

# EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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## A chance to compete

### Local teams headed to unofficial 3A/2A/1A state cross-country championships

By ANNIE FOWLER  
East Oregonian

**L**EBANON — East Linn Christian athletic director and cross-country coach Kellen Peters has had a lot on his plate the past couple of months.

He and his wife had twin girls on Feb. 19, 2021, the same day he sent out a message to fellow small-school, cross-country coaches about putting together an unofficial state championship for runners at the 3A/2A/1A level.

“Back when we found out there would be no OSAA (Oregon School Activities Association) state championships, I saw the look on my students’ faces,” Peters said. “I know I’m not the only coach who is seeing those faces. I understand why the OSAA can’t do it, but with some help, we are able to do something for the kids.”

Not long after Peters posted on athletic.net, he had 35 schools saying they were in.

“It grew from there,” Peters said. “I was clear that we weren’t trying to do something we shouldn’t.”

The championships will be held on Saturday, April 10, at Cheadle Lake Park. There are 59 schools with at least one runner qualified.

There are 88 runners registered for the 3A boys race, 112 for the 2A/1A boys race, and 106 for the 3A/2A/1A girls competition.

Runners had to qualify through a district meet. “The cool thing is because we don’t have to deal with the financial part of getting kids there, we were able to get in more kids than the OSAA would,” Peters said. “Forty percent of the kids who will run are kids who probably will never get a chance to race at state again.”

The Heppner Mustangs will be taking their girls and boys teams, and Stanfield/Echo will be taking its boys team, along with Zora Gehrke for the girls race.

Also competing are Alex McIntyre and Rose White from Weston-McEwen, and Saint Schimmel from Nixyaawii.

The Heppner girls won the team title at the 3A/2A/1A Special District 5 Spring Championships last week, while the Heppner boys were second.

“It’s kind of cool,” Heppner coach Russ Nichols said of the state meet. “This is the closest thing we can get. The senior class has missed out on so much the last year and a half. This will be great for them.”

When the state meet was originally proposed,



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Runners take off from the start of the 3A/2A/1A Special District 5 Spring XC Championship 1A/2A boys 5,000-meter race at Thompson Ranch in Heppner on Friday, April 2, 2021.

### STATE QUALIFIERS

#### GIRLS 3A/2A/1A

**Heppner:** Madelyn Nichols, Hailey Heideman, Kylie Boor, Hannah Finch, Irelynn Kollman, Hannah Palmer, Kayla Rodriguez.  
**Stanfield/Echo:** Zora Gehrke. **Weston-McEwen:** Rose White.

#### BOYS 2A/1A

**Heppner:** Trevor Nichols, Ed Ellsworth, David Cribbs, Thomas Rudolf, Kamron Drury, Roen Waite, Joseph Sherman. **Stanfield/Echo:** Sissy Hurty, Keegin Chitty, Jagot Singh, Josue Hernandez, Camren McCann, Uriel Carrillo, Alex Flores. **Weston-McEwen:** Alex McIntyre. **Nixyaawii:** Saint Schimmel.

Nichols wasn’t on board. It was the same day as their district meet. After conferring with the other Special District 5 coaches, it was agreed to move the district race to the week before.

“Once we could change our district meet, I was on board,” Nichols said. “It should be a lot of fun.”

The Mustangs’ Madelyn Nichols won the girls race, with teammate Hailey Heideman coming in third.

Hunter Nichols was the first Heppner boy across the finish line, coming in third. Stanfield’s Sissy Hurty was fourth.

The state meet will have three races — the 3A boys, the 2A/1A boys, and the 3A/2A/1A girls. The races will be one hour apart, and Peters said they will be following all Oregon Health Author-

ity guidelines.

The Cheadle Lake Park course is relatively flat, which should benefit the Heppner runners.

“We run so many hills in Heppner,” coach Nichols said. “I think they will like the course.”

### It takes a village

While a handful of schools have donated money toward the event, Peters said people and organizations have stepped forward to help.

Former Lebanon coach Brad Bauer, who is now retired and owns a timing company, has offered to do the timing for the meet.

Steens Mountain Running Camp founder/director Harland Yriarte emailed Peters out of the blue and offered to cover costs that had not already been taken care of.

Medals have been ordered for the first 10 runners in each division, and the top four teams in each division will receive a trophy. Each runner and coach will receive a free T-shirt.

None of the teams have been charged a fee to compete, but travel costs are the responsibility of each school.

“It’s enough of a financial burden just to get here,” Peters said.

With the race being held at a public park, Peters said they can have up to 15% capacity, which will allow family and friends to attend and watch. Admission is free.

The park has a double-loop course, giving spectators an area where they can view most of the race.

“It’s a very spectator-friendly course,” Peters said. “It will be nice for the families.”

## Ducks who opted out of 2020 regret nothing

By JAMES CREPEA  
The Oregonian

**EUGENE** — Pro days are about evaluating potential in the NFL. But Oregon’s pro day also was a bit about the potential of last season.

With four of nine participants having opted out of last season after the Pac-12’s initial August 2020 decision to suspend all sports until January 2021, including Penei Sewell, Jevon Holland, Thomas Graham Jr. and Brady Breeze, there was a feeling of what could have been for the Ducks in 2020.

“I really do believe that the situation out West was a lot different than the rest of the country,” Oregon coach Mario Cristobal said.

“It wasn’t like we were told it was going to take a little while. We were postponed twice and really canceled. There was no guarantee of actually playing a season and that’s when the opt-outs took place. I don’t think anyone should judge that. Those guys were tremendous competitors. Some of the guys that were seniors that did opt out, they had made the decision to return, had gone through spring ball, had gone through the offseason. They had every intention and carried out their intentions through actions to play this year, it just didn’t happen.”

The four Oregon players who opted out are at peace with their decisions, as is Deommodore Lenoir, who opted out and chose to return when the season was restored.

But that didn’t make it easy for them to sit out last fall or remove their frustration with the manner in which the Pac-12 went about handling the pandemic last summer compared to its peers across the Power 5, FBS and AAU.

“When it came down to it in August, we were told the season was canceled, we were super frustrated as seniors,” Breeze said. “I could tell the whole Oregon coaching staff was frustrated because they did every type of process we could to make it to where we could play, but then the Pac-12 still for whatever dumb reason, they decided to call off the season.”

“We said our goodbyes; we were hugging the coaches, hugging the players. Us seniors, we thought we were never going to play for Oregon ever again. I moved out of my apartment, moved back to Lake Oswego, was living with my parents, getting ready to start training and getting ready for the NFL process. Mentally I was checked out, and then five weeks later I get a phone call like, ‘Hey you got to be here tomorrow; we got practice tomorrow, we got

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## EOU dominates 2020 postseason CCC awards

East Oregonian

**CORVALLIS** — After grabbing its first undefeated regular season, the No. 8 ranked Eastern Oregon University volleyball team highlighted the 2020 postseason Cascade Collegiate Conference honors, released Thursday, April 8.

Kaki McLean Morehead was named the CCC Coach of the Year, while Kiley McMurtrey grabbed her third-straight Libero of the Year honor, Madison Pilon was named



McLean  
Morehead



McMurtrey



Pilon



Scott

the Setter of the Year, and Cambree Scott was named the Player of the Year. The No. 13 ranked Corban University’s Rylee Troutman earned

Freshman of the Year. Morehead is in her 14th season at the helm of the Mountaineers, heading into postseason with a 15-0

record, including EOU’s first-ever undefeated CCC season at 14-0. Under Morehead, the Mounties have won six regular-season CCC championships, including their third straight title. With the regular season title secured, the Mountaineers will host this year’s CCC Volleyball Tournament on Friday, April 9, and Saturday, April 10. EOU has also secured an automatic qualifying bid to the NAIA National Tournament.

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### SPORTS SHORT

## 2-minute silence across sports to mark Prince Philip’s death

By ROB HARRIS  
Associated Press

**LONDON** — Venues fell silent for two minutes, black armbands were put on, and flags lowered to half-staff as British sports marked the death of Prince Philip.

The Royal Family and government told sports authorities that competitions could continue following the death of the 99-year-old husband of Queen Elizabeth II on Friday, April 9.

Philip held positions in sports bodies throughout his life, including as president of the English Football Association and a 22-year spell as president of the International Equestrian Federation that he used to develop new competitions.

“British sport has lost one of its strongest and, on occasion, boldest

advocate,” World Athletics president Sebastian Coe said. “He had an unflinching view of the role of sport in all our neighbourhoods. That belief will be missed.”

Philip was a keen cricketer and he served two spells as president of the Lord’s-based Marylebone Cricket Club, which is regarded as the guardian of the laws of the game. He presented the Lord’s Taverners ECB Trophy to the English cricket champion for 43 years until he retired from royal duties in 2017.

“We owe him a great debt for his support and passion over many decades,” England and Wales Cricket Board chairman Ian Watmore said.

County cricket matches were underway when his death was announced by Buckingham Palace and a two-minute silence was held

before the afternoon sessions of play in venues without fans due to the pandemic.

The largely empty Aintree racecourse also fell silent before the second day of racing in the Grand National meeting. Philip was an honorary member of the Jockey Club and would attend flagship racing events, including Royal Ascot, to accompany his horse-owning wife. At Ascot in 2012, he presented the queen with the trophy after one of her greatest successes with Estimate winning the Queen’s Vase Stakes.

Jockeys at Aintree wore black armbands as footballers were asked to do across the weekend at England’s professional leagues, including the Premier League, and for the England women’s international game against Canada — where the queen is also head of state.



Peter Powell/Associated Press

A video screen shows a picture of the late Prince Philip, ahead of the races on the second day of the Grand National Horse Racing meeting at Aintree racecourse, near Liverpool, England, on Friday, April 9, 2021. Buckingham Palace says Prince Philip, the irascible and tough-minded husband of Queen Elizabeth II, has died. He was 99.