

## Powder Valley volleyball wraps up perfect season

By JAYSON JACOBY  
Baker City Herald

NORTH POWER — Powder Valley doesn't have a shiny new, official Class 1A state volleyball championship trophy to grace the school's display case.

But the Badgers, who recently completed a 14-0 season, believe they are the best team in Oregon at their level.

"I really don't hesitate to say that," Powder Valley coach Marji Lind said. "I think the girls feel that they're the top dog in Class 1A."

Because the Oregon School Activities Association didn't schedule state tournaments as usual due to the pandemic, schools were free to arrange their own "culminating events" during the final week of the abbreviated season.

Powder Valley played host to an event for Class 1A and 2A schools on Friday, April 9. The Badgers won three matches, beating Alsea, Joseph and Class 2A Union.

Lind lauded parents and school officials for working so hard to make the event "as big a deal as possible."

When the Badgers finished their three-set sweep of Union in the final match, spectators released streamers and balloons in the gym.

### Badgers overcame disappointment

The cancellation of the usual fall volleyball schedule was particularly disappointing for the Badgers, Lind said.

The team expected to be a top competitor to win the Class 1A state title.

This was not a case of excessive optimism, either, as Powder Valley had finished as state runner-up in 2018 and 2019. The Badgers lost to St. Paul in the state championship match both years.

Lind said the team, and in particular the core group of five seniors, felt strongly that "this was their year."

The seniors — Brooke Allen, Belle Blair, Keanna



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald

Powder Valley's Brooke Allen (front left) battles above the net with Baker's Lacy Churchfield, No. 9, during a match March 31, 2019, in Baker City. Powder Valley went 14-0 this season.

Bingham, McKenzie Leggett and Bailey Cole — "have played together forever," Lind said.

The Badgers were excited to learn that the volleyball season would happen, albeit in the spring rather than the fall.

But their enthusiasm waned when OSAA announced it would not have a state tournament.

"There was disappointment," Lind said.

Rather than dwell on something they couldn't control, Lind said the Badgers decided instead to make the shortened season as challenging as possible.

"We said, 'Let's just play every tough team that we can find,'" Lind said.

Powder Valley athletic director Brad Dunten assembled a schedule quite different from what the Badgers would play during a normal season.

Rather than playing primarily Class 1A schools, the Badgers' slate included Class 4A Baker (twice), Class 3A Burns and Vale, and Class 2A Union.

"It was a really fun schedule to play for the girls," Lind said. "They enjoyed being challenged and they enjoyed being together. It felt real again."

Powder Valley didn't just win all 14 matches in that imposing schedule — they dominated most of their opponents. In 11 of those 14 matches the Badgers won in

three straight sets.

Just two teams pushed Powder Valley to a decisive fifth set — Crane, on March 5, and Burns, on March 15.

That was the only loss of the season for Burns, which went on to win the Class 3A culminating event.

Another highlight, Lind said, was traveling to St. Paul and sweeping the Buckaroos March 12. That victory was especially satisfying after St. Paul denied the Badgers a state title in 2018 and 2019.

"That was really fun to go down there and beat St. Paul on its home court," Lind said.

As dominant as the Badgers' performance was on the court this season, Lind said she was equally impressed with her players' attitudes as they dealt with an unprecedented situation.

"I think the girls were super grateful and excited to play," Lind said. "These kids had a lot of fun together."

During the Badgers' final practice, it's a tradition for the seniors to impart advice to their younger teammates.

This year, the five Powder Valley seniors didn't waste a single word talking about the disappointments of their final season.

"There was no negativity," Lind said. "They said don't take anything for granted, and enjoy it while you can. They have an amazing, really mature, perspective."

## Cougars football team ends with win

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — Zeb Hermens saved his best for last, and stepped in a major way when the Wallowa Cougars needed him to.

The senior, who filled in for an injured Lute Ramsden at quarterback, rushed for 224 yards and four touchdowns and passed for two more scores as the shorthanded Cougars fought off the Elgin Huskies Friday afternoon, April 9, in their season finale, 58-42.

"Essentially we were playing without three all-state two-way starters," head coach Matt Brockamp said. "Elgin has some big, strong physical kids and they ran the ball well. They ran the ball hard. ... It was neat to see our kids keep playing hard and keep scoring and keep ahead of them."

The Cougars were without Lute Ramsden and Colby Mandal in the Elgin game, both injured in last week's win over Powder Valley, and lost Zeb Ramsden in the second quarter due to injury.

Hermens engineered the Cougar offense — largely with his legs, carrying the ball 27 times to pile up his yardage. He also was 5-for-10 passing for 79 yards and two scores — one to Tristin Bales and one to Ryder Goller. Defensively, he had six solo tackles and assisted on six more.

With Hermens leading



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa High's Zeb Hermens shakes Husky tacklers on a touchdown run in the fourth quarter during the Cougars' final game of the season Friday, April 9, 2021, in Elgin.

the way, Wallowa rushed for 405 yards, and finished with 484 yards of total offense. Bales had 99

and 14 assists, and Ramsden had three tackles and six assists.

Brockamp said the defense had to shuffle players around until Wallowa was able to find a combination to get the stops needed.

"It was musical chairs for a little bit until we got something we felt a little more comfortable with," Brockamp said. "And we made

a couple stops, we forced a couple turnovers, and were able to keep scoring and stay ahead of them, and make plays on special teams as well."

With the win, Wallowa wraps up the spring with a record of 4-1.

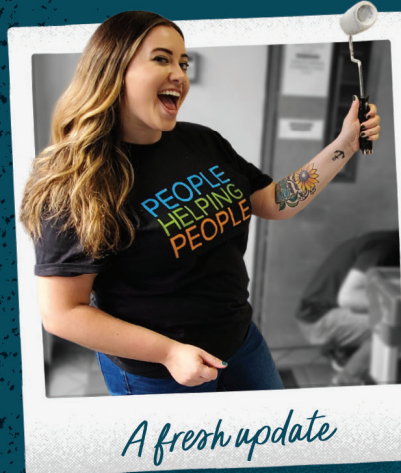
*"It was neat to see our kids keep playing hard and keep scoring and keep ahead of them."*

— Matt Brockamp, Wallowa football head coach

yards rushing and a touchdown and also had 48 yards receiving, and Zeb Ramsden had 52 yards rushing and 20 receiving before leaving with an injury.

Defensively, Jesse Duncan had five tackles

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