

Last-second touchdown lifts Mountaineers to first win

Observer staff

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

The Eastern Oregon University football team found a way to win in Ashland again.

This time, it took some last-second heroics.

Kai Quinn shook off three first-

half interceptions to throw for 270 yards and two touchdowns, including the game-winning 4-yard score to Saige Wilkerson with 10 seconds remaining, and the Mountaineers

upset No. 20 Southern Oregon on the road, 24-21, Saturday in Frontier Conference play.

“The team showed a toughness and family aspect that is special, (and) we need to build on this,” head coach Tim Camp said. “(We

need to) keep working on ways to improve what and how we do things.”

It was the second-straight time, and fifth time in the last seven years, that EOU knocked off its in-state rival on the road. The win

also continued a trend in the small-school Civil War, as the road team is 11-3 in the last 14 meetings.

Eastern led much of the afternoon but fell behind 21-17 when SOU's Wyatt Hutchinson scored on See **Eastern** / Page 9A

PREP FOOTBALL



Ronald Bond/The Observer

La Grande's Nathan Reed, center, breaks away for a 59-yard touchdown on the third play of the game Friday at Community Stadium. The Tigers rolled over Pendleton, 36-14, in their season opener.

Tiger takedown

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

La Grande quarterback Parker Robinson remembered the feeling of last year's game against the Pendleton Buckaroos.

“It felt like we let La Grande down when we lost last year,” the Tigers' senior said. “This year our main focus was revenge.”

The Tigers got that revenge, beating Pendleton for the second time in three years.

“It's our time. (The hard work) showed today,” he said. “We busted our butts the last three weeks.”

Robinson threw for 248 yards and three touchdowns — two to Blaine Shaw — and Nathan Reed added 131 yards rushing and a score in La Grande's 36-14 victory Friday night at Community Stadium in the season opening game for both teams.

“We executed. We tried to keep things a little tighter, but like I said before, we've been working hard, we've got a lot of leadership,” La Grande head coach Rich McIlmoil said. “The kids are coming together (and) we're starting to click early this year.”

The contest saw La Grande rack up yards, both on the ground and through the air. The Tigers totaled 430 yards of offense and took advantage of extra opportunities given by Pendleton, which turned it over four times.

“One thing we've been talking about is trying to force more turnovers,” McIlmoil said.

It was those giveaways, in fact, that Pendleton head coach Erik Davis said hurt his team.

“We had opportunities. We'll go back and watch film and take a look what we can do to get better. I think everything is fixable, and that's always a positive,” Davis said. “We had two turnovers inside the red zone and a pick six. Those kill you. (If) you give a team like (the Tigers) extra opportuni-



Ronald Bond/The Observer

La Grande's Blaine Shaw, right, recovers a Pendleton fumble at the goal line during the first quarter Friday night.

ties on the offensive side it's gonna be a long day for us, and we gave them that opportunity.”

La Grande needed only three rushing plays to score on the first drive of the game, with Reed scoring from 59 yards out for a quick 7-0 lead a minute into the game.

Pendleton's first points came from the defensive end, getting a safety and then briefly taking an 8-7 lead when Kason Broncheau scooped up a fumble and ran it in from 13 yards midway through the first quarter.

It was all La Grande from that point.

On the next offensive play, Robinson, who had fumbled the ball on Broncheau's score, launched an 85-yard touchdown pass to Josh Zollman. In the second quarter, he connected with Shaw for 43 yards on a jump ball that Shaw caught in front of the defender inside the 5-yard-line before walking in.

La Grande later collected its own defensive touchdown when Gabe Shukle nabbed an interception from Tanner Sweek and took it the other way 43 yards. A Chris Woodworth field goal late in the second quarter put La Grande well in front at the half, 29-8.

Sweek, who had 161 yards passing, got the Buckaroos on the board on offense in the third on a 40-yard scoring pass to Mathias Patrick. The score brought Pendleton within 15, but that was as close as the Bucks got, as Robinson and Shaw hooked up for a 17-yard touchdown early in the fourth for the final margin.

McIlmoil credited the play of his line on both sides of the ball. The Tigers, who won the battle in the trenches much of the night, racked up 182 yards on the ground to just 33 for Pendleton.

“The defensive line and offensive line played great tonight,” McIlmoil said. “We've got some dudes that can straight up play.”

Zollman finished as La Grande's top receiver with the big 85-yard TD catch. Shaw had 80 yards receiving and also recovered a fumble and grabbed an interception. Reed added 43 yards receiving.

For Pendleton, Sweek was 13-for-25 passing and added 35 yards rushing. Cooper Roberts was 5-for-16 for 74 yards, but had minus-9 yards rushing. Both threw an interception.

Pendleton's primary source of offense was through the air

Alleged gun threat reported following Friday contest

Toward the conclusion of Friday's game, law enforcement received a report of a male subject allegedly wearing a bulletproof vest and carrying a handgun tucked in his jacket at Community Stadium, according to a press release from the Union County Sheriff's Office. The subject was quickly identified after the call, which came in about 9:30 p.m., and located at his Union County home. Authorities concluded the alleged bulletproof vest was a sweatshirt resembling a vest, and the alleged firearm was a pocket tool in a black case. An investigation concluded no legitimate threat was posed to citizens.

— Source: Union County Sheriff's Office

as Sweek and Roberts combined to pass for 235 yards. Walker Camp added 49 yards receiving.

The Tigers (1-0 overall) travel to The Dalles Friday.

COLLEGE VOLLEYBALL

EOU volleyball takes first loss during road split

Observer staff

Eastern Oregon University's unbeaten run to start the season came to an end.

The 10th-ranked Mountaineers staved off an upset bid by Northwest Christian for a 20-25, 25-15, 25-12, 20-25, 15-12 win over the Beacons Friday, but dropped a match for the first time in 2019, falling to No. 19 Corban Saturday, 20-25, 27-25, 25-21, 25-23. Both road games were Cascade Collegiate Conference matchups.

EOU used a 5-1 run to take control of the decisive set Friday against NCU. A Jet Taylor kill started the rally, and a Cambree Scott and Taylor Tibbetts block capped it for a 6-2 lead. NCU did get back within two on three occasions, but the Beacons pulled no closer as Breanna Shaffer ended the match for the Mountaineers with the final of her team-best 14 kills.

Shaffer was one of three Mountaineers with double-digit kills. Megan Bunn had 13 kills and also had 26 digs, and Scott had 11 kills and seven block assists. Kiley McMurtrey also had 26 digs on the EOU back line. Madison Pilon posted a career-best 47 assists and added 17 digs and five block assists, and Aspen Christiansen had 13 digs.

EOU dominated the second and third sets. A 7-0 run gave Eastern the lead for good in the second at 11-5 on a Scott and Pilon kill, and an 8-1 run later pushed the lead to 22-9 on a Hailee Ackerman kill and a NCU attack error.

A 9-2 run in the third put the Mounties up 15-7 on a Taylor kill, and Eastern finished the set on a 8-2 run, which was started by a Shaffer kill and ended on a NCU attack error.

Cami Lingenfelder had 14 kills and 25 digs for the Beacons, while Makenna Northern had 42 assists

and 27 digs.

The Mountaineers' perfect start to the season was stopped by Corban Saturday as the Warriors took the final three sets.

EOU took the lead for good in the first with a 4-0 run, then ended the set on a 5-2 run, capped with a Taylor kill.

The Mountaineers seemed on their way to a 2-0 lead when a Tibbetts kill put them up 23-20. But Corban rallied with a 5-1 run to take the lead, and Cierra Leopoldino evened the match three points later with an ace.

The teamed jockeyed for the lead in the third before Corban scored nine of the final 13 points to take the set and a 2-1 lead on a kill by Sarena Bartley.

The Mountaineers seemed poised to grab the fourth set and force a deciding finale. The teams traded leads five times early, and EOU went up 22-20, then 23-21, on two Bunn kills.

Corban, though, scored the final four points to take the match. Cassie Cunningham, who turned in a match-best 17 kills, had three kills in the final rally, including the final two to end the match.

Eastern was held to its lowest kill percentage of the season (0.099) and had 24 attack errors, a season-worst. Bunn had 13 kills to lead the offense and added 19 digs. Both Tibbetts and Shaffer had nine kills, and Taylor added eight block assists while Tibbetts, Bunn and Scott had five each. McMurtrey led the team with 22 digs. Pilon dished out 38 assists and had 19 digs, Christiansen had 16 digs, and Sade Williams added 12 digs.

EOU (11-1 overall, 1-1 CCC) visits Walla Walla Tuesday to wrap up a season-opening 13 match road trip, then hosts College of Idaho in its home opener Thursday.

Eastern men slip past No. 11 Lions

Observer staff

MEN'S COLLEGE SOCCER

The Eastern Oregon University men's soccer team finally didn't have to go to overtime in a match.

Carlos Solorio and Mike Dias each scored in the game's first seven minutes, and the Mountaineers upset No. 11 Vanguard (California) on the road, 2-0, Friday in Costa Mesa, California, to stop a three-match winless streak.

Solorio gave EOU the lead for good just 2:03 into the match with a goal, and Dias scored in the seventh minute for what ended up

being the final margin in a game EOU dominated. The Mountaineers had 17 shots in the contest compared to just nine shots taken by the Lions. Vanguard put only one shot on goal in the first half, which Max Rose stopped as the Mountaineers tallied their first shutout of the season.

EOU (2-2-1 overall) is off until Sept. 20, when it travels to Northwest Christian in Eugene to begin Cascade Collegiate Conference play.