

# White Buffalo basketball teams facing a year of transition

By Brian Mortensen  
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With several new players on both teams, and with the imminent advance to a new classification with bigger schools, the theme of this season is transition for Madras High School's boys and girls basketball teams.

The boys White Buffalos expected the return of two starters and six players with varsity experience, but were then faced with the season-long loss of senior Jordan Say, who sustained a broken collarbone during football season.

The Madras girls return two all-Tri-Valley League selections in guard Briana Stacona and Susan Ahern, along with returning starting post Krista Haugen, but start the season with a new coach, former freshman coach Becky Burchell (nee' Dodson) and a mostly new team.

### Move to 4A conference

Both teams look to be competitive in their last season in the Class 3A Tri-Valley League before they move into Class 5A next year under the newly configured Oregon School Activities Association athletic districts.

Beginning next season, pending the results of disputes concerning the transition around the state, Madras would join most of the schools in what is now the Class 4A Intermountain Conference, with each of the three Bend schools, Summit, Bend and Mountain View, along with Crook County, The Dalles-Wahtonka, Hermiston and Pendleton. Redmond would move into Class 6A, and Hood River Valley would join a 5A league closer to the Portland area.

### Boys program

The Madras boys program have retooled its approach to account for the small yet athletic athletes it appears to have available in the coming season

and with the prospect of the school being the smallest in its new league beginning next year. So far, it's resulted in an exciting approach that features shifts of five players each playing exhaustively aggressive on offense and fast and opportunistic on offense, looking for transition chances and putting up a lot of three-point shots.

So far, it's worked, as in a non-conference schedule that's included four 4A teams, the White Buffalos have gone 4-3. Averaging 71.6 points game, the White Buffalos, going into their Dec. 20 action at Burns, had scored more than 80 points three times and made better than 10 three-pointers a game.

With its system of subbing five players after short shifts, nearly every player on the roster gets lots of playing time but it also puts pressure on the incoming players to maintain the level of play as the group before it. It also creates balanced scoring, as five White Buffalos averaged at least eight points a game through their first seven contests.

Derrick Metcalf, a junior, averages 14.2 points a game, including two 20+-point efforts and had twice hit five three-pointers in a game. Jansen Harrington, junior and a Warm Springs tribal member, averages 12.29 playing both inside and outside. Marcus Zacarias, a 5-9 senior guard, 9.6 points a game, and the team's other senior, Tyler Ellsbury, averages 8.6 a game.

Newcomer Albert Adams has hit a three-pointer in all but one game, including four against Astoria Dec. 10, and averages 8.0.

The White Buffalos have five games during the holiday break, with a game at Burns Dec. 20, a home game against LaPine Thurs., Dec. 22, and three games at the Sisters Holiday Tournament. The Madras boys

open that tournament against Junction City, a Sky-Em team that's started out 3-2.

Anthony Adams has averaged 5.0 a game as a sophomore, while junior Carson Ahern averages 5.6. Newcomers and tribal members Bobby Thurby and Orlando Tewee average 1.5 and 1.3 points, respectively.

### Girls team

As expected the Madras girls team, which reached the second round of the 3A state tournament and one win short of making the final eight at Corvallis' Gill Coliseum, have been led by Stacona and Ahern.

Stacona was the only White Buffalo scoring in double figures going into the team's home game against Burns, the No. 1 team in Class 3A and defending state champion, putting up 14.2 points per game.

Ahern averages 9.0 a game, but her long-range shooting made her a hero in the Buffs' game against Molalla, as her buzzer-beating three-pointer from the corner gave Madras a 54-53 win.

Only one other Buff, though, averages as much as six points a game, quick 5-2 junior Shirelle Adams. Post Ashley Haugen, a sophomore, has put up 5.8 a game, while guards Whitley Ruiz and Alyssa Selam, a sophomore, average 4.5 and 4.4 a game, respectively.

In fact, Stacona and Ahern have accounted for 43 percent of the Buffalos' scoring through their first six games. As a team, they average 50.3 points per game and have allowed opponents 51.2.

The Buff girls' schedule mirrors the boys, with a game at 1-3 LaPine Thursday and three games at the Sisters Holiday Tournament Dec. 27-29.

The Buffs open tournament play against Sisters, which beat Madras, 60-54, in Sisters Dec. 13.





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