

TEAM

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toward and put themselves in that position to be in. The belief is so strong in them that they are the guys for the job. They believe when it is their time to go, they will get it done.”

The coach noted it's contagious, too, and that when the momentum starts going, the success can take off in a hurry.

Schow said that any player in the batting order, one through nine, can come up with the key play when their number is called — then took it a step further, saying any of the 20 players on the team can come through.

“You can have faith in anybody on the team to score the RBIs that we need,” he said.

Several players after the championship win also pointed to the team's continuity in that many of the players have been on the same teams for years — as far back as when they were 8 years old.

“I think part of it is definitely that we've just been playing together for so long and we all just trust each other,” Bornstedt said. “None of us are really trying to do it all ourselves. We all want to do it for the next guy. Definitely



Suzie Collman/Contributed Photo

La Grande celebrates Jace Schow's home run in the sixth inning during the Tigers' 10-1 win over Hidden Valley in the OSAA Class 4A state championship game on Tuesday, June 7, 2022, at Volcanoes Stadium in Keizer. Schow also earned the win on the mound, fanning 11 and walking only one over six innings of work.

we know and trust each other that we're going to make the routine playing and the outstanding plays.”

The stats bear that point out, too. As a team, La Grande finished with a batting average of .363. Seven players with more

than 50 plate appearances hit above .300. Ten players had 10 or more RBIs on the season, but only two had more than 30. Twelve different players accounted for at least 10 of La Grande's 326 runs. While there were some stunning individual performances on the season — Bell finished with a .539 average, 10 home runs and 69 RBIs — McKinley called it a team that wasn't centered around just one player's efforts.

That was evident on the mound all season as well.

The Tigers finished with a team ERA this spring of 0.85, a number that would be stunning enough if it was a player's mark. As a team, La Grande surrendered just 38 runs, 21 of them earned. The Tigers threw 15 shutouts.

The individual numbers are more staggering. Five different pitchers logged at least 10 innings this season, and three more pitched 30 or more. Of the five, the highest ERA was 2.47. Schow, the championship game's winning pitcher, finished 10-0 with a 1.45

ERA. And three other pitchers had a mark under 0.50 (including one player, Logan Williams, who finished with an ERA of 0.00). That sheer level of dominance is why McKinley said last week he could feel confident with any player taking the mound.

“All 20 teammates were there for the same reason and the same common goal, and they executed it really well.”

— Parker McKinley, La Grande baseball head coach

Schow didn't disappoint, striking out 11 batters in six innings, and allowing just one run — on a balk — on six hits.

“I think it's really that (team) chemistry,” Schow said. “The fact that you know the whole team trusts that you can do what you can do, it allows us to have the confidence to trust in ourselves.”

The team's balance and completeness was on display all season long to the tune of 28 wins, including 24 in a row.

And, in Keizer on June 7, the pinnacle — a state title — came with it seeming like everyone was involved — because they all were.

“All 20 teammates were there for the same reason and the same common goal, and they executed it really well,” McKinley said.

CHAMPS

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knockout blow in the fifth.

“Eventually the dam broke,” Bornstedt said. “As a team we were putting a lot of pressure on them the whole game.”

La Grande loaded the bases with one out, and Cesar Rodriguez walked to force in a run for a 5-1 lead. On the next pitch, Braden Carson hit a two-run single to center, and three pitches later, Armstrong hit a two-run double to chase Vidlak from the game and push the lead to 9-1.

“We just put everything together, didn't let up on the gas, and I would say just tied some runs together that needed to happen,” Armstrong said of the fifth-inning barrage. “It was momentum building, one



Suzie Collman/Contributed Photo

La Grande's Braden Carson (16) celebrates after scoring during the Tigers' 10-1 win over Hidden Valley in the OSAA Class 4A state championship game on Tuesday, June 7, 2022, in Keizer. La Grande finished the season with a 28-1 record en route to the program's third state title.

piece at a time.”

Schow iced the win with a solo home run to lead off the sixth.

“The game is so much

about momentum,”

McKinley said. “When you get it going in your direction, special things can happen.”

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