



STAYING ALIVE!

Joseph squads make it to state

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain

For the first time in 36 years, both the Joseph Charter School boys and girls basketball teams will enter state competition together, going 2-0 each after last week's contests. The ladies last visited the upper reaches in 2009 while The boys made their last visit to state in 2005.

Eagles 64, Condon/Wheeler 59

The boys played at Condon/Wheeler Feb. 20, coming away with a 64-59 victory after staving off a fourth quarter spurt from their opponents.

The Eagles led 13-10 after the first quarter and 46-36 at the close of the third. However, Condon caught fire, eventually pulling within one before a timeout chat with coach Olan Fulfer led to a game-ending drive, leaving the Knights to eat the dust off their talons.

"We know that we lose leads, but what we don't know is that we can battle back and win afterwards," Fulfer said. "They stepped up and did what they needed to do to win that game."

Post point machine Caevan Murray led the Eagles' scoring with 20 points while brother Chase sank 14. Tyler Homan was close by, pouring in 13 for the cause, including going 6 for 6 at the free throw line in the second half. Trey Wandschneider added four crucial points in the final quarter, as did Mason Ferre down the stretch.

"It was the best I've ever seen us play," Fulfer said.

Eagles 55, Damascus 43

The game on the following Saturday saw the Eagles headed into a house of horrors against the Damascus Christian Eagles, a team Fulfer said had the worst sportsmanship he'd ever seen, fans and players alike. The mighty Eagles were up for the challenge and with David-like ferocity, slew their Philistine opponents, toppling them from their third-ranked plateau while leaving them with scarcely a feather in their hides with a decisive victory.

The Eagles began with a rout, leading 30-11 before Damascus brought it to within 10 at the half. Point guard Tyler Homan,

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who led the scoring with 21 points, had scored 14 in the second quarter alone.

The Eagles outscored their doppelganger 12-5 in the third quarter, leading 41-24, and spent the entire final quarter shooting free throws in response to the desperate plight of Damascus, whose court impotence led them to intense fouling in an order to change the tide of the game.

Fulfer called the majority of the fouls "hacking" or "flagrant" to give an idea of play on the floor. He added that Damascus earned plenty of technicals with their poor play and sportsmanship while Joseph kept piling on the points.

"We played our game, kept our cool and left with the win," Fulfer said. The coach described the finale as a den of madness with the fans booing Joseph as they threw debris at the referees upon leaving the floor. In a tantrum, one of the players refused to shake Fulfer's hand and instead elbowed him.

"I was worried about my kids' safety after the game," Fulfer said. "I had to get my team out of there as soon as possible."

The coach said that his team's play is exactly what he wished for. "We're peaking at the right time," Fulfer said. "We're a completely different team from District. My team outsmarted them and took away their offense completely."

As part of his amazing 21-point output, Homan sank a fifth three-pointer in the third quarter and was steady on the free throw line when it counted. Chase Murray stacked up 10 points and freshman phenom Mason Ferre followed with eight.

In an excellent performance, Wandschneider, the most heavily fouled player

on the team, sank seven free throws in the fourth quarter to keep the rabid Damascus fans at bay. Caevan Murray added six to the battle.

The Eagles next play Jordan Valley on Thursday, March 1 as part of the final eight in state.

Lady Eagles 72, Sherman 27

The lady Eagles also notched two wins, over Sherman and Crane, in their belts on the road to state. Coach Lance Homan was impressed with his team's stamina. He noted that the ladies got home around midnight Saturday, Feb. 17 after District and saddled up for Sherman the following Tuesday and played Crane on Friday.

Sherman County put up the surrender flag almost immediately against the Eagles' attack. The Huskies trailed 26-8 after the first quarter, and things didn't get better before they succumbed 72-27.

"The girls came out and really played with a lot of energy," coach Homan said. "Our press was very effective."

He noted that everyone on the team spent time on the floor.

Point guard Sabrina Albee tore up the defense, scoring 22 points in the first half while senior Alexis Sykora finished hot on her heels with 19 points.

"It was a total team effort on the defensive and offensive ends," Homan said. "We passed and shot the ball pretty well. Our girls are really focused and have a goal in mind."

Lady Eagles 44, Crane 30

Friday saw the ladies playing in Crane in what Homan politely called "a very hostile environment" with a trip to the state tournament on the line. As usual, the lady Eagles were more than up to the task, breaking out the hobbles and foot ropes to tame the Mustangs 44-30.

Homan credited the defense of Sykora and Hite's defense down low as the key to victory. Eagle guards applied the pressure up top while Sykora and Hite performed sentry duty under the hoop. He noted Sykora's superior job on the Mustangs' six-foot-one-inch post, while master thief Hite racked up a number of steals.

Offensively, Sykora and Albee carried the lion's share, with 10 and 24 points respectively. Homan noted that all other team baskets came at crucial times in the contest. He added that he's had fun watching Albee mature over the season and continue to perform at a high level in the state playoffs as a freshman.

"I can't tell you how impressed I am with our girls," Homan said. "They battle no matter the situation, no matter how they are feeling, no matter what is going on. They have earned this trip to Baker, and I couldn't be prouder."

The girls next play Country Christian at 3 p.m. on Feb. 28 at Baker High School in the 1A state championships.



END OF THE ROAD

Lady Outlaws' season comes to a close

By Steve Tool
Wallowa County Chieftain



The Outlaw ladies traveled to Oakland with their vaunted defense on Feb. 23 looking to climb the next rung on the state championship ladder. They sadly learned that defense isn't everything as they held Oakland to 34 points, but forgot to load their six-shooters as they managed only 23 points, shooting only 22 percent from the field.

No player managed more than five points.

Coach Mike Crawford hated to end the season on

that note.

"We could have played so much better than we did offensively, but we played a great defensive game," he said. "We did not get off the bus offensively."

“

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— Mike Crawford
Girls basketball coach

Crawford noted that only six points separated the teams for much of the game while the Outlaws watched their shots roll off the rim to the side.

"No matter what we did, we could not make a hard run at them," Crawford said. He noted that Oakland played patient ball and only committed a few turnovers.

"There's a reason they're the number three team in the state."

The Outlaws took only 37 shots in the entire contest and sank only eight. The ladies were 6 of 8 from the free throw line and were 1 for 7 outside the paint.

Senior Reece Christman shot 67 percent from the field, sinking two of three shots, but her closest competitor shot 29 percent and more than one stalwart shot a flat zero percent. Karli Bedard blocked two shots and hauled down 12 rebounds in the effort.

"What's most disappoint-

ing to me is that I know there's teams in the final eight we can beat," Crawford said. "It's really frustrating."

The Outlaws are losing four seniors, but the junior varsity looks good and has some likely prospects for next year's squad. Also, the Outlaws will have a bigger league, which should help them.

"I'm going to also have a good core of players back," Crawford said. "We're going to be pretty tough and be in the same mix we were this year. We're going to compete again."

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