

## EASTERN OREGON 24, COLLEGE OF IDAHO 21



Photos by Ronald Bond/The Observer

Top: Sage DeLong, Zach Lacey and Chase Van Wyck celebrate after a sack by Lacey in the third quarter. Bottom: Kai Quinn threw for 326 yards in the win.



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Eastern Oregon's T.J. Hancock pulls in a one-handed catch during the third quarter of Saturday night's season opener against College of Idaho. The Mountaineers won 24-21 to claim their home opener for the fourth straight year.

# MOUNTIES FEND OFF COLLEGE OF IDAHO TO WIN THRILLING HOME OPENER

By Ronald Bond  
The Observer

Eastern Oregon's home opener against College of Idaho had a similar feel to the Mountaineers' home opener against Southern Oregon two years ago — EOU holding a late lead, trying to keep its opponent from marching downfield on its final possession.

Like that 2016 opener, this one went the way of the home team.

"Super proud of the kids," EOU Head Coach Tim Camp said. "We've worked super hard since Aug. 5 to get to this point. They talk about grit. They talk about resilience. We have really good senior leaders. They made some plays."

Kai Quinn passed for 326 yards and ran for a touchdown, Victor Dias added two rushing scores and

the Mountaineers opened the 2018 season — and christened the new turf at Community Stadium — with a hard-fought 24-21 win over College of Idaho Saturday night.

Eastern never trailed in winning its fourth straight home opener and ending a two-game slide against the Yotes.

But C of I pushed EOU to the limit late.

The Mountaineers seemed in control with a 24-14 lead before the Yotes' Isaiah Abdul returned a blocked punt 37 yards for a touchdown to make it a three-point game with 6:17 to play.

"That was a huge play by them," Camp said, adding he should have called a different block formation on the punt. "That's something we have to get fixed."

EOU managed to burn nearly 4-1/2 minutes off the clock on the ensuing drive, but couldn't run it out, giving C of I a chance. The Yotes, on the arm of backup quarterback Nathaniel Holcomb, drove to the EOU 43-yard line in just over a minute, aiming for at least a tying field goal.

But a fourth-down pass in the waning seconds went high and through the hands of C of I receiver Wes Fitzpatrick to seal the victory.

"The kids were locked in on the sidelines," Camp said. "Our discipline was better. That was the one thing about fall camp. We have to be disciplined to win those close games. We got a couple pass interference calls late, but they held tight. Defense got a couple picks. I would like to finish it out offensively, but at the same time we're in the infancy stages of this."

The Mountaineers' first attempt this season at their reinstated hurry-up offense netted 452 yards. The rushing attack accounted for all three scores, but gained just 11 yards in the first half and had only a one-yard scoring run by Dias as the teams played to a 7-7 tie at the break.

But the ground game came to life in the second half. Dias scored from 22 yards out on the first drive of the third quarter — one on which EOU had 38 yards rushing alone — for a 14-7 lead just 2:06 into the third. Eastern rushed for 115 yards after halftime.

"We played our game the way we know how to play it, and things started to open up," Dias, who finished with 79 yards rushing, said.

"(That's) an element that comes with running our offense the way that we do, which was fantastic. The holes were definitely there. The offensive linemen did a good job."

The Yotes — who were held to 295 yards of total offense — pulled even midway through the third on a 28-yard catch and run by Dominic Garzoli, his second touchdown of the game.

But a wild 28-yard reception by T.J. Hancock — a one-handed grab he cradled with his right arm while his left arm was being held by a defender — helped set up a Nathan Harden field goal to ultimately give the Mountaineers the lead for good, 17-14, late in the third.

See **Thriller** / Page 9A

## EOU men's soccer denied in overtime

■ Mountaineers rally from two-goal deficit, but Whitworth scores in extra session for 3-2 win

By Ronald Bond  
The Observer

The Eastern Oregon men's soccer team decided it wasn't going down without a fight in its first match under the lights at Community Stadium.

Although their rally from a two-goal deficit was ultimately undone in overtime, the Mountaineers felt there were quite a few positives from the contest to build off of.

Whitworth's Tyler Pangia scored the golden goal six minutes into overtime, and the Pirates escaped Community Stadium with a 3-2 victory Friday night after surrendering a 2-0 lead in the final 26 minutes of regulation.

The Mountaineers' ability to rally, in fact, pleased first-year Head Coach Zach Mills.

"That's what I'm excited about," Mills said. "Obviously the loss was super tough, but we were down 2-0 and said to ourselves, 'We have to either step up or get stepped on.' They really did a great job of just being resilient (and) showing what they're made of."

A slow, feel-it-out first half that saw the teams combine for just nine shots ended with Whitworth ahead 1-0 when Ethan Kem scored from 35 yards on a free kick in the 37th minute.



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Eastern Oregon's Elvis Pavon, right, goes airborne to head a pass downfield during the first half of the Mountaineers' home opener against Whitworth Friday night.

The lead reached 2-0 early in the second half on an Alex Lopez header off a corner kick. Chase Reidt had an opportunity to effectively ice the match in the 56th minute, but pushed a point-blank shot wide.

But a brief huddle on an

injury timeout and a formation change from a 4-4-2 diamond to a 4-3-3 with about 30 minutes to play in regulation flipped the momentum to the Mountaineers.

Just minutes later, it led to a scoring flurry.

Junior Alex Gutierrez took a pass from Austin Peterson in front of the net and scored from about 13 yards away to cut the lead in half in the 64th minute.

"I saw Austin coming down the wing. I had a little open

See **Soccer** / Page 8A

## Eastern drops three of four in tourney

■ Mountaineer volleyball falls 5-3 as it heads into CCC opener against Southern

Observer staff

The No. 15 Eastern Oregon volleyball team went just 1-3 at the Big Sky Invitational in Butte, Montana, losing Friday to Vanguard, California, in five sets, to Providence, Montana, in four sets, and to Rocky Mountain, Montana, Saturday in three sets. The Mountaineers salvaged a win in their final match, a three-set sweep over Montana Western.

### Friday Vanguard 3, Eastern Oregon 2

The Mountaineers went back and forth with the Lions, and even held a 2-1 lead through three sets, but came up just short in a 25-14, 22-25, 22-25, 25-20, 16-14 loss, their first of the season.

The teams played to a 14-14 tie in the fifth and final set before Vanguard nabbed the final two points for the match.

Megan Bunn and Hailee Ackerman both had 16 kills to lead the Mountaineers. Bunn added 17 digs — one of five EOU players with 11 or more digs — for her first of three double-doubles on the weekend, while Ackerman had five blocks. Kiley McMurtrey led EOU with 19 digs and Nina

See **Volleyball** / Page 8A