

GEBBIA

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Gebbia, roundly panning it as a “dirty play.”

Months before the 2021 game against Oregon, Gebbia hoped to play in the game. Even though his doctors laid out 12-18 months of recovery, Gebbia thought that was for ordinary people.

Far less for a finely tuned athlete like a college football player.

“I had the blessing of being able to have training and strength staff and my own coaches that are going to be able to push me to get back onto the field,” Gebbia said. “That’s why I was looking at it like, 18 months? I’m gonna be back in eight months. I don’t know what you guys are talking about.”

Sure enough, eight months after undergoing surgery, Gebbia was there for the first day of 2021 pre-season camp last August. For three weeks, he took turns at quarterbacks in competition for the starting job. For a time, Gebbia looked on track to return as OSU’s starting quarterback.

Late in camp, coach Jonathan Smith said Gebbia’s hamstring was feeling sore,

so he was taking a day off. Then two. Then a week, and finally indefinitely.

“I kind of tweaked it a little bit, and it was tough for me to walk out there,” Gebbia said. “Short of getting a cortisone shot, I didn’t think I was going to be able to move very well.”

Gebbia told Smith he didn’t “want to do a disservice to the team” and took himself out of the mix for the starting job for Oregon State’s opener. Then a couple weeks later he had a minor medical procedure on his hamstring.

Hope waned. Weeks into the season, Gebbia was often spotted limping from the practice field to the Valley Football Center. One day he playfully rode a scooter across the street from the practice field.

Reality eventually struck Gebbia in early November that he wasn’t going to play during the 2021 season. “I mean, I was walking around in practice and having problems,” Gebbia said. “I was in constant pain.”

Gebbia couldn’t pinpoint the low point of his recovery, but admitted it got a little dark.

“It’s one of the big-

gest adversities that I’ve had to fight through,” he said. “There was a point in time where I had to think about, am I going to hang this thing up? I mean, it’s a pretty serious injury. But I’m blessed to say I’m not hanging it up.”

Gebbia also can’t pinpoint when he turned a corner. He felt it was the perseverance, the grind of rehabilitation that eventually turned into progress. The offseason, where there was no football, was a solace to Gebbia. He focused on rehab and school. Gebbia got back to lifting weights for the first time in more than a year.

Months later, spring football practice started, and Gebbia felt healed.

“Every month, it just gets better and better,” he said.

Now, the focus is playing. Which for Gebbia means proving he’s the best option to start at quarterback over Nolan or another candidate,

Ben Gulbranson. Gebbia hopes the coaches haven’t forgot how he played prior to the injury, because he thinks he’ll get back to that level or better.

“I felt like this is a place that I want to be a part of. Coach Smith has created an environment here that I really want to dig my heels into and try to win a spot again,” Gebbia said.

Gebbia said he’s not fixated on becoming the starter or the backup. Gebbia is about playing as well as he can, and let the coaches decide where he fits.

Gebbia insists whatever the coaches decide, he’s at Oregon State until the end of his college career.

“Unless they say, hey, kick rocks,” Gebbia said, smiling. “This is where I want to be. I want to put my head down and grind and be able to contribute in any way that I can. I don’t see me leaving in the foreseeable future.”

ON THE SLATE

April 8 results

COLLEGE BASEBALL
Lewis-Clark State 7, Eastern Oregon 0
COLLEGE SOFTBALL
Corban 5, Eastern Oregon 4
Eastern Oregon 4, Corban 2
PREP BASEBALL
Burns 6, Joseph/Enterprise/Wallowa/Elgin 5
Burns 13, Joseph/Enterprise/Wallowa/Elgin 11
PREP SOFTBALL
Echo/Stanford 18, Elgin/Imbler 1
Echo/Stanford 15, Elgin/Imbler 0
Burns 4, Joseph/Enterprise/Wallowa 1
Burns 4, Joseph/Enterprise/Wallowa 2

April 9 results

COLLEGE BASEBALL
Lewis-Clark State 18, Eastern Oregon 3
Lewis-Clark State 13, Eastern Oregon 4

COLLEGE SOFTBALL

Eastern Oregon 7, Corban 6
Eastern Oregon 3, Corban 0
PREP BASEBALL
Union/Cove 9, Pilot Rock/Nixyaawii 8
Union/Cove 14, Pilot Rock/Nixyaawii 9

Tuesday, April 12

PREP BASEBALL
La Grande at Pendleton/Griswold, 4:30 p.m.
PREP SOFTBALL
Pendleton/Griswold at La Grande, 4 p.m.
Enterprise/Wallowa/Joseph at Union/Cove, 5 p.m.
PREP TENNIS
La Grande at Baker/Powder Valley, 3 p.m.

Thursday, April 14

PREP TENNIS
Ontario at La Grande, 3 p.m.

HISLER

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wanted him to walk on.

EOU plays in the Frontier Conference with the likes of Carroll College, Southern Oregon, College of Idaho and Whitworth University.

An outstanding season

During a season that saw the Mustangs finish 11-1, with their one loss to eventual state champion Coquille in the semifinals, Hisler was the backbone of a very stingy Heppner defense that allowed opponents an average of 5.5 points per game.

He had a team-high 97 tackles and three fumble recoveries. On offense, he ran for 1,153 yards on 158 carries and 12 touchdowns.

He was a first-team Blue Mountain Conference selection at running back and linebacker.

Hisler also was named to the 2A all-state team as the Defensive Back of the Year, which includes linebackers and secondary players. He also earned first-team honors as a running back.

The cherry on the top of

the season for Hisler was an invitation to play on the East team in the 70th annual East-West Shrine Game, to be held Aug. 6 at Baker High School.

“I’ve been very fortunate to play here,” Hisler said. “The community is awesome, and coach Grant — there isn’t a better coach to play for — and the guys are amazing. Bigger schools might have better competition, but I love it here.”

In his four years with the Mustangs, Heppner amassed a record of 36-4, and won a state title in 2019 with a 13-0 record.

“Winning the title, that was awesome,” Hisler said.

In addition to football, Hisler also played basketball, ran track, and this spring is playing baseball for the Mustangs. He earned Blue Mountain Conference honorable mention honors this season in basketball.

“I did track the last three years,” Hisler said. “I haven’t played baseball since middle school, and before that, T-ball. I play center field and pinch run for the pitcher.”

Just a team player doing his part.

TIGERS

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offseason to regular season.

Bell noted that the one-two punch of himself and Cole Jorgensen is one of the lineup’s strengths, making it difficult for pitchers to pitch around either hitter. La Grande’s offense has been firing as a whole, scoring 12 or more runs in each of the last six games.

“My mindset is to get on base, because I usually have Cole Jorgensen coming up behind me and I know that he is completely capable of hitting me in every single time,” Bell said. “My mindset is to get on base and score every at-bat.”

On top of his hitting prowess, Bell has contributed on the mound as well. The senior is 2-0 on the year over three starts, combining for six innings, 11 strikeouts, three hits allowed and just one run.

His performances at the plate and on the mound during La Grande’s road trip to Arizona in late March earned Bell OSAA athlete of the week on Thursday, March 31.

“I try to just take care of business when my team and coach need me,” Bell said of his added presence on the mound this year.

Bell has been one of several dominant arms so far this season, alongside Jace Schow, Sam Tsiatsos, Logan Williams and Nick Bornstedt.

Schow emerged as one of the team’s aces early on, going 3-0 over five outings. Schow has pitched 18.2 innings, tallying 20 strikeouts and allowing five runs. As a team, the Tigers have allowed just one run in five separate games and kept every opposing team to five or less runs this season.

After winning its first two league games, La Grande is set to travel to face league opponents McLoughlin, Baker/Powder Valley and Ontario through the end of April. The Tigers host McLoughlin and Baker/Powder Valley in early May to close out league competition, before concluding the regular season with a matchup against Pendleton/Griswold at home.

A fast start to the season has the Tigers one step closer to their ultimate goal of winning a state title, but the team’s mentality continues to focus on one game at a time. With a deadly combination of efficient hitters and emerging aces on the mound, La Grande will look to continue its early season success into the second half of the regular season.

“We all want to win a state championship of course, but we just have to take it game-by-game and approach each team that faces us,” Bell said. “We’re taking it game-by-game, but I think we all know that we should be in the championship game and that it’s our top goal.”

Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia ARE YOU AT RISK?

According to a new study by Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and the National Institute on Aging, men and women with hearing loss are much more likely to develop dementia and Alzheimer's disease. People with severe hearing loss, the study reports, were 5 times more likely to develop dementia than those with normal hearing.

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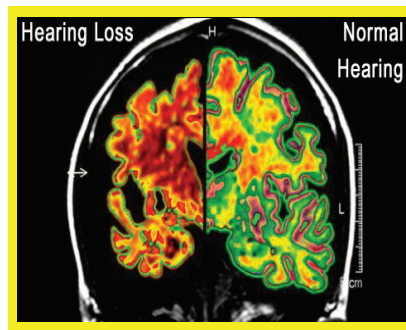
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