

Back on the gridiron

Position battles highlight Blue and Gold Weekend

By DAVIS CARBAUGH  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — After the COVID-19 pandemic interrupted the typical sports calendar over the past two years, Blue and Gold Weekend is set to return to Eastern Oregon University and the Mountaineer football team is champing at the bit to host the event.

Head football coach Tim Camp began the event before the pandemic, and it has grown into a university-wide gathering beyond just football. From auctions and community engagement to a sneak peak at the 2022 Eastern football roster, Blue and Gold Weekend is the premier event for the school's athletic department this spring.

"It's really turned into something," Camp said.

The two-day event is centered around showcasing the athletic department to the La Grande community, with a full slate of activities and fundraisers for athletes, alumni and residents. On Friday, May 13, Eastern will host a student-athlete challenge that is open to the public — a DJ will be at the event, as well as spike ball tournaments, a barbecue and other activities.

Alumni involvement is one of the goals of Blue and Gold Weekend. The Eastern athletic department is encouraging alumni to fill out the alumni contact information update on the department's website, in order for the university to keep up with former student athletes.

On May 14, events will start off with a women's soccer alumni game at 1 p.m. The men's soccer alumni game will follow at 3 p.m., setting the stage

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On the brink of HISTORY



The Observer, File

Amanda Smith (14) delivers a pitch during the Mountaineers' matchup with Providence University on Friday, March 25, 2022, at the Peggy Anderson Softball Field, La Grande. Eastern's starting pitcher is second in the conference in wins (17-5), earned run average (1.73) and opposing batting average (.191).

Eastern approaches historic success, will face off with Corban in CCC opening round

By DAVIS CARBAUGH • The Observer

LA GRANDE — It has been a near historic season for the Eastern Oregon University softball program.

The Mountaineers concluded the regular season with a 39-13 record, just two wins away from tying the all-time program record for wins in a season — Eastern set the record in 1999 under now-athletic director Anji Weissenfluh. Coming off three straight losing seasons, the Mountaineers

enter the postseason as a contender in the Cascade Collegiate Conference. The path to NAIA Softball World Series begins in Klamath Falls, where Eastern will face Corban in the opening round on Friday, May 6.

Eastern hit the ground running to start the season,

jumping out to a winning record and never looking back. The Mountaineers finished with a 24-6 conference record, just one game back of first-place Oregon Tech. Eastern tied for second with Southern Oregon, but lost out on the two-seed because of a tiebreaker.

For Eastern, starting pitcher Amanda Smith has been the team's ace all season. Smith is 17-5 on the year, a win total good for second in the conference. She is also second in the conference in earned run average (1.73) and opposing batting average (.191). Smith

ranks third in both strikeouts (120) and saves (three).

The team has relied on a strong cumulative effort at the plate, with six players in the lineup hitting over .300 in the regular season.

Caitlin Crist and Kayla Berg lead the team with 30 RBIs each, while Crist is the team's runs leader with 41.

The Mountaineers picked up speed as the season progressed, which was evident in a series against No. 3 Oregon Tech on the weekend of Friday,

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SPORTS SHORT

Basketball shot clocks tabled by OSAA executive board

Schools eyeing 2023-24 for implementation rollout

By NIK STRENG  
The Oregonian

PORTLAND — The addition of a shot clock — one of the most hotly discussed topics in high school basketball — was tabled Monday, May 2, without a vote during an Oregon School Activities Association executive board meeting.

The board heard a presentation on the topic from the OSAA and took no action, even though it was made clear by the presenting group

that the implementation of a shot clock in Oregon high school basketball is an inevitability.

At one point, it was noted that Washington, California, Idaho and Montana either have a shot clock in high school basketball or have a plan in place to implement one in the coming years.

"We're kind of the last island on the West Coast that does not have a shot clock," said Kyle Stanfield, OSAA assistant executive director.

Kris Welch, OSAA assistant executive director, added that the Oregon Basketball Coaches Association conducted a survey, with the majority of coaches supporting having a shot clock in Oregon.

Welch said the state athletic directors also said they support the change, with the biggest pushback coming from Class 2A athletic directors.

Welch said the current request from the schools is to implement shot clocks in the 2023-24 school year, and executive board members said they agreed with the timeline.

The National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) has changed its rules to allow for a 35-second shot clock at the high school level, which will go into effect at the start of the 2022-23 school year.

The next meeting of the executive board is scheduled for July 18.



East Oregonian, File

Pendleton's Brielle Youncs (14) and La Grande's Makenna Shorts (1) grapple for control of a jump ball on Wednesday, Jan. 19, 2022, at Pendleton High School. The Tigers defeated Pendleton, 45-42.

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).