

SATURDAY’S GAMES

ALL TIMES PACIFIC

CARROLL COLLEGE

AT EASTERN OREGON, 1 P.M.

The Fighting Saints bring a four-game winning streak and their first national ranking since 2016 into Community Stadium in hopes of ending a four-game skid against Eastern Oregon. The Mountaineers enter with a defense that, after a rough first half, has allowed 317 yards and 20.4 points per game in the second half of the season. EOU won last year, 8-7.

MSU-NORTHERN

AT COLLEGE OF IDAHO, 11 A.M.

The Lights have to be hoping for a miracle against the Frontier Conference champs, while the Yotes look to wrap up a perfect regular season as they head into likely a first-round home playoff game next weekend. C of I won last year, 59-28.

SOUTHERN OREGON

AT MONTANA WESTERN, NOON

There is some intrigue here. The Raiders, after their rough start to the season (0-3 in the Frontier), have a chance to finish with a .500 record in conference. The Bulldogs, meanwhile have to try and shake off a rough back half to the season that saw their playoff hopes derailed. SOU won last year, 37-10.

ROCKY MOUNTAIN

AT MONTANA TECH, NOON

Both teams are looking for a win to serve as a salve for the season. For Rocky, it would ease the sting of a first-to-seventh drop in the conference. For Tech, the sting of a late slide that will keep it out of the playoffs. Tech edged Rocky last year, 31-27.

PLAYER TO WATCH

Eastern Oregon defensive end Sage DeLong is putting up a strong finish to the 2019 season. The redshirt junior has 26 tackles — including six for loss — and two sacks in the Mountaineers’ last four games. That comes on the heels of three games where he had nine total tackles. He had seven tackles and one TFL in last week’s win over Rocky Mountain.

TREND TO WATCH

Two lengthy streaks are on the line for the Mountaineers when they take the field Saturday. In the previous 11 years under Tim Camp, EOU has never failed to win at least four games overall and at least two games at home. The last time EOU fell short of that mark was 2007, when it went 1-5 at home and 1-10 overall.

NAIA POLL

Team	Record	Points
1. Morningside (Iowa) [17]	9-0	392
2. Marian (Ind.)	8-0	369
3. Kansas Wesleyan	10-0	357
4. Grand View (Iowa)	10-0	352
5. Northwestern (Iowa)	9-0	328
6. College of Idaho	9-0	322
7. Lindsey Wilson (Ky.)	9-0	310
8. Cumberlands (Ky.)	9-0	287
9. Keiser (Fla.)	9-0	269
10. Saint Xavier (Ill.)	7-2	258
11. Saint Francis (Ind.)	7-2	234
12. Concordia (Mich.)	7-2	224
13. Reinhardt (Ga.)	8-2	201
14. Southeastern (Fla.)	8-1	193
15. Baker (Kan.)	8-2	185
16. Ottawa (Ariz.) (AZ)	8-1	165
17. Evangel (Mo.)	8-2	148
18. Dickinson State (N.D.)	8-2	131
18. Siena Heights (Mich.)	7-2	131
20. Benedictine (Kan.)	7-3	114
21. Langston (Okla.)	7-2	102
22. Carroll (Mont.)	6-3	53
23. Montana Tech	6-3	47
24. Dordt (Iowa)	7-3	34
25. Bethel (Kan.)	8-2	32
Dropped Out:		
Sterling (Kan.), Indiana Wesleyan, Montana Western		
Others Receiving Votes:		
Sterling (Kan.) 20, Indiana Wesleyan 16, Montana Western 12, Waldorf (Iowa) 9.		

Eastern looks to continue recent string of success against Carroll



Eastern Oregon receiver Josh Mendoza, left, makes a move against defensive back Donald Cook at Monday’s practice at Community Stadium.

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

They have one final chance to leave a mark — to leave an impression.

On Saturday, the Eastern Oregon football team will say goodbye to 15 seniors, who of course want to walk off the field with a win over Carroll College in the final game they will ever play.

“(It) would be a sweet taste in the mouth — leaving college (with a win),” senior Alec Cranford said. “Losing your last game of football is a bitter taste when you think about it. Of course we’re going to go out there and do our best. It’s going to be a big game for sure.”

Senior defensive lineman Luis Cardenas said his thoughts on his final game are that he wants to “leave something behind” for the returners to build on.

“I don’t want to be another senior who was here and gone. I want to leave an impression on the younger guys, especially this freshman class,” he said.

Cardenas noted that he no longer has the luxury of being able to say there’s always next year.

“I don’t (have) another year. I can’t have that mentality,” he said. “My thing is once I’m done, I want to put my name on it (and say) I’m proud of what I left behind. That’s my biggest thing.”

Cranford also talked about wanting to leave a mark for the younger players in the program, and has a different perspective after the senior left the sport his freshman year and just returned to the field this fall.

“I’ve had life without football, so I know how that goes. For me it was a chance to come in and play the game I love, and play with my best friends, and hopefully create a lasting impact with the younger guys and hopefully go out with a bang this Saturday,” he said.

The Mountaineers will get that chance to leave on a high note against a team in Carroll that they have defeated the last four years, albeit in close contests. Each of those four games have been decided by 10 points or fewer. One went to overtime. Last year’s win in Helena, Montana, was an 8-7 battle.

“I don’t know what it is — every year, Carroll and us, it’s always a brawl to the last second,” Cardenas said. “They just go to work. I think we’re way more physical for sure. It’s going to come down to every snap.”



Offensive lineman Noah Meyers, left, and defensive lineman Marc Anthony Oribio work on a blocking drill Monday.

About the game

SERIES HISTORY

Eastern Oregon and Carroll College will meet for the 33rd time on Saturday, with the Fighting Saints holding an 18-14 edge in the series. The Mountaineers have had the upperhand of late, winning the last four contests, and five of the previous six. The Mountaineers are 6-9 against Carroll under Tim Camp.

FIGHTING SAINT TO WATCH

Wide receiver Shane Sipes is on pace to put up 1,000 yards receiving this season, as he has 906 through nine games. He enters Saturday’s finale as one of only nine receivers in the country with 900 or more yards, and is a mere four yards behind Montana Tech’s Trevor Hoffman for the most yards in the Frontier.

Both Cardenas and Cranford said that the Fighting Saints have size on the offensive line that they’ll have to contend with, but are confident going into the battle in the trenches.

“They’re big up front, but they don’t have any more skill that we haven’t seen (from other teams),” Cranford said.

The Saints do come in on a four-game winning streak, and have already put up their first winning record since the 2014 season. Carroll has balance on offense, but does most of its damage on the ground, averaging 218.2 yards per game and led by Matthew Burgess (919 yards) and Major Ali (570) in the backfield. Carroll also has a dynamic receiver in Shane Sipes who is averaging more than 100 yards a game receiving.

“They’re pretty dynamic through the air,” senior defensive back Haziel Ledezma said. “They got a good line. They give (their quarterback) time to launch it up to No. 6 (Sipes). He’s been making plays all season. That’s going to be a big key for us.”

Eastern could have a shot at a strong day through the air against

a Saints’ squad that gives up 258.3 per game passing. Carroll, though, has been susceptible to the ground game of late, giving up 165.2 per game running the last five weeks.

“(They) run to the ball well and they bring more pressure on defense, which at times can create big plays for them or hurt them in man coverage,” EOU head coach Tim Camp said. “We like our matchups offensively. We need to protect our QB better and give him more time.”

Defense and special teams will be keys for EOU to have success Saturday, Camp said.

“The big job will be to slow down (their) offense (and) we need to win the special forces game,” he said.

The coach also commended the seniors as they get set to take the field one final time, saying that they have left an impression on him.

“They are a remarkable group of talented players, dedicated students, loyal teammates and most of all, great people who I know will go on to become great men,” Camp said.

POWER POLL

BY RONALD BOND
THE OBSERVER

1. College of Idaho: Unless the absolute unthinkable happens and the Yotes lose their finale to MSU-Northern, they’ll be the first team to go undefeated in the Frontier Conference since Southern Oregon in 2017. The last team before SOU to accomplish the feat was Carroll, which went 10-0 in 2010, the last of a four-year streak of undefeated seasons by Carroll.

2. Carroll College: Which 6-3 team to put at No. 2 is a tough call. Carroll, Tech and Western are all deserving. The Saints are the hottest of the four, though, so they’ll get the spot as they’re on a four-game winning streak.

3. Montana Tech: The Orediggers’ playoff hopes died with last week’s loss to Carroll. If Tech takes care of business, though, it’ll finish with its most wins since the 2016 season when it went 10-2.

4. Montana Western: The Bulldogs have dropped three of their past five, and the two teams they’ve defeated in that stretch — Rocky and MSUN — aren’t necessarily world beaters. UMW is definitely sputtering to the finish line.

5. Southern Oregon: I came *this* close to putting SOU below EOU in these rankings considering half of its wins are against MSUN, and the last one wasn’t impressive. But the Raiders’ win over Carroll should count for something.

6. Eastern Oregon: It is a bit concerning that the Mountaineers trailed Rocky in the fourth, but they showed some gusto to finish off the win. A victory in the finale would give EOU a huge boost entering the offseason.

7. Rocky Mountain: Unless they win Saturday to tie with EOU, the Battlin’ Bears will complete a fall from first to seventh in one season, which would be an unprecedented drop in the brief time the conference has had eight football teams (2012 to present).

8. MSU-Northern: The Lights need what would be a monumental upset to keep the conference losing streak from running into 2020.

STANDINGS

	Conf.	Overall
x-College of Idaho	9-0	9-0
Montana Tech	6-3	6-3
Montana Western	6-3	6-3
Carroll College	6-3	6-3
Southern Oregon	4-5	4-6
Eastern Oregon	3-6	3-7
Rocky Mountain	2-7	3-7
MSU-Northern	0-9	1-9
x-clinched Frontier Conference title		

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 24, Eastern Oregon 17
Montana Western, 40, Rocky Mountain 10
Montana Tech 28, Southern Oregon 14
Carroll College 27, MSU-Northern 6

Saturday, Nov. 9

Eastern Oregon 27, Rocky Mountain 17
Carroll College 30, Montana Tech 19
College of Idaho 38, Montana Western 27
Southern Oregon 27,
MSU-Northern 19

Saturday, Nov. 16

Carroll College at Eastern Oregon, 1 p.m.
MSU-Northern at College of Idaho, 11 a.m.
Southern Oregon at Montana Western, noon
Rocky Mountain at Montana Tech, noon

ON THE COVER

Senior Haziel Ledezma is coming off a two-interception performance in EOU’s win over Rocky Mountain. (Ronald Bond, The Observer)

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