

# Competition for Beavers' QB job 'pretty even'

Time short, opportunities limited for contenders to prove they're the Beavers' starter

By NICK DASCHEL  
The Oregonian

CORVALLIS — Oregon State coach Jonathan Smith expects quarterback Tristan Gebbia will be entirely recovered from hamstring surgery within a few weeks. At that point, the real battle for the team's starting quarterback job for the 2021 season begins.

Smith said Gebbia, who sustained a hamstring tear during the final minutes of Oregon State's 41-38 win over Oregon on Nov. 27, has an upcoming doctor's appointment to check on healing. Gebbia is expected to be cleared to take drops, move laterally and throw by mid-June.

That gives Gebbia, who

started Oregon State's first four games before the injury, about two months to prep for preseason camp starting Aug. 6.

It's a four-man competition for the starting job this summer, with Gebbia, redshirt sophomore Chance Nolan, second-year freshman Ben Gulbranson and true freshman Sam Vidlak getting a crack. The evaluation process starts well before Aug. 6, though. Smith and offensive coordinator Brian Lindgren can watch the quarterbacks throw, while interacting daily in the meeting and video rooms during June and July.

Smith said he anticipates all four getting turns

with the No. 1 offensive unit during the first 10 days of camp. Vidlak, who took part in spring drills after graduating from Hidden Valley High in December, left a strong impression with Smith this spring.

"I do think Sam was well ahead of being a senior in high school. The guy's got some instincts. Never was overwhelmed by the moment," Smith said.

Smith has experience starting a true freshman quarterback in Jake Browning while he was the offensive coordinator at Washington. That said, Vidlak is decidedly fourth in the competition because of the experience factor. "He's earned, through

what he showed in the spring, to get some reps against our first-string defense, because that'll be the closest thing to real football," Smith said. "He'll get a couple cracks at it in fall camp and that'll be kind of the next step of evaluation and seeing where he's at."

Smith is equally eager to see where Gebbia stands after missing the final three games of the 2020 season and spring practice recovering from surgery. The OSU coach also makes it clear all four starting candidates won't get an extended audition.

"Every rep is going to count. These guys aren't going to get an unlimited



Amanda Loman/The Associated Press, File  
Oregon State quarterback Tristan Gebbia (3) falls to the ground in pain while trying to walk off the field after an injury during the second half against Oregon in Corvallis on Friday, Nov. 27, 2020. Gebbia is close to being ready to resume full workouts after recovering from hamstring surgery in December.

amount of reps," Smith said.

Also to be established is a milestone, the point in camp where the competition is trimmed. Smith thinks it'll happen about

two weeks into camp.

"Do we have to decide in two weeks? No, but I think you've got to start distributing the reps a little bit at some point to establish a pecking order," he said.



Sean Meagher/The Oregonian, File  
Oregon State's 2021 spring football practices ended May 8, but it did not conclude the spring-time process for coach Jonathan Smith.

## OSU

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expects everyone else to return in August. That includes outside linebacker Addison Gumbs, inside linebacker Avery Roberts, receivers Tre'Shaun Harrison and Makiya Tongue, center Nathan Eldridge and quarterback Tristan Gebbia.

Eldridge is close to being cleared for full activity after sustaining a wrist injury in April. Same with Roberts, who broke his arm in December. Tongue and Harrison, out most of the spring with leg injuries, are working normally in the weight room and getting closer to few restrictions on running. Gebbia (hamstring) is expected to get cleared

for normal activity by mid-June.

Smith said Gumbs was limited this spring out of precaution, but he's expected to take part in all practice activities once camp commences.

Two former walk-ons who were given scholarships for the remainder of their careers are kicker Everett Hayes and snapper Dylan Black.

## McMURTREY

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the dean's list every term during her time at EOU.

"She's an incredible woman who has incredible time-management skills," she said. "She knows what's going to make her successful later on in life."

McMurtrey aims to use her master's degree to work with children as a speech pathologist. As for competing with the Utes, she is preparing for a step up into the NCAA's premier volleyball conference.

The Utah volleyball team recorded winning records in seven of its last eight seasons and qualified for the NCAA Tournament

during the last five seasons. This past year, Utah earned its highest ranking in school history, climbing all the way up to No. 7 in the country.

"It's almost like I'm a freshman again," she said. "I'm a lot more confident now than when I was a freshman though, just in my own skill set and what I can bring to a team."

For McLean-Morehead and the Mountaineers, replacing McMurtrey will be no small task. The libero has been a staple of EOU's volleyball starting lineup for the past four seasons.

"It's going to be incredibly hard to replace her, but she's awesome," McLean-Morehead said. "Her relentless defense and

her servicing have carried our team for the last four years."

McMurtrey leaves behind quite the legacy at Eastern, but it won't be the last time fans hear her family's name announced at Quinn Coliseum. Her younger sister, Alexis McMurtrey, is currently playing as a setter for EOU.

For Kiley McMurtrey, her appreciation for Eastern Oregon University and the La Grande community is something she will cherish.

"I just really feel like because of the community and my coaches," she said. "I've been able to grow as a person here more than I could have imagined."

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## ON THE SLATE

Schedule subject to change

Joseph at Wallowa, 5 p.m.  
Union at Nixyaawii, 5:30 p.m.  
Powder Valley at Baker, 6 p.m.

### TUESDAY, JUNE 1

**PREP BOYS BASKETBALL**  
Cove at Joseph, 5 p.m.  
Baker at Vale, 5:30 p.m. (MT)  
Imbler at Powder Valley, 7:30 p.m.  
La Grande at Nixyaawii, 7:30 p.m.

**PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL**  
Enterprise at Wallowa, 4:30 p.m.  
Vale at Baker, 5:30 p.m.  
Imbler at Powder Valley, 6 p.m.  
La Grande at Nixyaawii, 6 p.m.

### WEDNESDAY, JUNE 2

**PREP BOYS BASKETBALL**  
Union at Nixyaawii, 7 p.m.  
Powder Valley at Baker, 7:30 p.m.  
**PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL**

### THURSDAY, JUNE 3

**PREP BOYS BASKETBALL**  
Ontario at Baker, 5:30 p.m.  
Imbler at Union, 7 p.m.  
La Grande at Nyssa, 7:30 p.m. (MT)

**PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL**  
Baker at Ontario, 5:30 p.m. (MT)  
Imbler at Union, 5:30 p.m.  
La Grande at Nyssa, 6 p.m. (MT)

**PREP WRESTLING**  
La Grande vs. Baker/Powder Valley Dual Wrestling Meet, TBD

### FRIDAY, JUNE 4

**PREP BOYS BASKETBALL**  
Pine Eagle at Union, 6:30 p.m.

## GRH Behavioral Health Clinic

Grande Ronde Hospital and Clinics is pleased to announce that Blue Mountain Associates, an outpatient mental health treatment center, will become part of the GRH health system. The transition to the new **GRH Behavioral Health Clinic** takes effect June 1, 2021. For more information, visit [grh.org/behavioralhealth](https://grh.org/behavioralhealth).



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GRH Behavioral Health Clinic Providers (back row from top) Joel Rice, MD; Mary Goldstein, LCSW; Jim Sheehy, LCSW; (front row from top) Brittany Pryce, LCSW; Heather Holland, MSW, CSWA; and Gloria Turner, LCSW.