

## ON THE SLATE

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, 4 p.m.

## PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL

Pine Eagle at Elgin, 2 p.m.

Weston-McEwen at Union, 4 p.m.

Cove at Imbler, 4 p.m.

Wallowa at Griswold, 4 p.m.

## EOU athletics cuts concessions amid COVID-19 spike

By DAVIS CARBAUGH

The Observer

LA GRANDE — In the midst of a spike in the COVID-19 pandemic, Eastern Oregon University Athletics announced on Wednesday, Jan. 19, that it will not offer concessions or hospitality dining at home sporting events.

According to the statement from the university, Eastern is exercising the precautionary measures in order to ensure that fans are allowed at games for the remainder of the academic year.

"As tough as this decision is for us to make, it is the best possible route we are going to take so that we can still allow fans (at) games," Director of Athletics Anji Weisenfluh said in a press release. "We want to mitigate the spread of COVID, and this option allows our fans to still come and watch the student-athletes compete."

Eastern's spectator policy requires that all fans in attendance wear masks during indoor and outdoor events.

No outside food will be permitted inside Quinn Coliseum, but fans will be allowed to leave in between games to eat if they wish. Fans are required to keep their tickets in order to re-enter the stadium.

Back-to-back home men's and women's basketball games against Oregon Tech on Jan. 21 and Southern Oregon on Jan. 22 will be the first instances the new policy is put into place.

## Jorgensen signs to play baseball at WOU

La Grande standout to continue baseball career for Wolves

By DAVIS CARBAUGH

The Observer

LA GRANDE — One of La Grande High School's top athletes officially decided his future in collegiate athletics.

Cole Jorgensen, a multi-sport athlete at La Grande, signed to continue his baseball career with Western Oregon University on his signing day on Monday, Jan. 10. The catcher has been an anchor to the Tigers' baseball team throughout his high school career and will look for continued success on a strong Wolves team next year.

"Playing college baseball has always been my dream, ever since I was 9 years old and started playing travel baseball," Jorgensen said. "I've always really wanted to play at the next level."

In addition to his prowess behind the plate, Jorgensen has excelled in football and wrestling. Following a season in which the La Grande football team went 7-2 and made it to the 4A quarterfinals, Jorgensen was named 4A first-team all-state at the defensive line position and honorable mention 4A all-state on the offensive line.

Jorgensen said that he has enjoyed his time on the La Grande football and wrestling teams, but that focusing on his true passion on the baseball diamond has always been his goal moving forward.

"Being able to just purely focus on baseball all year round is going to be really nice," he said.

Even splitting his time with other sports, Jorgensen has excelled on the diamond for La Grande. Head coach Parker McKinley stated that Jorgensen stepped in as a freshman after older players on the team were injured and took on an immediate role on the baseball team.

"He's tough as nails,"



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group, File

Cole Jorgensen catches a strike during a match between the La Grande Legacy Legends and Hodgen Distribution at Optimist Field in La Grande on Friday, July 23, 2021.

McKinley said of his starting catcher. "Cole has gotten so big and so strong and has really started to mature into quite the young man. He's very physical and can handle the catcher position well with that."

During the 2021 spring season in which La Grande came just shy of a 4A state championship, Jorgensen led the Tigers with a .643 batting average. In 67 plate appearances, Jorgensen tallied 36 hits, three home runs, 10 runs and a team-high 32 RBIs. In 11 games for the La Grande Legacy Legends in the summer, Jorgensen averaged .467 at the plate and tallied 10 RBIs and 14 runs in just 38 plate appearances. Defensively, Jorgensen recorded a .991 fielding percentage on 109 attempts during La Grande's spring season and was 1.000 on 62 attempts for the La Grande Legacy Legends this past summer.

Jorgensen remarked that his time at La Grande has helped him prepare for the next level of competition. Beyond racking up elite numbers at the plate, he credits catching for strong pitchers who have gone on to play college baseball — such as Riley Miller and Parker Robinson — during his time at La Grande.

"I've had great coaches at La Grande ever since I was

little," Jorgensen said. "I feel pretty comfortable as a catcher. I've caught for some pretty good pitchers throughout the years who have gone on to the next level."

## Joining the pack

For Jorgensen, the initial recruitment process to Western Oregon quickly made the Wolves his top choice.

"I went on a visit to Western and met up with their recruiting coordinator, Coach (Trevor) Podratz, and I really liked him. He took me around the campus and I really enjoyed the campus," he said. "He just seemed like a really nice guy and he fit my personality really well, so that seemed like a great fit for me."

Jorgensen is set to join a Western Oregon team that went 22-8 in 2021 and made it to the NCAA Division II West Regional final game. The Wolves came up just shy of a trip to the national championships. The program boasts 23 players drafted into the MLB and 49 players who have appeared for MLB teams or their minor league affiliates.

"Obviously it would be a dream to go to the next level, so I think it's really awesome to know that guys have come out of there and done that," Jorgensen said of Western's his-

tory crafting MLB players. "It's really exciting for me."

Jorgensen shared a similar sentiment, noting that he hopes to represent the Tigers well and raise interest in what the La Grande program has to offer.

"I want to make us look good and hopefully open some doors for future players from La Grande who might want to go to Western," he said. "I want to show them how good of a program we have here and how hard we work, and what our intent is every day in practice."

Starting from the bottom as a freshman for Western, Jorgensen will rely on the same work ethic that earned him a starting spot as a freshman on the La Grande team.

"I'm going to try my best to earn my spot, work hard every day and try to represent La Grande baseball as best I can," he said.

## One last run

Before Jorgensen takes his talents to Monmouth, the senior will be looking to lead a very talented La Grande team this spring. The Tigers, who return a plethora of starters from last year, came just one inning away from a potential state title last spring. With La Grande up 2-1 in the final inning, Hidden Valley's Issak Hill crushed a grand slam to win the state title game by a 5-2 margin.

"Hopefully it's us again in the championship and hopefully we can come out on top this time," Jorgensen said. "I feel like we're really really solid. I feel like we should be right back up there."

Having already accomplished a major personal goal in securing his spot on a collegiate roster, Jorgensen would like one more accomplishment under his belt before his time at La Grande is up.

"I'm really motivated to win a state championship with these guys because I've been playing with them since I was 9 years old," Jorgensen said. "I think we all want it a lot and know that we have the capabilities to do so."

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