

Joseph, Enterprise open volleyball season

Chieftain staff

The Joseph and Enterprise volleyball teams opened the seasons on the road, and found success on the way.

The Eagles edged Country Christian in a five-set thriller on Thursday, Aug. 26, 28-26, 22-25, 26-24, 24-26, 15-13.

On Friday, Joseph fell to St. Paul, 20-25, 25-21, 25-11, 25-22, then later defeated Gervais in a neutral-site match at St. Paul, 20-25, 25-21, 25-22, 25-19.

Enterprise, meanwhile, opened with a sweep of McLoughlin on the road Friday, 25-19, 25-16, 25-8, then fell to Crane at the Grant Union Tournament, 25-15, 25-15.

Stats and any other scores were not available.

Games canceled, schedules adjusted due to COVID-19

Wallowa's jamboree and first football game of the 2021 season were canceled due to COVID-19, Athletic Director Marvin

Gibbs confirmed Thursday, Aug. 26.

The jamboree in Wallowa was set to feature the Cougars, Cove and Sherman/Condon. Gibbs said both Wallowa and Sherman/Condon needed to cancel.

The Cougars were also scheduled to face Falls City in the Dufur Classic on Sept. 3.

The season opener for the Cougars now will be Sept. 10 at DeSales in Walla Walla, Washington, though Gibbs said there is

some uncertainty there.

The Enterprise football team also has made a change to the schedule to start its season.

The Outlaws, who were to face Gold Beach at the Dufur Classic, will now host Crane at 2 p.m. Friday, according to the OSAA website.

The Wallowa volleyball team had its opening weekend of action canceled, and now is scheduled to begin the season at 5 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 2, when it hosts Enterprise.

ON THE SCHEDULE

Thursday, Sept. 2

Volleyball

Enterprise at Wallowa, 5 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 3

Football

Crane at Enterprise, 2 p.m.

Echo at Joseph, 7 p.m.

Volleyball

Echo at Joseph, 5 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 4

Volleyball

Enterprise at Prairie City Tournament, all day

Joseph, Wallowa at Echo Tournament, all day

Tuesday, Sept. 7

Volleyball

Cove at Enterprise, 5 p.m.

Wallowa at Imbler, 5 p.m.

Wednesday, Sept. 8

Volleyball

Joseph at union, 5 p.m.

—Subject to change

Outlaws feel loss of more than graduated seniors this fall

By RONALD BOND

Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — The Enterprise Outlaws are not only going to be feeling the loss of two key pieces to graduation, but two additional seniors who would have been starters for Lisa Farwell.

The head coach said both Asiya Salim, the Outlaws' setter, and Savannah Vaughn, their middle blocker, have moved out of the area, leaving a hole in the lineup.

"To have both of them (gone) is a double whammy," she said. "That is unexpected."

Given the setback, Farwell will have more youth blended in with the experience she does return, led by senior Jada Gray.

"She started some as a freshman. That is the season we lost Gracie Neizen on an injury and pulled this wide-eyed freshman off the bench," Farwell said. "She is a great leader and a great middle blocker. She will be part of our core group."

Enterprise also has Rilyn Kirkland back. The senior played during the coronavirus-shortened fall season, but didn't play



Wallowa's Zoe Hermens finesses the ball past Jada Gray of Enterprise during a game Oct. 15, 2020, in Enterprise.

Wallowa County Chieftain, File

in the spring.

"She is doing most of our setting duties for us," Farwell said of

Kirkland. "(She has) lots of volleyball experience, lots of volleyball IQ."

Outside hitter, junior Maci Marr, is back as well, and will join Kirkland and Gray to be the Outlaws' three captains.

"They'll play all the way around, front and back row," Farwell said. "They are working really hard. They'll be great leaders on our team."

Farwell has five additional players on the varsity roster to start things off, including returner and senior Liz Rowley splitting time as an outside hitter and middle blocker, and Rosie Movich-Fields spending most of her time as a libero.

Josi Coggins and Brianna Rouse will also figure into the mix, as will Maddie Wigen.

"Maddie is kind of inexperienced, (and) didn't start volleyball, period, until last year," Farwell said.

The junior, though, has the potential to be an impact player.

"She is tall, has great hands, athletic, (and) we are looking forward to utilizing her. We're going to get her there," Farwell said.

Farwell knows, however, that the positions could be mixed up on a match-by-match or week-by-week basis because of the coro-

navirus pandemic, and that as a result, players could be placed in spots not as familiar for them.

"They're smart, athletic, (and) will be able to switch positions," the coach said. "Flexibility is going to be the name of the game for all of us."

Passing will be a skill Farwell hopes the Outlaws improve in because of its importance to the rest of the game.

"We've not always been a good passing team, but that's where everything starts," she said. "Everything after that is so much easier. I have good hitters, players who like to be aggressive at the net. If we can improve our passing and focusing on that, I think we should have a good team and hopefully win some games."

Farwell expects Union and Weston-McEwen to be strong in the Blue Mountain Conference, but said "after that it might be wide open."

Enterprise opens BMC play Sept. 23 at home against Stanfield.

"We're super glad to get to be playing volleyball, and hope that it will be as normal as possible," Farwell said. "Don't know quite what to expect."

Eagles look to be balanced this fall

By RONALD BOND

Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — Jill Hite liked the toughness and resilience her Joseph Eagles volleyball team showed during its first weekend of play this fall.

And she hopes it continues this season.

"I thought the girls played really well, especially against Country (Christian)," Hite said of the Eagles, who won two of three matches on the west side of the state to open the fall. "Their defense really stepped up in the last little bit. That was fun to get out there and see them play defense."

Hite has just two seniors on the squad and lost a load of experience and talent, particularly in the graduation of standout Sabrina Albee. She has eight players currently on the varsity roster for 2021.

"For being as young as we are and not really doing any normal play last year, I thought for the first weekend out we did well," she said. "I was impressed with the girls."

Middle blockers Emma and Sara Orr are the two seniors for the Eagles. Molly Curry, a junior who has played middle in the past, has been moved to outside hitter, and will share duties at the position with Cooper Nave.

Her back row players will be Maggie Miller, McKenzie Meyers and Abby Orr, with Aimee Keffer, now a sophomore, engineering the offense from her setter position.

"No freshmen this year as far as on the varsity," Hite said. "Fun group of girls. Good attitude, (and) they like to work hard. So far it's been fun."

Hite added that she has seen each

player in their own way step up with the departure of the prior senior class.

"I think each of them is stepping into a role on their own," she said. "We haven't had just one person emerge (as a leader) all the time. I think this team is young and not having that experience, we're hoping that will emerge soon."

Hite, who in the past has seen her teams primarily driven on offense by one or two players, thinks that will be different this year, too.

"I haven't been balanced for a long time. For the first time in a long time I think you are going to see more balance," she said.

She also saw a never-quit attitude from her team in the first three matches against Country Christian, St. Paul and Gervais.

"I'm looking forward to it, based on how the girls reacted against those three good teams," she said. "They are kind of a team that never gives up. They don't have any quit in them. Even when we were down against all three of those schools at some point, they didn't give up. They kept chipping away at it, which is really good to see in a young squad."

A focal point noticed in those matches, though, is for the team to improve in finding holes in the opposition's defense.

"The teams we played this weekend, their defense is usually good, so trying to see those open spots on the floor (is important)," she said.

Hite sees the Old Oregon League as "pretty wide open" this fall.

The Eagles open OOL action Sept. 9 when they host Cove.

New leaders emerging for Cougars

By RONALD BOND

Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — The latest wave of the coronavirus pandemic has already impacted the Wallowa volleyball team.

The Cougars canceled play their first weekend after seeing players have to enter quarantine last week.

"We had some kids that had to go into quarantine, so we were limited on what we could do," Cougars head coach Janea Hulse said. "I just canceled to be on the safe side."

Hulse said she is hopeful the team will be at full strength for what now is its new season opener on Thursday, Sept. 2, at home against Enterprise.

"Fingers crossed, we'll hopefully have most of them when we play Enterprise," she said.

But she also knows that this season, if a player here or there ends up in quarantine, other players will have to step up into new or different positions for Wallowa to have success — or maybe even play.

"We're all going to be coming into times when we don't have our full rotations. Kids are going to be in quarantine, so you'll have to make a rotation out of what you have," she said. "All

the other teams are going to be going through the same thing we are."

Because of that, she is working on having players practice multiple positions and skill sets now, and she knows it will serve a long-term benefit.

"In the big picture, that is going to make them a better player," she said.

The Cougars take the court this season losing four players to graduation, including Ella Moeller and Shanna Rae Tillery, but they do return four players who were in the regular rotation a season ago, led by senior middle blocker Haley Brockamp.

Junior Libby Fisher and sophomores Zoe Hermens and Sophie Moeller are also returners with varsity experience.

"Hoping that kids can step up at this point," Hulse said.

She called the players she has, though, a "solid group" and noted Emma Starner-Durning and Cecilia April among the varsity newcomers Wallowa will be looking to step up.

"And hoping that we have some freshmen that really come into knowing some stuff," Hulse said. "The dynamics of everything is what is the biggest thing."

Hulse said during the

first two weeks of practice, she has seen the returners coming into leadership roles previously filled by the now-graduated athletes.

"They are stepping up into that leadership role that I need, and they are leading by example," she said. Hulse noted they tell the newcomers, "When coach says it's time to go, it's time to go. There is a purpose for everything here."

Defense has been a focus during early practices, as well.

"I feel defense wins games. If you can't play defense, you'll never have an offense," she said.

"It's trying to find the right set to the right plate. We've been working a lot on defense and a lot on serves to try and minimize unforced errors."

Hulse expects some of the main players atop the Old Oregon League to be there again this fall.

"I expect to see Joseph and Powder Valley. (They) are still going to be the ones in the lead, the ones everyone wants to beat," she said. "I've watched a little bit of game film on each of them. They do look strong, and I'm sure everyone of us has our strengths and weaknesses."

Wallowa begins OOL play Sept. 7 at Imbler.

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