

# EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 2021

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## COLLEGE BASKETBALL

### Kispert leads No. 1 Gonzaga past Saint Mary's, 87-65

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS  
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — Gonzaga is undefeated and has been ranked No. 1 all season. Coach Mark Few wants to put that in some perspective.

"This isn't the most physically imposing squad we've marched out there," Few said, noting the 2017 team that reached the NCAA championship game was bigger and the 2019 team may have had more gifted athletes.

"This is a team. They move it and share it. Our offensive numbers are reflecting that," Few said. "It's something to behold if you ask me."

Corey Kispert scored 20 points, Joel Ayayi added 16 and Gonzaga beat cold-shooting Saint Mary's 87-65 on Thursday night, Feb. 18, extending the nation's longest winning streak to 25 games over the past two seasons.

Drew Timme scored 12 points to help Gonzaga (21-0, 12-0 West Coast) extend its home winning streak to 48 games and wrap up the conference regular-season title. Fans were allowed at a Gonzaga home game for the first time this season and a few dozen family members of players were in the stands.

"We're really playing tough, hard-nosed, attentive defense," Few said.

Ayayi made four of five from 3-point range. "I love that Joel was hunting his 3 a little bit more today," Few said.

The Zags looked better than in the first game at Saint Mary's, when they trailed after 11 minutes and finished with a season-low 73 points.

"We delivered against their physicality better than we did down at their place," Few said.

Judah Brown scored 16 points, and Logan Johnson had 13 for Saint Mary's (11-7, 2-5). The Gaels are typically one of Gonzaga's arch-rivals, but

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Megan Burchard kicks a soccer ball during a Blue Mountain Community College soccer practice at the college on Friday, Feb. 19, 2021.

## A PACK MENTALITY

### BMCC athletes ready for seasons to begin April 1

By COREY KIRK  
Baker City Herald

PENDLETON — After nearly a year of the COVID-19 pandemic, April 1 is the date circled on calendars for athletes and coaches from Blue Mountain Community College and other teams in the East Region of the Northwest Athletic Conference.

That's when competition between teams in that region is slated to begin.

Member schools have been proceeding through the conference's reentry phase this winter, and Marco Azurdia, the conference's executive director, said he understands that for

some students, athletics is a key part of their college experience.

"For them to not have that opportunity to compete and to take classes online has been a huge obstacle in terms of keeping student-athletes engaged," Azurdia said. "Keeping them engaged so that they can get the most important thing, and that's their education."

At Blue Mountain, athletes began a two-week quarantine on Jan. 4 as part of the reentry procedure.

Jordan Hillmick, women's head soccer coach for the Timberwolves and Blue Mountain's sports information director, said the process went well.

"It's actually gone really successful, they did the two-week quarantine, all the athletes did an amazing job being able to work and understand," Hillmick said.

Since the pandemic put sports on hold back in March 2020, NWAC schools have been relying on state guidelines. The conference has

#### STAYING CAUGHT UP

Schedules and other information for the Timberwolves are available at [www.bmcc timberwolves.com](http://www.bmcc timberwolves.com).

For more information involving NWAC and its "Return to Play," protocols, go to [www.nwacsports.org](http://www.nwacsports.org).

member schools in Oregon, Washington and Idaho.

Hillmick credits the conference, the Oregon Health Authority and Gov. Kate Brown's office for providing direction.

"We were working hand-in-hand with OHA, the Governor's Office, making sure our guidelines and our protocols here at the school, as well as the NWAC office did an amazing job

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## Frontier Conference modifies schedule for remaining teams

### Montana Tech, Montana Western opt out of 2021 spring season

East Oregonian

WHITEFISH, Mont. — The Frontier Conference is revamping its 2021 spring football schedule — again.

Montana Tech and Montana Western announced on Tuesday, Feb. 16, that they would be opting out of the conference spring football season.

"As the pandemic has progressed, the health and safety of our student-athletes has always been our No. 1 priority," Montana Western Director of Athletics Bill Wilson said in a media release. "As each week has passed, it became



La Grande Observer, File

Eastern Oregon will start the 2021 spring football season with a bye week and will not step on the gridiron until March 20, when it will host Carroll College at Community Stadium in La Grande.

increasingly clear to us that moving forward with the conference football schedule was going

to be very difficult at best. With scheduled games taking place as early as March, we had to make

this very difficult decision."

Tech and Western join Southern Oregon University in opting out of competing in the modified spring schedule. Five Frontier Conference schools — Eastern Oregon University, College of Idaho, Carroll College, MSU-Northern and Rocky Mountain College — have committed to play a spring schedule.

"We certainly know that these tough decisions by the three member institutions have been well thought out," Frontier Conference Commissioner Kent Paulson told MontanaSports.com. "The league is most appreciative that this decision has been made now so that the rest of the Frontier Conference member teams will be able to know what the modified schedule looks like. Teams can adjust travel plans, and coaches and student-athletes will have a

definitive direction as we move forward in preparation for the upcoming conference season."

The new schedule has the season now starting on March 13, and will go five weeks. Each team will get a bye week and will play a pair of home and away games, respectively. Eastern Oregon will start the season with a bye week and will not step on the gridiron until March 20, when it will host Carroll College at Community Stadium in La Grande.

The following week, EOU hits the road to face Rocky Mountain College on March 27. The second home game for the Mounties will be on April 3 when they host long-time rival College of Idaho for Senior Day. The final game of the regular season has EOU playing at MSU-Northern on April 10.

Kickoff is set for 1 p.m. local time for all games.

## SPORTS SHORT

### Daytona 500 win lands McDowell more sponsorship money

Associated Press

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Daytona 500 winner Michael McDowell was rewarded on Friday, Feb. 19, with a sponsorship increase from CarParts.com.

The online parts sales company was already part of McDowell's program at Front Row Motorsports, but was still working on its 2021 budget when the NASCAR season began on Sunday, Feb. 14, with the Daytona 500. McDowell earned his first victory in 358 Cup races by overcoming 100-1 odds in

winning NASCAR's biggest race.

CarParts.com will be McDowell's primary sponsor on the No. 34 Ford at Watkins Glen, Indianapolis, at McDowell's return to Daytona in August and finally at Las Vegas Motor Speedway in September. Las Vegas is a playoff race, the only one open for sponsorship in FRM's inventory. The company will also be an associate sponsor all season.

"The story of Michael McDowell winning the Daytona 500 mirrors CarParts.com's story. Both of us were building a really strong foundation under the radar," said

Houman Akhavan, chief marketing officer. "Both of us were building great teams."

The company received a marketing boost in summer 2020 when it bought Bubba Wallace's bumper after McDowell and Wallace had an incident at Bristol. Wallace had left the bumper at McDowell's hauler and CarParts.com auctioned it for charity donations.

The Daytona 500 was the third victory in Front Row Racing's history. The team still has five races for McDowell open for sponsorship.



Michael McDowell crosses the finish line ahead of Austin Dillon to win the NASCAR Daytona 500 auto race at Daytona International Speedway on Monday, Feb. 15, 2021, in Daytona Beach, Fla.  
John Raoux/Associated Press