



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Jamal Heckard, left, is one of nine newcomers for the Eastern Oregon men's basketball team, while Max McCullough, right, is back after missing last season with ankle surgery.

## New-look EOU ready to run

By Ronald Bond  
The Observer

Eastern Oregon men's basketball head coach Carlito Labarda Jr. set out to add players to the roster this fall who have a team-first mentality.

And as the 2019-20 season approaches, the third-year head coach likes what he is seeing from his squad, one that features nine new players.

"I'm happy to say all of them are team driven," Labarda said. "I really couldn't say that about last year's team, to be honest. These guys just want to win, they have great attitudes (and) they're very, very, very coachable. I haven't had any problems with them. They like each other, and I don't think anyone has any hidden agendas."

Labarda said he went through a much more thorough vetting process in looking to add players to come alongside the eight returners he does have from last year's team that finished 15-15, lost two seniors and had four additional players elect to not return. The list includes players like Jamal Heckard, who Labarda said showed at the junior college level the capability to score 20-plus points a game, but later took a role on a different team scoring fewer points in order to win.

"He doesn't care about scoring. All he cares about is winning," Labarda said. "You could say that for Josh Brown, David Mixon, Preston Chandler (and) all these guys who are coming in."

Brown's answer to the question of his individual goals for the season, in fact, give a picture into the type of players Labarda added.

"Be a part of a 20-plus win team," Brown said.

The Mountaineers return two of their top three scorers from a year ago in 7-foot center Jarek Schetzle and fellow senior Landon Jones, who averaged 12 and 11.7 points per game a year ago, respectively. The two were also EOU's top rebounders, combining for 13.9 boards per contest.

Schetzle said the coach is trying to bring in "winners," and the senior is



Ronald Bond/The Observer

EOU works on its defensive stance during practice on Wednesday.

excited about who has been added.

"It's people who want to come to practice every day and work hard," he said. "Just looking for people who want to win, not people who just want to come and play basketball."

Having a 7-footer in the middle like Schetzle and a sharpshooter like Max McCullough, a career 41% 3-point shooter, were part of the draw for Brown to join EOU.

"Looked him up (and saw) that he was a high quality basketball player," Brown said of McCullough. "That interested me because obviously I'm trying to make him better, and he's for sure going to make me better."

EOU did lose leading scorer Jordan May, who transferred, but does have back its leading scorer from two years ago in McCullough. The guard, who averaged 22.2 points per game in 2017-18, missed all of last year after having surgery on both ankles.

"It's been a long process, and even the beginning of the season it's taken a little bit to get back into, but every day, it's getting stronger. I'm seeing progress," the redshirt junior said.

He'll need to be ready, too, as Labarda plans to emphasize speed and free-flowing basketball on the offensive end

this season, which he says he can do given the basketball IQ of the players on the team.

"I got a good mixture of shooters, athleticism, speed, quickness, slashers, and I got the big guy, who is going to play a big part," Labarda said.

The team, Labarda said, will look to get out and go in the fast break, and even push the pace off made baskets. And offensively, he's going to allow the team to create more, and aim to call fewer set plays.

"I'm going to let them loose a little, because I think they can coach themselves. What I mean by that is they know what a good shot is and what a bad shot is," Labarda said.

Schetzle will be a key piece even with the speed emphasis, as the center said he's much more fit this fall.

"We want to be really fast. (We're) conditioning a lot now. We're trying to get up and down the court as quickly as we can and not have to set up a play every (time), and keep the game going."

Brown said the inside game with Schetzle, in fact, could be one of the team's biggest strengths.

"We have a 7-footer at the end of the day. Nobody else is honing that type of

See **Hoops** / Page 8A

## Tigers lock up GOL title again

By Gerry Steele  
EO Media Group

The La Grande Tigers defended their Greater Oregon League volleyball title Thursday by defeating Baker 25-16, 25-16, 25-20 in the Baker gym.

The Tigers stand 5-0 in league play, and Baker, 3-2, is in second place.

La Grande had little trouble with the Bulldogs, unlike when Baker visited La Grande earlier in the season. In that match, La Grande topped Baker 3-1.

"When they came to our place we didn't start out strong," said La Grande coach Melinda Becker-Bisenius. "Since then we've worked a lot to speed up our offense and tried to find the holes in their defense."

The La Grande coach also noted that her team missed just one serve Thursday.

In the first set, La Grande broke a 4-4 tie behind the serving of Jayce Seavert to take an 8-5 edge.

La Grande then continued to add to the margin the rest of the game.

Set 2 was much the same with La Grande pulling away from a 4-4 tie and expanding its lead.

Set 3 was much closer as the teams played through nine ties before Baker took a 3-point lead.

La Grande stayed in range, finally catching the Bulldogs with Presley Justice serving.

When Justice got the serve Baker was leading 20-19. Justice then served the final six points for the match.

Seavert led the Tigers in the win with 16 kills, 15 blocks and added three digs. Kenzie Williams added 15 assists and three blocks, Jacie Howton had 12 assists and Felicity Houston grabbed 12 digs. Grace Neer added four blocks and Justice had seven kills.

La Grande (18-5 overall, 5-0 GOL) ends its regular season Tuesday in Ontario.

## EOU women's XC returns to top 25

Observer staff

For the first time in seven years, the Eastern Oregon women's cross country team is ranked.

The Mountaineers, who have been on the cusp of breaking into the top 25 in the coaches' poll, did so Thursday, climbing to No. 23 in the nation.

Eastern, which had 169 points in the poll, is ranked for the first time since 2012. That season EOU moved into the ranks for the first time late in the year — coincidentally, also on Oct. 17 — at No. 21, and reached as high as 11th before wrapping the season in 13th.

The Mountaineers are one of four Cascade Collegiate Conference teams in the poll, along with No. 3 College of Idaho, No. 10 Oregon Tech, and No. 11 Southern Oregon.

The EOU men, meanwhile, maintained their spot in the top 20, though

they slipped one position to No. 19 in the latest poll Thursday, trading spots in the poll with Montreat, North Carolina.

The CCC continues to have three teams in the poll on the men's side, with College of Idaho holding at second and Southern Oregon dropping two spots to eighth.

The Eastern Oregon women's soccer team dropped out of the top 10 following its first loss of the season, slipping five spots to No. 11 in the latest poll on Wednesday.

Eastern's 3-1 setback on the road at Oregon Tech Friday ended a nine-match unbeaten streak to open the season. But the Mountaineers rebounded for a 1-0 win at Southern Oregon to prevent a further slide.

The Mountaineers, despite currently being third in the CCC, are the only conference team in the top 25.

## Wallowa County takes first, third

Observer staff

Ellyse Tingelstad fell short in a race to the finish line but took second overall and led the Wallowa County girls cross country team to a victory at the Kyle Burnside Wildhorse Invitational Thursday in Pendleton.

Tingelstad turned in a time of 19:39.9, just 0.6 seconds behind Baker's Sydney Keller, who won the race. La Grande's Jacki Martini followed in third in 19:47.2, and Union/Cove's Jaimee Baxter placed fourth in 19:54.4.

Wallowa County finished with 88 points and edged The Dalles, which followed with 94.

Union/Cove (140) was sixth, and La Grande (159) placed seventh.

Wallowa County had two other runners in the top 20, with Kyla Hook placing 12th (21:02.9), and Mary Catherine Matthews in 16th (21:15.4).

Baxter was the only Bobcat runner in the top 30, though two finished together in 36th and 37th as Kaitlin Martens (22:11.1) edged out Danielle O'Reilly (22:12.2).

Corbyn Sexton (21:24.2) and Maia Vandervlugt (21:27.0) followed Martini in 20th and 21st for La Grande.

Elgin's two runners, Jocelyn Palmer (21:59.4) and Anika McDonald (22:00.9) finished in 30th and 31st.

For the Wallowa County boys, Henry Coughlan broke the 16-minute mark,

See **Harriers** / Page 8A

## Mountaineers sweep Yotes

Observer staff

The No. 5 Eastern Oregon Mountaineers rallied to win the first set, and rode the momentum to a sweep of No. 23 College of Idaho on the road Thursday, 25-23, 25-19, 25-18.

EOU was staring at a first-set loss when a block by C of I's Jade Warren put the Yotes ahead 23-21. The Mountaineers pulled even and took the lead after three straight C of I errors, and took the set on a block by Taylor Tibbetts and Jet Taylor.

A 4-1 mini run put Eastern up 18-14 in the second

set on an ace by Kaci Cox, and a 5-0 run that featured two Aspen Christiansen aces and two of Megan Bunn's 11 kills made it 24-17. Cambree Scott, who also had 11 kills, finished the set with a kill for a 2-0 lead.

A 6-2 run in the third — one started by a Tibbetts kill and ended with a Bunn kill — gave Eastern the lead for good at 13-10. The lead reached six on three occasions before Taylor and Madison Pilon capped the match with a block.

Bunn and Scott, in addition

to leading the team in kills, each added four block assists. Taylor added seven kills and six block assists, and both Tibbetts and Breanna Shaffer had six kills. Three players — Kiley McMurtrey (16), Bunn (11) and Christiansen (10) reached double figures in digs, and Pilon recorded 38 assists. Eastern posted a .263 attack percentage — its third best of the season.

The Mountaineers (22-1 overall, 12-1 CCC) who maintained the top spot in the CCC with the win, host Walla Walla Saturday.

### EOU hosts camp

The "Mountie Made: Kids Camp" for volleyball takes place Saturday at Quinn Coliseum.

The camp, for boys and girls ages 5-12, takes place from 10 a.m. to noon, and costs \$20. Participants will get to learn the fundamentals of the game and meet the members of the fifth-ranked EOU volleyball team. They will also get a T-shirt and a ticket to the Mountaineers' match against Walla Walla that night.

