



Photos by Ronald Bond/The Observer

Paige Dodd, shown competing in the high jump, left, and long jump, right, at the EOU Team Challenge March 16, has climbed up the EOU record list in several events, and is the record-holder in the pentathlon.

Making great strides

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

Paige Dodd says most people are surprised to learn she was primarily a discus thrower when she first joined the Eastern Oregon women's track and field team.

That fact likely comes with even more shock given the redshirt junior is currently the school record holder in the women's pentathlon and is near the top of the record book in several additional events, including the 100 hurdles, the indoor high jump and, most recently, the heptathlon. She scored 4,503 points in the event at the Boxer Combined Event Monday and Tuesday in Forest Grove to take top honors, move into fourth on the all-time list at EOU and into the current lead at the NAIA level in 2019.

"(It's) very exciting and definitely uplifting," Dodd said of the way she's excelled on the track this season, performing at the highest level of her career.

The marks she is putting up not only in the pentathlon and heptathlon, but also by reaching 5-feet-7 in the high jump during the indoor season and hitting 15.03 seconds in the 100 hurdles last weekend — both second all-time at the school — she largely credits to last year's redshirt season, which allowed her to place an extra level of focus on developing in the sport's varied events.

"A lot of technique and a lot of fitness," Dodd said of what she keyed on during the redshirt year. "I did a lot of hurdles (and worked on) techniques for jumping. (Assistant

Coach) Rebecca (Rhodes) had me do a lot of runs to get (more fit) in general."

Consistency, though, was the area in which both Dodd and EOU Head Coach Ben Welch said she grew the most during the year off.

"She's not up and down mentally and emotionally," Welch said. "That's what you get (when athletes are younger). That's one area she's matured in."

Sitting out for an entire year and purely training can be tough, and Dodd said there were days it was. But, she said, "I was looking more in the long run. I knew taking a year to focus on the things I need to work on would be the best for me. It was a good time for me to mentally focus and get tougher for the (heptathlon)."

Welch said being mentally tough is a requirement for multi-event athletes because they have to maintain an even keel — not getting too low if they struggle in one event, but not riding the wave too high after a strong effort.

"They have to move from event to event without getting too rattled," he said. "Some people would make great (multi-event athletes) but if they have a bad event they're ruined (mentally)."

Welch said the athletes who tend to be a good fit physically for a multi-event are those who have what he calls "elastic power."

"They have a smooth motion that lends themselves well (to events) that takes strength and speed," he said.

Dodd fits that mold, and Welch

said she has developed even more physical strength, especially during the redshirt year.

But her path to track — and ultimately to the heptathlon — got a late start. In fact, she didn't step on the track at Columbia High School in Burbank, Washington, until her sophomore year. She said she got into track because she needed a change from her previous focus — bowling.

"I could have gone to college for bowling," said Dodd, who added her best score in bowling is a 247. "I did league bowling (and) I had some coaches from universities come up and say, 'When you're old enough you could apply to our school.'"

She quickly found her stride in track and field, becoming a two-time district champion in the discus and placing as high as third in the 2B state championships as a senior.

The high jump didn't come along until late in her junior year.

"My coach decided one meet to throw people in random events. He put me in high jump and I did really well," she said. "I went to state that year."

She peaked at 5-feet-4 her senior year — an eight-inch improvement over her top mark as a junior — and took 10th at state. She has since threatened the high jump record at EOU held by Harley McBride of 5-feet-7-1/4.

She's also developed into one of the top hurdlers to don an EOU uniform, with her mark of 15.03 just .25 seconds behind the all-time record

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Tiger baseball picks up victory in Pride Classic finale

Observer staff

Kyler Malone's two-run single in the bottom of the fifth inning proved to be the difference as the La Grande Tigers baseball team salvaged the final game of the Pride Classic in Arizona with a 5-4 win over George Washington Prep (Calif.) Wednesday.

Parker Robinson hit an RBI triple in the fifth to break a 2-2 tie, and Malone followed two batters later with his hit for a 5-2 lead.

GW added two runs in the sixth to close the gap, but Riley Miller recorded a strikeout to end the sixth for La Grande, then retired the opposition in order in the seventh, including recording a pair of strikeouts, to seal the win.

La Grande, which never trailed, scored a pair of first-inning runs on a Wyatt Earp RBI triple and a Robinson run-scoring single.

Earp pitched five innings for the win, allowing three runs on five hits and striking out four batters. Miller recorded three strikeouts in the final two innings as he earned the save. Malone and Robinson had two RBIs each to power the offense.

La Grande (3-5 overall) travels to Irrigon Tuesday.

EAGLES BLANK BANDON

The Wallowa Valley Eagles baseball team shut out the Bandon Tigers at the Les Schwab Tournament in John Day Thursday, 5-0.

Stats were not available.

The Eagles (3-0 overall) continue play at the tournament against Rainier today and Neah-Kah-Nie Saturday.

SOFTBALL UNION/COVE RALLY FALLS SHORT

The Union/Cove Ladycats softball team rallied from a four-run deficit

to tie the score against the Rainier Columbians, but a late response by Rainier lifted it to an 8-5 win in Union/Cove's final game of the Grant Union Invite Wednesday in John Day.

Union/Cove was in a 5-1 hole entering the sixth inning, but pulled within a run when Brianna Kohr hit a two-run double and scored on an error on the play. The Ladycats pulled even three batters later on an RBI double by Kylie Bruce.

The Columbians, though, retook the lead for good, with Paige Kellar's two-run double the key hit for Rainier.

Rainier had an early 3-0 lead, but an error by Rainier on a Union/Cove bunt allowed Autumn Daggett to score in the fourth to get the Ladycats on the board.

Callie Glenn worked six innings in the pitcher's circle, allowing five earned runs on nine hits with two strikeouts.

Union/Cove (2-2 overall) hosts the Union Spring Bash this weekend, opening play with games against Bonanza and North Douglas today.

College softball

Weather conditions in Montana have resulted in a rescheduling of the Eastern Oregon softball team's road series against Carroll College, according to the EOU sports website.

The series has been rescheduled as a triple-header to be played Monday. All three games will be Cascade Collegiate Conference games, and the usual fourth nonconference game will not be played.

The games will also be moved to Missoula, Montana, on the campus of the University of Montana. Game times will be at 10 a.m., noon and 2 p.m. ■

Mariners take down defending champions in home opener

By Tim Booth
The Associated Press

Tim Beckham, Domingo Santana and Seattle's hodgepodge of new faces sent the defending World Series champions to a deflating start.

The Mariners didn't just knock off Boston. They thumped their way past the Red Sox and their ace, Chris Sale.

Beckham hit two of Seattle's three home runs off Sale, and the Mariners improved to 3-0 with a 12-4 victory in their home opener Thursday.

The Mariners followed up their two wins over Oakland last week in Japan by rattling Sale (0-1) and knocking out the lefty that had dominated Seattle in the past. Sale was done after just three innings, while the Mariners were just getting started on their big offensive day.

"We like our team. It's a different look to our team. I get that. It's not the household names, the names you are used to seeing in our lineup," Seattle manager Scott Servais said. "But these guys can play and I've said it all along, as this

season goes along I think fans will have plenty of guys to latch onto because we certainly have personality on this team. You saw some of that come out today."

Beckham did the most damage, hitting a solo homer in the second and following up in the third with a two-run shot to center field. The infielder was hitless in 15 career at-bats with nine strikeouts against Sale before hitting his second and third home runs of the season.

"I know the past history. I don't care about that," Beckham said.

"He still has to come out and throw the ball. I respect him — he's a really good pitcher. I wanted to see something up in the zone I could handle. ... He normally gets me with the fastball up. I was looking for the one up and I got a good pitch to hit."

Edwin Encarnacion added a solo shot off Sale as part of a four-run third inning. Ryon Healy and Santana both homered against Boston's bullpen as Seattle finished with five long balls.

Santana has nine RBIs in three

games, the most in team history after the first three games of a season. He had 20 RBIs in 85 games last year with Milwaukee.

Sale had overpowered Seattle the last three times he faced the Mariners, with double-digit strikeouts in all three outings. And it appeared he was headed for another dominant performance that would have delighted the numerous red-clad fans that showed up at T-Mobile Park to see the World Series champs. Sale struck out the side with ease in the first inning. ■

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