

# Goals: Wolves show progress on the court



NEIL GRAVATT/for the Itemizer-Observer

Forward Ali Nelke hopes to play a bigger role on offense.

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“Evolving from last year, I need to step into a role as an offensive threat on the team,” Nelke said. “This is one of the big reasons I write M.T.D. is to remind myself that my team needs me to score and force the defenders to guard me in order to open up other teammates.”

High school was also the first time Nelke truly thought about playing basketball in college.

Her freshman year at West Albany, her coach handed her a registration packet to play for Oregon Elite, a club team based in Lake Oswego.

“I was inspired by the fact that my high school coach believed in freshman me and truly thought I could play at the college level,” Nelke said. “I learned just how many opportunities there are to play in college and committed my summers to this goal and

## Women’s basketball

- Western Oregon women’s basketball team lost to Western Washington 65-45 on Thursday and to Simon Fraser 60-49 on Saturday.
- Shelby Snook scored a game-high 19 points against Western Washington. Savannah Heugly had nine points and six rebounds.
- Ali Nelke had a team-high 10 points against Simon Fraser. She also had four rebounds and one block. Sydney Azorr also scored 10 points.
- Western Oregon entered the week with a 7-12 record overall and a 3-9 mark in Great Northwest Athletic Conference play.

Oregon Elite.”

Once WOU entered the picture, there was little doubt where she would be playing her college ball.

“WOU was the right fit for me from the minute I was being recruited,” Nelke said. “WOU had the business major I was interested in, a comfortable closeness to home and coach (Holli) Howard-Carpenter put a priority on defense, which I value.”

She arrived as a freshman at Western Oregon ready for the 2015-16 season and started 21 games.

But the Wolves went 4-24 overall.

“Last season, I learned that I can never be content with the level of my game,” she said. “I can always improve, especially when it comes to guard skills. I also learned the incredible value of communication on offense and defense amongst

a team. Which means, I also experienced the great struggle when we are not communicating and working as one unit.”

Western Oregon, and Nelke, remain a work in progress this season. The Wolves have won seven games and Nelke is averaging 5.1 points per game — up from 4.0 points per game a season ago, including a 10-point performance against Simon Fraser on Saturday.

While progress has been slow, it has been steady. And Nelke hopes the team, like herself, continues to step forward.

“One of our team goals was to win 12 games this year,” Nelke said. “That would be one of the best seasons WOU has had in a long time. It will take a lot of hard work, but the season would definitely be a success if we can hit that marker.”

# Refs: Average age of referee is 47 years old

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It’s becoming more common in some parts of the state for a referee crew to work a freshman or JV game and a varsity game.

That can cause burnout among refs.

“The average age of a ref is 47 years old,” Folliard said. “That’s creeping up, too, and can be hard for the crews, especially if you have a sport like football or basketball where there’s quite a bit of running involved.”

Some ref crews have to travel long distances to help cover games outside of their normal areas, and refs are asked to cover more and more games throughout the week.

Steve Bulen, director of the

Salem Basketball Officials Association, saw an increase of 10 refs this year to 158 — the first time he’s seen any increase in refs in three years.

Even still, the association is in a precarious spot.

“The biggest challenge is finding officials to work afternoon games,” Bulen said. “On very busy days, I have had to tell schools I don’t have enough officials to service their games. Not often, but if I don’t get the numbers up, it will be more frequent.”

Ken Woods, commissioner of the Salem Football Officials Association, had 120 football officials five years ago. Last season, that number had dwindled to 87.

The SFOA serves 35 high

schools, 36 middle schools and a number of youth football programs, including Central, Dallas and Perrydale.

Without a fix in sight, the situation for high school football could become dire in the near future.

“I expect in 2017-18 you will see some varsity and some sub-varsity football games either get cancelled or moved to Saturdays due to the shortage of football officials,” Woods said. “It almost happened last year, and I expect the shortage to continue before it turns around.”

The question facing the OAOA is how to attract new refs.

“It is a tough job and people don’t like being yelled at,” Bulen said.

Folliard said they recruit heavily among college students looking to earn a little extra money and have asked athletic directors to ask recently graduated students, especially athletes, about becoming refs.

“We need both men and women who have a knowledge of the game,” Bulen said. “The trend can be reversed, but it will take a combined effort between the (referee) associations and the schools as well as OSAA.”

Woods believes all the recruiting in the world will do little good if there aren’t a few fundamental changes.

“People don’t realize the countless hours that officials spend attending conferences, clinics and

classroom training each year,” Woods said. “We need to increase pay at all levels to entice people to want to officiate and the spectators, fans, parents, coaches and players need to treat officials with respect.”

For now, attempts to draw in new refs haven’t been successful, and for athletes on the sub-varsity levels, the continued decrease in refs could have major consequences.

“We’re at the edge where sometimes the individuals responsible for assigning refs will get a schedule from a school for, say, a freshman team, and say I can’t service a game on that date, you have to change it,” Folliard said. “If this trend continues, games will be

## FALLS CITY BASKETBALL

# Mountaineers learn tough lessons

## Itemizer-Observer staff report

FALLS CITY — Falls City’s girls basketball team lost three games, but the lessons players learned could prove invaluable over the long term.

The Mountaineers fell to Jewell 39-38 in overtime on Jan. 25 before losing to Perrydale twice, 38-28 on Friday and 50-19 on Monday.

“Last Wednesday was a

tough loss,” sophomore Amara Houghtaling said. “We worked our tails off, forced overtime and got up 38-37 before we let them down the court.”

On Friday, Falls City executed well until Perrydale’s press caused issues.

“We had everything set up for us,” Houghtaling said. “Our defense was great. We were doing great and then

they pressed and it sped us up. We got control of our composure and lost by 10.”

On Monday, Houghtaling got into early foul trouble and the Pirates pulled away.

The Mountaineers (7-9 overall, 2-6 Casco League), which played Oregon School for the Deaf Tuesday after press time, weren’t discouraged by the losses.

“The growth is there,”

Houghtaling said. “... We need to work on our defense. That’s what wins games. We have the basic things down, but we have to move our feet better and not let them get easy baskets.”

Falls City plays at Livingstone Thursday at 5:30 p.m. before hosting Willamette Valley Christian Tuesday at 5:30 p.m.

With the regular season

approaching its conclusion and the league tournament looming, Falls City is ready to bring its best foot forward.

“We’re going to enter the league tournament and bring our game,” Houghtaling said. “It will be a good fight.”

**BOYS BASKETBALL DEFEATS JEWELL:** Falls City’s boys basketball team defeated

Jewell 45-30 on Jan. 25 before falling to Perrydale 64-39 on Friday and 67-34 on Monday.

The Mountaineers (8-9 overall, 3-6 Casco League) played Oregon School for the Deaf Tuesday after press time. Falls City travels to play Livingstone Adventist Thursday at 7 p.m. before hosting Willamette Valley Christian Tuesday at 7 p.m. Falls City entered Tuesday’s game against OSD in fourth place in the league standings.

## PERRYDALE BASKETBALL

# Pirates to play four games in six days

## Itemizer-Observer staff report

PERRYDALE — The saying goes that there ain’t no rest for the weary.

Perrydale’s boys and girls basketball teams are experiencing that during the final regular season push.

The Pirates’ girls basketball team fell to Crosshill Christian 37-19 on Jan. 25, defeated Falls City 38-28 on Friday, lost to St. Paul 42-25 on Saturday and beat the Mountaineers 50-19 on Monday.

“Everything we’ve talked about during the season, they’re understanding better and coming around,” girls coach Terry Newton

said. “We were within five points for almost the whole game against St. Paul, and they’re a top eight team in 2A. (On Monday), we came out with our hair on fire. The girls shot the ball really well and blocked out better and ran our traps better. I’m extremely pleased.”

The boys went 4-0 during the same stretch, earning a 50-38 win over Crosshill Christian on Jan. 25, a 64-39 victory over Falls City on Friday, a 77-57 win over St. Paul on Saturday and a 67-34 victory over Falls City on Monday. The Pirates, who have won seven in a row,

improved to 16-3 overall and 11-1 in Casco League play, good for first place.

Both the boys and girls teams have little time to rest.

The Pirates host Toledo on Wednesday (girls at 5:30 p.m.; boys at 7) and Jewell on Thursday (girls: 5:30 p.m.; boys: 7) before playing at Mapleton on Saturday. The Pirates return home to host Damascus Christian on Tuesday (5:30 and 7 p.m.).

“It will be another busy week,” Newton said. “We have four games in six days, but I’m excited. We’re rounding out the right way.”

## Lapping the field



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Dallas senior swimmer Jolie-Rae Ford competes in the girls 100-yard butterfly on Jan. 24. Ford won the race with a time of 1 minute, 6.5 seconds.



LUKAS EGGEN/Itemizer-Observer

Falls City’s Jeremy Labrado (5) and Perrydale’s Daniel Domes fight for a loose ball.

## Solution on Page 10A

	2		9					
		8	7	4				9
4	1				2		3	8
	5	6			7			
7				9	4			
8								
1							7	2
			8		9		5	
		4	1			3		

## Sudoku

Difficulty: ★★☆☆☆

Row →	4	3	2	8	1	6	7	5	9
	5	6	9	3	7	4	8	1	2
	1	7	8	9	5	2	4	6	3
Three-by-three square →	3	4	7	2	8	5	6	9	1
	2	1	6	7	4	9	3	8	5
	9	8	5	1	6	3	2	7	4
	7	9	1	4	3	8	5	2	6
	8	5	3	6	2	1	9	4	7
	6	2	4	5	9	7	1	3	8

## How to do Sudoku

Fill in the grid so the numbers 1 through 9 appear just once in every column, row, and three-by-three square. See example above.