

# Tigers pull away from Pioneers in fourth, now 3-0 in GOL

By Ronald Bond  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The last time the La Grande Tigers built a sizable fourth-quarter lead at home, they nearly gave it all away.

Friday, unlike that contest two weeks ago against Baker, the Tigers put the pedal down and finished off a victory.

The Tigers opened the fourth quarter Friday with a 14-2 run to break open their Greater Oregon League contest against McLoughlin and rolled to a 58-36 win, one that moved them to 3-0 at the midway point of GOL play.

“Overall I was happy with our energy,” head coach Mark Carollo said. “We didn’t shoot the ball great tonight but we made up for it in other areas.”

Mac-Hi’s Dereagan Stephens beat the third-quarter buzzer to cap an 8-0 run and bring the Pioneers within 38-30.

The Pioneers got no closer in the fourth quarter. Two free throws and a jumper by Justin Jenner pushed the lead back to 12. Devin Bell followed with eight straight points for the Tigers, including a putback after a miss, a short jumper in the key and a field goal from the base-line, to make it an 18-point game, and Brady Hutchins added a field goal to make it 52-32 near the midway point of the fourth and cap the run.

“You got teams down, you gotta make sure you’re keeping them down and not giving them that glimmer of hope,” Carollo said, adding the message to his team down the stretch was to “stop being careless with the ball, stop jumping all over the place trying for steals, stick to the fundamentals. That’s what was hammered at them in the fourth.”

It was a final quarter that saw the Tigers shoot 57% from the floor, but the major key was the team’s defense. La Grande limited the Pioneers to just 20% shooting in the final quarter and forced seven turnovers.



Staff photo by Ronald Bond

La Grande defenders Devin Bell, left, and Justin Jenner, right, surround McLoughlin’s Marcellus Brinkley during Friday’s game at La Grande High School.

## Prep boys hoops

“It all started on the defensive end tonight,” junior guard Cristian Mendoza said. “Anytime you hold a team to 40 points (or less) it’s hard not to win a game. I think it started there and we executed pretty well.”

It was defense by La Grande earlier in the game that Carollo pointed to as what allowed it to build its lead, as a strong second quarter — one that saw the Pioneers go roughly five minutes between field goals — helped the Tigers build a 12-point lead before going into the break ahead 27-18.

“Second quarter I thought our defense was outstanding, and I give credit to a couple of guys coming in off the bench — Nick Duvernay and Lukas Schelin,” he said.

Schelin also had a big part in helping La Grande own a 36-20 edge on the glass with nine rebounds — seven of them on the offensive end.

Mendoza scored 14 points — all in the first three quarters — to lead the Tigers’ offense. La Grande also got nine points apiece from Hutchins and Kaleb Myer, and eight points from both

Jenner and Bell. Stephens led the Pioneers with 21 points.

The Tigers (4-10 overall, 3-0 GOL) visit Pendleton Tuesday before heading to Baker on Friday, where they can clinch a share of the league title with a win.

**Also Friday**  
**Union 62, Weston-McEwen 47:** Cole McLean led the way with 16 points Friday as the Bobcats broke the game open after halftime and ended a two-game losing streak.

Jace Phillips and Keegan Glenn added 15 points apiece for Union, which pulled ahead 29-19 at the half then outscored the TigerScots 21-7 in the third quarter to take a 24-point lead and coast to the victory.

**Grant Union 62, Enterprise 47:** A huge third quarter by the Prospectors proved to be the difference in their win at Enterprise in Blue Mountain Conference play.

Grant Union led by just three at halftime but outscored the Outlaws 26-11 in the third to take a 52-34 lead.

Cason Kirkland scored 16 points, including eight in

the fourth quarter, to lead the Outlaws, while Dallas Harker added 11 points.

**Powder Valley 51, Joseph 39:** The Badgers pulled away in the fourth quarter Friday to get past the Eagles and stay undefeated in the Old Oregon League.

Powder Valley held a slim one-point lead at halftime and was ahead just 33-29 after three before scoring 18 points in the fourth to finish the win. Moziss Nesser, who led the Badgers with 12 points, scored eight in the final period. Reece Dixon and Ethan Stephens each added 10 points.

Chase Murray and Mason Ferre each had 15 points for the Eagles, who were playing in their first game since the Jan. 16 fire that burned their home gym.

**Nixyaawii 76, Elgin 53:** The visiting Golden Eagles raced out to a 22-point halftime lead to top Elgin in an Old Oregon League matchup.

The Huskies were within 25-16 after one, but Nixyaawii pushed the margin to 45-23 at the half and led by 36 after three quarters.

Kaden McClure scored 19 points to lead the Huskies.

Tristan Simpson had 12 points, and Gage McKay added 11.

**Wallowa 52, Griswold 45:** Tristin Bales poured in 31 points Friday as the Cougars won on the road to earn their first Old Oregon League victory of the season.

Wallowa held just a 33-32 lead headed into the fourth quarter, but both Bales and Zeb Hermens had eight points in the fourth as the Cougars pulled away.

Hermens added 15 points in the win for Wallowa.

**Imbler 47, Cove 25:** Wyatt Frost scored a game-high 11 points as the Panthers, who never trailed, used two big quarters to pull away for an Old Oregon League win.

Imbler outscored Cove 9-0 in the first and was ahead 17-10 at the half then outscored the Leopards 14-3 in the third to take control at 31-13.

Jayce Burnette and Isaac Herron both added nine points for the Panthers. Bo Ledbetter led Cove with eight points, and Caden Hall added seven.

**Saturday**  
**Union 38, Enterprise 21:** The Bobcats put on a defensive clinic Saturday as they locked down Enterprise at home in Blue Mountain Conference play.

It marked the fourth time this season Union has held an opponent to less than 25 points, and was the lowest total since a 47-19 win at Cove in January 2015.

Jace Phillips had nine points and Cameron Dillman added seven for Union, which led 27-13 at the half and blanked Enterprise in the third — though it only scored two itself — to take a 29-13 lead after three.

Devin Greer had eight points to lead the Outlaws.

Union (13-7 overall, 4-3 BMC) visits Grant Union Friday, while Enterprise (5-9, 1-6) visits Weston-McEwen Saturday.

**Nixyaawii 71, Joseph 57:** The Eagles didn’t have enough firepower to keep up with Nixyaawii Saturday on the road.

Nixyaawii built a nine-

point lead after one quarter and gradually extended the margin the rest of the night.

Chase Murray scored 19 points to lead Joseph, and Mason Ferre added 14.

Joseph (10-5 overall, 1-2 Old Oregon League) hosts Elgin Tuesday.

**Powder Valley 94, Griswold 42:** Roper Bingham had 19 points Saturday to lead 11 players in scoring as the Badgers hammered the Grizzlies on the road in Old Oregon League play and eclipsed 90 points for the third time this season.

Kaden Krieger added 15 points, Ethan Stephens scored 14 and Dominick Grende had 11 for Powder Valley. The Badgers held a 40-25 lead at the half then went off for 54 points after the break.

Powder Valley (14-3 overall, 6-0 OOL) hosts Baker Tuesday.

**Elgin 63, Pine Eagle 57:** The Huskies fended off the Spartans at home Saturday in a barn burner in Old Oregon League play.

Elgin was up just 35-34 at the break and 49-48 after three quarters, but Tristan Simpson scored seven of the team’s 14 points in the final quarter to help the Huskies hold on.

Kaden McClure led Elgin with 26 points and hit five 3-pointers in the win. Simpson added 15 points.

Elgin (9-6 overall, 4-1 OOL) visits Joseph Tuesday.

**Wallowa 41, Cove 39:** Tristin Bales scored 23 points Saturday, including seven in the final quarter, as the Cougars held off a rally by the Leopards for an Old Oregon League win.

Wallowa held a seven-point lead at the half but saw the lead cut to 32-28 after three. Cove pulled closer in the fourth but couldn’t complete the comeback.

Caden Hall had 12 points for the Leopards, and Bo Ledbetter and Patrick Frisch added 10 points apiece.

Wallowa (6-10 overall, 2-4 OOL) faces Joseph Wednesday in Enterprise, while Cove (1-14, 0-4) hosts Pine Eagle Friday.

## TIGERS

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time La Grande tried to pull away — rallied.

A basket by Mac-Hi’s Courtney Breeding and two free throws by Emma Leber cut the lead to nine with 2:49 left. The next minute saw the teams combine for four turnovers, and the teams traded a pair of free throws — after a Pioneer foul and a La Grande technical foul — to keep the margin at 57-48 with about a minute and a half left.

Dunlap collected a steal on the ensuing possession, but the typically automatic Camryn Collman twice missed the front end of a 1-and-1 to keep the door open. Daniela Angel, who led the Pioneers with 17 points, hit a jumper with about a minute to go to get the deficit to seven, and moments later hit two more free throws to make it 57-53 with just 25.5 seconds left.

But a foul on Mac-Hi, and moments later a technical foul on the Pioneers after arguing for what they believed was a missed foul call on La Grande, sent the Tigers to the line for four free throws, with Lauran Rinker splitting two and Collman re-finding her touch to hit two. Collman, who had 16 points and 10 rebounds, seconds later made two more free throws for the final margin.

“I think we had a little bit more push than them,” Dunlap said. “We kind of picked it up a little bit in the second half and that’s what gave us the lead.”

She admitted, though, the Tigers overlooked Mac-Hi.

“We went into it thinking we had it in the bag, and we obviously didn’t,” she said. “We didn’t play as a team in the beginning.”

La Grande struggled the entire night to shake the Pioneers. Mac-Hi led most of the first quarter and had a 15-14 lead after one on a late jumper by Darby Rhoads.

La Grande took the lead for good on a steal and basket by Rinker 22 seconds into the second quarter and led by as much as 10 in the period on a pair of Josie Reagan free throws and later on a field goal from Grace Neer, but the Pioneers pulled within 31-26 at the half.

A layup by Kenzie Williams, who added eight points, gave the Tigers a 40-28 lead. A 3-pointer by Angel trimmed the margin back to seven, and it was trimmed to six before Williams’ late jumper gave La Grande a 46-38 lead after three.

The Tigers (11-5 overall, 2-1 GOL) visit Baker Friday, looking for a win to stay in contention in the GOL title race.

“We challenged the girls to go home and watch the game film this weekend and analyze that, and then we gotta put that aside. In a few weeks we gotta go to their place, which is going to be a battle,” Wright said.

**Also Friday**  
**Enterprise 38, Grant Union 32:** The Outlaws used a solid third quarter Friday to build an insurmountable lead as they topped the Pioneers at home

in Blue Mountain Conference play.

Ashlyn Gray has six of her 11 points in the period as Enterprise turned a five-point halftime lead into a 33-22 margin through three.

Carsyn Miller had 13 points to lead the Outlaws.

**Union 57, Weston-McEwen 19:** Brianna Kohr scored 16 points Friday, Callie Glenn chipped in with 10 points, and 10 players scored in the Bobcats’ blow-out home in Blue Mountain Conference play.

Union built a double-digit lead by the end of the first quarter and was never tested. The Bobcats led 28-12 at the half, with Kohr scoring 13 points in the first half.

Audrey Wells added eight points for the Bobcats.

**Elgin 64, Nixyaawii 58:** Jayden Palmer poured in 28 points Friday, Tynra Anderson added 20, and the Huskies rallied in the fourth quarter to secure an important Old Oregon League home victory.

Palmer, who hit seven 3-pointers, had the hot hand early as she had 21 first-half points, and Anderson played a key role in the second half with 16 points, including 11 in the final quarter. Elgin trailed after three quarters, 41-38, but finished with a 26-point fourth to come back for the victory.

Kaelin Evans added eight points in the Huskies’ eighth-straight win.

**Joseph 41, Powder Valley 32:** A big second quarter Friday and a 27-point night from Sabrina Albee lifted the

Eagles to a road win in their first game since the Jan. 16 fire that burned their home gym.

The Eagles, who led 10-6 after one quarter, took command with a 16-point second quarter — seven of which came from Albee — to go ahead 26-13 at the half. Albee followed with 11 more points in the third to help Joseph maintain its margin.

Belle Blair scored 13 points to lead Powder Valley.

**Wallowa 56, Griswold 22:** Jamie Johnston had 15 points and 11 rebounds Friday as the Cougars routed the Grizzlies at home in Old Oregon League play.

Ashlyn Young added 12 points for Wallowa, which broke the game open early with a 20-5 first-quarter run and built an insurmountable 36-13 lead by halftime.

Shanna Rae Tillery added 11 points for the Cougars.

**Cove 37, Imbler 31:** Kierra Moore scored a game-high 14 points Friday, and the Leopards rallied after a slow start to earn a road victory in Old Oregon League action.

Cove trailed by four after one but took a 19-18 lead into the half and extended the lead to 27-22 after three quarters. Elli Hines-Dunlap added nine points and Raegan Duby hit two important fourth-quarter 3-pointers for Cove.

Kenna Whitmore led Imbler with 10 points, and Alyssa Jennings added seven points.

**Saturday**  
**Union 33, Enterprise 32:** Kylie Marriott hit two

free throws with 5.8 seconds remaining Saturday as the Bobcats squeaked by the Outlaws at home to stay undefeated in Blue Mountain Conference play.

Ashlyn Gray had a 3-point play that gave the Outlaws the lead late before Marriott, who had 11 points, won the game for the Bobcats.

The contest was neck-and-neck all night, as the Bobcats held an 11-10 lead after one quarter and a 16-15 lead at the break. The teams were tied at 23-23 after three quarters.

Callie Glenn finished with 12 points to lead Union.

Gray had nine to lead the Outlaws, while Carsyn Miller scored eight points.

Union (17-3 overall, 7-0 BMC) travels to Grant Union Friday, while Enterprise (13-3, 5-2) visits Weston-McEwen Saturday.

**Elgin 58, Pine Eagle 37:** The Huskies shook off a halftime deficit and woke up offensively to roll past Pine Eagle at home and stay undefeated in Old Oregon League play.

Elgin trailed 19-16 at the break but scored 22 points in the third to build a 41-25 lead and take control of the game.

Jocelyn Palmer scored 15 points to lead Elgin, and Tynra Anderson added 12 points.

The Huskies (13-2 overall, 5-0 OOL), who with the win matched their highest win total since 2001, face Joseph Tuesday in Enterprise in a battle of two of the OOL’s top teams.

