

Sports

No. 12 Rocky Mountain
at
No. 24 Eastern Oregon
Noon, Sat., Community Stadium



RISE TO THE OCCASION

Ronald Bond/The Observer

Eastern Oregon's T.J. Hancock, left, and Eli Teuteu play a tipped ball on a pass during practice Tuesday. The Mountaineers host No. 12 Rocky Mountain Saturday for senior day.

■ Mountaineers hope to shake off rough outing against College of Idaho with Frontier-leading Battlin' Bears coming to town

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

Nathan Harden has been trying not to dwell on the fact he and 13 other seniors will be taking the field at Community Stadium for the final time on Saturday.

"It's pretty sad, to be honest," the senior kicker said. "It'll be fun, though, and I'm glad (the game is) against a good team and there are a lot of things riding on this for us. It's a good one to go out there and have an exciting last (game)."

The matchup isn't against just "a good team," though. It's against No. 12 Rocky Mountain, which enters Saturday's contest as the hottest

team in the Frontier Conference with its current five-game winning streak and as the FC leader, holding a tiebreaker over Montana Western, who, like Rocky, is 6-2 in FC play.

The Mountaineers, who are ranked 24th, still have a lot to play for entering the contest. They have their backs against the wall, though, following last weekend's 48-24 loss at rival College of Idaho. EOU had issues in every facet of the game, allowing a season-worst 612 yards, turning the ball over four times and missing two field goals. The loss dropped the Mountaineers to third in the conference at 5-3, hampering their conference

title and playoff aspirations. Even if Eastern won Saturday and next weekend at Carroll College, they would still need help in the form of another loss by Montana Western to reach those goals.

"We didn't play very well last weekend. Everyone knows that," Harden said. "Offense, defense and special teams did not perform to the best of their abilities. We're going to focus more on going back to the fundamentals, and it's senior week, so we're trying to have fun with it too."

Senior offensive lineman Alec Yangos said the team seems to play best when it's in a corner, and he

looks for the team to do so Saturday. "We always rise to the occasion, no matter who we're playing, and especially after a tough loss like that," he said. "We'll bounce back really well. I'm pretty confident this week."

In all three of its losses, Yangos said, EOU hurt itself the most — and that is indeed the case. The Mountaineers committed 11 turnovers in their three losses, compared to just nine in five victories.

"It comes down to us doing our thing. All of our losses this year have been us beating ourselves," Yangos said. "If we do our thing, it doesn't matter who we play against."

It's going to be in the Mounties' favor."

When Eastern's offense is humming, it's near the top of the Frontier, and it'll need that offense to be in full gear against an equally potent — if not more so — Rocky Mountain attack. The teams are No. 1 and 2 in the FC in scoring (RMC 36.1 points per game, EOU 31.9), total yards per game (RMC 474, EOU 467) and passing yards per game (EOU 335, RMC 314). They boast the top two players in total offense in EOU quarterback Kai Quinn (350 yards per game) and Rocky QB Jacob Bakken (324). They also have

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Scared you twice: Tigers win Halloween game on PKs, again

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

Oct. 31 is the day ghouls, ghosts and goblins come out, but the last two years, the biggest Halloween fright in La Grande has been at the girls soccer playoff game.

A year ago, the Tigers needed penalty kicks to defeat Yamhill-Carlton in the first round.

Wednesday, they went to penalty kicks against North Marion — and like last year escaped with a victory.

Faith Akers made a crucial save late, Audrey Garlitz made the game-winning PK, and La Grande won the penalty shootout, 4-3, over the North Marion Huskies after the teams played to a 2-2 tie through 100 minutes of action.

"This is the second year in a row we've had a playoff game on Halloween, and we won the shootout. I'm just so proud that we stayed composed the whole time and I'm so happy we won," Akers, who had six saves, said.

Garlitz added: "They were just there telling me I could



Ronald Bond/The Observer

The La Grande girls soccer team celebrates after winning a penalty kick shootout over North Marion in the first round Wednesday. The Tigers and Huskies played to a 2-2 tie, and LHS won the shootout, 4-3, to advance.

do it. We've been practicing this so many times. They said, 'We did it last year, and we could do it again this year.'"

After North Marion's Mya

Hammack and La Grande's Alaina Carson put home their first penalty kicks, Akers lunged right to stop a shot by North Marion's Marissa Colby. Kara Gooder-

ham followed with a successful PK for La Grande and a 2-1 lead.

"That was awesome," La Grande Head Coach Kristen Rice said of

Akers' stop. "I think that just energized our team, and it helped feed us to keep going and finish strong."

Akers said the team being in the same position a year

ago helped, as did ample time practicing PKs during the week.

"I knew what (to prepare for in PKs) because of last year," she said. "Honestly PKs are just a guessing game. I just guessed right and I got really lucky."

Katie Perry was successful on her kick to put the Tigers up 3-2, and after La Grande missed on the first opportunity to put the match away, Garlitz — a freshman who has been a spark plug off the bench for La Grande this fall — coolly connected on the winning kick and was subsequently mobbed by her team.

"I was nervous at first," Garlitz said. "Once I hit it, I knew it was going to go in. My team was there to support me before shooting it. That gave me the confidence."

The nerve-racking shootout was set up by an almost equally spooky final eight minutes of regulation and 20 scoreless minutes of overtime.

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