

## CRANE BOYS, GIRLS BOTH WIN CLASS 1A STATE BASKETBALL TITLES AT BAKER HIGH SCHOOL

## Crane holds off Redsides to claim its first boys title

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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With the pressures starting to stack up on their shoulders, the Crane Mustangs shrugged off the weight and soared.

Facing the prospect of capping a perfect season with the school's first boys basketball state championship, the Mustangs responded to a valiant rally by South Wasco County to finish the Class 1A title game with a 12-3 run that gave Crane a 62-53 victory before a packed crowd Saturday night, March 5, in the Baker High School gym.

"This is a feeling I've never felt before," Eric Nichols, Crane's second-year head coach, said as Mustang fans thronged the court in jubilation. "These boys," he said, his voice trailing away as though he couldn't summon the words to describe their accomplishment. "It's a great group."

Crane's first boys state title didn't come easily, or without drama.

The Mustangs led 21-12 after the first quarter, but then South Wasco County's electrifying senior guard, Oscar Thomas, took over.

Thomas scored 12 straight points for the Redsides in the second quarter as South Wasco closed to within 30-24. Thomas scored both inside, with a couple of tough runners in traffic, and with a pair of 3-pointers.

South Wasco's Ian Ongers scored the first two baskets of the third quarter to get the Redsides to within 34-32, the closest they had been since the first quarter.

Crane's Jared Zander swished a 16-footer to push the Mustangs' lead back to 41-36, but Thomas hit another 3-pointer and then found Ongers with a nifty pass for a basket that tied the score at 41 with 2:50 left in the third quarter.

Crane responded with a 6-0 run capped by Zander's 3-pointer, and Crane freshman Cody Siegner scored inside to boost the lead to 49-42 at the end of the third quarter. Siegner also scored the first

## Powder Valley boys finish 5th

The Powder Valley boys basketball team placed fifth in the Class 1A boys state tournament.

After beating Nixyaawii 60-45 in a quarterfinal game on Wednesday, March 2, the Badgers lost to South Wasco County 59-40 on Friday, March 4.

The Badgers struggled offensively, shooting just 22% for the game, 13 of 59, including just 1 of 13 3-pointers.

South Wasco, meanwhile, made 50% of its field goals in the first half and ended up at 46% for the game, on 23 of 50, including 9 of 16 3-pointers.

Cole Martin led Powder Valley with 13 points.

In the 3rd-place game on Saturday morning, March 5, Powder Valley lost 61-44 to Crosshill Christian.

Powder Valley's shooting woes carried over from Friday's game, as the Badgers made 18 of 61 shots against Crosshill Christian, 29.5%. The Badgers missed all seven of their 3-point tries in the first half, while Crosshill Christian made 6 of 9 in racing to a 37-20 lead at halftime.

Cole Martin led Powder Valley with 14 points.

The Badgers finished the season with a 24-4 record.

## Crane makes Class 1A history with dual titles

Based on records from the Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA), Crane is the first Class 1A school to win the boys and girls state basketball championship in the same season.

Girls tournaments date to 1976. The first tournament for the state's smallest high schools — then known as the B division — was in 1977. For more than 20 years there were four divisions — AAA, AA, AA and B, later reconfigured as 4A, 3A, 2A and 1A. Two new classifications — 5A and 6A — were added for the state's larger schools in 2006.

Crane joins these schools in winning both girls and boys state basketball titles in the same year:

- LaSalle (Milwaukie), 1981 (AA) and 1984 (AA)
- Stayton, 1995 (3A)
- Jefferson, 2010 (5A)
- Portland Christian, 2010 (2A)
- Jesuit, 2011 (6A)

basket of the fourth period to push the lead to 51-42.

But the Redsides responded with a quick 8-0 spurt, capped by Brock LaFaver's inside basket that cut the lead to 51-50 with 5:31 left.

It was almost all Crane after that.

Sophomore point guard Carter Nichols (the coach's son) weaved his way inside and lofted a shot over 6-foot-6 LaFaver, off the glass and through. Nichols also drew a foul and made the free throw to give Crane a 54-50 lead.

Zander then made consecutive 3-pointers in a little more than a minute, the second, from

the left corner, giving Crane a 60-52 lead with 3 minutes left.

Zander, a junior who had four 3-pointers overall and led Crane with 16 points, credited his teammates for making his two key shots possible.

"They found the open guy and it happened to be me," he said.

Nichols had 15 points for Crane. Siegner and Mitch Clark added 11 each.

Eric Nichols said South Wasco was "outstanding," but he credited his team for responding to every Redsides rally.

"These guys answered the bell," Nichols said. "It's a team effort. Team basketball."

## Mustangs state champions again

BY JAYSON JACOBY

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The referees surprised Crane senior Dani Clark by telling her to take off the black sleeve wrapped around her left arm.

It might have been the Mustangs' best assist during the Class 1A state championship basketball game Saturday night, March 5, between the Mustangs and Damascus Christian at Baker High School.

Clark, who started wearing the sleeve after having surgery on her elbow, returned to the court without the sleeve.

She is, by the way, a left-hander.

Sleeveless, Clark made four 3-pointers during a 23-0 Crane run that spanned most of the second quarter and propelled the Mustangs to a 56-47 win and their second straight Class 1A state title.

Although Crane's longtime coach, Stub Travis, considers this a threepeat.

The Mustangs won the 2020 title 64-44 over Country Christian in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, capping a 26-0 season.

The official 2021 tourney was canceled, but Crane also went unbeaten during the abbreviated season in June 2021 and won a 16-team tournament, also at Baker High School, that concluded that schedule.

And now the Mustangs have another championship trophy. Crane also won the girls state title in 2004, also with Travis at the helm.

As Crane fans congregated on the court in the Baker gym to celebrate the win over Damascus Christian on Saturday night, Travis said the Mustangs' three-year run — a 72-1 record — has been accomplished despite changes in the roster each year.

"Our kids have great heart and they're great athletes," Travis said. "I'm really proud of this group."

Saturday's win over Damascus Christian brought Crane more than a championship.

The victory also avenged the only blemish on the Mus-



Lisa Britton/Baker City Herald

**Damascus Christian's Laelie Rasmussen defends Crane's Alexia Ballard during the state**

three shots to cut the halftime lead to 34-15.

Travis said the 23-0 run, fueled by six 3-pointers, didn't shock him.

"It wasn't a fluke that we shot like that," he said. "We have four guards that can shoot like that on a given night."

The Eagles got within 10 points, at 40-30, late in the third quarter, but Crane scored the final 7 points of the quarter — 5 by Kortney Doman — to push the lead back to 17 entering the final period.

Damascus Christian made three 3-pointers late in the game — two by Sierra Hale — to get as close as 52-45 with 55 seconds left, but the Mustangs made enough free throws to thwart the comeback bid.

Crane's final points were particularly poignant.

During the final minutes the Mustang fans chanted "we want Kelsie," a reference to Crane senior Kelsie Siegner.

Siegner, who led the Mustangs to the 2020 state title with 25 points in the championship game, injured her knee in the fourth quarter of the final game of the June 2021 tournament.

Although she hasn't been able to play this season, Travis had her sub in during the final 30 seconds Saturday. Siegner — the 2020 Class 1A player of the year who also made a cameo appearance in Crane's quarterfinal win over Jordan Valley, making a basket — was fouled, and she swished both free throws with 11.8 seconds.

"I loved it," Travis said of watching Siegner score the final points of her high school career.

Kortney Doman led Crane with 19 points. Clark added 14 — all during the decisive second-quarter run.

Rasmussen led the Eagles with 19 points.

Crane's dominating season included a rare win over a Class 4A team — and on the same court where the Mustangs won the state championship Saturday.

Crane rallied in the fourth quarter to beat Baker 49-46 in a holiday tournament at BHS on Dec. 28.

## Bulldogs

Continued from Page A1

The four boys quarterfinal games on Thursday will take place at North Bend High School, while the four girls quarterfinal contests, also on Thursday, will be a few miles away, at Marshfield High School.

Semifinals and the championship games for both boys and girls will be at Marshfield.

Coos Bay and North Bend are separate, but adjoining, cities on the southern Oregon Coast.

All tournament games will be broadcast live on the NFHS network (subscription required) at nfhsnetwork.com. Statistics are also available at osaa.org.

The Baker teams will leave Baker City Tuesday, March 8 at 5:30 p.m. and spend the night at Hood River.

The Bulldogs will practice somewhere in the Eugene area on Wednesday, March 9, then continue to Coos Bay, where they'll be staying at the Best Western Holiday Hotel.

The players will have dinner Wednesday night at the North Bend High School cafeteria.

## Girls

Baker qualified for the state tournament by routing — coincidentally — Marshfield 50-20

## Bulldogs At State

## BOYS

• Play Junction City in a quarterfinal game Thursday, March 10, at 2 p.m. at North Bend High School.

• Baker is making its first state tournament appearance since 2007, when the Bulldogs won the school's second boys state championship.

## GIRLS

• Play Corbett in a quarterfinal game Thursday, March 10, at 7 p.m. at Marshfield High School.

• Baker won the last state tournament, played in 2019. The 2020 and 2021 events were canceled due to the pandemic.

on Saturday afternoon, March 5, in the Baker gym.

The Bulldogs enter the tournament with a 20-5 record. They will open the tournament Thursday at 2 p.m. against Corbett, which beat Banks 66-48 on Saturday, March 5.

Corbett, a school in the Columbia Gorge east of Troutdale, is 21-3. Two of the Cardinals' three losses were to league rival Madras, a team that Baker beat 59-43 in a non-league game on Jan. 7. Corbett

lost 44-40 to Madras on Jan. 28, and lost 58-55 on Feb. 18.

Corbett is the highest-scoring Class 4A team this season, averaging 56.4 points per game. The Cardinals allowed their opponents an average of 32.4 points per game.

Baker is a defense-minded squad, giving up 31.2 points per game. The Bulldogs average 51.9 points per game on offense.

Baker and Corbett had three other opponents in common this season besides Madras. The results:

## Mac-Hi

- Corbett: won 58-28 on Dec. 20
- Baker: won 66-10 on Jan. 14, won 62-21 on Feb. 4

## Molalla

- Corbett: won 61-42 on Jan. 21, won 45-35 on Feb. 10
- Baker: won 50-33 on Dec. 11

## Estacada

- Corbett: won 57-23 on Feb. 2, won 72-20 on Feb. 21
- Baker: won 59-4 on Dec. 10

Baker returns to the state tournament as the defending champion from the last official tournament, in 2019.

It was Baker's first state girls basketball title.

The 2020 tournament was canceled due to the COVID-19

pandemic while Baker was preparing for a quarterfinal game at Forest Grove.

The 2021 tournament was also canceled.

If Baker beats Corbett, the Bulldogs would play in a semifinal on Friday, March 11, at 8:15 p.m. at Marshfield High School against the winner of Thursday's Cascade-Madras quarterfinal.

## Boys

Baker is returning to the state tournament for the first time since 2007, when the Bulldogs beat Stayton to claim the school's second boys state title, and first since 1938.

Baker qualified for state with a dominating 80-52 win at Gladstone on Friday, March 4. The Bulldogs are 19-6 in coach Jebron Jones' fourth season.

They will play top-seeded Junction City (22-3), which advanced with a 54-39 win over Molalla on Friday, March 4.

Molalla is one of four common opponents for Baker and Junction City this season.

Baker beat Molalla 85-68 on Dec. 11.

The others:

## Klamath Union

- Junction City: won 49-28

on Jan. 7

- Baker: won 82-49 on Dec. 18.

## Mazama

- Junction City: won 63-42 on Dec. 28
- Baker: won 64-53 on Dec. 17.

## Banks

- Junction City: won 51-46 on Dec. 30
- Baker: won 85-84 on Dec. 4

The Baker-Junction City match up pits two teams that, at least statistically, are quite different.

Baker is the highest-scoring Class 4A team, averaging 68.2 points per game and scoring at least 80 points six times. Defensively, the Bulldogs have allowed 56.9 points per game.

Junction City, meanwhile, has the stingiest defense among Class 4A teams, allowing just 38.2 points per game. The Tigers average 53.9 points on offense.

If Baker beats Junction City, the Bulldogs would play in a semifinal on Friday, March 11, at 1:30 p.m. at Marshfield High School. Their opponent would be the winner of the quarterfinal game between Philomath and Seaside.

## More about the Bulldogs

Please turn to Page A5 for a story about the Baker boys playoff game, and to Page A6 for a story about the Baker girls clinching a state tournament berth.

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