

COLLEGE OF IDAHO (7-0, 7-0) AT EASTERN OREGON (2-6, 2-5)

GIMME FIVE — KEYS TO SATURDAY'S GAME

1. SLOW DOWN THE YOTES' RUN GAME

C of I has one of the nation's most prolific running attacks, one that ranks fifth in NAIA football at 260.9 yards per game. EOU will need penetration up front to slow the ground game, or it could be a long day.

2. LONG, CLOCK-CHEWING DRIVES

The best defense can be a good offense. EOU has been better in the ground game in recent weeks, and if it can build longer drives, get first downs and — most importantly — score, it'll be able to hang around.

3. FORCE MULTIPLE TURNOVERS

The Coyotes are a team that takes care of the football. They have thrown just three interceptions and lost six fumbles. If the Mounties can get a couple of takeaways Saturday, they'll have a shot at the upset.

4. FINISH DRIVES WITH TOUCHDOWNS

While the EOU defense has been better, inevitably C of I going to score some points. If Eastern is able to put some long drives together, it'll be vital to turn those possessions into touchdowns.

5. BLOCK A KICK IN SPECIALTEAMS

The Mountaineers' lone touchdown last week came on a blocked punt. Getting through the line to block a kick is a challenge, but if Eastern can pull it off Saturday, that will be an added bonus.

Change in style fits 'grit' of EOU senior

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

The move to a physical, hard-nosed style of offense seems to fit Eastern Oregon senior running back Victor Dias perfectly.

His stats since the bye week, when the Mountaineers made that move, bare that out. In the last three weeks, Dias has rushed for 283 yards and three touchdowns — 94.3 yards per game and 4.8 yards per carry — after gaining just 134 yards — 26.8 per game and 3.2 yards per carry — in the first five contests.

"That's the style of football I've always played," he said. "I embrace that, for sure. I'm not one to shy away from contact or anything of the kind. I try to do my best with that sort of thing in all phases of the game."

The gritty style of play was emphasized to him on the field by his coaches at Middleton, Idaho — which included his father, Pete Dias.

"All those guys instilled in me the reality that physically I could enforce my will on people," he said. "That is something I try to do. Protecting the football is priority No. 1, but the second thing is making sure it takes more than one guy to bring me down. I think I've been pretty successful with that in my career."

It also fits his build as a football player, as the senior is listed on the EOU roster at 5-foot-8 and 210 pounds.

But it also suits him — and, perhaps best — mentally.

"It's how I've been raised and how I've lived my life. (I'm) not one to shy away from contact or conflict," he said. "I have somewhat of an aggressive nature when it's time to get stuff done."

As one gets to know Dias more, you learn that the work ethic needed to have success in that style of play and the grind-it-out attitude is deeply ingrained in him. When he isn't playing football, studying or spending time with his wife, former EOU women's basketball standout Maya Ah You-Dias, he'll often be on the back of a horse working cattle.

"I work outside for a living, what I enjoy the most is being a working cowboy," he said. "I spend my time riding horses and tending to livestock."

His family back in Idaho owns livestock that he helps tend to, but he also works for different ranchers in the La Grande area.

"It's always fun when we get to go home and work cattle or (do it) here in La Grande," he said. "It's something I've always enjoyed doing."

His bloodline — on both sides of his family — is also accustomed to the hard-working lifestyle. His great-great-grandparents on his mom's side of the family were pioneers. His great-grandparents on his dad's side immigrated from Portugal. His grandfather, Manuel Dias, was a veteran of the Korean War.

When he considers the sacrifices and trials his family has made through the years, he considers himself blessed to be able to play football, and one can see why. It also makes the perceived struggles of a 2-6 season on the football field pale in comparison.

"I have this opportunity to play college sports (that they didn't)," he said. "The struggles are small."

Even if he didn't have the lineage ahead of him, he's witnessed ample success in his time at EOU that would offset this season. As he put it, "I've done a lot more winning than losing."

"I understand fully well that in my career I've done a lot of winning, and it's a blessing. In my previous sports, middle school, high school and here at Eastern," he said. "I'm not going to dwell as much on the hard times. The hard times for us right now here at Eastern pale in comparison to the people who went before."

It also helps put into perspective his use of the word "grit" when asked what would describe his time at EOU.

His family has shown it in the past. He shows it in his choice of work. He's shown it on the field. It seems to describe Eastern Oregon as a whole — not just the school, but the region.

"Grit has been the word that for whatever reason when we talk (to people) they say they want to have that grit," he said. "That's what it takes to be a Mountie."

It makes it easy to see why EOU head coach Tim Camp called the senior the "type of player" a coach would want as a program leader.

"Vic has been an outstanding addition to this team, obviously as a player but more importantly the type of young man he is," Camp said. "He is a hard-working (and) dedicated husband, teammate, and captain of this football program."

C of I RB Nick Calzaretta

KEY STATISTIC: Leading C of I rusher with 864 yards; had 124 yards in opener against EOU.

It starts with the running game for College of Idaho, which means it starts with the offensive line and running back Nick Calzaretta. The junior has emerged as one of the top backs in the Frontier Conference and in the country this season, leading the conference and ranking seventh in the nation in yards per game rushing. He also has gone for more than 100 yards five times. Stopping C of I's offense will obviously require stopping more than just Calzaretta, but if he is able to go for another big day — as he has shown the ability to do this season — the Mountaineers could be in trouble.



EOU LB Gunnar Blix

KEY STATISTIC: Tied season high with eight tackles last week against Montana Tech.

Gunnar Blix has had a solid second half of the season as yet another player who is seeing the benefit of Eastern Oregon's physical focus. He has 22 tackles in the last three games, and twice in the last three weeks has posted his season-best in tackles with eight. That's after having 19 in the first five games, and only one against C of I in the opener. The defense has been much better across the line, and how successful Blix and the rest of the linebacking corps is at helping hold the line will be important. It'll be a tall order to hold a fourth straight opponent under 300 yards. If EOU can do so, it'll be in position for the upset.



Calzaretta



Blix

EDGE: CALZARETTA

BY THE NUMBERS

C OF I INDIVIDUAL STAT LEADERS

Passing	C-A-I	Pct.	Yards	TD	Yds/G
D.J. Peterson	102-177-3	57.6	1,526	15	218.0
Rushing	Carries	Yards	Avg.	TD	Avg/G
Nick Calzaretta	140	864	6.2	6	123.4
D.J. Peterson	71	364	5.1	2	52.0
Dominic Garzoli	50	279	5.6	3	39.9
Justin Hellyer	32	221	6.9	4	31.6
Ed Osterberger	9	99	11.0	1	16.5
Receiving	Rec.	Yards	Avg.	TD	Avg/G
Hunter Juarez	26	593	22.8	5	84.7
Connor Richardson	19	271	14.3	4	38.7
Keegan Crafton	14	219	15.6	4	31.3
Connor Gagain	19	203	10.7	2	29.0
Bo Stevens	7	93	13.3	0	13.3
Punt Returns	No.	Yards	Avg.	TD	
Tony Huebner	19	94	5.0	0	
Kick Returns	No.	Yards	Avg.	TD	
Tony Huebner	9	195	21.7	0	
Dominic Garzoli	4	90	22.5	0	
Field Goals	M-A	Pct.	40+	Long	
Kyle Mitchell	8-11	72.7	2-4	58	
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Total	TFL	
Forrest Rivers	22	27	49	7.0	
Josh Elsberry	12	24	36	0.0	
Graham Carnahan	17	16	33	5.0	
Daniel Garcia	14	19	33	5.0	
David Ford	16	16	32	1.0	
Taeson Hardin	20	12	32	0.5	
Landon Clark-Gammell	8	19	27	6.5	
Interceptions	No.	Yards	Avg/Ret	TD	
Taeson Hardin	3	82	27.3	0	

EOU INDIVIDUAL STAT LEADERS

Passing	C-A-I	Pct.	Yards	TD	Yds/G
Kai Quinn	120-251-12	47.8	1,419	5	177.4
Rushing	Carries	Yards	Avg.	TD	Avg/G
Victor Dias	101	417	4.1	3	52.1
Kai Quinn	63	208	3.3	3	26.0
Kaler Moore	35	127	3.6	3	18.1
Victor Rosas	7	44	6.3	0	14.7
Receiving	Rec.	Yards	Avg.	TD	Avg/G
Saige Wilkerson	20	360	18.0	1	45.0
Isaiah Thomas	23	303	13.23	0	37.8
Phoenix Millhollen	11	177	16.1	2	25.3
Conner Falk	18	171	9.5	1	21.4
Tanner Zenke	13	146	11.2	0	18.3
Victor Dias	17	134	7.9	1	16.8
Punt Returns	No.	Yards	Avg.	TD	
Isaiah Thomas	4	31	7.8	0	
Kick Returns	No.	Yards	Avg.	TD	
Tanner Zenke	14	337	24.1	0	
Isaiah Thomas	5	52	10.4	0	
Field Goals	M-A	Pct.	40+	Long	
Jaiden Machuca	8-9	88.9	0-0	33	
Tackles	Solo	Ast.	Total	TFL	
Haziel Ledezma	25	29	54	0.5	
Isaiah Cranford	18	25	43	6.0	
Gunnar Blix	16	25	41	2.5	
Chase VanWyck	15	25	40	3.5	
Solo Taylor	10	29	39	2.0	
Zack Jacobs	14	20	34	1.0	
Sage DeLong	17	14	31	9.0	
Interceptions	No.	Yards	Avg/Ret	TD	
Zack Jacobs	4	0	0.0	0	

POSITION MATCHUPS

BACKFIELD	RECEIVERS	OFFENSIVE LINE	DEFENSIVE LINE	LINEBACKERS	SECONDARY
The Yotes not only have a top-five rushing attack nationally, but are paced by a top-10 running back, as Nick Calzaretta is seventh in the country in yards per game. They also have just three picks thrown to 12 for EOU.	The Yotes don't have to throw it often, but have shown to have that capability with more than 350 yards passing two of the last three weeks. They also have the Frontier's No. 3 receiver in yards per game in Hunter Juarez.	You've gotta have a good offensive line to get the yardage that C of I does on the ground. The Yotes also do a great job of protecting the quarterback, as they've only allowed nine sacks in seven games.	If there is a position where the teams are close to even, it would be here and at the linebacker. The Mountaineers have who are widely considered two of the conference's better defensive ends (Van Wyck and DeLong).	The last three weeks, the Mountaineers' run defense has allowed just 91 yards per game and only 2.31 yards per carry — numbers that are actually better than C of I in that span. This is close to a push, but we'll give it to EOU.	The teams have similar numbers in terms of yardage allowed and interceptions, but what gives C of I the edge here is that it's giving up just a 53.8% completion rate. The Mountaineers are allowing 63.9%.

PREDICTION: COLLEGE OF IDAHO 30, EASTERN OREGON 13

EASTERN OREGON SCHEDULE/RESULTS

AT COLLEGE OF IDAHO LOSS 48-12	AT SOUTHERN OREGON WIN 24-21	VS. MONTANA TECH LOSS 35-10	AT PORTLAND STATE LOSS 59-9	AT MONTANA WESTERN LOSS 49-13	VS. MONTANA STATE NORTHERN WIN 45-7	VS. SOUTHERN OREGON LOSS 31-25	AT MONTANA TECH LOSS 23-10	VS. COLLEGE OF IDAHO Nov. 2 1 p.m.	AT ROCKY MOUNTAIN Nov. 9 Noon	VS. CARROLL COLLEGE Nov. 16 1 p.m.
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EOU improvements should be encouraging

Eastern Oregon's gradual improvement is about to get the ultimate test.

With all due respect to MSU-Northern, Southern Oregon and Montana Tech, none of those teams can hold a candle to College of Idaho — though Montana Tech is a team that has consistently stayed close to the Coyotes and, were it not for a 58-yard Kyle Mitchell field goal two weeks ago, would have beaten C of I and been right in the middle of the conference title chase.

The last three weeks — really, the last four if you count the bye week — have, in a way, built to this point of seeing if Eastern can put up a better showing against the Frontier Conference front-runners than it did in the opener when it lost 48-12, a game that it trailed by 20 at halftime, by 27 in the third quarter and really didn't give itself a chance of winning.

First, the bye week, where the Mountaineers made the call to return to a physical brand of football, focus on the run game and on getting in plays that best



FROM THE SIDELINE
RONALD BOND

suit the offensive personnel.

Next, the initial trial run against MSU-Northern — the exact team you would want to face out of the gate when making an adjustment like the Mounties did — which resulted in a 45-7 win.

Then, the Small School Civil War against SOU, a game that, were it not for a couple costly turnovers, Eastern maybe escapes with the win, rather than a 31-25 loss.

Last week, a visit to Butte to face a team in Montana Tech that is currently second in the conference and that ran EOU out of its own home stadium a few weeks back. The end result was a loss, but one that was much closer than the 35-10 setback earlier this year: The Mountaineers were within a touchdown in the fourth quarter before losing 23-10.

Now comes C of I. Undefeated. Ranked No. 6 in the nation. On the cusp of a conference title (the

Yotes can actually earn a share of it if they win Saturday). A powerful offense. A stout defense. A 13-game winning streak dating to last season. The team many people projected it to be at the start of the season.

The Mountaineers have their hands full, for sure. Vegas would probably have EOU as roughly 20.5-point underdogs.

But this game will be closer, and there are two reasons why that can be drawn from the last three weeks.

1) EOU has better a defense than a few weeks ago: The Mountaineers have held their last three opponents to an average of 91 yards per game on the ground, and have kept four of their opponents under 300 yards in total offense this season. EOU hasn't done that since 2011. Yes, yards allowed in a game aren't the greatest indicator of success, but when you consider the Mountaineers were allowing nearly 470 yards per game at the bye week, it shows they are getting stops more consistently.

2) EOU's focus on physicality

is paying off: The Mountaineers' physical play is probably the No. 1 reason for improvement the last three weeks. Yes, they are just 1-2 during that time. But they aren't getting pushed in games around like they were earlier in the season. The rematch against Tech is a good example of that. They didn't match the Yotes on the physical aspect the first time. But they should be closer to it this weekend. That in and of itself will allow the Mountaineers to hang around.

Keep this in mind, too. EOU has a history of success against high-ranked teams. The Mountaineers have 10 victories against top-10 opponents under Tim Camp, including a handful in the most unlikely of circumstances — most notably the 2013 team which upset No. 3 Carroll despite coming into the game with an 0-4 record.

If the Mounties stay physical up front and is able to play well enough on defense to slow down the Yotes, they could put themselves in a position to have a chance at the upset. And that alone would be a mark of improvement.

