

Higa, Freeman all-Americans

Observer staff

Macy Higa took fourth in her weight class and Cassidy Freeman was sixth as both earned all-American nods to lead the Eastern Oregon women's wrestling team to 13th place in the first ever NAIA Women's National Invitational Saturday in Jamestown, North Dakota.

The top seven finishers in each weight class garnered all-American honors in the event, according to the NAIA website.

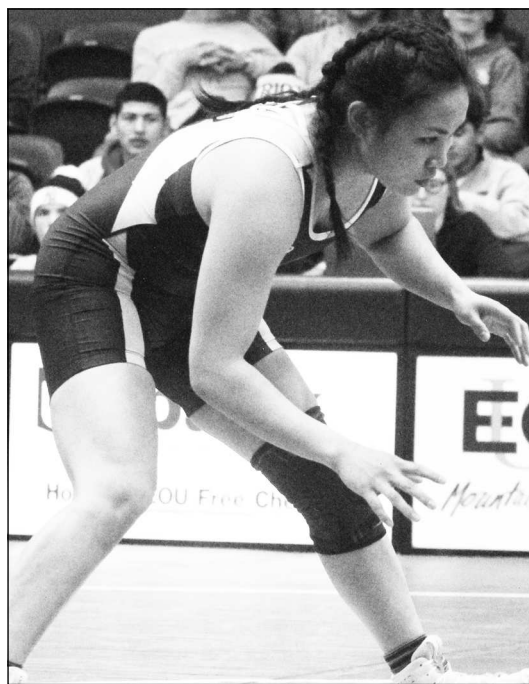
Higa (123 pounds) rebounded from a first-round loss, a loss by fall to Oklahoma City's Kailyn Ramos, to win four straight matches and get to the third-place match. The wins included a 12-0 technical fall over Lyon College's Emma DeBrum, a win by fall over Midland's Haley Schiermeyer, a 12-2 technical fall over Oklahoma City's Daniela Flores and a pin of Ottawa's Victoria Norris. Higa ended with a loss in the third-place match to Providence's Dajan Treder by an 8-4 decision.

Freeman finished with a 2-3 record at 109. She opened with a win by fall over York's Claire Payne, then lost to Oklahoma City's Raven Guidry by technical fall, 14-4. Freeman reached the consolation semifinals after a win by fall over Diana Leyva of Waldorf before dropping two straight matches, an 11-0 technical fall to Tyesha Topps of Life University and a loss by fall to Brianna Ribucan-Leong of Lyon in the fifth-place match.

Amber Pair (116) was the only other Mountaineer with multiple wins in the tournament, going 2-2. She shook off a 10-0 technical fall loss to Jathiya Issac of Wayland Baptist to win two in a row, pinning Lyon's Jasmine Hernandez and earning a 9-3 decision over Cumberland's Ashley Tobe, but was eliminated by Madison Angelito of Cumberland by a 10-0 technical fall.

Renay Monohan went 1-2 at 155 for the Mountaineers. She opened with a 12-2 technical fall loss to Missouri Valley's Shamera McTier, then pinned Chyna Rodriguez of Midland before being knocked out by a 10-0 technical fall loss to Life's Destinee Rivera.

Lisa Megargee (101), Rosa Ramirez (123), Krystal Fabricante (130), Sara Angelo (143), Dempsey Talkington (155) and Madisen Bozovich (191) all went 0-2 for Eastern. ■



Ronald Bond/Observer file photo

Macy Higa took fourth place at the NAIA Women's National Invitational Saturday.

A triumphant return home

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The Eastern Oregon University track and field team gave a proper christening to its first meet on its new track.

The Mountaineers compiled victories in 20 events — including 13 by the EOU women — to take the top honors in the EOU Team Challenge Saturday in the first track meet Eastern has held in La Grande since 2013.

“For the athletes it’s so much better,” EOU Head Coach Ben Welch said. “And the track runs well... It’s just so much more pleasant to be at home.”

The wins began to pile up shortly after a pre-meet ribbon-cutting ceremony to officially reopen the track — during which EOU President Tom Inkso said the track’s return felt like it was coming out of hibernation. It was a fitting description, too, with several inches of snow still sitting on the infield and around the outside of the track.

Paige Dodd racked up three wins individually to pace the EOU women, who scored 284.5 points to top College of Idaho by 86 points in the five-team meet. Dodd took top honors in the high jump (5-feet-3-3/4-inches), the long jump (17-feet-2-1/4) and the 100-meter hurdles (15.82 seconds).

“It felt more relaxed because we were at home,” Dodd said. “It was really exciting to show everyone our new facility.”

Dodd wasn’t the lone multi-event champion for the EOU women Saturday. Maggie Ledbetter collected a pair of individual wins for Eastern, taking the discus (126-feet-9) and the shot put (38-feet-6). Elizabeth Herbes added a victory in the women’s 200 (26.36 seconds) and was on the winning 4x100 relay team with Payton Jolley, Kinnah Rhodes and Morgan Reddington, which posted a time of 49.77 seconds. Michelle Herbes posted the top time in the 800 (2:20.72), and Jolley was first in the pole vault (10-feet-11-3/4).

The Herbes sisters also teamed with Katie Emerson and Olivia Lane to win the 4x400 relay with a time of 4:10.84.

Also collecting individual wins were Emerson in the 400 hurdles (1:05.33), Victoria Branch in the triple jump (35-feet-0-1/2) and Makayla Akers in the javelin (126-feet-3).

The Mountaineers, though,



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Top left: Paige Dodd clears a hurdle in the 100 hurdles. Top right: Alex Kosel tied for first in the high jump. Bottom left: Connor Young edges out teammate Devin Lewis-Allen to win the 400. Bottom right: Michelle Herbes hands the baton to Elizabeth Herbes during the 4x400 relay.

were not only strong at the top of the event list, but also showed depth. Dodd’s win in the high jump was part of a 1-2-3 effort in the event, with teammates Cheyanne Collins following in second and Kalulusno Ngaida taking third, each clearing a mark of 5-feet-1-3/4. The Mountaineers accumulated several additional top-four finishes: Megan Boals was second (2:21.62) and Amanda Welch fourth (2:22.16) in the 800; Haley White placed second (1:09.52) and Emily Palmer was fourth (1:11.03) in the 400 hurdles; Danielle Church was second (38-feet-4-3/4) and Stephanie Miears fourth (36-feet-4-1/4) in the shot put; White placed third (16.18) and Lane fourth (16.68) in the 100 hurdles; and EOU had second-place finishes from Church in the hammer throw (136-feet-

11), Branch in the long jump (16-feet-11-1/2), Kennedy Lake in the pole vault (10-feet-6) and Karianne Zollman in the javelin (122-feet). The Mountaineers added fourth-place finishes from Emerson in the 100 (13.72), Burgess in the 400 (1:04.89) and Boals, Kendra Blake, Faith Homer and Welch in the 4x400 relay (4:17.06). “Everyone did really well, and I think that’s because everyone’s spirits were high and attitudes were really good,” Dodd said. Alex Kosel paved the way to victory for the EOU men’s team by winning or sharing first in three events, taking top honors in the long jump (21-feet-7-1/2) and the triple jump (43-feet-2-1/2) and tying for first in the high jump (6-feet-2-3/4). Jakob Sandhagen (185-feet-6), Moses McAninch (171-feet) and Dawson Kennon (165-feet-

9) recorded a 1-2-3 finish to power EOU in the javelin, while Connor Young led a 1-2-4 effort in the 400, winning in a time of 49.66, just besting teammate Devin Lewis-Allen (49.73) while Cooper Shaw (50.48) was fourth. Also winning was Lane Inwards in the 200 (2:01.23) and the 4x100 relay team of Brandon Phannaha, Corey Wockenfuss, Nicholas Griffin and Robert Simpson (43.60). “(The competition) had the energy you expect a home meet to have that we’ve never truly had,” Inwards, a senior, said. Inwards added that being at home and competing in front of more EOU fans and in front of other EOU athletes added to the drive to perform. “(There was) a little extra incentive there to hold your own,” See **Track** / Page 8A

Tigers open season with a strong performance in Ontario

Observer staff

The defending Class 4A state champion La Grande Tigers boys track and field team won seven events in the season-opening Ontario Icebreaker Friday.

Jacob Huntsman and Terence Clay both won two events to lead the Tigers. Huntsman was first in the discus (121-feet-1) and the pole vault (12-feet-6) and Clay won both the high jump (5-feet-8) and the 300-meter hurdles (44.58 seconds). La Grande also received wins from Owen Kreutz in the javelin (140-feet-8), Calum Ebel in the 110 hurdles (17.10) and the 4x400 relay team of Sajun White, Josh Zollman, Luke Bloodgood and Aaron Corsini (3:50.65).

White added second-place finishes in the 100 (12.06) and 200 (24.69). Hunter Youngblood and Zach Wiggins tied for second in the high jump (5-feet-6) and Youngblood was also second in the long jump (19-feet-3). Clay was second in the 110 hurdles (17.19) while Ebel was second in the 300 hurdles (45.67). And Bennett Welch was second in the

1,500 (4:19.61).

Welch added a third-place effort in the 3,000 (10:00.03). Also grabbing third was Westin Blake in the 800 (2:15.01), Jarom Huntsman in the javelin (132-feet) and the triple jump (38-feet-11), Wiggins in the long jump (19-feet-2) and the 4x100 relay team of Josh Zollman, Julian Harris, Maxon Huxoll and Jacob Huntsman (48.19).

In fourth was Bloodgood in the 200 (25.11), Corsini in the 400 (58.01), Eli McLean in the 800 (2:15.21), Cristian Mendoza in the 1,500 (4:37.46) and 3,000 (10:02.70), and Jacob Huntsman in the long jump (19-feet-1).

The Cove Leopards boys had three victories, all from Tim Stevens. The senior took the top spot in the 400 (54.06) the 800 (2:03.24) and the 3,000 (9:07.45). Jaxon Blackburn led the Union Bobcats boys by taking second in the pole vault (10-feet). He was also on both relay teams, joining Matthew Sheehy, Jace Phillips and Griffin Nash to take fourth in the 4x100 (49.16). Individual-

ly, Nash took third in the discus (113-feet-1).

On the girls side, La Grande was led by second-place finishes by Jacki Martini in both the 800 (2:38.83) and the 1,500 (5:22.42). Katie Brown was second in the 100 (13.74), Rachael Keniry was second in the 3,000 (12:28.00) and Brown, Karsen Williams, Kenzie Williams and Cecelia Aguilera placed second in the 4x100 relay (55.85).

In third were Brown in the 200 (29.52), Keniry in the 1,500 (5:24.31), Alexyssa Chamberlain in the high jump (4-feet-6 as part of a tie for third) and the 4x400 relay team of Kenzie Williams, Audrey Garlitz, Abby Crews and Aguilera (4:50.67). Anna Green added a fourth-place finish in the discus (87-feet-3).

For Union, Jaimee Baxter earned a victory in the 400 (1:05.17) and Abriel O’Reilly won the 3,000 (12:07.88). The 4x400 relay team of Audrey Wells, Kaitlin Martens, O’Reilly and Baxter finished second in 4:34.62. Baxter was part of a tie for third in the high jump (4-feet-6).

For Cove, the defending 1A girls state champions, Rylie Overton (97-feet-3) and Mykiah Overton (96-feet-10) recorded a 1-2 finish in the javelin. In second were Sophie Pettit in the long jump (16-feet-5) and Austin Kendall in the high jump (4-feet-8). Alisa Fox was third in both the 400 (1:08.36) and the 800 (2:44.55). Pettit and Allie Best were part of the tie for third in the high jump (4-feet-6). Best was also fourth in the javelin at 92-feet-10, Kendall was fourth in the 100 hurdles in 20.03, and Best, Fox, Mykiah Overton and Kendall were fourth in the 4x400 relay in 4:58.09.

La Grande returns to action Thursday at the Crook County Relays, while Union and Cove are back on the track Thursday at the Bulldog Invite in Hermiston.

PANTHERS GET A PAIR OF WINS IN HARPER

Calvin Martin turned in a first-place and two third-place finishes — one as part of a relay — to lead the efforts of the Imbler Panthers boys track and field team as it opened the season Fri-

day at the Diana Thurmond Invitational in Harper.

Martin won the javelin (140-feet-3), was third in the long jump (17-feet) and ran with Jayce Burnette, Brendan Colwell and Devin Colwell on the third-place 4x100 relay team (50.44 seconds).

The Panthers’ Nathan Bingham added a second-place finish in the triple jump (36-feet-11-1/2) and was fourth in the 300-meter hurdles (55.00). Isaac Herron took third in the triple jump and Devin Colwell was third in the 300 hurdles (52.00).

Erin Coston took first place in the pole vault at 7-feet-6 to lead the Imbler girls.

Imbler returns to action Thursday at the Bulldog Invite in Hermiston.

JOSEPH’S OPENER CANCELED

The Mullen Leavitt Invitational in The Dalles, which the Joseph Eagles track team was set to attend Friday, was canceled.

The Eagles are set to next take the track April 5 at the Carnival of Speed in Milton-Freewater. ■