

OSAA dismisses La Grande racism claim

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Oregon School Activities Association concluded its investigation into the alleged racist remarks made during a state playoff football game between La Grande and Gladstone, which determined that use of racial slurs throughout the game could not be confirmed.

OSAA released its findings in a statement on Tuesday, Jan. 11, which stated that the allegations made by Gladstone football players against the La Grande team could not be verified. After a lengthy process involving a third-party investigator, allegations of a solitary use of a racial slur during the game came back inconclusive. Allegations regarding an official identifying a Gladstone coach by his ethnicity were confirmed — the investigation also confirmed that the official apologized to the coach during the game.

The OSAA Class 4A state playoff matchup between La Grande and Gladstone on Nov.

5, 2021, at Community Stadium in La Grande ended in turmoil, as the final minutes of the game resulted in a major dispute on the Gladstone sideline. Gladstone players and parents followed up with allegations of racism in the days after the 34-12 La Grande victory in the 4A first-round matchup.

The ensuing months involved a deep dive into the game by OSAA's third-party investigator, interviews with players and staff from both schools and a joint statement between the La Grande and Gladstone school districts.

"Although the evidence of a racial slur being used was ultimately inconclusive through the third-party investigation, the OSAA recognizes that students, coaches, and families were negatively impacted," OSAA Executive Director Peter Weber wrote in the statement. "The OSAA stands firm with the expectation that all involved in interscholastic activities can do so in an environment that is free from discrimination or harassment."

La Grande School District



Andrew Cutler/The Observer, File

La Grande quarterback Logan Williams follows running back Brody MacMillan during an OSAA 4A state playoff matchup against Gladstone at Community Stadium on Friday, Nov. 5, 2021. Gladstone players and coaches accused La Grande players of making racist remarks against opposing players during the game.

Superintendent George Mendoza released a statement on behalf of the district, stating that La Grande accepts the findings of the investigation and is grateful for the willing collaboration of coaches, staff, students, officials and community during the investigation process.

"From the beginning of this

process, La Grande and Gladstone have been strong in our intent toward solidarity and reciprocity in resolving a difficult situation in order to build trust and strength in the relationship between our districts," the statement read.

According to OSAA, the organization is working with

the officials' association that called the playoff game in order to implement implicit bias training and OSAA's racial equity training. The statement also indicated that OSAA is working with all its officials' associations on protocols involved in reporting any potential acts of discrimination during athletic competitions.

La Grande and Gladstone both conducted elements of the OSAA's S.T.A.R. Initiative, which promotes sportsmanship and equality within athletic events. Prior to any outcome of the investigation, both school districts took steps to rebuild relations for future sporting events.

"We participated and did everything they needed us to do. I was always confident in our kids and our coaches," La Grande Athletic Director Darren Goodman said. "We have great kids, great coaches and great families."

Other outcomes of the investigation included the implementation of OSAA's Racial Equity Training at La Grande, conversations between La Grande and

other league members about expected behavior at future athletic competitions, creating a point of contact at La Grande and Gladstone to welcome visiting teams to their venues, reviewing the language in the student codes of conduct at both school districts and a meeting between both teams' captains, athletic directors and coaches to ensure positive relations moving forward.

According to OSAA, the La Grande and Gladstone boys basketball teams planned a shared meal and shaking of hands at halfcourt on the day of the scheduled matchup on Dec. 20. The game was canceled due to inclement weather, but the plans represented a first step in healing the relations between schools.

"In our school district, we will continue to actively teach, model and reinforce that words matter," Mendoza's statement read. "Our focus going forward will be to repair and restore our relationship with Gladstone as well as proactively create healthy environments and experiences for all stakeholders."

COPS AND COURTS

Arrests and citations in the Blue Mountain Eagle are taken from the logs of law enforcement agencies. Every effort is made to report the court disposition of arrest cases.

Grant County Sheriff

The Grant County Sheriff's Office reported the following for the week ending Jan. 19:

- Concealed handgun licenses: 5
- Average inmates: 11
- Bookings: 5
- Releases: 7
- Arrests: 0
- Citations: 1
- Fingerprints: 3
- Civil papers: 11
- Warrants processed: 2
- Asst./welfare check: 2
- Search and rescue: 0

Oregon State Police

Jan. 7: Trooper responded to Highway 26 near milepost 154 for a non-injury accident. A 68-year-old Mt. Vernon man driving a 2001 Dodge pickup swerved to avoid a dog and went into a ditch. The driver tried to back out of the ditch, damaging a fence and knocking down a street sign. The vehicle was towed.

Jan. 11: Trooper stopped a blue Jeep Grand Cherokee on Highway 26 near milepost 162 for a traffic violation. The driver claimed not to need a driver's license, insurance or license plates for the vehicle. Jacob Clarence Brown, 32, of Dayville was cited for failure to carry or present a driver's license, having no operator's license, driving uninsured and failure to display license plates.

Jan. 13: A trooper responded to a single-vehicle crash on Highway 395 North near milepost 107B. A 1974 Ford pickup spun out on a curve and landed on its side, blocking the northbound lane. The driver, a 55-year-old woman from Long Creek, declined medical attention. The truck was towed. ODOT assisted with traffic control.

Jan. 14: A trooper responded to the Subway restaurant on South Canyon Boulevard in John Day for a report of a woman who left her two minor children unattended in her car while she

went in the restaurant to order a sandwich. Chantal Marie Desjardin, 28, of John Day was cited for second-degree child neglect.

Jan. 15: A trooper received a call from a Grant County sheriff's deputy about a sick or injured bull elk reported by snowmobilers on Forest Service Road 1530. At the trooper's request, the deputy dispatched the elk.

Jan. 15: A trooper responded to Highway 395 North near milepost 93B for a single-vehicle rollover crash. A Mitsubishi Raider pickup started sliding on a curve, hit a deep snow berm on the side of the road and rolled over, coming to rest on its top. The driver, a 76-year-old man from Long Creek, was not injured. The vehicle was towed. Grant County Sheriff's Office and ODOT assisted at the scene.

Jan. 20: A trooper responded to Highway 26 near milepost 163 for a single-vehicle crash with injuries. The vehicle lost traction on a patch of ice and went off the shoulder and rolled. The driver was transported by private vehicle to Blue Mountain Hospital. John Robert Titus, 41, was cited for driving uninsured.

Dispatch

Grant County dispatch worked 127 calls during the week ending Jan. 21, including:

• Oregon State Police

Jan. 14: Trooper advised dispatch of found animals on Roper Road in Mt. Vernon.

Jan. 17: Advised of two cows and a goat in the road on Highway 26 near milepost 152.

Jan. 19: Advised of a dead animal in the road on Highway 26 east of John Day.

Jan. 20: Advised of an injured deer on East Main Street, John Day.

• Grant County Sheriff's Office

Jan. 14: Responded to Canyon Mountain Trail Road near Canyon City for an abandoned vehicle.

Jan. 14: Responded to West Sixth Street, Prairie City, for a report of harassment.

Jan. 14: Responded to North Cozart Street, Prairie City, for a report of a dispute.

Jan. 15: Responded to South Washington Street, Canyon City, for a noise complaint.

Jan. 15: Responded to Meadowbrook Apartments, John Day, for a civil issue.

Jan. 15: Responded to Chester's Market, John Day, for a hit-and-run report.

Jan. 15: Responded to South Canyon Boulevard, John Day, for a noise complaint.

Jan. 15: Deputy assisted OSP with a sick elk on Forest Service Road 1530 by dispatching the animal.

Jan. 16: Traffic stop, Highway 26 near milepost 127. Driver warned for speeding.

Jan. 16: Traffic stop, Highway 26 near milepost 148. Driver warned for speeding.

Jan. 16: Traffic stop, Highway 26 near milepost 148. Driver warned for speeding.

Jan. 17: Advised of an overdue motorist in the area of Magone Lake.

Jan. 17: Dispatched to Riverside Mobile Home Park for a civil issue.

Jan. 17: Dispatched to South Ingle Street, Mt. Vernon, for a possible burglary.

Jan. 18: Responded to Chester's Market, John Day, for a non-injury accident.

Jan. 18: Responded to Grant County Library, John Day, for a criminal mischief complaint.

Jan. 18: Responded to Front Street, Prairie City, for a welfare check.

Jan. 18: Responded to East Main Street, John Day, for an animal complaint. Tabitha Graves, 34, was cited for allowing a dog to be a public nuisance.

Jan. 18: Responded to Southwest Council Drive, Mt. Vernon, for a dispute.

Jan. 18: Responded to Southwest Council Drive, Mt. Vernon, for a disturbance.

Jan. 18: Responded to Clyde Holliday State Park, Mt. Vernon, for a public assist.

Jan. 18: Dispatched with Oregon State Police to Highway 26 east of Prairie City for a mental subject.

Jan. 19: Responded to Brent Lane, Canyon City, for a burglary report.

Jan. 19: Responded to Coyote Trail Lane near Mt. Vernon

for a missing person report.

Jan. 19: Responded to Northeast Dayton Street, John Day, for a welfare check.

Jan. 19: Responded to Riverside Mobile Home Park, John Day, for a civil issue.

Jan. 19: Responded to Highway 26 east of Prairie City for a juvenile problem.

Jan. 19: Responded to Seventh Street, John Day, for a public assist.

Jan. 19: Advised of suspicious circumstances at Riverside Mobile Home Park, John Day.

Jan. 20: Responded to Blue Mountain Hospital, John Day, for an assault.

Jan. 20: Responded to McHaley Street, Prairie City, for a welfare check.

Jan. 20: Responded to Best Western Inn, John Day, for a theft report.

Jan. 20: Responded to South Washington Street, Canyon City, for a vandalism report.

Jan. 20: Responded to

Highway 19 near Kimberly for a civil issue.

Jan. 20: Responded to Highway 26 near Highway 19 for a public assist.

Jan. 20: Took a report of someone in John Day illegally giving a juvenile a tattoo.

Jan. 20: Advised of a single-vehicle rollover on Highway 26 near milepost 163.

• John Day Ambulance

Jan. 15: Dispatched to Canyon Creek Apartments, John Day, for a 56-year-old male with difficulty breathing.

Jan. 15: Patient transport from Blue Mountain Care Center, Prairie City.

Jan. 16: Dispatched to Cottonwood Street, Mt. Vernon, for a 97-year-old female with breathing difficulty.

Jan. 16: Dispatched to West bench Road for a male with a medical issue.

Jan. 16: Dispatched to East Main Street for a female having seizures.

Jan. 18: Patient transport

to St. Charles Medical Center, Bend.

Jan. 18: Dispatched to East Main Street for a female having seizures.

Jan. 19: Patient transfer at the airport.

Jan. 19: Patient transport to Redmond.

Jan. 20: Dispatched to Valley View Assisted Living for a female with a possible fall injury.

Jan. 21: Dispatched to North Johnson Street, Prairie City, for a 62-year-old female with a possible dislocated knee.

Jan. 21: Dispatched to Valley View Assisted Living for a 78-year-old female having difficulty moving after several falls.

• Long Creek Ambulance

Jan. 17: Dispatched with John Day Ambulance to North Eagle Street, Long Creek, for an elderly man with chest pains.

• John Day Fire

Jan. 17: Dispatched to Paterson Bridge Road for a fire alarm.

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH, THE TOUGH GET VACCINATED.

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