



DAVIS CARBAUGH  
CARBAUGH'S CORNER

## Farewell La Grande, Union Co.

The time has come to say farewell. After spending a year as a sports and news reporter for The Observer, I will be concluding my time here with the paper to pursue other endeavors.

While I was here for only a year, I feel as if this community has been my home for ages. Moving here from the East Coast, I was anxious about starting fresh in a new, unfamiliar town on the other side of the country.

Within weeks, even days, the community welcomed me with open arms. Moving can be difficult, but as a reporter you meet new people every single day on the job — through The Observer, I have made great connections in the community, built lasting friendships and forged great bonds with the wonderful people who put this newspaper together.

I always knew that sports served a role as a common connection for human beings across the world. People from all different backgrounds can come together to argue, debate, agree upon and discuss topics in the sports world together.

Coming to a rural area in Eastern Oregon, I was not quite sure what to expect. I quickly learned that community members in Union County are die-hard fans of their local sports teams. From the biggest football games to Little League contests over the summer, this community truly has a passion and appreciation for sports.

Watching small schools pack the stands for state championship events like the 1A football championship or the 2A girls basketball championship just goes to show how Union County takes pride in its teams. At the 4A level, La Grande's

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## LA GRANDE HIGH SCHOOL



Isabella Crowley/The Observer

Tigers celebrate after La Grande's 8-0 victory over Philomath at Pioneer Park on Tuesday, May 31, 2022. The Tigers advanced to the OSAA Class 4A finals where they will play Hidden Valley at Volcanoes Stadium on June 4.

# ANOTHER TITLE?

## LHS baseball faces Hidden Valley rematch for state title June 4

By RONALD BOND • For The Observer

**L**A GRANDE — For the fourth time in the last six years, the La Grande High School baseball team will play in the state championship game.

And it will be against a foe the Tigers know well.

Devin Bell tossed a no-hitter in La Grande's 8-0 victory over Philomath on Tuesday, May 31, the second time this season the Tigers have topped the Warriors. La Grande defeated Philomath at home 5-0 on April 23.

"He was dialed in. He did great," head coach Parker McKinley said. "And he competed in the zone, threw strikes in the zone."

The win in the rematch sets up the Tigers

(27-1 overall) with a title-game showdown against Hidden Valley (27-2) on Saturday, June 4, at Volcanoes Stadium in Keizer. The Mustangs downed Mazama in the other semifinal May 31, 10-1.

A year ago, the teams squared off in a championship tilt at the 4A showcase won by the Mustangs, 5-2, on a walkoff grand slam by Isaac Hill.

"Last year's championship game was one of the best games I have ever been a part of, as a player, as a coach, even a fan. I'm not

expecting anything less than that again," McKinley said.

The teams appeared to be on a collision course for the rematch all season, and they enter with several similarities, including the top two offenses and defenses in the state.

"They have good pitching, we have good pitching. They have good defense, we play good defense," McKinley said.

La Grande, which is on a 23-game winning streak, has surrendered just 37 runs in 28 games. The Tigers have tossed 15 shut-outs on the season, including a stretch of 12 in a row from April 15 to May 13. La Grande has also scored 316 runs on the season. Only Burns and Blanchet Catholic have a higher run average across all classifications.

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## Future bright for La Grande softball

### Tigers lose two seniors off state semifinal team

By RONALD BOND  
For The Observer

**T**URNER — The season ended one game short of the ultimate goal for the La Grande softball team.

But head coach Cody Bowen and the Tigers have a lot to look forward to in 2023 with the team losing just two starting seniors — albeit the players are Kinzy Bowen and Grace Neer who played a key

role in the team turning around after a slow start and reaching the 4A state semifinals.

"We got a lot to go with next year," Bowen said. "We got a couple of good solid holes to fill. We're going to miss our seniors, especially their bats. Kinzy ended up with 12 home runs this year, Grace had 10."

That's 22 of the 34 homers hit by the team on the season

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The Observer, File

Grace Neer, center, gets ready in the dugout during a match between the La Grande and Baker softball teams at Sam Marcum Field in La Grande on Thursday, May 6, 2021. Neer is one of two starting seniors the Tigers graduate from this year's 18-8 squad.

## SPORTS SHORT

## Blazers linked to Toronto forward in trade talks

By ARON YOHANNES  
The Oregonian

PORTLAND — The Portland Trail Blazers will be exploring all options this summer to improve their roster.

The Blazers have a bit of flexibility with what they can, which includes the No. 7 selection in the upcoming NBA Draft. There's optimism about what Portland will do with the pick.

One possibility? Trading it.

Jake Fischer of Bleacher Report reported Monday, May 30, that word has cir-

culated among rival front offices that Toronto Raptors forward OG Anunoby is dissatisfied with his role in Toronto in 2021-22, following a standout season from Rookie of the Year Scottie Barnes, who joined Pascal Siakam and Fred VanVleet as the primary ball-handlers in Nick Nurse's offense.

Anunoby is believed to be a potential trade target for the Blazers as the summer heats up.

The Trail Blazers remain widely expected to pursue trade scenarios with the No. 7 pick in order to

add a complementary veteran alongside All-NBA guard Damian Lillard, and Anunoby is believed to be one of their primary targets along with Jerami Grant.

Anunoby is a long and athletic forward who plays above the rim and on both ends of the floor — a great void he could fill in Portland. On top of being a young (24) and productive player for the Raptors, Anunoby is also a bargain contract, as has three years left on a four-year, \$72 million deal.

The Anunoby and Grant contracts both fit under

Portland's \$20.9 million trade exception from the deal that sent CJ McCollum to the New Orleans Pelicans in February.

The Blazers and Raptors have conducted trade business before, too, when they swapped Gary Trent Jr. for Norman Powell at the February 2021 trade deadline.

Neither Anunoby nor Grant are expected to be players that will significantly change the Blazers' championship fortunes, but they're good starting points for the summer project to re-tool the roster around Lillard.



Winslow Townson/The Associated Press, File

Toronto forward OG Anunoby goes in for a dunk past Boston's Terry Rozier (12), Marcus Morris and Jaylen Brown (7) in Boston Sunday, Nov. 12, 2017.

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