

Men's College Basketball

EOU men land two on all-conference team

East Oregonian

LA GRANDE — The Cascade Collegiate Conference released its men's basketball All-Conference team as voted by the league's coaches on Wednesday morning, and a pair of Eastern Oregon Mountaineers saw their names listed.

Senior guards Bryan McGriff and Kentrell Washington, both of Las Vegas, Nevada, earned all-conference honors after accounting for close to 40 percent of the Mountaineers' offensive output for the 2016-17 season.

McGriff not only led the Mountaineers in scoring this season, he also led the CCC with a 21.7 point per-game average while shooting 51 percent overall and 88 percent at the free throw line. The 6-7 senior nearly averaged a double-double as well with 9.4 rebounds per game.

Washington was EOU's No. 2 scoring threat all season long, and finished with an average of 15.1 points and 7.5 rebounds per game. The 6-4 guard shot 47 percent from the floor and also tallied a team-best 121 assists, or a 3.9 per-game average.

Northwest Christian senior Jay Mayernik was named conference Player

of the Year as he averaged a double-double with 16.0 points and 12.7 rebounds. Also garnering top awards were College of Idaho's Emanuel Morgan for Defensive Player of the Year, Oregon Tech freshman Mitchell Fink for Newcomer of the Year, and Northwest Christian's Luke Jackson as Coach of the Year.



McGriff



Washington

MOUNTIES FIND OUT MATCH-UPS

The NAIA men's and women's Division II National Championship tournament brackets were released on Wednesday, and both EOU teams finally found out their first round opponents.

The Eastern Oregon women earned a No. 3 seed in the Naismith bracket where they will first face off against No. 6 Dickinson State (N.D.) on Mar. 8 at 7:15 p.m. in Sioux City, Iowa. Dickinson State finished the regular season 23-7 overall.

Meanwhile, the Mountaineer men slot in at the No. 4 seed where they will take on the No. 5 seed IU Southeast in Point Lookout, Missouri on Mar. 9 at 2 p.m. IU Southeast comes into the tournament with a 24-6 record and a River States Conference championship.

TIGERS: Expecting a home-court feel this weekend with proximity to Stanfield

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all close as teammates, and I think that's a big reason why we're where we're at."

"The atmosphere (at state) is definitely different. You're going to see a lot of good teams," said senior Ryan Bailey, who was a reserve on that 2014 squad, "But I think our guys are really prepared for it. We've really excelled in other sports and it really prepares us for big moments like that. ... I just think we have a lot of guys that love pressure. We love big games."

The Tigers (20-1) will open their tournament against No. 7 Oakridge (20-6) in the final game of the day with an 8:30 p.m. start. It's a battle of conference champions, and Stanfield is expecting the Mountain View Conference champs to try and slow down the tempo and avoid the treatment the Tigers gave their MVC neighbors.

Stanfield is coming off a 90-56 throttling of Oakland, which finished third in the MVC, that it felt was their best game of the season. Oakland tried to slow the tempo down as well.

"Because it's the playoffs now we brought a lot of intensity that game, the environment, all the people, really pumped us up," said senior Thyler Monkus. "(Oakridge) is very lengthy, but they like to play slow ball, so we're just going to try to take that away from them and play our speed."

"A lot of those (MVC) teams, they don't like playing at a fast pace, so we're just going to keep doing what we do, just keep pushing the ball," Grogan said. "We match up with (Oakridge) pretty well. They might be a little taller but I think we've got size on them."

Stanfield is averaging 80.2 points a game while giving up 58.7.

Oakridge made its last appearance in Pendleton in 2015, and 6-foot-3 senior guard Joel Snyder is the



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Stanfield's Thyler Monkus puts up a shot guarded by Weston-McEwen's James West (33) in the Tigers' 88-68 win against the TigerScots on Feb. 18 in Pendleton.

only player left from that roster. They average 59.9 points a game on offense while giving up 49.3.

Six-foot-5 posts Mathias and Jonathan Nchekwube have caught the Tigers' eye as well.

"They have some really big guys down low," said Stanfield senior Jose Garcia. "All season long we've been dominating down low, but I guess they have the same technique as us. So our goal is to get rebounds over them, attack the key and try to outwork the two big guys down low."

One area the Tigers are sure they'll have an advantage is in the stands, as fans have shown up in numbers all season and packed their gym to its capacity for the playoff game.

"Our fans have been amazing this year for every

sport, but they've been showing up, they've been getting loud," Bailey said. "We kind of challenged them at the beginning of the season to get out and be loud, and they did it. It's been packed. It's awesome."

The winner between Stanfield and Oakridge will play the winner of No. 6 Life Christian (22-6) and No. 3 Columbia Christian (24-2).

Experience could play a huge factor in that game as Life Christian makes its first final bracket at any level and Columbia Christian returns four starters from a team that finished second in Class 1A last season. It's also a meeting of conference foes as Columbia won the Northwest League and Life finished fourth, but Life is 2-1 against Columbia this season.

On the other half of the bracket, the day's action begins with one heavy-weight getting sent into the loser's bracket as defending champion No. 9 Vernonia (22-5) takes on No. 1 Western Mennonite (24-5) making its 11th straight trip to Pendleton.

Vernonia returns three starters from last season's title run, including senior Tristan Adams, who scored 33 points in the semifinals and championship combined and went 7-for-13 from three-point range as one of the Loggers' top scorers for the tournament.

Western Mennonite is led by senior Simeon Hess, who is making his fourth appearance in Pendleton, but four starters are back from last season's third-place finish, and eight players return with court experience.

Following their game, which tips off at 1:30 p.m., No. 5 Imbler will take on No. 4 Santiam at 3:15 p.m.

Imbler has two starters back from last season's fourth-place run and six players that touched the courts in Pendleton. Santiam is ending a 19-year absence from the basketball final bracket, but did make the playoffs in football this year before losing to Stanfield in the quarterfinals.

It all adds up to a strong looking bracket the Tigers are eager to sink their teeth into. They haven't lost to a 2A team this season, have won 19 games in a row, which includes an 80-77 win over Western Mennonite on Dec. 19.

"It feels like we all know what we're doing, we all know what we want to do and are going to do," Garcia said. "It feels like we're all on the same page."

"We don't want to settle," Bailey said. "We want to keep playing as hard as we can and earn anything we can."

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BRIEFLY

Stanfield man hits ace at Big River

Carlos Chavez hit the first hole-in-one of 2017 at Big River Golf Course in Umatilla.

The Stanfield man hit the ace on the ninth hole during the Feb. 25 Valentine's Massacre. The opening tournament of the 2017 season had been postponed due to weather and course conditions.

Results of the tournament included A Flight: Josh Williams, Carlos Chavez and Justin Vandever. Flight B: Jake Allen, Jay Holthus and Curtis Engbretson. Flight C: John Holland, Steve Allen and Tyler Bendixsen.

In addition, Megan Olsen, Big River general manager, reports more than \$400 in the skins pot.

— East Oregonian

TIGERSCOTS: Split season series with Imbler, ready for the rubber match

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practice on Wednesday. "I think that kind of helps with this because a lot of the girls on this team play both sports and know what it feels like to work up, and I think it gives confidence in ourselves that we have done it before and we can do it again."

Weston-McEwen's path begins at 1:30 p.m. today at the Pendleton Convention Center, where they will first face the No. 5 Imbler Panthers in the quarterfinal round. The TigerScots and Panthers are very familiar with each other, having played each other twice during the preseason schedule in December and each holding a 1-1 record.

The TigerScots believe that the familiarity has helped with the preparation in practice, though they

know that the Panthers will have the same advantage.

"Well we know what we're getting into," Weston-McEwen senior Sara von Borstel said, "and what they have down low, what they have in their guards ... it'll let us match up better."

Weston-McEwen interim coach Jeff Griggs was not on staff for either of the previous meetings, but he said on Wednesday that he's learned enough on film to know what Imbler will bring to the table.

"Imbler's very athletic and they like to get up and down the court, don't take a lot of time to run their offense," he said. "From what I've seen it looks like they don't play very deep in their lineup ... and I would think that playing down the bench with our depth that it could be an advantage for us



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

In this Dec. 22, 2016 file photo, Weston-McEwen's Chelsea Quaempts (32) brings the ball downcourt during a non-league game in Athena against Imbler.

towards the second half of the game."

And with Griggs, he said

he has been amazed at how the team has handled the sudden and quick coaching

transition that happened so late in the year after former coach Erik Jensen resigned on Feb. 13 due to health reasons. The TigerScots say that their close bond as a team made it easy to stay together through the transition.

"Surprisingly it wasn't that hard," junior Chelsea Quaempts said. "We all know Mr. Griggs very well and we all have one goal as a team and we did pretty good stepping up and not letting it affect us as much as it could have. We didn't use it as an excuse and I'm really thankful because we had a really good transition."

Weston-McEwen is coming off of a 42-29 upset victory on the road against No. 4 Faith Bible in the first round of the playoffs, while Imbler held on for a 42-39

victory at home against No. 12 Lost River. The TigerScots credited the win to a strong defensive game plan and execution while feeding off of the energy that was brought by its small but mighty group of fans that made the trip.

Now facing a 15 minute drive to the games, the TigerScots are effectively the 'home' team of the tournament compared to some of the 2A teams, meaning a loud cheering section and a drive to continue to pull off upset victories.

"This is when it counts," Quaempts said. "This is the time for upsets and I know that we can do it and we're ready for it."

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NIXYAAWII: Tip-off at 1:30 p.m. today

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Nixyaawii has now made the final site of the state tournament in each of the last two seasons, following up on a third place finish in 2016. But the Golden Eagles learned a lot from that experience, and believe that they are better prepared and more relaxed heading into this year's tournament.

"I just think the kids going through those type of game situations, dealing with the crowd, having to be sleeping in a bed that isn't your own, basically everything that typically comes with the tournament," Maddern said, "all of that experience is going to help us tremendously this time around."

Something else that is different with this year's squad is the addition of junior guard Milan Schimmel, which has added a new dynamic to the Golden Eagles' offense and given the

team another ball handler and scoring threat alongside Mary Stewart.

"I feel like I've helped out a lot, especially with the ball handling," Schimmel said, "because Mary is a very key player and I believe me coming on helps the team

a bit ... I used to play with these girls a while back, and to come back and experience a chance at a state championship with them is cool."

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