



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
Grant Union's Riley Robertson (32) hugs teammate Paige Weaver (24) in celebration of a buzzer-beating three-point shot at the end of the third quarter. The Grant Union Prospectors defeated the Umatilla Vikings 41-35 Thursday, Dec. 9, 2021, during the Columbia River Clash at Umatilla High School.



Ben Lonergan/EO Media Group
Grant Union's Sheldon Lenz defends Umatilla's Ulises Armenta (35). The Umatilla Vikings defeated the Grant Union Prospectors 62-25 Thursday, Dec. 9, during the Columbia River Clash at Umatilla High School.

GU boys learn from losses

Prospectors drop 3, Lady Pros go 1 and 2 at tourney

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

JOHN DAY — With a lot of basketball left to play this season, the Grant Union boys team continues to learn and improve each game.

Grant Union's boys' basketball head coach RC Huerta said the young team was nervous in competing at the Columbia River Clash Basketball Tournament Dec. 9-11 at Umatilla

High School. It was the first big event for many on the young squad, Huerta said in a phone interview on Tuesday, Dec. 14.

After dropping their first two games, 62-25 to Umatilla and 83-51 Nixya'awi, the Prospectors fell to Riverside 49-27 on Saturday, Dec. 11, in the tourney's final game.

By that point, the coach said, the team was tired. But, according to Huerta, the night before they played with a lot of heart against Nixya'awi.

Huerta said Sheldon Lenz, a sophomore, and Ryland Beil, a freshman, stood out in that game.

Lenz, Huerta said, showed "excellent poise and great leadership," while Beil guarded one of Nixya'awi's offensive weapons, who, according to Huerta, was much bigger than the freshman. But with stout defense, Beil held him to just 13 points.

"(Beil) played tough, he played a lot of minutes as a freshman, and it was pretty incredible," Huerta said.

Huerta said his team, 1-4 so far this season, will continue to work on fundamentals and improve.

"We're going to continue to get better," Huerta said. "I'm pretty confident (because)

their all-around effort is tremendous. They're very coachable, and they work their tails off."

Lady Prospectors go 1 and 2

After winning their first game at the Columbia River Clash on Thursday, Dec. 9, a 41-35 victory over Umatilla, Grant Union's girls' basketball team lost the next two games of the tourney. On Friday, Dec. 10, the Lady Pros fell 61-41 to Nixya'awi. Then, on Saturday, Dec. 11, the girls lost to Riverside, 32-18.

SPORTS ROUNDUP

By STEVEN MITCHELL
Blue Mountain Eagle

Grant Union's girls' wrestling team took third overall at the Culver Invitational wrestling meet Saturday, Dec. 11. Meanwhile, the Prospector boys took 10th overall.

Andy Lusco, Grant Union's head wrestling coach, said the grapplers wrestled hard and showed some improvement over the squad's first weekend.

Lusco noted that the team's conditioning and skills are improving daily.

"We are continuing to work

toward getting healthy, eligible, conditioned and skilled enough to compete more consistently as the season goes along," Lusco said.

In their third-place finish at the Culver Invitational, the Lady Pros scored a total of 70 team points while competing against 29 other schools.

Zoey Beam finished second in the 116-120 weight division, defeating Riverside's Katelyn Wiseman. Meanwhile, in the same weight class, Macy Carter took sixth.

June Wolf took fifth in the 123-128 weight class, pinning

Riverside's Zahaira Boos in 4:26 in the deciding match.

Serenity Marcano also took fifth in her 132-141 weight division when she pinned Kira Chambers of Chiloquin in a little over a minute. In the 144-158 weight class, Jaydika Anderson took fourth.

Finally, Mallory Lusco seized the second-place spot in the 172-217 weight class, while Delaney Coombs took third.

In the boys' tournament, which featured 23 teams, Grant Union grapplers scored 83 team points.

Rylan Cox and Justin Hodge finished second in their respective 285 pound and 170 pound weight divisions, while Tristan Clarry took sixth in the 138 pound division.

Lady Panthers split in Powder Valley

The Prairie City girls basketball team took one of two games at the Calvin Hiatt Tournament in Powder Valley last week.

In the squad's Saturday, Dec. 11, game against Dufur, the Lady Panthers lost 37-32 after dominating Powder Valley 49-29 the day before. The team was coming off a 51-33 loss to Union on the tournament's first day.

Prairie City boys win one of two

The Panthers bounced back from a 61-37 loss to Powder Valley Friday, Dec. 10, to best Dufur on Saturday, Dec. 11, by the same margin, 61-37. Earlier in the week, the boys team downed Union, 60-53.

D/M girls, boys drop games

The Dayville/Monument Lady Tigers basketball team fell to Cove Saturday, Dec. 11, by a score of 33-14 at the John Howey Memorial Tournament in Maupin.

Meanwhile, the boys team lost their Saturday game to Central Christian, 47-24.

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Alleged racial slurs by La Grande team still under review

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The (La Grande) Observer

LA GRANDE — Allegations of racism from the La Grande football team remain under review.

Following a 34-12 playoff victory over Gladstone on Friday, Nov. 5, at Eastern Oregon University, La Grande's players were accused of using racial slurs during the game in an article published by The Oregonian. The ensuing investigation by the Oregon School Activities Association, La Grande School District and Gladstone School District is still ongoing.

A player and parent from the Gladstone football team spoke to The Oregonian on Nov. 11 regarding what they claimed was a persistent use of racial slurs from the La Grande team throughout the entirety of the first-round playoff game. Near the conclusion of the game, a verbal dispute ensued between the Gladstone sideline and players on the field.

Following the accusations, a full-blown investigation began led by an independent investigator working alongside OSAA. The investigation included review of game film, interviews with those involved and amends between the two school districts.

According to La Grande Superintendent George Mendoza, the interviews and investigative section of the review is nearing completion and OSAA is working toward a final decision on the allegations. The La Grande School District has cooperated in the investigation and provided due diligence in getting to the bottom of the accusations, Mendoza said.

OSAA Executive Director Peter Weber said that the inde-

pendent investigator is nearing the tail end of conducting interviews and research.

"I spoke with the investigator and he is hoping to wrap that up pretty soon here," he said.

Weber noted that the Thanksgiving holiday caused a slight delay, but that the investigator has been collecting information for the past couple weeks.

The allegations drew concern from leading Democrats in the Oregon House of Representatives, who emphasized that House Bill 3409 was passed in 2019 to advocate for fair play and equality in high school athletics. According to The Oregonian, House Speaker Tina Kotek, House Majority Leader Barbara Smith Warner and Rep. Janelle Bynum were a part of the statement. House Bill 3409 instructs OSAA to investigate complaints regarding racism and iron out the issue within 30 days.

The La Grande and Gladstone school districts worked together with OSAA to gather information from players, chain crews and officials. A statement from the three entities on Nov. 16 detailed ways that the districts are looking to mend the relationship between the two schools. A big emphasis from the school districts has been promoting clarity on both sides during the investigation process.

"My understanding is that people at both schools have worked together with the investigator to provide as much information as possible," Weber said.

The La Grande and Gladstone boys basketball teams are scheduled to compete against each other at the Gladstone Holiday Tournament at Gladstone High School on Monday, Dec. 20.

SPORTS SCHEDULE

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 15 Grant Union Basketball @ Burns, 4, 5:30 p.m.	Long Creek Basketball @ Griswold, Helix Tournament, 8 p.m.
THURSDAY, DEC. 16 Prairie City Basketball vs. Baker, 5:30, 7 p.m.	SATURDAY, DEC. 18 Grant Union Basketball @ TBD, Thirteen Mile Shootout, game times to be determined
FRIDAY, DEC. 17 Grant Union Basketball vs. Faith Bible, Thirteen Mile Shootout, 3, 4:30 p.m. Grant Union High School Prairie City Basketball vs. Joseph, Thirteen Mile Shootout, 6, 7:30 p.m. Prairie City High School	Prairie City Basketball @ TBD, Thirteen Mile Shootout, game times to be determined MONDAY, DEC. 20 Dayville/Monument basketball @ Sherman, 2, 3:30 p.m.

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