



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Eastern Oregon's Aspen Christiansen dives to make a play on a ball Saturday.

VOLLEYBALL

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A 9-2 run in the first set put the Mountaineers up 16-9, and a subsequent 6-0 spurt made it 22-12. A kill by Hailee Ackerman and a block by Ackerman and Taylor ended the set.

Madison Pilon capped a 9-1 run in the second set with an ace that put Eastern ahead 17-9, and an 8-0 run ended the set moments later on another Ackerman kill.

Eastern took a little longer to break away in the third, but another 9-2 run put the Mountaineers ahead 18-11, and Sade Williams ended the match with a kill.

"We have a lot of room to improve. I don't think this weekend was our best weekend of play," Taylor said, pointing specifically to the team's attack as an area to get better. "For sure our hitting percentage. Hitting wise we were making errors we don't normally make in games. Things we can control, we need to control."

One area, though, that was consistent throughout the weekend — as it has been all season — was the defense. With Taylor leading the way both nights, EOU had eight team blocks Friday and seven Saturday. The team also had 117 digs in the two matches, which helped keep both Warner Pacific's and Multnomah's kill percentage down. Kiley McMurtrey (30) and Aspen Christiansen (24) led the team in digs over the weekend.

"Our defense is the backbone right now, blocking wise, but also the floor defense," McLean-Morehead said. "I think that Aspen and Ki are doing a great job back there of momentum, of keeping the ball in play, of getting everybody to buy in, (and) being on the same page. They're really doing their jobs and over and above their jobs."

Christiansen pointed to the amount of court time together for her and McMurtrey — and, by extension, the team — as why the back line has been solid.

"It helps that this is Kiley's and my third year playing next to each other. Over the years we've gotten better at it, and we're finally hitting our peak," she said.

The junior added that while the team has room to grow, the players are "still playing steady and we're still playing strong. We're getting better every game."

Megan Bunn and Breanna Shaffer each added four kills for EOU against Multnomah. McMurtrey had 19 digs and three aces. Pilon added 15 assists, Christiansen had 10 digs, and both Taylor Tibbetts and Ackerman had three blocks.

On Friday, Bunn had 10 kills and Cambree Scott added eight to lead the Mountaineers' sweep of Warner Pacific.

EOU put the first set away against the Knights with an 11-3 run, ending it on a kill by Shaffer, but had to work

to close out Warner Pacific in the second and third. Eastern built an 18-10 lead in the second on an ace by Ackerman, but the Knights got within 24-22 before Taylor ended the set with a kill.

In the third, Eastern rallied from a six-point deficit and was down 24-22 before getting the final four points. Taylor tied the set at 24-24 with a kill. Bunn gave the Mountaineers the lead with a kill, then teamed with Taylor for a block to end the match.

Taylor had seven kills and five block assists. Four players — Pilon (14), Christiansen (14), Bunn (12) and

McMurtrey (11) — reached double-digits in digs, and Pilon had 22 assists.

The two wins set up what will be one of the biggest matches of the season on the national level when No. 7 Corban — the only team to defeat EOU this fall — comes to town Friday. The Warriors (12-3 overall, 9-0 CCC) currently lead the conference, while EOU (19-1, 9-1) is in second.

"We need to come out ready to set the tone against Corban next weekend," Taylor said. "That's going to be a good game."

The matchup begins at 5 p.m. Friday.



Kathy Orr/EO Media Group

La Grande's Nathan Reed, right, takes a hand off from Parker Robinson during the Tigers' 34-21 win over Baker Friday.

TIGERS

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McIlmoil said the Tigers took advantage of the Baker miscues, then got its running game on track.

"We made some adjustments in the second half and started pushing the ball up the field," McIlmoil said. "We ran the ball pretty well."

The Tigers outgained Baker 220 yards to 13 on the ground.

In an attempt to jump-start a stagnant offense, Baker switched to Spencer Smith at quarterback in the second half. Smith, a senior, had not played quarterback since his sophomore season.

"Spencer did fine. In fact he did more than fine," Ramos said.

Smith finished 9-of-19 for 174 yards and

two TD passes.

Robinson's third touchdown run gave La Grande a 28-7 lead before Smith connected with Myer for a score with 4:09 left in the third period.

La Grande added a TD run in the fourth quarter before Smith connected with Riley Flanagan for Baker's final score.

"We challenged the kids to play better in the second half," Ramos said. "We fixed some things. I was proud of the kids the way they played hard to the finish."

La Grande received a minor scare when Robinson was knocked out of the game twice in the second half.

"I think he'll be fine," McIlmoil said after the game.

La Grande (5-0 overall, 2-0 GOL) travels to Ontario Friday. La Grande defeated Ontario 56-6 in its GOL opener.

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