



Davis Carbaugh/The Observer

Enterprise's Zac Knapp, front, runs during the La Grande Invitational track meet at La Grande High School on Friday, April 8, 2022.

Track:

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The Joseph boys, who took 11th with 19.75 points, got a first-place finish from Kale Ferguson in the discus with a mark of 143-feet-2½, and a second-place finish from Ferguson in the javelin at 137-feet-11½. The Eagles also got a tie for seventh in the high jump from James Burney (5-feet-2), and an

eighth-place finish from the 4x100 relay team of Gavin Russell, Dylan Rogers, Jayden McNall and Burney in 50.50.

For the Eagle girls, Iona McDonald placed sixth in the 300 hurdles in 58.23, and Basey Dawson was sixth in the javelin with a throw of 91-feet-8.

Enterprise continues on the track April at the Buck Track Classic in Pendleton, while Joseph is at the Sherman Invitational April 16 at Moro.

Outlaws:

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hits. Sophie Moeller went 4-for-4, doubled twice and scored three times, and Alex Rowley added three hits. Moeller, Kirkland and Liz Rowley also had two stolen bases apiece.

Meanwhile, Liz Rowley was close to perfection. In the five-inning win, she allowed just one hit, hit a batter and struck out 12, throwing first-pitch strikes to 14 of the 17 batters she faced.

In the second game, Rowley moved her contribution from the circle

to the plate, going 3-for-3 with a double, a triple, five RBIs and four runs scored. Kirkland added another 3-for-3 effort with three doubles, three RBIs and three runs scored to finish the day 7-for-7 with eight RBIs, five extra-base hits and six runs scored. She reached base all eight times she stepped up. Abby Straight added three hits, and Moeller scored four times.

As a team, the Outlaws had 16 hits, worked 11 walks and didn't strike out.

Meyers pitched all four innings, surrendering two runs on three hits, walking a batter and striking out eight.

Golf:

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and Ashlynn Greer finished with a score of 140.

On Friday, April 8, at Birch Creek in Pendleton, Jennings led the Outlaws again with a score of 98 as the team finished with a tally of 484 to place 10th. McDowell finished with a score of 117, Siebe shot a 126 and Young had a score

of 143.

For Wallowa/Joseph, which took seventh at 447, Homan finished with a score of 91. Gorham followed with a 96, Gibbs shot a 125 and McKee had a 135.

For the Enterprise girls, Stonebrink turned in a score of 122 and Cunningham had a score of 139.

Both teams next compete at the Grant Union Invitational April 15 in John Day.

Crawford:

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Outlaws' hard-fought 65-58 loss to Gervais a day earlier in the first round of the 2A state playoffs — the loss that ended his career at 520-275 — he was formulating lineups in his mind.

"I'm always thinking about lineups and the team. I had completely put together next year's team in my mind," he said.

'This is the time'

As to the question of why retire now, he said the time is right because he and his wife, Tammy, are ready for some time away.

"Tammy and I have talked for a long time about going south, spending some time in the warmer weather, the advantages of that, (and) I like to golf, too," he said. "I like to fish. We just decided this is the time. I think I told you, but I sat down and made reservations for Kauai next year at the end of January/February right there, a little 10-day stretch, and when I made the reservations, I decided I was going to be done."

Interestingly, his career may have actually been extended by the COVID-19 pandemic, an event that shut down so much over the past two years. Crawford noted that he likely would have wrapped his career in 2021 had it not been so marred by the coronavirus.

"I wanted it to be as normal as possible, and I thought this was a perfect year to go out. I had a quality group of kids," he said. "The unfortunate part is that no matter what, when you walk away, you walk away from kids that are still in the program. I have regret there, but I would have regret no matter when that happens. And I hope they understand."

The final year

His final team, which went 15-11 and was one win away from the state tournament, took some lumps early, but came together to take third in the Blue Mountain Conference, reach the tournament title game, and over the course of the season earn wins over both Union, the eventual state champion, and Stanfield, which took sixth.

"... Going into this year, now I've got my whole team intact for this year, of which there were two senior starters, Rilyn (Kirkland) and Jada (Gray), and then the rest I had to put together," he said, noting the 2020-21 season being so severely impacted by COVID and eventually moved to May and June hampered many of his players. "The rest of those girls, as of a year ago, they got to play a couple of games there, but not really. Not much. It wasn't like it was anything that was going to prepare them for what we were going to do this year. ... So preseason was all about prepping us and seeing what we got and where our strengths were and so on."

The team's pinnacle was on Jan. 15 when it earned a 47-39 home win over the Bobcats.

"We played Union tough. And actually in the Union Tournament, when we played them the final day we played — I hadn't seen us come out on day two, in this case day three, and play with some



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

Enterprise coach Mike Crawford and his players react with emotion after a Blue Mountain District tournament game against Heppner Saturday, Feb. 22, 2020, at the Pendleton Convention Center. Enterprise beat the Mustangs 40-38, notching third place and Crawford's 500th win.

conviction like we're ready to attack. ... That was day three, and we played to the end," he added of a December matchup, a 45-36 loss in Union. "It was a really good game, and then going into the (league) season, the first time when we played Union at home was the day we beat them. ... I knew we were good, I knew we were good enough to play with the teams in the final eight.

Outside looking in

Seeing teams Enterprise had beaten make the state tournament, while the Outlaws were stuck at home, is something Crawford has witnessed before, with one example that immediately jumped out being 2017.

"I'm sitting there in the first round, watching the first game, it was Imbler vs. Weston-McEwen. We played Weston-McEwen twice that year — we were not in the same league — we had beaten them at home by 20 and beat them there by 10," he said. "We had beaten Imbler — we split with Imbler. Here they are in the final eight playing in the first round and we're not there."

Crawford said there are plenty of "what ifs" over the course of 33 years, recalling a blown 12-point fourth-quarter lead in the 1997 state semifinals against Santiam Christian when a timeout could have stalled an SC rally — but Enterprise didn't have one. SC went on to roll in the state championship game, while Enterprise — undefeated before that night — settled for third.

Another was a back-and-forth battle in the 2001 state title game against Sherman which was a battle in the post he knew would be determined by which team lost its post player to fouls. Enterprise did, and lost the final, 45-37.

"There's so many situations over the course of history. I had a lot of good teams, I had a lot of good opportunities and moments. I don't really regret anything there. You can only control what you can. You put them on the floor and they gotta play," he said.

The highlight of his 33 years, obviously, was the 1996 state championship, but Crawford also took a ton of pride in Enterprise's consistency over the years.

"There was a lot of good moments that stand out with individual accomplishments

by kids, team accomplishments that were better than maybe we should have been," he said. "They're all pretty special. I think that for me, the thing that I'm proudest of (is) there were only three years that my teams did not make the district tournament. One was the very first year I coached. We only won four games, only won one league game that year. But after that, we never finished worse than fifth. There were two years that we finished fifth that we did not go because they only took four teams. In all the later years they took five teams. We weren't very often the fifth-place team, either. We were competitive every year. Kids worked hard over and over again."

Getting a program going

He said a conversation he has had several times throughout the years is about how to build a program and how long it takes. For Crawford, he said it was about five years to get EHS where he wanted it to be.

But once it's in place, it's hard to slow down. And he believes his eventual predecessor should be able to keep rolling.

"I had a conversation with Jordan (Klebaum-Johnston), the coach at Union, about how you go for 33 years doing the same stuff," he said. "You can say all you want about 'They know what we do,' but it's obvious to me that they may know what we do, but that doesn't mean they can stop it. We've always been one of the higher scoring teams, one of the more difficult to play — maybe there's something to it. Old school's not necessarily the wrong school."

When asked how he wanted his teams to be defined, he said that was actually a question he asked his players.

"I (would) give them a paper that I want them to fill out. And the last thing that I put on there was if you were somebody not on this team watching this team, what would you want them to think of you? What would you want them to say about you?" he said. "I wanted them to hustle, I wanted them to play tough defense, I wanted them to run offensively. Our offensive game started predominantly off defense, and I think we pretty much did that."

For the coach, though, it went beyond the basketball court. Crawford wanted to be

available in case any of his players ever needed him.

"When you're involved in the school and you're attached to the school, you want them to be successful, you want them to graduate, and you want them to have a plan for their life," he said. "I'd be involved in all of their lives in that regard as much as I could or as they needed me to be or that they wanted me to be."

Family played a big role throughout his career, and he said the support of Tammy was instrumental over the years.

"She's been very supportive. It wouldn't have functioned, it wouldn't have worked whatsoever, if it would not have been something that she was good with during that time," he said of his wife, who he noted was also an Enterprise teacher and coach for several years. "My coaching, and having my boys play, and being involved with the football program when they were in school, being involved with the basketball program — because I'm coaching girls (and) they're in the boys program — Tammy's always been right behind me. If (she) wouldn't have been, it wouldn't have worked, period."

The support of the Enterprise community was key, too.

"I feel like Enterprise has been an extraordinary place for a lot of people who teach in this district," he said. "The history has been once you got here you taught your whole career here. And I think that's another reflection on how cool this community and how supportive this community has been to the school. And then in the programs, we played in front of people who wanted to watch us play."

As for if he'll ever pull a move like Tampa Bay quarterback Tom Brady and return, he said it's unlikely, but won't say never.

"We'll see. I'm not going to say no, because as soon as I say no, there's something that would happen that would be a perfect creation, I guess of why it could happen again."

He leaves the court with 520 wins in 795 games, one state title, hundreds of players he worked with, and contentment.

"No doubt about it," he said when asked if he was content with his career. "I'm ready for the next challenges."

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Rilyn Kirkland had a day to remember for the Wallowa Valley softball team last week against Heppner/One. In two blowout victories, the senior went a combined 7-for-7 at the plate, hit two home runs, drove in eight runs, scored six times and had three doubles. The day included a 4-for-4 effort in the opener, a 14-0 win, where she had two home runs and five RBIs. She added an RBI double later in the week against Burns to finish the week 8-for-12 with nine RBIs. (Photo courtesy of Melissa Kirkland)

ATHLETE OF THE WEEK