

## Echo expecting fight against Nixyaawii

BY SAM BARBEE  
HERMISTON HERALD

At the beginning of the season, Echo girls basketball coach JD Brazil looked at the schedule and circled two games: a road game Jan. 10 at Nixyaawii and a home test against those same Golden Eagles Friday.

The Cougars claimed the first game in Mission, and Brazil said Nixyaawii will be coming after his team hard in the second matchup.

"If they win one more game this year, they want it to be Friday night," Brazil said of the Golden Eagles. "It's gonna be intense. Their season's on the line. I think they can still win (the Old Oregon League) if the right chips fall, but they can't do it if they don't beat us. If you look at this that way, we can do it without beating them, but they can't do it without beating us."

Echo is not adjusting its routine in preparation, however.

"We're just treating it like any other game, like normal," Echo leading scorer Elizabeth McCarty said. "We won't come out (and say), 'Oh my gosh this is Nixy.' We respect them. They're a great team, but we're going to prepare like we always do."

Echo rolls into the game winners of six of eight games. The Cougars won their first 10 games and have gone 6-4 since, with losses to Country Christian, Tri-Cities Prep (WA), Dufur and Wallowa. In the loss to Wallowa, the Cougars' only league loss thus far, Echo scored a season-low 34 points.

As of Tuesday, Echo holds a two game advantage over the Golden Eagles, who sit in fourth place in the OOL with a 4-3 record, 12-6 overall. Echo has an 8-1 league record and is edging Wallowa by a game for the top spot.

Nixyaawii, conversely, has lost two consecutive one-point heart breakers. On Jan. 24, Wallowa slipped past the Golden Eagles 48-47, and Saturday Powder Valley squeaked past them 41-40.

An Echo win Friday would boost the Cougars' record to 9-1 with games against third-place Powder Valley and Wallowa remaining.

According to Brazil, Friday night's tilt against the Golden Eagles is the first of three games in a de facto league championship series. Echo has to win two of three, in no certain order, to get a bye in the district tournament that starts at the end of this month.

"I feel a little bit nervous, but it's nothing we can't handle," Echo senior Bailey Strofe said. "As a team, like Elizabeth said, we're going to prepare like we do every single Friday and Saturday for the teams we're going to play."

To win Friday, Echo will have to hold off Nixyaawii perimeter threat Charlotte Barkley.

"I think the best matchup is who has the better game: Elizabeth McCarty or Charlotte Barkley," Brazil said. "Charlotte, sometimes she's a little streaky shooting. Unless she's playing Echo, then she's on. We expect no less out of her. We're just going to have to contain her (and) try to harass the hell out of her and see what happens."

Echo will use its press to keep Barkley from moving the ball up the court and getting good looks at the basket. Barkley lives on the 3-point line, and anything Echo can do to contain her as no one has been able to outright eliminate her will significantly help the Cougars.

In the half court, Taylor Swaggart will be paired against Barkley. Captains Strofe, McCarty and Kelsey Ranger have full confidence in the freshman to handle the large assignment.

"Taylor has the best defense on the whole team," McCarty said. "I couldn't expect more out of a freshman than Taylor. She's the perfect freshman."

In turn, Echo expects the Golden Eagles will try to contain McCarty. In the Jan. 10 meeting, McCarty tallied 15 points, but Ranger had 17. Brazil also got good minutes from his bench, something he said will have to happen again Friday.

"With Elizabeth McCarty, they're probably going to try and put six girls on her, some fans and a cheerleader, and see if they can't shut her down and force our other girls to do work," Brazil said. "That's why we like being in our gym because (we) like to shoot in our own gym."

Ultimately, neither Brazil nor the players feel any pressure heading into Friday's bout with the Golden Eagles. They're confident, loose and ready to play.

That said, the Cougars expect a battle.

"This is Nixy," Brazil said. "There's a lot of respect. There's a lot of blood. It's an old story. These games have been close since they won state (in 2011). It's always been a dogfight."

Tip-off for the game is set for 6 p.m. Friday in Echo.

## Bulldog run dooms Lady Bucks

### Raleigh Andreason has eight points in final quarter to spark run

BY SAM BARBEE  
HERMISTON HERALD

Through three quarters in Pendleton, the Lady Bucks had the upper hand.

They were holding off certain Lady Bulldogs and forcing others to score. They just weren't planning on anyone other than Jansen Edmiston or Sara Ramirez to beat them.

They weren't planning on sophomore swinger Raleigh Andreason getting hot in the fourth quarter.

Andreason scored five straight points early in the fourth quarter to cut Pendleton's lead to one and drained a 3-pointer with 3:39 left to tie things up at 50, sparking a 7-4 run that propelled the second-ranked Lady Bulldogs over the fifth-ranked Lady Bucks 57-54 at Warberg Court Tuesday night.

"We knew it was going to be a dogfight," said Hermiston assistant coach Juan Rodriguez, who was filling in for Steve Hoffert. "It doesn't matter how good we are. It doesn't matter how good they are. In the year's past, when we had more of a gap, it was still a good game, this year more so because they're a really good team."

Andreason finished the game with eight points, all of which came in the fourth quarter, but Maddy Juul shouldered the load, scoring 13 points — seven of which



EO MEDIA GROUP PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS

Hermiston's Maddy Juul drives on Pendleton's Kiana Sperl in the Bulldogs' 57-54 win against the Buckaroos on Tuesday in Pendleton

came in the first half. Kiana Sperl led the way for Pendleton with 16 points, and Marlene Bodmer chipped in 13.

Neither team shot the ball well. Hermiston shot just 27 percent from the floor, and Pendleton shot slightly better at 34 percent. The Lady Bucks didn't make a 3-ball, going 0-12, and Hermiston hit five out of 18 attempts from deep. Pendleton led the way in free-throw shooting at 15-20, and Hermiston went 12-18.

Turnovers made the difference in the game.

Pendleton coughed up the ball 21 times to Hermiston's 15. In one stretch in the third quarter, while leading 37-33, Pendleton turned over three straight possessions and four out of five, which the Bulldogs converted into five points, cutting the Lady Bucks' lead to one.

For Hermiston, the main takeaway was the maturation of the roster, Rodriguez said. When players like Andreason

step up to provide unexpected lifts, it points to the team setting higher goals than merely winning a basketball game.

"That's what we need everyone in the program to do," Rodriguez said. "We love seeing the maturation."

After leading most of the first half and taking a slim 25-24 lead at the break, Pendleton came out hot in the third quarter, hitting its first three shots and making three of four free throws to take a 33-29 lead. A Bodmer jumper extended the lead to six at 35-29, the biggest Pendleton lead of the night that was matched one other time in the third period.

Tavin Headings then sparked a little run, netting seven points in just less than three minutes to pull Hermiston within one at 39-38.

In the fourth, Hermiston and Pendleton traded baskets throughout. With 3:23 on the clock, Andreason hit her 3-pointer — her only deep ball of the night — to tie things up at 50. Two minutes later, Ramirez hit her only 3-ball to give Hermiston the lead for good. Darian Lindsey's 3-ball at the buzzer went begging, and Hermiston held on to the win.

"(Tuesday night) was the team we want to see heading into the postseason," Rodriguez said. "We're gonna get games like this in the state tournament. If we can't grind out games like this where it isn't pretty, we won't win many games in the postseason...This team would've folded earlier in the year in a game like this."

Hermiston heads to The Dalles to take on the Riverhawks at 7 p.m. Friday.

## Umatilla holds off Vale

### Echo splits in Joseph

BY SAM BARBEE  
HERMISTON HERALD

Down four with 30 seconds left, the Umatilla boys basketball team was looking for some momentum heading into the second half against the visiting Vale Vikings. Kaden Webb obliged in a big way.

The freshman hit a 3-pointer with 0.6 seconds on the clock, was fouled and made the free throw to tie things up at 30 heading into the break. Umatilla went on to outscore Vale 26-23 in the second half to hold on for a 56-53 win in Eastern Oregon League play in The Pit Saturday.

Eric Garcia led the game in scoring with 33 points — including seven three-pointers — but no basket was bigger than Webb's at the end of the first half.

"It was a huge momentum swing," Umatilla head coach Derrek Lete said. "It was great for Kaden."

Lete said he also expected Garcia to have a big game Saturday, although he didn't couldn't point to why.

"Eric's our man offensively," he said. "He was



SAM BARBEE PHOTO

Umatilla's Eric Garcia (3) sets up Vale defender Andrew Weber during the second half of Umatilla's 56-53 win over Vale on Saturday in The Pit. Garcia would hit a 3-pointer on the play, one of his seven on the way to 33 points.

one of the guys that was runner-up for player of the year in our league (last year) and kind of had a rough first half of league play (from) a scoring standpoint. It was just one of the feelings you get as a coach sometimes. I don't get them very often, but I had a feeling he was going to have a big night, and he did."

Garcia had a feeling, too. "In pregame (my shots) were going in, so I felt pretty good before the game," the senior said. Garcia went 7-15 from deep, including two consecutive deep balls in the fourth quarter to send Umatilla from down one to up five. They were Umatilla's first baskets of the final

period, and positioned the home Vikings to go on a stretch run.

Garcia, though, was more happy with the win than with the scoring outburst.

"I could have, like, three points, and if we won I'd still be happy," he said.

Defensively, Umatilla battled a huge Vale front line that had at least three players over 6 foot 4, while Umatilla has just two regular rotation players at 6 foot 2.

Lete said the game plan was to double down on Vale's Levi Noethe and Tyson Mesa and try to force Vale to make bad passes that Umatilla could convert into easy baskets. Umatilla

forced 12 turnovers in the game.

"It was a great battle on our guys' end, for competing like that and not giving up because they could've easily done that," Lete said.

Umatilla hosts Vale again at 6:30 p.m. Thursday.

**JOSEPH 52, ECHO 48**

At Joseph, a slow start doomed the Echo Cougars, who fell to the Joseph Eagles 52-48 in overtime.

Michael Thompson was held to just 11 points, but he did grab 12 rebounds. Carlos Chavez led the Cougars (10-8, 6-3) in scoring with 21 points. Echo scored just five points in the first quarter on 2-13 shooting, but Joseph didn't do much better, netting just eight points. The game went to the break knotted at 16, and another poor quarter for Echo, the Cougars were down by seven before tying the game at the end of regulation. Echo shot just 29 percent (16-55) to Joseph's 39 percent (18-46).

Echo takes the floor again in a 7:30 p.m. home game against Nixyaawii Friday.

## Vale pulls away from the lady Vikings

EO MEDIA GROUP STAFF

Umatilla got a first-hand glimpse at what a championship basketball team looks like on Saturday when it fell to the reigning Class 3A state champion Vale Vikings 51-40.

Seventh-ranked Umatilla sparred with the champs for three quarters before the visiting Vikings wore them down at Umatilla High School.

A veteran ball club, third-ranked Vale (16-1, 5-0 Eastern Oregon League) kept their composure and weathered several Umatilla (16-3, 4-1 EOL) surges.

The final answer came in an 18-5 second half counterpunch that put Umatilla's upset intentions to bed. "If we know we can play with Vale, there's not a team in this state that we're worried

about it," Umatilla coach Scott Bow said.

Due to a previous postponement, the Umatilla girls will have ample opportunity to prove they can in the coming weeks. The teams will square off again in Umatilla again Thursday, a third time on Valentine's day at Vale, and possibly again in the EOL district title game the following week.

The step up in competition comes at a perfect time for Umatilla. Winners of seven consecutive entering Saturdays, Umatilla had begun to "coast" against weaker competition, Bow said, something a team with playoff aspirations can little afford.

"If we do a get playoff berth, seeing Vale this many times in a row is only going to make us stronger," he said.

**GIRLS BASKETBALL**

**ECHO 66, JOSEPH 45**

At Joseph, Echo's Elizabeth McCarty's scored 23 points and pulled down 13 rebounds as the Cougars ran away with a 66-45 win.

McCarty got her points despite a rough night from the floor. The senior was just 8 of 22 from the field, but made 9 of 13 from the charity stripe. Echo won despite being out-rebounded 61 to 48 Saturday night. The Cougars forced 33 turnovers, however, turning them into 19 points at the other end.

### GO SEE IT

#### Wednesday, February 4

No events scheduled

#### Thursday, February 5

**Wrestling**  
Hermiston vs. Pendleton, 7 p.m.  
**Girls Basketball**  
Umatilla vs. Vale, 3 p.m.  
**Boys Basketball**  
Umatilla vs. Vale, 5:30 p.m.

#### Friday, February 6

**Girls Basketball**  
Hermiston @ The Dalles, 7 p.m.  
Stanfield vs. Pilot Rock, 6 p.m.  
Echo vs. Nixyaawii, 6 p.m.  
**Boys Basketball**  
Hermiston vs. The Dalles, 7 p.m.  
Stanfield vs. Pilot Rock, 7:30 p.m.  
Echo vs. Nixyaawii, 7:30 p.m.

#### Saturday, January 7

**Wrestling**  
Hermiston @ Oregon Episcopal Tournament in Oregon City, 9 a.m.  
**Girls Basketball**  
Umatilla @ Nyssa, 4 p.m.  
Echo @ Powder Valley, 4 p.m.  
**Boys Basketball**  
Umatilla @ Nyssa, 5:30 p.m.  
Echo @ Powder Valley, 5:30 p.m.