

Running with the Wolves

Multisport standout McKaylee Orton signs with Blue Mountain Community College

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Not many athletes are able to take their talents to the next level in more than one sport. That is, unless your name is McKaylee Orton.

The La Grande athlete agreed to play softball and basketball at Blue Mountain Community College at her signing event on Monday, Aug. 3. The versatile athlete was a staple to La Grande's basketball and softball programs over the last four years.

"I'm really excited," Orton said. "Playing two sports, I'm trying to decide on what I want to do after."

Orton's experienced success both on the hardwood and the softball diamond, competing in state tournaments and earning individual accolades. With a loaded resume in both sports, Orton will have the opportunity to be a dual-athlete for the Timberwolves. However, Orton says she may narrow down to one sport further down the line.

"I'm not deciding on one or the other right now," she said. "It'll come down to whatever fits me best."

On the diamond

Orton was named a 4A first-team all-state outfielder during the 2021 season, helping La Grande to a 11-2 record. The Tigers lost in the second round of the 4A state tournament to Henley High School, 8-0, on May 20.



Alex Wittwer/The Observer

McKaylee Orton (11) plays as a guard during a league match against Baker City on Friday, June 18, 2021.

La Grande's 2020 season was canceled due to the pandemic,

but the 2019 season stands out as a highlight for Orton. The

Tigers won the 4A state championship in a narrow 4-2 victory over Henley at Jane Sanders Stadium in Eugene. Orton was also a member of the JV team in 2018 when the varsity squad knocked off Henley 6-1 for another state title.

Nothing but net

On the court, Orton was an aggressive guard on a powerhouse Tigers team. Orton was one of five seniors on the 2021 girls basketball squad that led the Tigers to a perfect 10-0 regular season. La Grande dominated opponents all year and only won by less than 10 points once during the season. The Tigers advanced to the second round of the 4A state tournament before losing 48-40 to Hidden Valley. Orton led the Tigers in scoring with 11 points in the loss.

"One of the things that's special about McKaylee is that she really loves to play basketball," assistant basketball coach Jesse Wright said. "McKaylee shows up for every open gym."

Orton's junior year may be the biggest question mark of her basketball career, as COVID-19 derailed the season of one of the more successful La Grande girls basketball teams. The Tigers went 18-7 through the regular season, including winning seven of their last eight games of the regular season. Heading into the state tournament with ambitions

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Mountaineer football will open season at No. 18

The Observer

LA GRANDE — The expectations for the Eastern Oregon University football team are being noticed at the national level.

The Mountaineers, who last week were selected as the pre-season favorite to win the Frontier Conference, were the highest-ranked member of the Frontier in the NAIA preseason coaches' poll, coming in at 18th when the poll came out Monday, Aug. 2. Eastern has 143 points in the poll.

EOU, which finished the 2020 season at 21st in the poll and had a 3-1 record, jumped College of Idaho for the highest spot in the conference. The Coyotes are at 19th in the preseason poll, and are the only other Frontier team in the top 25, though Montana Western and Carroll College are both just outside the top 25.

According to NAIA archives, it's the highest ranking for Eastern since Oct. 22, 2018, when the Mountaineers were also ranked 18th in the coaches' poll.

The highest preseason ranking for EOU all-time was when they were seventh to open the 2017 season. The top poll position ever for Eastern Oregon is fourth, which they reached at the end of the 2016 season and also held in the 2016-17 postseason poll. EOU has been in the top 25 in six straight polls.

Defending champion Lindsey Wilson is the preseason No. 1 team with 418 points and all 18 first-place votes.

Taking his opportunity to compete with the best



Corey Kirk/Baker City Herald, File
Mason Van Arsdall will compete for the East All-Stars at the Shriners Game Saturday, Aug. 7, 2021, in Baker City.

Mason Van Arsdall set for chance to shine in all-star game

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

BAKER CITY — One of the area's top football players is showcasing his skills one last time.

Baker's Mason Van Arsdall will compete for the East All-Stars at the Shriners East-West All-Star Game. The annual event returns to Baker City on Saturday, Aug. 7, after being canceled last year due to the pandemic.

"It's a great chance to compete with some of the best players in the state and raise some money for a really great

cause," Van Arsdall said.

Van Arsdall will be competing alongside over 40 of the state's top stars from Class 1A through 4A. The Shriners all-star game is taking place for the 69th year and is recognized as the top fundraiser of its kind in the entire country, according to the Shriners website.

Van Arsdall was an anchor on Baker's offensive and defensive lines during his prep career and led the Bulldogs to a 3-3 record in the shortened 2020 season. The 6-foot-2-inch, 235-pound lineman played football, basketball and baseball at Baker and is signed to play baseball at Eastern Oregon University next year.

For Van Arsdall, competing in the Shriners game is a family tradition. Van Arsdall's dad, Jef Van Arsdall, competed in the

game in 1990 and his grandfather, Jim Van Arsdall, played in the game in 1961. Jef Van Arsdall went on to play football for Portland University, while Jim Van Arsdall played for the University of Oregon.

Van Arsdall's knowledge of the game from his family members helps him recognize the importance of the event, beyond just football.

"Getting to play one last time in Baker is something I'm looking forward to," he said. "It's an important game because of the cause and what it means to the community."

The Shriners All-Star game originated in 1952, with Shriners from Union and Umatilla counties coming together to host the event. The game was hosted in Pendleton at Round-Up Arena for the first 20 years before

moving to Baker City.

According to first vice-chairman and secretary Zach Steele, the all-star game is the organization's biggest fundraiser.

The players competing in the East-West game typically participate in a week of giving back and community involvement. Due to the pandemic, the players are in a bubble environment at Eastern Oregon University for practice during the week leading up to the game.

While the scope of the event is limited, the sales from the game contribute greatly towards the Shriners' mission, according to Steele.

Tickets are \$15 at the front gate and proceeds go to the Portland Shriners Hospital. Kickoff is set for 7 p.m. at Baker Bulldog Stadium.

SPORTS SHORT

Carmelo joins LeBron's Lakers to seek ring

By **GREG BEACHAM**
The Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Carmelo Anthony and LeBron James have dreamed about teaming up in the NBA since they entered the league together 18 years ago.

They're finally getting the chance on the remarkably mature new roster of the Los Angeles Lakers.

The 37-year-old Anthony agreed to a one-year deal with the Lakers on Tuesday, Aug. 3, agent Aaron

Mintz confirmed to The Associated Press.

The 10th-leading scorer in NBA history will join James, the third-leading scorer, alongside eight-time All-Star Anthony Davis and former MVP Russell Westbrook for what should be a fascinating season in Los Angeles.

If the Lakers don't win another NBA title, they'll at least be strong candidates for gold medals in London: They'll have one-third of the 2012 U.S. Olympic team's roster

in purple and gold, with fellow Olympian Kobe Bryant's retired numbers watching from above the Staples Center floor.

Anthony, a 10-time All-Star, essentially told the world about the deal earlier on social media by posting a video with his nickname, "Melo," and the Lakers logo. Free agent deals can't become official until Friday, but Anthony can't wait to get started on what might be his last, best chance to win an NBA title.



Jack Dempsey/The Associated Press, File
Portland forward Carmelo Anthony points to a teammate during a game against the Denver Nuggets on May 22, 2021.

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