

Eastern hoops filling out the roster

Mountaineers' men's basketball adds two transfers to recruiting class

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

LA GRANDE — The Eastern Oregon University men's basketball team coaching staff has been busy this offseason, locking in several key transfers who will fill gaps and add to the roster.

In addition to securing former Idaho State guard Emmitt Taylor III, Eastern has also added guards Jaden Hansen and Isaac Brown to join the team on next year's roster.

Hansen comes to La Grande after redshirting his only collegiate season at the College of Southern Idaho. The 6-foot, 1-inch guard tore his ACL in his final year of high school at Rocky Mountain High School and has been working his way back onto the court ever since.

Eastern head men's basketball coach Chris Kemp noted that he met Hansen while scouting current Mountaineer forward Preston Chandler on a recruiting trip at an AAU program. At the time, Hansen was heading into his sophomore season and working his way up the prep ranks in Idaho.

"He's a natural point guard, but is strong and can score it," Kemp said.

Brown joins the Mountaineers after two seasons at Wenatchee Valley College. The Pocatello, Idaho native averaged 7.2 points per game last season in 32



Hansen



Brown

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East Oregonian, File

Ione/Arlington's Taylor Rollins (45) runs the ball Nov. 5, 2021, for the Cardinals against St. Paul in the first round of the Oregon School Activities Association 1A State Football Championship. Rollins has signed to play football at Eastern Oregon University in the fall of 2022.

A dream come true

Ione senior Taylor Rollins to continue football career at EOU

By ANNIE FOWLER • East Oregonian

IONE — When most kindergarten students are trying to find the perfect crayon to color their picture, Taylor Rollins had visions of playing college football.

"It was my plan since kindergarten when I would play football at recess," Rollins said. "I always wanted to play college ball."

The Ione senior will get his chance after signing to play at Eastern Oregon University.

"Hardly any kids get to play football after high school," Rollins said. "I told myself if I get a chance, I am going to go."

The 6-foot-2, 265-pound Rollins is the first Ione football player to go on to play in college since 2011, when Tanner Rietmann went to Pacific University. A running back, Rietmann played for one season.

"It doesn't happen too often for us 1A kids," Rietmann said. "When it does, you have to enjoy it."

EOU coach Tim Camp, who has found success with small-school players, was happy to welcome Rollins to the fold.

"That kid just needs coaching and a chance," Camp said. "He does a lot of different things. He is going to be a big

(lineman) for us. Small-school kids just need to be brought up to speed. I see him at guard or center, or an inside guy on the defense."

Rollins, who played everything from punter to running back for the Cardinals, is ready for the challenge.

"I will miss playing all over the field," Rollins said. "Eleven-man football is way different than 8-man. When you come from an 8-man school with 14 kids on the roster, to one with 150 guys, you can focus on one position. My favorite position is fullback — everyone likes to run the ball. I just have to change my mindset to protect instead of run over."

It's that kind of attitude that excites Camp.

"Fullback is not out of the question," he said. "I just can't wait to get him here and see who he really is. He has farm strength. He loves to play. That drew me to him. I love those small-school kids. We are doing a good job of giving kids opportuni-

ties. I don't think there are a lot of people cruising through Ione looking for players. I just absolutely loved him. He is a good, hard-working young man."

Rollins said he knows the learning curve will be steep, but he's willing to put in the work, which will include redshirting his first year at EOU.

"Making the transition from 8-man to 11-man, and learning the playbook, that will be a big transition for me," Rollins said. "I have been spending a lot of time in the weight room, but that will be different too."

But in a good way. "I can see Taylor playing at 285 with the right weight on him," Ione/Arlington football and basketball coach Dennis Stefani said. "The bad weight will come off and the good weight will go on."

Stefani said Camp was interested in Rollins from the get-go.

"It was a pretty easy sell," Stefani said of his initial conversation with Camp. "He was aware of him. I think it will be a great fit for Taylor. He will enjoy it and get the most out of it. He will find the good in everything, win or lose. He has a good competitive nature and a really high IQ for the game. Just a handful of guys get to do

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SPORTS SHORT

EOU women's lacrosse coach Monica Plut announces resignation

University will conduct national search for new coach for the young program

The Observer

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University women's lacrosse head coach Monica Plut is set to resign, as announced by the university's athletic director Anji Weissenfluh on Wednesday, April 20.

Plut served as the team's head coach from January 2020 through April of this season, leading the way for Eastern's first two years as

an official program.

The Mountaineers played their first official season in 2022, after the team faced challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Eastern earned the program's first official victory on Saturday, Feb. 12, defeating Whitworth, 8-6. The Mountaineers tallied a 1-6 record overall in the 2022 season, which ended in early April.

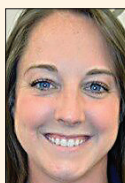
In 2021 Eastern played strictly exhibition matches, taking the field for the first time. The Mountaineers tallied a 1-4 record.

Eastern is one of three schools in the Cascade Collegiate Conference

that sponsor the sport as an official program. Plut put a large emphasis on expanding the sport locally and in the region during her time as head coach at Eastern — the former coach worked with local middle schools and high schools, teaching the sport.

Plut previously coached at Adams State University, a Division II school in Colorado — she also served as a high school coach before joining the program at Eastern Oregon.

According to the press release from Eastern's athletic department, the university is currently in the process of conducting a national search for the team's next head coach.



Plut



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group, File

Samantha Buckley (5) faces off against Catie Kawamura (19) during the match between Eastern Oregon University and Willamette University at Community Stadium, La Grande, on Saturday, Feb. 19, 2022. The Mountaineers lost 17-6 against the visiting Bearcats.

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