Stats were not available. Cove (11-5 overall, 4-3 OOL) hosts Pine Eagle today. Wednesday IMBLER EARNS SWEEP Aspen Smith had 12 kills, Erin Coston added nine kills and four aces and the Imbler Panthers swept the Nixyaawii Golden Eagles in Old Oregon League play Wednesday, 25-12, 25-18, 25-8. Allison Stirewalt added five kills for Imbler. Anika McDonald chipped in with six digs and three aces, and Rylee Deal had 32 assists. Imbler (9-11 overall, 6-1 OOL) hosts Joseph Tuesday.