

EOU storms back to win opener at nationals

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

What a thrilling way to start the postseason for the Eastern Oregon volleyball team.

The 11th-ranked Mountaineers rallied from down a set to win their first game of pool play at the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics national championships over No. 21 Central Methodist Tuesday, 25-21, 18-25, 14-25, 25-21, 15-10.

"It doesn't matter if you do it in three, four or five (sets) if you get it done," EOU Head Coach Kaki McLean-Morehead said. "I was impressed with our ability to stay the course."

The teams played to three ties early in the final set, the last at 6-6, before Eastern took control with a 6-1 run. Hailee Ackerman had two kills and a block in the scoring burst, and a block by Megan Bunn and Jet Taylor gave Eastern a 12-7 lead. The Eagles got within three points on a Jane Kickham kill, but a block by Taylor Tibbetts and Allyson Crisp gave EOU match point, and two points later, Tibbetts completed the rally with her 10th kill.

In a strong first set, EOU never trailed and led by as many as eight points. The Mountaineers took the set when Crisp finished with a kill. Tibbetts had four kills and two blocks in the first set.

The Eagles took over the lead with a solid second and third set behind a strong front-line effort led by Mariana do Nascimento. The Eagles'



Cindy Potter/Columbia College Athletics

The Eastern Oregon volleyball team shook off a 2-1 deficit to top Central Methodist in five sets Tuesday to open pool play. Shown from left is Megan Bunn, Kiley McMurtrey, Allyson Crisp, Holli Mullins and Madison Pilon.

junior, who recorded a match-high 19 kills and 10 blocks, had six kills and four blocks in the second set alone and added four more kills in the third set. CMU had eight blocks in sets 2 and 3, and took a 2-1 lead after Grace Stumbaugh's kill ended the third set.

McLean-Morehead acknowledged CMU's block was strong in those sets, but added, "It also was their serve/serve-receive game. They did a much better job (in sets 2 and 3). We couldn't get them out of system, and

in turn they were making us very predictable."

The Mountaineers shook off the rough third with an early kill by Taylor giving EOU a 10-5 lead in the fourth set. The Eagles closed to within two points in four occasions in the set, but a 6-2 run, finished off by a block from Tibbetts and Taylor, put the Mountaineers up 21-15. A block by Crisp ended the set to force the decisive fifth.

"Really it was just taking a breath and realizing what we need to do and play the kind

of volleyball we can play," the coach said.

EOU's victory came in spite of Central Methodist recording higher numbers in kills (69-54), attack percentage (.222-.128) and digs (111-90). The Mountaineers did shake off an early disadvantage

in blocks to collect 13 on the match, equal to that of CMU. A major advantage in serving — Eastern had nine aces to just one for Central Methodist — gave EOU a boost, with Ackerman doling out four aces and Kiley McMurtrey serving up three.

"Those definitely made a huge difference for us," McLean-Morehead said of the aces and the strong serving. "There's a difference when we're serving aggressively."

Bunn led the Mountaineers' offense in the victory with 13 kills. Ackerman recorded eight kills, and Crisp had seven kills and seven blocks, including two solo blocks. Taylor came off the bench to add six kills and four block assists, and Tibbetts also recorded four block assists.

EOU was balanced on both offense and defense. McMurtrey had a team best 25 digs, Bunn had 22, Madison Pilon tallied 12, and Holli Mullins added 11. Pilon dished out a team-best 27 assists, and Sarah Carpenter added 17.

Along with the big match from do Nascimento, CMU had three players — Kickham, Marija Janjusevic and Viviane Viana — each add 11 kills. Alma Flores had 36 digs, and Shannon Peters recorded 33 assists.

EOU (24-7 overall) faced Oklahoma City at 10 a.m. this morning in its second pool play contest. A win over the Stars, coupled with Lindsey Wilson four-set win over Central Methodist earlier this morning, would guarantee Eastern advances out of pool play.

LOCAL SCHEDULE

Thursday COLLEGE VOLLEYBALL

- Eastern Oregon vs. Lindsey Wilson, Kentucky, NAIA national championships, pool play, 10 a.m.

Friday

WOMEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL

- Southern Oregon at Eastern Oregon, 5:30 p.m.

MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL

- Southern Oregon at Eastern Oregon, 7:30 p.m.

MEN'S COLLEGE WRESTLING

- Eastern Oregon at Providence Duals, Great Falls, Montana, all day

WOMEN'S COLLEGE WRESTLING

- Eastern Oregon at Providence Dual Tournament, Great Falls, Montana, all day

COLLEGE VOLLEYBALL

- Eastern Oregon vs. TBD, NAIA national championships, first round, TBD

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL

- Union at Imbler, 7:30 p.m.

- Crane at Enterprise, 7:30 p.m.

- Wallowa vs. Huntington, Elgin Lions Tournament, 1 p.m.

- Elgin vs. La Grande JV, Elgin Lions Tournament, 4:30 p.m.

- Prairie City at Joseph, 7:30 p.m.

- Adrian at Cove, 6:30 p.m.

- Powder Valley vs. North Lake, Jordan Valley, 3:30 p.m.

PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL

- Elgin vs. La Grande JV, Elgin Lions Tournament, 3 p.m.

- Union at Imbler, 6 p.m.

- Adrian at Cove, 5 p.m.

- Powder Valley vs. North Lake, Jordan Valley, 2 p.m.

- Crane at Enterprise, 6 p.m.

- Wallowa vs. Huntington, Elgin Lions Tournament, 11:30 a.m.

- Prairie City at Joseph, 6 p.m.

PREP WRESTLING

- Joseph/Wallowa, Enterprise, Union/Cove, Elgin, Imbler at Enterprise Kickoff Tournament, 10 a.m.

— Subject to change



Ronald Bond/Observer file photo

Yahaira Chavarria-Mondragon, left, Camie Edgington and the Eastern Oregon women's soccer team saw its season end with a 3-0 loss to second-ranked William Carey Tuesday.

Historic season comes to an end for women's soccer

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

Arguably one of the best — if not the best — seasons in the history of the Eastern Oregon women's soccer program has come to an end.

Second-ranked William Carey, which entered play Tuesday as the second-most prolific scoring team in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics, scored three goals in the second half to pull away from the No. 20 Mountaineers, 3-0, Tuesday morning in Orange Beach, Alabama.

"I think that's where some of their experience (at nationals) came in and our inexperience got the best of us," EOU Head Coach Jacob Plocher said of the second half.

The Mountaineers, who were making their first-ever appearance in the NAIA's second round, hung with last year's national semifinalist through a tight first half that ended with the teams in a scoreless tie. The teams combined to take just nine shots, and EOU's Kaitlyn McLeod had the only shot on goal.

"We battled with them back and forth," Plocher said. "Things were close. We had some

opportunities (and) they had some opportunities."

The second half, though, was all Crusaders. Kelly Stubbington scored an unassisted goal in the 49th minute to give WCU the lead for good. Shantel Thompson and Silvia Leonessi — half of the Crusaders four players to reach double digit goals this season — scored in the 57th and 68th minutes, respectively, to put the game out of reach.

During the second half, WCU amped up its offense, taking nine of its 10 shots on goal while Cydni Cottrell recorded six saves.

The Mountaineers did register four shots on goal, but all were stopped by WCU keeper Abby Baravik.

The Mountaineers finish with a record of 16-3-2, one win shy of the program record set in 2015. Eastern, however, claimed its second consecutive Cascade Collegiate Conference championship, earned the program's first-ever national ranking and advanced further in the playoffs than the 2015 team did.

"We just talked about how, the past two years, we've set the standard for EOU soccer moving forward," Plocher said.

The season of giving is upon us! We can't help but to reflect on the past year and all those who have been so generous towards our school and supported our efforts to keep our children safe, to help them learn, and to be good citizens. So many wonderful organizations and community members have supported our schools and made programs possible for our youth.

One organization that our district is extremely thankful for is the Soroptimist International of La Grande. For the last 20 years, the women of this organization have support our school district. The Soroptimist Grant helps fund LaGrande School District's 3rd Grade Swim Lesson Program. La Grande School District, in conjunction with the City of La Grande, and MidCo Bus Company, who provides free transportation, supports this swim program. This project is for the betterment of our community by keeping our students healthy and safe around water, especially since we have a river in our community. By teaching our students how to swim it empowers boys and girls to enjoy a life-long physical activity that is healthy and could be life-saving. This opportunity supports families who are unable to provide swim lessons for their children so they stay safe and healthy.

The Center for Disease control website states that drownings are the second largest cause of death for children ages 1-14. Our hope is to give our students a lifelong skill that will keep them safe as well as provide a healthy activity. This project helps sustain our community pool, keeps children in our community safe, and hopefully increases the number of students involved in our local swim club and high school swim team.

Thank you Soroptimist International for providing the funds year after year to sustain this valuable program. This is a true example of the spirit of giving, by the sharing of resources to improve the lives of children and families.

Sincerely,
Central School,
Greenwood School,
and
Island City School.

