



Samantha Buckley (5) of Eastern Oregon University maneuvers between a pair of Corban University players during a lacrosse match Saturday, March 20, 2021. The Mountaineers completed the program's inaugural season with a 1-4 record. The program's lone win came against Whitworth, posting a 22-16 victory March 5.



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File
Enterprise coach Mike Crawford and his players react while watching the end of the team's Blue Mountain District tournament overtime win Saturday, Feb. 22, 2020, against Heppner at the Pendleton Convention Center — the victory marked the coach's 500th win. Crawford has been named the 2021 National Federation State High School Association's Section 8 Coach of the Year for girls basketball.

IN THE BOOKS

EOU lacrosse looks forward to 2022 season after inaugural campaign

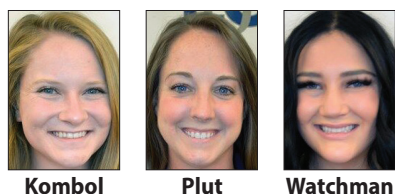
By COREY KIRK
Baker City Herald

LA GRANDE — When Eastern Oregon University hired Monica Plut in early 2020 to build the school's women's lacrosse program, Plut was excited about playing a part in teaching the game she loves.

Then the COVID-19 pandemic derailed those plans. "I started recruiting ASAP, of course, then COVID hit," she said. "It was a pretty crazy year to be honest."

Since the program's initial season of 2020 was no longer happening, Plut hit the recruiting trail again, gearing up for a 2021 season. With the future marred with uncertainty due to the pandemic, recruiting prospective student athletes became more difficult. Add in that the sport doesn't have much of a foothold in Northeastern Oregon.

"A lot of these different layers added into once COVID was a



thing, and the hard part about recruiting lacrosse is that it's not big here," Plut said. "You've got pockets of it. Boise, Portland, Seattle, but there's no lacrosse within two hours of here."

As time progressed, the next season was deemed salvageable just a few months into 2021. Not being recognized as a sport by the Cascade Collegiate Conference quite yet, lacrosse programs like EOU's had to face any opponents that were near enough to be able to compete in a condensed format.

"There's only us and Corban (in 2021) that have a team in the whole conference. Multnomah is adding next year. We played Corban three times and there aren't any community colleges out here either. So we got in touch with a couple of club teams we played with, and we were going to play Boise State's club team but they weren't able to start practicing until late March," Plut said. "So we played all of the Division III teams — Linfield, Pacific, Willamette, Whitworth — and Northwest Nazarene. Basically anyone we can get a game with we reached out to."

EOU was forced into having to

compete in all of its games quickly, since out-of-conference opponents would not be able to play once conference seasons started.

"We were done by mid-April," Plut said.

All in all, the Mountaineers completed the program's first season with a 1-4 record. Eastern's first win came against Whitworth, posting a 22-16 victory March 5.

"We were winning the game the whole time, even though at the end of it all, we had three players plus a goalie," Plut said. "They had the same on their side, but they also had all these subs and were switching people out. Our girls made it work and came out with a win. It was awesome."

Now, already five weeks into the offseason, Plut, who spent one season as the head coach at NCAA Division II Adams State in Alamosa, Colorado, prior to joining EOU, has most of the roster set to return for the 2022 season. The only graduating senior from the team is Hailey Crudo.

Plut is excited to see the young roster continue to grow within the game, like sophomore Kiana Watchman.

"Kiana was a key defender for us," she said. "In the beginning, she didn't love defense. But she really wants to grow in that leadership position on defense next year."

See, **Lacrosse**/Page 7A

Enterprise coach honored as one of best in nation

Mike Crawford named 2021 National Federation State High School Association's Section 8 Coach of the Year

By RONALD BOND
Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — A major accolade has come the way of Mike Crawford.

Next Sunday, June 6, the longtime Enterprise girls basketball coach will be given his award for being named the 2021 National Federation State High School Associations Section 8 Coach of the Year for girls basketball, which in essence pegs him as the top girls hoops coach in the Northwest, and one of the best in the county.

"You stop to think about it, Mike was chosen as the best of the best from six Northwest states," said Oregon Athletic Coaches Association Executive Director Rob Younger.

Crawford, along with 12 other Section 8 award winners, five state award winners and two national winners, will be honored at an awards banquet June 6 at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande.

Crawford was nominated last fall as the state coach of the year for girls basketball,

which put him up against other coaches from the Section 8 states: Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Alaska, Montana and Wyoming.

"The fact that it was a recognition from other coaches that got it started, it's humbling," Crawford said. "It's a longevity thing. I got my 500th win. That's kind of rarefied stuff. It's 'How do you have a concept or a feeling for what that means when it is about you?'"

Younger said Crawford was nominated, in part, because of his lengthy and successful career at EHS.

"The Federation awards, a big part of it is their longevity, their commitment to their school and their community," Younger said. "Mike is being recognized for his many years of outstanding service to the Enterprise community in basketball."

Crawford, a staple of Northeastern Oregon hoops, has racked up more than 500 career wins with

See, **Coach**/Page 7A

SPORTS SHORT

Four from EOU named All-Americans at NAIA track and field championships

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

GULF SHORES, Alabama — The Eastern Oregon University men's and women's track and field teams concluded the 2021 season at the NAIA track and field championships with four athletes earning All-American status, including Maggie Ledbetter earning the honor in two events.

Ledbetter earned her first All-American honors in the shot put on Thursday, May 27. The sophomore threw a distance of 45 feet, 2-1/4 inches, a personal best, on her third throw to finish in eighth place.

The junior from Cove was back in action May 28 to com-

pete in the discus. On her second attempt, Ledbetter secured a top-eight finish with a toss of 145-6, earning her second All-American nod.

TJ Davis also earned All-American status for the Mounties in the decathlon, while Moses McAninch and Karianne Zollman each earned the honor in the javelin throw.

McAninch and Zollman were the first two of the quartet to garner All-American status as both finished sixth in the javelin. McAninch hit a mark of 199-1 on his third throw of the event. His mark is also a personal best and now the third best mark in EOU history for the outdoor season.

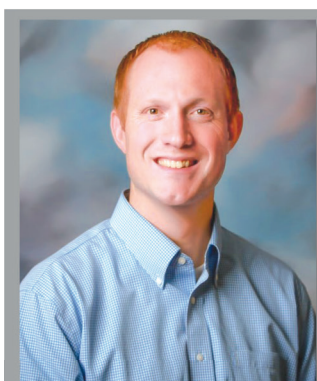
Zollman picked her sixth place finish with a mark of 141-4. She earned a top-eight finish by hitting her mark on the first throw of the competition. Her mark is a personal best and is the third best mark in program history.

In the decathlon, Davis finished in the top 10 of each event and had a pair of top-five finishes over the two-day span. His best finish was in the 110-meter high hurdles, where he won the race with a time of 14.94 seconds.

For the three-day meet, the Mountaineers finished with five points on the men's side to tie for 59th overall. On the women's side, Eastern scored six points and tied for 41st overall.



Connor Bracken/Eastern Oregon University, File
Eastern Oregon University's Maggie Ledbetter, shown competing in the weight throw last season, earned All-American honors in the shot put and discus at the May 2021 NAIA Track and Field Championships in Gulf Shores, Alabama.



Turning 65?
We're here to help!

Joel Myer
jmyer@valleyinsurance.com



1603 Washington Ave, La Grande
(541) 963-3121

Let us take the
mystery out of
Medicare for you!

Kathy Rienti
krienti@valleyinsurance.com

