

SATURDAY'S GAMES

ALL TIMES PACIFIC

COLLEGE OF IDAHO

AT EASTERN OREGON, 1 P.M.

The advantage in the Interstate 84 rivalry has shifted to the southeast the last couple of years, with the Coyotes winning four out of the last five meetings — and winning those games by an average of 21.5 points. They come in not only leading the Frontier Conference by two games, but with the highest ranking in program history.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN

AT MONTANA WESTERN, NOON

Montana Western still has a glimmer of hope at the Frontier Conference title, but would need for C of I to slip up this weekend in La Grande and top the Coyotes next week. The Bulldogs also need to take care of business this weekend against Rocky, which they buried in September, 38-7.

MONTANA TECH

AT SOUTHERN OREGON, 1 P.M.

This contest was surprisingly close the first time — a 17-14 home win by Montana Tech — considering the teams were going in vastly different directions at the time of the game. The Raiders have found their footing in recent weeks, last week's loss to C of I notwithstanding, and could play spoiler to the Orediggers' playoff hopes.

CARROLL COLLEGE

AT MSU-NORTHERN, 6 P.M.

Carroll totaled 480 yards of offense in a 54-26 win when these teams first met. A win by the Fighting Saints would give them five conference wins for the first time since 2014.

PLAYER TO WATCH

Eastern Oregon running back Victor Dias has been a workhorse in the backfield since the bye week. The senior has had his best three games the last three weeks, going for 130 total yards (76 rushing, 20 receiving, 34 passing) against MSU-Northern, 147 yards rushing against Southern Oregon, and 107 yards (60 rushing, 47 receiving) against Montana Tech.

TREND TO WATCH

This game will very likely come down to who runs the football better. In the last five meetings between EOU and C of I, the winning team has amassed more yards on the ground. The Coyotes had a whopping 377-66 advantage in rushing yards in the first meeting, and have 532 more rushing yards than EOU the last two contests.

NAIA POLL

Team	Record	Points
1. Morningside (Iowa) [17]	7-0	392
2. Marian (Ind.)	6-0	368
3. Kansas Wesleyan	8-0	361
4. Grand View (Iowa)	8-0	350
5. Northwestern (Iowa)	7-0	327
6. College of Idaho	7-0	321
7. Lindsey Wilson (Ky.)	8-0	309
8. Cumberlands (Ky.)	7-0	284
9. Evangel (Mo.)	7-1	269
10. Keiser (Fla.)	8-0	241
11. Saint Xavier (Ill.)	5-2	236
12. Ottawa (Ariz.) (AZ)	8-0	215
13. Benedictine (Kan.)	6-2	205
14. Siena Heights (Mich.)	7-1	201
15. Concordia (Mich.)	6-2	182
16. Saint Francis (Ind.)	5-2	180
17. Reinhardt (Ga.)	7-2	149
18. Southeastern (Fla.)	6-1	131
19. Montana Tech	5-2	122
20. Baker (Kan.)	6-2	105
21. Dickinson State (N.D.)	6-2	91
22. Langston (Okla.)	5-2	81
23. Sterling (Kan.)	6-1	73
24. Montana Western	5-2	45
25. Waldorf (Iowa)	6-2	25

Dropped Out:

None
Others Receiving Votes:
 Valley City State (N.D.) 5, Dordt (Iowa) 3, Indiana Wesleyan 3, Carroll (Mont.) 3

Mountaineers look forward to the challenge of facing unbeaten Yotes



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Eastern Oregon's defense has held three straight opponents to less than 300 yards of offense.

By Ronald Bond

The Observer

The first matchup against College of Idaho in late August did not go well for the Eastern Oregon football team.

The Mountaineers have played better since that 48-12 loss, but know they still have a tall task ahead of them when they face the undefeated and sixth-ranked Coyotes Saturday at Community Stadium.

"(I'm) looking forward to the challenge," senior running back Victor Dias said. "They know who we are (and) we know who they are."

The Yotes have largely been a run-first, run-often power football team, a team that rushes the ball more than 63% of the time, and does so effectively. C of I is fifth in the nation in rushing yards per game at 260.9, and ran for 377 yards in the opening victory over EOU.

It's a team that, seemingly, has been building to this point. After some struggles during the first 4-1/2 seasons since bringing back the football program, C of I won its final six games of the 2018 season, and hasn't lost since.

"College of Idaho is a very good football team that is very senior heavy, and these players have played in a lot of games for the Yotes," EOU head coach Tim Camp said.

C of I, indeed, has 26 seniors on its roster. The run-heavy attack is led by junior running back Nick Calzaretta and senior quarterback Darius-James Peterson, who have more than 1,200 yards on the ground between them.

Eastern Oregon's defense, however, has improved in recent weeks, and has held three straight opponents under 300 yards — an unprecedented streak in the Tim Camp era.

"I feel like we've been coming together as a team (on defense)," defensive end Chase Van Wyck said. "We're growing as a unit. Everything is starting to click for us."

The focus on physicality has played a role in that, but the junior pointed to more reasons.

"The chemistry has grown, and we understand where we're at (as a team)," he said.

Senior linebacker Isaiah Cranford said the approach taken by the team has also helped in the cerebral facet of the game.

"We've been working together



Ronald Bond/The Observer

Luis Cardenas, front, and the rest of the EOU football team goes through conditioning Monday.

About the game

SERIES HISTORY

Eastern Oregon and College of Idaho have played 11 times since the Coyotes reinstated their football program, and C of I has a 6-5 edge, having won four of the last five meetings. EOU has won three of the five contests played at Community Stadium, including 24-21 last fall. C of I won the first matchup this season, 48-12.

COYOTE TO WATCH

Quarterback Darius-James Peterson has been an effective game manager for C of I this fall, though he has also shown the ability to throw the football. In two of the last three weeks, the senior has passed for more than 300 yards, and tossed a program-record five touchdown passes in the Yotes' 42-14 win at Southern a week ago.

a lot more and been a (much) more sound football team throughout," he said. "Physicality has increased, we've been hitting harder, hitting more, (and) it's helped with our tackling and being mentally tough."

One of the keys for the Eastern defense — and something that was emphasized repeatedly during walkthroughs Monday — is for the front seven to get penetration against the power run sets for C of I.

The EOU offense, meanwhile, has been mostly better since the bye week, but struggled to get going last week in a 23-10 loss to Montana Tech, one that saw the team gain just 171 yards and not come away with an offensive touchdown.

"When we execute, we move the football. When we don't execute, we don't," Dias said. "That's how this offense has been all season."

Wide receiver Saige Wilkerson said the physical side is something that could catch C of I off guard.

"Our offense as a whole is a lot more physical, which they aren't going to be expecting or ready for,"

he said.

The players know that, in the eyes of viewers, they'll be underdogs.

Cranford said some of the players may take a nothing-to-lose approach into the game because of that. For the senior, though, his take is different.

"I think some people have, and that's their opinion. For me, I love the game of football. Playing a game each week is exciting for me, and being able to see (C of I) a second time," he said.

Wilkerson noted that a team being an "underdog" doesn't often matter in the Frontier Conference.

"On paper they can say whatever they want to say, but everyone knows in the Frontier Conference that every game is up for grabs," he said. "We're going in with the mindset that were going to win the football game and hurt C of I's season."

Camp added that he believes execution and disciplined play will lead to a victory.

"We will execute our style of play, and the bottom line is that we need to make plays in all phases of the game," he said.

POWER POLL

BY RONALD BOND
THE OBSERVER

1. College of Idaho: It's almost a formality at this point that the Yotes are going to win the Frontier Conference — it's just a matter of when they are crowned conference champions. They can clinch a share of the title if they knock off EOU Saturday.

2. Montana Tech: The Orediggers will be favored in their final three games (Southern, Carroll and Rocky are their opponents). If they win out and finish 8-2, one has to wonder if that could be good enough for them to sneak into the playoffs given their only losses would be to C of I twice.

3. Montana Western: The Bulldogs' playoff hopes are on life support, as it would take them winning out — which would include beating the Yotes on the road next week — to get back in the postseason picture.

4. Carroll College: The Fighting Saints have to be kicking themselves even more now for giving up the lead late in their loss to SOU a couple weeks back. They won't be in the playoffs, but will be favored in two of their final three games, which could mean a winning season.

5. Southern Oregon: Southern didn't put up much of a fight in the rematch against College of Idaho. The Raiders' hopes for a .500 season hinge on winning against either Montana Tech or Montana Western.

6. Eastern Oregon: Eastern is improving. There is no denying that. A real gauge of improvement will be how close the Mountaineers are to C of I this weekend. It shouldn't be a 36-point rout like last time.

7. Rocky Mountain: The Battlin' Bears have two wins over MSU-Northern and not much else to show this season. Yes, they beat Dickinson State in August, but that is not a team that belongs in the top 25.

8. MSU-Northern: Carroll. Southern. C of I. The Lights have to beat one of those three to avoid a third straight winless conference season. Gulp.

STANDINGS

	Conf.	Overall
College of Idaho	7-0	7-0
Montana Tech	5-2	5-2
Montana Western	5-2	5-2
Carroll College	4-3	4-3
Southern Oregon	3-4	3-5
Rocky Mountain	2-5	3-5
Eastern Oregon	2-5	2-6
MSU-Northern	0-7	1-7

Saturday, Oct. 19

Southern Oregon 31, Eastern Oregon 25

Rocky Mountain 57, MSU-Northern 39
 College of Idaho 16, Montana Tech 14
 Carroll College 33, Montana Western 29

Saturday, Oct. 26

Montana Tech 23, Eastern Oregon 10
 Montana Western 59,
 MSU-Northern 13
 Carroll College 51, Rocky Mountain 14
 College of Idaho 42, Southern Oregon 14

Saturday, Nov. 2

College of Idaho at Eastern Oregon, 1 p.m.
 Rocky Mountain at Montana Western, noon
 Montana Tech at Southern Oregon, 1 p.m.

Carroll College at MSU-Northern, 6 p.m.
Saturday, Nov. 9
Eastern Oregon at Rocky Mountain, noon
 Montana Tech at Carroll College, 11 a.m.

Montana Western at College of Idaho, 11 a.m.
 Southern Oregon at MSU-Northern, noon

ON THE COVER

Senior running back Victor Dias has turned in a strong second half to the 2019 season.
 (Ronald Bond, The Observer)

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