

ESPORTS

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may look vastly different, esports has all the makings to provide students with the same experiences and life lessons.”

The team actually has roots dating to 2016, Melville said, when the 1 Up Game Club, which was founded that year, began to push for a startup of an esports program.

The actions of EOU alumni and professional competitor Geoff Butterworth also helped set the groundwork.

“While attending school, (he) would often host competitive Super Smash Bros tournaments here at the university,” Melville said of Butterworth. “His efforts, alongside others from EOU students, predated our official founding as a program but were instrumental in laying those foundations and really showing that bringing esports to EOU was attainable.”

Melville said 1 Up Club officers made efforts to get the activity noticed by the school and received help from staff members “who have gone above and beyond in supporting us in growing this program, even if they may have been confused as to what exactly esports is as well,” he said. Melville, who is a club officer, added, “They listened to our students and showed genuine interest in learning more about esports and are devoted to helping bring programs to EOU that students are passionate about.”



Photo contributed by Ethan Melville

The Eastern Oregon University esports team, which officially formed last fall, has nearly 30 members.

Esports offers different completion avenue

While esports is an arm of the athletic department at some schools, EOU’s program, which has 27 members, is overseen by Student Affairs faculty and the Center for Student Involvement — though Melville believes the long-term goal is to have activity “be brought into the fold of the athletics department.”

Melville calls the formation of esports an important step for the school, and noted his own experience as a former high school athlete who had “a hard pill to swallow” when he realized playing collegiately wasn’t in the

cards for him.

His freshman year, he was turned on to a game called Dota 2 and was “hooked.”

“It had everything that I was missing from my time on different sports teams,” he said, including “the responsibility of learning individual skills and learning my role in a team of five players, communicating effectively as a team member, players within the community who inspired me to push myself and to grow, and the opportunity to overcome adversity as an individual and as a team to win when the odds are stacked against you... I can honestly say that the time I’ve spent with the game has done a lot to help me

improve as a person.”

That statement could easily lend itself to a sense of skepticism, which Melville also addressed.

“I definitely understand that some people might be skeptical about the values that can be learned from playing video games in a competitive setting,” he said. “I think that beyond the proficiency in a sport itself, where athletes really benefit from competition are the lessons they learn that are applicable for a lifetime. And when you boil down the differences of individual sports, there are some universal lessons to be learned: finding a place within a team, building a culture that values growth and development, and dealing with adversity. I’m confident that any athlete will be able to point to a specific story in which they learned one of these skills while competing.”

He pointed to a tournament in Seattle the team traveled to, and what he learned about personal responsibility in playing a 1-on-1 game.

“When you find yourself competing in a 1-on-1 setting, the thrill of winning is overwhelming, but similarly, when you experience loss, you have to contend with the fact that the responsibility for that is on you alone,” Melville said. “It can be hard to handle a loss when there are no other excuses or teammates to share in that loss. What I noticed from my time competing, and losing, in Seattle is that I had grown and matured a lot from my time wrestling in high school, where when I would lose, I would

often be upset, both with my opponent and with myself.”

Game specifics dictate play

Although some games are played in a 1-on-1 format, the majority are team-based, Melville said. He said of those that take place in a team setting, players specialize “in specific team roles and (are) working together under the leadership of a team captain to grow during practices, and (they) compete in a series of collegiate leagues (with) universities across the U.S. and Canada. These leagues can use a number of different formats but usually involve a best-of-3-game match each week as part of a regular season,” before the top team or teams in each region head to the playoffs.

He said the specifics of the game dictate how they are played competitively, but that “games that are developed with competition in mind often follow traditional sports models for leagues and tournament formats, and so spectators with little experience with the world of esports would still be able to follow it pretty well.”

What is the ultimate takeaway for esports members?

“At the end of the day, what I want someone to take away from their time as an esports player at EOU is the understanding of how important things like diversity, tenacity, emotional intelligence, and professionalism are, and how to develop a culture in which these skills are cultivated,” Melville said.

CEMETERY

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not had any vacant niches or crypt space for about five years.

Anderson said the future columbarium center will occupy ground that could not be used for burial plots.

“It is hard ground and rocky. It is not good for burial plots,” Anderson said.

The addition of the columbariums and gazebo are being funded with money from the La Grande Cemetery District. Anderson said she began setting aside money for this work in a reserve fund five years ago.



Staff photo by Dick Mason

Contractors Michael Brock and his son Eric, both of Sherwood, work on the construction of a gazebo Tuesday afternoon at Grandview Cemetery, La Grande. The project is among other upgrades to La Grande cemeteries that have been five years in the making.

HOBBIES

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“I wanted to continue to give that opportunity of music,” Hoke said. “At a time when things are crazy and you don’t know what is going to happen, they still have music. Music is not closed, and we are continuing.”

With gyms and yoga studios closed for in-person workouts and instructions, Peak Lifestyle, La Grande, has taken to creating virtual memberships, which grant access to online classes and instruction. Colleen McIntosh, Peak owner and instructor, said the new format has been well received and presented new challenges.

“When we thought we might have to go online, my husband went out and bought all the recording equipment. From there we went off of what did and didn’t work,” McIntosh said. “Initially we did Facebook Live classes, but there wasn’t enough accountability in it, so we switched to Zoom.”

McIntosh said 50 to 80 people put their membership accounts on hold until the studio reopens, and about five people canceled their memberships when the pandemic prevented in-person classes. There have been 20 people who signed up for virtual memberships so far.

When the studio reopens she anticipates keeping some form of virtual membership

available, particularly for those who can’t come to La Grande every week for a class.

McIntosh said having this membership option available has meant everything for keeping the businesses open and running, as she still has to pay instructors and rent for the studio.

Being out of work and stuck at home has people bored, according to Josiah Brown, owner of The Hobby Habit in La Grande. The store, which sells puzzles, games and arts and crafts supplies, has seen an increase in sales, as more people look for things to do while at home.

“I wouldn’t say people are expanding into new hobbies but (are) having time to do more of the hobbies that they already enjoyed,” Brown said.

Game nights used to be a popular event at the store, where people could meet and play tabletop games. However, the store in March canceled the events until further notice. Brown said people have continued the board games via video chat.

DRIVE-IN

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Social distancing rules will be in place during all of this weekend’s showings. Moviegoers must stay in their cars except to buy concessions or use restroom facilities.

“Nobody will be allowed to sit outside in a lawn chair,” Johnson said.

She pointed out this also means individuals will not be allowed to view the movie while sitting in the back of their pickups.

To meet social distancing standards, the business will allow no more than 125 vehicles in per showing. This is about half of the site’s capacity. Entry into the drive-in’s concession building also will be limited to a specific capacity. Once this capacity is reached, nobody will be allowed in until someone exits.

The cost for entrance will be \$7 for each person age 6 and older. Children younger than 6 will get in free.

Johnson said that later in the season when double features are shown, the cost will be per car load instead of per person.

Following Sunday’s showing of “Onward,” the drive-in will re-open Wednesday, May 20, through Sunday, May 24, for the showing of “The Call of the Wild,” a 2020



Staff photo by Dick Mason

La Grande Drive-in manager Patty Johnson prepares the venue’s concession stand for its opening this weekend. The drive-in is showing the animated family film “Onward.”

American adventure film based on the Jack London 1903 novel of the same title.

The La Grande Drive-in will maintain its Wednesday through Sunday schedule through its summer season. Johnson said she hopes the week night showings will reduce crowding during weekends.

Exceptions to the Wednesday through Sunday schedule will be the evenings of May 30, June 5 and June 6, when movies will not be shown because the drive-in will be the site of high school graduation activities, including the showings of senior slideshows. The activities were moved to

the drive-in because of COVID-19 concerns.

The drive-in is expected to continue operating this season through early September, Johnson said.

The La Grande Drive-in has been showing movies since 1951, when the film lineup included “Tarzan’s Peril” and “Bedtime for Bonzo,” which starred future president Ronald Reagan. The venue is one of about 70 that operated in Oregon during the 1950s, when the popularity of drive-in theaters

was at its peak. Today, it is among three commercial drive-ins from the 1950s still operating in Oregon. The others are the M & F Drive-in in Milton-Freewater and 99W Drive-in in Newberg. The M & F Drive-in opened in 1953 and 99W Drive-in began operating in 1954, according to DriveInMovie.com. This means La Grande’s drive-in is the oldest in the state.

Oregon also has a fourth drive-in, Drive-in Movie Experience, which opened at Sutherlin in Douglas County in 2005. It is based at Hi-Way Haven RV Park and the showings of its films are free for everyone staying at the RV park, according to DriveInMovie.com.

La Grande’s drive-in theater is a year from turning 70, but it features a state-of-the-art digital projector. Remnants of its past include the yellow metal poles that once supported speakers for vehicles. Now viewers tune into a movie’s sound through FM radio. Johnson said the poles still serve an important purpose — they provide guides for where drivers should park their vehicles.

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