

## SPORTS

### VOLLEYBALL

# Teams get their second season after playing in the fall

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

### Cougars return six from 2019 playoff squad

WALLOWA — The fall Season 1 helped Wallowa volleyball head coach Janae Hulse get a sense of what the Cougars would have given the chance to take the court as they now do this spring.

“We were fortunate enough in the fall. It was more than what summer league would have given us,” Hulse said. “I got an idea of a little more what to expect.”

The abbreviated Season 2 begins this week, with Wallowa’s first contest last night, Tuesday, March 2, against Cove.

Learning cohesiveness was a vital aspect of the fall for the Cougars, one Hulse hopes they carry onto the court the next few weeks.

“At the beginning of the



Jada Gray, right, and the Enterprise Outlaws volleyball team begins play tonight against Joseph.

fall, they were not working together as a team very well,” the coach said, noting that as a result the team lost a couple matches she felt they should have won. “By the end they realized how important it was

and started having success. . . . They had some games (that they lost early on) where I thought they were the stronger team.”

Wallowa brings back six varsity players from the 2019 team that went 22-9 and reached the second round of the state playoffs, including seniors Ella Moeller, Shanna Rae Tillery, Bailey Hafer and Samantha Starnier.

Moeller and Tillery have been mainstays of the team for several years, though Moeller will switch from libero to setter to replace the graduated Ashlyn Young.

“I really needed an upper-classman to help lead, and that is where you are leading from is the setter (position),” Hulse said.

Freshmen Sophie Moeller and Zoe Hermens have come along strong, Hulse said, and sophomore Libby Fisher is a player the coach said is gaining confidence each day.

“I have Libby on the right side, and she is a great block to help slow the offense down,” Hulse said.

Hulse said a team strength is its athleticism, and said many of the players are motivated.

“The biggest obstacle is making sure they stick together as a team and don’t get frustrated,” she said. “It’s the dynamic of volleyball —

you cannot get down.”

### Outlaws preparing despite limited practice time

ENTERPRISE — The amount of practice time for schools before the start of the Season 2 volleyball slate was already going to be limited.

And last week Enterprise, as it began preparing for games which start tonight, got a taste of just how slim the margins are going to be as it tries to play a season during the pandemic — the last two days of practice last week were canceled after a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the school.

“It’s been difficult. It’s hard to do. I’m used to having close to two weeks, and usually in the fall we have daily doubles,” EHS head coach Lisa Farwell said. “I’m not feeling as comfortable.”

The Outlaws, who went 10-14 in 2019, will be helped by the fact they got several games in during the fall.

“Of course, it is our second season. Nothing dramatic has changed,” Farwell said. “Our lineup will be a little different and we’re a little younger. It all makes for some interesting lineup decisions, but we are still looking forward to the season. Last week felt great to be in the gym with the nets up.”

Just two seniors are taking the court for the Outlaws — Claire Farwell and Kasey Duncan.

“She was a strong libero for us last year and this year,” Farwell said of her daughter. “Kasey Duncan, she’s going to have an expanded role.”

Three juniors — middle blockers Jada Gray and Savannah Vaughn, and setter Asiya Salim — will be key to the Outlaws’ success, as will sophomore Maci Marr.

“Jada has been starting since she was a freshman ... Her hitting is on the money,” Farwell said.

Most of the matches Enterprise will play this season is against 1A schools, but the coach said EHS still will get a good matchup against those teams and will not have to travel far, either.

“The competition in that 1A league around us is so high and so good,” she said. “It’s been nice to not have to travel over the hill.”

She added the players — and herself — are happy to have a chance to be on the court after the uncertainty of the last few months.

“I think they’re really excited. They’re just up to do anything we can,” she said. “We weren’t sure we were gonna get a chance this second volleyball season.”

### Eagles already have familiarity as they enter 2021

JOSEPH — Joseph head volleyball coach Jill Hite said the Eagles usually take some time to build familiarity with each other at the start of each season.

That should already be established this spring, though, with Season 2 starting tonight against Enterprise — six months into the school year.

“The kids are more familiar with themselves and others ... we usually start the season in August not knowing each other,” Hite said, adding that the players have been around each other in school now for months.

That should help as they adjust to playing in March and early April, as opposed to August, September, October and November. Having Season 1 in the fall also served a benefit.

“It’s helped them prepare and kinda come together,” Hite said. “That fall season was so different. You’re still playing volleyball but you had different guidelines you were going by. You don’t switch sides, your warmups were different — a lot of things you were trying to get used to. It was nice to have that season for the kids to get used to all of that.”

Hite has five seniors out, four of whom were holdovers from the team that went 17-14 and reached the second round of the state playoffs in 2019 — Sabrina Albee, Anabelle Russell, Zoey Leith and Josey Wearin. Haley McKee is a newcomer to the team.

“The four seniors I’ve had for a long time is an amazing group of girls. They are positive, they are hard working — I can’t say enough about them. They’re great kids. They’re responsible,” Hite said.

Albee has been a key component of the offense and is the team’s floor general.

“She’s my floor captain that keeps everybody going out there,” Hite said.

Molly Curry heads the group of underclassmen back this spring, as there are just three sophomore and two freshmen on the varsity squad along with the seniors.

Hite said the team’s excitement level is high as it gets ready to play.

“I think they’re pretty fortunate,” she said. “Yes, they haven’t had a full season, but with the two combined they get a lot of volleyball, even though we didn’t have our ‘normal season.’”

After tonight’s opener, the Eagles take the court on their newly reconstructed home floor Friday against Union.

“I think we are just excited to play and get going,” Hite said.

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### CROSS-COUNTRY

# Outlaws back to running, gear up for spring

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA COUNTY — The defending 3A state champion Wallowa Valley boys cross-country team won’t get an official opportunity to defend its title this spring.

But one of the races the Outlaws are signed up to run in will give a bit of a feel of what a state meet could have featured.

East Linn Christian is playing the host for a major meet April 10 in Lebanon, one that

should serve as a de-facto championship of sorts given the Oregon School Activities Association won’t be sponsoring a state championship for the Season 2 sports. That is the final meet on the slate for Dan Moody and the Outlaws, which is scheduled to run its first meet on Monday, March 8, in Nyssa.

Wallowa Valley runners won’t be at the fitness level for the state meet they would have been during a regular year, but Moody anticipates his team — which has back four of the top five runners from the 2019 title teams and a fifth runner from the previous second-place team in 2018 — should still be able to mix it up with the other teams in the state.

“I’m hoping we will,” he

said. “Henry (Coughlan) and Bayden (Menton) and Zac (Knapp) have been running a little bit. That’s a plus. The other kids have to do some catch up.”

Ian Goodrich is the fourth returner, joining the rest of the trio that took three of the top four spots in 2019, highlighted by Coughlan’s individual state title. The team’s depth is solid, too, with Reece Nelson, who placed fifth on the team and 25th overall when the team just missed out on a title in 2018. The five make up 14 runners on the boys team for the Outlaws.

On the girls side, just four runners are out, with senior standout Kyla Hook leading the way.

“She’s pushing herself. She’s a hard worker,” Moody

said of Hook. “The No. 1 reason she is out is because of track. That’s the way I’m going to try and convince some of the other kids.”

Lottie McDonald, Iona McDonald and Michalia Caine are the other three out for the girls team.

The races will look more normal, too, after the recent prohibition on having more than two teams compete at one time was lifted.

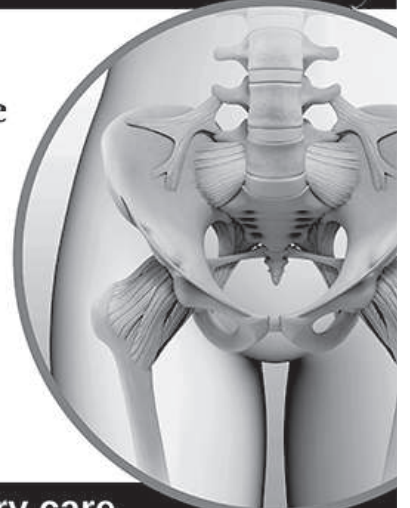
The cross-country season will serve as a warmup for the spring ‘Season 3,’ which includes track, and starts practice April 5.

“As soon as cross-country is over with, we’re going into track the next week. I want them ready for track. We gotta look at that also,” Moody said.

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