



DAVIS CARBAUGH
CARBAUGH'S CORNER

Local athletes ready to take the diamond

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

The temperatures are gradually rising, which means that spring sports is right around the corner.

Coming off a mix of epic and gut-wrenching finishes to the winter sports seasons, local athletes are set to hit the tennis courts, golf courses and tracks, and baseball and softball teams are dusting off their gloves and getting geared up to take the diamond.

For the La Grande baseball team, several key players are coming off the euphoria of a wrestling state title. Others who played basketball are aiming to bounce back from the heartbreak of a season-ending buzzer beater at the hands of Banks just over a week ago.

The Tigers return a huge group of upperclassmen that came just one inning away from a state championship last season. A strong cadre of seniors leads a La Grande team that will look to make a playoff push this spring.

The Tigers have a large turnout this year, filling the halls of the La Grande Middle School Annex to train and get into top form ahead of the upcoming season. La Grande's opening day is Thursday, March 17, on the road at Hermiston.

In softball, La Grande is led by a group of core seniors looking to replicate similar success from last year's team that made it to the 4A state semifinals.

Seniors Grace Neer and Kinzy Bowen, who will both play softball in college, will be anchors for a strong Tigers team in 2022. La Grande opens the season at Hermiston on March 16.

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Nick Huntimer/Contributed photo

Eastern Oregon University's TJ Davis sprints into a high jump attempt at the 2022 NAIA Indoor Track and Field National Championships in Brookings, South Dakota, on Saturday, March 5, 2022. Davis scored 5,439 points to take home an individual nation championship in the men's heptathlon.

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PAYING OFF

TJ Davis' hard work comes to fruition with national heptathlon championship

BROOKINGS, S.D. — In one of track and field's most difficult competitions, a local college track athlete recently earned top marks in the nation.

TJ Davis, in just his second year at Eastern Oregon University, took home the individual national championship in the men's heptathlon at the NAIA Indoor Track and Field Championships on Saturday, March 5, in Brookings, South Dakota. Davis set personal records in six of the seven events en route to scoring 5,439 points, finishing his indoor season on top.

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SPORTS SHORT

MLB, union bargain past midnight to salvage 162-game season

By RONALD BLUM
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Players have voted to accept Major League Baseball's latest offer for a new labor deal, paving the way to end a 99-day lockout and salvage a 162-game regular season that will begin April 7.

The union's executive board approved the agreement in a 26-12 vote Thursday, March 10, pending ratification by all players, a person familiar with the balloting said, speaking to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity because no announcement was authorized.

MLB sent the players an offer March 10 and gave them until 3 p.m. to accept in order to play a full season. The union

announced the player vote around 3:25 p.m. Owners planned to hold a ratification vote later in the day.

The agreement will allow training camps to open this week in Florida and Arizona, more than three weeks after they were scheduled to on Feb. 16. Fans can start making plans to be at Fenway Park, Dodger Stadium and Camden Yards next month. Opening day is being planned a little more than a week behind the original date on March 31.

The deal will also set off a rapid-fire round of free agency. Carlos Correa, Freddie Freeman and Kris Bryant are among 138 big leaguers still without a team, including some who might benefit from the adoption of a universal designated hitter.

The sport's new collective bargaining agreement will also expand the playoffs to 12 teams and introduce incentives to limit so-called "tanking." The minimum salary will rise from \$570,500 to about \$700,000 and the luxury tax threshold will increase from \$210 million to around \$230 million this year, a slight loosening for the biggest spenders such as the Yankees, Mets, Dodgers and Red Sox. A new bonus pool was established for players not yet eligible for arbitration, a way to boost salaries for young stars.

Commissioner Rob Manfred had set a March 8 deadline for a deal that would preserve a 162-game schedule along with full pay and service time required for players to reach free agency. Talks spilled past the deadline and Manfred announced

more cancellations Wednesday, increasing the total to 184 of the 2,230 games.

After yet another snag, this time over management's desire for an international amateur draft, the deal came together March 10 and capped nearly a year of talks that saw pitchers Max Scherzer and Andrew Miller take prominent roles as union spokesmen.

Players had fumed for years about the deal that expired Dec. 1, which saw payrolls decline for 4% in 2021 compared to the last full season, back to their 2015 level. The union had an ambitious negotiating stance in talks that began last spring, asking for free-agency rights to increase with an age-based backstop and for an expansion of salary arbitration to its level from 1974-86.

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