



DAVIS CARBAUGH
CARBAUGH'S CORNER

Starting at The Observer

I would like to take this opportunity to formally introduce myself as your newest reporter at *The Observer*, Davis Carbaugh. I've hit the ground running since starting early in May, so I may have met some of you already. I will be covering sports and news here in the Grande Ronde Valley.

Moving from Virginia to Oregon has been an amazing journey, one that has given me great perspective. I have already met some wonderful people through finding sources for stories, and the people of La Grande have been so welcoming.

A little bit about me: I am a recent graduate of Virginia Tech University, where I studied multimedia journalism with a sports media and analytics concentration. I worked as a sports writer for four years, and as a sports editor my senior year I covered just about every sport you can imagine. I came into that program as a kid who was good at writing and passionate about sports, but left as a reporter in love with telling a story.

That's exactly the angle I'm looking at in my position at *The Observer*, finding local athletes and news stories that deserve being told. I'm very excited about the prospect of covering sports here at the high school and collegiate level.

The Observer and I have a goal to focus on feature stories rather than lengthy recaps, and I am eager to shine a light on athletes in the area. With that being said, I would love anyone's help with leads, score updates or ideas for newsworthy stories. I'm always open to ideas. I'll be covering news and sports, so I'm all ears when it comes to story ideas or even critiques on stories with my byline you see in the paper.

As for how the experience has been in La Grande, I have been more than pleased with my time so far. Phil Wright and Andrew Cutler as editors have been helpful and insightful leaders of the newsroom, while Alex Wittwer, Dick Mason and Lisa Lester Kelly have been wonderful to work with.

The people and this town have given me so much perspective, as I come from a place very different than here. The one thing that honestly sticks out to me is how generally kind people are here, compared to other places I have been. That makes reaching out and writing stories a lot easier and more enjoyable.

As a writer, my passion is to bring stories worth telling to life. Being in La Grande and working for *The Observer* gives me that opportunity, and I am grateful for that. I look forward to growing as a writer here, helping our publication and being a part of the community in Union County.

Davis Carbaugh covers news and sports for The Observer. He can be contacted at dcarbaugh@lagrandeobserver.com.



The Observer, File

Eastern Oregon's Kiley McMurtrey reaches for a dig during a 2019 match against Multnomah. McMurtrey, a fifth-year senior libero, is transferring to play NCAA Division I at the University of Utah.

A lasting legacy

EOU's Kiley McMurtrey transfers to Pac-12's University of Utah

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University volleyball standout Kiley McMurtrey is one of the most decorated volleyball players in program history — and she is now taking her talents to Division I.

The fifth-year senior libero is transferring to play NCAA Division I volleyball at the University of Utah, where she will also be a part of the school's Master's Program for Speech, Language and Pathology. The Utes compete in the Pac-12, one of the top conferences in the country.

NAIA eligibility rules grant players an extra year of eligibility due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

McMurtrey exits the EOU volleyball program at the top of the list in all-time career digs with 2,150 and service aces with 132.

"I think one of the biggest things I brought to the team was just a fire and competitiveness when we played," she said.

From the beginning of her Mountaineer career, McMurtrey hit the ground running. The Idaho Falls, Idaho, native played in all 35 games her freshman year and won 2017 Cascade Collegiate Conference Freshman of the Year. Reflecting back, McMurtrey noted how stressed and anxious she was at the beginning of her college career.

"I was hyper-focused," she said. "As a person I feel like I've relaxed a lot and been able to figure out how to enjoy myself while I've been here, too."

In 2020, McMurtrey recorded a team high 24 aces, which was good for second best in the CCC. She also led the conference with 5.15 digs per set.

Following an EOU run to the quarterfinals of the 2020 NAIA tournament, McMurtrey was awarded honorable mention All-American. She was also named CCC Libero of the Year



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

Kiley McMurtrey stands in Quinn Coliseum at Eastern Oregon University, just weeks before she is set to move to Utah to begin her post-graduate career and a spot on the Utes volleyball team. The NAIA All-American is the all-time career leader in digs and service aces at EOU.

for the third year in a row.

"This year at nationals was really fun for me," she said. "I'll always remember the bigger games we played."

Off the court, McMurtrey excels in the classroom, winning 2019 CCC Scholar Athlete of the Year. The award is given to the conference's top academic athlete across all sports.

McMurtrey holds a 4.0 GPA and earned a degree in both physical activity and health and elementary education.

Eastern volleyball head coach Kaki McLean-Morehead credits McMurtrey for helping lead the team academically. McMurtrey has been on

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'We've got a good thing going'

Oregon State coach Jonathan Smith holds individual player meetings, says message is positive

By **NICK DASCHEL**

The Oregonian

CORVALLIS — Oregon State's 2021 spring football practices ended May 8, but it did not conclude the spring-time process for coach Jonathan Smith.

During the past two weeks, Smith met with each player individually in his office for what can be described as an annual checkup. It's a free-flowing discussion, as Smith is as eager to learn things as the player.

After meeting with all but a few players on the roster, Smith says there's a common theme.

"We've got a good thing going," he said. "These guys feel like this place has helped them grow."

Players are handed a worksheet with questions prior to meeting with Smith. They first meet with their position coach, then Smith. The discussion with the OSU head coach ranges from team chemistry, their favorite and least favorite parts of program, summer goals, improvement methods and where they currently stand. Smith asks them about "programmatic setup," from weight room, training room and academics. Mental health and school progress are discussed. For older players, where they're at in terms of graduating and post-school plans.

"I appreciate their opinions. I've found a good amount of stuff that we can tighten up and make better around here," Smith said.

Also coming from the meetings are discussions as to where a player stands at his position. Occasionally, it evolves into a player moving positions, such as receiver Jesiah Irish to cornerback. Smith said there are no other position changes brewing, but offseason weight gains or losses can turn to talk of a position switch during camp.

The individual assessments also can lead to a few players considering the transfer portal.

Since spring practice ended, defensive tackles Evan Bennett and Jordan Whittle and tight end Bryce Bramscher entered the portal. Smith said it wouldn't surprise him if more opt for the portal because that's the business of college football in 2021.

Personnel updates for fall:

Smith expects fewer than a handful of players to be out or limited when preseason camp commences Aug. 6. One is offensive lineman Brock Wellsfry, who graduated this year and decided to call it a career. Another is safety Johnathan Riley, who had surgery for an ACL tear and is expected to miss the 2021 season.

Offensive lineman Joe Quillin and defensive lineman Sebastian Briski will not be ready for the start of camp.

Barring a setback, Smith

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SPORTS SHORT

Ducks to open 2021 season Sept. 4 vs. Fresno State

Eugene Register-Guard

EUGENE — Oregon fans can start planning the first tailgate at Autzen Stadium since Justin Herbert's final game in Eugene on Nov. 30, 2019.

And it's going to be an early one.

The Pac-12 announced Thursday, May 27, the Ducks' home opener against Fresno State on Sept. 4 will kick off at 11 a.m. on the Pac-12 Networks.

Oregon's Sept. 18 home game against Stony Brook is at 4:30 p.m.

on the Pac-12 Networks, and the Oct. 15 home game against California under the Friday night lights is set for 7:30 p.m. on ESPN.

Oregon athletic director Rob Mullens is optimistic capacity crowds will be roaring again this fall at Autzen.

"I have been riding on the hope wave for quite a while," Mullens said during a recent interview with the *Register-Guard*. "I am hopeful that vaccination is in fact the path to a full Autzen."

Oregon's marquee nonconfer-

ence game at Ohio State on Sept. 11 was previously announced as the "Big Noon Kickoff" matchup on Fox starting at 9 a.m.

"We're going to go into the teeth of it into the Horseshoe," Mullens said. "The kick time is not ideal, even though it is a big platform, but I'm confident that our staff and our student-athletes will be ready. And I can't wait to get to the first game."

The Ducks played only two home games in 2020, wins over Stanford and UCLA, without fans allowed inside Autzen.



Sean Meagher/The Oregonian, File

Oregon wide receiver Devon Williams (2) tries to avoid a tackle during a game against UCLA in November 2020.