



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Powder Valley's Case Olson (25) pushes his way through the center against Adrian High School on Saturday, Nov. 27, 2021, on the Baker High School field. The Badgers lost to the Adrian Antelopes 46-38 during the final match for the OSAA 1A State Championship in a heartbreaking finale that saw Adrian come back in the fourth quarter to take the title.

CHAMPIONSHIP THRILLER

Powder Valley football team comes up just short in 1A title game

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

BAKER CITY — In a game of inches, Powder Valley came up just shy of a state championship.

The Badgers exchanged blows with top-seeded Adrian in the OSAA 1A State Championship, but the Antelopes ultimately came out on top. Despite leading through the first three quarters, the Powder Valley football team was bested 46-38 at Baker Bulldog Memorial Stadium in Baker City on Saturday, Nov. 27.

"The boys played outstanding," Powder Valley head coach Josh Cobb said. "We just ran out of time."

Coming into the title matchup, top-seeded Adrian



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Casey Vaughan (4) hypes up his fellow Powder Valley Badgers during halftime inside the Baker High School locker room on Saturday, Nov. 27, 2021. The Badgers just missed winning the OSAA 1A State Championship against the Adrian Antelopes.

had not trailed to an opponent all season and had outscored its opposing teams 618-54. The Antelopes bested Powder Valley 38-0 on Oct. 1, but the championship game proved to be a much more competitive contest.

The action between the two teams was neck-and-neck for four quarters, with both fan-bases packing the stands in Baker City.

The Antelopes started things at their normal pace, taking an early lead. Adrian quarterback

Conley Martin, this year's 1A Special District 2 East player of the year, ran in a 61-yard rushing touchdown on Adrian's first play of the game to take a quick 6-0 lead. The quarterback finished with 211 rushing yards, 57 passing yards and four total touchdowns.

Powder Valley did not back down, as junior Cole Martin ran the ensuing kickoff for a 94-yard touchdown. The Badgers converted the extra point to take an 8-6 lead, the first deficit of the

season for Adrian, and would hold the lead until midway through the fourth quarter.

Within just two minutes, both teams had found the end zone in what looked to be a fast-paced game. While the teams heated up in the second half, the first half was more of a defensive, ground-and-pound matchup.

Late in the first quarter, the Powder Valley defense came up with a huge stop on fourth-and-goal at the team's own eight-yard line. Just when it looked like the Antelopes were going to retake the lead, the Badgers gathered steam and started the march down the field as the first quarter ended at 8-6.

Early in the second quarter, senior Case Olson broke loose for a 65-yard rushing touchdown that put the Badgers up 16-6 and ignited the Powder Valley sideline.

In the midst of Powder Valley's momentum, Adrian stayed calm and kept to its game plan — this was the case throughout the entirety of the contest. Conley Martin concluded a productive drive with a two-yard touchdown run to cut the lead to 16-14. Despite delving

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IMBLER WRESTLING

Burns leads the way for growing team

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

IMBLER — When Garrett Burns defeated Central Linn's Blake Owens by a 6-2 decision last June, he made Imbler wrestling history.

Burns dominated the 120-pound weight class and became the first Imbler wrestler to win two individual state titles. The best part for Imbler head coach Doug Hislop is that Burns still has his senior year to build on his legacy. The senior will be the cornerstone of an Imbler wrestling team that has seen a sizable increase in turnout over the last several years.

"Last year was a great year with just four wrestlers — they all placed at the district tournament," Hislop said. "I would like to say that's a possibility this year, that's the goal."

Hislop expects eight boys wrestlers and two girls wrestlers to compete for the Panthers this year, a major uptick from having four wrestlers each of the last two seasons. In 2019, two wrestlers were injured and Imbler had only two competing by the end of the season.

Burns will lead the way once again this year, looking to defend his state title. In his junior campaign, Burns went 9-1 and helped Imbler capture 18th place out of 48 schools at the 2021 2A/1A state tournament. His only loss last season came at the hands of La Grande's Kai Carson, a 4A opponent.

"It's going to take a heck of a kid at the 1A or 2A level to beat Garrett," Hislop said.

Burns wasn't the only wrestler to make history last year — teammate Alex Hunter became the first Imbler freshman to qualify for a state tournament. Hunter switched schools to Lighthouse Academy, but will be eligible to compete for his home district (Imbler) this season. Hislop has not been able to practice Hunter yet in following OSAA guidelines. Hunter competed at the 113-pound weight class last season and could be a crucial piece of Imbler's plans this year as a sophomore.

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IMBLER GIRLS BASKETBALL

Imbler a combination of experience and youth

By JEFF BUDLONG
For The Observer

IMBLER — Imbler will look to incorporate a mixture of experience and youth into a successful girls basketball team this season.

The Panthers return six upperclassmen to lead a team that will be supplemented by 14 freshmen and sophomores. It is a bit of a chemistry experiment for head coach Darci Sweet and her team coming off an 0-7 pandemic-shortened season.

"Win-loss, it didn't go as well as it could have, but just getting that time in the gym and having the chance to work together helped us," Sweet said.

The Panthers have a four-year varsity post player in Joelle Treat returning. She is the team's go-to option, but Sweet said it is her growth as a leader that has impressed her the most.

"She has really worked

on finding a way to become a scoring threat for us," Sweet said. "She is a great rebounder."

She is joined by fellow seniors Audree Treat, Joelle's cousin, and Kendra Counsell. Treat handles the point guard duties with Counsell working next to her as a shooting guard. Three juniors also return in Elidia Rivas, Alyssa Jennings and Sadie Bingaman.

Rivas joins Joelle Treat in the post to give the Panthers size and experience, entering her third year on varsity. She will help offset the graduation of Anika McDonald. Jennings and Bingaman both have experience at the guard positions.

Sweet knows the six upperclassmen will play an important role in helping develop their young teammates.

"With all those

freshmen, the majority of them have been in our program since the fourth grade," she said. "It is a ton of young, eager and athletic girls. They need leadership from the girls who have been in the varsity program for three and four years."

Sweet said several freshmen will have the opportunity to carve out a role for the varsity team, with some bringing a different dynamic to the floor.

"There are a couple of great athletes in that group," Sweet said. "Defensively, I feel like we will have more speed and quickness than we have had in the past, which allows us to do some other things."

Sweet is using practices and the early season to help determine what the identity of this team will be. Youth provides possibilities, but

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IMBLER BOYS BASKETBALL

Unproven boys team looking to hit the ground running

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

IMBLER — It's a fresh new start for the Imbler Panthers.

Coming off a 1-6 spring season, the Imbler boys basketball team is banking on its two seniors to lead a very young group in the 2021-22 season. With a large group of inexperienced players, the ceiling is high for the potential of this year's team.

"We've got work to do. We're going to go through the bumps and bruises that I think any young team goes through," Imbler head coach Tony Haddock said.

The Panthers come into the season with two seniors, one junior and 16 underclassmen. Haddock emphasized the importance of his two seniors — Carter Crook and Nate Bingaman

— as many new names and faces work to merge into a cohesive unit.

"I'm going to lean on them quite a bit," Haddock said. "Bingaman is chomping at the bit to get going, and Carter Crook is coming off a real good football season and will give us good leadership."

Another key element for Imbler will be 6-foot-3-inch sophomore Justin Frost, the team's tallest

player. "He's a big kid and he's learning. He's got some obvious size that we'll be looking to use," Haddock said. "The best thing about Justin is as he's gotten older, his athleticism has caught up with his growth spurt. He's got pretty good feet for a bigger guy."

Frost is one of the many underclassmen on the

Imbler roster who will be looking to carve out a big role with the team. Haddock emphasized the importance of protecting the paint in high school basketball, noting that Frost will be crucial in the team's efforts.

"We're going to lean on him quite a bit in the middle," Haddock said. "He's going to have to do some back-to-the-basket scoring, rebound and defend everybody's big. He's going to have to be physical and not back down. He's certainly our main source of size."

Imbler gets off to a fast start this season, facing off with 2A schools Union and Stanfield. The Panthers will compete at the Calvin Hiatt Memorial Tournament at Powder Valley High School and the Union Bobcat Classic before their league

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Haddock