

### CROSS-COUNTRY



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Wallowa Valley's Zac Knapp, right, takes off at the start of the men's 5,000 meter Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021, at the Mustang Invite at Thompson Ranch in Heppner. Knapp finished first with a time of 15:38.9, his fifth win in five races this season.

## Focus has paid off for Outlaws' Knapp

Senior Wallowa Valley runner has won all five races this fall

By JEFF BUDLONG  
For EO Media Group

ENTERPRISE — Focus made a big difference for Zac Knapp.

The senior cross-country runner for Wallowa Valley has always loved to play soccer. It is no surprise, because he is quite good at it. But this spring he had to make a tough decision.

"I started playing soccer competitively about five years ago, and that was my life and all I wanted to do," he said. "That is actually how I got into running because I got into cross-country as a way to stay in shape for that."

"Last spring, I started feeling that maybe I should just focus on running, and I was curious what I could do if I just focused on running."

Knapp is leaving no doubt. The decision to commit to running has paid off for Knapp and Wallowa Valley as he has won all five races the team has taken part in this fall. He took the top spot to open his season at the Catherine Creek Scamper in 17 minutes, 22 seconds. He was the lone



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Wallowa Valley's Zac Knapp runs Thursday, Oct. 7, 2021, at the Mustang Invite at Thompson Ranch in Heppner. Knapp finished first in the 5,000 meter with a time of 15:38.9 to win for the fifth time this season.

sub-17 minute runner in winning the Wallowa County Invite in 16:20.2, and went under 16 to win the Stanfield Fun Country in a school-record time of 15:24.9. Knapp also claimed the Baker Invite in 16:15.34 and the Mustang Invite in 15:38.9.

Knapp said eliminating soccer practice in the morning allows him to get more sleep, and it has freed up his weekends to be able to put in a few more miles.

"Once he made that decision, he just became a totally different runner," said Wallowa Valley head coach Dan Moody, who has led the team since 1989. "He is really conscientious about it and working toward what he can get to."

Knapp hopes his extra work will lead to an individual state title after a trio of third-place finishes and a low 15-minute effort this season.

That doesn't mean that Knapp has been adding a ton of miles to his 40-miles-a-week training regimen because Moody doesn't believe in overdoing it in the offseason.

"I didn't put many miles in this summer, which annoys me a bit, but I understand it," he said. "To stay busy I do a lot of bike workouts."

His success has him pivoting his future plans as well. No longer looking to play soccer in college, Knapp wants to continue running at the next level. Where that will be is yet to be determined, but it would continue a connection to former Outlaws' runner David Ribich.

Ribich ran at NCAA Division II Western Oregon University before turning pro and racing for Brooks.

"He is such an inspiration to me," Knapp said. "We had a meet in Joseph a couple of weeks ago and he came up for that. The day after that we went for a run together, and that was honestly something I will remember forever. He has so many nuggets of wisdom and words of support."

Knapp said without Ribich's success at the professional level,

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### VOLLEYBALL

## Joseph finishes undefeated in league play

Chieftain staff

JOSEPH — The Joseph volleyball team swept its way to an undefeated slate in Old Oregon League play.

The Eagles trampled Elgin on the road Friday, Oct. 15, 25-4, 25-12, 25-11, then rolled over both Griswold and Nixyaawii at home in OOL action Saturday, Oct. 16, sweeping the Grizzlies 25-8, 25-8, 25-13, and the Golden Eagles 25-12, 25-6, 25-14, to lock up the OOL-North title and a berth into the semifinals of the district tournament.

"I'm so proud of the girls for being undefeated," head coach Jill Hite said. "This has never been done in Joseph since I have been here. It is an amazing accomplishment, but they still have goals for the season."

The winning streak is now at 16 in a row for the Eagles, who wrapped up league play sweeping all but one of their matches — only Powder Valley pushed Joseph past a third set when the Badgers and Eagles battled for five sets in late September.

Cooper Nave pounded down 13 kills in the win over Elgin, while Sarah Orr had six kills. Against Griswold, Nave had 12 more kills, Emma Orr had six, and against Nixyaawii, Nave had nine kills and Molly Curry added seven. Aimee Meyers was the team leader in assists all three matches.

The Eagles (20-3 overall, 11-0 OOL) hosted Weston-McEwen in a nonleague contest Tuesday night, then will travel to Baker City for the OOL District Tournament semifinals on Saturday, Oct. 23. The district title and third-place matches will also be played that

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## Enterprise falls to Stanfield, GU, but beats Pilot Rock

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — A scoring run in the first two sets — and finding its strongest hitters — was the key to Stanfield collecting a win over Enterprise in Blue Mountain Conference action.

The front-running Tigers used lengthy rallies and held off a late comeback attempt by the Outlaws to complete a sweep Friday, Oct. 15, 25-18, 25-12, 26-24.

Enterprise led in each set, and seemed to have some early momentum in the opener after going ahead 11-7, and later 14-11, when the Tigers put kill attempts into the net.

Nine of the next 10 points, however, went to Stanfield. The Tigers grabbed their first lead at 15-14 and opened up a five-point lead at 20-15 on a tip kill by Zuri Reeser. Enterprise got no closer after that.

A kill by Josi Coggins and a Stanfield error put Enterprise up 5-2 early in the second, but the next 11 points went to the Tigers, who pulled ahead 13-5 on a Jennifer Flores ace. A Jada Gray kill

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### FOOTBALL

## Joseph gets snakebitten

Eagles football team taken down by Rattlers

By RONALD BOND  
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — It's been more than four years — when Joseph was still playing eight-man football — since the Eagles have lost on their home field.

That streak came to a screeching halt Friday, Oct. 15.

Wheeler County's Nate Clark returned three kicks for touchdowns, caught two receiving scores and added an interception on defense, and the Rattlers scored on the first play and never let up in a 49-6 victory to conclude an undefeated regular season.

The teams hadn't played since 2019, a 93-7 beatdown by the Eagles.

Clark, though, set a different tone Friday when he took the opening kickoff 83 yards down the right sideline to put Wheeler County — a co-op of Mitchell, Spray and Wheeler high schools — up 7-0 just 13



Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

Joseph's Jaxon Grover (8) looks for running room Friday, Oct. 15, 2021, against Wheeler County. Grover rushed for 101 yards in the 49-6 loss.

seconds into the game.

Joseph's defense held on the next two possessions, but the offense struggled, losing two fumbles on its first two times with the ball, and getting saddled with a safety when Clint Rutherford took down Trace Collier in the endzone for a safety and a 9-0 lead.

The ensuing free kick went

to Clark, who went 60 yards for a second touchdown and a 16-0 lead late in the first quarter.

Joseph appeared it would get on the board early in the second when Jaxon Grover sprinted 49 yards to the Wheeler County 2, but the Eagles went backwards on the next four plays, turning the ball over on downs to the Rattlers.

Clark then struck again on a 79-yard TD reception for a 22-0 lead. Rutherford and Clark both scored again before half-time, with Clark's 16-yard scoring catch giving Wheeler County a 35-0 lead and putting the running clock mercy rule in effect the entire second half.

Joseph finally broke through to open the third when Collier connected with Kale Ferguson for an 18-yard touchdown catch to cap a 70-yard drive.

Clark got the points back, though, on the very next play, taking his third kick to the house, this time from 92 yards out. Rutherford added a fourth-quarter touchdown to round out the scoring.

Joseph was limited to 128 yards of total offense, with Grover rushing for 101 yards in the contest. Collier passed for 53 yards and a score, but lost 37 yards on the ground, threw two interceptions and lost two fumbles.

Clark had 123 yards receiving and 65 rushing to lead the Rattlers' 302-yard day on offense.

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Wallowa County CHIEFTAIN

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