

# Sports+Outdoors

## PREP FOOTBALL



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Sisters' Justin DeSmet (23) breaks away from a Pleasant Hill defender during the first half Friday night at Sisters.

## PLAYING FOR THE PLAYOFFS

### Sisters football back in playoff hunt for first time since 2016

BY BRIAN RATHBONE

CO Media Group

SISTERS — The Outlaws gathered after beating Pleasant Hill 31-7 in an important Class 3A Mountain Valley football clash and were a tad ... unsatisfied?

Sisters believes it left many points on the table during the Friday night home game.

"Honestly, I think our team could have played a lot better tonight," said junior running back Justin DeSmet. "We should have 60 points on the board."

After the still-convincing win in which Sisters (5-2 overall, 3-1 MVC) forced five Pleasant Hill (3-4, 1-3) turnovers, the Outlaws are on the brink of clinching one of the conference's three automatic qualifying spots — far from where the program was a year ago.

"The boys are very hungry," said Sisters coach Clayton Hall. "They have a goal of making it to the playoffs. We have the goal to win our last three games, and we got the first one tonight."

Last season, the Outlaws finished 1-6 and were outscored by opponents 258-89. Now with a win on the road against either Siuslaw this Friday or Harrisburg Oct. 28, Sisters will be postseason-bound for the first time since 2016.

"This team is based on having a lot of seniors and we know how to play with



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Sisters' Kayle Mock finds himself wide open for a touchdown catch during the first half against Pleasant Hill on Friday night at Sisters.

one another," said senior quarterback Easton Moore, one of 12 seniors on the 32-man roster. "This year is going pretty great — I can't wait for playoffs."

Against the Billies, the Outlaws forced three fumbles — one of them on special teams — while DeSmet and sophomore Hudson Beck each had an interception. Outside of one scoring drive late in the first half, Pleasant Hill had little success moving the ball on offense.

After giving up an average of 32 points per game last year, the Outlaws have held

opponents to 15 points per contest this season.

"The defense has been playing very, very well," Hall said. "I thought the boys played hard all night tonight."

While the Outlaws believe that the offense did not have its best game despite scoring 31 points — which would have been a season high last fall — they were still able to find the end zone four times.

Moore found sophomore wideout Kayle Mock for the game's only score in the first quarter. Junior running back

Tony Gonzalez had two short touchdown runs, one in the second quarter for a 14-7 lead and another on the opening drive of the third quarter to give Sisters a 21-7 advantage. Senior kicker Brody Duey booted in a 27-yard field goal. Then DeSmet capped off the blowout with a 55-yard touchdown run late in the fourth quarter.

For a team coming off a disappointing 2021 season, after the Outlaws stomped Burns 23-0 to open this season, belief started to sink in.

"We realized that we have a good bunch of athletes and that we can do this," DeSmet said. "That first win at Burns gave us that spark and it has been a fire since then."

Since that opening victory — aside from a 26-14 loss to MVC-leading La Pine, and a 29-14 loss to 4A Madras — the Outlaws have been rolling.

Now they head on the road to take on defending state-champion Siuslaw, which handed Sisters a 50-0 loss last season. A win over the Vikings would clinch a postseason berth, and could give the Outlaws a home playoff game.

"I think it is going to be a pretty even match," Hall said. "We have something to prove this year."

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### Central Oregon Prep football roundup

Senior quarterback Hogan Carmichael tossed four touchdown passes to three different receivers to push Summit's (6-1, 3-0 Intermountain Conference) winning streak to six games and secure a playoff spot with a 35-0 win over Redmond (2-5, 0-3). Senior Charlie Ozolin caught eight passes for 174 yards and two touchdowns, seniors Ethan Carlson and junior Tadhg Brown each caught touchdown passes as well.

After dropping its first game of the season last week, Bend High returned to its dominating form with a 41-0 win over Caldera (2-5, 1-2 IMC). The Lava Bears (6-1, 2-1) tallied 417 yards of offense while holding Caldera to just two yards of offense. Senior running back Malakai Nutter scored twice on the ground, as did senior quarterback Logan Malinowski. Senior wideout Blake Groshong caught a 55-yard touchdown from Malinowski.

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Crook County (3-4, 1-2 Special District 5) dropped its second consecutive game, falling 42-14 to La Grande... After starting the season off with three consecutive wins, Madras (3-4, 0-3 SD 5) has dropped four consecutive games. Friday, the White Buffalo fell 41-13 to Baker... Since losing its second game of the season, La Pine (6-1, 5-0 MVC) has rolled off five consecutive wins and are now a win away against Creswell from claiming the 3A Mountain Valley Conference title. The Hawks won on the road 52-26 against Elmira. During the winning streak, the Hawks have averaged 42 points per game... It was nearly an upset for Culver (3-4, 2-2 Tri-River) in a non-league matchup against undefeated Lowell. But the Bulldogs' upset effort came up short, falling 30-26... Gilchrist (1-5) picked up its first win of the season with a 27-12 win on the road against Days Creek.

## PREP BOYS SOCCER

### Lava Bears clinch playoff spot with win over Ridgeview

BY BRIAN RATHBONE

CO Media Group

REDMOND — With a 3-1 victory Thursday afternoon against Ridgeview, the Bend High boys soccer team not only won its fourth consecutive game, but it also punched its ticket to the playoffs. The Lava Bears are guaranteed to finish no lower than second place in the Intermountain Conference.

This is the first season that the Lava Bears are postseason bound since 2018, when they made it to the first round of the Class 6A playoffs.

"We knew how big this game was," said Bend High coach Nils Eriksson. "The kids have worked hard; it is a good group of guys. It is fun to see how we have grown as a program the past few years."

During the previous three seasons, the Lava Bears went a combined 7-26-2, including a winless season in 2019.

"The past years we have al-

ways had the heart and always wanted to make the playoffs," said senior midfielder Tommy Anderson. "We would just come up short and never had it in us to make the playoffs. This year, there is something different, we are a little more experienced and want it more."

Perhaps the win to sweep the Ravens this year proved how different the Lava Bears are in 2022. Bend (8-3-1, 6-1-1 IMC) would have to rally from an early deficit for the victory in Thursday's matchup between two teams ranked in OSAA's Top 10. Bend is ranked seventh in 5A. Ridgeview is ranked ninth.

Ridgeview (9-4, 4-4) took an early lead within the first 10 minutes of the match when sophomore forward Oliver Thompson scored. For much of the first 40 minutes, the Ravens were the aggressors, creating more threatening scoring opportunities.

That changed after Bend

junior forward Luke Murphy evened the score in the 33rd minute, hitting a goal on a counter. After that, the Lava Bears looked like a different team and took control.

"We started talking more and communicating better," Eriksson said. "The kids took charge on the field. They were coaching each other on the field. The kids did a good job directing each other better in the second half."

In the second half, the Lava Bears turned a 1-1 tie into a two-goal advantage. Bend took the lead in the 65th minute when Anderson set up senior midfielder Leamon Rich's goal. Then, in the 71st minute, Anderson scored to put the game out of reach.

"We were giving them a lot of opportunities from our own mistakes," said Anderson, who finished with a goal and an assist. "It clicked in that we needed to start playing our game. There was a realization



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

Bend's Luke Murphy (29) and Ridgeview's Collin McWhortor (2) fight for possession of the ball during the first half of the 5A matchup Thursday in Redmond.

after we got scored on that this game was really big and we needed to secure this win to get second in the conference. This was a really big 'dub.'"

Even with the loss, Ridgeview is still in the OSAA's Top 10 and very much alive in the postsea-

son hunt. The Ravens need a win over either Mountain View or Redmond to secure the third automatic playoff bid.

Eriksson predicts that whoever makes the postseason, along with Bend High and Summit, will be tough to beat in

the playoffs.

"It's rewarding to see that Central Oregon soccer is on the rise overall," Eriksson said. "Whoever gets in as the third team is going to be competitive."

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