

Wallowa Valley baseball teams off to a slow start

By Ellen Morris Bishop
EO Media Group

ENTERPRISE — The Wallowa Valley All-Stars Team 2 dropped a pair of games Sunday but showed improvement from one contest to the next.

The team of 14- and 15-year-olds played a doubleheader at Jensen Ball Fields, Enterprise, and lost its first game 21-1 to the Tri-Cities Reign team.

Wallowa Valley's sole score came from Gabe Nobles who walked, then stole his way around the bases early in the game. The team had only four hits — each on a single — from Cody Fent, Gavin Stecher, Tyler Knapp and Maclane Melville. Dropped balls and muffed catches plagued the team.

The team's play improved when it took the field for its second game that afternoon, this time against Pendleton.

Players made diving catches, hauled in fly balls, stole bases and racked up 17 hits, including a scorching double by Melville in the fourth inning. The final score was 7-5 Pendleton.

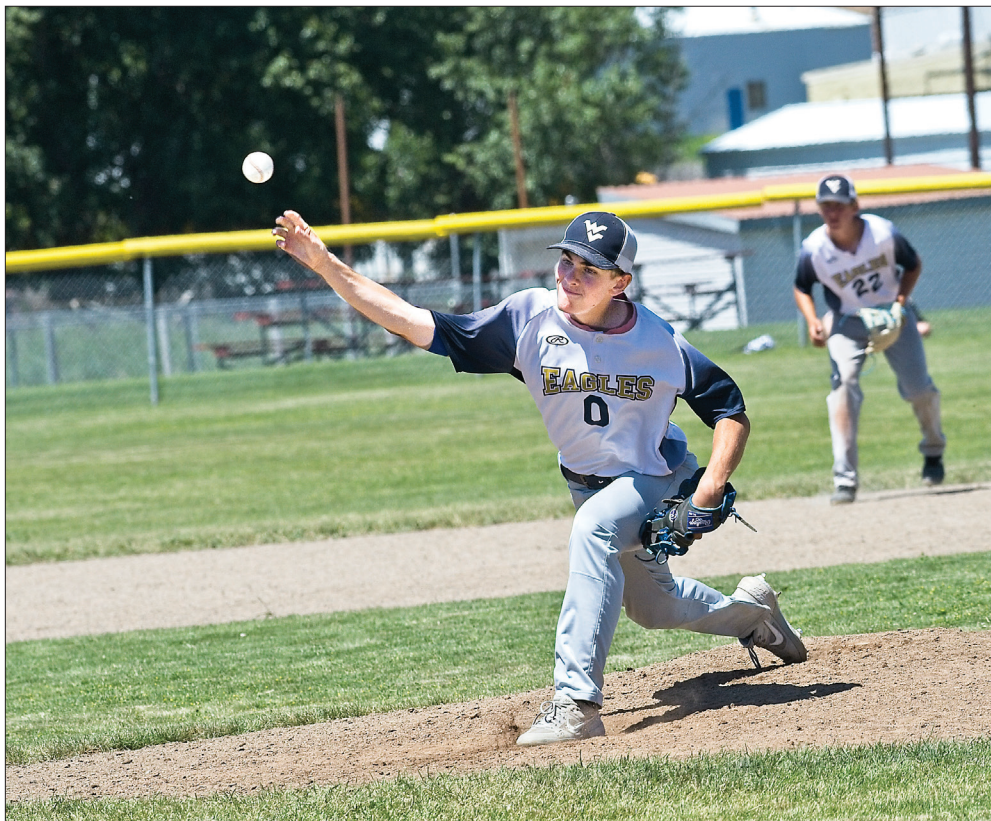


Photo by Ellen Morris Bishop/EO Media group

Blade Suto with the Wallowa Valley All-Stars Team 2 pitches Sunday in a game with Tri-Cities, which won with a 21-1 score.

Strong pitching performances by Wallowa Valley's Drew Beachy and Melville helped keep Pendleton in check.

Coach Jim Nave said his

team of young players was improving.

"A lot of these kids played Little League before this, and they mostly played in the infield," he said. "So

playing the outfield is new and different. It requires some new skills. They are catching on."

Nave noted both the Pendleton and Tri-Cities

teams represented much larger communities.

"They probably had a hundred kids to choose from," he said. "Here, we take every kid who wants to play. Summer baseball is an important learning experience for our players. These kids will be the J.V. team for the schools next year."

The older Wallowa Valley Team 1, composed of 16- to 18-year-olds, played a doubleheader in La Grande Wednesday. They dropped both games, losing to Pendleton by a score of 13-12, and coming slightly unraveled to lose to La Grande 12-2.

"In both of those games, Trace Evans pitched a phenomenal game," Nave said. "In the Pendleton game, we figured that we gave up eight unearned runs due to errors and making bad plays. So we should have won that game."

Team 1 co-captain Flynn Nave said the heat in La Grande had a negative effect on the team. In the game against La Grande, Flynn Nave said

the team sort of fell apart after a missed fly ball. Repeated infield errors compounded the problem, and Wallowa Valley lost control of the game.

Still, there were some bright spots in the games. "Trace (Evans) pitched a lot of strikeouts and had batters just hitting fly balls," Flynn Nave said. "And I made three solo double-plays."

Is it discouraging to play teams from bigger communities?

"I think it's good to play teams that are better than us," Flynn Nave said. "It makes us better players. It makes us elevate our game."

The Wallowa Valley Team 1 plays a doubleheader with Baker City at Jensen Field in Enterprise starting at 3 p.m. Friday, July 24.

"We beat Baker City in Heppner two weeks ago," Nave said. "We are looking forward to doing that again."

The younger team plays a home doubleheader with Walla Walla Saturday, July 25, beginning at noon.

Construction starts at new Enterprise athletic facility

By Bill Bradshaw
EO Media Group

ENTERPRISE — There was no gold-plated shovel, as is common at formal groundbreaking, but an impressive track hoe did the trick July 8 as some of the organizers of a new 8,000-square-foot indoor athletic facility gathered at Jensen Ball Fields in Enterprise.

"It's been a work in progress for over two years," said Kate Fent of the Wallowa County Athletic Network. "There have been a lot of meetings and a lot of people involved."

She said the network has been working on the project to give Wallowa County children a place to play and practice during cold and wet weather. The multipurpose facility will include a turf playing field, restrooms and storage. It'll be particularly useful in the winter, when school gymnasiums are in use. Baseball and softball programs also will be able to use it.

Fent said the project originated with an idea put forth by Dick and Cathy Johnson, who donated the first \$20,000 toward it. Dick Johnson is a former baseball coach who knew firsthand the need for a practice area given what local athletes experience during Wallowa County's winter and spring weather.

In late 2018, the network — through the city of Enterprise — received a \$250,000 grant from the Oregon Department of Parks and Recreation it applied for early that year. The network also has received matching donations totaling \$125,000 from a variety of private and public individuals and groups.

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