

Playing for pride and redemption

It's been darn near 10 years — maybe more — since the Stanfield girls basketball team won three games in a row. On Tuesday, they beat Lone 42-36 to claim its third straight.

The Tigers are also one game away from being .500, which is light years off last year when they went 1-21.

I've seen a few of their games, but I also know what it's like to be in a situation like that.

I think I've talked about my high school football teams, but, in case I haven't, I'll be brief. In my sophomore and junior years, we won one game. We went 1-17. It was hard. It was hard to go to practice every day knowing we would get blown out on Friday night. Schools half our size were beating us by 40 points. It was embarrassing. It was humiliating. I never once thought of quitting, but I would have entertained it. We were the laughing stock of a league that we used to dominate.

Then we got a new coach. He energized us. He made us excited to play again. He made us believe that we could play, that we could compete, that we could win.

Yazzmin Chavez put it really nicely after the win Tuesday night. She said she feels like a basketball player, not merely someone who's playing basketball.

Coach Bertram did the same at R. A. Long, and we did well. We went .500 that first year, took third in the league (should have been second, but that's another column) and went to the playoffs. Actually, we were a mediocre football team, but it felt so much better than being a horrendous football team.

The same thing is happening in Stanfield. Daniel Sharp has revitalized, no, he's vitalized a program that has been dormant for a long time. These girls now believe they can play, that they can compete, that they can win.

And it's showing. They're 8-9. They've won eight times the games they won last year. Like last year, they won their first game. Unlike last year, they've managed to win another, and another, and another.

Chavez said they want to prove to people, to teams, they aren't an easy win any longer, that you



SAM BARBEE
FROM THE SIDELINES
Sports reporter

have to show up to play if you want to beat Stanfield.

My senior year of football, we had the exact same mindset. We were proving to people that we could play this sport, that the Jacks were back.

One of our main rivals in the league — at least in our eyes — was Woodland, a small highway town almost halfway between Longview and Portland on Interstate 5. The school is about two thirds the size of R. A. Long, and football is the main event of the year. Woodland lives for crisp Friday nights at the stadium.

We were put in the same league my sophomore year after the Washington Interscholastic Activities Association redid the classification numbers, and we moved from 3A to 2A. Woodland was 1A but got moved up to 2A. We thought we would roll them.

In two years, we were outscored something like 120-30. I'm talking not close. Maybe 30 is too high for us. I remember the first game vividly because I threw a pick-six that opened the flood gates. Bad memory.

So, senior year we played there and lost in the fourth quarter. It was a close game in the rain, and we led for much of it. As the two teams walked to the locker rooms, I caught up to a Woodland senior who I'd played baseball against for countless summers and told him we just wanted to show up and play to prove to the Woodland Beavers we weren't slouches anymore.

He told me we did that and more. He told me they respected us after that game. We may as well have won for all I care.

That's exactly what the Stanfield girls are doing right now. They are playing for pride. They are playing for respect.

And, if they keep going at this pace, they will have both those things when the season ends next month and with only one senior on the roster.

— Sam Barbee is the *Hermiston Herald* sports reporter. He can be reached at sbarbee@hermistonherald.com



SAM BARBEE PHOTO
Stanfield's Maddie Griffin (10) goes for a layup as Lone's Rachel Holland (32) defends and Bailey Watson (20) and Maggie Flynn (22) watch during the second half of Stanfield's 42-36 win Tuesday night in Stanfield.

THIRD STRAIGHT WIN Stanfield girls slip by lone

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

After leading almost the entire first half and most of the third quarter, the Stanfield girls basketball team was in a hole Tuesday night.

The visiting 1A Lone Cardinals had just completed a 19-10 run to take a four-point 33-29 lead with 4:45 left in the fourth quarter. In the past, the Tigers would have folded, but under first-year coach Daniel Sharp, they stayed the course, and Yazzmin Chavez banked in a 3-ball with three minutes and change remaining, and the Tigers held off Lone in the final minutes to come away with a 42-36 win Tuesday night.

"I was thinking, 'Don't air ball it,'" Stanfield head coach Daniel Sharp said of Chavez's go-ahead 3.

Chavez scored five of Stanfield's final nine points and finished with nine on the night to lead Stanfield. Jessie Flynn had 14 points for the Cardinals.

The win was the Stanfield girls' third in a row, the first time in recent memory that Stanfield (8-9, 2-3) linked together that many wins.

For Chavez, a junior,

it's about "making a difference" in a program that hasn't had many ups in the past.

"To be able to make a difference from last year to this year, seeing our progress and proving that we aren't the same team we were last year and that we want more this year (feels good)," Chavez said. "It feels amazing, to be honest."

Stanfield's quick guards and relentless press forced Lone into serious foul trouble. Lone's senior Lauren Garrett and freshman Maggie Flynn both fouled out, and several other Cardinals had four fouls.

Lone (3-11, 3-4) was a bit short-handed because of illness, so head coach Mike Garrett didn't have the bodies he normally has to rely on when others get into foul trouble. His game plan, though, was to work the ball to his taller post players, but once they were in foul trouble, that became difficult.

"That Stanfield team did a great job," Garrett said. "They're really quick. They're really quick and got us into foul trouble. They were able to work it inside fairly quickly, and we just got too many fouls and started



SAM BARBEE PHOTO
Stanfield's Cynthia Curriel (3) drives the lane as Lone's Rachel Holland (32) waits during the second half of Stanfield's 42-36 win Tuesday night in Stanfield.

getting too many starters sitting on the bench.

"Any time a 1A team can play a 2A team tough like that, we're happy about it."

Stanfield led 15-8 after a quarter and 22-17 at the break. In the third, Lone went on its run and took the four-point lead, but Bailey Watson hit a pair of free throws and Ashlee O'Neill hit a long two-pointer to tie it up at 33 in the fourth quarter. Chavez hit her high-arching bank 3 to give Stanfield a three-point lead at 36-33, and, after an Lone timeout, drove the lane and laid one in to give Stanfield a five-point lead.

"That seven-point swing was huge, and it happened lightning quick," Sharp said. "It shows what they can do when they're making some shots."

Watson hit two more free throws to push the advantage to six, and Maddie Griffin got a layup on a nice inbounds play to up the lead to nine at 42-33. At that point, Stanfield had gone on a 9-0 run in just 3:20. Flynn hit three free throws down the stretch, but it wasn't enough.

Stanfield shot 12 of 83 from the floor, which is usually a miserable 14.5 percent, but the Tigers made the shots they needed to down the stretch.

"I think the fighting back was good," Sharp said. "I don't know what it is about Tuesday nights. We seem to have a problem with them, but I think any (time) these girls can have some success and see that — they worked really hard in practice (Monday). I think those successful things helped them build some confidence, and we're seeing that a little bit."

Stanfield's next game is Friday at Weston-McEwen. Tip-off is scheduled for 6 p.m.

GO SEE IT

Wednesday, January 28

Wrestling
Hermiston @ Hood River Valley, 6 p.m.

Thursday, January 29

Girls Basketball
Hermiston @ Hood River Valley, 7 p.m.
Umatilla @ Riverside, 6 p.m.

Boys Basketball
Umatilla @ Riverside, 7:30 p.m.

Wrestling
Echo vs. Irrigon, 6:30 p.m.

Friday, January 30

Boys Basketball
Hermiston vs. Hood River Valley, 7 p.m.
Stanfield @ Weston-McEwen, 7:30 p.m.
Echo vs. Pine Eagle, 7:30 p.m.

Girls Basketball
Stanfield @ Weston-McEwen, 6 p.m.
Echo vs. Pine Eagle, 6 p.m.

Saturday, January 31

Swimming
Hermiston @ Baker, noon

Girls Basketball
Umatilla vs. Vale, 4 p.m.
Echo @ Joseph, 4 p.m.

Boys Basketball
Umatilla vs. Vale, 5:30 p.m.
Echo @ Joseph, 5:30 p.m.

Rangers shock Cougars

Dufur upsets Echo in Cougar Den

BY SAM BARBEE
HERMISTON HERALD

The Echo girls basketball team hadn't beaten Dufur in 15 years going into Monday's tilt, and the Cougars were looking to change that. Before the game between the Rangers and Cougars, Echo head coach JD Brazil wrote the previous game scores between the two teams on the whiteboard in Echo's

locker room. They were all losses.

After two quarters of play, Echo was in position to eke out its first win over Dufur in nearly two decades but could only manage 19 points in the final half and came up short 53-46 Monday night in Echo.

"It seems like we were playing against the name on the shirt just as much as what (Dufur head coach Hollie) Darden is doing," Brazil said after the game. "For us, we have to keep that stuff in check. For a lot



SAM BARBEE PHOTO
Echo's Hannah McCarty (in white) drives through Dufur's Taylor Darden (43), Sydney Reed (2) and Aimeelyn Miller during the second half of Dufur's 53-46 win Monday night in Echo.

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