



**DAVIS CARBAUGH**  
CARBAUGH'S CORNER

## Sports seasons are on thin ice

**L**A GRANDE — The start of the 2021 fall season was a refreshing sight to anyone involved in local prep and high school sports. After a year of postponed seasons, empty stadiums and mask policies, things felt back to normal.

That was the case until about the past month or so, when rising COVID-19 numbers once again brought the cancellation of numerous games at the high school and college levels. The omicron variant has caused a skyrocket in cases, affecting sports all the way up to professional leagues.

More than 20 basketball games have been canceled over the last month in the Cascade Collegiate Conference, five of which involved Eastern Oregon's opponents. The conference's forfeiture policy penalizes the school that could not field a team with a loss, which could have a telling impact on the standings at the end of the year.

The La Grande boys and girls wrestling teams are just two of the many local high school teams that have seen regional competitions canceled to avoid large crowds.

In head-to-head sports like basketball, games have been canceled left and right. Most recently, Griswold High School canceled a slate of weekend games that affected both Powder Valley and Joseph's schedules on both the boys and girls sides.

La Grande and Baker postponed their rivalry matchup earlier this week, moving the contest to Feb. 8. The game was slated as the Greater Oregon League opener for both schools.

The availability of the COVID-19 vaccines and booster shots makes a major difference from this point in time versus last year's sports seasons, but the abundance of canceled games could lead to a slippery slope.

Athletes and fans alike can only cross their fingers for the remainder of the winter season and future of the spring seasons.

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## PREP NEWS & NOTES



Reece Dixon, left, sweeps through the court at Powder Valley High School on Friday, Dec. 3, 2021. Dixon, a senior, leads the Badgers at the point guard position.

Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File

# Leaving no doubt

Powder Valley setting the tone early in Old Oregon League play

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**  
The Observer

**NORTH POWDER** — After cruising through nonleague play with a 9-1 record, the Powder Valley boys basketball team is leaving little doubt at the start of Old Oregon League competition.

The top-ranked 1A school dominated its first three opponents of league play, taking an early spot at first place in the Old Oregon League. The Badgers have defeated their first three league opponents by an average of 32.3 points per game and have scored in the high 60s each contest. Powder Valley defeated Pine Eagle (68-41), Imbler (66-32) and Cove (69-33) for a dominant start to league play and the new year.

"We just play hard," head coach Kyle Dixon said. "We're ready to go."

Through three games of league play, senior point guard Reece Dixon has seen his scoring numbers steadily improve, averaging 18.3 points per contest.

Senior forward Clay Martin has also excelled during the opening stint of Old Oregon League competition, scoring in double digits each game. Martin has averaged 13.7 points per contest and led the Badgers with 18 points in the win over Pine Eagle.

A similar narrative to the 1A football season seems to be unfolding, with Powder Valley on a collision course with Adrian once again. The Antelopes are ranked seventh with an 11-1 record, but handed the Badgers their only loss of the season on Dec. 27. Ione/Arlington (12-0), Crane (11-0) and South Wasco County (11-0) are the only 1A schools with better records than Powder Valley.



Bo Ledbetter, right, drives down the court at Imbler High School on Wednesday, Dec. 1, 2021. Union defeated Imbler 55-27 in its season opener.

Alex Wittwer/The Observer, File

While most schools stick to their league competition for the second half of the season, Powder Valley has several non-league games remaining that will be major challenges. After a narrow 46-44 win over Umatilla, a 3A school, on Thursday, Jan. 13, the Badgers are slated to play against 4A opponents La Grande and Baker later in the year. The Badgers face the Tigers at La Grande High School on Jan. 18 and visit the Bulldogs on Feb. 5.

### Union boys capitalize on narrow league victories

**UNION** — Faced with a massive overhaul of seven seniors from last year's team that made it to the second round of the 2A state tournament, this year's young Union Bobcats boys basketball team has made solid progress.

Faced with a difficult slate of non-league games, the Bobcats managed a 6-5 record heading into 2A Blue Mountain Conference action. After a three-game skid against 1A powerhouses Nixyaawii, Adrian and Powder Valley, Union found itself losing a 66-51 contest to Heppner in the team's

opening league matchup.

After losing four straight games, Union head coach Odin Miller was pleased with the team's resiliency in the group's first league victory on the following night — a thrilling 51-50 win over Pilot Rock.

"I'm very proud of our guys and the way they persevered through adversity," Miller said. "They believed they were going to win and wouldn't be denied, even if it was an ugly game. This was a great lesson for our young team to learn about how crazy the league season can be."

Union freshman Chase Koshinsky has been a microwave outside shooter this season for the Bobcats, showing off his ability to heat up quickly from beyond the arc. He led the Bobcats with 18 points in the win over Pilot Rock, 12 of which came from long range.

While it is easy for young teams to make costly mistakes, Union's youth has also led to positive momentum swings throughout the season. The Bobcats traveled to Athena and earned a narrow 59-53 win over Weston-McEwen to

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## EOU softball announces its 2022 schedule

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**  
The Observer

**LA GRANDE** — Softball season is just a month away at Eastern Oregon University.

The Mountaineers softball program announced its 2022 schedule on Tuesday, Jan. 11, with 53 games for the upcoming season. Eastern's first event is Feb. 12, with a three-game road series against Willamette in Salem.

Eastern Oregon softball is coming off a 16-32 season that saw the Mountaineers fall to Corban and the College of Idaho on consecutive days of the Cascade Collegiate Conference Championships.

The Mountaineers will begin the season with 13 straight nonconference matchups, which includes games against Willamette, Lewis & Clark College, Menlo College, William Jessup, Hope International and Marymount California.

Eastern will open conference play in Eugene against Bushnell on March 4. The Mountaineers and Beacons will play doubleheaders on consecutive days.

Eastern will return to Peggy Anderson Softball Field, La Grande, for the team's first home series, against British Columbia on March 11. The Thunderbirds will face off with the Mountaineers in back-to-back doubleheaders.

On March 19, the Mountaineers will travel to Ashland for a four-game series with Southern Oregon. The Raiders are the reigning NAIA champions and went 4-0 against Eastern last season. Southern Oregon won the conference regular season title with a record of 26-1 in conference play — the Raiders finished the 2021 season 55-6.

Eastern will welcome the College of Idaho to town for a doubleheader on March 29. The Mountaineers were routed in all seven matchups against the Yotes during the 2021 season. The two schools square off again for a doubleheader on April 5 in Caldwell, Idaho.

Oregon Tech will travel to La Grande for a four-game series against Eastern, starting on April 22. The Owls finished last season as the NAIA runners-up to Southern Oregon. The series against Oregon Tech will be the final home stand of the year for the Mountaineers.

Eastern concludes its regular season with a four-game road series against Carroll College on April 29.

Opening pitch for the Mountaineers is 2 p.m. Feb. 12, in Salem.

## SPORTS SHORT

# Former La Grande quarterback transfers to Wyoming

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**  
The Observer

**LARAMIE, Wyo.** — Andrew Peasley has a new home.

The former standout La Grande quarterback announced on social media on Thursday, Jan. 13, that he will be transferring to play football at the University of Wyoming. Peasley will have two years of eligibility remaining with the Cowboys.

The junior quarterback left Utah State University, where he split reps and was ultimately beat out for a starting spot by Logan Bonner. Peasley announced that he would be leaving Utah State in a tweet on Dec. 23, 2021.

Peasley threw for 415 yards and three touchdowns in the 2021 season, along with 212 rushing yards and one rushing touchdown on 25 carries.

In a 49-45 victory over Air Force, Peasley threw three touchdowns. The Aggies finished the season 11-2 and won the Mountain West Championship game over San Diego State.

The game-to-be was a three-star recruit and the No. 70 pro-style in the class of 2018, according to 247Sports.

In his time at La Grande High School, Peasley tallied over 100 total touchdowns and has more



Peasley

than 4,000 passing yards between his sophomore and junior seasons.

Peasley joins two other transfer quarterbacks, one true freshman and one red-shirt freshman, as the Cowboys look to stock up their quarterback room under ninth-year head coach Craig Bohl.

Peasley's transfer comes just 14 days after former Wyoming quarterback Levi Williams announced that he would be joining Utah State. Last year's Cowboys starter Sean Chambers also transferred to Montana State this offseason, leaving the starting job open in Laramie.



Utah State University Athletics/Contributed Photo

Utah State quarterback Andrew Peasley, left, celebrates with wide receiver Deven Thompkins during the Aggies' 49-45 win at Air Force on Saturday, Sept. 18, 2021. Peasley, a La Grande High School graduate, announced on social media he was transferring to Wyoming.