

# La Grande baseball team aims for state championship

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**  
The Observer

AURORA — Both the La Grande baseball and softball teams will compete at North Marion High School Saturday, May 22, with a 4A baseball state championship on the line.

On the baseball diamond, La Grande is having one of its best seasons in recent years. The Tigers went 12-1 in the regular season and are riding a 12-game winning streak into the 4A championship game.

The Tigers, ranked third in the bracket, easily defeated the six-seed Gladstone 18-1 and then narrowly beat the reigning champion and two-seed Banks 7-4. Now, La Grande

faces a matchup with the top-seeded Hidden Valley Mustangs. First pitch is scheduled for 4 p.m.

La Grande softball lost to the No. 1 seed Henley on May 20, which snapped the Tigers' streak of winning the last two championships. The team will compete for third place May 22.

Prior to the loss, La Grande softball had a 10-1 regular season record. The Tigers coasted past Gladstone 6-0 but fell 0-8 against Henley. They will face Banks in the third place matchup at 1 p.m.

Fans are allowed to attend the games at North Marion High School. For those who can't be there, score updates will be posted at OSAA.org.

# Mountaineers finish at 21 in final football poll

The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Eastern Oregon University football team has plenty on which to build next year.

After finishing with a 3-1 overall record and a share of the Frontier Conference title, a first for the program, the Mountaineers had a strong showing in the final edition of the Football FirstDown PlayBook Top-25 Poll.

Eastern came in at No. 21 — less than 10 points from squeezing into the top 20. The Mountaineers finished with 84 points, just behind No. 20 Roosevelt, with 90 points.

EOU wasn't the only Frontier Conference team in the final Top 25. The College of Idaho finished at No. 18, while Carroll College finished at No. 22.

Along with picking up a share of the conference crown, the Mountaineers also had multiple all-conference selections, including the offensive player of the year, the defensive player of the year and coach of the year.

Pendleton graduate Kai Quinn was named the

offensive player of the year, Chase Van Wyck was the defensive player of the year, and head coach Tim Camp was named the Frontier Conference Coach of the Year.

Van Wyck and Quinn each also earned AFCA All-American honors for the NAIA. Also garnering All-American honors was offensive lineman PJ Schubert. In all, EOU had a total of 15 All-Frontier Conference selections. Earning the honors on offense were Quinn, Schubert, Tanner Zenke and Luke Thomas. Making the second team on offense were John Lesser, Isaiah Thomas and Patrick Collins.

On the defensive side, earning first-team recognition was Van Wyck, Zak Donato and Solo Taylor. Dakota Hibbs was the lone selection for EOU on the second-team list.

Zachary Cahill was a first-team selection at kicker and was a second-team selection at punter. Isaiah Thomas was a first-team special team selection at both kick returner and punt returner.

# Anthony to face Denver in playoffs for first time

By **ANNE M. PETERSON**  
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Carmelo Anthony has been around the NBA for quite some time but he's never faced the team that launched his career in the playoffs.

Until now.

Anthony's current team, the Portland Trail Blazers, faces the Denver Nuggets in a first-round best-of-seven series starting Saturday.

Anthony said he hadn't realized that he'd never faced the Nuggets in the postseason. But so much has changed since he wore a Denver jersey.

"It's a lot different now. My mindset is different. My goals are different. We're going in there trying to win," he said. "So, it's a different type of mentality, but deep down inside I know that Denver will always hold a special place for me."

A 10-time All-Star, Anthony is ready for another chance at an NBA title, something that has so far eluded him in his 18-year career and 12 trips to the postseason. Last season, Portland was eliminated in five games by the Los Angeles Lakers.

"This is where I should be. I should be in the postseason. That's just me speaking from the heart and genuinely. If I'm not in the postseason, then it should be a problem," he said.

Anthony was drafted by the Nuggets with the third

overall pick in the 2003 NBA draft. He played in Denver for seven-plus seasons, helping the team reach the Western Conference Finals following the 2008-09 season.

He was traded in 2011 to the New York Knicks, where he spent more than six seasons. Anthony also had stops in Oklahoma and Houston, but in early 2019 he was traded to Chicago and the Bulls cut him before he played a game.

Anthony hadn't played for a year when he was signed by the Trail Blazers in November 2019. He instantly sparked the team and developed a chemistry with his teammates while also providing veteran leadership.

This season he's come off the bench, leading the Blazers' second unit with an average of 13.4 points per game.

"What he's done for us in a year and a half has been what we needed. This year, the role that he's had off the bench has been a big part of the reason why we are where we are," Blazers coach Terry Stotts said.

# LG girls basketball open with resounding victory

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — After a long pause, basketball season is back at La Grande High School.

The Tigers girls basketball team took on the Bulldogs of Nyssa and came away with a 63-25 victory during their season opener Thursday, May 20.

"It feels strange to be playing basketball this time of the year," said head coach Brian Wright.

The last time the Tigers took the court was in the playoffs last season. La Grande had qualified for state competition but the season was cut short due to COVID-19. Now playing in the spring, Wright's team looks poised to start the season on a high note.

The Tigers came out strong, opening the game on a 14-0 run. Camryn Collman scored five of the



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

La Grande's Makenna Shorts drives for a layup during the second quarter of the Tigers' home game victory against Nyssa on Thursday, May 20, 2021. Shorts scored eight points in the second quarter as the Tigers jumped out to a big lead.

team's first seven points, while controlling the tempo on fast breaks and rebounding effectively.

"We've been trying to work on being able to push the ball and get easier opportunities in transition," Wright said. "I thought the kids did a really good job

of that early on."

Collman finished with 10 points and was all over the court on offense and defense for La Grande.

The Tigers held a commanding 20-2 lead at the end of the first quarter and never looked back. Makenna Shorts added eight

points in the second quarter to extend La Grande's lead to 38-9 at the half.

In the paint, Ella Dunlap and Maddie Larman dominated the boards and scored efficiently up close to the basket.

"It's our game plan. We run a lot of triangle and we look at the low block," Wright said. "We try to get the easiest opportunities we can get, or putbacks."

The Tigers held the Bulldogs to less than 10 points in each quarter, despite a late push from Nyssa.

Up next, La Grande will host Baker on May 27. The season is a bit unconventional, but the Tigers are glad to be back.

"For some of these kids it's unfinished business," Wright said. "They want a chance to get back on the court and it's good for them."

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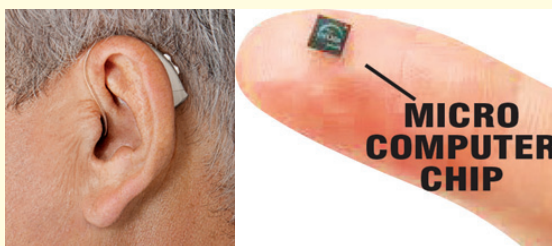
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