



Ronald Osterloh/Contributed Photo, File

Imbler's Garrett Burns cradles Nestucca's Zakai Chatelain in the semifinals of the 126-pound weight class at the OSAA Class 2A/1A State Wrestling Championship on Saturday, Feb. 26, 2022. Burns earned a technical fall with a 17-1 win on his way to his third state championship.

BURNS

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The senior cruised through the opening rounds, winning three straight matches to ensure his spot in the final. Otley previously defeated Burns once this year, but Imbler's top wrestler took the final matchup of the season to make history for the Panthers.

Setting the bar high

The journey from beginner wrestler to three-time champion was one of hard work and dedication for Burns, who picked up the sport later than most. Burns began wrestling in the eighth grade, learning the ins and outs of a new sport. Burns went 11-6 as a freshman, but found inspiration in his teammates. Logan Butcher, a senior at the time, took home an individual state championship for Imbler, giving Burns motivation to achieve similar success.

"It really drove me," Burns said. "I put in the work for it and just kept working and working and working. As a freshman if you told me I'd be a three-time champion, I wouldn't believe you."

In his senior campaign for a historic third state championship, Burns went the extra mile to cement his legacy with the program. The senior stuck to a daily regime of lifting before school, often swimming when time allowed, weight training after lunch, practicing after school and doing homework before bed — this cycle was on repeat for the eventual state champion in his pursuit of top marks at the 126-pound division.

ON THE SLATE

Friday, March 11

COLLEGE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL
Eastern Oregon vs. Sterling College, Park City, Kansas, 10 a.m.

COLLEGE WOMEN'S WRESTLING
Eastern Oregon at NAIA National Invite, Jamestown, North Dakota, TBA
COLLEGE SOFTBALL
British Columbia at Eastern Oregon, 1 p.m.
British Columbia at Eastern Oregon, 3 p.m.

Saturday, March 12
COLLEGE WOMEN'S WRESTLING

Eastern Oregon at NAIA National Invite, Jamestown, North Dakota, TBA
COLLEGE BASEBALL
Eastern Oregon at Corban, 11 a.m.
Eastern Oregon at Corban, 2 p.m.
COLLEGE SOFTBALL
British Columbia at Eastern Oregon, 11 a.m.
British Columbia at Eastern Oregon, 1 p.m.
COLLEGE WOMEN'S LACROSSE
Eastern Oregon at Boise State Tournament, TBA

Sunday, March 13
COLLEGE BASEBALL
Eastern Oregon at Corban, 11 a.m.
Eastern Oregon at Corban, 2 p.m.

"He has a tremendous work ethic and great leadership," Imbler head coach Doug Hislop said. "Our junior high kids look at him like an idol, which is neat. He's a good role model and gets straight As in school."

History in Imbler

As Burns claimed the district title at 126 on Feb. 19, the senior suffered a significant ankle injury that limited his mobility. According to Hislop, the team at Imbler was sure to tape both of Burns' ankles in order to avoid showing a weak point to opponents.

Fighting through injury at the state tournament, Burns managed to earn a

7-2 decision over Otley to make history.

"Everything I put into it is what I got out of it," Burns said. "I made sure I was doing the right things, I made sure I was on the right diet, I made sure I was lifting and perfecting. By the time I got there each year, I was ready for it."

Burns' success and work ethic have drawn high praises from Hislop, who has been a pillar in Eastern Oregon wrestling programs.

"I've never in 52 years of coaching had a kid like him before," Hislop said.

After the conclusion of his senior season, Burns leaves Imbler as the school's most successful wrestler. His three titles,



Ronald Osterloh/Contributed Photo, File

Imbler wrestling coach Doug Hislop stands with Panther grappler Garrett Burns just before the state championship competition on Feb. 29, 2020. Burns won the championship in 2020, 2021 and 2022, becoming the first Union County wrestler to win state three times.

alongside Carson of La Grande, highlighted a historic season for wrestling in Union County.

"I was really excited and ecstatic leaving it on that," Burns said. "I was sad to be done, but I was glad to leave on that note."

Burns is planning to help coach at Imbler next year, before potentially studying and wrestling at community college. He hopes to eventually transfer to Eastern Oregon University, to join the wrestling team and earn a business degree.

The senior wrestler noted that several younger athletes at Imbler have recently picked up wrestling upon seeing his success. He stated his hopes that younger wrestlers can see his achievements and be inspired, just as Burns found inspiration from his upperclassmen teammates as a freshman.

"Just doing that for those small schools puts a lot into perspective," Burns said. "It doesn't matter where you're from or your school size, you can still do it. It's all about the work."

RANKINGS

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caught at the wall in right-center field to end the game.

The success has been all the more impressive considering the Beavers have been without two of their three weekend starters. Jake Pfenning was pulled after two innings in his second start with an undisclosed injury and did not pitch against UC Irvine, while starter Will Frisch has not pitched this season because of an undisclosed ailment.

In their absence, ace left-hander Cooper Hjerpe (3-0, 1.65 ERA) has been dominant, holding opposing hitters to a .203 batting average, and the defense has been near-perfect, flexing a .991 fielding percentage that ranks fourth in the nation. And, of course, the lineup continues to batter opposing pitching staffs — the Beavers are averaging 10.1 runs a game and rank fourth in nation in batting average (.353) and sixth in on-base percentage (.457).

Oregon State begins Pac-12 play this week, when it visits Washington State at 3:05 p.m. March 11 in the opener of a three-game series in Pullman.

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