

La Grande takes second at district

By Jayson Jacoby
EO Media Group

BAKER CITY — The skies were pure blue but the dominant colors at the Greater Oregon League cross country meet Friday afternoon were the purple and gold of Baker High School.

The Bulldogs ran away with the meet on the hilly, difficult course at Quail Ridge Golf Course, pulling off a complete sweep.

Baker won the girls and boys team titles, paced by individual winners Sydney Keller and Kale Cassidy.

Cassidy, a senior, won his third straight district title. La Grande, despite missing its top girls runner, Jacki Martini, finished second in both the girls and boys races, giving the Tigers a berth at the state meet as well.

Both Baker and La Grande will compete at the Class 4A state meet Saturday at Eugene's Lane Community College.

On the boys side, La Grande nipped third-place Ontario by a single point.

Keller was excited after winning her first district title in a time of 20:17.

"That was my goal from the beginning," she said. "I'm just happy that the team is going (to state) together."

But her joy was tinged with sadness due to the absence of Martini, who became ill the night before the race and wasn't able to compete.

"I was expecting Jacki to be here," Keller said.

Runner-up Maia Vandervlugt of La Grande finished at 20:56, 39 seconds back.

Vandervlugt, a senior, said Martini's falling ill the night before the meet "shook up our team a little bit."

"But we still came out and did what we set out to do," Vandervlugt said, referring to the Tigers finishing second

and qualifying for the state meet.

Vandervlugt, who won the district title as a sophomore and has now finished second three times, said she actually considered focusing on theater this fall rather than competing in cross-country.

After her runner-up finish Friday, she said she's glad she decided to run in her final year in high school.

"I felt really good," she said with a smile. "I was not expecting to get second today."

La Grande easily outdistanced third-place Mac-Hi, with 40 points to the Pioneers' 77.

The Tigers' Corbyn Sexton placed 4th in 21:14, and Audrey Garlitz was the third La Grande runner in top 10, finishing 9th in 23:14.

Gladys Alf Rippee (24:29) and Anne Sweet (24:35) finished 12th and 13th to round out La Grande's top five.

In the boys race Cassidy, like Keller, took the lead early and was never threatened.

He finished in 16:13, 30 seconds ahead of Ontario's Lance Trees.

Cristian Mendoza and teammate Braxton Bisenius led La Grande by finishing sixth and seventh, respectively.

Mendoza, who finished in 17:30, four seconds ahead of Bisenius, said although he's pleased that La Grande finished second as a team to advance to the Class 4A meet, he wasn't satisfied with his own performance.

"I'm not too happy," Mendoza said. "I didn't have my best race."

Donald Sweet finished in 17:59 to take 11th for La Grande. Two freshmen — Caleb Murie (18:10) and Dima McCarthy (19:43) placed 14th and 18th to round out the Tigers' top five.

Union/Cove, Wallowa County make state meet

Observer staff

The Union/Cove boys cross country team put three runners in the top four and four in the top six to win the 2A/1A Special District 3 cross country meet Friday in Pendleton.

Israel O'Reilly and Taylor Fox went 1-2 for the Bobcats, with O'Reilly finishing in 16:43.6 and Fox following in 16:45.4. Andrew Lackey also broke the 17-minute barrier, crossing the line in 16:53.9.

Monte Kirby edged his way into sixth with a time of 17:27.6 and Carter Blackburn rounded out the top five for Union/Cove in 14th at 18:15.2.

"(It's) going to be fun at the state meet next week," head coach Steve Sheehy said. "St. Stephen's Academy is clearly the best team on paper. Hopefully we can have a good day in Eugene."

The Elgin boys placed fifth, and were led by Kaden McClure, who finished in 23rd with a time of 19:11.9. Kevin Hendrickson followed closely in 27th in a time of 19:21.9. Clay Wilhelm (20:00.6) and Chris Myers (20:33.8) finished 36th and 40th, and Noble Craig came in 49th (21:27.9).

In the 3A boys race, Burns and Wallowa County both scored 32 points, but the Hilanders claimed the tiebreaker for the top spot.

Wallowa County had three of the top four runners in district champion Henry Cough-

lan (15:56.7), third-place finisher Zac Knapp (16:19.2) and Bayden Menton in fourth (16:33.0). Ian Godrich took 10th in 17:19.1, and John Matthews rounded out Wallowa County's top five in 14th in 17:44.5.

Burns had five runners in the top nine to edge out Wallowa County.

On the girls side, Union/Cove edged out Wallowa County by four points for second place in the 3A/2A/1A race.

Wallowa County's Ellyse Tingelstad and Union/Cove's Jaimee Baxter finished 2-3 in times of 19:13.1 and 19:27.3. Audrey Wells (20:47.8) and Ashlee Burtch (21:10.2) finished in the top 20 for Union/Cove in 14th and 19th. Danielle O'Reilly (21:39.3) followed in 25th and Kaitlin Martens (21:49.8) took 29th.

Wallowa County runners Kyla Hook (20:59.0) and Mary Catherine Matthews (21:07.2) finished 17th and 18th. Sydney Rouse (21:46.4) placed 27th and Maddie Nordtvedt (22:13.0) was 31st.

Burns, like on the boys side, had five runners in the top 10 to coast to the district title.

Elgin runners Anika Jacobson (22:06.4) and Jocelyn Palmer (22:34.9) placed 30th and 56th.

Union/Cove and Wallowa County will compete at the state meet Saturday in Eugene.

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