

ON THE SLATE

Friday, April 1 (Games completed after print deadline)

COLLEGE SOFTBALL

Eastern Oregon at Warner Pacific (2), 2 p.m.

COLLEGE TRACK & FIELD

Eastern Oregon at NNU Invitational, Nampa, Idaho, TBA

PREP BASEBALL

La Grande at Seaside/Jewell, 4 p.m.  
La Grande vs. North Marion, 7 p.m.

PREP SOFTBALL

Banks at La Grande (2), 2 p.m.  
Elgin/Imbler at Union/Cove (2), 2 p.m.

PREP TRACK & FIELD

Cove, Elgin, Imbler, La Grande, Powder Valley, Union at Carnival of Speed, McLoughlin High School, 10 a.m.

PREP TENNIS

Pendleton at La Grande, 3 p.m.

PREP BOYS GOLF

La Grande at Milton-Freewater, TBA

Saturday, April 2

COLLEGE BASEBALL

Eastern Oregon at British Columbia (2), 1 p.m.

COLLEGE SOFTBALL

Eastern Oregon at Warner Pacific (2), 11 a.m.

COLLEGE WOMEN'S LACROSSE

Eastern Oregon at Corban, 1 p.m.

PREP BASEBALL

La Grande at Astoria, noon

Sunday, April 3

COLLEGE BASEBALL

Eastern Oregon at British Columbia (2), 11 a.m.

Monday, April 4

PREP SOFTBALL

Echo/Stanford at La Grande (2), 2 p.m.

Tuesday, April 5

COLLEGE SOFTBALL

Eastern Oregon at College of Idaho (2), 1 p.m.

PREP BASEBALL

Union/Cove at Weston-McEwen, 4 p.m.

PREP SOFTBALL

Pilot Rock/Nixyaawii at Union/Cove (2), 3 p.m.

PREP TRACK & FIELD

Elgin, Imbler, Powder Valley at Small Schools Meet, Grant Union, 4 p.m.

PREP TENNIS

Vale at La Grande, 4 p.m.

Wednesday, April 6

PREP TENNIS

La Grande at Ontario, 2 p.m.

Thursday, April 7

PREP BASEBALL

Ontario at La Grande (2), 2 p.m.

PREP SOFTBALL

Ontario at La Grande (2), 2 p.m.



Davis Carbaugh/The Observer

Elgin/Imbler softball coach Miah Burgess delivers instructions at the start of Elgin/Imbler's practice on Wednesday, March 30, 2022. Burgess, a former college player who graduated from Elgin, is looking to build up the program and its core of young players.

# Back on the diamond

## Softball program returns with crop of young athletes

By DAVIS CARBAUGH  
The Observer

ELGIN — A local softball program is gearing up to take the field for the first time in five years.

The Elgin/Imbler softball program returns this spring, the first time the high schools have fielded a team since the 2017 season. Returning to her former school where she played softball for the Huskies, head coach Miah Burgess and her coaching staff are looking to rebuild up the program.

"They're doing fantastic and working super hard," Burgess said. "Every day they're making improvements and learning, getting better."

Burgess and Elgin Athletic Director Kevin Johnson proposed bringing softball back several years ago, but that idea was nixed when the COVID-19 pandemic hit. With spring sports returning to its normal schedule this year, the Huskies are ready to hit the ground running.

Prior to taking up the head coaching position at Elgin, Burgess played college softball for Blue Mountain Community College and the College of Idaho. She also spent time as an assistant coach at La Grande, helping the team with its most recent 4A state championship, in 2019.

Burgess graduated from



Davis Carbaugh/The Observer

Freshman Isabella Warg swings a pitch while freshman Kendra Hensley readies behind the plate during a Elgin/Imbler softball practice at Elgin High School on Wednesday, March 30, 2022. The Huskies are taking the field this year for the first time since the 2017.

high school in 2015, which was also the last year that the Huskies competed in or won a state playoff game. Now back at Elgin as the head coach, Burgess is looking to revitalize the program.

"I'm really impressed with the effort they've put in so far," Burgess said of the student athletes. "Softball is something that was a big part of my life, so I'm happy to see it return."

Elgin/Imbler's roster includes 14 players, with experience ranging from travel ball backgrounds to players picking up a softball for the first time.

The team's roster includes only one senior and one junior, and the remaining players are underclassmen. Burgess noted that this year's players will have

### ELGIN/IMBLER SOFTBALL ROSTER

- 2/2 Paige Gifford-Lamb
- 3/3 Rian Rutherford
- 4/4 Corrina Smith
- 5/5 Cadence Miles
- 8/8 Avonlea Crook
- 9/9 Isabella Warg
- 10/10 Madi Schnabel
- 11/11 Alex Monger
- 12/12 Gracie Howell
- 13/13 Elizabeth Plisek
- 22/22 Chelsie McKay
- 31/31 Kendra Hensley
- 35/35 Izabel Martin
- 50/50 Sofie Adams

freshmen Izabel Martin and Kendra Hensley to lead the way in the pitching department this year. Infielder Chelsie McKay, a sophomore, is expected to provide versatility in the infield.

The program will be a work in progress, Burgess said, adding that the improvement over a short period of time has been exponential.

The Huskies took the field

to be versatile, filling in different positions on the field as they continue to learn and improve their skill sets.

"We have quite a bit of raw athletic talent," she said. "We have a lot of girls that are going to play multiple positions."

The Huskies plan to lean on freshmen Izabel Martin and Kendra Hensley to lead the way in the pitching department this year. Infielder Chelsie McKay, a sophomore, is expected to provide versatility in the infield.

The program will be a work in progress, Burgess said, adding that the improvement over a short period of time has been exponential.

The Huskies took the field

for the first time since the program's revival on Friday, April 1, in a doubleheader against Union/Cove. The Huskies will host their first home games of the year when Echo/Stanford comes to town for a doubleheader starting at 2 p.m. on April 8.

For the Huskies, success this season may come down to progress instead of final scores and stats — Burgess noted that in-game experience will be crucial for player development. The program will look to continue building up as a young group takes the field in purple and white for the first time since 2017.

"It's a brand-new program and everything came together really quick. Our main focus this year is going to be getting better," Burgess said. "Hopefully the girls will love softball and enjoy it, while getting better and making improvements."

### ELGIN/IMBLER SOFTBALL SCHEDULE

- Friday, April 1  
Elgin/Imbler at Union/Cove (2), 2 p.m.
- Friday, April 8  
Echo/Stanford at Elgin/Imbler (2), 2 p.m.
- Friday, April 15  
Elgin/Imbler at Heppner/Lone (2), 2 p.m.
- Friday, April 22  
Grant Union/Prairie City at Elgin/Imbler (2), 2 p.m.
- Friday, April 29  
Elgin/Imbler at Weston-McEwen (2), 2 p.m.
- Friday, May 6  
Pilot Rock/Nixyaawii at Elgin/Imbler (2), 2 p.m.

SPORTS SHORT

## EOU Blue and Gold Weekend set to return

Community outreach event planned on Eastern Oregon University campus

The Observer

LA GRANDE — After a two-year postponement due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Eastern Oregon University will host its Blue and Gold Weekend on campus.

The community event is scheduled to begin on Friday, May 13, and conclude on May 14. The weekend is geared toward community outreach and a gathering of

current students and alumni.

"It's about building connections and engagements with our community, alumni and students," Athletic Director Anji Weissenfluh said in the university's announcement.

The two-day event includes fun for all ages, with live music, spike ball tournaments, barbecue, cornhole and more. Alumni will compete in a soccer game, and the football team will host a spring

scrimmage.

Blue Mountain Summit Realty Group and Fairway Mortgage are sponsoring this year's Blue and Gold Weekend.

The university's athletic department will be fundraising through a silent auction in the tailgate zone on campus — the items set to be auctioned off have been donated to the Eastern Oregon athletic department.



Eastern Oregon University/Contributed Photo, File

Fans pack the stands at Community Stadium at Eastern Oregon University, La Grande, in this October 2016 photo.

Find up-to-date scores and additional game coverage for your local high school, available 24/7 at [www.lagrandeobserver.com](http://www.lagrandeobserver.com).