

# Under the lights: All-Star game highlights local talent

Local prep football standouts cherish opportunity to play

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**  
The Observer

**LA GRANDE** — It was an opportunity for one final high school football competition for some of the state's high school football stars.

Union County and Wallowa County standouts participated in the 2021 Oregon 8-Man All-Star Game at Eastern Oregon University on Saturday, June 26. The East All-Stars topped the West All-Stars, 38-14.

"I'm proud of all the East kids. They came together really well like the east side of Oregon does," East All-Stars and Adrian High School head coach Bill Wortman said. "I could not be more proud of them."

The East All-Stars included seven Union County football players and two from Wallowa County. Zeb Hermens and Zeb Ramsden represented Wallowa, Isaac Herron and Wyatt Frost played for Imbler, Wyatt Hallgarth and Gage McKay appeared for Elgin, and Hunter Lind, Eric Newman and Ethan Stephens performed for Powder Valley.

## Large turnout for all-star game

Local fans packed the stands at Community Stadium on EOU's campus in La Grande.

The West All-Stars scored their first points late in the second quarter and trailed 24-8 at halftime. Several players that would have competed in the 2020 all-star game, had it not been cancelled due to COVID-19, were honored at the 50-yard line during halftime.

Mapleton High School



**Powder Valley's Ethan Stephens takes a handoff during the 2021 Oregon 8-Man All-Star Game on Saturday, June 26, 2021. Stephens played running back and defensive line and was named the MVP following the game.**

quarterback JJ Neece added a rushing touchdown for the West All-Stars in the fourth quarter, but a big fumble recovery returned for a touchdown by Carston Hartman of Lost River High School and a 30-yard touchdown run by Hallgarth put the game out of reach.

"I like this team and we played really well together from day one," Frost said. "It was nice being able to play with these guys and get a win."

Frost, a 6-foot-5 offensive lineman, is committed to play college football at Western Oregon University. The former Imbler standout was not planning on playing football after high school until the Western running backs coach reached out having seen him in scouting footage.

"I wasn't even planning on playing college football but one day I just got the call and the rest is history," Frost said.

Due to the pandemic, a number of big man camps and season games were canceled, which made it

difficult to get recruited. Upon visiting Western in February, Frost received a scholarship to play for the Wolves and was offered 50% tuition.

## Early lead propels East to victory

Not only was it an honor to be selected to the 8-man all-star game, but the East All-Stars dominated the game from start to finish.

"It felt like I was playing on a college team and it was one of the best atmospheres I could ask for, just playing in a facility like this," Stephens said. "Being able to play with the best in the state felt great."

Herron opened the scoring with a short-yardage rushing touchdown with 3:39 remaining in the first quarter. South Wasco County High School's Garrett Olson caught a two-point conversion to put the East All-Stars up 8-0. Olson is set to play for Western Oregon University next fall.

Stephens made it difficult on the West All-

Stars' defense throughout the game, weaving in and out of traffic on running plays. He scored a goal-to-go rushing touchdown with 9:36 remaining in the second quarter to put his team up 16-0 and converted a two-point conversion after a Zack Turner (Lost River High School) quarterback sneak to build a 24-0 lead. Stephens also made a number of plays on the defensive side of the ball and was named MVP of the Oregon 8-Man All-Star game.

"We bonded really well and played smart," Stephens said. "It was a sensational feeling to make a tackle and hear the crowd go crazy."

## 8-Man game returns to La Grande

While the East All-Stars managed to win comfortably in front of a packed crowd, the playing of the game itself was in question throughout much of the pandemic. In addition, the high temperatures pushed the game back from 1 p.m.



**Imbler's Wyatt Frost blocks Cauly Jackson of the West All-Stars during the first half of the Oregon 8-Man All-Star Game on Saturday, June 26, 2021. Frost is committed to play football at Western Oregon University in the fall.**



**Elgin's Wyatt Hallgarth runs an end-around during the second half of the Oregon 8-Man All-Star Game at Eastern Oregon University on Saturday, June 26, 2021. Hallgarth broke free for a 30-yard touchdown run late in the game that secured a 38-14 victory for the East All-Stars.**



**Gage McKay represents Elgin High School at the Oregon 8-Man All-Star Game at Eastern Oregon University on Saturday, June 26, 2021. McKay was forced into playing quarterback in the second half after Zack Turner of Lost River High School suffered an injury.**

to 7 p.m., but everything went smoothly.

"I wasn't expecting to have this all-star game, so it was great to get another chance to play," Hermens said.

Across the state, most football teams played shortened seasons due to the pandemic. The local prep football standouts not only earned spots on the all-star rosters, but put on a strong performance one last time at the high school

level. With the sun setting on Community Stadium, fans and family members in attendance gave the players a standing ovation after the final seconds ticked off the clock.

"It makes me proud to suit up one more time and represent the east side of Oregon," Newman said. "It felt good to play one last game with a big crowd here to watch."

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