

Road warriors



Warner University photo

Sade Williams, left, Aspen Christiansen, center, and Kiley McMurtrey, shown earlier this season, each had double digits in digs — 11, 12 and 28, respectively — in Eastern Oregon’s five-set victory over No. 14 Hastings Saturday.

Observer staff

The Eastern Oregon University volleyball team followed its undefeated start to the season in Florida with an even more impressive series of victories in Nebraska.

The No. 10 Mountaineers toppled a trio of ranked opponents at the Bill Marshall Volleyball Classic in Hastings over the weekend, upsetting No. 3 Grand View (Iowa) in straight sets Friday, then claiming a four-set win over No. 22 Bellevue (Nebraska) and a come-from-behind five-set win over No. 14 Hastings Saturday to improve to 7-0 on the young season.

Hailee Ackerman led the offense with 10 kills in EOU’s sweep of Grand View Friday, 25-17, 26-24, 25-13, to open the weekend. Cambree Scott added seven kills and Megan Bunn chipped in with six for Eastern, which had a .202 kill percentage while holding Grand View to just .014 and forcing the Vikings into 31 attack errors. EOU was solid at the net with nine blocks, getting four block assists each from Scott, Taylor Tibbetts and Jet Taylor. Setter Madison Pilon added a double-double with 19 assists and 12 digs, and both Kiley McMurtrey (23) and Aspen Christiansen (10) reached double figures in digs.

EOU broke open the first set with a 6-0 run, with one of Breanna Shaffer’s five kills putting the Mountaineers up 21-13. Scott finished the set moments later with a kill.

Grand View used a 7-0 run to take a late 24-22 lead in the second set and seemed primed to even the match before Eastern turned the tables. A block by Ackerman and Scott tied the score, and kills by Shaffer and Scott gave EOU the set and a 2-0 lead.

Eastern rode the momentum to a rout in the third set, scoring the first seven points and later using a 6-0 run for a 20-10 lead capped by a block by Bunn and Taylor. Ackerman and Scott had kills to finish the match.

Saturday morning, Eastern’s balanced attack won a tightly contested match over the Bruins, 21-25, 25-21, 25-21, 25-20.

Ackerman again led the way with nine kills. Both Bunn and Shaffer had eight kills, and Tibbetts added seven. Taylor was a force at the net with nine block assists. The back row defense was also balanced, getting 15 digs from McMurtrey, 14 from Pilon and 13 from Christiansen. Pilon also had 20 assists, and Brooke Dodge added 15.

Bellevue used a 12-3 run to take control of the first set, going up 17-11 on an ace by Paige Holdsworth. Eastern rallied to get within 20-18 on a kill by Tibbetts but got no closer, and Sierra Athen ended the set with a kill for the Bruins.

Eastern scored five straight points midway through the second set to build a cushion and saw its lead reach six on several occasions, including at 20-14 on an ace by McMurtrey. The Bruins clawed to within three but pulled no closer as EOU evened the match.

Taylor had a hand on three blocks early in

the third set to help Eastern score the first five points for an early lead. Bellevue eventually pulled even three times, the last at 20-20 on a block by Sienna Black and Olivia Galas. But Eastern scored the next four points, using kills by Tibbetts, Bunn and Taylor to retake the lead, and Ackerman finished the set with a kill.

A 7-1 run in the fourth gave Eastern an 11-4 lead on a kill by Scott. Bellevue did get within two points several times, but a timely 4-0 run — capped by a block by Scott — put EOU at match point, and Scott finished the match moments later with a kill.

The Mountaineers had their hands full later Saturday in a rematch of the 2016 national quarterfinals before rallying to win a five-set thriller over the host Broncos, 25-22, 15-25, 18-25, 30-28, 15-10.

Eastern ended the first set on a 6-2 run to come back and take the early 1-0 lead. Kills by Shaffer, Scott and Bunn started the rally, and Taylor had a kill later to end the set.

Hastings, through, controlled second set, using a 9-2 run to go up 16-9, and three times leading by as many as 10 points, including when Emily Lenners and Emily Krowlikowski teamed up for a block to end the set.

Hastings never trailed as it methodically took control in the third set, going up as much as 18-10 on a Claire Vanderbeek kill. Eastern did get within 21-17 on back-to-back kills by Bunn before the Broncos scored four of the next five points for the set and a 2-1 lead.

Eastern got back in the match after taking a wild fourth set that was tied 14 times. The teams traded rallies throughout — Hastings went on a 6-0 run to take a 14-11 lead on an ace by Claire Ostrand, but EOU later used a 6-1 run to go up 19-16 on an Ackerman ace. The Broncos then scored seven of the next nine to take a 23-21 lead, but Bunn had a kill to cap a mini 3-0 run and give Eastern a 24-23 edge. The teams then traded points to 28-28 — both seeing chances to win the set fall away — before Eastern scored the next two points to even the match.

Armed with new life, EOU took advantage. A block by Scott and Shaffer put the Mountaineers up 5-2 in the decisive fifth set. Scott was later in on another block — this time with Tibbetts — that gave EOU an 11-4 lead. Bunn followed with a pair of kills, and Shaffer finished the match with a kill.

Bunn led EOU with 16 kills. Shaffer had a career-best 14 kills and Ackerman added 12. Scott had eight kills and seven blocks, and Taylor also had eight kills. McMurtrey tallied 28 digs, Pilon had 29 assists and Dodge has 19 assists. Christiansen (12) and Sade Williams (11) also reached double digits in digs. EOU managed the victory despite having fewer kills, digs, blocks, aces and a lower kill percentage than Hastings.

Lenners had a match-best 18 kills and nine blocks for the Broncos.

EOU (7-0 overall) next faces Cardinal Stritch (Wisconsin) Friday in Caldwell, Idaho.



Ronald Bond/Observer file photo

Javier Moran, left, scored the golden goal in overtime to lift Eastern Oregon to a 3-2 victory over Whitworth Saturday.

Moran lifts EOU men in OT

Observer staff

The Eastern Oregon University men’s soccer team won a thriller to begin the season, scoring a 3-2 overtime victory over Whitworth (Washington) Saturday when Javier Moran headed in the winning goal in the 93rd minute.

Moran scored off a crossing pass from Josh Ebel, heading the lofted ball into the net to end the extra session shortly after it started. The win was EOU’s first over Whitworth in three tries and avenged a very similar loss to the Pirates in 2018, when Whitworth, like EOU, scored on a golden goal in overtime for a 3-2 win. Both matches, coincidentally, were played on Aug. 24.

Eastern was the aggressor early Saturday, quickly taking a 1-0 lead on a goal by Carlos Solorio in the eighth minute. The

Pirates got the equalizer in the 37th from Eric Shaporda, but Calvin Mitchell — who assisted Solorio’s goal — scored unassisted less than 90 seconds later to give Eastern a 2-1 lead at the half.

Shaporda fed Drew Williams for the tying goal in the 70th minute to set the stage for the Mountaineers to take the win in overtime.

EOU outshot Whitworth by a 17-10 margin and had more than double the shots on goal (nine) as the Pirates (four). Eleven of Eastern’s shots came before halftime.

Mitchell, Felipe Madero and Elvis Pavon each had three shots for EOU, and goalkeeper Max Rose had two saves.

Whitworth keeper Jesus Nunez kept the Pirates close with six saves.

EOU (1-0 overall) hosts Embry-Riddle (Arizona) Friday.



Ronald Bond/Observer file photo

Josee Bassett, left, scored a goal on a penalty kick in Eastern Oregon’s victory over Hastings on Friday.

EOU women earn win, draw

Observer staff

The 14th-ranked Eastern Oregon University women’s soccer team opened the regular season with a win and a tie in a pair of top 15 showdowns over the weekend.

Friday, the Mountaineers earned a 1-0 road win over No. 12 Hastings (Nebraska) and on Sunday battled to a 1-1 draw against ninth-ranked Midland (Nebraska).

The lone goal in Friday’s match came on a penalty kick by Josee Bassett in the 25th minute. It was one of only two shots on goal generated by the Mountaineers, who took seven shots total, but their defense made the lead stand.

Hastings wasn’t able to do much more on the offensive end, managing just three shots on goal and eight shots total.

Eastern goalkeeper Cydni Cottrell had three saves in the defensive battle.

Sunday both EOU and Midland generated more offense than was shown Friday, but neither was able to come away with a win as the teams finished even after 110 minutes of play.

The Mountaineers again scored early, getting on the board in the 11th minute on a goal by Camie Edgington. The Mountaineers took more shots in the first half (eight) than they did the entire match against Hastings.

But Midland goalkeeper Rachel Thigpen, who had eight saves, collected four in the first half alone to keep the Warriors in the match.

Midland found its offense in the second half, taking 10 shots after managing just one in the first half. The Warriors broke through in the 67th minute on a goal by Nayeli Rodriguez. Each team got off a flurry of shots in the final 20 minutes of regulation — five by Midland, four by EOU.

Each team sent a shot wide in the first overtime session. Midland had maybe the best scoring chance in the second overtime, but Cottrell stopped a shot by

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