

## Mountaineers return to second round

By Ronald Bond  
The Observer

The Eastern Oregon women's basketball team won its first-round game at the NAIA National Championships for the third straight year.

Jane Nelson scored 21 points, Maya Ah You-Dias added 18 and the Mountaineers never trailed in earning a 70-61 win over St. Francis, Indiana, Wednesday in Sioux City, Iowa.

"Our starters were dialed in and they were ready," Head Coach Anji Weissenfluh said. "They stepped up... Our starters played their tails off."

Nelson turned in her top scoring effort of the season, eclipsing two prior 20-point games. She had 12 points in the second quarter alone, with a 3-pointer and a steal for a layup giving EOU its first double-digit lead of the game at 23-12 with 6:48 to play in the half. Another 3 by Nelson later in the half and a trey from Maren Herrud made it a 14-point game.

"The bigger the game the bigger Jane comes ready to play," Weissenfluh said. "She plays with a lot of confidence. She's smart and disciplined."

The Mountaineers led 36-25 at the half, and were ahead by as many as 15



Iain Dexter/EOU Athletics

Jane Nelson scored 21 points, her top mark with Eastern Oregon, in a 70-61 win over St. Francis, Indiana.

points in the third quarter before the Cougars rallied, getting within 53-48 early in the fourth when Savannah Buck's 3-pointer capped a 10-2 run.

But EOU scored the next seven points on two Ah You-Dias free throws, a basket by Herrud and a 3-pointer by Madison Crews to extend the margin

back to 60-48 with 6:57 to play. The Cougars never pulled closer than eight points the rest of the way.

While Weissenfluh said St. Francis didn't necessarily key in on trying to stop Ah You-Dias, the Mountaineers' leading scorer, the Cougars "paid attention to her." The



Iain Dexter/EOU Athletics

Madison Crews had six points and six assists, and hit a 3-pointer to cap a key 7-0 run in the fourth quarter.

coach said St. Francis double-teamed the post players a lot — noting Ah You-Dias played in the post Wednesday — which led to EOU getting open looks from other players.

"Our whole gameplan going in was make the extra pass," Weissenfluh said. "Someone is going to be open. They did great

(and) knew where the open person was."

Weissenfluh also said prior to the game the Mountaineers needed to control the boards, and EOU did just that. Eastern owned a 35-27 advantage in rebounding, with both Ah You-Dias and Kylie Smith grabbing six boards to lead the way.

The coach credited both Smith and Julia Hanni for their efforts as each logged more minutes than usual and impacted the game on the defensive end.

"(They) gave us, combined, the 47 most valuable minutes of the year," she said. "They ran the floor, they defended (and) they took care of the ball. They played really well. I was proud of how they stepped up."

Herrud added nine points, and Crews had six points and six assists.

"She made a couple 3-pointers," Weissenfluh said of Crews. "She facilitated the ball where it needed to be (and) she played heavy minutes."

Kara Gerka had 26 points to lead the Cougars. Whitney Will added 10 points.

EOU (29-3 overall), which is one win away from a third consecutive 30-win season, faced Indiana Tech at 6:30 a.m. PST this morning in the second round.

"They're long," Weissenfluh said of Indiana Tech, which entered the contest at 31-3. "Other than the point guard, they're about 5-10 and 5-11. They got a couple good shooters. It's a good matchup. We're going to have to defend, rebound (and) stay out of foul trouble." ■

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