



Staff photo by Ronald Bond

Eastern Oregon University's Beverly Slater shoots a jumper during the first quarter Friday night against Northwest Christian University. The Mountaineers fell to the Beacons, 66-63, ending their 50-game home winning streak.

Impressive streak ends

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

LA GRANDE — It had been nearly four years since the Eastern Oregon University women's basketball team lost at home, a streak of 50 consecutive games.

That streak ended Friday night as an EOU squad still trying to find its identity fell to Northwest Christian — the last team that had beaten the Mountaineers in Quinn Coliseum — 66-63 in Cascade Collegiate Conference play.

"They're never going to beat themselves. If you're going to come in here and win, you gotta beat them," said NCU head coach Chad Meadors. "We competed. We just told our kids to keep fighting."

The back-and-forth battle saw seven lead changes in the fourth quarter alone.

EOU claimed a 63-61 advantage on a 3-pointer by Megan Still with 2:21 to

play. But Morgan McKinney, who scored 21 points to lead NCU and the Beacons' last nine points, took over in the closing minutes. She scored twice in the paint after Still's 3-pointer, the second field goal with 1:29 to go putting the Beacons ahead 65-63. McKinney then collected a key steal on the defensive end in the closing seconds with EOU looking for the tie. With 3.6 seconds left, she split a pair of free throws, leaving the door open for the Mountaineers, but Eastern's last-second look at a tying 3-pointer by Whitney Meier fell short.

EOU head coach Anji Weissenfuh said the team is struggling with consistency and still is trying to figure out what will get it on track.

"Honestly, what frustrates me most is the lack of playing team basketball. And it's not out of selfishness. We're not playing selfish basketball," she said.

"We're just playing uninspired, scared, individual basketball. We just for some

reason cannot put the puzzle together, and that's on me. That's on me as a coach. We gotta figure it out."

The loss was the first at home for the Mountaineers since a 63-54 setback to the Beacons Jan. 22, 2016. Quinn Coliseum has been a house of horrors for visiting teams since that time. Not only had the Mountaineers won 50 straight, but 43 of those wins were by 10 points or more.

Meadors said EOU's home-court winning streak spoke highly of what Weissenfuh has accomplished over the last few years.

"I'd love to say great things about NCU on this, but man, that's amazing. What Anji has built here is so tremendous," Meadors said. "It's a real testament to the program she runs and the class program that is here at Eastern Oregon."

NCU, which led by as many as seven

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Eastern Oregon men split home games

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Eastern Oregon University men's basketball team split its first homestand of the new decade Friday and Saturday, rebounding from a 109-99 loss Friday to Northwest Christian to earn a 93-78 win Saturday over Corban in a pair of Cascade Collegiate Conference games at Quinn Coliseum.

EOU was done in Friday by struggles on the defensive end, as the Beacons shot 53% for the game and 56% in the second half. Eastern head coach Carlito Labarda Jr. said the team was giving up too many drives to the rim.

"We just couldn't contain them, and we couldn't contain the dribble, plain and simple," he said. "They took us to the rim, they manhandled us going to the rim, and they did a great job."

EOU, which trailed 49-45 at the half, used a 10-0 run over the span of about two minutes to take a 62-57 lead — its largest of the second half — on a field goal by Landon Jones and a 3-point play by Jarek Schetzle.

NCU eventually took the lead for good, 74-72, on a Malik Corey field goal with 12 minutes to play.

Jones, who had 21 of his team-high 28 points in the second half, almost single-handedly kept the Mountaineers in the game for a large stretch of the second half.

"I just knew we needed somebody to try and keep us



Staff photo by Ronald Bond

Eastern Oregon University's Zane Wright connects on a 3-pointer Friday during the first half.

in it. We got a few stops in a row, (and) I thought we had the momentum. I was kind of in attack mode thinking they hadn't stopped me for a few possessions, so I was going to keep going," he said.

Jones scored 13 straight EOU points, the last of which was a field goal with 9:32 to play to pull Eastern within a point at 81-80, and a basket by Max McCullough with 4:03 to play kept EOU within striking distance at 94-90.

But then the Beacons put the game away. Former Baker High School standout Kaden Sand had an uncontested dunk for a six-point

lead, and his brother, Logan Sand, followed with a pair of corner 3-pointers for a 102-90 advantage with less than two minutes to go.

A Josh Brown layup and a Jamal Heckard 3-pointer helped EOU get within 105-99 in the final minute, but Eastern didn't score again.

"Coach was preaching all week defense and rebounding, and it's hard to win when they get so many layups uncontested," Jones said.

Jones added 14 rebounds for the Mountaineers, who shot 45% on the night but were just 7-for-20 from 3-point range, 3-of-11 in the second half

Schetzle added 18 points while battling foul trouble most of the night. Heckard (14 points), McCullough (13) and Zane Wright (10) were also in double figures for EOU.

Ernest Ugoagu had 33 points to lead the Beacons. Logan Sand and Kaden Sand had 16 and 13 points, respectively.

Eastern ended its three-game losing streak with an important 93-78 win Saturday night over Corban, shaking off a nine-point second-half deficit with an 11-0 run, and later using an 11-3 run to take the lead for good.

Corban took a 53-44 lead with 15:28 to play on a Beau Roggenbach field goal, but the Mountaineers responded with the next 11 points to go ahead 55-53 on a McCullough 3-pointer. The teams battled to a 62-62 tie before the Mountaineers took control. McCullough had five points during the key run, which ended with Eastern ahead 73-65, then had consecutive field goals to give the Mountaineers their first double-digit lead of the game at 84-73 with 3:15 to go.

McCullough finished with a game-high 29 points and shot 67% for the game a night after shooting just 25%. Jones added 21 points, Heckard had 16, and both Schetzle and Brown scored 10 points. Schetzle also had 11 rebounds, and Heckard has six assists and four steals.

EOU (8-7 overall, 2-4 CCC) travels to face Evergreen State College Friday.

LHS girls win another tourney

Observer staff

The La Grande girls basketball team won its second tournament in a row Saturday and matched their longest winning streak of the past four seasons with a 57-48 win over Madras in the finale of the Banks Winter Shootout.

The victory was the Tigers seventh in a row, equalling their longest streak from last season and best since taking 13 games in a row during the 2015-16 season.

The Tigers used a strong second quarter to break a 15-15 tie and take a 29-21 lead at the break. Madras got within 46-40 after three quarters, but the Tigers held on.

Camryn Collman led a balanced offensive attack with 16 points for the Tigers. Grace Neer and Ella Dunlap each added 15 points.

On Friday, La Grande rallied in the fourth quarter to win its semifinal game and end defending 3A state champion Clatskanie's 20-game winning streak with a 51-48 victory.

The Tigers trailed after three quarters in the back-and-forth battle 40-35, but saved its best for last to earn the win. La Grande outscored Clatskanie 16-8 in the fourth, getting six in the period from Collman — who had a game-high 19 points — and four apiece from Lauran Rinker and Dunlap. The rally erased a rough third quarter for La Grande, which had taken a 24-19 lead at the half before spotting Clatskanie 21 points in the third. Rinker and Dunlap added eight points apiece for La Grande.

La Grande (9-3 overall) travels to Pendleton Tuesday.

Also
FRIDAY

Enterprise 55, Pilot Rock 22: Zari Bathke and Jada Gray scored 12 points

each Friday as Enterprise opened Blue Mountain Conference play with a dominant home win.

The Outlaws held the Rockets to just four first-half points as they took a 30-4 lead at the break.

Rilyn Kirkland added nine points as Enterprise saw nine players score. Gray added six of the team's 27 steals. Ashlyn Gray had nine rebounds and Asiya Salim had six assists.

Union 54, Knappa 19: Union had 10 players score as it ran past Knappa Friday in the semifinals of the Toledo Holiday Tournament.

Callie Glenn had 15 of her game-high 19 points in the first half as Union sprinted out to a 33-12 lead at the half.

Kaylee Lantis added eight points for the Bobcats and Brianna Kohr scored seven.

Cove 47, La Grande JV 27: Raegan Duby scored a game-high 16 points Friday to lead three Leopards in double figures as they pulled away for a home win.

Kierra Moore added 12 points and Austin Kendall scored 11 for the Leopards. Cove built a 10-point first-quarter lead, then broke the game open with an 18-5 second-quarter run to take a 32-9 lead at the half.

Prairie City 47, Imbler 29: Imbler recovered from a 14-0 first-quarter deficit Friday to get within striking distance of Prairie City but saw its rally fall short.

Kenna Whitmore had eight of her team-high 12 points in the second quarter as the Panthers cut the margin to 22-10, and Anika McDonald scored all seven of her points in the third as Imbler inched to within 33-25 after three quarters, but Imbler scored just four points in the fourth.

Joelle Treat added eight points for the Panthers.

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Outlaws topple undefeated Pilot Rock at home

Observer staff

Cason Kirkland had 23 points, five assists and three steals Friday as the Enterprise boys basketball team knocked off previously unbeaten Pilot Rock, 67-64, in the Blue Mountain Conference opener for both teams.

Dallas Harker added 17 points and nine rebounds, and Devin Greer scored 13 points for Enterprise. The Outlaws scored 22 points in the third quarter to erase a two-point halftime deficit and take a 51-47 lead after three, then held on in the fourth after the Rockets missed a late chance at the tie for the team's biggest win of the season.

The Outlaws had no answer for Grant Union's Tristan Morris Saturday as he scored 26 points to lead the Prospectors past Enterprise, 48-30.

The Outlaws found themselves in a 29-15 hole at the half and were unable to get

out as they dropped their first BMC contest.

Kirkland had eight points for Enterprise and Greer scored seven for the Outlaws (5-4 overall, 1-1 BMC) host Weston-McEwen Friday.

Also
Friday

Union 42, Illinois Valley 34: The Bobcats shook off Thursday's loss to secure a win Friday over Illinois Valley at the Toledo Holiday Tournament.

Union turned in a strong first quarter to take a nine-point lead, extended it to 22-11 at halftime and was never truly threatened in the second half.

Keegan Glenn scored 19 points to lead the Bobcats, and Jace Phillips added seven points.

Prairie City 55, Imbler 21: Imbler struggled offensively Friday as it was blanked in the second quarter and outscored by 16

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