



Eagles week sends both cager teams to district

By Steve Tool

Wallowa County Chieftain

The Imbler Panthers traveled to Joseph on Tuesday, Feb. 5 in an unsuccessful effort to knock the Eagles off their perch.

The ladies had a relatively easy time of it, coasting to a 56-19 win that saw every Eagles player gain valuable and extensive floor time. Most of the fourth quarter saw starters doing a little bench riding although point guard Emma Hite remained on the floor to lead the troops.

Coach Lance Homan said the ladies played well the entire game. The balanced attack allowed the ladies a 21-4 lead in the first quarter and the Eagles never looked back.

"We were able to get each player extended minutes and really work on things that we needed to work on," Homan said.

Sabrina Albee dished out 21 points along with 11 rebounds five steals, and five assists. Emma Hite and Madelyn Nelson each had 10 points while Camille Crenshaw hammered out eight points.

It was a total team win that we took lots of positive things away from," Homan said.

The girls faced off against Wallowa on Friday, Feb. 8, winning a 60-17 victory with the starters spending appreciable bench time, again giving the next generation of players valuable floor time.

Coach Homan said the ladies were looking forward to the game as they didn't think they played as well as their previous meeting although Joseph won. Homan credited the difficulty with tenacious play on the Cougars' part.

The Eagles led 19-4 after the first quarter with shooting ace Albee scoring 14 of the points. The Eagles applied the pressure as well, which further stymied the Cougs.

Albee scored 24 points, snagged eight rebounds, had four assists, and six steals. Haley Miller smoked 13 points while Hite added 10 points, seven assists, and six steals.

Jamie Johnston led the Cougs with nine points, followed by Riley Ferre with four in the bucket. Several players scored two points each.

"It was a nice way to send our seniors out," Homan said. "I was proud of the total team effort."

The game at Nixyaawii on the following day saw more of the same as the high-altitude Eagles won their 12th straight game, 60-28.

Coach Homan said that the Golden Eagles have a fantastic fan base, and the trip to Pendleton was long, but the Eagles responded with marvelous energy.

The ladies led by 10 at the half and started their deadly press after the break. Awesome Albee burned in 20 points and wrested eight rebounds while handing out five assists, and snatch-



FOUL — This photo shows the physicality between the Wallowa Cougars and Joseph Eagles basketball teams at Joseph on Friday, Feb. 8. The Eagles won the game 52-40. The photo was taken after the Cougars resorted to flagrant fouling in a desperate and unsuccessful attempt to change the Joseph tide late in the game.

Steve Tool/Cheftain



COLLISION COURSE — Floor skirmishes characterized the Joseph/Wallowa boys and girls games on Friday, Feb. 8 in Joseph. The lady Eagles won their final league skirmish 60-17. On the floor are Eagles player Sabrina Albee (in white) and Cougars player Ashlyn Young (in black).

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ing four steals. Exceptional Emma Hite rang in with 18 points, five each of rebounds assists and steals. Nelson opened the door with 16 points, five boards and four steals.

"Overall, we had a very successful weekend and one that we hope to build on as the next phase of our season begins," Homan said.

The win left the girls in first place, as they ended the regular season with a perfect 12-0 league record and 22-2 overall.

The boys game was anything but a lark although they triumphed, 37-30, in probably their most physical game of the year.

The Eagles jumped out to a quick 6-0 lead in the first quarter, although Imbler, bigger and brawnier, got the points right back. In fact, Imbler played the entire game with little in the way of finesse against the smaller Eagles.

However, Eagles players took their lumps and handed out a few as well. In the end, it was Eagles finesses and their camaraderie that won a game that coach Olan Fulfer said featured one of their lowest shooting percentages of the year.

The Eagles ended the first half with a 16-13 lead, but Imbler came out swinging and took a lead through

most of the third quarter before an Eagles three-pointer at the buzzer put the team up for good at 24-23.

The Eagles went to work on the Panthers, suddenly developing hot hands that built up a 10-point lead. The Panthers resorted to intentional fouls and made sure the Eagles felt them.

The strategy failed. The Eagles made most of their fouls shots and Imbler never got closer than seven.

Big men led the scoring with Hadley Miller netting nine points and Trey Wandschneider camped on his hocks with eight. Tyler Homan netted seven while TJ Grote and Kade Kilgore

snatched five apiece.

Fulfer pointed out the under-the-radar play of Grote, whose calm presence helped keep the Eagles netted together.

"What he does for our team is huge," Fulfer said. "He got key rebounds and did key defense. He kept on an even keel the entire time. He's the best defensive player and someone I can always count on."

The coach called the game "ugly," but he thought the Eagles showed the right stuff in a way they hadn't before.

"It shows a lot of growth on our part," he said. "Earlier in the season we'd have

folded."

The Eagles faced virtually the same situation versus Wallowa on Friday, Feb. 8. The Cougs had previously beaten the Eagles in the Cougar den, but the Eagles turned the tables at their nest, 52-40 in a virtual slugfest. The game started out very physical with neither team willing to stand down. The lead traded back and forth with the Eagles not able to find the bucket with their shots, but their stellar defense also kept the game from getting out of hand. At the end of the third quarter, the Eagles hit a three-pointer that put them ahead to stay, 24-23.

The Eagles regained their shooting eyes at that point and gradually built a double digit lead. The Cougars tried fighting back, making the occasional bucket but never pulling closer than six points. Regrettably, the Cougars resorted to intentional fouling that appeared more egregious the more the game got out of the Cougar's hands, even when a comeback was hopeless. The Eagles responded with sinking an incredible amount of free throws with Mason Ferre going 6 for 6 from the line, for just one example.

Ferre led the Eagles with 14 while Hadley Miller poured in 13 due to his toughness inside, which accounted for numerous rebounds as well. Tyler Homan aced nine while TJ Grote nailed seven, a big three in second quarter and four clutch free throws down the stretch. Kade Kilgore sank two three-pointers for the cause.

Christopher Nobles led with 18 points, followed by Tristin Bales with 13 points in the hoop. Mason Moore contributed seven points, and Zane Mallory added two.

Saturday's game at Nixyaawii saw a bruised and battered Eagles squad going down 53-40. Once again, the Eagles had difficulty finding the bucket and started the game down 22-2 in the second quarter before bouncing back only down 35-31 at the beginning of the final quarter. The fourth quarter proved doom for the Eagles, who lost their shooting glasses and the game as a result.

"We got good looks but couldn't hit them at all," Coach Fulfer said. "Our defense was good and kept us in the game. We lost by 13, but I'm proud of my kids for battling back."

Homan had a solid game with 15 through the ring including three dead-eye shots from behind the paint and nine points in the third quarter comeback. Mason Ferre pulled nine from his hat while Chase Murray ran down seven.

"His demeanor is good for us and he sees the court well," Fulfer said of Murray.

The game ended the regular season for the boys with a 9-3 league record for second place and 16-8 overall. They next play Imbler at the district tournament in Baker on Thursday, Feb. 14.

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