



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Grayson Jensen and the La Grande boys swim team are competing in eight event at the state swim meet Friday and Saturday.

## Tigers' swim teams hope to get into trophy range at state meet

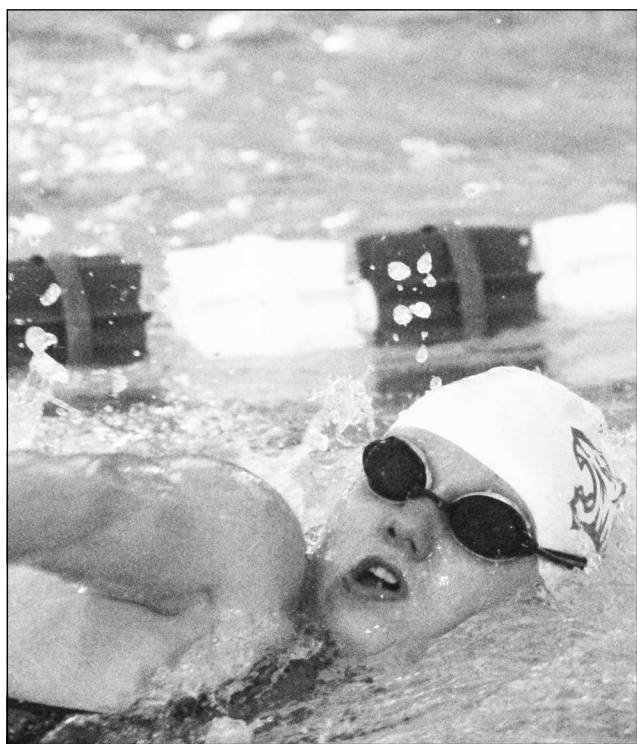
By Ronald Bond  
The Observer

The La Grande Tigers swim team is in position to score well — and, if the chips fall the right way, possibly bring home a top-four trophy — on both the boys and girls ledgers as the Tigers get set for the Class 4A/3A/2A/1A State Swim Meet Friday and Saturday at Tualatin Hills Aquatic Center in Beaverton.

“We’re actually in a pretty good spot overall. If we can keep our heads about us, we should be in a spot where we could score points,” Head Coach Darren Dutto said.

The LHS boys are coming off a district championship Friday and have racers competing in eight events with four legitimate opportunities to be in at least the top three and maybe bring home a couple individual state champions or have champions in relay. Senior Garren Dutto will enter the weekend as the favorite in both his individual events — the boys 50-yard freestyle and 100 freestyle. He completed the respective races last week at district in 21.83 and 48.56 seconds, both of which are the best times headed into the state meet. In fact, he’s nearly a second ahead of the next best time in the 50 freestyle.

The Tigers also have changes to place high in both the 200 freestyle relay and the 200 medley relay, which enter state seeded second and third, respectively. La Grande won both races at the district meet, with Dutto, T.J. Clay, Grayson Jensen and Caden



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Kennedy Kruse is one of the athletes who helped the LHS girls team land a spot in all 10 events at state.

Ricker the district swimmers in those events.

How those four races go could determine if La Grande has a chance to crack into the top four and bring home a trophy, which would be the Tigers’ first since taking second in 2017. LHS was fifth last year.

The Tigers have competitors who are on the bubble in three events: the 200 individual medley (Logan Flynn), the 100 backstroke (Clay) and the 100 breaststroke (Jensen). All three are seeded seventh headed into Friday’s preliminary races, and would need to get into the top six to reach the finals and score points for the team.

The final team is the 400 freestyle relay of Devin Ingram, Flynn, James Thurman and Adam Remily, which is seeded 12th.

The girls team has an equally good — if not better — opportunity to finish near the top at state. The Tigers, who finished second in the district meet, have an athlete or team in all 11 events, five of which are seeded third or better and two additional individuals currently seeding in scoring range at sixth.

The girls 200 medley relay team of Aryana Bouten, Romyne Ricker, Kristal Jensen and Reagan Kruse heads into state off a district title in the event the top seed after posting a time of 1:53.61 at Friday’s district meet.

The Tigers also have the No. 2-seeded 200 freestyle relay team of Ricker, Laramie Ricker, Kruse and Jensen, and have two second-

See **Tigers** / Page 7A



Observer file photo

Head Coach Tim Camp and the Eastern Oregon football coaching staff have added 24 recruits — seven transfers and 17 freshmen — to the program ahead of the 2019 season.

## Eastern football brings in its next wave of recruits

By Ronald Bond  
The Observer

The Eastern Oregon men’s football program last week announced the signing of 24 student-athletes to the roster ahead of the 2019 season as the Mountaineers look to build off of last season’s 6-4 record.

EOU inked 24 players — 17 freshmen and seven transfers — in the upcoming class. The hardest-hit areas on the roster from graduation is on offense, and this class should help address that issue.

Eight of the signees are listed by EOU Head Coach Tim Camp as “biggs” — offensive and/or defensive linemen — and nearly all of them played on both sides of the ball in high school. The lone transfer among the biggs is Travis Tucker, originally from Plumas Lake, California, just north of Sacramento, who is transferring from Sacramento City College.

Camp added seven freshmen biggs: Ben Cunningham from Clarkston, Washington; Bryden Esquibel from Cheney, Washington; Dakota Hibbs from Zillah, Washington; Tony Herrmann from Connell, Washington; Cole Schultz from Ridgefield, Washington; Everett Willard from Pendleton; and Dillon Young from Redmond.

The group is a portion of the players EOU will call on to replace three starters on the offensive line in Mick Wilson, Alec Yangos and Colten Alefteras.

Camp named Hibbs as a freshmen who could step up and have a role early on for EOU.

“He is extremely athletic and will make a huge impact,” Camp said.

EOU also has to replace five wide receivers, including the most prolific pass-catcher in program history, Brenden Kelly. The Mountaineers inked 11 “skill” players, five of whom played wide receiver: freshmen Riley Brown, of Pasco, Washington; Chris Gray of Richland, Washington; Jayden Moran, of Caldwell, Idaho; Drew Reyes of Yakima, Washington; and transfer Michael Bibe, originally of Kennewick, Washington, who will be coming over to EOU from Frontier Conference rival Rocky Mountain.

The other six skill players signed include Christian Blaser, a transfer from Boise State who was a high school quarterback at Rocky Mountain in Meridian, Idaho; Aaron Washington Jr., a defensive back from Portland who played at Central Catholic and is transferring from Saddleback College; and Shanon Griffin, a quarterback from Long Beach, California, who transferred from Humboldt

State. The additional freshmen skill players are linebacker/tight end Ethan Boisselle from Zillah; quarterback/defensive back Andrew James of Hermiston; and running back/linebacker Shawn Yeager of Pendleton.

The Mountaineers rounded out their signing class with four “combo” players and a kicker. The combo players are the sixth transfer Soloman Taylor, a running back/linebacker from Rigby, Idaho and Boise State; Hayden Brandon, a linebacker/tight end from Kuna, Idaho; Willie Camp, Tim Camp’s son, a linebacker and tight end from Pendleton; and Colby Preston, a running back/linebacker from Sparks, Nevada. The final transfer is kicker Jaiden Machuca from Parker, Colorado and Presentation College in South Dakota.

Tim Camp will get to fulfill a desire of his in coaching his son, and called both him and James two good additions to the team.

Getting my son and Andrew, two very athletic young men to stay on the east side of the state and not go to (Division II) schools or even Big Sky schools is great for us in my opinion,” he said.

Preston is another freshman who could have an impact right away.

“(He’s a) long, physical linebacker,” Camp said. “We will see how the transition goes from high school.”

The class is the smallest EOU has signed in the last six seasons, with just the 2014 signing class, which had 22 members, lower during that time. Three of the previous four classes had at least 32 players signed, with a maximum during that stretch of 47 signed in 2015. Camp noted, though, there are more than 90 players already in the locker room for the team.

Camp also continued a recent trend of going after homegrown and Northwest talent. Twenty of the 24 signees played their high school ball in the Pacific Northwest — 10 in Washington, six in Oregon and four in Idaho.

“Once a player sees Eastern in person, they see the quality of education that they can receive here and the quality of football that is being played in the Frontier Conference,” he said of what draws players to the program.

The coach also pulled four athletes from Northeast Oregon, including three from Pendleton, which has become a pipeline in recent years.

“I think anytime that you can recruit young men to stay close to home and get a great education we are doing something right,” Camp said.

CHECK OUT THE  
**Local Sports Report...**

ON THE  
**Johnny Ballgame Show**

**THE OBSERVER**

Tune into the Johnny Ballgame Show for the Local Sports Report with Observer Sports Editor Ronald Bond at 5:30 p.m. each Wednesday.



Listen to the Johnny Ballgame Show from 3-6 p.m. Monday through Friday on SuperTalk 1450 AM.

