

# EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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## WOMEN'S WRESTLING



Eastern Oregon University/Contributed Photo  
Eastern Oregon University women wrestlers Erin Redford, left, and Dempsey Talkington pose during the Women's Wrestling National Invitational in March 2021 in Jamestown, North Dakota. Redford finished second as the runner-up at 143 pounds, and Talkington posted an eighth-place finish at 155 pounds.

## EOU's Sluberski earns women's wrestling coach of the year honor

Erin Redford takes second at national competition

By ALEX WITTWER  
La Grande Observer

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University's Carlene Sluberski is the 2020-21 Cascade Collegiate Conference Women's Wrestling Coach of the Year.

The conference in an announcement Thursday, March 18, reported her fellow head women's wrestling coaches in the conference voted for her to receive the honor.

The head coach was surprised — she said didn't even know she was nominated for the award.

The award came less than a week after Sluberski wrapped up her first year as the program's head coach and less than a week after she led nine of her players to North Dakota to compete in the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Women's Wrestling National Invitational, where wrestler Erin Redford finished as the national runner-up at 143 pounds, posting a 4-1 record over the two-day tournament. EOU teammate Dempsey Talkington posted an eighth-place finish at 155 pounds.



Sluberski

Sluberski took on the position of head coach for the women's wrestling team back in November 2020 — the third person to hold the title. Women's wrestling at EOU is relatively new. The program started in 2016 after the university received \$300,000 from the state, along with \$200,000 from private donations, to reinstate a men's team and establish a women's team.

"It's definitely not traditional," said Sluberski about the sport's niche status, "but it's up and coming."

Nationwide, Oregon is one of 28 states that have state-sanctioned championships for women's wrestling.

New York, Sluberski's home state, isn't one of them. That fact didn't deter Sluberski's passion for the sport.

"I'm from New York, so I wrestled in New York, and I wrestled on the boys' team," she said. "They still don't sanction it in New York — I'm 11 years removed from high school, and they're still behind."

Sluberski grappled most of her life, starting in elementary school and throughout college, winning four individual Canadian Interuniversity Sport titles before becoming a head coach at Providence University in Montana. After taking the position at EOU, she tackled a new problem — leading the team during a pandemic.

"When you have the opportunity to compete taken away from you," Sluberski said, "it makes it that much more special when you get to go."



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

A smattering of preapproved fans lines the stands at the Pendleton Round-Up Arena on Friday, March 12, 2021, ahead of Pendleton's 20-12 win over Ridgeview.

## WELCOME BACK

Teams are able to bring in more fans

By ANNIE FOWLER  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Come on in. That was the invitation for Pendleton High School football fans on Thursday, March 18.

The high school was informed they could have up to 15% percent capacity at the Round-Up Arena for its game on Saturday, March 20, which equates to roughly 2,300 people.

"We were given a directive

for 15% capacity in a high (risk) county," Pendleton athletic director Mike Somnis said. "It will be nice for the boys to have a regular Friday night experience. It has been a long time since these kids have competed in front of fans. They are excited."

Saturday's 1 p.m. game against Redmond will not have concessions. There also will be an admission fee of \$4 for students and \$6 for adults. Neither will deter the fans, who took to social media saying they would be there to support their Bucks.

Each player was issued four tickets for their family. Somnis said parents should not have to pay to watch their kids play.

While the game will be held outside in an open-air stadium, fans still are asked to wear a mask, social distance, and contact tracing requirements will be in place.

When Pendleton senior Blake Swanson found out they got to have fans, he jumped on Twitter to spread the news.

"We are ecstatic," Swanson said. "Our friends and family get to watch us play. It will be a more realistic background to play in. Last week, we had 75 fans (at the Round-Up Arena). You could hear a little crowd noise, but not the traditional fan noise. It will be fun to have that support."

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## M's Kyle Lewis ready for challenge after rookie honors

By TIM BOOTH  
Associated Press

SEATTLE — During a normal offseason, Kyle Lewis would have enjoyed traveling around and being celebrated after becoming just the third Seattle Mariners player to be named the American League rookie of the year.

Instead, some of Lewis' most cherished moments of the offseason came when he spent time hanging around his old high school in Georgia.

"I went over there just to continue to show my face and show the high schoolers that there are people who were in the same positions and have been able to accomplish great things," Lewis said. "That to me was definitely a point I made to go back home and be around, be accessible to some extent as much as I could."

As the Mariners enter the next stage of their rebuilding plan, Lewis is one of Seattle's foundational players. He showed enough in last year's 60-game truncated season for the Mariners to believe



Ross D. Franklin/Associated Press

Seattle Mariners' Kyle Lewis (1) gets fist-bumps from manager Scott Servais, left, and a teammate as Lewis returns to the dugout after scoring against the Chicago White Sox during the third inning of a spring training baseball game on March 5, 2021, in Phoenix.

they have a burgeoning superstar on their hands and for the rest of the American League to take notice.

Lewis wasn't great for the entire 60-game season, but he was good enough to be the best rookie in the AL. His mix of raw

power to all fields, hitting for average, and proving he can handle the demands of playing center field were major revelations for the Mariners as they plot out the next steps for becoming a contender in

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## SPORTS SHORT

### Oral Roberts shocks Ohio State, first big upset of NCAAs

Associated Press

WEST LAFAYETTE, Ind. — Oral Roberts welcomed the madness back to March.

The 15th-seeded Golden Eagles pulled off the first major upset of the first NCAA Tournament in two years, holding off second-seeded Big Ten power Ohio State 75-72 in overtime on Friday, March 19.

Oral Roberts got poised, impeccable performances from its two star players, guard Max Abmas and forward Kevin Obanor, to become the ninth 15 seed to win a first-round game and the first since Middle Tennessee shocked Michigan State in 2016. Last year's tournament was called off because of the pandemic.

Obanor scored seven of Oral Roberts' 11 points in overtime, including two free throws with 13 seconds left, and finished with 30 points and 11 rebounds. Abmas, the nation's leading scorer, had 29 points.

Ohio State could have tied it in the closing seconds of overtime, but Duane Washington Jr.'s open 3-pointer from straight away bounced off the side of the rim, and Oral Roberts celebrated its first tournament win since 1974.

The Golden Eagles (17-10) advanced to play seventh-seeded Florida in the South Region on Sunday, March 21.

E.J. Liddell scored 23 points to lead the Buckeyes (21-10). Washington scored 18, but made just 7

of 21 shots.

Oral Roberts scored the game's first seven points, including a 3-pointer by Abmas from the logo that drew a collective "Ooooh" from the socially distanced crowd.

The Buckeyes led by eight before the Golden Eagles rallied. Abmas hit a 3-pointer with about five minutes left in the first half to give Oral Roberts a 26-25 lead, prompting a chant of "O-R-U!" from the fans who traveled to support the small, Christian school based in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He hit another 3 moments later to force an Ohio State timeout.

Abmas made 5 of 7 3-pointers in the first half and had 18 points at the break as the Golden Eagles led 36-33.



Robert Franklin/Associated Press

Oral Roberts players celebrate after beating Ohio State in a first-round game in the NCAA men's college basketball tournament on Friday, March 19, 2021, at Mackey Arena in West Lafayette, Ind.