

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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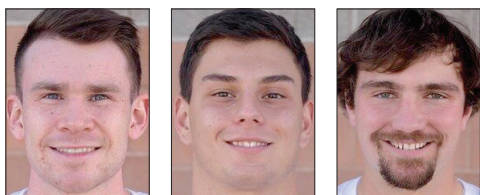
Mountaineers earn weekly honors after OT win

East Oregonian

WHITEFISH, Mont. — The Eastern Oregon University football team pulled off a come-from-behind road win on Saturday, March 27, and on Monday, March 29, the Frontier Conference and NAIA office took notice.

The Mountaineers, who beat Rocky Mountain 36-33 in overtime, swept all three player of the week honors, the league announced.

Pendleton graduate Kai Quinn took the offensive honor, while Zak Donato earned



Cahill

Donato

Quinn

the defensive award. Zachary Cahill was the special teams winner.

Quinn was an all-around weapon for EOU's offense, totaling 341 yards on offense. Through the air, he was 24-of-35

passing for 256 yards and had three touchdowns. On the ground, he carried the ball 17 times for 85 yards and a pair of touchdowns. He also had the game-winning rushing touchdown in overtime to lead EOU to a 2-0 start.

Donato led the Eastern defense in total tackles with 11 in the victory with five solo tackles. He also had one tackle for loss.

Cahill handled all kicking chores for the Mountaineers. He was a perfect 3-for-3 in extra point attempts and kicked a 43-yard field goal. As a punter, his longest punt of the game was 60 yards and he had one punt

land inside the 20-yard line.

In addition to the individual awards, the Mountaineers also moved up one spot in the national rankings.

EOU now ranks No. 20 in the NAIA Football FirstDown PlayBook Top-25 Poll. Out of the Frontier Conference, Eastern Oregon and College of Idaho are the only ranked teams. The Coyotes check in at No. 6 this time around, falling one spot from No. 5. The Mountaineers and Yotes showdown this weekend will be a battle of unbeaten. The College of Idaho is also 2-0 on the season.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Pendleton's Kyle Liscom (21) and Ridgeview's Gannon Jeter (20) watch as an official performs the coin toss prior to the Buckaroos' 20-12 win over the Ridgeview Ravens on Friday, March 12, 2021.

Making it work

Officials and schools are working together to keep sports rolling

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Dorothy Smith has worked volleyball matches by herself this season, and on one particular day, she officiated an early afternoon match in Irrigon, then hustled up the road to be in Pendleton for a match that evening.

Such schedules are not the norm, but during the COVID-19 pandemic, they are frequent adventures for not only volleyball officials, but for those who also work football and soccer games.

"We have officials that work a noon game in Spray, then drive to Heppner, Arlington or Lone for a night game," Heppner football coach Greg Grant said. "I don't think people realize what they do. We play junior high

and junior varsity games during the week and they are there. I joked at the start of the season, 'name your price.'"

Smith, president of the Blue Mountain Volleyball Association, is one of 18-20 volleyball officials who officiate matches in Umatilla and Morrow counties. Because of COVID, the number of officials this season is down to eight.

"It has been different because we couldn't invite new referees," Smith said. "We have had to use veteran referees. Some are teachers and can't get the time off when we need to staff early matches. I worked some solo matches. When there was a sub, I signalled them in, marked it on my card and put the whistle back in my mouth. During a timeout, I get down and check the book."

While the working conditions are not ideal, Smith said all of the officials have the same goal in mind.

"We wanted to get the girls playing," said Smith, who is in her 16th season of officiating games. "The girls have been so good. If their mask comes down when they go up to hit a ball, they are good about adjusting it. It's hard to play with them on. They are

working hard and sweating. I had one girl hyperventilate."

Smith said the players also have been good about sanitizing their hands every time they leave or enter the court.

With limited or no fans, Smith said she has seen an uptick in parents volunteering to run the score clock, be line judges or sanitize the volleyballs just so they can watch their daughters play.

"In Pendleton, they had sign-up sheets for parents," Smith said. "They are coming together to make sure their kids get to play."

Darla Huxel, commissioner of the Blue Mountain Volleyball Association, said she appreciates the work of the athletic directors in being flexible to change times to make sure all matches can be covered.

"The ultimate goal is to let the kids play," said Huxel, who is in her 41st year of officiating.

While volleyball matches typically consist of two officials, football requires at least a four-man crew for 1A, 2A, 3A and 4A games, and five-man crews for 5A and

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NCAA MENS BASKETBALL

USC shuts down Oregon 82-68 to end 20-year Elite Eight wait

By JOHN MARSHALL
AP Basketball Writer

INDIANAPOLIS — Southern California's dark days lasted far longer than the Trojans would have liked.

A once-elite program had fallen into mediocrity, losing seasons mixed in with short-lived trips into the NCAA Tournament.

A two-week run of playing their best at just the right time has the Trojans turning the corner — possibly toward the Final Four.

Isaiah White scored 22 points and USC shut down Oregon's potent offense to reach the Elite Eight for the first time in 20 years with an 82-68 win in the West Region semifinals Sunday night, March 28.

"We're making history and it just means a lot to this program," White said. "As a team, we're just super excited and we worked for this, so I'm glad that it's paying off."

Pac-12 After Dark Indy-style turned into a lights-out performance by USC.

The Trojans (25-7) clipped the high-flying Ducks with their length on the perimeter and 7-footer Evan Mobley in the middle. Offensively, the region's No. 6 seed bobbed and weaved through the holes in Oregon's defense, shooting 57% and 10 of 17 from 3.

The all-around domination put USC in the Elite Eight for the second time in 60 years and three Pac-12 teams in the regional final for the first time since 2001.

Next up is a shot at undefeated Gonzaga in the regional final on Tuesday, March 30.

"We believe we can beat anybody," White said.

Oregon certainly had no answer for the long-armed Trojans.

The seventh-seed Ducks (21-7) floundered after USC switched to zone early on, unable to find holes or get much of anything to drop over it until a late rally that came up short. The Pac-12's best 3-point shooting team (38%) went 5 of 21 from the arc.

Eugene Omoruyi had 28 points 10 rebounds, and Chris Duarte scored 21 for the Ducks.

"I let the guys down. I didn't have them ready for that zone," Oregon coach Dana Altman said. "I thought we were, but their length and athleticism really bothered us."

Oregon and USC have been a big part of the Pac-12's unexpected success in the Circle City.

Picked to be the worst among the major conferences, the big league out West opened the NCAA Tournament with nine straight

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SPORTS SHORT

Hamilton holds off Verstappen to win tense F1 season opener

Associated Press

SAKHIR, Bahrain — World champion Lewis Hamilton just managed to hold off Max Verstappen to win the season-opening Bahrain Grand Prix and clinch the 96th Formula One win of his career on Sunday, March 28.

The race was effectively decided when Verstappen overtook Hamilton on Lap 53 of 56 but went too wide on a turn and off track limits. He was told by his team to give Hamilton the position back, as he risked a time penalty.

"It's a shame, but you also have to see the positives," Verstappen said. "We are really taking the fight to them, and I think that's great to start the year like that."

Verstappen still had a few laps to catch Hamilton and he almost did, finishing 0.74 seconds behind the Mercedes driver.

"What a difficult race that was. Max was all over me at the end and I was just about able to hold him off," Hamilton said. "I knew he was going to catch me and I thought it was going to be impossible to keep him behind ... That

was one of the hardest races I've had for a while. I love the challenge."

With 22 races still to come, F1 fans could be in for a treat this season if Verstappen takes the title challenge to Hamilton.

"I'm super happy for the fans that they are excited, this is something all the fans have wanted for some time," Hamilton said. "I hope for many more of these races with Max."

Hamilton's teammate, Valtteri Bottas, finished third but was way behind the front two.



Kamran Jebreili/Associated Press

Mercedes driver Lewis Hamilton of Britain steers his car followed by Red Bull driver Max Verstappen of the Netherlands during the Bahrain Formula One Grand Prix at the Bahrain International Circuit in Sakhir, Bahrain, on Sunday, March 28, 2021.