

BACK IN THE GAME

The La Grande High School Soccer team handily defeats Four Rivers in the first home game in nearly a year

By **ALEX WITTWER**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The La Grande High School Tigers returned to the field Tuesday, March 2, and seized victory in the first home game since Gov. Brown lifted restrictions on high school sports.

Approximately two dozen spectators took to the stands at Eastern Oregon University's Community Field to watch the Tigers soccer team play against the Four Rivers Senior Preparatory Falcons of Ontario. Parents and media sat masked and bundled up in blankets as the night went on. The stands were closed to the general public, while guests were limited to two persons of the same household per player, with social distance rules enforced.

Still, that didn't hinder some die-hard sports fans from watching the first home game since the pandemic began. A group of high school students sat in a pickup outside the field along Sixth Avenue and watched from their vehicle, and others did likewise. As the Tigers scored, a flurry of honks erupted from the vehicles.

"I'm glad to get the kids back on the field. I'm glad the parents could watch," said Darren Goodman, athletic director for La Grande High School. "Hopefully we can iron out the wrinkles and it'll get smoother and smoother each time."

Regarding restrictions, Goodman said it's a work in progress to ensure family members can safely watch the games from the stands.

"We want to go slow so we're making sure we're doing it safely," he said. The game was a blowout with the Tigers leading 5-0 in the first half against the Four Rivers Falcons. The La Grande offense was too much for the Falcons to handle, and most of the game was spent near the visiting team's net. By the second half, the Tigers played much more defensively, shifting the ball back toward a middle-game to force their opponents to wear themselves out.

The gambit worked. The Falcons were running on fumes from the constant pressure, allowing the Tigers ample breathing room against any comeback attempts. La Grande scored two points in the second half, and the game ended with a resounding 7-0 victory from the Tigers.

The next home game will be the girl's soccer team against Four Rivers on Tuesday, March 9.



Photos by Alex Wittwer/The Observer



ABOVE: La Grande High School forward striker Devin Ingram (17) takes the battle early to the Four Rivers Falcons on Tuesday, March 2, 2021, during La Grande's first home game in nearly one year.

LEFT: Approximately two dozen spectators look on Tuesday, March 2, 2021, as the La Grande High School Tigers face off against the Four Rivers Falcons in La Grande. Due to the pandemic, no visiting team family members were able to attend, and viewing was closed to the general public.

BELOW: La Grande High School assistant coach Eric Montgomery (front) and the Tigers stand at attention during the playing of the national anthem before the game Tuesday, March 2, 2021.

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— Darren Goodman,
athletic director for La Grande High School



CCC releases spring season basketball schedule

CORVALLIS — The Cascade Collegiate Conference released the women's and men's spring season basketball schedule Tuesday, March 2, with Bushnell University, Corban University, Eastern Oregon University, Multnomah University, Oregon Tech, Southern Oregon University and Warner Pacific University set to participate.

The spring schedule comes on the heels of the approval from the Oregon Health Authority of the CCC's comprehensive "Return to Play" plan for high contact sports, according to the conference's announcement. In mid-February, Oregon Gov. Kate Browns' office announced it would accept the plans for college sports as well as high school activities that had been prohibited during the pandemic.

Seven men's teams and six women's teams will hit the hardwood later this month, after Southern Oregon made the decision to opt-out of the spring schedule in women's hoops.

The schedule will run for an eight-week period and is set to begin the weekend of March 19-20 and finish April 30-May 1. The 12-game men's and 10-game women's CCC slate has teams playing each other on back-to-back dates and incorporates a bye weekend in which non-conference games can be planned.

CCC Commissioner Robert Cashell in the announcement said schools are finalizing their plans to access antigen testing, which will supplement the weekly PCR testing the conference has been doing with Santiam Hospital in Stayton.

"Our goal is to have all of that in place to begin play in three weeks' time," Cashell said.

The revised Return to Play Plan includes strict daily wellness screening, stringent procedures for mitigating against the introduction and spread of COVID-19, and twice per week testing. The conference will use a combination of PCR/antigen testing to comply with the approved plan.

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