

Wallowa roundball teams conclude with Echo, Powder Valley

By Paul Wahl
Wallow County Chieftain

Wallowa High School Girls Basketball team ended their season with two losses. The Lady Cougars held Echo fairly close, losing 25-39, but were trounced by Powder Valley, 24-80. Wallowa defeated Echo last time around and had expected to see the same result, coach Annette Moeller said. Echo came out to a fast start, outscoring Wallowa 12-2 in the first quarter. Shanna Rae Tillery led scoring with 10, Grace Pendarvis and Ashlyn Young had 3 each and Riley Ferré, Ella Moeller and Bailey Hafer two each. “We were 3-for-17 from the free-throw line and that makes up a lot of points for us,” Coach Moeller said. “We also didn’t shoot well as the girls experienced a lot of pressure to win to continue into districts.” Powder Valley scored 20 points in the opening quarter and never looked back. Tillery had 10 for Wallowa, Ferré had six, Young 4 and Moeller and Hafer had two apiece. “Powder Valley has several seniors who had been playing together for some time,” Coach Moeller said. “We just couldn’t get our shots to fall.” Although the Lady Cougs will not be advancing to post-season play, Coach Moeller said she rates the season as good. “This was a very young team, but every game we saw improvement,” she said. Even coaches of opposing teams noticed the efforts. “Next year we’ll be contenders with this group,” Coach Moeller added. “They gave it their all every time they walked on the floor.” The Wallowa Boys Varsity team finished the season with a nail-biter win over Echo, 58-55, and a drubbing by Powder Valley, 16-79.

Eagle teams finish regular season play

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times for the Joseph Charter School Eagles. Friday saw both the girls and boys squads heaping abuse on their Griswold opponents while Saturday saw Nixyaawii doing the same to the Eagles, albeit the Eagle boys put in a poor showing against the Golden Eagles. The Eagle ladies traveled to Griswold for Friday’s event, which saw the girls winning, 56-42. After a slow first half with only Madelyn Nelson and Emma Hite keeping the Eagles in the contest the team was down by only two at the half-way mark. The ladies turned on the fire in the second half with performances by Haley Miller, Nelson and Sabrina Albee, who carried the load offensively in the third quarter. Coach Lance Homan also noted the defensive play of Hite and senior Alexis Sykora, who played well defensively the whole game and held down the larger Grizzlies inside players while the Eagle guards created turnovers that led to easy scores.

“This was a tale of two halves, and I am very proud of how our girls responded to some adversity,” Homan said. “This was a good win on the road in our league.” Albee led the scoring with 16 while Sykora added 12 and Nelson came up with 11 points. Saturday’s game saw the girls coming out on the short end of a 72-38 score. The ladies had nothing to be ashamed of. They played hard and put in a sterling effort against the undefeated Golden Eagles, the state title holder riding a 50-game winning streak. Senior Alexis Sykora stole the show for the Eagles, scoring 26 of the team’s 38 points, the only player to shoot in double digits. Albee added eight points to the Eagle’s efforts.

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Eagles senior Alexis Sykora, left, and freshman Sabrina Albee bring the ball upcourt in the waning minutes of Joseph’s 72-38 loss to state titleholder Nixyaawii on Saturday, Feb. 10 at Joseph.

Homan said the game was sad, but he wasn’t talking about the score or the efforts of the ladies. He was talking of Sykora and her last Eagles home game. “Alexis Sykora is our lone senior and to see her play her last regular season game at home was emotional,” he said. “Alexis has meant so much to Joseph basketball. It’s hard to put into words just how proud I am of Alexis and all she has accomplished.” As far as the game against Nixy, they came into Joseph having won 50 consecutive games, and they are a clear favorite to win the state title again this year.

“In saying that, our kids competed and played with a lot of heart,” Homan said. “Alexis was fabulous tonight scoring 26 points and snaring numerous rebounds. I am very proud of our kids and look forward to the district tournament. The lady Eagles next play at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 15 in a district contest against Echo.

The boys put a major hurt on the Griswold lads, posting a 57-26 victory that left the Grizzlies reeling back to their caves

to serve out the rest of their hibernation. Coach Olan Fulfer liked what he saw of the boys. “We moved the ball and played hard on defense, and when we do that, great things are going to happen,” he said. “We started out down 4-11, but we stayed together as a team and instead of giving up, we pulled together and made some points and defensive stops.” The boys could say no such thing about Saturday’s efforts in their 53-72 home loss to Nixyaawii that should have been the other way around. Joseph showed they can play championship-caliber basketball but also showed their lack of cohesion and commitment to the game when the chips are down for only a moment. The Eagles started out fine, building a 20-13 lead in the first quarter. The Golden Eagles were on the ropes, with two of their starters panting and out of breath. After a brief timeout, Nixyaawii sank a three-pointer and most of the Eagles squad folded their wings and decided all was lost at that point. The Golden Eagles forced three quick turnovers as Joseph ballplayers normally known for their ballhandling skills

suddenly developed butterfly-fingers and handed over the ball to Nixy again and again. The Golden Eagles no longer had to work up a sweat as Joseph was sluggish bringing the ball upcourt and responded to possession changes with a pace that can charitably be described as dawdling. The Golden Eagles won going away without trying. Only Caevan Murray and Jean Luc Palma put in creditable efforts. “We have to find consistency,” Fulfer said. “We had the best start we’ve had all season, and what we’re doing is letting a little momentum shift destroy everything that we built. We build the momentum and they hit one shot and we fall apart. We have to be able to take those hits and keep on going if we want to do anything at districts or go on to state.” Fulfer noted the play of Murray and Palma as the game’s only real bright spots. Murray led the scoring with 15 and rebounded in the double digits while Palma dialed in for 13 points and caused a number of Nixyaawii’s turnovers with his stellar defensive plays in the team’s losing effort. The Eagles next play Cove at 8 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 15, in Baker, in the first round of district play.



Photos by Steve Tool/Chieftain
Wheels on his heels. Eagles senior Jean Luc Palma is miles ahead of the competition and everyone else on this layup caused by a turnover Palma instigated during Joseph’s 72-53 loss to Nixyaawii on Saturday, Feb. 10.

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK

Alexis Sykora

This week’s athlete of the week is Joseph Charter School senior, Alexis Sykora, 17. During her final home game, Sykora scored 26 of the team’s 38 points in a losing effort against defending state champs Nixyaawii. Coach Homan summed up her team contributions. “It is hard to put into words just how proud I am of Alexis and all she has accomplished. She has been a 2nd team all-league player, a 1st team all-league player, all-district tournament player the past two years, and an all-state player just to name a few. She has a bright future ahead of her and I feel privileged to have been her coach for a couple of years.”

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