

Small team takes to the golf course for Wallowa/Joseph

Cougars have four golfers — two returners, two newcomers

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

WALLOWA — The Wallowa/Joseph golf team is a small one this spring, with just four players out for the sport.

There is also a rarity

among the ranks for Marvin Gibbs, who has been the head coach for 25 years — no girls on the team.

“It is kind of strange not to have at least one girl,” he said.

Gibbs noted that a year ago there were no girls on the team, but part of that could be attributed to the odd COVID-19 spring that it was. And, of course, there were no spring sports in 2020 at the start of the pandemic. The team is

also just three years removed from when Tori Suto tied for fourth at the state golf tournament.

“Last year was a weird year, we didn’t have any girls,” he said. “The year before I was going to have girls out” before COVID canceled the season.

Among the four on the boys team for Gibbs are two returners — his son, Willie Gibbs, a senior and the lone golfer for Wallowa, and

Owen Gorham, a sophomore from Joseph, who is back after being on the course last year.

Willie Gibbs, who shot 112 in opening the season at Echo on March 18, has ample experience, albeit with a chunk of time in the middle impacted by the pandemic.

“The bad thing is Willie had those two years of COVID in there (between his freshman and senior years),” Marvin Gibbs said. “The

good thing for Willie is he knows the process.”

The coach noted Gorham, meanwhile, has grown physically since last season.

“He’s quite a bit bigger than he was last year. We’re going to have to see how things shake out with him,” he said.

Among the two newcomers are Joseph senior Chase Homan, who Gibbs said has a lot of experience but has never played on the team, and

Jonas McKee, a Joseph sophomore out for the first time.

“Chase has played a lot of golf. His dad, Lance, plays a lot,” Gibbs said. “He’s a good athlete. He wants to go through what’s called the professional golf management program at the University of Idaho, so to do that (you’ve) got to get a handicap established and be playing golf, not baseball.”

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Davis Carbaugh/The Observer, File

Joseph's Iona McDonald, center, placed seventh in both the girls 1,500 and girls 3,000 Saturday, May 22, 2021, at the 1A state track meet in La Grande.

Eagles pleased with early returns

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — Joseph head track coach John Roberts already has seen his team in a meet this season, and was pleased with the effort in the March 18 Mullen Leavitt Invite at The Dalles.

“All I wanted was some marks out of them so we can build off that,” he said. “We have a lot of new kids. (We) wanted them to get familiar with track and field and have an easy time of it. Pretty low-key meet. We did about what we expected we would do.”

The Eagles have more than 25 athletes on the team this spring, about 10 more than Roberts expected. That count includes a tripling of the number of girls from a year ago, when he had just three. He also has about 17 on the boys side.

Two of the boys who performed well at The Dalles, and for whom Roberts has high hopes, are Reece Nelson and Kale Ferguson. Each won two events — Nelson taking the high jump and triple jump, and Ferguson the discus and javelin throws.

“Those two should easily go to state, if not in first place in their events,” Roberts said. “Reece already jumped higher (when he cleared 6

feet) than the qualifying mark for state. It was a pretty easy jump. Kale, we’re just working on mechanics. I don’t want him throwing too hard. Toward the week of predistrict we might be hitting top marks.”

The Eagles also should be strong in the distance races, with Bayden Menton and Ian Goodrich — who both ran at the state championship cross-country meet for title-winning Wallowa Valley — leading the charge. Menton, in eighth, was the second finisher for the team back in November, and Goodrich, in 12th, was third on the team.

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Kirkland, Gray named honorable mention all-state

Chieftain staff

ENTERPRISE — The season may have ended a month ago for the Enterprise girls basketball team, but the accolades are still flowing in.

Seniors Rilyn Kirkland and Jada Gray were tabbed as all-state honorable mention after helping the Outlaws to a runner-up finish in the Blue Mountain Conference district tournament and a state playoff berth. Enterprise went 15-11 on the season, with those wins including a victory over eventual state champion Union and one over sixth-place finisher Stanfield. It concluded



Ronald Bond/Wallowa County Chieftain

Enterprise's Rilyn Kirkland attempts a layup during the Outlaws' game against Weston-McEwen Saturday, Feb. 12, 2022. Enterprise won the game, 50-30.

with a close 65-58 loss to Gervais in the first round of the state playoffs.

“Both of them, well deserved,” head coach Mike Crawford said. “Jada really

finished strong in the season and Rilyn became more of a distributor of the ball and a handler of the ball. Scoring’s always one of the things (looked at). They did a great job. I’m really happy they both got selected. That required at least two coaches (in the state) to vote for them.”

On the season, Gray was the team’s leading scorer with 10.2 points per game, and also recorded a team-best 3.7 steals per contest. She also averaged 2.8 rebounds and 1.6 assists. The senior shot 41% from the floor, 35% from 3-point

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SOFTBALL

Outlaws sit at 2-3 entering first home games

Chieftain staff

The Wallowa Valley softball team finished with a record of 1-2 at the Grant Union Tournament, losing to Scio and defeating Lost River on Monday, March 21, and falling to host Grant Union on Tuesday, March 22.

The Outlaws opened by dropping a close 6-4 battle to Scio on March 21, one that saw the teams combine for just 10 hits. Wallowa Valley had four of the hits — one each from four different players. Abby Straight powered the offense with two RBIs and Maci Marr also drove in a run.

Liz Rowley worked six innings, striking out eight, and allowed six runs on six hits while walking five.

Later in the day, the Outlaws collected 15 hits in a 9-5 victory over Lost River. Twelve of the 15 hits in the win were singles.

Rowley and Cooper Nave both had three hits and drove

in two runs, and Aimee Meyers also had two RBIs in the victory. Karly Baremore and Alex Rowley also had two hits apiece.

In the circle, Meyers pitched all seven innings for the win, allowing five runs on 10 hits and striking out eight.

On March 22, The Outlaws managed just six hits, through one was a solo home run from Liz Rowley. Nave had two hits and drove in the other run for Wallowa Valley.

Rowley also pitched four innings, allowing six runs on five hits, though four runs were unearned. She walked five and struck out one. Meyers added two innings, allowing six runs on six hits, though none were earned. Wallowa Valley was hurt by four errors.

The Outlaws (2-3 overall) play their first home games Friday, April 1, when they host Pilot Rock/Nixyaawii in a doubleheader beginning at 1 p.m.

BASEBALL

Wallowa Valley baseball gets into the win column

Chieftain staff

JOHN DAY — The Wallowa Valley baseball team got into the win column last week as it went 3-1 over four days at the Les Schwab-Grant Union Tournament.

The Eagles opened with a dominant 16-4 win over Nyssa on Wednesday, March 23. They followed by defeating Valley Catholic 14-5 on March 24, dropping an 11-10, eight-inning nailbiter against Sisters and wrapping play with a 13-0 win over Ontario.

Wallowa Valley broke the game against Nyssa open early with four runs in the first and five in the second for a quick 9-0 lead, and never let up in the five-inning victory, the team’s first of the season. Jaxon Grover went 4-for-4 with a leadoff home run, two runs scored, three RBIs and finished a double shy of the cycle. Jackson Decker had three hits and scored three times. Lane Rouse, Cody Fent and Trace Collier each scored twice, and Spencer

Decker added two hits.

Against the Valiants, Wallowa Valley overcame an early 3-0 deficit and rolled after that.

Maclane Melville scored three times in the victory, and Grover, Ty Prince, Caden Fent and Jackson Decker scored twice. Decker also had three hits, and both Prince and Melville had a pair of hits.

Sisters got the winning hit in the eighth inning of the March 25 showdown, and that coming after the Outlaws scored the tying run in the seventh.

Sisters seemed in command, up 9-2 through five innings, before Wallowa Valley batted around and posted eight runs in the sixth to take the lead. The first eight batters in the frame, in fact, all reached base on a combined five hits (all singles) two walks and a hit batter, and scored. The key hit was a two-run single by Melville. Wallowa Valley led at the end

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