

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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FLOOR GENERAL

Eynetich is key to Ione/Arlington's 8-0 start

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

IONE — The Ione/Arlington boys basketball team has a variety of weapons to put on the floor, from 6-foot-9 junior Bryce Rollins to junior guard Oliver Giefing, who should have his face on a wanted poster for all the steals he has this season.

But the one person who keeps everything running smoothly is 5-10 junior guard Carson Eynetich.

"I trust Carson, not just with the offense, but everything," I/A coach Dennis Stefani said. "He has a really good basketball IQ. Any time you can relate to a kid as coach to player, and they have that IQ, you don't have to explain it. He grasps it immediately. He is so good because he is personable and outgoing, he relays that out there on the floor."

It's a responsibility Eynetich handles with focus.

"I take it seriously, but I try to stay as calm as I can," he said. "The more I stay calm and focused, everyone stays behind me. It has been a good start. There are definitely a lot of things we need to perfect if we want to go the distance. One of the advantages we have is Bryce. When they collapse on him, it opens up the 3s and so many more things for us."

Eynetich leads the Cardinals in scoring with 18.1 points a game. He also leads in assists with 45 over eight games. He is second on the team behind Giefing with 29 steals. And he averages five rebounds a game and is shooting 45.8% from the floor.

"Leading in scoring and assists is pretty good," Stefani said. "He has quickness, and he has pretty good hops, which helps him play taller than he is. He plays bigger than he is. He has no fear. He attacks the hole and dumps it off. He has good vision on the floor."

In a small town, you get the players you get. Stefani has been fortunate to have a mix that allows players to showcase their talents, whether it is scoring, rebounding or defense.

"That's something we try to pass on to these kids," Stefani said. "We aren't having to isolate people to score. Pilot Rock tried to diamond-and-one on Carson, then Bryce was scoring and Gary got a couple. The better games we play, we have four guys in double figures, and Carson understands that. It's nice to have a scorer who understands it, distributes the ball and gets everyone involved."

The Cardinals' team chemistry also has played a part in their success.

"This team is all pretty much local kids," Stefani said. "It's incredible the bond they have, you can tell they are tight. They know each other inside and out. It's a good group of kids with good morals and family backgrounds."

The Cardinals are off to their best start since the 2013-14 season when they started 15-2 and finished fourth at state.

This season, I/A has outscored opponents on an average of 63-31 per game.

"The team that does well at Baker is the one who plays the best defense," Stefani said.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Ione/Arlington's Carson Eynetich (10) drives toward the basket Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2021, at Pilot Rock High School. The Ione/Arlington Cardinals defeated the Rockets 67-53.

Basketball junkie

Eynetich has been playing basketball since he was in grade school, playing at halftime of the varsity boys games when he was in the third and fourth grade.

"Those were good times," Eynetich said.

Though he also likes baseball, basketball is his No. 1 sport.

"It's the one I put the most effort into," Eynetich said. "It just feels good playing as a team and seeing everyone come together."

In middle school, Eynetich played on Amateur Athletic Union teams in Hermiston and Irrigon.

"It was just the kind of thing you do in a small town," Eynetich said. "Sports is what I like to do. I love playing with this group of boys. We have been playing together since middle school. When we gel, it's hard to stop us."

Eynetich gets his love of basketball from his mom Dawn, who played at Ione and was part of the 1996 state championship team.

"My dad (Jeff) went to Arlington but he wasn't much of an athlete," Eynetich said. "My mom grew up in Ione and played volleyball and basketball."

Stefani gave the team a few days off during Christmas break, and Eynetich could be found working at ASE Farms in Ione doing winter service work on farm equipment.

"Work ethic carries on through sports, through school, through life," Eynetich said. "You just have to have a good one."



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Ione/Arlington's Carson Eynetich (10) puts up a shot Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2021, during the Ione/Arlington Cardinals 67-53 win over the Pilot Rock Rockets at Pilot Rock High School.

ON THE SLATE

Tuesday, Dec. 28

Prep girls basketball
Pilot Rock vs. Griswold at Bouncin' Cancer Tournament, Echo, 10 a.m.
Joseph at Ione/Arlington, 2 p.m.
McLoughlin vs. Prairie City, at Baker Invite, 3:30 p.m.
Stanfield vs. Echo at Bouncin' Cancer Tournament, Echo, 4:30 p.m.
Imbler at Weston-McEwen, 5:30 p.m.
Riverside at Columbia-Burbank (Washington), 6 p.m.
Nixyaawii vs. Grant Union, at Baker Invite, 6:30 p.m.
Prep boys basketball
Hermiston at West Valley (Spokane), TBD
Pendleton at Summit Holiday Classic, TBD
Pilot Rock vs. Griswold at Bouncin' Cancer Tournament, Echo, 11:30 a.m.
McLoughlin vs. Prairie City, at Baker Invite, 2 p.m.
Joseph at Ione/Arlington, 3:30 p.m.
Nixyaawii vs. Grant Union, at Baker Invite, 5 p.m.
Hermiston at West Valley, 5 p.m.
Stanfield vs. Echo at Bouncin' Cancer Tournament, Echo, 6 p.m.
Imbler at Weston-McEwen, 7 p.m.
Riverside at Columbia-Burbank (Washington), 7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, Dec. 29

Prep girls wrestling
Hermiston at Hanford, 9 a.m.
Prep boys wrestling
Pendleton at NW Duals, West Albany, 9 a.m.
Prep boys basketball
Pendleton at Summit Holiday Classic, TBD
McLoughlin at Baker Invite, TBD
Nixyaawii vs. Prairie City, at Baker Invite, 2 p.m.
Weston-McEwen at Grant Union, 6 p.m.
Heppner at Irrigon, 7:30 p.m.
Girls basketball
McLoughlin at Baker Invite, TBD
Nixyaawii vs. Prairie City, at Baker Invite, 3:30 p.m.
Weston-McEwen at Grant Union, 4 p.m.
Heppner at Irrigon, 6 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 30

Prep girls basketball
Umatilla at Salem Academy Tournament, TBD
Stanfield at Enterprise, 3 p.m.
Riverside at McLoughlin, 4 p.m.
Walla Walla at Pendleton, 5:30 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Grant Union, 6 p.m.
Union at Weston-McEwen, 6 p.m.
Prep boys basketball
Pendleton at Summit Holiday Classic, TBD
Umatilla at Salem Academy Tournament, TBD
Stanfield at Enterprise, 4:30 p.m.
Riverside at McLoughlin, 5:30 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Grant Union, 7:30 p.m.
Union at Weston-McEwen, 7:30 p.m.
Prep boys wrestling
Pendleton at NW Duals, West Albany, 9 a.m.
Heppner at Riverside Rumble, 11 a.m.

OSAA wrestling championships on the move

Finals will not be at Memorial Coliseum for the first time since 2007

By JERRY ULMER
OSAAtoday

WILSONVILLE — The OSAA wrestling championships will have a much different look this season.

Instead of taking place at Veterans Memorial Coliseum, its long-time home, the tournaments will be split into separate high school venues: Sandy (6A), Ridgeview (5A), Cascade (4A), La Pine (3A) and Culver (2A/1A, girls).

The OSAA executive board decided to make the change due to the Coliseum enforcing COVID-19 restrictions for spectators and participants.

"It's a bummer, but at the same time, I think it can be a quality experience for kids," OSAA Assistant Executive Director Brad Garrett said. "You're really high-

lighted at a single venue like that, on four mats."

The executive board opted for separate tournaments after reviewing information provided by the OSAA staff. Garrett worked closely with Culver coach J.D. Alley — the wrestling representative from the Oregon Athletic Coaches Association — to formulate the alternative plan.

All of the boys tournaments will be single-day events on Feb. 26, except for 6A, which will be a two-day event either Feb. 25-26 or Feb. 26-27. The girls tournament is set for Feb. 24.

It will mark the first time the state tournaments will be at a venue other than the Coliseum since 2007, the end of a three-year run at the State Fairgrounds Pavilion in Salem.

The revised state tournament format is a reflection on the COVID-19-shortened schedule of last season, when Newberg (6A), Cottage Grove (5A, girls), Cascade

(4A), Redmond (3A) and Sweet Home (2A/1A) played host to separate culminating week championship events.

"We kind of got a preview to this, a prequel," Alley said. "In terms of running the tournaments smoothly with separate tournament directors, we did that last year without the help of the OSAA. I feel real confident about that. Beyond a shadow of a doubt, we wouldn't be having this conversation if the wrestling community hadn't accomplished that feat last season."

Garrett said he and Alley were contacted by schools offering to play host to the tournaments.

"We didn't have to go very far," Garrett said. "Those places that were chosen, every one of them has an infrastructure, not only a building but a wrestling community that's involved and understands what kind of things need to be done, and why."

A change in National Federation of State High School Associ-

ations rules last year that allows for wrestlers to compete in a sixth match in one day — provided it is a qualifying or postseason championship event — was helpful in scheduling single-day state tournaments. But the 6A tournament, with brackets of 24, requires two days to complete.

The OSAA is ironing out details on operating the tournaments within the limited venue capacity. At the Coliseum, a 200,000-square foot, 10,000-seat arena, the OSAA did not have to enforce limits on the number of team personnel and spectators. That will change this season.

"In 6A, before you ever start, you have 500 people in the gym, just wrestlers and coaches," Garrett said. "It's likely our ticketing system is going to have to look differently. Potentially something like each wrestler would be allotted a certain number of tickets that they can distribute as they choose. But it's not going to be a free-for-all."

With that challenge in mind, the

6A tournament could be scheduled for Saturday-Sunday instead of Friday-Saturday to avoid conflicting with Sandy's school day.

"That would allow us to at least get more people in," Garrett said. Alley, for one, is relishing the atmosphere of a capacity crowd.

"Wrestling or playing a guitar, it's much better to play in a packed house with 900 people, packed to the rafters, than having 2,000 people in a facility of 6,000," Alley said. "That coliseum is a big, old place. This will give it much more of a Hoosier, packed-house kind of feel."

"On the flip side, it is the state championship, it's our Super Bowl, and it should be in our biggest, grandest city and its grandest venue. So it's sad."

The OSAA cheer and dance/drill championships also will move from the Coliseum. Both will go to Oregon City High School, with cheer on Feb. 12 and dance/drill on March 18-19.