

Eagles take down Imbler again

Joseph breaks game open in second, third quarters, wins 40-28

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

BAKER CITY — The Joseph Eagles girls basketball team moved on to the semifinals of the Old Oregon League District Tournament.

Aimee Meyers scored a game-high 19 points, Cooper Nave added 11, and the Eagles took control in the second quarter and cruised to a 40-28 win over the Imbler Panthers Thursday, Feb. 17, in a second-round game.

Joseph head coach Lance Homan said a key in the win was putting pressure on the Panthers at the top of their offense. It worked, as the Eagles forced 27 Imbler turnovers and collected 15 steals.

“Just trying to pressure up front,” he said. “It’s easier to make the pass if you have all the room in the



Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

Joseph’s Maggie Miller dribbles up-court following an Eagles’ steal during an Old Oregon League District Tournament game Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022, in Baker City. Joseph defeated Imbler, 40-28.

world, so we wanted our guards to pressure harder up front and allow our kids underneath to have more time to get in position. I thought they did that well.”

Joseph grabbed the lead for good midway through the second quarter, with Meyers scoring 10 of the team’s 14 points and paving the way. The sophomore’s layup put Joseph up 10-8

with 4:22 in the half, and a 3-point play just 47 seconds later extended the lead to five.

“That pressure did bother us more today than I think I anticipated,” Panthers’ head coach Darci Sweet said.

Nave buried a 17-foot jumper that made it 16-10, and a last-second play seemed to give an indication it would be the Eagles’

afternoon. Imbler knocked the ball away from Joseph near midcourt in the closing seconds, but Meyers grabbed the ball, took a quick peek at the clock, dribbled once and put up a running 3 from the top of the key, which banked in at the buzzer for a 19-10 lead at the break.

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Davis Carbaugh/The Observer

Wallowa’s Libby Fisher looks for an open teammate during a matchup against Elgin in the quarterfinals of the Old Oregon League district tournament at Baker High School on Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022. The Cougars defeated the Huskies 28-18 to advance to the semifinals.

Wallowa girls outlast Elgin in defensive battle

Cougars open district tourney with low-scoring 28-18 win

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

BAKER CITY — It wasn’t pretty, but the Wallowa Cougars girls basketball team gained a hard-fought win to keep its season alive.

The Wallowa girls basketball team defeated Elgin 28-18 in the quarterfinal round of the Old Oregon League tournament Thursday, Feb. 17. The Cougars, who were led by an efficient showing from sophomore Zoe Hermens, capitalized on a strong second-half effort to advance to the semifinal round.

“We finally got into the second half where we got comfortable, spread the floor out,” Wallowa head coach Greg Oveson said. “We did quite a bit of free-lancing off our offense, and we started getting some good looks. We were taking time off the clock. We went man-to-man in the second half. I thought we did a good job playing man-to-man.”

The first half was incredibly low scoring, as a combination of strong defense and baskets not falling led to a neck-and-neck affair. The Cougars led just 4-2 after the first quarter and held a narrow 9-5 lead at halftime.

“First playoff game for a lot of our girls,” Oveson said. “I know they were a little nervous, and it showed.”

Things started to move offensively in the second half, as both young rosters began to settle in to the flow of the game. Elgin came out with a renewed intensity after struggling to score in the first half — one in which they had committed 23 turnovers. The Huskies scored six straight points to start the second half and take an 11-9 lead on a Kylee Bagett putback.

Bagett scored four of her team-high seven points in the third quarter as Elgin crawled back into the game. Wallowa responded to the rally, as Hermens scored four points of her own. Her steal and layup put Wallowa back in front 12-11. The Cougars’ run reached seven-straight points and they led 16-11 by the end of the third quarter.

Hermens finished with a game-high 11 points and controlled the tempo throughout the game for Wallowa. She came close to a triple-double, adding nine rebounds and eight steals.

“Zoe can do that from time to time, and obviously our girls, it doesn’t matter who scores. They’re not picky,” Oveson said. “I’m just glad to get the win.”

Wallowa extended its lead in the fourth quarter and wore Elgin out with a fast-paced effort. The final frame was the highest scoring quarter for both teams, as the Cougars outscored the Huskies 12-7.

Bagett hit a big 3-pointer for Elgin to cut the lead to 23-18 with just 1:23 remaining in the fourth, but Wallowa continued to attack the basket. The Cougars rattled off five consecutive points to close out the game.

Third-quarter barrage boosts Joseph boys past Imbler

Eagles roll thanks to strong third quarter, rout Panthers 60-34

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

BAKER CITY — The Joseph Eagles boys basketball team was not about to let having five players out due to suspension stop it from reaching the semifinals of the Old Oregon League District Tournament.

The Eagles used a balanced attack, high energy and a third-quarter offensive onslaught to break open their contest with Imbler as they rolled to a 60-34 victory Thursday, Feb. 17.

“We started crashing the boards more, closing out, and started to trust teammates and moving the ball,” head coach Olan Fulfer said. “They opened things up.”

Hayden Hite, who had 13 points to lead the Eagles, caught fire late in the sec-



Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

Joseph’s Reece Nelson fires a 3-pointer during an Old Oregon League District Tournament game Thursday, Feb. 17, 2022, in Baker City. Joseph defeated Imbler, 60-34

ond quarter and had 10 in the period to help the Eagles grab the lead, 26-20, at the end of a back-and-forth first half.

In the third quarter, everyone caught fire.

The Eagles were 10-for-18 in the third quarter and drained four 3-pointers, and dominated the last 4:07, when a 17-1 run turned what still was a relatively close game into a rout.

James Burney spotted up for a 3-pointer, his second of the quarter, which put Joseph ahead 36-26. A basket inside by Javon Besotes and a 3-pointer from Storm Lynch — which came after he saved possession with an offensive rebound — made it 41-26. Besotes scored two more times, with a steal and layup pushing the lead to 19, and Reece Nelson’s runner in the lane capped

a run of 14 straight Joseph points. After a free throw from Imbler temporarily halted the bleeding, Nelson capped the run with a corner 3 as the buzzer sounded for an insurmountable 50-27 advantage.

“That’s what was exciting — that’s the team that I see in practice,” Fulfer said. “That’s our potential, and that’s our best quarter, and that was the kids finally trusting each other, playing locked in, and playing smart and focused.”

The lead reached as much as 26 points — the final margin — in the fourth quarter.

Imbler head coach Tony Haddock described the third quarter as an avalanche with shots starting to fall for Joseph, the Eagles having an energy the Panthers didn’t match and the shots Imbler took not falling.

“They’re really good, once they see the ball go in a few times they’re even tougher,” Haddock said, calling the third quarter “brutal” for his team. “We

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TUESDAY, FEB. 15

Eagle girls roll past Cove in rematch; Wallowa boys eliminated

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — When the Joseph and Cove girls basketball teams met earlier this season, it took a fourth-quarter rally for the Eagles to escape with a two-point home victory.

Joseph had no such problems Tuesday, Feb. 15, in the rematch in the first round of the Old Oregon League Tournament.

Aimee Meyers scored a game-high 15 points and had a hand in every Eagle basket in the first half, and Joseph never trailed on the way to a 43-25 victory, sending them to the second round and sending Cove home.

“I think for us it’s been a year of growing with all the young kids, and the young kids coming off the bench. You have to be in situations to grow and learn and figure things out,” head coach Lance Homan said of the improved play in the rematch. “I think that’s part of it, and I think they came in (after) playing better this past Saturday. They wanted to see what they could do. They were pretty motivated today.”

Meyers scored nine first-half points, and also assisted on four other first-half field goals — a pair of baskets by Cooper Nave and 3-pointers



Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

Joseph’s Aimee Meyers dribbles up-court after forcing a turnover during the Eagles’ OOL District Tournament game Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022. The Eagles defeated Cove 43-25.

from both Sarah and Abby Orr. Three times in the opening quarter Meyers collected a steal and went the other way for a layup as the Eagles jumped to a 10-2 lead after one.

“It’s one of those things where you have a sophomore that you’re telling to do everything, and so that’s also part of the learning,” Homan said of Meyers. “You’re going to have those ups and downs. But she’s getting it figured out. We’re better when she has the ball. She

can create, she can get to the line — she gets to the line a lot — and she passes well. She sees the floor.”

Abby Orr’s banked-in 3-pointer gave the Eagles a 19-7 lead with 2:20 in the half, and the lead held at 19-9 at the break.

“I think our attitudes were a lot different. We were in a happier place, and we were looking forward to having a fun game,” Meyers said.

The Eagles methodically added to the lead in the second half, with Nave’s

3-pointer pushing the lead to 22-11 at the 5:10 mark of the third. Joseph never led by fewer than 11 the rest of the way, and extended the lead to 32-15 on another Meyers steal and layup late in the third quarter. The margin grew to as much as 20 points in the fourth quarter.

“I think it was just everybody working hard to get open. We always do, but this game everybody really looked for their open shots and worked hard for it.”

The combination of stout



Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

Wallowa’s Willie Gibbs attempts a layup during the Cougars’ OOL District Tournament game Tuesday, Feb. 15, 2022. The Cougars fell to Pine Eagle 66-28.

defense and missed open looks by Cove resulted in the Eagles posting their best defensive performance of the season.

Nave added nine points and Sarah Orr scored eight points, hitting a pair of 3-pointers in the win.

Cougar boys see season come to an end

WALLOWA — The Pine Eagle boys went offensively and advanced to the second round of the Old Oregon League Tournament, draining 10 3-pointers and never trailing in a 66-28 rout

of Wallowa, bringing an end to the Cougars’ season.

The Spartans opened the game on a 12-1 run and hit a pair of 3-pointers in that opening 4:33 before Wallowa’s Malichi Wilson converted the Cougars’ first field goal at the 3-minute mark to make it 12-3. A late 3-pointer by Caleb Brown, who went off for 29 points, extended the lead to 17-5 after one quarter. In the period, The Cougars committed 10 turnovers, which led to nine of the Spartans’ points.

Two corner 3s by Cole Morgan helped push the lead to 25-5. The margin reached as much as 22 in the period before the Cougars ended the half on an 8-3 run. Gabe Nobles had six of his team-high 10 points in the rally, including a floater at the buzzer that gave Wallowa some momentum going into the break, though down 30-13. Pine Eagle hit six 3-pointers in the opening half. Brown almost singlehandedly put an end to any comeback hopes by Wallowa, scoring 14 points in the third quarter alone and hitting two more 3s to help open up a 57-20 lead after three.

Wilson and Willie Gibbs both added seven points for the Cougars in the loss.

Wallowa’s season ends with a final record of 5-16.