

SPORTS

FOOTBALL

Nine-man back on the table

Ad hoc committee drops postseason ineligibility discussion, supports official six-man championship

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

WILSONVILLE — Nine-man football appears to be back in the discussion — at least at the 2A level. The outcome of the latest meeting on Wednesday, Jan. 19, of the OSAA's Football Ad Hoc Committee was that the committee is again considering the addition of nine-man football.

In fact, the committee recommends nine-man for all 2A schools — schools that play 11-man currently. It continues to back the idea of eight-man football for larger 1A schools and six-man for the smaller schools.

Nine-man football was considered early on by the ad hoc committee, as it was looking at implementing the setup for larger 1A schools and all 2A schools, a move that would have, in effect, nixed eight-man football altogether.

But a survey of 1A schools found they overwhelmingly supported sticking with eight-man as opposed to nine-man. In the Jan. 5 meeting of the ad hoc committee, it appeared that nine-man talk had been shelved altogether.

Instead, the committee cited support among 2A schools of adjusting to nine-man in its reasoning for bringing it back to the table.

"The group reviewed correspondence and testimony from members of the 2A classification indicating that a majority of schools surveyed supported moving to the nine-player game for the next time block," the committee wrote in its update.

The change, if implemented, would potentially impact Enterprise, although the 2A school has been playing eight-man football the last four seasons. Currently, the Outlaws are slated to be part of an eight-team Blue Mountain Conference with Grant Union, Irrigon, Heppner, Riverside, Stanfield, Umatilla and Weston-McEwen.

Enterprise, though, still has the option to continue to play at the eight-man level if it desires to. Head coach Rusty Eschler said the school likely will wait on a decision until a final plan is set by the OSAA.

Additionally, the committee said it is fully supporting making six-man football a sanctioned sport that could play for an official OSAA title, an option that was not in place during the pilot program for six-man.

That would allow Joseph, which played in the first two de-facto title games and won one, to again be able to compete for a championship.

The committee also made a decision to change its stance on play-off eligibility for teams that do play down. The committee elected to drop its position from the prior meeting and allow teams playing down eligibility for the postseason.

"Ultimately the group shifted their stance in this area to recommend that schools meeting the criteria and choosing to play down would be eligible for OSAA play-offs, but that these schools would be reviewed on an annual basis by the Football Ad Hoc Committee," the update from the OSAA said.

The committee is also seeking feedback on a potential change to the season schedule.

See Football, Page A10

NIXY POURS IN POINTS

Eagles fall at home to high-scoring Nixy; Wallowa gets fourth win, Enterprise falls short

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — Nixyaawii piled on the points and never let up Friday, Jan. 21. Behind 34 points from Aaron Barkley, the Golden Eagles boys basketball team matched their season high for points in an 88-60 win over Joseph.

"We're going to work harder than we have ever worked this week to improve from this loss," head coach Olan Fulfer said. "We are a better team than we showed on Friday."

It was Joseph's first game in nearly two weeks, and the Eagles couldn't keep pace with Nixyaawii, which outscored Joseph in each quarter.

The Eagles, who were led in scoring by Blade Suto's 12 points, found themselves down 22-13 after one quarter. Nixyaawii continued its torrid pace, and by halftime Joseph was down 42-28, and behind after three, 67-48.

Suto, in leading the Eagles in scoring, had four of the team's six 3-pointers.

Jaxon Grover added 10 points for Joseph, and Reece Nelson scored eight points, all in the third quarter.

Joseph (4-7 overall, 2-1 Old Oregon League) hosts Elgin Jan. 28 and Cove Jan. 29.

Saturday, Jan. 22

Wallowa 53, Griswold 31: The Wallowa boys basketball team is getting pretty good at winning in Helix.

Gabe Nobles scored 16 points to lead three Wallowa players in double figures as the Cougars defeated Griswold in Helix for the second time this season, toppling the Grizzlies on Jan. 22, 53-31.

"We just worked on some stuff. After not playing for a



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Joseph's Blade Suto flies to the rim against a Nixyaawii defender Friday, Jan. 21, 2022.

week, (the) boys played hard and learned some new stuff," head coach Deon Chandler said. "They are coming along good."

Nobles scored nine in the opening quarter, and Ryder Goller had five of his 13 points in the first as the Cougars darted out to a 18-9 lead. Wallowa put the game out of reach by halftime as it opened up a 33-14 lead at the break.

In addition to Nobles and Goller, Isaac Barnum put in 10 points for Wallowa, which also defeated Griswold on the road

49-19 during the Helix Tournament in mid-December.

The Cougars (4-11 overall, 2-3 Old Oregon League) host Imbler Jan. 28 and travel to Pine Eagle on Jan. 29.

Stanfield 58, Enterprise 50: The Enterprise boys basketball team played Stanfield much closer on the road Saturday, Jan. 22, than when the teams met 12 days earlier in Enterprise.

The Tigers, though, who are battling for the top spot in the Blue Mountain Conference, held

GAMES RESCHEDULED

Last week was ravaged by postponements and cancellations on the basketball court. Games that were postponed and rescheduled last week included:

Enterprise:
Boys, girls games Jan. 18 against Pilot Rock
Boys, girls games Jan. 21 at Heppner
Girls game Jan. 22 at Stanfield

Wallowa:
Boys, girls games Jan. 21 against Powder Valley

Joseph:
Boys, girls games Jan. 22 at Powder Valley.

The new dates for the rescheduled games include:

Enterprise:
Boys, girls at Heppner Jan. 25
Boys, girls at home against Pilot Rock Jan. 26, 5 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Girls at Stanfield Feb. 1, 5:30 p.m.

Wallowa:
Boys, girls at home against Powder Valley Feb. 1, 5 p.m. and 6:30 p.m.

Joseph:
Boys, girls at home against Powder Valley Feb. 10, 6:30 p.m. and 8 p.m.

off the Outlaws to secure a 58-50 win.

"As a team we've become much more disciplined offensively," Enterprise head coach Kyle Crawford said. "We're taking care of the basketball and working to find the best shot rather than the first. I'm feeling really optimistic about the improvements and I'm hoping it's only a matter of time for us to get our first league win."

The contest was the latest example of Enterprise playing better and staying in games down

See Boys, Page A10

EAGLES TAKEN DOWN BY NIXYAAWII

Joseph falls at home, but defeats Pine Eagle; Wallowa tops Griswold

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

Joseph ran into a tough opponent Friday, Jan. 21, in a battle of the last two teams who were unbeaten in Old Oregon League action.

Nixyaawii, who has been scoring at will as of late, continued its pace, opening up a 17-point halftime lead and not letting up, breaking the game wide open in the fourth quarter to top the Eagles, 64-30, in Joseph.

"Our girls came out flat and I think a little intimidated, so we made many unforced errors," head coach Lance Homan said.

The Eagles managed just a Cooper Nave 3-pointer in the first and was down 16-3 after one. The lead grew to 29-12 at the break, and although Joseph won the third quarter to stay within 15 at 41-26, the Golden Eagles poured it on in the fourth, dropping in 23 points to earn the blowout.

"I thought our girls really competed in the third quarter, cutting



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Joseph's Aimee Meyers (10) charges up court during the Eagles' game against Nixyaawii on Friday, Jan. 21, 2022.

the lead to under 10, then injuries and fatigue really hurt us," Homan said.

Nave and Aimee Meyers pow-

ered the Joseph offense in the loss, with Nave scoring 16 points, including nine in the second half, while Meyers added nine points.

The Eagles (6-6 overall, 3-1 OOL) host Elgin Jan. 28 and Cove Jan. 29.

Also Saturday, Jan. 22

Wallowa 51, Griswold 33: The Wallowa girls basketball team shook off a tough loss and got back on track.

A week after their 46-point setback against Nixyaawii, the Cougars rebounded to take down Griswold in Helix for the second time this season, earning a 51-33 victory Saturday, Jan. 22.

"I was happy with the way we played," head coach Greg Oveson said. "Because of some injuries, we started four sophomores and a freshman. I thought they played well the first quarter. Everyone got to play and I feel like we are all starting to get on the same page."

As has often been the case this season, a big game from Zoe Hermens was part of the equation. The sophomore finished with 19 points and hit half of Wallowa's six 3-pointers in the win.

Both she and Sophie Moeller hit a pair of first-quarter 3s as Wallowa grabbed a 15-7 lead after one, which it extended to 26-12 by halftime. The Cougars gradu-

See Girls, Page A10



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