



November 16, 2021

The La Grande School District, Gladstone School District, and Oregon School Activities Association (OSAA) are in close coordination regarding allegations of racial slurs during a recent 4A playoff football game on November 5, 2021. While the investigation of what occurred continues, we are issuing a joint statement to express an intent towards solidarity and reciprocity in resolving a difficult situation in order to build trust and strength in the relationship between our districts.

The La Grande School District deeply regrets that the Gladstone players, coaching staff, parents, and fans did not have a positive experience competing against La Grande High School. The district is proud of our history of sportsmanship, so we take the situation very seriously. The La Grande School District is responding to the incident in coordination with Gladstone School District and OSAA in acknowledgement of the need for conversation, investigation, and understanding at every level from district administration to coach to student. To that end, the OSAA will work with an independent investigator and take action upon completion of the investigation.

Together, we are diligently following applicable policies to gather information and take the appropriate actions, as well as going beyond what is required for the sake of our students:

1. The La Grande School District has worked with Gladstone School District as well as OSAA in sharing information gathered thus far as it relates to the following:

Incident reporting; Fact finding/information gathering; Frequent communication; Making a determination of findings; Taking administrative action; and Implementing preventative actions which include safety and support planning for our student athletes and stakeholders.

2. Both districts have been reviewing game film, interviewing athletes from both teams, and fact-finding with coaches from both teams.
3. La Grande High School and OSAA have been communicating with game officials and members of the chain crew to receive their official statements.
4. As we have sought to determine administrative action and potential sanctions; our mutual goal has been to ensure that a restorative and educational process is used to support administrative action and healing as well as prevent reoccurrence.
5. La Grande High School will provide Implicit Bias professional development for all athletes and coaches in our school and will ask that our league do the same.
6. Both districts are making plans to set up Captain-to-Captain, Athletic Director-to-Athletic Director, and Coach-to-Coach conversations to ensure collegiality between our teams.

7. La Grande High School and Gladstone High School will ensure OSAA S.T.A.R. Sportsmanship expectations are taught and promoted. In addition, both schools will ensure communication announcements at least 3 times per game as well as student assemblies. This includes guidance for all stakeholders to support with a focus on Safety, Tolerance, Acceptance, and Respect. To learn more about the OSAA S.T.A.R. Initiative go to: <https://www.osaa.org/equity/star-resources>
8. Both districts are setting up opportunities for pre- and/or post game meals to build strong relationships between the students on our teams.

Beyond following required processes and laws, these steps are designed to help students grow and to help our districts become more connected. Both districts, along with OSAA, want every student, coach, and school community member who goes to another district to have and promote an enjoyable, educational, and safe experience — whether at an athletic event or for any other purpose. This is part of creating a welcoming environment in our schools that is free from bullying, racial slurs, harassment, and other forms of bias.

This fall OSAA launched the S.T.A.R. Initiative to disrupt racism and combat discrimination at Oregon high school athletic events. Standing for Safety, Tolerance, Acceptance and Respect, the S.T.A.R. initiative provides training and resources to help schools become more equity-minded in events they host and eradicate discriminatory behaviors safely and respectfully. As part of the guidelines, schools are encouraged to post signage to help visiting participants and spectators know where facilities are and how to navigate an event; read a required S.T.A.R. public address at each OSAA-sanctioned event; and conduct a preseason meeting with student-athletes, coaches and parents to review the S.T.A.R. sportsmanship standards.

Our districts and OSAA will continue to communicate, listen, resolve, and move forward together so that students and our entire school communities can safely enjoy events in each other's districts. And with these goals in mind, the La Grande School District will continue to actively teach, model, and reinforce appropriate behavior by our student-athletes as they represent the district in all sports and activities.

The message we're sharing with our students and school communities is that words and actions matter, and that racial discrimination will not be tolerated at OSAA interscholastic activities. It's worth taking some time to examine and improve how we treat each other, how we compete, and how we honor one another. That's the power of athletics — to bring communities together, to educate students on how to interact while competing, and to turn challenges into opportunities for growth in our person-to-person and district-to-district relationships.

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