



ABOVE: Kinzy Bowen (7) connects with a low pitch at Sam Marcum Field, La Grande on Thursday, April 7, 2022. La Grande's softball team swept the visiting Ontario Tigers 13-2 and 15-1. **RIGHT:** Grace Neer (2) lobs the ball across the plate against an Ontario hitter on April 7. The Observer, File Photos



Finding a groove

La Grande softball seniors set the tone for postseason push

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH** • The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Tigers are on the cusp on finishing off a highly productive regular season.

The La Grande softball program has put together a strong regular season, nearing the conclusion of the year near the top of the 4A state rankings. With a mix of senior leadership and young talent, teamwork and versatility have played a major role in the team's success.

"Everybody has really understood their

roles and been flexible," senior Grace Neer said. "I think we're finally going to get solid in our roles."

The Tigers are 13-5 overall and 9-1 in league play through 18 games, with just five matchups remaining in the season. After starting the season 1-4 in the midst of a smaller than usual roster, La Grande has found a rhythm in league play. The Tigers have won 12 of their last 13 games, climbing to No. 3 in the OSAA 4A rankings as of Tuesday, May 10.

The Tigers are set to host their senior day against Baker/Powder Valley on May 13, honoring three players in their final seasons. With eight underclassmen on the roster, the team's core senior leaders — Neer, Kinzy

Bowen and Keayra Krantz — have all played a key role in the team's success.

Neer has been the reliable ace in the pitcher's circle for La Grande, accumulating a 6-2 record on the year with a 3.11 ERA. The College of Idaho commit has tallied 80 strikeouts across 54 innings, allowing only 35 hits. At the plate, Neer leads the Tigers with 34 RBIs.

According to Neer, the team's ability to wear a number of hats and step up when needed has had a noticeable impact on La Grande's success.

"I think people have definitely stepped up into their roles," Neer said. "We've had

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ON DECK

May 10 results

PREP BASEBALL

Union/Cove 12, Stanfield/Echo 9
Weston-McEwen 4, Joseph/Enterprise/Wallowa 2
Weston-McEwen 9, Joseph/Enterprise/Wallowa 8

Wednesday, May 11

(Games completed after print deadline)

PREP SOFTBALL

Pendleton/Griswold at La Grande, 3 p.m.

Friday, May 13

PREP BASEBALL

Baker/Powder Valley at La Grande (2), 2 p.m.
Nyssa at Joseph/Enterprise/Wallowa (2), 1 p.m.

PREP SOFTBALL

Baker/Powder Valley at La Grande (2), 2 p.m.
Heppner/Ione at Union/Cove (2), 2 p.m.
Nyssa at Joseph/Enterprise/Wallowa (2), 1 p.m.

PREP TRACK & FIELD

Cove, Elgin, Imbler, Powder Valley, Joseph at 1A Special District 4, Baker High School, 1 p.m.

Union, Enterprise at 2A District 5 Championship, Weston-McEwen, 11 a.m.

COLLEGE TRACK & FIELD

Eastern Oregon at Cascade Collegiate Conference Outdoor Championships, Ashland, all day

Saturday, May 14

COLLEGE TRACK & FIELD

Eastern Oregon at Cascade Collegiate Conference Outdoor Championships, Ashland, all day

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

Eastern Oregon Blue & Gold spring game, 6 p.m.

Monday, May 16

PREP BASEBALL

Union/Cove at Dufur/South Wasco County, 4 p.m.

PREP GIRLS GOLF

La Grande at 4A state championships, Redmond

Thursday, May 19

PREP TRACK & FIELD

Cove, Elgin, Imbler, Powder Valley, Union at OSAA 1A State Championships, Eugene, TBA

Union, Enterprise at OSAA 2A State Championships, Eugene, TBA

PREP BASEBALL

SPORTS SHORT

Maggie Ledbetter earns conference field athlete of the week honors

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University women's track and field thrower Maggie Ledbetter recently earned conference acknowledgment for her strong recent performances.

Ledbetter was named Cascade Collegiate Conference field athlete of the week, coming off a strong showing at the Linfield Open on Saturday, May 7.

The senior from Cove put together a well-rounded performance, winning both the shot put and discus. She tossed the shot

put 13.77 meters and threw the discus 41.93. In addition, Ledbetter launched the hammer 49.02 to place second.

Ledbetter's score in the shot put was good for an automatic qualifier to the NAIA national championships. The 13.77-meter throw currently ranks tops amongst Cascade Collegiate Conference competitors this season.

Following the conclusion of the regular season, the Mountaineers are set to travel to Ashland to partake in the conference outdoor championships. The two-day event begins on May 13 and concludes after a day of competition on May 14.



Connor Bracken/Eastern Oregon University, File

Eastern Oregon University's Maggie Ledbetter, shown competing in the weight throw last season, became the first EOU women's track and field discus All-American at the 2021 NAIA National Championships in Gulf Shores, Alabama.

Find up-to-date scores and additional game coverage for your local high school, available 24/7 at www.lagrandeobserver.com.