

ON THE SLATE

Thursday, Jan. 20

COLLEGE WOMEN'S WRESTLING

Eastern Oregon vs. Southwestern Oregon Community College, Salem, TBA
Eastern Oregon at Corban, 5 p.m.

Friday, Jan. 21

COLLEGE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Oregon Tech at Eastern Oregon, 7:30 p.m.

COLLEGE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Oregon Tech at Eastern Oregon, 5:30 p.m.

COLLEGE MEN'S WRESTLING

Eastern Oregon at Missouri Valley Invitational, TBA

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL

Cove at Elgin, 4:30 p.m.
La Grande at McLoughlin, 7:30 p.m.
Union at Stanfield, 7:30 p.m.
Nixyaawii at Joseph, 7:30 p.m.
Enterprise at Heppner, 7:30 p.m.

PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL

La Grande at McLoughlin, 6 p.m.
Union at Stanfield, 6 p.m.
Nixyaawii at Joseph, 6 p.m.
Enterprise at Heppner, 6 p.m.
Cove at Elgin, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Jan. 22

COLLEGE MEN'S BASKETBALL

Southern Oregon at Eastern Oregon, 5 p.m.

COLLEGE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

Southern Oregon at Eastern Oregon, 3 p.m.

COLLEGE MEN'S WRESTLING

Eastern Oregon at Missouri Valley Invitational, TBA

COLLEGE TRACK AND FIELD

Eastern Oregon at Lauren McClusky Memorial Open, Moscow, Idaho, TBA

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL

Weston-McEwen at Union, 5:30 p.m.
Pine Eagle at Elgin, 5:30 p.m.
Cove at Imbler, 5:30 p.m.
Wallowa at Griswold, 5:30 p.m.
Enterprise at Stanfield, 5:30 p.m.

PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL

Pine Eagle at Elgin, 2:30 p.m.
Weston-McEwen at Union, 4 p.m.
Cove at Imbler, 4 p.m.
Wallowa at Griswold, 4 p.m.
Enterprise at Stanfield, 4 p.m.

Tuesday, Jan. 25

COLLEGE MEN'S BASKETBALL

The College of Idaho at Eastern Oregon, 7:30 p.m.

COLLEGE WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

The College of Idaho at Eastern Oregon, 5:30 p.m.

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL

Pendleton at La Grande, 7:30 p.m.

PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL

Pendleton at La Grande, 6 p.m.

Meeting her goals

Former EOU soccer player set to compete for Philippines Women's National Team while reconnecting with family

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

LA GRANDE — An Eastern Oregon University women's soccer player is fulfilling a life-long dream to represent her country's national team.

Kiara Fontanilla, a goalkeeper who has spent the last two seasons with the Mountaineers, was selected to compete for this year's Philippines Women's National Team at the AFC Women's Asian Cup in India. The appearance for the national team has not only been a life-long goal for Fontanilla, but the experience also opened the door for her extended family in the Philippines to reconnect.

"I definitely didn't see it coming because I've had a hard soccer career," Fontanilla said. "For this to happen was definitely a sigh of relief. Everything I've worked for is now paying off."



Fontanilla

Fontanilla has been a solid contributor defending the net for the Mountaineers over the last two years, in addition to her experience with Division I Cal State-Fullerton and Division II Northwest Oklahoma State University. The goalkeeper will look to help the Philippines Women's National Team place well enough at the tournament to qualify for the FIFA World Cup for the first time in the country's history.

Family roots

Fontanilla has struggled with injuries in her playing time, as well as battled mental obstacles during her playing career. An even larger obstacle may have been the task of acquiring eligibility to play for the Philippines and help her father reconnect with his family in his home country.

Fontanilla's father, Francisco Fontanilla, was born and raised in the Philippines, but has spent the last 40 years in the United States unable to return home after complications related to his immigration years ago. Both Fontanilla and her father went through a grueling process of acquiring the proper paperwork to become dual citizens of the



Eastern Oregon University Athletics/Contributed Photo

Kiara Fontanilla readies to clear the ball in front of the Eastern Oregon University goal during a match in the 2021 spring season. On Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2022, Fontanilla found out she was selected to represent the Philippines Women's National Team at the AFC Women's Asian Cup in India.

Philippines, which allowed her to compete for the national team and for her father to visit his family.

"That honestly really pushed me to be on the team," Fontanilla said. "My main goal is so that my dad can go home and see his family."

The chance to travel to India for the Women's Asian Cup will allow Fontanilla's father to reconnect with family and return to his childhood home. Through competing with the team in India, Fontanilla and her dad will have the chance to return to the Philippines and visit family. For the 21-year-old goalkeeper, the reunion will mark the first time she has physically met much of her father's extended family.

"It's really cool to see him so excited to talk about his childhood, because usually he's really reserved about that," Fontanilla said. "For him to share that with me was really cool."

Earning her spot

In her time at Eastern, Fontanilla recorded a 5-1-1 record in seven career starts over two seasons. In the 2020 spring season, she went 5-0-1 and recorded five shutouts along with 19 saves. Last fall, Fontanilla appeared

in five games for the Mountaineers and recorded four saves along with a 2.38 goals allowed average.

Even with a strong resume, Fontanilla found herself competing for roster spots against the top players of the Philippines. After traveling to California for training on Tuesday, Nov. 9, Fontanilla joined roughly 100 other players seeking a spot on the national team. The ensuing two months of training consisted of gradual roster cuts that left the players constantly on edge. After the roster was trimmed down to about 30 players, Fontanilla found out from her coaches on Jan. 4 that she would be a part of the team traveling to India.

"I was super excited," Fontanilla said. "It was super nerve-racking because I knew there was only going to be three goalkeepers that could go, but there were six of us at that point."

Fontanilla was one of six first-year players on the national team, earning a coveted spot behind the team's anchor in goal, Inna Palacios. However, some younger players did not get to experience the same thrill of making the team. Fontanilla noted that seeing players get cut after months of training together

and building bonds was a difficult process. For one 18-year-old goalkeeper who did not make the cut, Fontanilla looked to provide guidance and motivation in a difficult time.

"I really wanted someone like that there for me when I was going through hardships earlier in my career, but I only had maybe one person there for me," she said. "I definitely wanted to be a part of that process in a positive way for the younger players who didn't make it."

Learning curve

With experience in Division I soccer and a successful Eastern Oregon program, Fontanilla is used to playing in high-intensity environments. However, the step up to international level training was a significant adjustment for the goalkeeper in her first stint with the national team.

"It was definitely a big jump from EOU to here," Fontanilla said. "EOU is high level and the training is really intense, but the training (for the national team) definitely was super high intensity."

Fontanilla noted that her coaches with the Philippines

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Father-daughter duo gear up for sled dog race

By RONALD BOND

Wallowa County Chieftain

ENTERPRISE — Both Morgan and Craig Anderson are set for another run at the Eagle Cap Extreme Sled Dog Race, which returns at noon Thursday, Jan. 20, after a year away due to COVID-19.

"It's so nice. I've done no other big race yet (besides the ECX, but) it's definitely one of my favorite races to go to," said Morgan Anderson, an Enterprise High School graduate.

Though just 22, Anderson is already a veteran when it comes to running the Extreme. This will be her sixth time competing in the ECX, and her second time taking to the path in the 200-mile race, the longest and most grueling of the four to be run this weekend.

"I did the junior race my first year, then the 31-mile race three times, then the 200 and now the 200 again," she said. "I kind of skipped the 100. Someone offered me the dogs and I said, 'Why not?'"

Getting ready

The younger Anderson has spent most of the last five months training in Pinedale, Wyoming, training for the race with fellow ECX racer and family friend Clayton Perry. In fact, most of the dogs she'll be running with in the race this week belong to Perry.

"At this point, we've been



Wallowa County Chieftain, File

Craig Anderson, of Enterprise, starts on the second leg of the 31-mile race in the 2020 Eagle Cap Extreme.

training dogs since the beginning of September," she said.

Getting the dogs' endurance built up for a 200-mile race starts before there is snow on the ground. Anderson said at the beginning of training season, rather than a sled, they used teams of 16 dogs and would pull an ATV four-wheeler.

"We would go 5 miles," she said. "We call four-wheeler training the weight training. It's

off and in neutral, or a lower gear."

The early stages are not run at a high speed, with Anderson saying they would go about 5-8 mph.

"Once snow hits, we can start getting more distance and more speed going," she said.

Top speed, she noted, is about 16 mph. It's a pace Anderson's group will maintain for short stretches, with the average closer

to 8-10 mph.

The heavy training days are long, for racers and dogs alike. Late last week, Anderson and Perry went on about an 85-mile training run. They took off at about 11 a.m., ran until about 7 p.m. rested until about midnight, then finished the final stretch, getting back about 4:30 a.m.

The training days are wearing, but Anderson had a team largely of younger racing dogs — seven

of them are "puppies" that are about 1-1/2 years old — and their energy does rub off.

"As soon as we started getting them dressed," they're excited, she said. "They are always way more hyped than I am."

A family affair

Meanwhile, her father, Craig, will be running in the ECX for the second time. He said he entertained thoughts of running the 100-mile race, but settled for the 31-mile race, which was the distance he ran previously.

A combination of items resulted in Craig competing — previously volunteering for the race, acquiring more sled dogs, the proximity of the race to his hometown of Enterprise and his daughter racing among the reasons.

"It's kind of good for the dogs, too," he said. "It's good for the dogs to see other dogs and pass other dogs."

As the younger Anderson got more involved, so did Craig. In fact, four of the sled dogs he owns are siblings to Morgan's lead dog and the one she owns, Gale.

"I moved away to college, so my dad no longer had me to look after, so I think I got replaced by dogs," she quipped.

Running sled dogs has resulted in Morgan and Craig getting several opportunities to run together

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