

**DAVIS CARBAUGH**
CARBAUGH'S CORNER

EOU hoops facing major hurdle

Losing your best player is not an ideal way to start off the season for a first-year head coach.

Just four games into the year, Eastern Oregon University's interim head coach Chris Kemp has most likely lost his top player. Max McCullough, a redshirt-senior who already owns the program's career scoring record, was injured in an exhibition at Gonzaga. McCullough likely has a torn ACL, Kemp said, and appears to be out for the season.

Paul Pennington, one of the team's top guards, is also facing extended time off the court due to an injury sustained in the exhibition.

At a crossroads, Kemp and the Mountaineers are going to have to find a way to overcome adversity early in the season. On the bright side for Eastern, this year's team has one of the deepest rosters in recent history.

A handful of transfers have made a major impact and created a well-balanced group. Guards Phillip Malatare and Manny N'tula, alongside forwards Xavier Lovelace and Ismael Valdez, have added a major boost to the team.

Malatare adds elite ball handling and efficient court vision, while N'tula showed off his sharpshooting with a team-high 15 points against Gonzaga. Lovelace can play big in the paint, as well as flash athleticism at the forward position. Meanwhile for Valdez, the team is hoping that he can be a lockdown rim protector.

With all these added players, someone is going to have to step up big for the Mountaineers. Otherwise, the ship is going to sink quickly if the team cannot find an identity without McCullough on the court.

With so much added depth this year, the plan was to play McCullough off the ball and clear up space for other scorers. That was evident in a home win against Montana Western on Saturday, Oct. 30, when the Bulldogs' bench fervently changed its game plan every time McCullough was subbed in or out.

Whether it be one standout or a combined team effort, the Mountaineers are going to need to find an answer — quickly. Eastern faces a handful of non-conference foes during November before opening conference play early in December. In his first year as a head coach, Kemp will need to get creative to find wins without the team's top player.

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John Farrington, then an assistant coach, observes the field during an Eastern Oregon University baseball game in the 2021 season. Farrington took over as the head coach at Treasure Valley Community College in June, his first full-time head coaching position at the collegiate level.

READY TO LEAD

Former EOU baseball assistant takes the reins at Treasure Valley Community College

By **DAVIS CARBAUGH**
The Observer

ONTARIO — A former Eastern Oregon University assistant baseball coach is taking a step up in his career.

John Farrington, assistant coach for the Mountaineers last season, is entering his first year as head coach of the Treasure Valley Community College baseball team. After guiding Eastern in its first year back on the diamond since 2006, Farrington is taking a major step up into his first collegiate coaching gig.

“When you grow up with a love of baseball, you never want to get away from the game when you're done playing,” Farrington said. “It was definitely always the plan for me, so I'm excited to be here.”

New coach at the helm

Farrington felt like his hiring at Treasure Valley was a natural next step, following a unique season with the Mountaineers.

The 29-year-old helped resurrect the program and was part of Eastern's return to baseball. Following a successful playing career at Biola University, Farrington held numerous coaching positions before finding his way to La Grande. In addition to the challenges of starting up a new program, he noted that last season involved unprecedented hurdles.

“I think that the hardest part

was resurrecting a program during COVID,” Farrington said. “It's two things that no one is really used to dealing with.”

Prior to his time at Eastern, Farrington held a variety of coaching positions. His passion for managing baseball has taken him across the world, with the initial spark occurring when Farrington was down under.

“I went to Australia to play, but got roped into coaching a 18-U team,” Farrington said. “My plan was to come back and play some independent ball, but I kind of fell in love with coaching out there.”

Farrington coached the Rockingham Rams in Australia in 2015-16. He returned to Oregon for an assistant stint with Doc Stewarts Baseball in Douglas County, then was an assistant at MidAmerica Nazarene in Olathe, Kansas. He also served as head coach for the Yorkton Cardinals, a collegiate summer-league team in the Western Canadian Baseball League.

Farrington noted that his time with the Mountaineers in 2021 was very productive, teaching him what it takes to build a program from scratch. Taking over for the Chukars, he is hoping to mirror similar tactics to rebuild the program in Ontario.

“It takes a couple years to resurrect a program and get the culture back to where you want it, but we plan on getting this thing back within a few years to where it once was,” Farrington said.

Building from the ground up

Despite being a powerhouse program in years past, the Chukars have struggled in recent seasons. Over the last four years, Treasure Valley has posted a 29-97 record.

While the Chukars have struggled lately, the program has a history of churning out top talent. More than 30 former Treasure Valley players have gone on to sign with Major League Baseball affiliates, while six former Chukars have made it to the show.

Farrington is entering the program with high expectations for turning it around and returning to its glory days.

“Historically, it's one of the best JUCO's in the Northwest,” he said. “That's our plan, to make Treasure Valley that spot that high school kids want to come play for.”

Learning the ropes

While Farrington is more than excited to be leading a team from the head coach's position, there have been several challenges with taking the major step up from assistant coaching.

“It's a lot different because you're dealing with administrative stuff and there's a lot of other things that you don't always think about as an assistant,” he said. “I wouldn't trade it for the world though, you get to build your culture and you can get things done the way you

see best.”

Farrington considers his strength as a coach to be his ability to connect with players. At Treasure Valley, he is hoping to develop student-athletes to have success on and off the field.

“I ask my guys to give me 100% in order to be the best ball players they can be,” Farrington said. “It's about being a good student and a good person on and off the field. We think everything will fall into place as a program if we focus on developing the person and the player.”

Farrington is leaning on the lessons of his former coaches during his playing career, as well as local managers in the area. He stated that former Treasure Valley coaches Rick Baumann and Aaron Sutton have helped him make the step up to the head coaching position.

“I've had some great coaches over the years, so it's time for me to give back and help the players under me,” Farrington said.

Heading into his debut season, Farrington is taking things day by day. He emphasized that during COVID-19, no game is a guarantee. The first-year coach stated that turning things around starts one game at a time.

“Our goal is to make the NWAC tournament,” Farrington said. “We're working toward that every day and taking things one step at a time. We're just going to go out there every game and play our butts off.”

SPORTS SHORT

Pendleton Round-Up is a Sowing Good Deeds finalist

East Oregonian

DULUTH, Ga. — The Pendleton Round-Up is one of five rodeo committees selected by AGCO Corporation, a global leader in the design, manufacture and distribution of agricultural machinery and precision ag technology, as its 2021 Sowing Good Deeds finalists.

Also selected were Gunnison (Colorado) Cattlemen's Days, Burke (South Dakota) Stampede, Prescott (Arizona) Frontier Days and Reno Rodeo committees.

The annual contest recognizes Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association rodeo committees who go above and beyond in their charitable endeavors, making positive impacts in their local ag

communities.

According to AGCO, this year's finalists represent the best of what the PRCA stands for — community impact, innovation, and their ability to overcome adversity.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Pendleton Round-Up committee created the Let'er Buck Cares program to support and benefit various community organizations that rely on the Round-Up and Happy Canyon events for revenue.

AGCO will announce the winning committee at the 2021 PRCA Awards Banquet in Las Vegas, at the South Point Hotel, Dec. 1. The Wrangler National Finals Rodeo presented by Teton Ridge runs Dec. 2-11 in Vegas.

The overall winner receives a Massey Ferguson tractor valued at more than \$60,000.

“Rodeos are an important part of the fabric of America, supporting not only revenue-generating competitions, but local ag organizations like FFA and 4-H that represent the future of our industry,” said Matt LeCroy, director, marketing hay and forage for Massey Ferguson North America, in a press release. “Sowing Good Deeds shines a spotlight on the generosity and services provided by rodeo committees across the United States. AGCO is proud to recognize these unsung heroes who selflessly give their time and talents to make our ag communities stronger.”



Austin Johnson/For the East Oregonian, File

Members of the Pendleton Round-Up and Happy Canyon courts display their pink outfits for Tough Enough to Wear Pink day Sept. 16, 2021, on the second day of the Pendleton Round-Up. The Round-Up is a finalist for an award honoring professional rodeos for charitable efforts.