

Molalla, Gladstone, OSAA speak to alleged racial taunts

By RYAN CLARKE
The Oregonian

PORTLAND — The Molalla River and Gladstone school districts released a joint statement with the Oregon School Activities Association on Wednesday, Feb. 2, promising a thorough investigation into alleged racial taunts at a recent high school basketball game.

Boys basketball players from Gladstone High School claimed they faced racism and intimidation on Jan. 28 as they traveled to face Molalla, including an adult displaying a photo of a confederate flag in their direction, a Molalla student adorned in black-face, monkey noises chanted from the Molalla student section toward Black Gladstone players, and a phone call from the Molalla High School student resource officer.

“We are deeply troubled by allegations that Gladstone High students were the subject of racial taunting at a recent varsity basketball game at Molalla High School,” the joint statement from Gladstone, Molalla and the OSAA reads. “Accordingly, the Molalla River School District, Gladstone School District, and the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) are coordinating an investigation to determine what occurred and what future steps to take. We are issuing this statement to express our plans to jointly resolve this difficult situation.

“This investigation’s success requires that we acknowledge the need for deep conversation, in depth fact-finding and a thorough understanding about what occurred. We will engage people at every level, from district administrators to coaches to students. To that end, we will be working with an independent investigator, and we will take appropriate action upon the investigation’s completion.”

The OSAA’s previously contracted independent investigation into allegations leveled by Gladstone against football players in La Grande took approximately two months, yielding an “inconclusive” result.

It is also still investigating a racist incident that allegedly occurred during a girls basketball game in Clatskanie, and the Benson girls basketball team claims it was

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Ready for another run

La Grande boys wrestling team hitting stride heading into postseason

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Tigers are poised for another run at a title.

The La Grande boys wrestling program concluded its regular season with a 63-15 dual victory over Ontario on Tuesday, Feb. 1, and is gearing up for postseason competition. Before any potential state championship contention, the Tigers will be looking to start the postseason strong at the OSAA 4A Special District 4 competition on Feb. 11-12 at Sisters High School.

“I feel really good. I think everybody’s going to be ready to roll at the right time,” La Grande head coach Klel Carson said.

The Tigers will be competing against Baker/Powder Valley, Corbett, Gladstone, Madras, McLoughlin/Weston-McEwen, Ontario and Sisters at the district meet.

La Grande has had an eventful year, seeing several events canceled during the omicron spike. Even so, the Tigers competed at several regional tournaments against some of the best local schools to strengthen the team prior to the postseason.

“They’ve been in some really tough tournaments with a lot of tough competition. I do think that helps them down the stretch,” Klel Carson said.

La Grande traveled out of the state several times this year, placing third out of 38 teams at the Red Halverson Invitational in Idaho on Jan. 29. The Tigers were crowned dual meet champions at the Oregon Classic on Jan. 15 and placed 12th out of 71 teams at the Rollie Lane Invitational on Jan. 7.

La Grande also placed fourth at the 2021 Tri-State, competing against 28 schools from Washington and Idaho.

La Grande has several frontrunners leading the way, including senior Braden Carson at the 145-pound weight class. The two-time state champion will be looking for a strong start to the postseason as he aims to become the first three-time champion at La Grande. Braden Carson is 32-1 on the year and enters the tournament as a heavy favorite.

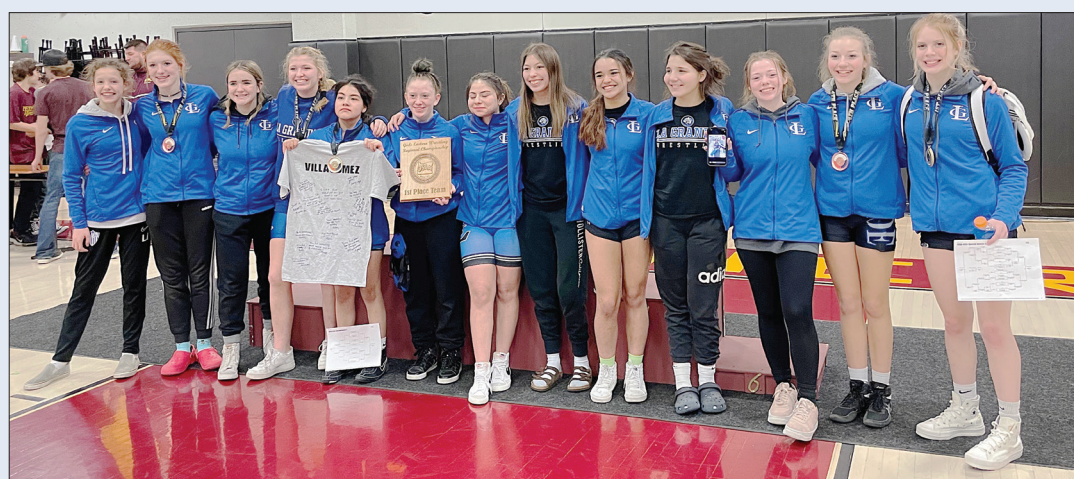
Junior Joshua Collins has had a strong year at 138, going 29-7. Collins and junior Brysen Penaloza will look for solid results at the 138-pound level.

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Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group, File

La Grande’s Braden Carson, top, wrestles Bishop Kelly’s Derek Doiron in the 145-pound semifinal during the 2021 Muilenburg Tournament at La Grande High School on Saturday, Dec. 11, 2021. Carson won the 145-pound division to help the Tigers take the team title.



Max Mejia/Contributed Photo

The La Grande girls wrestling team poses with its first-place plaque at the OSAA Special District 3 Tournament at Redmond High School on Saturday, Feb. 5. The Tigers saw three individual wrestlers earn qualifications to the OSAA State Championships.

LG girls win Special District 3

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

REDMOND — The La Grande girls wrestling team won its first ever district championship, taking first place at the OSAA Special District 3 Tournament on Saturday, Feb. 5.

The Tigers tallied 178 points to take first place, with second place La Pine just 39 points behind. La Grande faced off against 29 other wrestling programs competing at the event.

La Grande saw two wrestlers earn individual titles in their weight classes, while nine other Tigers placed.

Dora Galindo and Delia Gulzow both earned first-place finishes in their weight divisions. Both wrestlers, along with third-place finisher Kaitlin Brock, punched

their tickets to the OSAA State Championships.

Galindo placed first overall at the 105-pound level, defeating Ridgeview’s Paige Aponte by fall in the first-place match.

Gulzow defeated Klamath Union’s Hayleigh Dukes by fall in just 45 seconds, claiming the title at 115. Teammate Navaeh Hall placed fifth in the same division to earn valuable points for the Tigers.

Lyndie Isaacson placed fifth at the 100-pound level. Isaacson defeated Arianna Flores of Madras by forfeit in the fifth-place match after taking two wins earlier in the competition.

At the 110 pound division, La Grande saw two placers. Avery Myer placed fourth and Shantie Ward won the fifth-place match over Hood River’s

Ximena Galvez.

Nakita Gonzales and Florecita Villagomez took fifth and sixth in the 120-pound weight class to earn a combined 25 points for the Tigers.

Riley Robinson competed well at the 125-pound level, taking sixth place to earn 13 points.

La Grande’s Paige Allen placed fourth at 130, winning four matches throughout the competition to earn 20 points for La Grande.

The district victory is a huge accomplishment for La Grande under first-year head coach Max Mejia. The Tigers upped the team’s turnout this year and came home with a district title.

Gulzow, Galindo and Brock are set to compete at the 4A State Championships at Cascade High School on Feb. 26.

OSAA committee discusses investigations, student involvement

By NIK STRENG
The Oregonian

PORTLAND — A review of the investigation process, the Student Advisory Council and the S.T.A.R. Initiative led the discussion during a recent meeting of the Oregon School Activities Association’s Equity and Diversity Advisory Committee on Thursday, Jan. 20.

One of the big topics of conversation in the committee was having student voices when investigating

incidents of discriminatory harassment. This includes having a professional who deals with harassment and counseling available, because they will be able to structure the conversation in a way that best supports the student.

“Student voices need to be heard through the complaint process but ensuring that there is not further harm done in the process needs to be considered,” the OSAA’s update on the committee meeting reads. “Maintaining confidenti-

ality and ensuring that students who share their perspectives are supported throughout the process is also important.”

The committee also discussed the complaint process, which usually involves the individual schools conducting their own investigations and coming with differing perspectives. The committee supported the use of a third-party investigator when schools’ investigations return inconclusive.

“The third-party inves-

tigator also helps to recognize the importance of the necessary follow through and the impact of the events that occurred,” the OSAA’s update reads.

The OSAA has looked into multiple alleged racist incidents in recent months:

- An incident at a playoff football game where La Grande players allegedly used racist taunts toward Gladstone players turned out inconclusive results.

- De La Salle North girls basketball players

alleged that Clatskanie players used racist slurs during a game in December.

- Benson girls basketball coach Eric Knox filed a complaint with Camas School District, claiming that his team was subject to racist taunts during a game in January.

- Gladstone boys basketball players allegedly faced racist actions during a basketball game at Molalla, including a student attending the game in blackface.

The committee also discussed the S.T.A.R. Initiative, and specifically brainstormed the idea of a “hospitality person” that schools would be required to designate when hosting an event.

The hospitality person would be required to greet the visitors, show them the facility and remind them of who they can speak to if an incident occurs that needs immediate attention.

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