

SOUTHERN OREGON (2-4, 2-3) AT EASTERN OREGON (2-4, 2-3)

GIMME FIVE — KEYS TO SATURDAY’S GAME

1. TAKE CARE OF THE FOOTBALL

The Mountaineers were able to get away with two turnovers last week, but that trend cannot continue if it wants to stay in the win column. It does help, however, that they forced five against Northern.

2. CLEAN UP THE PENALTIES

EOU had an uncharacteristic 15 flags thrown at it last weekend, although they cleaned it up in the second half. Coach Tim Camp has been emphasizing playing clean, smart football this week.

3. WIN THE BATTLE IN THE TRENCHES

Both of these teams found their ground game last week, as each team rushed for a season-high in yards (EOU 222, SOU 201). Whoever establishes control up front will have a clear advantage.

4. PLAY SMART FOOTBALL

A lot of facets contribute to this — not committing silly penalties, controlling the clock, taking the check-down when it’s there, not forcing a play, etc. If EOU does these things, it will be in good shape.

5. KEEP UP THE MOMENTUM

The effort put forward last weekend will go for naught if the Mountaineers don’t keep up the improvement this weekend. It doesn’t HAVE to translate to a win, but the solid play needs to continue.

SATURDAY’S KEY MATCHUP

SOU RB Hykeem Massey

KEY STATISTIC: Turned in the Raiders’ best rushing effort with 120 yards in last week’s win.

The junior transfer is starting to make an impact on the Raiders’ offense. Massey had his best effort in his short time in an SOU uniform — and by far the team’s best this season — when he rushed for 120 yards and a touchdown on 21 carries in a 21-14 win over Rocky Mountain. He only had 95 yards on 34 carries in the previous five contests. Keeping him and the running game going will be important for the Raiders. They’ve gone for more than 100 yards twice as a team — and won both times.



Massey



Cranford

EOU LB Isaiah Cranford

KEY STATISTIC: No. 2 on the team in tackles with 30, had two tackles for loss in first game vs. SOU.

The La Grande product is emerging as one of the leaders on the defense, and how he and the rest of the linebackers do in helping slow the Raiders’ run game will be a key to watch. The Mountaineers held SOU’s running backs to 48 yards in the win in Ashland last month. The Raiders, though, seem to have found a solid feature back in Massey. If the SOU backs get past the line of scrimmage, Cranford and the other LBs have to hold their ground and keep SOU from getting into the secondary.

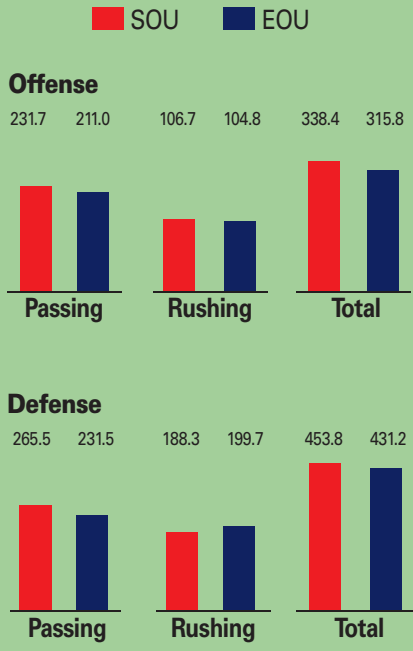
EDGE: CRANFORD

BY THE NUMBERS

SOU INDIVIDUAL STAT LEADERS

Passing	C-A-I	Pct.	Yards	TD	Yds/G
Wyatt Hutchinson	96-161-7	59.6	1,165	9	233.0
Rushing	Carries	Yards	Avg.	TD	Avg/G
Wyatt Hutchinson	59	222	3.8	3	44.4
Hykeem Massey	55	215	3.9	2	35.8
Austin May	41	136	3.3	1	27.2
Trent Banner	25	53	2.1	0	8.8
Receiving	Rec.	Yards	Avg.	TD	Avg/G
Christian Graney	30	347	11.6	3	57.8
Parker Randle	22	236	10.7	2	39.3
Jordan Suell	16	317	19.8	4	52.8
Hykeem Massey	12	110	9.2	1	18.3
Kahlil Hudson	10	116	11.6	0	19.3
Jason Shelley	9	134	14.9	1	26.8
Punt Returns	No.	Yards	Avg.	TD	
Jason Shelley	3	17	5.7	0	
Kick Returns	No.	Yards	Avg.	TD	
Jason Shelley	8	174	21.8	0	
Michael Chisley Jr.	7	140	20.0	0	
Field Goals	M-A	Pct.	40+	Long	
Graycen Kennedy	4-9	44.4	2-5	46	
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Total	TFL	
Collin Crown	39	14	53	4.0	
Nate Kuratli	28	10	38	2.0	
Jake Regino	20	12	32	3.0	
Devin Holden	26	5	31	0.0	
August Forrest III	21	9	30	5.5	
Michael Chisley Jr.	23	1	24	0.0	
William Brown	21	2	23	0.0	
Interceptions	No.	Yards	Avg/Ret	TD	
Michael Chisley Jr.	4	87	21.8	1	

EOU INDIVIDUAL STAT LEADERS



POSITION MATCHUPS

BACKFIELD

The numbers are basically even from both the quarterback and running back positions. Both teams are finding their ground game. I’m going to do something I’ve never done in this section: call this a push.



PUSH

RECEIVERS

The big-play potential of the Raiders’ receivers will be interesting to see against the EOU secondary. Yes, they were shut down largely in the first game, and could be again Saturday, but they could break a big one.



SOU

OFFENSIVE LINE

Even while EOU was working to get its ground game established, one thing it has one well is limit sacks. EOU QBs have only been dropped eight times this season, which is a credit to the boys up front.



EOU

DEFENSIVE LINE

The Mountaineers have two of the conference’s best defensive ends in Sage DeLong and Chase Van Wyck. DeLong had 2.5 sacks in the last contest between these teams. The EOU D-line could have a big day.



EOU

LINEBACKERS

Collin Crown and Nate Kuratli are among the conference leaders in tackles (second and tied for 14th). They have clearly been stalwarts on defense for the Raiders, and should keep Southern Oregon in the game.



SOU

SECONDARY

Zack Jacobs and Michael Chisley Jr. lead their respective teams — and the conference — in picks. I’m tempted to play another push here, but I think the rest of the EOU secondary will step up as it did the first game.



EOU

PREDICTION: EASTERN OREGON 21, SOUTHERN OREGON 17

EASTERN OREGON SCHEDULE/RESULTS

AT COLLEGE OF IDAHO	AT SOUTHERN OREGON	VS. MONTANA TECH	AT PORTLAND STATE	AT MONTANA WESTERN	VS. MONTANA STATE NORTHERN	VS. SOUTHERN OREGON	AT MONTANA TECH	VS. COLLEGE OF IDAHO	AT ROCKY MOUNTAIN	VS. CARROLL COLLEGE
LOSS	WIN	LOSS	LOSS	LOSS	WIN	Oct. 19 1 p.m.	Oct. 26 Noon	Nov. 2 1 p.m.	Nov. 9 Noon	Nov. 16 1 p.m.
48-12	24-21	35-10	59-9	49-13	45-7					

EOU improvements should be encouraging

One game is a very, very small sample size — and one that should be taken with a grain of salt given it was against Montana State Northern.

But the progress shown in last week’s win, and how the team is going about turning the season around, should be encouraging to Mountaineer fans.

And it shows, I believe, that head coach Tim Camp is taking the right steps to get EOU where he wants it to be again — not just for the rest of this season, but beyond.

Let’s look at a couple examples. Beginning last year, Camp made moves on the offensive end to go no-huddle, high-speed, fast, fast, fast. It had moments of success a year ago, but the team wasn’t able to maintain that style during the rough start.

So during the bye week, Camp and the coaching staff regrouped. The pace was taken away. The Mountaineers are huddling and getting the plays called in, rather than signaled in. There is an emphasis on taking what the defense



FROM THE SIDELINE RONALD BOND

gives you underneath in the passing game and not trying to go for a home run ball all the time.

The results were better across the board.

“It was good,” quarterback Kai Quinn said of the changes. “Coach Camp is really good at making adjustments for his personnel. He’s done a great job of doing that all year.”

The team has also emphasized physicality over, and over, and over. On the offensive line. On the defensive line. In the running game. EVERY position. Simply outwork the man across from you.

It resulted in EOU’s best rushing effort of the season. The running game, of course, helps the passing game.

“That is something we have struggled with all year,” lineman PJ Schubert said of the run game, last weekend’s win notwithstanding. “It makes it hard, because then

defenses can cover the pass, and that makes us one-dimensional.”

Those elements are continuing to be focused on, as is discipline.

Camp also met with each player during the bye to get a six-week plan — which is now a five-week plan — of what they intend to get better at between now and the end of the season, and he is holding them to what they said.

And there is one facet I haven’t seen often in my time covering EOU — the team, in 11-on-11, stopping a play in practice, walking it through, then running the play again in order to get it right.

It’s not that I’ve never seen it before. It’s more common early in the season, and is apt to take place during “look squad exchange” when the team is practicing against scout team members who are running plays of the next opponent.

But there were a handful of instances in 11-on-11 at the practice I went to Tuesday where mid-play, Camp said to stop, backed everybody up to the starting position, then had them walk through the play to correct an item.

The reason is simple.

“We’re going to get it corrected, then we’re going to run it,” Camp said of the play stoppages. “Every team is different. Some teams you can holler at them and tell them, ‘Hey you gotta do this.’ Some teams you gotta stop it or you gotta watch film. This team learns differently than last year’s team. (We’re) just trying to do different things coaching wise that might sink in and make an impact with some of these guys.”

Now I get some could read this and say it reflects poorly on the players’ ability to pick up concepts, or that they aren’t as far along as they should be.

I see it differently. I see it as a coach doing what is necessary to adjust to the players, to find what makes them tick or helps them understand, and to put them in position to perform come game day.

Now, how do they respond week to week? That is the mystery.

But these are the steps that need to be taken. And given the sample size we have, they appear to be moving EOU in the right direction.

Converted receiver now a key safety

By Ronald Bond

The Observer

He signed as a wide receiver, and was going to redshirt as a freshman.

But a series of injuries early in 2017 led to Eastern Oregon safety Zack Jacobs switching to the other side of the ball and stepping onto the field almost immediately that fall.

The trial by fire has paid off, as the junior has emerged as not only one of the Frontier Conference’s top safeties, but beyond, at least in the eyes of his head coach.

“He’s one of the best defensive backs in the country in my opinion,” Eastern head coach Tim Camp said. “He’s a special kid.”

And he’s quickly making a name for himself in the record books at EOU.

In less than 2-1/2 seasons, the former La Grande High School standout has surged into a tie for second in program history in interceptions, pulling even with Rodell Razor after grabbing his 11th career pick — and fourth this season — last Saturday against Montana State Northern.

Jacobs now only trails Havan Jones, who holds the single-season and career mark for interceptions with the 13 he snagged during the 1980 season.

Not bad for somebody who was thrust into the position he is in now in short order.

Jacobs played both wide receiver and defensive back during his time at LHS. Camp brought him on as a wideout, and felt he could have been a great one for the Mountaineers.

“With focus and coaching and structure, him as a wideout would be very dangerous, and (it’s) something that I don’t believe he got in high school,” Camp said.

But a rash of injuries to the secondary in the early stages of the 2017 season led to Jacobs making the move not only out of redshirt role, but to the other side of the ball.

“That was the instant bump right there, three weeks into the season,” Jacobs said. “It was, ‘all right, you’re on the defensive side. That’s how it’s going to be.’ And that’s how it’s been.”

The transition, of course, led to a steep learning curve for Jacobs, who up to that point had been studying up on the play-book for the EOU offense.

“It was a pretty crazy adjustment,” he said. “It was such a surprise, but at the time that’s what was best for our team, and that’s what I needed to do. I needed to focus at that point on defense and start chipping away there.”

Necessity may have led to the move, but Camp said Jacobs has the tools in his arsenal to be an effective defensive back.

“He’s so dang athletic, and he’s smart,” Camp said. “He sees things. He can take a misstep, but he can cover it up just based on his speed and being smart, and understanding what people are trying to do to him.”

The most important key for Jacobs once the change was made was learning the defense.

“Right when I was going in the first couple of games, I didn’t have a big idea what I was doing,” he said. “(But) once I got those plays and studied them and knew them myself, the speed of the game picked up. I could play a lot faster, which is huge in the game of football.”

He made a massive leap from year one to year two, collecting seven picks in 2018 — tied for second most in EOU history in a single season.

Jacobs said being a former wide receiver and knowing what a wideout will do has helped him in the transition, as well.

“You try to read the receiver’s demeanor and what kind of route they’re running and what they’re dictating,” he said. “Another thing that helped is being able to high-point the football (when you jump) and go up and get it. In that aspect, it is like a receiver. You have to out jump (the player) and high point the football. That was a huge key to bring over.”

The primary key, though, to being a successful defensive back in the eyes of Jacobs? Those around him.

“Trusting your other defensive backs (is important),” he said. “You have to have trust (so you) don’t try to do too much. You have to do your job. Keeping your eyes on your man (and) not the quarterback.”

Camp said Jacobs’ improved knowledge of the game is what has allowed him to become an elite defender, and a vital cog to the entire EOU defense.

“Being able to see things before they happen instead of just being a pure athletic, being able to study film, being comfortable back there, being able to communicate, (and) being sure that people are in the right spots,” Camp said. “He’s more of a coach on the field than he’ll give himself credit for, but he knows exactly what’s going on. That’s why he’s in the position that he plays.”

