

EOU women's soccer adds 14 players to roster

By Ronald Bond
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Eastern Oregon University women's soccer team made its deepest playoff run ever last season, and has seven starters back from the team that reached the national quarterfinals and finished 10th in the nation.

That has not stopped Mountaineers head coach Jacob Plocher from loading up on recruits in an effort to help push the program one step closer to being a national title contender.

Plocher signed 14 athletes in the Class of 2020, eight of whom are collegiate transfers.

"We as a staff definitely feel this is probably one of the deepest recruiting classes we brought in," Plocher said. "We really like the potential with this group."

The coach, who already holds the program mark for career wins as he enters his fourth season and has guided Eastern to the playoffs each of the last three years, also added six incoming freshmen to his roster. EOU graduated just five seniors and lost one to transfer, but the large incoming class figures to create greater competition within the team and to build for beyond 2020, as the team will have eight seniors this upcoming season.

"There's a lot of versatility, which has been a theme of what we look for," Plocher said. "I'm really looking forward to the competition this fall. It's going to be intense."

Of the transfers, Plocher brought in two players from Division I schools, adding Washington State University transfer Allison Rader, a midfielder and



Contributed photo

Kiara Fontanilla, a Division I transfer from Cal State Fullerton, is among 14 signees by the Eastern Oregon University women's soccer team.

defender, and Cal State Fullerton goalkeeper Kiara Fontanilla. Neither D-I transfer saw the pitch during their time at their previous schools. Rader wasn't a part of the WSU soccer program but had a decorated high school career and was playing semi-pro in Washington, according to Plocher, and Fontanilla was a backup goalkeeper for the Titans but didn't play in 2019.

Still, he is excited about what they can bring.

"Being around that environment and how things are run at different

programs, they know what it is going to take," he said. "We don't necessarily put a big emphasis on where you come from, what you've done in the past. We want you to buy in."

Additionally, EOU pulled in Haley Leavens, a Division II transfer from Concordia University. Leavens, a midfielder, played 18 games as a freshman and started five, tallying an assist and registering nine shots, including five on goal.

Plocher also signed some of the top players from the Northwest Ath-

letic Conference from last season, including West Region MVP Hannah Jenkins, a defender from Highline Community College.

"The biggest thing is obviously with losing Josee (Bassett) on the back line those are impossible shoes to fill," he said. "(Jenkins) brings another element that is going to help our back line and help our program as a whole be competitive."

Jenkins had a goal and two assists but, more important, helped anchor a defense that surrendered

just six goals in 19 games for unbeaten Highline as it won the NWAC title. The Highline defense logged 14 shutouts, including a stretch late in the season of seven in a row.

He also landed NWAC all-stars Gretta Wiersma, a midfielder from Wenatchee Valley Community College, and Walla Walla Community College forward Taylen Wohl, who also was an all-star in the NWAC.

Wohl was among the most prolific goal-scorers in the NWAC last fall, registering 14 goals, which

was the fourth-highest total in the conference, and scoring on nearly 61% of her shots on goal. Wiersma added a pair of goals from her midfield position.

Brianna Krygier, a goalkeeper from Spokane Community College, and Corynn Vigil, a midfielder from Yakima Valley, were also scooped up by Plocher.

Vigil, also an NWAC all-star, had 12 goals, tied for sixth in the NWAC, and two assists, and scored on 44% of her shots on goal. Krygier allowed 11 goals in 10 games in net for Spokane but had 50 saves for a save percentage of 82%.

Plocher added six high school seniors from across the West, including Alaska Rush Soccer Club teammates Kasey Johnson and Kana Mateaki. Johnson is a defender/midfielder from South Anchorage High School, and Mateaki comes from Dimond High School, also in Anchorage.

Mateaki is a player Plocher thinks could have an immediate impact out of high school despite being the shortest player among the recruits at 5 foot even.

"I love those girls who have a chip on their shoulder and want to come out and prove (critics) wrong," Plocher said.

Joining them are Idaho standout defender/midfielders Kody Epp, from Eagle High School in Boise, and Darby McDewitt, from Lakeland High School in Rathdrum; from California, Santa Barbara High School utility player Mikayla Thoits; and from Washington, Marysville Pilchuck High School forward/defender Mackensie Connelly.

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