

Cougar girls shake off slow start to top Imbler

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — For about 12 minutes Friday, Jan. 28, nothing was falling for either the Wallowa or Imbler girls basketball teams.

They endured the offensive struggle through a six-point first quarter — one that saw Imbler lead 4-2 — and the Cougars held just a scant 7-6 lead with 4 minutes to play in the half.

Then the Wallowa press kicked in, set up some easy baskets and in less than a minute turned the game. The 8-0 run pushed the Cougars into control and triggered their offense on the way to a 41-27 home win in Old Oregon League action.

“I was really happy with the way we pressed,” head coach Greg Oveson said. “We created a lot of turnovers on it.”

The combination of Zoe Hermens — who scored a game-high 17 points — and Sophie Moeller at the top of the press changed the game. Moeller snagged a steal, and Hermens put back the missed layup for a 9-6 lead with 3:50 to go in the half. On the next possession, Moeller again grabbed a steal and this time converted the basket. Hermens followed with a steal of her own, and followed with a pass to Haley Brockamp for a jumper.



Wallowa's Zoe Hermens drives for a layup during the fourth quarter of an Old Oregon League game Friday, Jan. 28, 2022.

Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

Then Abby Straight got in the action with a steal, getting the ball to Hermens who found Moeller for another layup and a 15-6 lead with 2:57 to go in the half.

“We made a little adjustment

to our press, and it was huge,” Oveson said. “We started getting some steals, they started throwing it away, that was the difference right there.”

Hermens later hit a stepback

3-pointer just before the break for an 18-8 lead.

The sudden offensive surge spilled into the third, with Hermens hitting a pair of 3-pointers and scoring eight in the quarter. Yet every

attempt by Wallowa to put the game out of reach was replied by Imbler, and despite leading by as much as 13, the Cougars took just a 30-22 lead into the fourth after Imbler's Jayda Cant scored on a putback.

The Cougars finally did put the game out of reach with the first six points of the quarter, the last on a field goal by Straight with 4:40 to play for a 36-22 advantage. Imbler pulled no closer than 10 the rest of the way.

Hermens, who finished with three 3s on the night, said the press did help the Cougars get going after the rough start.

“We started out really slow, but then we always start better once we get our press really tight, and we had a little run there and scored ... quite a few,” she said. “That really helped us out.”

Hermens was the lone Wallowa player in double figures, but was aided in the scoring column by Brockamp and Straight, who each had seven points. Moeller added six points.

Joelle Treat had 14 points to lead Imbler.

The Cougars (11-6 overall, 5-2 OOL) hosted Powder Valley on Feb. 1, Nixyaawii on Feb. 4 and Griswold on Feb. 5.

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Imbler's fast start too much for Wallowa boys

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — Imbler started fast and put Wallowa in a quick hole the Cougars were unable to dig out of.

The Panthers scored the game's first 11 points and built a 15-point lead by the end of the first quarter that would get no smaller en route to a 52-24 win over the Cougars in Old Oregon League play Friday, Jan. 28, in Wallowa.

Justin Frost, who had a game-high 13 points, scored seven of the first nine points as Imbler needed barely more than five minutes to take a double digit lead. A Kellen Knifong jumper with 2:24 to play in the opening quarter got Wallowa into the scorebook, but the Panthers scored the final six points to take a 17-2 lead after one. Imbler shot 67% in the first while limiting Wallowa to 20% and forcing nine turnovers.

“Our offense, we run our offense, but we're not shooting the ball,” head coach Deon Chandler said. “We gotta shoot the ball more. If we don't put up at least 10 shots a quarter, it's a long night for us.”

The margin continued to grow the rest of the evening, as Imbler outscored Wallowa in all but the fourth quarter. The Panthers were up 27-6 at the half and led by as many as 33 points.

Wallowa did find a rhythm in the second half, with Isaac Barnum a big part of the improvement. Barnum led Wallowa with seven points, and scored all of them after the break. He had a short field goal and a putback in the third and another basket in close in the fourth. He also collected a team-high seven rebounds.

“Isaac was big in the second half,” Chandler said. “Kellen picked it up a little bit (as well).”

Gabe Nobles and Willie Gibbs both added four points for Wallowa.

Chandler noted he has seen several areas of improvement from his team on both sides of the ball this season, and said the team



Wallowa's Willie Gibbs (15) drives to the basket during the fourth quarter of an Old Oregon League game Friday, Jan. 28, 2022.

Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

is “getting there.”

“They're coming together as a family more, they're trying to figure out what each other's role is. That's a big thing, now they know who does what, and who doesn't do what,” he said.

The Cougars (4-13 overall, 2-5 OOL) hosted Powder Valley on Feb. 1, Nixyaawii on Feb. 4 and Griswold on Feb. 5.

Jan. 29

Joseph 63, Cove 34: Joseph turned in maybe its most impressive win of the season at home Saturday, Jan. 29.

Behind 18 points for James Burney and 13 points from Hayden Hite, the Eagles ran over Cove at home in Old Oregon League play, 63-34, to stay in the upper half of the league.

Hite scored 11 of his points in the first half as the Eagles bolted out to a 16-7 first-quarter lead and a 33-16 margin at the break. Burney got rolling in the second half, with 12 of his points and half of his four 3-pointers the game



Wallowa's Kellen Knifong puts up a jumper for the Cougars' first points during the first quarter of an Old Oregon League game Friday, Jan. 28, 2022.

Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

turned into a rout.

In all, nine players scored for Joseph in the easy win. Joining

Burney and Hite was both Chase Homan and Blade Suto with seven points, and Reece Nelson scored six points.

The Eagles (6-7 overall, 4-1 OOL) visit Imbler on Feb. 2, Griswold on Feb. 3 and Nixyaawii on Feb. 5.

Union 48, Enterprise 20: Enterprise was able to shake off an early double digit deficit and get back in its previous matchup with Union.

The Outlaws had no such luck in the rematch Saturday, Jan. 29, seeing a 10-point first-quarter deficit swell on the way to a 48-20 setback in Union for their lowest offensive output of the year.

Union had a 13-3 lead through one and added on, netting 18 more points in the second to take a 31-9 lead into the locker room. Chase Koshinsky scored 19 points to lead Union, one fewer than the whole Enterprise team.

Jackson Decker scored five points to lead the Outlaws.

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WRESTLING

Joseph gets two first-place finishes in Irrigon tourney

Chieftain staff

IRRIGON — The Joseph wrestling team claimed two victories and a second-place finish at the Irrigon JV Tournament on Saturday, Jan. 29, in Irrigon.

Gavin Russell claimed three wins at the 152-pound B ranks, pinning Wyatt Koch of McLoughlin and Xander Olman of Irrigon, and claiming a third win by forfeit.

Dylan Rogers went 2-0 at 126, pinning Cashton Wheeler of Grant Union and Aiden Murillo of Riverside.

And Jayden McNall went 1-1 at 120 for second, dropping a match by fall to Mateo Rockwell of Riverside and pinning Riverside's Axel Paredes-Rosales.

Gunnar McDowell took third place and was one of two Enterprise wrestlers to gain a victory at the Caldwell, Idaho, JV Tournament on Saturday, Jan. 29.

McDowell went 2-1 at 220 pounds. He needed just 26 seconds to pin Allen Current of Homedale, Idaho, in the quarterfinals, was pinned in the semifinals by Skyview's Philly Vasi, then took the third-place match against Chance Patterson of Owyhee, Idaho, by fall.

Cody Fent shook off an early loss to go 3-1 and take third at 170. He was pinned in the first round by Lincoln Lovitt of Nyssa, then after a bye pinned Gunnar Graves of Owyhee, topped Nyssa's Orlando Perfecto by a 9-4 decision, and finished with a pin of Boise, Idaho's, Joaquin Peterson.

Pearce Schnetzky (138), Will Ogden (195), Trey Charlton (285) and Gabby Delapena (girls 120) all went 0-2 on the day.

Both teams are next at the Bank of Eastern Oregon Invitational Feb. 5 in Heppner. Individually, Delapena will be at the girls regional tournament in Redmond Feb. 5.

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