

SATURDAY’S GAMES

ALL TIMES PACIFIC

MSU-NORTHERN
AT EASTERN OREGON, 6 P.M.

While no game in the Frontier Conference should be looked at as a guarantee, EOU has to feel better about having the Lights be the first team it plays as it looks to shake off the rough start. It is a series, as will be noted later, that the Mountaineers have dominated of late. It doesn’t hurt, either, that MSUN has a 31-game Frontier Conference losing streak.

COLLEGE OF IDAHO
AT CARROLL COLLEGE, NOON

There are a couple of possible separation games this weekend, and this is the first one. The Yotes have a chance to further distance themselves from the middle tier of the conference. Carroll, meanwhile, can stay in the conference and playoff discussion with an upset.

MONTANA WESTERN
AT MONTANA TECH, 5 P.M.

This is the first of three night games in the Frontier Conference Saturday, and is by far the biggest. It has the potential to be another separation game. A win by Western would put it two games ahead of the Orediggers, but a Tech win keeps it in striking range for the conference title, especially with a game at C of I coming up.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN
AT SOUTHERN OREGON, 6:30 P.M.

Southern has some momentum coming off its win over Carroll before the bye week, while Rocky has been reeling its last three games. The loser likely slips to seventh place.

PLAYER TO WATCH

If Eastern Oregon is going to get in the win column, it needs to get the ground game going, and Kaler Moore might be the player to jump-start the rushing attack. He isn’t EOU’s leading rusher, but has the top rushing average (4.0 yards per carry) of any Mountaineer with at least 10 carries, and he led Eastern with 53 yards and a score in its win over Southern Oregon.

TREND TO WATCH

Eastern has fared well coming out of a bye the last few years, winning its last five post-bye contests. While it is true that the Mountaineers have faced MSU-Northern in three of those meetings, the victory that started the streak was in 2015, when 1-4 EOU went on the road and knocked off No. 4 Carroll College, 28-21, in Helena, Montana.

NAIA POLL		
Team	Record	Points
1. Morningside (Iowa) [17]	4-0	392
2. Kansas Wesleyan	5-0	361
3. Marian (Ind.)	4-0	357
4. Concordia (Mich.)	5-0	352
5. Grand View (Iowa)	6-0	338
6. Benedictine (Kan.)	5-1	297
7. Northwestern (Iowa)	4-0	294
T8. College of Idaho	4-0	285
T8. Saint Francis (Ind.)	3-1	285
10. Lindsey Wilson (Ky.)	5-0	273
11. Cumberlands (Ky.)	4-0	235
12. Southeastern (Fla.)	4-0	212
13. Saint Xavier (Ill.)	2-2	195
14. Dickinson State (N.D.)	4-1	191
15. Montana Western	4-0	188
16. Langston (Okla.)	3-1	171
17. Evangel (Mo.)	5-1	155
18. Ottawa (Ariz.)	5-0	129
19. Keiser (Fla.)	5-0	112
20. Reinhardt (Ga.)	4-2	108
21. Siena Heights (Mich.)	4-1	85
22. Montana Tech	3-1	81
23. Bethel (Tenn.)	3-2	64
24. Baker (Kan.)	4-2	46
25. MidAmerica Naz. (Kan.)	5-1	44
Dropped Out:		
Bethel (Kan.)		
Others Receiving Votes:		
Sterling (Kan.) 15, Cumberland (Tenn.) 6, Bethel (Kan.) 2		

EOU returns to physical roots as it welcomes Lights for homecoming



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Eastern Oregon quarterback Kai Quinn, right, hands off to Victor Dias during practice Tuesday at Community Stadium. The Mountaineers are looking for their second win of the season Saturday.

By Ronald Bond

The Observer

The base format of the offense will still be the same. But rather than slinging the ball around the field in what Eastern Oregon University head coach Tim Camp called “basketball on grass,” the Mountaineers will now employ the run first and run hard physical style that made it relevant.

That change will see its first look Saturday against Montana State Northern as EOU looks to turn around from a 1-4 start.

“It isn’t going to change overnight, because we are who we are, but at the same time the direction and the intentions are to change us back to being a physical football team,” Camp said.

The no-huddle, high-speed style that EOU was looking to implement will be replaced by the style Camp said he saw was successful for the program as he reviewed film going back to 2012 and 2013.

“What I’ve come up with is what you saw out there in practice today,” he said following Tuesday’s practice of what he came away with from film study. “An offense that we’re capable of running that is going to work on the finer things of run blocking, the finer things of making sure we’re getting the spacing at wide receiver and doing the stuff that I know we are capable of doing.”

Camp said what EOU was trying to put in place was the up-tempo style the team used in 2009, but was also bringing along other elements to supplement it.

“And then you become a jack of all trades, a master of nothing,” he said. “We used to be a master of running the football, play-action passing (and) throwing the vertical ball when we needed to. I want to get back to being a master of that.”

“We still have our base offense in,” he added, “but (we’re doing) some of the things a little bit differently. Some of the things we’re emphasizing a little bit more.”

Camp said doing so will not only help bring back the physical nature of the team on offense, but will help the defense as it will have to practice against that same style.

“By us doing (what we were before), we’ve created a softer interior of our defense so that’s why teams are coming downhill at us,” he said. “The cute stuff is throw the ball all over the place. Now we’re going to focus on what we can do, and that’s being a physical team. That will



Ronald Bond/The Observer

EOU wide receiver Phoenix Millhollen, right, pulls in a pass in front of Zack Jacobs at Tuesday’s practice.

About the game

SERIES HISTORY

Eastern Oregon and Montana State Northern have met a total of 22 times, with the Mountaineers holding a 15-6 all-time advantage. EOU has owned the Lights of late, winning the last five contests and 13 of the last 14 meetings, including 10 by at least 17 points.

NORTHERN LIGHT TO WATCH

Quarterback Brenden Medina has some big-play potential and has gone off a couple times in the passing game. Twice he has thrown four touchdown passes, and three weeks ago he racked up 389 yards passing and four scores in a loss to Carroll College.

make our defense tougher, too.” MSU-Northern, who comes in like EOU at 1-4 overall but is winless in the conference, will get the first look at the adjusted Mountaineers Saturday.

The Lights have seen their lengthy conference losing streak reach 31 games, but are more competitive this fall.

“They’re a team that just hasn’t got the instant win. They’re in games (and) that’s the thing about it,” Camp said. “They gotta be licking their chops to come down to Eastern Oregon. I think it’s going to be a very fair fight.”

Senior running back Victor Dias, who leads EOU in rushing, said the key for the ground game, which is averaging just 81.4 yards per game this fall, will be aggression and consistency.

“We have guys in the run game specifically both in the backfield and up front, that there are flashes of brilliance (with), and there just needs to be more on a more consistent basis and on a consistent level,” he said. “Injuries have not helped clearly, but we have guys that have ability and have talent. They need to execute their jobs both in the backfield and up front.”

The defense, meanwhile, will have to contend with a quarterback in Brenden Medina who has had some solid performances, but been inconsistent himself He

topped out with 389 yards and four touchdowns in a matchup against Carroll College, but also had two picks in the game. He has 11 touchdowns and 11 interceptions this fall.

“We’re hoping defensively to shut these guys out,” senior defensive back Haziel Ledezma said. “Every team in the Frontier is capable, but we’re optimistic and excited about how our bye week went.”

Speed and physicality will also be important Saturday.

“They have the dudes, (so) not giving up those big plays and running to the ball (will be important),” senior linebacker Isaiah Cranford said. “Playing physical is a big thing for us.”

Ledezma said he is excited about the matchups on the schedule ahead, not only beginning this weekend against MSUN, but some of the upcoming rematches.

“We’re really optimistic about the teams that we’re playing (and) we’re glad we get a second chance at teams like (Montana) Tech and C of I,” he said.

Cranford added that even with the slow start, the team has been able to stay upbeat.

“(We’ve been) keeping the positive energy up (by) just remembering why we’re out here, why we love the game, and having fun with it,” he said.

POWER POLL

BY RONALD BOND

THE OBSERVER

1. College of Idaho: The Yotes are definitely legitimate. Four wins in four tries. Tied for No. 8 in the NAIA coaches poll. There is still a lot of football to be played, but the Nov. 9 home matchup against Montana Western may very well be for the Frontier Conference title.

2. Montana Western: The Bulldogs have been equally impressive, and are getting some notice on the national level as they sit 15th in the coaches poll. But their two toughest games before the C of I showdown are coming up the next two weeks.

3. Montana Tech: The Orediggers have a chance to really shake up the top of the conference and put themselves squarely in the conference title discussion the next two weeks, as they host UMW and travel to C of I.

4. Carroll College: The Fighting Saints are trending the right direction in terms of getting back to being the football power they once were, but the Carroll of old likely doesn’t lose the way it did in its last outing at SOU.

5. Rocky Mountain: The Battlin’ Bears have had their repeat hopes all but shattered after losing their last three games by a combined score of 124-14. Makes one wonder how tough the top of the Frontier is given RMC beat the now No. 14 team in the nation a few weeks back.

6. Eastern Oregon: If there is a silver lining for the Mountaineers, it could be that their three conference losses are to the top three teams in the Frontier. They also have what appears to be a pair of winnable games the next two weeks.

7. Southern Oregon: Welp, so much for being the preseason conference runner-ups. Beating Carroll in the final minutes for their first win last time out, though, should give the Raiders momentum.

8. MSU-Northern: Are these the same old Lights? MSUN’s last three losses are by 25, 28 and 42 points.

STANDINGS		
	Conf.	Overall
College of Idaho	4-0	4-0
Montana Western	4-0	4-0
Montana Tech	3-1	3-1
Carroll College	2-2	2-2
Rocky Mountain	1-3	2-3
Eastern Oregon	1-3	1-4
Southern Oregon	1-3	1-4
MSU-Northern	0-4	1-4

Saturday, Sept. 21
Portland St. 59, Eastern Oregon 9
Montana Western 38, Rocky Mountain 7
Carroll College 54, MSU-Northern 26
Montana Tech 17, Southern Oregon 14

Saturday, Sept. 28
Montana Western 49, Eastern Oregon 13
Montana Tech 42, MSU-Northern 0
College of Idaho 42, Rocky Mountain 0
Southern Oregon 29, Carroll College 28

Saturday, Oct. 12
MSU-Northern at Eastern Oregon, 6 p.m.
College of Idaho at Carroll College, noon
Montana Western at Montana Tech, 5 p.m.
Rocky Mountain at Southern Oregon, 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 19
Southern Oregon at Eastern Oregon, 1 p.m.
Rocky Mountain at MSU-Northern, noon
Montana Tech at College of Idaho, noon
Montana Western at Carroll College, noon

ON THE COVER

Haziel Ledezma, left, and Conner Falk lock up during practice Tuesday. (Ronald Bond, The Observer)

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