Staff photo by Ronald Bond

La Grande's Gabe Shukle slams Hidden Valley's Christopher Woods Saturday to set up a pin in the final of the 285-pound division at the 4A state tournament in Portland.

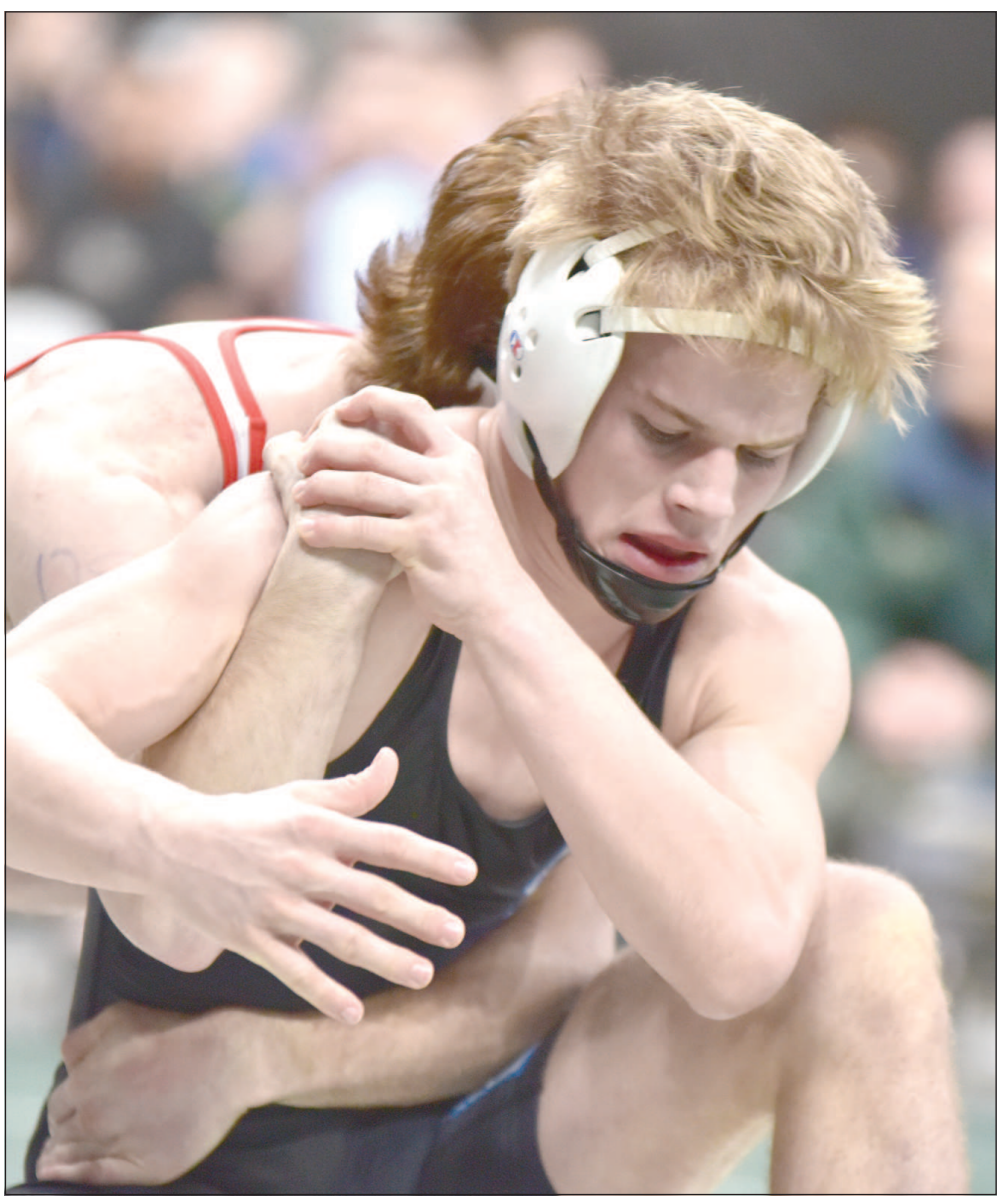
Staff photo by Ronald Bond

La Grande's Christopher Woodworth scores a late takedown Saturday to defeat Elmira/Crow's Nat Brown 4-3 during the 195-pound final in Portland and repeat as state champ.

KINGS OF THE MAT

Staff photo by Ronald Bond

La Grande's Parker Robinson flexes after winning the 170-pound title Saturday in the 4A state tournament in Portland 5-3 for his second wrestling title.



Staff photo by Ronald Bond

La Grande's Braden Carson tries to break the grip ofTillamook's Quintin Metcalfe Saturday during the 126-pound final in Portland. Carson won 8-4 for his first state title.

Tigers claim first wrestling championship since 1996

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

PORTLAND — In November, La Grande ended a 45-year championship drought in football.

Saturday, the Tigers ended a stretch of 24 years between titles in wrestling.

"They're state champions, man!" La Grande head coach Klel Carson exclaimed after the tournament.

Boosted by four individual championships, three second-place performances and several important wins throughout the lineup, the Tigers won their first state wrestling crown since 1996, edging runner-up Sweet Home by just 6.5 points — 261 to 254.5 — for the 4A title.

"It's a great accomplishment," said sophomore Braden Carson, one of the four Tigers who claimed an individual championship. "I don't think we could have done much better. We wrestled our hearts out."

Parker Robinson and Christopher Woodworth both repeated as state champions Saturday, with Woodworth's 4-3 victory over Elmira/Crow's Nat Brown at 195 pounds giving La Grande the needed boost in points to finally pull ahead of Sweet Home for good.

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Head-to-head success vital to La Grande's state crown

RONALD'S REPORT
RONALD BOND

There wasn't a team that came across the La Grande Tigers' path this wrestling season that, pound-for-pound, person-for-person, was able to stop them in a dual.

That was evident when La Grande breezed through the Oregon Classic to win the 'dual state championship' earlier this season, handling some teams 78-0 blowout losses there and defeating Sweet Home — the same team it defeated for the OSAA 4A state title Saturday — in the 4A final in Redmond in January. It was clear when the Tigers trounced teams in dual matchups like they did Baker (61-7), Ontario (64-12) and McLoughlin (66-11). It was why some teams even canceled their duals with La Grande.

But what does a dual have to do with La Grande's ability to win the state tournament title, as it did Saturday night?

Simply, that duals are head-to-head matchups against a single team. At the state tournament, the Tigers had ample head-to-

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