



Abigail Dollins/Salem Statesman Journal

La Grande's Braden Carson hooks his arms around Baker's Gavin Stone in the 145-pound weight class at the OSAA Class 4A state wrestling championship at Cascade High School in Turner on Saturday, Feb. 26, 2022.

TEAM

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performance, not surrendering a point during the tournament. "I have a lot of people to thank for the title, and a lot of people that pushed me in practice every day," said the senior, who will wrestle at Eastern Oregon University next season. "It is a big deal for me because I have worked my whole life for this and I am happy about it. I wanted to dominate and not leave anything behind." Kai Carson claimed the crown at 120 in dominating fashion. He pinned his way to the finals in a combined time of 3 minutes, 32 seconds. The sophomore, who concluded his season with a 39-3 mark, beat Sweet Home's Kyle Watkins 7-1 in the championship match. Joshua Collins followed a similar path to his title at 138, recording three pins to

reach the finals before handling Stayton's Eli Howard 11-4. The title came after runner-up finishes the past two seasons. "I have been dreaming about winning ever since I was a freshman," said the junior. "I was looking at the team scores before I went out and wrestled, so I wrestled for myself but also my team." Coach Carson said the three champions set a tone for the team. "Those kids were favored to win the tournament, but they stepped up and really wrestled well," he said. "They were stepping up and getting bonus points where they could, and there was a round where it just seemed we were pinning on just about every mat." The groundwork for the

impressive showing Saturday night was laid months before. "We had a lot of kids put in the time over the summer, and several of them went with me to Europe for a culture exchange and they wrestled freestyle there," coach Carson said. Sophomore Mason Wolcott finished as the state runner-up at 106, falling to Sweet Home's Kyle Sieminski by pin in 3:28. Senior Brody MacMillan had a pair of pins and a major decision to reach the title match at 195, but came up on the wrong end of a 9-5 decision to Marshfield's Miguel Velazquez. Wyatt Livingston responded from a semifinal loss to pin teammate and fellow junior Cole Shafer

in 4:20 to take third at 170 as the Tigers put two in the top four. "It is always hard to wrestle teammates, but I always tell them that iron sharpens iron," coach Carson said. "They are both tremendous wrestlers and they make each other better." Ridge Kehr took fourth place at 152, dropping a hard fought 10-8 decision to Sweet Home's Kaden Zajic in the third-place match. Tavian Kehr finished fourth at 126, falling to Estacada's Cohen Schleich 8-2 in third-place match. Jarett Armstrong closed out his season with a 14-8 victory over Tilmook's Johnathan Gingerich to take fifth at 182. Brysen Penaloza pinned Sweet Home's Christian Gregory in 3:03 to finish fifth at 132. Landon Perry took sixth at 120 as he rebounded from a first-round loss to win three straight matches. Jaxson Leonard took the same route to finishing sixth at 126. Dominick Caratello also took sixth at 138, scoring bonus points in three straight wins after a quarterfinal loss. The end result was the culmination of an idea planted early this season. "At the beginning of the year, we sat down and made it our goal to beat Sweet Home and it was a good motivator," Braden Carson said. "Our team was really wrestling for each other when we went out on the mat. It is fun when wrestling becomes a team sport."



Ronald Osterloh/Contributed Photo

Imbler's Garrett Burns raises his hand in victory following a 7-2 decision over Crane's John Otley in the finals of the 126-pound weight class at the OSAA Class 2A/1A State Wrestling Championship on Saturday, Feb. 26, 2022. Burns became Union County's first three-time state champion, joined later in the night by La Grande's Braden Carson in Class 4A.

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denied Lathrop the title with a 7-4 victory. Elgin's Reece McConnell took sixth at 145, recording a pair of pins after dropping his quarterfinal match in sudden victory. Ty McLaughlin also took sixth at 152. David Creech, the lone qualifier for Union/Cove, took sixth place at 182, falling in the fifth-place match to Heppner/Ione's Conor Brosnan by pin. Culver continued its dominance of the state meet, winning the team title with 182 points. Illinois Valley was second with 101.5 points and Vernonia came in third with 80 points. The win marks the 13th state championship for Culver, all of which have come over the past 15 seasons dating back to 2007. In that time, Reedsport Charter won the title in 2020 and Lowell won in 2013, and Culver was the runner-up both times. Elgin placed 14th with 36 points, while Imbler posted a top-20 finish, scoring 25 points to place 18th.

OSAA CLASS 4A BOYS BRACKET

First round
Friday, March 4
(16) Molalla at (1) Junction City, TBD
(9) Baker at (8) Gladstone, 6 p.m.
(12) North Marion at (5) Philomath, TBD
(13) Woodburn at (4) Seaside, 7 p.m.
(14) Corbett at (3) Marshfield, 8:30 p.m.
(11) Banks at (6) La Grande, 5 p.m.
(10) Stayton at (7) Henley, TBD
(15) Marist Catholic at (2) Cascade, TBD

OSAA CLASS 4A GIRLS BRACKET

First round
Saturday, March 5
(16) Henley at (1) Philomath, TBD
(9) Stayton at (8) Mazama, 3 p.m.
(12) Marist Catholic at (5) Gladstone, 7 p.m.
(13) Hidden Valley at (4) Junction City, TBD
(14) Marshfield at (3) Baker, 4 p.m.
(11) Corbett at (6) Banks, 6 p.m.
(10) Astoria at (7) Madras, TBD
(15) La Grande at (2) Cascade, TBD

BRACKETS

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Bell led all scorers with 23 points in the rout. Both teams faced Molalla during the regular season. The Braves thumped the Indians 64-30 on Jan. 6 in Banks, while the Tigers went on the road and posted a 53-22 rout on Dec. 10. The Braves (18-6) enter the tournament after a 68-52 win over Phoenix in a state play-in game on Feb. 26. Banks split regular season road contests against a couple of GOL teams, crushing Ontario 69-21 on Dec. 3, before falling the following night 85-81 at Baker. The Braves finished second in the Cowapa League behind No. 4-seeded Seaside. Both posted identical 7-1 league marks. Baker, the Greater Oregon League runner-up, is seeded No. 9 and will travel to face Gladstone on March 4.

ON THE SLATE

Wednesday, March 2
PREP BOYS BASKETBALL
Powder Valley vs. Nixyaawii, Baker High School, 8:15 p.m.
Thursday, March 3
COLLEGE TRACK AND FIELD
Eastern Oregon at NAIA Indoor Championships, Brookings, South Dakota, TBA

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