



DAVIS CARBAUGH
CARBAUGH'S CORNER

Mounties set tone in season opener

Football is back in La Grande, and the Eastern Oregon University Mountaineers are in the win column early. It wasn't pretty, but Eastern handled business during an early road test Saturday, Aug. 28, against Montana Tech, winning 26-24.

The big takeaway from the season opener is that while head coach Tim Camp's squad might not be flashy, the team will win games with fundamentally sound football.

Even after losing 2020 second-team all-conference running back John Lesser, the Mountaineers relied heavily on the ground game in the opener. Redshirt-sophomore running back Jordan Eggers made a name for himself in the opener, rushing for 152 yards and two touchdowns.

Quarterback Kai Quinn jumped in on the successful rushing attack, adding 88 yards. The redshirt-senior threw for only 80 yards, but the run game was the most effective way to attack the Orediggers throughout the game. One of Quinn's best drives was a methodical quest down the field as time wound down in the fourth quarter.

The Mountaineers were able to milk almost six minutes off the clock and extend the lead to 26-17 with a Zachary Cahill field goal. Quinn's experience and time management skills under center will go a long way for the Mountaineers this year.

For the Mountaineers, a dominant offensive line will look to assist in a strong rushing attack all season. The big guys up front created running lanes for Eggers and Quinn all night in the season-opening contest.

Eastern forced four turnovers and lost only one fumble in the game, a margin that Camp will be pleased with.

Even as Montana Tech made a late-game comeback attempt, the Mountaineers stayed calm and collected in crunch time. With a large number of seniors and upper-classmen on the roster, the Mountaineers will look to continue playing fundamentally sound as the season progresses.

Eastern brings the momentum back home with next week's home opener slated for a 1 p.m. kickoff at Community Stadium on Sept. 4.

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Wrestlers have a life experience

La Grande team finds new perspective during trip to Europe

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Several La Grande wrestlers took the world by storm this summer.

That is not in reference to nearly going back-to-back as 4A state champions, but to the seven La Grande wrestlers participating in a Northwest Cultural Exchange two-week trip to Europe in late August. The Tigers wrestled against foreign competition and traveled through several countries in Europe during the two-week excursion.

"It was a life experience for those kids to see the world. It was really awesome," La Grande wrestling coach Klel Carson said.

The group traveling from La Grande to central Europe with the coach consisted of Wyatt Livingston, Cole Shafer, Braden Carson, Dominick Caratello, Brysen Penaloza, Kai Carson and Joshua Collins. As part of the Northwest Cultural Exchange, the crew from La Grande joined wrestlers and coaches from other schools around Oregon and Washington.

The wrestlers spent a week training in Austria before heading to Germany to compete in Frankfurt (Oder). Along the way, the team met with former Olympians and competed against wrestlers from Austria, Switzerland, Germany, the Czech Republic and Russia.

"The wrestling was a lot different," said Collins, an incoming junior. "It was great to learn, and it was great to understand the culture behind their wrestling."

The La Grande wrestlers adjusted to the Greco-Roman and freestyle wrestling that is more standard in Germany and Austria. According to senior Braden Carson, the athletes he faced were sound wrestlers who took their time and moved defensively.

"Most of the guys were very experienced and wrestle year-round," he said. "The age range is also different over there, so I was going against some guys that were in their 20s and 30s."

In his first time out of the country, Penaloza learned from the contrasting wrestling styles and even competed against a 50-year-old wrestler.

"They taught me some things that we really haven't used



Klel Carson/Contributed Photo

The La Grande wrestling team and other participants in the Northwest Cultural Exchange pose in front of the Reichstag building in Berlin, Germany, during the August 2021 trip. The wrestlers spent a week in Austria and a week in Germany training and getting advice from Olympians and other elite wrestlers.



Klel Carson/Contributed Photo

From left to right, Braden Carson, Kai Carson, Joshua Collins and Brysen Penaloza stand in front of the Berlin Cathedral in Germany during the La Grande wrestling team's cultural exchange trip to Europe in August 2021.

because it was a much different type of wrestling," the junior said. "It was a little different in the beginning, but we got pretty used to it after a little while."

Olympic perspective

Another takeaway for Penaloza and the La Grande wrestlers was interacting with Olympians and other top competitors. Collins noted that he met a handful of wrestlers who had come within one match from qualifying for the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

Alongside Klel Carson, former South African Olympian Shaun Williams was one of the coaches on the trip. Williams, the head coach at Central Valley High School in Spo-

kane, Washington, wrestled at the University of Oregon and competed in the 2004 Olympics. While in Germany, the cultural exchange group was guided by three-time German Olympian Sven Thiele. The athletes stayed in some of Europe's premier wrestling facilities and were able to receive advice from elite wrestlers. Not only did the La Grande wrestlers meet elite competitors, but they were also able to compete against top-notch opponents.

"A lot of the kids got to wrestle against kids that are placers in European championships and world teams," Klel Carson said. "They got to go against really high-level competition, so it's just awesome all the way around."

Coming together as a team

For the wrestlers involved, the trip did more than improve their wrestling skills. The cultural exchange group created bonds across opposing teams in the region, and the experience tightened the chemistry within the La Grande squad.

"It was a good team-building experience. We all got to explore Europe," Collins said. "I got to know my teammates a lot better and it was a great trip with them. They were supportive the whole way, and made it a fun trip."

According to Penaloza, all 17 wrestlers taking part in the trip got along well throughout the two weeks spent together. For Collins, the trip gave him an expanded view of work ethic and training habits.

"Mentality is huge," he said. "Your mentality goes with everything because you have to be strong."

The La Grande wrestling team is coming off a runner-up finish at the Class 4A state championship this past spring. Following a once-in-a-lifetime team experience this summer, the Tigers will be looking to use that boosted chemistry to bounce back and reclaim the top spot in the state.

The Northwest Cultural Exchange trip gave the athletes a new perspective on wrestling and other cultures.

"It was a pretty amazing experience for those kids," Klel Carson said.

SPORTS SHORT

EOU issues mask requirement for fans at sporting events

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University athletics is facing another hurdle related to COVID-19.

The athletics department announced its spectator policy on Thursday, Sept. 26, requiring masks for fans in attendance at all indoor and outdoor competitions. The decision is effective immediately and comes right at the start of the 2021 athletics season.

The Cascade Collegiate Conference Council of Presidents met on Aug. 26 to discuss mask

policies for outdoor sporting events, which Eastern put into effect on its campus. The decision comes in the wake of Gov. Kate Brown's outdoor mask mandate announced on Aug. 25.

Union County's total of COVID-19 cases during the month of August has eclipsed 500, making it the highest of any month since the beginning of the pandemic.

Eastern's fall sports are just starting up, with soccer, football and volleyball beginning regular season competition this month. With home football games around the corner, the Mountaineers are slated to host five

games at Community Stadium. The stadium also hosts men's and women's soccer and can hold up to 3,000 fans.

According to Sports Information Director William McLaughlin, Eastern currently has no plans for enforcing capacity limits at sporting events. The university's spectator policy encourages fans to maintain social distancing standards when attending a sporting event.

The Cascade Collegiate Conference states that failure to comply with attendance policy will result in removal from the venue and any further contests.



Eastern Oregon University/Contributed Photo

Fans pack the stands at Community Stadium at Eastern Oregon University, La Grande, in this October 2016 photo. The EOU athletics department announced it will require masks for fans in attendance at all indoor and outdoor competitions in the fall of 2021.

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