

La Grande tromps Nyssa in football opener

By ALEX WITTWER
The Observer

NYSSA — The La Grande High School football team in its season opener took off right where it left off at the end of 2019 — with a big win.

The Tigers traveled Thursday, March 11, to face the Nyssa Bulldogs in the first game since winning the OSAA Class 4A Football State Championship against the Banks Braves on Nov. 30, 2019. La Grande defeated Nyssa 42-8.

“I was extremely proud of our boys for their effort, they really gave 110%, you could say,” La Grande head football coach Rich McIlmoil said. “I was proud of them — they really came together as a group and played well as a team. There wasn’t any individuals trying to, in a sense,



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Players with the La Grande High School varsity and junior varsity football teams practice Tuesday, March 9, 2021 behind the school in preparation for varsity’s first game of the season. The Tigers on Thursday, March 11, defeated the Nyssa Bulldogs 42-8.

steal the show — they really played well together.

With this whole COVID experience that’s been

going on, it’s been really good for them to come

together and bond.”

The key moment in the game came early.

“Our first drive, we just marched down the field and scored, and it set the tone for the rest of the game,” he said.

But the win was such a team effort, he said, there wasn’t one play that stood out to him as a coach, although the offensive line did. Jarrett Armstrong, Ryan VanderZanden, Nick Bornstedt, Cole Jorgensen, Noah McIlmoil, the coach’s son, and Lukas Schelin, he said, were outstanding.

“Our offensive line — every guy playing on the offensive line, every one of my players, it was their first true varsity game,” McIlmoil said, “and so to play that good their very first game and as young as they are, was really impres-

sive to me.”

He said no one should get the wrong idea that Nyssa was not a good team.

“A lot of people are going to think Nyssa wasn’t very good because we countered them, but actually they’re a pretty good team, and we just played very well,” he said.

And while Nyssa’s players were bigger, McIlmoil said La Grande’s were faster and stronger. He also said the real victory here was getting youths back on the playing field.

“It’s so nice to get the kids out there again, playing,” McIlmoil said. “They just really enjoyed themselves. It’s less about the score and more about that — don’t get me wrong we played great, a lot of kids really stepped up, it’s just fun watching them play.”

Little League registration closes March 17

LA GRANDE — La Grande Little League baseball and softball registration for minors, majors and juniors closes Wednesday, March 17 and the first season begins April 1.

The league announced it canceled tryouts to prepare for extra precautions for the 2021 season due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Teams will draft players March 18. The first season runs April 1 through May 28, with a closing day parade May 29. The second season runs June 1 through July 2.

The league also reported it extended the waitlisting period for the T-Ball and Coach Pitch programs. Waitlisting closes April 30 and open registration runs May 1-14.

You can find more information and updates on the La Grande Little League Facebook page and its website: www.lagrandelittleleague.net.

Mountaineers football announces two camps for summer

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University head football coach Tim Camp announced two camps that will take place this summer.

The first will be for eight- and six-player teams June 20-23 at Elgin High School, Elgin. Price for the camp is \$125 per student-athlete and \$50 per coach. This price will include lunch and dinner for coaches.

High school students in ninth-12th grade are eligible to attend. The first camp includes scrimmages, individual coaching and



Ronald Bond/The Observer, File

La Grande Little League player Derek Begin swings during batting practice in July 2017. Little League registration for 2021 closes Wednesday, March 17.

a passing league. EOU’s coaching staff also will evaluate players and officiate matches.

The second camp is an 11-player team camp July 12-15 on the campus of Eastern Oregon University, La Grande. Price is \$170 for day participants and \$225 for overnight participants.

Athletes again must be high school aged (ninth-12th grade). The second camp offers controlled scrimmages, individual drills and a passing league.

For information on the both camps, please contact Tim Camp at tcamp@eou.edu or at 541-805-58969. Those interested in the first camp date also can contact Andrew Woody at woodya@eou.edu or at 541-805-8844. Those interested in the second camp date also can contact Bryan Mills at millsbk@eou.edu or at 541-975-3206.

EOU volleyball moves up one spot in national rankings

KANSAS CITY, Mo. —

Eastern Oregon University’s volleyball team moved up one spot in the latest national rankings.

The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics on Wednesday, March 10, released its second edition of the Women’s Volleyball Coaches’ Top-25 Poll and Eastern Oregon University now sits at No. 8, according to a press release from EOU.

The Mountaineers moved up one after starting the season a perfect 9-0, including an 8-0 start to Cascade Collegiate Conference play. Eastern is just one of two undefeated teams in the top-10.

In the Mountaineers start to the spring campaign they have already garnered CCC Team of the Week honors, picked up three CCC Player of the Week awards and one NAIA Player of the Week honor. Along the way to the 9-0 start, head coach Kaki McLean Morehead also reached career win No. 300 at the helm of leading Eastern Oregon. And senior Kiley McMurtrey also became the all-time career leader in digs at EOU.

Two other CCC teams also garnered national attention with one being in the top-25.

Corban University in Salem checks in at No. 14 after starting the year at No. 13. And Bushnell University, Eugene, continues to receive votes in this edition of the coaches’ poll.

Eastern will be back in action next weekend on Friday, March 19, and Saturday, March 20, when the team hosts College of Idaho in a pair of Cascade Collegiate Conference matches inside Quinn Coliseum. First serve for the Friday match is set for 7 p.m. PT, while Saturday’s match will take place at 4 p.m.

— The Observer

Russian folk song rejected as Olympic anthem

By GRAHAM DUNBAR
Associated Press

GENEVA — Russia’s wish to use a patriotic Soviet-era folk song as a replacement anthem for the Tokyo Olympics was rejected by the Court of Arbitration for Sport on Friday, March 12, in further fallout from a years-long doping scandal.

The court said its panel of three judges was asked to clarify what music it would allow within the two-year ban on Russia’s team name, flag and national anthem from Olympics and world championships imposed in December.

Russian officials proposed the “Katyusha” song, which is identified with the

fight against Nazi Germany in World War II.

“The CAS panel considers that ‘any anthem linked to Russia’ extends to any song associated with, or with links to, Russia, which would include Katyusha,” the court said in a statement to The Associated Press.

It is unclear which piece of music Russian Olympic officials could propose in consultation with the International Olympic Committee.

Russia will compete in Tokyo and next year’s Winter Olympics in Beijing as “ROC,” an acronym for the Russian Olympic Committee.

The CAS judges’ ruling

in December settled Russia’s long-running dispute with the World Anti-Doping Agency over a state-backed doping program and cover-ups.

The IOC asked the Russian Olympic body last month to submit an alternative piece of music for use at medal ceremonies.

Similar restrictions apply to world championship events in Olympic sports, and most governing bodies have played their own anthems for Russian athletes and teams.

A piece of music by 19th-century Russian composer Pyotr Tchaikovsky was approved by the International Skating Union for its world championships.

Brady signs extension with Bucs

Associated Press

TAMPA, Fla. — Tom Brady has agreed to a contract extension with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers that provides the Super Bowl champions with salary cap relief and will help the seven-time NFL champion reach a goal of playing until he’s at least 45.

Brady posted a picture of himself on Twitter, signing the extension Friday with the message: “In pursuit of 8 ... LFG@ Buccaneers we’re keeping the band together.”

The extension confirmed by the team frees about \$19 million in salary cap space, a move that improves Tampa Bay’s chances of returning as much of its championship

roster as possible for 2021.

Seven starters from the Super Bowl were among two dozen Buccaneers eligible to become free agents next week.

“When we acquired Tom a year ago, we were extremely excited about the leadership, poise and winning track record that he would bring to our locker room. Since that time, he has proven himself to be the ultimate competitor and delivered in every way we had imagined, helping us capture the Lombardi Trophy,” general manager Jason Licht said. “Year after year, Tom proves that he remains one of the elite quarterbacks in this game and we couldn’t be happier to keep

him in Tampa Bay as we continue to pursue our goals together.”

Brady’s extension adds an extra season on the two-year, \$50 million contract he signed in free agency last March following a 20-year run with the New England Patriots.

The five-time Super Bowl MVP capped his first season with the Bucs by leading Tampa Bay to its first championship in 18 years.

Tampa Bay was estimated to be more than \$7 million over the salary cap before Brady extended his contract. The Bucs can now turn their attention to trying to reach a deal with linebacker Shaquil Barrett, the 2019 NFL sack leader.

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