

WALLOWA COUNTY

# New leagues set for 2022-26

## County schools stay put for now

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

SALEM — Enterprise, Joseph and Wallowa officially have new district opponents.

The Oregon School Activities Association approved the final district proposal for the 2022-26 time block on Monday, Dec. 13.

The Wallowa County schools all stayed where they have been for several years — Enterprise in the 2A Blue Mountain Conference, and Joseph and Wallowa in the 1A Old Oregon League.

Both districts, however, are welcoming new competition.

Enterprise, Grant Union, Heppner, Stanfield and Weston-McEwen all will stay in the BMC. Returning to the district will be Irrigon, which is dropping down from the 3A Eastern Oregon League, to round out the six-team district.

The Knights have formerly played in the BMC, the last time being part of it in 2013-14. Since then, Irrigon spent two years in the Columbia Basin Conference before moving up to 3A at the start of the 2016-17 school year.

Irrigon claimed a boys basketball title the last time it was part of the BMC, the first of two consecutive boys basketball championships won by the school.

The BMC is losing two teams — Pilot Rock and Union — to the OOL.

The addition of the Bobcats and Rockets to the OOL makes it an 11-team district. In addition to Joseph, Pilot Rock, Union and Wallowa, the OOL will include Cove, Elgin, Griswold, Imbler, Nixyaawii, Pine Eagle and Powder Valley.

The addition, especially of Union, to the OOL adds a team that has been strong in girls basketball and volleyball in recent years. The Bobcats are off to a 9-2 start on the hardwood this winter, and a month ago reached the 2A volleyball quarterfinals. The team also took fourth at state in volleyball in 2019 and fifth in girls hoops in 2020.

Volleyball, basketball and track will be the sports most impacted by the change. The schools compete either as co-ops or in combined classifications in cross-country, wrestling, baseball and softball.

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Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File

La Grande senior Jarom Huntsman (8) readies to attempt a header from a corner kick alongside Pendleton's Renee Ortega Cruz (11) at Community Stadium in La Grande on Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021. Huntsman concluded his high school soccer career by being named 4A first-team all-state.

# STANDOUT SEASON

## La Grande senior Jarom Huntsman earns 4A first-team all-state honors

By DAVIS CARBAUGH  
The Observer

**L**A GRANDE — A solid season of boys soccer at La Grande was rounded out by its anchor in defense earning all-state honors.

Jarom Huntsman, a four-year varsity player, ended his high school career by being named first-team all-state by a vote from coaches across Oregon. The senior was the only recipient from La Grande,

earning a spot alongside the top 4A soccer players in the state.

“He definitely deserves that first-team spot,” head coach Sid Rangel said. “He’s always putting in the extra work.”

The Tigers finished the year 5-3-3 and earned a spot in the 4A playoffs after defeating North Valley/Rogue River 3-2 on Oct. 30. La Grande’s season came to an end in the first round in a 7-0 defeat to Phoenix.

Huntsman helped anchor a defense that recorded five shutouts over 11 games played. The Tigers held opponents to 1.9 goals per contest last season and are just one season removed from allowing only two goals over eight contests in the 2021 spring season.

“Defensively he’s really solid, but he made the most of all his opportunities,” Rangel said. “He can jump really high and win balls in the air.”

For Rangel, Huntsman is a part of a senior group that marks the first athletes to

play all four years under his coaching. He noted that his ability to read the game well and pick off forwards has been huge for La Grande.

“Jarom was one of the first players that I’ve coached all four years, so I’m really excited for him,” Rangel said. “He’s a great athlete on and off the field and shows great leadership.”

Huntsman also joined six other La Grande players in earning all-league honors. Senior Lamar Langidrik and junior Owen Rinker were both named to the Greater Oregon League first team, while seniors Carter Perry and Brady Hutchins and juniors Brayden Sudbrock and Gage Mathson earned second-team honors.

Huntsman is one of four graduating seniors on this year’s La Grande roster, alongside Perry, Hutchins and Langidrik. Rinker, Sudbrock and Mathson will be three of the eight juniors from this year’s roster looking to step up next season.

## Kyle Seager retires after 11 seasons with Mariners

The Associated Press

SEATTLE — Kyle Seager announced his retirement Wednesday, Dec. 29, after 11 seasons in the majors, all with the Seattle Mariners.

Always one to eschew social media, Seager made his decision known through a short statement posted by his wife, Julie, on her Twitter account.

“Thank you to all of my family, friends and fans for following me throughout my career. It’s been a wonderful ride but I am unbelievably excited for

the next chapter of my life,” the statement says.

The 34-year-old Seager became a free agent after the season when Seattle opted not to exercise a club option on his contract. Rather than test the open market and with the uncertainty created by the ongoing lockout, Seager chose to call it a career.

Seager’s retirement is a bit surprising considering he was coming off one of his best seasons. He hit a career-high 35 home runs and had a career-best 101 RBIs last season as Seattle made a late run into playoff con-

tention only to fall short in the final days.

Seager was tearfully removed from Seattle’s final game on Oct. 3 in the ninth inning after the Mariners had been eliminated from the playoff race.

“That was pretty special for me. That was a real moment,” Seager said after the season finale. “Obviously, you know this moment is gonna happen. You think about it, you think about how you’re going to feel but you can’t prepare for that. That was really special.”

He had a solid final season

for Seattle, playing in 159 games and posting a .212/.285/.438 slash line with 29 doubles, a triple, 35 home runs, 101 RBIs, 59 walks and 161 strikeouts. He admittedly focused on power and producing runs for a top-heavy lineup that struggled to score all season. The approach sunk his batting average to a career low for a full season, but also resulted in career-high totals in homers and RBI. He was named a finalist for the American League Silver Slugger award at third base.

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SPORTS SHORT

## EOU ranked No. 40 in NAIA Learfield Directors’ Cup standings

The Observer

LA GRANDE — The final NAIA Learfield Directors’ Cup fall standings were released and Eastern Oregon University finds itself in the top 50 among NAIA schools.

The Mountaineers are one of four Cascade Collegiate Conference teams ranked in the top 50, while a total of 10 CCC institutions are in the top 100.

Eastern sits 40th in the final fall standings with 104 points after having a pair of teams qualify for the NAIA National Championships earlier this year. The Mountaineers men’s cross-country team collected 54 points in the standings with a 20th-place finish at nationals in November. The volleyball team collected 50 points after qualifying for nationals for the eighth year in a row. They finished the season

No. 16 in the NAIA.

Out of the CCC, Oregon Tech leads all of the NAIA in the overall fall standings with 275.5 points. College of Idaho finishes the fall with 175 points to sit in 14th place after sending three fall teams to nationals.

Lewis-Clark State College (33rd, 120.5 points) and Southern Oregon University (35th, 117.5) also sit in the top 50. Corban University (60th, 64 points), Bushnell University (70th, 59 points), Northwest University (78th, 53 points), Multnomah University (90th, 38 points) and Warner Pacific University (92nd, 25 points) each rank in the top 100.

The Learfield Directors’ Cup was developed as a joint effort between the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics and USA Today. The winter standings will begin distribution on Thursday, March 31.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File

Jet Taylor (16) and Breanna Shaffer (14) beam after scoring against Columbia International at Quinn Coliseum on Saturday, Nov. 20, 2021. The Mountaineers are No. 40 in the NAIA Learfield Directors’ Cup standings. The volleyball team collected 50 points after qualifying for nationals for the eighth year in a row. They finished the season No. 16 in the NAIA.