

LA GRANDE BASEBALL

# ONE MORE TIME

La Grande looks to avenge last year's title game loss to Hidden Valley

By RONALD BOND  
For The Observer

**L**A GRANDE — While the preparation for the state championship rematch against Hidden Valley will be similar as the previous 28 games, there is a redemptive element to this contest for the La Grande Tigers.

“Redemption is on all of our minds, for sure,” junior pitcher and infielder Logan Williams said. “It’s that, but also, it’s another game.”

La Grande will be aiming for its third state baseball title when it meets the Mustangs at 1:30 p.m. Saturday, June 4, at Volcanoes Stadium in Keizer.

“This game means a lot to us,” senior pitcher and infielder Devin Bell said. “I feel like all season we’ve played with a chip on our shoulders, like we want to get there. We want to play that team again, because we have something we want to prove to everybody, so I believe just that chip on our shoulders will lead to us pushing harder.”

The teams met a year ago at Aurora in what head coach Parker McKinley earlier this week called one of the best games he had been a part of. It was a



La Grande head coach Parker McKinley talks to his team Thursday, June 2, 2022, prior to the team's state championship appearance against Hidden Valley on June 4.

Ronald Bond/For The Observer

point he expanded on this week, noting the quality of athletes on both teams, the baseball IQ they carry and the ability to not only make the routine plays, but great plays.

“That game last year had several of those,” he said. “And so that’s what made it so special. I can see that this has the potential to be another game like that just based on the personnel

that’s in both lineups.”

La Grande dropped the title game that day, 5-2, when Isaac Hill hit a two-out walk-off grand slam for Hidden Valley.

“We felt that heartbreaking moment, and we’re like ‘we’re not going to let that happen again,’” Bell said. “We’re going to try to take the lead and keep it steady.”

The teams have been on a proverbial collision course for the rematch all season, routing opponents left and right, and piling up similar numbers. Both teams enter with 27 wins — La Grande at 27-1, Hidden Valley at 27-2. Both teams average around 11 runs per game, have solid defense and strong pitching

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## Shining examples of student-athletes

Three La Grande baseball players earn valedictorian status with 4.0 grade point averages

By JEFF BUDLONG  
The Observer

**L**A GRANDE — Cole Jorgensen, Braden Carson and Derek Begin will not be at La Grande’s graduation ceremonies on Saturday, June 4, and they could not be happier about it.

The trio has done everything needed to stride across the stage in front of family and friends. They are three of



Begin

Carson

Jorgensen

five valedictorians for the senior class, but they will be busy at Volcanoes Stadium in Keizer battling for a state baseball championship.

“Those guys do a really good job of leading by example, and it is one of those things when you are standing around and look at how everyone is doing something a certain way it becomes the culture,” head coach Parker McKinley said. “I am fortunate to have

a lot of guys with high grade point averages on the team, and I credit all of the juniors and seniors passing that culture on to the freshmen and sophomores.”

With GPAs more impressive than anything they can put up on the baseball diamond, the discipline and determination to be successful both on the field and in the classroom doesn’t happen by mistake.

“It is just a lot of hard work,” Carson said. “When I was in middle school I got a B in a class and I was struggling a little bit, but I made it a goal to get all A’s in high school.”

All three are multisport athletes, and Jorgensen said playing sports at La Grande helps instill a lot of traits that will benefit anyone as they try to accom-

plish goals in their life.

The 4.0 GPAs are that much more impressive given the circumstances all students had to overcome during a pandemic. The same self-motivation needed to go to practice and compete in games throughout the school year served all three well when making time to study and getting assignments completed, especially when classes were conducted remotely.

“We know how fortunate we are and we have played together on the same travel baseball team since we were 9 years old,” Jorgensen said.

Carson, who will attend Eastern Oregon University in the fall to wrestle,

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### SPORTS SHORT

## Despite backlash, controversial Saudi-backed golf tournament coming to Oregon

By KYLE IBOSHI  
KGW News

PORTLAND — Despite push-back from local mayors, a U.S. senator and golf club members — several of whom have resigned from the club — Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club in North Plains is scheduled to host a controversial golf tournament June 30-July 2.

It will be the first U.S. stop for a lucrative new professional golf league backed by the financial arm of Saudi Arabia — a country long accused of human rights abuses.

“It’s despicable. It’s horrible, absolutely horrible,” said North Plains Mayor Leri Lenahan.

Lenahan, along with 10 other mayors in Washington County,

signed a letter opposing the Saudi-backed golf tournament.

Local leaders are especially concerned about potential protests and the safety of their community.

Saudi Arabia’s role in this new golf tour, the LIV Golf Invitational Series, has prompted a hailstorm of controversy. The non-governmental organization Amnesty International said the country has demonstrated time and again a flagrant disregard for human rights — including crackdowns on freedom of expression, association and assembly.

In 2018, Saudi agents killed Jamal Khashoggi, a dissident and columnist for The Washington Post.

“I’m just not going to be

silent when Saudi Arabia tries to cleanse its bloodstained hands,” said Oregon Sen. Ron Wyden.

Wyden accused the Saudis of “sportswashing” — a term used to describe big spending on high-profile sporting events to help cleanse a country’s image and reputation.

The LIV Golf Invitational Series is scheduled to begin with a tournament at Centurion Golf Club in London June 9-11. The new league is hoping to entice professional golfers to participate with huge payouts and prize money. The PGA has warned it would forever ban players if they abandoned the PGA Tour for the

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Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club/Contributed Photo

Pumpkin Ridge Golf Club in North Plains is scheduled to be the first U.S. stop for the controversial Saudi Arabia-back professional golf tour, the LIV Golf Invitational Series.

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