

Prep football



Ben Lonergan/EO Media Group

La Grande running back Nathan Reed, left photo, and defensive lineman Gabe Shukle, right photo, were named 4A offensive and defensive players of the year.

Reed, Shukle, McIlmoil named state's best

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande Tigers' football season was already perfect.

They added some icing on the cake Tuesday and earned an early Christmas gift.

After sweeping through the opposition during the 2019 football season, the Tigers swept the player and coach of the year awards, The Oregonian/OregonLive announced on Christmas Eve, with running back Nathan Reed earning Class 4A offensive player of the year, defensive lineman Gabe Shukle earning defensive player of the year, and head coach Rich McIlmoil being named 4A coach of the year.

"It's awesome. Gabe totally deserved it (and) Rich definitely deserved it," Reed said. "It's super cool to sweep that."

Shukle said Reed "hands down deserved" the offensive player of the year award.

"Nathan is just so explosive and physical at the running back position, and he is an incredible leader and we are very blessed to have a player like him on our team," Shukle said.

Reed was among two Tigers in the running for offensive player of the year, along with quarterback



Observer file photo

La Grande head football coach Rich McIlmoil was selected as the 4A coach of the year.

Parker Robinson, and Monday night they were the final two standing as OregonLive gradually eliminated players from the running over the weekend.

Reed, who credited the offensive

line all season with their effort as he put up 1,725 yards rushing on the season, said the line's play was what allowed both him and Robinson to be the top two in the player-of-the-year running.

"You're not going to have two offensive finalists without an outstanding offensive line," he said, pointing to the linemen's efforts in opening up holes for both Reed and Robinson, and for protecting Robinson on pass plays.

Reed's success in addition to the blocking in front of him came from having an attitude of not letting the first defender he came upon beat him.

"I tried to never be taken down by the first man and always fall forward for those extra yards," he said.

Shukle made his name in 2019 by being what Reed called "disruptive" in his efforts to stop opposing offenses.

"Coaches saw that, and saw he was going to be a problem (for their teams to handle)," Reed said. "A lot of teams double-teamed him. A good word I would say to describe him is disruptive. He's aggressive."

As an example, Reed pointed to a regular-season game against Baker. Shukle had been battling an injury and been in and out during the game, but he came in at a key point when Baker was driving and single-handedly stopped the Bulldogs' drive.

"When he was on the field, the other team knew it," Reed said.

McIlmoil in a previous interview with The Observer said the Baker coaching staff had a similar take following that game.

"The Baker coach made a comment, (that) it was evident (when Gabe played)," McIlmoil said. "The second time we played Baker, Gabe didn't start. He came in periodically, and you could tell when he was on (the field)."

Shukle said his goal was to simply help the team out.

"I wasn't in on every tackle, but I would try to take on multiple guys so someone else could be unblocked and make a play," he said. "Another goal of mine was just to make as big (of) an impact on the field as I could."

McIlmoil completed his second season as head coach and has a 19-3 record in those two years.

"Coach Mac is an incredible coach. He put so many hours into helping our team be the best we could be, and he truly cared about us," Shukle said.

Reed added the key for McIlmoil was his ability to get all the players invested in the program.

"We all trusted him and believed in him," he said. "He got us all to buy in. No one was in 50% or 75%. We were all in 100% this year because of Rich."

Boys soccer lands six on all-GOL

Observer staff

LA GRANDE — Six members of the La Grande boys soccer team earned all-Greater Oregon League accolades following the 2019 season, including three who landed on the first team.

A pair of seniors, defender Ty Rivas and midfielder James Thurman, and junior Callum Ebel, were each named to the first team, while Lucas Young, Jarom Huntsman and Devin Ingram were each second team selections.

Thurman and Ebel were the top scorers for the Tigers on the season, finishing with nine and eight goals, respectively. Ingram added two goals.

The Tigers reach the Class 4A quarterfinals in the Greater Oregon League. La Grande finished with an overall record of 9-5-1 in head coach Sid Rangel's first year.



Observer file photo

La Grande's Callum Ebel was one of three Tigers named first-team all-Greater Oregon League, after scoring eight goals this season.

Prep basketball

Joseph girls, boys split opener of road trip in Dufur

Observer staff

DUFUR — Sabrina Albee scored 18 of her 30 points in the second half Thursday and single-handedly outscored Dufur as the Joseph girls basketball team opened a three-game year-end road trip with a 46-29 victory over the Rangers.

Albee had 10 in the first quarter and 12 by the half as Joseph built a 26-13 halftime lead, then scored all but two of the Eagles' points in the second half.

Camille Crenshaw added eight points for Joseph (7-1 overall) which continues its road trip Friday in Perrydale and Saturday in St. Paul.

EAGLE BOYS FALL SHORT AGAINST RANGERS

The Joseph boys came up short in their first game of the three-game road trip Thursday, falling at Dufur 51-44.

Chase Murray scored 13 points and Carson Littlepage and Mason Ferre added nine



Staff photo by Ronald Bond

Joseph's Sabrina Albee, shown in a game Dec. 13, scored 30 points in Thursday's win at Dufur.

points apiece.

Joseph was within a point at the half, trailing just 23-22, but Dufur opened up a 41-34 lead after three

quarters and maintained the margin in the fourth.

The Eagles (5-3 overall) face Perrydale Friday and St. Paul Saturday.