

La Grande HS star now Utah State field general

By Kaleb Lay
The Observer

LOGAN, Utah — La Grande High School standout Andrew Peasley made his first start under center for the Utah State University Aggies in late November, and the former Tiger showed up in a big way on the big stage.



Peasley

Peasley had the kind of day any dual-threat quarterback dreams of, racking up three scores through the air and a fourth on his feet. Leading the Aggies to their first win of the season, Peasley completed 14 of 21 passing attempts for 239 yards and added another 118 yards on 11 carries.

“I’ve been a backup for two years, and to finally get an opportunity to go out and play was rewarding,” Peasley said. “It was more rewarding for the team to get that first W this year.”

Utah State, hindered by a diminished coaching staff due to the COVID-19 pandemic, rode a wave of offensive momentum to a



Eli Lucero/Associated Press

Utah State quarterback Andrew Peasley (6) scrambles away from Air Force defensive tackle George Silvanic (78) during the first half of an NCAA college football game Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020, in Logan, Utah. Peasley is a 2018 graduate from La Grande High School and was a standout on the Tiger’s football team.

41-27 victory over the New Mexico Lobos.

Peasley said his team felt some momentum heading

into the week after finding elusive that first win.

“I feel like us as an offense, you know, we

showed that we can actually put up points, and the team really liked getting that W and that feeling (of

winning). I think we’ll continue to strive for that,” he said.

That momentum wasn’t enough to overcome a stout Air Force Falcons defensive outing, though. The Aggies lost their matchup against the military academy on Thursday, Dec. 3, falling 35-7. Peasley threw for one touchdown and two interceptions and led the Utah State rushing attack with 53 yards on the ground.

Peasley entered the spotlight during a year in which football, like most things, has been upended by the COVID-19 pandemic. He played his first start against the Lobos in front of a minimal crowd, and the Aggies already had to cancel a matchup against the University of Wyoming Cowboys due to the virus.

“We didn’t have any fans besides our family last game,” Peasley said. “You know, it really just comes down to playing football, right? There’s no adrenaline to the fan base.... We’ve gotta do three tests a week for COVID, each week there’s probably gonna be someone out. We

had three total coaches last week, I think, on offense. So that was interesting, but we made it work.”

Peasley, who graduated from La Grande High School in 2018, stepped in for the Aggies after the team dismissed previous starting quarterback Jason Shelley for violating an unspecified team rule.

While Peasley’s early success may not have been matched in his second start, the La Grande native certainly has achieved a degree of stardom. He was one of eight collegiate quarterbacks that week named as a Manning Star of the Week.

And he hasn’t forgotten his Eastern Oregon roots, and Eastern Oregon hasn’t forgotten him.

“I had multiple people text me, call me after the game, that I usually never talk to, and they’re congratulating me,” Peasley said. “So it just shows that a town like La Grande, you know, they really support me, and I’m very, very thankful and blessed to be from that town and to have a fan base there.”

OSAA executive board adjusts calendar to February start date

Sports seasons now will be six weeks, with an additional culminating week

By Ronald Bond
Wallowa County Chieftain

SALEM — The Oregon School Activities Association executive board on Monday, Dec. 7, voted to revise the 2020-21 OSAA calendar by moving the start dates of Season 2 to February 2021, with Seasons 3 and 4 to follow in the spring. The seasons now will be shorter than they were under the previous plan, which was slated to see the season start on Dec. 28.

Under the new plan, each of the three seasons would be six weeks in length, and the sixth will be a culminating week to conclude the season, akin to what was adopted by the OSAA in August.

One change discussed is that Season 2, which the

OSAA announced later Monday will start Feb. 22, would consist of the traditional fall sports of football, volleyball, soccer and cross-country. Spring sports would take place in Season 3, and winter sports in Season 4.

The OSAA also announced the start date for Season 3 is April 5, and the start date for Season 4 is May 10. The start dates in the announcements are the first practice dates, with contests slated to start the next week.

The exception is for football practices, which begin Feb. 8, and in baseball and softball, with pitchers and catchers slated to report March 22.

The changes were made due to an increase in COVID-19 cases in Oregon

that led to further restrictions being put in place by Gov. Kate Brown. Under the current regulations, 25 of Oregon’s 36 counties are classified as ‘extreme-risk’ and have the highest level of restrictions.

Peter Weber, OSAA executive director, explained that because of that, only about 42 of the entity’s member schools are in a location lower than extreme-risk.

“The OSAA and member schools are bound to follow the guidance for the state. They are not suggestions. They are requirements,” Weber said.

He noted that full-contact sports currently are not allowed by the Oregon Health Authority, and that includes two of the sports in the season that was to start Dec. 28 — basketball and wrestling.

“Basketball and wrestling currently are still pro-

hibited by the state,” he said in opening the discussion at the virtual meeting. “We need to make some changes.”

The board considered two proposals — one for two nine-week seasons that each had a culminating week, and another for three six-week seasons. Board members favored the three-season model.

Several members expressed concern with splitting sports in a way that athletes would have to choose between two events they otherwise would have taken part in.

“I like the three-season sports season for that,” said Curt Shelley, board vice president and superintendent at Tillamook. “I think it gets the prime time of the seasons and the best weather for that.”

“I, too, support the three-season model as well,” said Dufur athletic

director and football coach and 1A representative Jack Henderson. “The stacking is really, really difficult.”

Jeff Clark, 2A representative and principal at Oakland High School, said the two-season model was not an option.

“A three season model is our best option because it allows us to offer everything at this point,” he said. “If we adopt the two-season model, we are already cancelling sports in some fashion.”

Representatives for the Oregon Athletic Directors Association and the Oregon Athletic Officials Association also expressed concern with the overlap.

Jack Folliard, the OAOA rep on the executive board,

said, for example, there are 1,000 basketball referees in the state, and 250 of them also ump baseball or softball.

Overlapping those two sports would leave an already shorthanded officiating group statewide hamstrung.

“I cannot in good conscience guarantee we could cover sports in a two-season (model),” Folliard said.

Weber explained OSAA staff’s reasoning for late February, saying that date allows for time for new COVID-19 cases to hopefully decrease and works around winter weather.

“By pushing that date further, we believe that sets us up for success,” he said.

EOU’s women wrestling makes top 20 in preseason poll

The Observer

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — Eastern Oregon University’s women wrestlers cracked the top 20 in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics’ 2020-21 preseason poll.

The Mountaineer women sit at the No. 17 spot in the first edition of the coaches’ poll, which came out in late November. Along with their national ranking, the team had a quartet of grapplers ranked in the top-20 individually. EOU is one of four Cascade Collegiate Conference teams in the national rankings.

The Mountaineers turn a new chapter this year as they have a new bench boss in Carlene Sluberski. She took over the EOU women’s wrestling program in early November and will look to lead the Mountaineers to new heights. She takes over a squad that is picked to finish fourth in the conference in 2020-21.

The four wrestlers who



Ronald Bond/The Observer, File

Eastern Oregon University’s Erin Redford, top, was one of four Mountaineers in the top 20 preseason rankings. The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics’ 2020-21 preseason poll also ranked the EOU women’s wrestling team at No. 17.

garnered individual top-20 rankings are Macy Higa at 130 pounds, Kaylee Moore at 136 pounds, Erin Redford at 143 pounds and Dempsey Talkington at 155 pounds. Higa and Redford both were ranked sixth. Talkington is ranked No. 9 in her weight class, followed by Moore at No. 16 in her class.

The other three CCC squads appearing on the

top-20 poll were Menlo College (California), Southern Oregon and University of Providence (Montana).

Menlo led the way at the No. 4 spot, followed by SOU at No. 6. Providence also cracked the top 10 at No. 9.

The second edition of the top-20 rankings will be released Tuesday, Jan. 26.

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