

Athletes lament for a sports season lost

■ Student-athletes from across northeast Oregon share how they are coping after losing their spring season to COVID-19

By Brett Kane
For EO Media Group

PENDLETON — Lane Maher has a routine he uses to train for his track and field season every year.

First, the Pendleton senior track star warms up the muscles with a round of stretching. Then, he'll start his running drills. Next, he practices his hurdling to perfect his technique and endurance.

It's a straightforward but effective regimen that has worked well in his favor the past three years — Maher was the Intermountain Conference champion in both the 300 and 110-meter hurdles as a junior, and went on to become the 300 meter hurdle 5A state champion that same year, and also placed second in the 110 meter hurdles.

While he still takes to the track every day, things are more different now than they've ever been before.

This year, he won't have any meets to compete in, new records to break, a team to practice with, or another state championship to vie for. Maher is one of the countless high school senior athletes across the state whose spring season was taken from them after the Oregon School Activities Association shut down all athletic events for the remainder of the school year because of the COVID-19 pandemic in what was to be his last season as a Buckaroo.

"Finding out that your favorite sport has been canceled in the last season you'll get was very hard for me to deal with," said Maher. "There was so much potential in this season for a lot of people that was washed away because of this situation."

Maher had big goals in mind for his final season with the Bucks. He wanted a shot at another state title, as well as to break the Pendleton High School record for the 110 hurdles, which is currently held by Kelly Simpson with her time of 14.46, set in 1999.

"This is my bread and butter," Maher said. "This is what I love to do, and this season is something I'll never get back. This spring is a lot different. Trying to find something to do and stay busy is hard at this point."

Maher plans to attend the College of Idaho in Caldwell after graduation, where he will pursue a degree in engineering. He will also continue his track career at the college.

And Maher isn't the only local senior athlete whose high school athletic career unexpectedly came to an end.



Ben Lonergan/EO Media Group file photo

Pendleton's Lane Maher (left) leaps over a hurdle during prelims of the 110 meter hurdles in 2019 at the 5A Track and Field State Championships at Mount Hood Community College in Gresham.



Photo by Ben Lonergan/EO Media Group

Pendleton High School athlete Lane Maher rides a longboard Thursday afternoon on Airport Road in Pendleton. The hurdler has spent what would have been his senior track season longboarding, running and golfing to stay active.

Hermiston senior utility player Bailee Noland was ready for her senior softball season — the Bulldogs' second in Washington's Mid-Columbia Conference. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, instead



Noland

of spending her spring days out on the diamond with her coaches and teammates, she's been working on a farm.

"I believe it's a great opportunity for me to learn new things every day that I will need in the future, and I love working outside, so it was a win-win," she said. "But softball was always the reason I was so excited for the end of the school year, because I knew I was going to get to ball out with my teammates."

Noland signed a letter

of intent to play softball at Salt Lake City Community College in December 2019, so she will still get to take to the diamond once again — just as a Bruin, and not a Bulldog.

"I'm missing the atmosphere the most," she said. "Us girls would walk into practice, and we would all start joking and

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Hermiston High School softball player Bailee Noland drives a tractor Friday morning while seeding a field in Hermiston.

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Ellen Barlow, FNP-C, joins the GRH Regional Medical Clinic from Boise, Idaho, where she worked as a registered nurse in a busy emergency department for the past several years. She completed her Master's Degree at Gonzaga University, and her undergraduate degree at Boise State University. Ellen has background as a Union Hotshots wildland firefighter and EMT, and looks forward to utilizing her diverse set of skills to transition into her new role as a primary care family nurse practitioner. She has a particular interest in developing a long-term relationship with each of her patients, while empowering them to attain their health goals. Ellen was born and raised here in La Grande, and is eager to return to her roots with her husband and two dogs. She looks forward to enjoying all the outdoor activities that Eastern Oregon has to offer.

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