

EAST OREGONIAN

SPORTS

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1B



Nixyaawii seniors (pictured left to right) Kaitlynn Melton, Mary Stewart, Milan Schimmel and EllaMae Looney are determined to lead their Golden Eagles team to a second consecutive Class 1A state championship this weekend in Baker City.

Going for it all...again

Nixyaawii aiming for back-to-back unbeaten, championship seasons

By ERIC SINGER
East Oregonian

MISSION — When the Nixyaawii girls basketball team walked off the court at Baker High School last February, it did so with a state championship trophy in its hands and high expectations for 2018.

The Golden Eagles had just finished off a perfect 25-0 season and claimed the Class 1A state championship, the second in the school's brief history, with a 68-39 win over No. 3 Country Christian — it was hard not to look ahead.

The Golden Eagles had only two seniors graduating, but returned four starters, an impressive lineup of Mary Stewart, Milan Schimmel, Kaitlynn Melton and EllaMae Looney.

And from that moment, the Golden Eagles made it their No. 1 goal to do it all over again.

"The expectations going into this year were pretty high," said Nixyaawii

head coach Jeremy Maddern, "though we set those expectations pretty high. They set them before the season and I'm happy they're getting this opportunity to achieve them."

The Golden Eagles have, so far, lived up to those expectations remarkably. With Wednesday's 74-30 victory over No. 10 Damascus Christian in the Class 1A state quarterfinals, the Golden Eagles are now a perfect 27-0 on the season and sit just one win away from a chance at defending their championship.

In Wednesday's game, the Golden Eagles held a mere 30-19 lead over Damascus Christian, but woke up in the second half and asserted their dominance. They outscored the Eagles 54-11 in the second half to secure the win.

Nixyaawii had four players reach double figures scoring in the game. Schimmel led the group with 19 points and added nine rebounds, seven assists

See NIXYAAWII/3B



In this Jan. 5, file photo, Nixyaawii's Mary Stewart drives up court guarded by Powder Valley's Kim Williams in the Golden Eagle's 71-24 win against the Badgers in Mission.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Prep Basketball

Mustangs to tip off 2A tourney

Tournament starts Thursday afternoon in Pendleton

By ERIC SINGER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — On Thursday, the Heppner Mustangs will be playing in the Class 2A state tournament for the first time since 2013 and they won't have to wait long to get onto the court.

The Mustangs' quarterfinal game with No. 1 Kennedy opens up the 2018 girls tournament at 1:30 p.m. at Pendleton High School, while the boys quarterfinal action gets started at 1:30 p.m. at the Pendleton Convention Center with No. 1 Western Mennonite and No. 8 Grant Union.

The No. 1 Trojans present a tough challenge for the No. 8 Mustangs. The Trojans have been a 2A powerhouse in the last four year with a combined 90-24 overall record while capturing the 2016 state championship.

They come into Pendleton 26-1 overall and have won 21 straight games, but the Mustangs will not be scared. The Columbia Basin Conference district champion Mustangs are coming off of an upset victory of Weston-McEwen and a hard-fought win over Central Linn last week.

The girls quarterfinal round games will all be played at Pendleton High School on Thursday.

NO. 4 GRANT UNION (21-3) vs. NO. 5 FAITH BIBLE (25-2), 3:15 p.m. — This quarterfinal matchup features two teams that have not lost in a very long time.

See 2A TOURNEY/2B



• Thurs., 1:30 p.m.
• at Pendleton High School

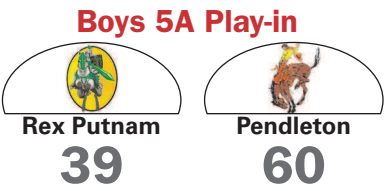
Buckaroos punch ticket to playoffs

Newsom's 25 points lead Pendleton to the playoffs

By ALEXIS MANSANAREZ
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — It was unfamiliar territory for the former three-time Columbia River Conference champions. The Pendleton Buckaroos were in their first play-in game in four years; and the last time their season was on the line in 2014, they were sent home licking their wounds after a 40-point defeat.

But this time, the Buckaroos were able to keep their postseason hopes alive with a 60-39 victory over Rex Putnam on Tuesday at Warberg Court.



"We're not necessarily used to playing in the play-in game so it was kind of a different atmosphere," head coach Kyle Tedder said.

Nonetheless, the expectations were still the same, Tedder added.

"They know what's on the line," he said. "We knew they've got two guys that we needed to neutralize and we knew we needed to play hard."

The Kingsmen's top scorers juniors

Brady Miller and Shane Halladin accounted for nearly half of the team's total points — a combined 19 — but it was another pair of scorers who kept Putnam in the game for a brief eight minutes.

The Bucks (15-10) got off to a 17-10 lead behind the efforts of freshman Dakota Sams and junior Tyler Newsom, who sank 11 of the team's first-quarter points.

Pendleton hit its first bucket from the field five minutes into play, and from there went on a 13-6 run to keep the Kingsmen (5-20) at bay. But in the second quarter, Putnam made a run of its own during a Pendleton lull.

The Bucks were scoreless in the final

See BUCKAROOS/3B



Pendleton's Tyler Newsome puts up the ball in front of Putnam's Shane Halladin in the Bucks' 60-39 win against the Kingsmen on Wednesday in Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Sports shorts

Matt Forte retires after 10 years in NFL with Bears, Jets

NEW YORK (AP) — Running back Matt Forte has announced his retirement from playing after 10 NFL seasons.

The 32-year-old Forte had one year left on his contract with the Jets, but says in a statement on Twitter on Wednesday that it was time for "the workhorse to finally rest in his stable."

Forte, who spent his first eight seasons with Chicago, dealt with knee issues the past two seasons. He had a career-low 381 yards rushing on just 103 carries and ran for two touchdowns last season while playing with swelling in his surgically repaired right knee. He also had 37 catches for 293 yards and one TD.

With the Bears from 2008-15, Forte was one of the game's most versatile running backs. His 9,796 yards rushing rank him 33rd on the NFL's career list. He also had 554 receptions.



Forte

"It was one of those moments that stops your heart a little bit. But once we got some feedback from the training staff and doctors ... I was very encouraged when he walked in yesterday with minimal swelling, the pain was down, and there were no obvious signs of a fracture or break."

— Jerry Dipoto

Seattle Mariners general manager describing his emotions after starting pitcher Felix Hernandez was hit in his pitching arm during a spring training game this week.

EOU women earn No. 2 seed in NAIA tournament

The Eastern Oregon University women's basketball team earned the No. 2 seed in the Duer bracket of the NAIA Women's Basketball National Championship on Tuesday.

The Mountaineers will play No. 7 Reinhardt University in the first round on Mar. 8 at 10:15 a.m. Central time. All games will be played at the Tyson Events Center in Sioux City, Iowa.

EOU (30-2 overall) rolls into the tournament on a 24-game win streak, most recently defeating SOU to win the CCC championship. Its last loss came on Nov. 25 in a 79-65 defeat at the hands of Montana Western.

Mountaineer junior guard Maya Ah You-Dias also recently earned CCC Player of the Year, senior Stormee Van Bell was CCC Defensive Player of the Year and Anji Weissenfluh was CCC Coach of the Year.



THIS DATE IN SPORTS

1955 — Allen Fieldhouse, home of the Kansas Jayhawks, hosts its first basketball game and the Jayhawks beat rival Kansas State 77-66.

1988 — Wayne Gretzky of the Edmonton Oilers becomes the NHL's all-time assist leader, breaking the longtime mark of Gordie Howe. In his ninth season, Gretzky picks up assist No. 1,050 in a game against the Los Angeles Kings. Gretzky takes 681 games to surpass the record that took Howe 1,767 games to set.

1994 — Portland radio analyst Mike Rice is ejected in the third quarter of Portland's 106-94 loss to Indiana.

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