

Sports

No. 22 Montana Western
at
Eastern Oregon
1 p.m. Sat., Community Stadium



Ronald Bond/The Observer

EOU's Tanner Zenke, left, returns a kickoff during practice Wednesday. The Mountaineers enter Saturday's matchup against Montana Western after losing back-to-back games.

■ Mountaineers look to rebound from two straight losses, fix third-quarter woes as they return home to face undefeated Bulldogs

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The third quarter has been a detriment for the Eastern Oregon Mountaineers in their last two games, one that they know needs to be corrected if they're going to get back in the win column.

In fact, it's a proving point for the football team, according to EOU running back Victor Dias.

"(We're) excited to have the opportunity to prove that we can finish games, that we have the team to finish games and beat teams that are good in close games," he said.

Eastern gets its first crack at righting the third quarter woes — and tries to end a two-game losing streak — when it hosts No. 22 and undefeated Montana Western Saturday at Community Stadium.

"The focus has been to attack the third quarter, to come out at

halftime with the mentality that regardless of whatever is on the scoreboard we can't become complacent," Dias said.

As the third quarter has gone for EOU so has the game result. The Mountaineers outscored College of Idaho 10-7 in the third quarter to break a 7-7 tie en route to a 24-21 win in their season opener.

In the previous two contests, though, it's been a different story. The Mountaineers were outscored by Southern Oregon and Montana Tech a combined 43-3 in the third. EOU led both those games at halftime, but saw the leads vanish in 32-13 and 24-17 losses to those respective teams.

EOU Head Coach Tim Camp believes the team isn't far off from where it needs to be, and said if the Mountaineers could have "create(d) our own breaks, we could be sitting

at 3-0 right now," rather than 1-2.

"We've been up on two teams and couldn't finish," Camp said. "We had some missed opportunities, but at the same time (we need to) just get better. Enjoy the process of coming out here and playing football and having a good attitude — and they do. There was a lot of energy out here (Wednesday). Hopefully it translates into a win on Saturday."

Turnovers hurt EOU in those two games. The Mountaineers' seven total giveaways came in the second half the last two weeks, and six were in the third quarter. Three of them came during a four-play sequence against Montana Tech following a leg injury that knocked quarterback Kai Quinn out of the game.

Quinn has been practicing since, but Camp said Wednesday who starts under center against the

Bulldogs — Quinn, Saige Wilkerson or Joey Aliff — hasn't been decided.

"I'll make that decision as it gets closer. I never want to play anybody who's hurt or not 100 percent," he said.

The offense has struggled to put points on the board, averaging just 18 points per contest so far, but does lead the Frontier Conference in passing, averaging 286 yards per game. Conversely, though, EOU is eighth in rushing (97 yards per game).

"We certainly have not been effective offensively in the third quarter, specifically," Dias said. "That reared its ugly head at Tech."

The defense is only giving up 325 yards per contest — third best in the Frontier — and has forced seven turnovers, including four interceptions by defensive back Zack Jacobs. EOU has surrendered nearly 26

points per game, but one touchdown came after a blocked punt, one on a fumble return and all three allowed to Montana Tech were on a short field after a turnover.

Yet Jacobs said there are plenty of areas for the defense to improve.

"We've been playing pretty good (defense) lately, but we also have our mistakes that we can fix to hold even two more touchdowns off (the board in) those previous games," he said. "We have to come in with a high energy and confidence, believing in one another, come out and give it all we got."

Camp added the team did miss opportunities for a couple more interceptions against both Southern Oregon and Montana Tech. And while there are areas the team can improve defensively — such as getting lined up and getting everyone

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OSU finding success in balanced attack

By Steve Gress
Corvallis Gazette-Times

Oregon State was dead last in the Pac-12 conference in total offense last season as the Beavers went 1-11.

They managed just 333.8 yards a game and passed for only 196.2.

But under first-year coach Jonathan Smith and offensive coordinator Brian Lindgren, the Beavers have been an offensive juggernaut over the first three games.

Oregon State (1-2) leads the Pac-12 with 1,581 total yards for an average of 527 per game heading into Saturday's Pac-12 opener against Arizona (1-2) inside Reser Stadium. Kickoff is 1 p.m.

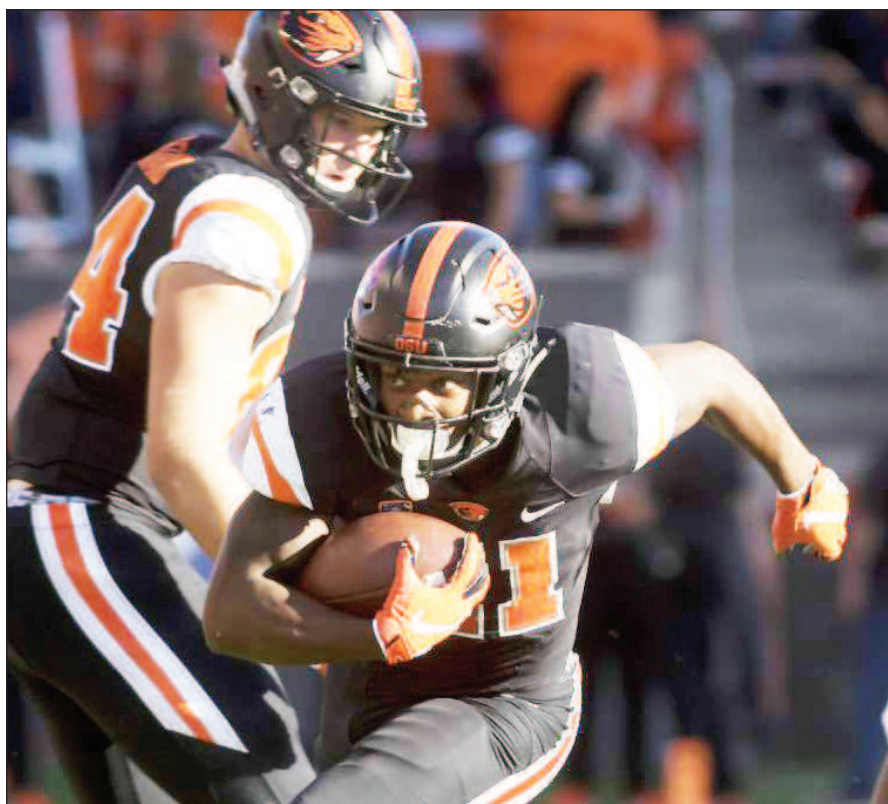
The record for most total yards in a season is 6,071, set over 13 games in 2013; that's an average of 467 per game.

While Lindgren said Tuesday there are still a lot of games to be played, the Beavers have started well.

Lindgren credits the staff Smith has put together and each coach's ability to get the players ready. And that the players are buying into the new system.

"They are starting to see that, hey what I'm doing during the week can translate to Saturdays," Lindgren said Tuesday. "We've got a lot of stuff to clean up and we're not there by any means. But I like the direction we're heading."

The Beavers had 459 yards passing in last week's loss at Nevada, using



Andy Cripe/The Corvallis Gazette-Times via AP

Beavers running back Artavis Pierce carries the ball against Southern Utah on Sept. 8 in Corvallis.

both Conor Blount and Jake Luton at quarterback. It was the sixth most yards passing in a game in school history.

Luton was 12 of 35 for 284 yards and Blount finished 12 of 20 for 175 yards.

Isaiah Hodgins had 14 catches for 200

yards and Timmy Hernandez added 11 for 116.

"The guys have done a really good job," Luton said. "Like I've said, the receivers, I just got the ball in their hands."

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PREP ROUNDUP

Elgin gets back on track with win

Observer staff

The Elgin Huskies football team bounced back from their loss last week to Wallowa in a big way, blowing out the Powder Valley Badgers at home in Special District 3-East play Thursday, 58-20.

"Overall, this was another big win for us, and we were able to score in all three phases of the game," Elgin head coach Jeff Rysdam said.

Elgin amassed 489 total yards, including 418 on the ground. Wyatt Hallgarth led the Huskies with 184 yards rushing and two touchdowns. Tristan Simpson added 156 rushing yards and two scores and Gage McKay rushed for 80 yards and a touchdown.

Reece Dixon rushed for 35 yards and a touchdown for Powder Valley, which managed just 179 yards

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EOU men stay at 7th

Observer staff

The Eastern Oregon men's cross country team held steady at No. 7 in Wednesday's installment of the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics coaches poll.

The Mountaineers received 444 points in poll ahead of their first run of the 2018 season, which is their home EOU Invitational tonight at Lane Farms.

Eastern is one of four ranked Cascade Collegiate Conference teams, three of which are in the top 10. Southern Oregon is tied for second, College of Idaho is ranked fifth and Oregon Tech is 13th.

