

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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Prep sports participation drops, led by decline in football

Associated Press

Led by a decline in football for the fifth straight year, participation in high school sports dropped in 2018-19 for the first time in 30 years, according to an annual survey conducted by the National Federation of State High School Associations.

The 2018-19 total of 7,937,491 participants was a decline of 43,395 from the 2017-18 school year, when the number of participants in high school sports reached a record high of 7,980,886.

The last decline in sports participation numbers occurred during the 1988-89 school year.

The group said 11-man football dropped by 30,829 to 1,006,013, the lowest mark since the 1999-2000 school year. It was the fifth consecutive year of declining football participation.

"We know from recent surveys that the number of kids involved in youth sports has been declining, and a decline in the number of public school students has been predicted

for a number of years, so we knew our 'streak' might end someday," Dr. Karissa Niehoff, NFHS executive director, said in a statement. "The data from this year's survey serves as a reminder that we have to work even harder in the coming years to involve more students in these vital programs — not only athletics but performing arts programs as well."

Although the number of participants in boys' 11-player football dropped, the number of schools offering the sport remained steady. The survey indicated that 14,247 schools offer 11-player football, an increase of 168 from last year. A comparison of the figures from the past two years indicates that the average number of boys involved in 11-player football on a per-school basis dropped from 73 to 70, which includes freshman, junior varsity and varsity teams.

While participation in boys' 11-player football dropped in all but seven states, participation in six-, eight- and nine-player football



Staff photo by E.J. Harris, File

Pendleton's Shawn Yeager (22) rushes the ball in the Bucks' 20-19 loss to Summit on Sept. 15, 2017. Football leads the decline in prep sports participation across the country.

gained 156 schools and 1,594 participants nationwide, with the largest increase in boys' eight-player football from 19,554 to 20,954. In addition, in the past 10 years, participa-

tion by girls in 11-player football has doubled, from 1,249 in the 2009-10 school year to 2,404 last year.

"The survey certainly confirms that schools are not dropping

the sport of football, which is great news," Niehoff said. "Certainly, we are concerned about the reduction in the number of boys involved in the 11-player game but are thrilled that states are finding other options by starting six-player or eight-player football in situations where the numbers have declined."

"While we recognize that the decline in football participation is due, in part, to concerns about the risk of injury, we continue to work with our member state associations, the nation's high schools and other groups to make the sport as safe as possible. Every state has enacted rules that limit the amount of contact before the season and during practices, and every state has concussion protocols and laws in place, so we continue to believe that the sport is as safe as it has ever been. We also are working with groups such as USA Football to reduce contact and teach proper tackling skills at the youth levels to increase the interest level as kids reach junior high school and high school."

Heppner debuts at No. 4 in 2A football poll

Echo Cougars come in at No. 3 in 6-man poll

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

HEPPNER — The Heppner Mustangs are making noise in the 2A football ranks and the season hasn't started yet.

The Mustangs came in at No. 4 in the first statewide coaches poll Wednesday, picking up one first-place vote along the way.

Kennedy, the defending state champion, came in at No. 1, garnering 11 of the 15 first-place votes.

According to the OSAA, the 2A classification has not had a repeat champion since Scio in 2009 and 2010.

Santiam, last year's runner-up, came in second, followed by Monroe, Heppner and Lost River to round out the top five.

Heppner faces Santiam the second week of the season on the road in Mill City.

The bottom five of the poll sees Coquille at No. 6, followed by Knappa, Sheridan, Warrenton, and Toledo and Lakeview, which tied for 10th.

In the 1A 6-man poll, the Echo Cougars came in at No. 3, getting one first-place vote.

"It's awesome," Echo coach Don Walker said. "We are in a pretty good league. It's nice to be on top, but it also puts a target on your back."

Joseph was ranked first, earning five of eight first-place votes. South Wasco County was second, McKenzie fourth and Harper Charter fifth.

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BMCC reaching for top of NWAC East



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

BMCC volleyball players scrimmage on Wednesday morning during the first of two practices.

Wolves return top hitters Mariah Moulton and Keeley Morrison

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — From 2012-15, the Blue Mountain Community College volleyball team ruled the NWAC.

The Timberwolves won the NWAC East title and the NWAC title all four years. The past couple of years have been a little lean for the Wolves, but first-year coach Ceanna Larson is hoping to change that for the program.

"It's fun to be part of that history," Lar-

son said the four-year run.

This season, the Wolves are young, and Larson had a late start hitting the recruiting trail after being hired in April.

"I had to do a bit of late recruiting," she said. "It's kind of a building year. We don't

have height, but we make up for it with talent. It's all about speed."

BMCC got its feet wet last weekend at the NWAC Friendlies in Springfield,

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SCHEDULE

Sept. 19 vs. Spokane 7 p.m.
Sept. 25 vs. Treasure Valley 6 p.m.
Sept. 27 at Big Bend 7 p.m.
Oct. 2 at Columbia Basin 6 p.m.
Oct. 4 at Walla Walla 6 p.m.
Oct. 9 at North Idaho 6 p.m.
Oct. 11 vs. Yakima Valley 6 p.m.
Oct. 16 at Spokane 6 p.m.

Oct. 19 at Wenatchee Valley 2 p.m.
Oct. 23 at Treasure Valley 6 p.m.
Oct. 25 vs. Big Bend 6 p.m.
Oct. 30 vs. Columbia Basin 6 p.m.
Nov. 1 vs. Walla Walla 6 p.m.
Nov. 7 vs. North Idaho 6 p.m.
Nov. 9 at Yakima Valley 2 p.m.
Nov. 13 vs. Wenatchee Valley 6 p.m.

SPORTS SHORTS

Federer not eyeing changes at Open

By HOWARD FENDRICH
AP Tennis Writer

NEW YORK — Roger Federer's not about to start trying new tricks now.

So even though he's lost the opening set in each of his first two U.S. Open matches for the first time in the 19 times he's entered the Grand Slam tournament, it's not as if the guy is going to seek some sort of magic solution. Working up more of a sweat in the gym before

heading to the court, say. Or playing an extra practice set.

What he chose to focus on, instead, is looking on the bright side: "Can only do better," Federer said, "which is a great thing, moving forward."

At a Flushing Meadows flush with surprises so far — half of the top 12 seeded men already were gone by the time he stepped into Arthur Ashe Stadium on Wednesday — Federer cleaned up his act quickly enough to come back and

beat Damir Dzhumhur 3-6, 6-2, 6-3, 6-4, reaching the third round on an afternoon when rain postponed all but nine scheduled singles matches and every doubles contest.

Wednesday included a loss by two-time champion Venus Williams to No. 5 seed Elina Svitolina, and victories for No. 3 Karolina Pliskova and 2017 runner-up Madison Keys on the women's side, and a win for No. 7 Kei Nishikori on the men's.



AP Photo/Kevin Hagen

Roger Federer, of Switzerland, returns a shot to Damir Dzhumhur, of Bosnia, during the second round of the U.S. Open tennis championships on Wednesday.