



DAVIS CARBAUGH

CARBAUGH'S CORNER

# OSAA review sees murky ending

After the OSAA investigation found inconclusive results regarding the Gladstone High School allegations of racist remarks by the La Grande High School football team in a state playoff game in early November, it seems that the situation was a lose-lose scenario.

The allegations could not be verified, which of course is a positive for the La Grande community. However, the accusations caused a ripple in the sport community across the state. After being accused of racism for more than two months, the effects on La Grande's reputation could take some time to overcome.

For Gladstone, there was little solid outcome from the ordeal. The findings came back inconclusive regarding the alleged use of a singular racial slur during the game, but there was no definitive action ruling the allegations to be unwarranted.

No further comment was made from members of the Oregon House of Representatives, who pushed for La Grande to be held accountable shortly after the accusations in November.

La Grande head football coach Rich McIlmoil noted that, in any situation, individuals who might not be aware of an entire situation should abstain from pointing fingers. That should especially be the case when the situation involves high school athletes and allegations that could not be verified.

At this point, all sides involved are tasked with moving forward. The OSAA should continue its in-depth investigation into similar allegations, as there is no place for discrimination in sports. La Grande is tasked with moving on after months of being in the spotlight, and not in a good way. In a community that embraces its high school sports, La Grande athletes, residents and the school district will be forging ahead to put the investigation behind them.

*Davis Carbaugh covers news and sports for The Observer. He can be contacted at dcarbaugh@lagrandeobserver.com.*



Kaden Krieger (20) dunks the ball at Powder Valley High School on Friday, Dec. 3, 2021. The senior, who starts at center for the Badgers, in a fast-paced game against Nixyaawii on Jan. 29, 2022, dominated the paint and scored 24 points.

# Surging to the top

## Powder Valley boys basketball team shaping into contenders late in regular season

**By DAVIS CARBAUGH**  
The Observer

NORTH POWDER — A heartbreaking loss in the 1A football state championship last fall might not be Powder Valley's only shot at a state title this year.

The Badgers boys basketball team has been firing on all cylinders, coming out strong in league play and climbing to the top of the OSAA 1A state rankings. With a deep group of experienced upperclassmen, Powder Valley is shaping up to be a serious contender on the hardwood this year.

"They've been playing together for so long and they just love to win and play hard," Powder Valley head basketball coach Kyle Dixon said.

The Badgers have surely been playing hard, putting up a 16-1 season record and 6-0 league record heading into the final two weeks of the regular season. Powder Valley is riding an eight-game winning streak, topped off by a huge victory over Nixyaawii, a clash of top Old Oregon League teams on Saturday, Jan. 29. The Badgers have thrived off a high-octane offense, averaging 64.7 points per game and holding opposing teams to 43.6 per game.

**Peaking at the right time**

For most basketball teams this season, the COVID-19 pandemic has been an obstacle in keeping to a consistent schedule. With games postponed left and right, Powder Valley experienced

a similar setback when a slew of games were moved around in mid-January.

The Badgers found themselves on a mid-season hiatus from Jan. 14-26, when an outbreak in the school district limited the students to virtual learning for a week and postponed several games. In order to squeeze the contests back into the schedule, Powder Valley played three straight games from Jan. 27-29, with a quick turnaround before a contest at Wallowa on Feb. 1.

The onslaught of consecutive games did not slow the Badgers, who won all three to end the month of January.

"It affected us a little bit, but we got back on track pretty quick," Dixon said of the break in schedule. "The guys want to play all the time. It kind of worked out good. You don't want to be peaking at the middle of the season. You want to be peaking at the end of the season, so hopefully we're doing that."

The end of the three-day string of games was perhaps Powder Valley's biggest win of the season to date, defending home court against a strong Nixyaawii team in a 76-64 win. The Golden Eagles came into the matchup 14-4 on the year and 5-1 in Old Oregon League play, just half of a game back of Powder Valley in the league standings.

"They were a pretty quick team and they can shoot the ball really well. We just kept up with them and played a fast-paced game," the coach said. "It was a

stressful game the whole time. It was a really good game for us to play."

In the fast-paced game, senior forward Kaden Krieger dominated the paint and scored 24 points. Junior forward Cole Martin scored 19 points, and senior point guard Reece Dixon tallied 18 points. The victory gave the Badgers a game and a half lead in the league ahead of Nixyaawii and Imbler.

As evident in the win over Nixyaawii, Powder Valley's roster has an array of talent and doesn't have to rely on just one player. Between Reece Dixon's skillset in controlling the tempo and driving to the basket and Krieger's presence in the paint, space on the court is open for other players to thrive. Cole Martin adds another presence inside, while Kaiden Dalke, Clay Martin and Case Olson all contribute well from guard position.

"You just never know who might step it up," Kyle Dixon said. "Each night, someone different steps up and has a big game. We have a couple guys that score 15 or 20 most nights, but we're right around each guy getting 10 points per game."

The coach cited one instance in which Dalke heated up for 16 points in the first half of a win against Pine Eagle on Jan. 28, converting three three-pointers. Dalke remained scoreless the rest of the game, but provided a big boost in the drivonf half and opened floor space for teammates to get good looks at the basket.

**State championship hopes**

Powder Valley's strong performances this season have earned it respect in the OSAA 1A state polls, as the Badgers climbed to No. 1 after the Nixyaawii victory.

Kyle Dixon noted that he takes a more day-to-day approach when it comes to standings and rankings, keeping a steady mindset within the team. He stated that he was not sure if the players check the rankings, but that the overall attitude is to be prepared to face every top competitor by season's end.

"It doesn't matter in the end," he said of the rankings. "You have to beat everybody to be No. 1."

A key factor in Powder Valley's success goes well beyond X's and O's — the athletes have been playing sports together since a young age and have developed a great camaraderie.

As the basketball season approaches its end, state title contention could be in the works in North Powder. The Badgers are taking things one game at a time and preparing themselves to play any competitors in the postseason.

Powder Valley is jostling at the top of the state rankings alongside Crane (16-1), Crosshill Christian (16-2) and Perrydale (14-2). Adrian, the Badgers' only loss on the season, is currently ranked at No. 7 with a 16-3 record.

"I think we can make a state run," Kyle Dixon said. "These guys can win it all if they stick together and keep playing hard and keep learning."

### ON THE SLATE

**Tuesday, Feb. 1**  
**PREP BOYS BASKETBALL**  
Powder Valley at Wallowa, 6:30 p.m.  
**PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL**  
Powder Valley at Wallowa, 5 p.m.

**Wednesday, Feb. 2**  
**PREP BOYS BASKETBALL**  
Joseph at Imbler, 7 p.m.

**Thursday, Feb. 3**  
**PREP BOYS BASKETBALL**  
Joseph at Griswold, 7:30 p.m.  
**PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL**  
Joseph at Griswold, 6 p.m.

**Friday, Feb. 4**  
**COLLEGE BASEBALL**  
Eastern Oregon at Linfield, 2 p.m.

**COLLEGE MEN'S BASKETBALL**  
Eastern Oregon at Walla

Walla, 2 p.m.

**COLLEGE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL**  
Eastern Oregon at Walla Walla, noon

**PREP BOYS BASKETBALL**  
Stanfield at Union, 7 p.m.  
Ontario at La Grande, 7:30 p.m.  
Griswold at Elgin, 7:30 p.m.  
Powder Valley at Imbler, 7:30 p.m.  
Cove at Pine Eagle, 7:30 p.m.  
Nixyaawii at Wallowa, 7:30 p.m.  
Heppner at Enterprise, 7:30 p.m.

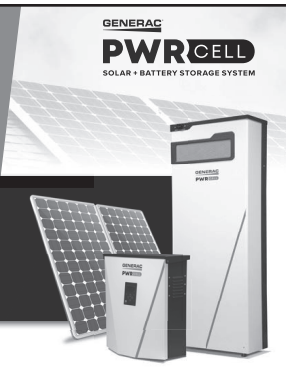
**PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL**  
Stanfield at Union, 5:30 p.m.  
Ontario at La Grande, 6 p.m.  
Griswold at Elgin, 6 p.m.  
Powder Valley at Imbler, 6 p.m.  
Nixyaawii at Wallowa, 6 p.m.  
Heppner at Enterprise, 6 p.m.  
Cove at Pine Eagle, 7 p.m.

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