



Alan Reed/Eastern Oregon University, File
Eastern Oregon University's Madison Pilon (4) and Cambree Scott (12) battle at the net against a University of Jamestown defender Thursday, April 29, 2021, in Sioux City, Iowa, during the quarterfinals of the NAIA volleyball championship. The Mountaineers enter the 2021 season as the preseason favorites to win the Cascade Collegiate Conference.

Legends title run comes to abrupt end

COVID-19 case on team stops play at American Legion state tournament

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
 The Observer

AURORA — Poised for a title run, the La Grande Legacy Ford Legends American Legion baseball team saw its season end in heartbreak.

After winning the first three games of the Oregon American Legion A state tournament at North Marion High School, the tournament was canceled on Saturday, Aug. 7, due to a positive COVID-19 test result from a member of the La Grande baseball program, according to a report from Pamplin Media Group.

"I really felt like we were playing at a level that would have been difficult to beat and would have loved to have been able to finish the tournament and see the kids have the opportunity to come out on top," La Grande head coach Parker McKinley said.

The Legends cruised past Mountainside 13-3 in the first round before one-run victories in the next two rounds. La Grande had an automatic bid into the championship game regardless of the outcome of the semifinal matchup. The Legends were set to play Mountainside in the semifinal matchup before the tournament was canceled. Eight teams traveled to Aurora to participate in the state tournament.

Including the three playoff wins, La Grande compiled a 22-4 record on the year and was riding a 14-game win streak.

"There were some very tough opponents, and my hats off to them and their programs, but I really did feel like we were the team to beat and we were going to be very hard to beat," McKinley said.

Led by a strong pitching rotation, the Legends dominated opposing

teams this year and held opponents to under four runs per game on average. Riley Miller led the way with a 4-0 record, while Devin Bell and Logan Williams both went 3-0 on the year. Jace Schow, Nick Bornstedt and Sam Tsiatsos stepped up to solidify the rotation and all recorded two wins on the season.

Bell excelled at the plate during the 2021 season, leading the team with 40 hits and 35 RBIs. The senior hit .556, drew 16 walks and scored 36 runs. Leadoff hitter Payton Cooper scored the most runs with 43 and hit for an average of .388.

Cooper, Miller and Brodrick Hood are the lone graduating seniors of the group.

La Grande carried those numbers into post-season play and rolled through the first three rounds of the double-elimination tournament. Following a 10-run victory over Mountainside in the first round, the Legends defeated the Eugene Ole Athletics 4-3 and held off a late rally in a 7-6 win over the Marion Berries in the quarterfinals. Cole Jorgensen recorded four hits, four RBIs and a .364 batting average during the state tournament. Cesar Rodriguez went 3-for-4 at the plate with four walks and four runs scored.

The Legends last won a state championship in 2011, and before that in 2001. The stars seemed to align this season for a championship every 10 years, as this year's squad combined quality pitching with timely hitting and a deep roster.

"It's heartbreaking from the baseball standpoint, but also just hope the young man who came down ill heals quickly and without any issues," McKinley said.

A new season

Eastern Oregon volleyball faces high expectations

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
 The Observer

LA GRANDE — A perennial powerhouse at Eastern Oregon University is looking for another strong season in 2021.

Eastern volleyball enters the season ranked atop the Cascade Collegiate Conference Preseason Coaches' poll and will look to defend last season's regular season conference title. The Mountaineers are also ranked No. 6 in the NAIA heading into the 2021 campaign. Despite losing several cornerstone players, the Mountaineers return three all-conference players heading into the 2021 season.

"While we are honored to be picked first in the preseason poll, we know that the work has just begun," head coach Kaki McLean Morehead said.

The Mountaineers are coming off a shortened

season where they went undefeated during the regular season for the first time in program history. Eastern compiled a 15-0 regular season record, but lost in the conference tournament to Corban University. The team made a run to the NAIA quarterfinals, losing to No. 1 overall seed Jamestown in three sets.

The Mountaineers ended the 2020 campaign ranked No. 7 in the final NAIA coaches' poll.

From that group, two crucial starters and former first-team CCC nominees have departed the program. Setter Madison Pilon graduated from Eastern, while three-time CCC libero of the year Kiley McMurtrey transferred to NCAA Division I University of Utah to compete as a graduate transfer.

"We have high expectations even with the key personnel we lost and we know that it's going to take some time to make those adjustments that are normal with new key pieces," McLean Morehead said.

The Mountaineers return a majority of last year's team, including three first-team All CCC players in middle blocker Cambree Scott, outside hitter Breanna Shaffer and middle blocker Jet Taylor. All three players are entering their fourth seasons in the program, but due to extended eligibility rules they are still listed as juniors this year.

"With every single one of our returning hitters being sophomores and juniors this year, we have high hopes that they will have an exceptional year," McLean Morehead said.

Eastern also added two freshman newcomers, Hailey Arritola and Katie Black. Black is a 6-foot outside hitter from Boise, and Arritola is a defensive specialist and libero from Mount Angel.

Despite losing two key starters, Eastern's returning group has caught the eyes of conference opponents heading into next season. The Mountaineers received eight out of 12 votes for

first place in the CCC Pre-season Coaches' Poll as the expected favorite to win the conference. The Mountaineers placed just above Corban and Southern Oregon, who both received two points.

Eastern opens its season at the Big Sky Challenge in Butte, Montana, against Bellevue on Friday, Aug. 20. Conference play opens for the Mountaineers on Sept. 3, at home against Bushnell.

Just a day later, the Mountaineers will square off at home against Corban, the team's top competition in the conference this year. The Mountaineers face a 30-game slate of regular season games following last season's shortened schedule.

As the preseason favorites, the Mountaineers will have a big target on their backs as the top team in the conference and one of the elite programs in the NAIA. Eastern will have its eyes set on another CCC title and a deep run in the national tournament.

SPORTS SHORT

Oregon promotes Jodie Berry to associate head coach

By **JAMES CREPEA**
 The Oregonian

EUGENE — Oregon formally announced the promotion Tuesday, Aug. 10, of assistant women's basketball coach Jodie Berry to associate head coach.

"I'm thrilled to be able to elevate Jodie to associate head coach," Oregon coach Kelly Graves said in a statement. "The relationships she builds with our student-athletes and the example that she sets for them on and off the court has been instrumental to the program's success. Jodie and I have worked together for a long time and I consider her a great friend

and trust her with everything. There is no one more deserving of this opportunity than her."

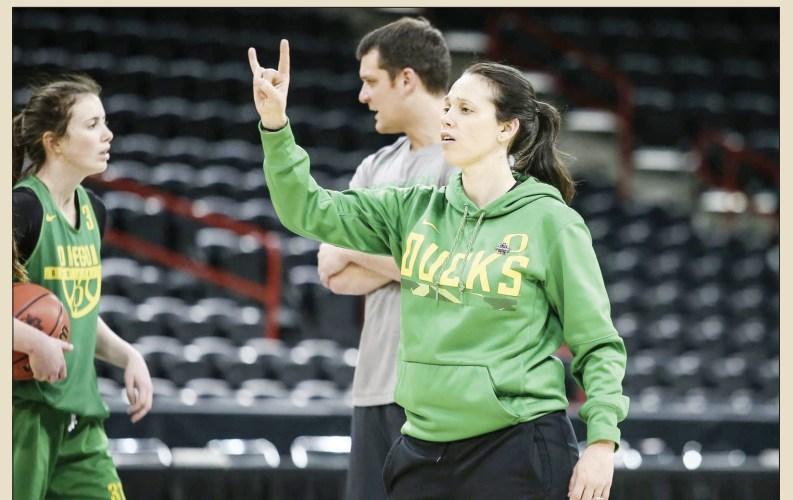
The lone returning assistant on Graves' staff, Berry worked with him for 16 seasons and currently works with the post players and assists in scouting and recruiting.

Earlier this summer she signed a one-year extension through June 30, 2022 for \$200,000, up from the \$179,152 she earned in 2019-20 and \$161,237 she earned last season due to a 10% reduction amid the pandemic.

"I am both humbled and honored to continue my coaching journey here at the

University of Oregon," Berry said in a statement. "I am proud to be a part of the Duck Family and cherish the many relationships within the athletic community here at Oregon. I will forever be grateful for the mentorship and guidance that Coach Graves has provided over the past 20 years and am excited for the future of Oregon women's basketball with Jackie, Mike, Brielle, Oti and our team. Go Ducks."

Among the players Berry has coached at Oregon were All-Americans Ruthy Hebard and Jillian Allelyne. While at Gonzaga, she coached five All-Americans.



University of Oregon/Contributed Photo
Longtime Oregon assistant head coach Jodie Berry was promoted to women's basketball associate head coach on Tuesday, Aug. 10.

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