

SPORTS

Jaguars nip Cougars in hard-fought battle

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

The Echo girls basketball team has sustained its first losing streak of the season, albeit a small one.

The Tri-Cities Prep Jaguars knocked off the Cougars 66-55 in Echo Saturday behind 29 points from Devin Hirsch and 13 points and 14 rebounds from Corinne Barnett. For Echo, Elizabeth McCarty had 20 points and 11 rebounds in the loss, and Kelsey Ranger tacked on another 18 points.

“We didn’t necessarily play bad,” McCarty said. “We just didn’t play our best. We just gotta go back to the drawing board and take a break and see where things went wrong. We’re gonna be fine. We’re gonna be fine. We’re not worried.”

Echo has now lost two straight, its first two losses of the season, and has a record of 10-2. Tri-Cities Prep is 7-3.

Echo drove up to Pasco, Washington, on Friday to watch the Jaguars play Connell, a 1A Washington school, and Connell won

handily, 71-46. Echo head coach JD Brazil said TCP just didn’t play well that night, and it could have given his squad a “false sense of security” Saturday.

“I’m not gonna say we took ‘em lightly because we didn’t,” he said after the game. “We had our game plan. We followed it. Some of those things worked exactly like I thought they were gonna work, but you can’t plan for us shooting ourselves in the foot.”

Mistakes plagued the Cougars all evening. For long stretches, they couldn’t get a layup to fall. They committed 22 turnovers and shot just 4 of 9 from the free-throw line.

With all those negatives, however, the Cougars were still in the game until midway into the fourth quarter when TCP took a 16-point lead that Echo couldn’t shrink.

Despite what Brazil called a “flat” first quarter, the Cougars took an early 7-2 lead on baskets from McCarty, her sister, Hannah, and a free throw by Erika Parks, but TCP came roaring back with six unanswered points

behind four from Hirsch. The first quarter ended with

Echo up 16-12, and the Cougars forced four turnovers in



SAM BARBEE PHOTO
Echo’s Elizabeth McCarty (center) and Tri-Cities Prep’s Emma Slaughter (left) battle for a rebound as Jaguar Bela Ghirado (5) watches during the second half of TCP’s 66-55 win over the Cougars on Saturday in Echo.

the period. TCP was held to 5 of 21 shooting in that period, but the Jaguars wouldn’t stay down for long.

TCP started to take control in the second quarter. The Jags made four of their first five shots, including a 3-ball from Hirsch, and took a 21-18 lead two minutes into the quarter before a timeout. Echo was in a zone then, and TCP shot the Cougars out of it. The next possession, Maddie Hill hit another 3 for TCP, and Brazil took another timeout.

Out of the timeout, Echo turned it over on three-straight possessions, giving TCP four points and a 28-18 advantage. With 2:31 remaining in the half, McCarty converted on a 3-point play to cut TCP’s lead to five at 28-23, but an Emma Slaughter 3-ball minutes later took that momentum right away. Ranger scored the last three points of the half to give Echo a five-point half-time deficit at 31-26.

The beginning of the third quarter was Echo’s turn to shoot well. The Cougars made three of their first four shots that period, and Rang-

er’s layup tied it at 32 with 5:37 left. TCP then went on a 12-2 run to take a double-digit advantage and the lead for good. Echo again battled back to a five-point deficit to end the quarter at 47-42.

The wheels came off the Echo wagon in the fourth quarter, however.

Down three with 5:28 remaining, the Cougars, again, started well, but, again, three-straight turnovers led to seven Jaguar points and a nine-point lead for TCP. Echo never got any closer.

“We’ve got a short memory,” Brazil said. “Our girls are gonna be angry at how they played. I went into the locker room (after the game), and in years past I would’ve said, ‘Look, this was the issue. This was the issue.’ And these girls are in there in the locker room saying, ‘We need to do better at this, this and this. This is where it broke down.’ ... We’re fine.”

Echo begins its league play in earnest with a 6 p.m. matchup Friday against the visiting Joseph Eagles.

WEEKEND RECAP

EO MEDIA GROUP STAFF

GIRLS BASKETBALL

HERMISTON 85, KENNEWICK 56

Jansen Edmiston went 10 of 17 from 3-point land, and Hermiston made 17 3s as a team to wax Kennewick 85-56 Saturday in Kennewick.

The win was the Bulldogs’ 10th straight, which improved their record to 10-2. As of Monday, they were ranked first by the OSAA. After Tuesday’s game at La Grande, the Bulldogs have two non-league contests remaining: a home game against 10-0 Sunnyside on Jan. 13 and a road game against fourth-ranked La Salle on Jan. 16. League play begins Jan. 23 against The Dalles in the Dawghouse.

UMATILLA 51, NIXYAAWII 24

At Salem, miles away from home, the area schools met in a consolation-bracket contest at the Salem Academy Tournament, however the Vikings (10-3) made short work of the Golden Eagles (7-3) Friday.

Nine Umatilla players recorded at least one steal and four had more than three, as the Vikings totaled 23 for the game. Kasandra Galbraith had a team-best six swipes.

Sidney Webb led all scorers with 11 points. Courtney Dohman and Iri Campos each chipped in with 10.

The normally adept Nixyaawii perimeter shooters were held without a 3-point make for the first time all season, and the Golden Eagles dropped their third consecutive game after starting the season with seven wins.

BOYS BASKETBALL

KENNEWICK 46, HERMISTON 39

At Kennewick, the Bulldogs hung tough against one of the top Washington schools before turnovers did them in late Saturday.

Playing in a tied ball game midway through the fourth quarter, Hermiston (2-8) threw it away on four consecutive possessions, and the savvy Lions (7-1) took advantage to slink off with a narrow win.

Hermiston coach Jake McElligott was pleased with the team’s effort, especially the play of posts Keegan Crafton and Trey Neal, who combined for 20 points and helped the Bulldogs win the rebounding battle by three.

“I thought we played well. We had the rebounding edge,” he said.

Crafton had 14 points and 12 rebounds. Chase Knutz nailed four 3-point shots to join Crafton in double figures with 12 points.

Hermiston led by one at halftime and traded the advantage for much of the second half.

The Bulldogs have three nonleague contests remaining: a road game against Summit Saturday, a home game against Sunnyside Tuesday and they host La Salle Prep Jan. 16. Columbia River Conference play begins against The Dalles on Jan. 23 in The Dalles.

CRESWELL 68, UMATILLA 65

At Salem, for the second straight day, the Vikings played extra basketball with one of Class 3A’s best teams, and, for the second straight day, they dropped a heartbreaker at the Salem Academy Tournament on Saturday. Both Andrew Jaime and Eric Garcia failed to convert layups in crucial spots for Umatilla (6-7). Jaime, who had a season-best 16 points, missed a go-ahead point-blank look with five seconds remaining in regulation. In overtime, Garcia missed a driving layup that would have knotted the score at 67 in the waning seconds.

Nyssa defeated Umatilla in overtime on Friday. The loss is Umatilla’s third overtime defeat this season.

“I’m proud of the guys for competing,” Viking coach Derrek Lete said. “It’s just the little things that are going wrong that cost you the game. A missed layup here or there.”

Umatilla begins Eastern Oregon

League play at 5:30 p.m. Saturday at Nyssa.

WRESTLING

At Nampa, Idaho, Hermiston wrestlers Bob Colman and Sam Colbray each won their weight classification at the mega 49-team Rollie Lane Invitational on Saturday.

Coleman used two sudden victory wins to earn the top medal in the 170-pound weight class at the Idaho super tournament. Coleman beat fellow Bulldog Brock McDonough in the overtime period and then did the same to Brendan Harkey of Crook County. He won the championship match by 9-2 decision over Kyle McCullough of Capital (Idaho).

The defending state champion Colbray won all three matches at 195 Saturday by major decision or pin. He defeated Gunner Robirts of Crook County by a 10-2 major decision in the final bout.

The win was Colbray’s second at a major tournament of the season at 195 pounds. Colbray also took medalist honors at the Tri-State Invitational in December.

Both wrestlers were a perfect 7-0 during the two-day meet.

Andy Wagner finished sixth place in the 126 pound competition.

Hermiston finished fifth in the team competition. Post Falls took first place, and Crook County was second.

WATSON:

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ways the ball in her hand, no matter what sport she’s playing,” Bow said.

On the court, Watson could be described as a stat-sheet stuffer. She scores; she distributes; she gets steals, rebounds, etc. She’s had scoring games of 16, 19 and 23 points. She’s racked up 10 steals in a game and 10 rebounds once, too.

“Things that we’re

running, she’s usually our No. 1 option everywhere we go,” Bow said. “We know that. Other teams know that. We run our offenses through her first and, hopefully, get her the first best look we can. Then she kind of becomes the distributor from there. Like last game (against Nyssa), we put five girls in double figures because, once (opponents) lower her abilities, take her away a little bit, other girls stand right out.”

Watson said she does

whatever is necessary to make the team win. If she scores 30 points and the Lady Viks lose, she’s unhappy. If she scores four and they win, it’s a good night.

“I don’t really look at what I do,” she said. “It’s more of a team thing. I want to help out as much as I can (for) the team. I want to do everything that I can to benefit the team, just work as hard as I can, every day be in the gym ready to go, get to work, get the work done that I need to, to make

sure I’m ready to play.”

After this season, Watson has two more years left to play high school basketball. Beyond that, though, opportunities are already beginning to present themselves for her to continue her basketball career. Bow says interest in his sophomore guard is beginning to mount, and he believes she can play small-school college basketball, if everything goes smoothly.

“I’m talking to multiple people, and the interest is out there,” Bow said. “She

would love to play. We just gotta keep her on track and hope she stays injury-free, and good things can happen to a kid like that.”

“If I can (play in college), then, yeah, I want to go there,” Watson added. “I want to play (in) college if I can. If I have the opportunity, I think it would be really cool.”

Her immediate priority, however, is high school ball and helping the 11-3 Umatilla Lady Viks team to the playoffs.

With league play be-

ginning this week, Watson is optimistic about her squad’s chances to make noise in the 3A ranks.

“I feel very good about (this season),” she said confidently. “I think we’re gonna go far. As long as we keep playing the way we’re playing and making sure we keep the same goal in mind, make sure we’re where we want to go and just keep doing what we’re doing, I think we’re gonna do really good this year. I think we’re gonna go far.”

HOOPS:

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interesting, are on top of the Eastern Oregon League. They have a loss to Nyssa, but it was at a tournament in Salem and, therefore, counts as a nonleague game. I have that one circled on my pretend calendar because the Vikings lost by three in overtime, and head coach Derrek Lete said it was a game they should have won. It’s provided some motivation to win those kind of games that can carry through the league schedule.

Nyssa is 5-5, Riverside is 5-7 and Vale is 2-7, as of Monday. Also, Umatilla has hung with Irrigon twice, although the scores don’t indicate that. If Umatilla can parlay these disappointments, for lack of a better term, into some success, I like them in the EOL.

Now, go south on 395 to Stanfield.

With Daniel Sharp pulling double duty with the boys and girls, it’s a wonder the boys play as well as they do. Not that Sharp is any less of a coach, but that’s a lot of work. At the Bouncin’ Cancer series, he coached four games in two days. That’s a ton of basketball. Sometimes I think the players sense how tired he is and sort of feed off that. I’ve never thought about people feeding off a negative deal, but I guess it’s possible.

Anyway, the Stanfield boys find themselves in a tough league this year. Irrigon is good. Heppner is good. As of Monday, Weston-McEwen is 5-5 but dangerous. The Tigers, as I’ve written before, have a good mix of size and speed and can really score. Their only problems are limiting turnovers and

playing sound defense. Those two things will be huge factors against Irrigon and Heppner. I don’t know much about Heppner, but Irrigon thrives off of turnovers and transition scoring. Stanfield can beat both teams, in my opinion, but it’ll have to play its best to do so.

I like the Stanfield girls, too. They get better every time I see them play. They’ve already tripled their win total from last season and will undoubtedly get a few league wins this year. Sharp is building that program from the ground up, and in a couple years I think it will be very competitive in the Columbia Basin Conference.

Now, we head across I-84 to Echo.

The girls have lost just twice, to a very good Country Christian team and to a Tri-Cities Prep

team that has a very good scorer. They’ve gotten a taste of their new league and waltzed through. The Old Oregon League will come down to Nixyaawii and Echo, and the first of two league matchups is coming Saturday. Those two games, the other landing on Feb. 6, will decide the league title.

The Echo boys round out the group of opposites. As the girls sit atop the proverbial ladder, the boys are still climbing it. A nice win over Tri-Cities Prep on Saturday — a team that beat Stanfield — has them in a good place mentally heading into the league schedule. Head coach Ben Campbell said a couple weeks ago that he is happy with where they are and happy to be focused on basketball rather than off-court issues. I don’t blame him. Echo is going to be competitive in a league with only one .500

team (Nixyaawii at 6-6). Look for Echo to possibly make some noise.

So that’s it. Thanks for bearing with me. In about a month and a half, the playoff picture will be set, and we’ll talk about that then. Plus,

it’ll start to get warmer, and I can’t argue with that.

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Super Crossword

Answers

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