



Steve Tool

Federico Buoncompagni, an exchange student from a small community on the east coast of Italy, has changed and brightened the entire complexion of kicking for the Joseph Eagles football team.

## Exchange student gets Joseph Eagles football off on the right foot

By Steve Tool  
Wallowa County Chieftain

For a professional football team, a kicker can often prove to be the decisive edge that allows a team to win a close game. On the other hand, fans of six and eight-man football aren't used to seeing much in the way of kicking other than kickoffs and punts — field goals and point after touchdown kicks? Forget about it. However, an exchange student is changing that for Joseph Eagles fans.

Federico Buoncompagni, from a small community on the east coast of Italy, about the same size as his temporary adopted Joseph home, can often be seen doing his soccer-style kicks for PATs and the occasional field goal.

He became interested in volunteering as an exchange student after an AFS (formerly American Field Service) presentation at his school.

"My father came to listen to the presentation and asked me if I wanted this experience," Buoncompagni said. "I said, 'I'll try.'" He lives in the home of Randy and Jeni Green Shields.

"She (Jeni Green Shields) said that a lot of exchange students played football, and everybody had fun," Buoncompagni said.

Buoncompagni didn't grow up playing or watching American football of course. Like most Europeans, he plays and follows soccer or Rugby. Even then, he didn't come by his skills as a star offensive player, although he said he was a good defensive player.

"I don't kick in Italy," he said. "I play center back."

He didn't really know what to expect when he started practice, but he laughingly described his first efforts as, "very bad." But he also kept improving. He now sometimes plays running back in addition to his kicking duties.

"I'm quite fast," he said without a hint of braggadocio. Kicking is his favorite part of football.

As some Eagles players run to get some water, Buoncompagni doesn't get a chance to answer if his teammates were surprised at his kicking ability.

"Not really," a teammate said. "Look at his legs." The exchange student also noted that the spirit of camaraderie is similar in American football and Italian Soccer.

Will he play other sports?

"This winter, I'll play basketball and after that, track," he said.

In the meantime, he's enjoying his stay. "I like it here," he said. "I'll come back. I don't know when — maybe on a vacation."

Coach Duncan Christman said that Buoncompagni is a great addition to the team and is happy to have him. He said that with some training in kicking the American football, Buoncompagni is barely missing 50-yard field goals.

"He surprises us every day, and he's taking to American football more and more," he said. "Federico's our second-team running back and on our games when we're a bit ahead, he plays second-team defensive back."

# Youth soccer season ends Saturday

Hope remains for sport to continue for older kids

By Bill Bradshaw  
Wallowa County Chieftain

Youth soccer's six-week season wraps up Saturday, Oct. 19, with a daylong jamboree.

The Enterprise teams will play at Jensen Fields behind Safeway. Teams in Joseph and Wallowa also play locally.

Saturday's play will consist of two games per team, beginning in mid-morning and concluding in mid-afternoon, said Jeff Yanke, president of the Wallowa Valley Youth Soccer Association. He was uncertain as to the exact time the games would begin, but said team coaches would inform players.



Bill Bradshaw

Daisy Mendez, left, of the Abundant Life team, takes the ball past Freija Hostetter, of the Meadowlark Land Services team, Monday, Oct. 7, at Jensen Fields in Enterprise during a game for kids 9 through 13 years of age.

About 225 youths have enjoyed a six-week season that started just after Labor Day. Divided into three age/

skill levels, kids from ages 5 to 13 learned the basics of the sport, as well as sportsmanship. The 21 teams

were based in Enterprise, Joseph and Wallowa, often traveling from one town to another to compete Monday and Wednesday evenings.

The teams are organized into three levels: ages 5 through 7, under age 11 and under age 14. The rules for each skill level are different. For example, the younger kids don't keep score, aren't allowed to do head shots and they play on a field about half the size of the field the older kids play on. Head shots, corner and penalty kicks and scoring are allowed for the older divisions.

There is hope that kids will find opportunities to play organized soccer beyond age 14, Yanke said.

"I think what we've seen this year is we have a lot of interest and we have a lot of skill we would like to see promoted," he said.

## Outlaw gridders gun down Ione/Arlington

By Steve Tool  
Wallowa County Chieftain

The Outlaws gridders are on a roll after a heart-stopping 36-28 victory at Ione/Arlington on Friday, Oct. 11. The Outlaws have won two of their last three contests.

Coach Rusty Eschler said the Outlaws fought hard to get the victory and only sealed the win in the waning final minute.

"It was a very physical game," he said. "Our kids fought the whole way through."

According to Eschler, the Outlaws played well and led in the first half, but a change of fortune in the second half saw the Outlaws start to fall behind. The Outlaws didn't quit, and tied the score in the fourth quarter. During a late drive, the Outlaws managed to stifle a Cardinals drive and force a punt. Enterprise took possession of the ball with only about 44 seconds remaining in regulation and the score tied at 28.

The Outlaws went right to work. Helped along by unsportsmanlike conduct penalties, a pass com-

pletion to Dallas Harker brought the ball down to the five-yard line with only seconds remaining. Jericho Peters carried the ball in for the score with only 10 seconds on the clock. The two-point conversion brought the game to its final 36-28 score, but the Outlaws weren't through yet.

Trace Evans intercepted a hail Mary pass as the final play of the game.

"It was an incredibly tight game," Eschler said. "The kids didn't quit, and it's one of the first times they found a way to win. In the past, in

dire situations, we kind of got our heads down, but not this time. We've hopefully turned a corner, and I'm excited because it's a good win going into the last game. It was a fun ride home."

The win left the Outlaws with a 2-2 season record and 2-3 overall, sitting in third place in league standings. The squad is currently in the 19 slot in state rankings. The Outlaws next face Union in an away battle on Thursday, Oct. 17.

"Union's a pretty good football team," Eschler said. "It'll be a real battle for us."

## Eagles remain undefeated

Steve Tool/John DeWitt  
Wallowa County Chieftain

The Joseph Eagles climbed another rung upward as they took down rival South Wasco County in six-man football by a 25-13 score. Wasco put up a tough fight in holding the Eagles to their lowest point total of the season.

Joseph had an unsettled start in the contest. The Redskins put together a successful drive before fumbling in the Eagle red-zone. Hadley Miller came up with the recovery. On the next drive the Eagle offense got on track with a quick drive starting with three good rushing plays before sophomore quarterback, Trace Collier, found Carson Littlepage on a short pass that turned into a 48 yard touchdown. The extra point kick was blocked leaving the score at 6-0.

The second half started with promise as Joseph kicker Federico Buoncompagni put the kickoff to the South Wasco 2-yard-line with no return. But the Redskins drove the ball more than 70 yards into Eagle territory before a series of stops by defensive stalwarts Ronny Morello and Jonah Staigle turned possession over to Joseph.

The next two drives saw Joseph go ahead 19-0. A two-play drive saw Littlepage get loose for his second touchdown. A Justin Rogers interception on the next S. Wasco possession led to another Littlepage touch-

down run. The Eagles looked in control. Littlepage's eventual fourth touchdown of the day sealed a 25-7 lead. S. Wasco got a consolation score on the last play for the final score.

Head Coach Duncan Christman thanked everyone on the team for the great effort and for digging in and fighting for the whole game.

"We made enough mistakes that we could have lost that game, but fortunately had enough great individuals step up and make great plays to see us through," he said. "South Wasco is a genuine team ran by a genuine coaching staff as well," Christman said. "It's nice to have a strong rivalry like ours that should continue for years to come."

Littlepage led the rushing charge with 193 yards on a mere 15 touches while Rogers amassed 71 yards on 11 carries. The offense completed four of ten passes for 64 yards.

Defensively, Ronny Morello led the battle with an amazing 10 tackles, followed by Jonah Staigle with nine and Haden Hite with seven.

The undefeated Eagles next play at home, facing Mitchell/Spray/Wheeler on Friday, Oct. 18 at 5:30 p.m.

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