

Eastern takes third



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Eastern Oregon's Lane Inwards finished fourth to pace the men's cross country team Friday.

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

Lane Inwards had a strong final kick to fight his way to fourth place individually and lead the No. 7 Eastern Oregon men's cross country team to a third-place finish at the EOU Invitational Friday at a windy Lane Farms east of La Grande. The women's team also posted a third-place finish, with Katie Jo Gebhardt and Michelle Herbes — both freshmen — finishing seventh and eighth to lead the Mountaineers.

"It being our opener, I was a little unsure of the pace I wanted to go with the wind," Inwards said. "I started out with the wind and felt really good, and then right as that front pack got ahead of me was when the wind hit us. I got a bit timid to go with (them), but I tried to trust myself. (Did) really good at finishing late and strong."

Inwards, who finished the race in 26:48.81, was the only Mountaineer to finish in the top 10 on the men's side in the 8K race. A trio of EOU runners — Dustin Zimmerly (27:45.53), Hunter Schiess (28:00.51) and Robie Swanson (28:01.23) — followed in 14th through 16th, respectively, and Brandon Hartill (29:04.82) placed 22nd.

The Mountaineers scored 68 points to trail the other two teams in the competition — first-place Northwest Nazarene University (30 point) and runner-up College of Idaho (32). Eastern Oregon Head Coach Ben Welch said he didn't expect the men's team to fall to third in the race and hopes to get some stronger performances moving forward, but said even in

the struggle there were some positives.

"We talk about trying to push through the middle (of the race). Our top three executed that extremely well," Welch said.

He also commended Inwards.

"Lane ran very, very well. So did Hunter Schiess back behind him, and Robie Swanson, one of our freshmen," Welch said.

The women's underclassmen also continued their strong start to the season. In addition to the efforts by Gebhardt (20:12.49) and Herbes (20:14.17) in the 5K race, three other freshmen were among the top five on the team Friday. Molly Gulden (20:41.10) followed in 12th, while Calista Van Delden (21:34.23) was 17th and Dierdre McKey (21:40.39) was 18th.

"(They) all ran really well, especially for never having raced this course," Welch said of his top runners. "Behind that there were good things going on. We have some people that need to figure out how to push through fatigue, but that's part of a young team."

It was also the second race in a row to start the season that Gebhardt had led the Mountaineers.

"She's stepped up to the challenge, is extremely tough, and she's talented," Welch said of Gebhardt.

C of I was the winner on the women's side with 32 points, with NNU (34) and EOU (62) following.

The Mountaineers return to action Saturday at the Willamette Invitational in Salem.



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Katie Jo Gebhardt led the EOU women for the second straight race with a seventh-place finish.

FIRMAN

Continued from Page 7A placed 61st and Ella Coughlan (21:36.60) was 64th. Karli Bedard (23:48.80) placed 148th, and Charlotte McDonald (26:44.20) was 221st.

La Grande, which was 16th with 442 points, was led by Abby Crews, who took 31st in 20:47.20. Maia Vandervlugt (21:23.20) was 53rd. Corbyn Sexton (23:26) followed in 132nd, Jenna Ault (23:50.40) was 150th and Yo Saito (24:54.40) was 182nd. There were 260 runners.

The teams all run at the Baker Invitational Friday. **Elgin runs at Connell**

Four Elgin Huskies took part in the Connell Invitational Saturday in Connell, Washington.

Jocelyn Palmer was the top finisher on the girls side, taking 10th with a time of 21:45.72, and Kaylee Smith was 52nd in 28:51.50.

On the boys side, Jordan Palmer came in 43rd in 20:19.83, and Kaden McClure was 51st in 20:40.09.

Elgin is back in action Thursday at the Bulldog Fest in Hermiston.



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Entries must be postmarked by midnight this Thursday or dropped off at The La Grande Observer by 4 p.m. this Friday. Late entries will be considered invalid.

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