

# EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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## Pendleton steps up to take on 6A Southridge

Skyhawks feature a large line and 3 veteran receivers

By ANNIE FOWLER  
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The Bucks went from having their first game of the season canceled to picking up a game against 6A Southridge all in a span of 48 hours.

Pendleton will travel to Beaverton on Friday, Sept. 3, to take on the Skyhawks of the Metro League.

“We got some film,” Pendleton coach Erik Davis said. “They are very big up front. That is going to be something we will fight a little bit all year. We are going to see if we can hang with a 6A team.”

Davis and Southridge coach Kevin Bickler were quarterbacks together at Western Oregon University, which Davis said will lead to similar offensive game plans.

The Bucks, who went 4-2 last season, likely will start Jack Lieuallen at quarterback and move Collin Primus to receiver. Both have been taking snaps at quarterback.

“Putting Collin out at



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

**Pendleton's Ben Jennings (6) hauls in a pass under heavy coverage from Hermiston's Erlin Delgado (14) during a scrimmage Friday, Aug. 27, 2021, at Pendleton High School. This was the first time the former rivals met on the field of play in almost four years.**

receiver and keeping Jack at quarterback I think is going to make us a better offensive team,” Davis said. “I think you will see both of them at quarterback at some point.”

Running backs Kyle Liscom and Payton Lambert bring a little spice to the offense coming out of the backfield.

“They are able to bring a

little heart when they run the football,” Davis said. “They aren't going to back down from anyone. You want them to stay healthy — you don't want them to take a big hit every time. We are as thin as can be depth wise.”

Also look for the Bucks to incorporate sophomore Ben Jennings into the mix at receiver and in the second-

ary. He also handles the kicking duties.

The Skyhawks, who went 2-4 during a COVID-19-shortened season in the spring, have some size up front with center Danny Battilega (6-3, 310), TE/DE Dominick Menegas (6-2, 250), OL/DL Ethan Sanft (6-3, 280) and Sol Sagiao (6-4, 265).

“Looking at their D-line, they lean on you and wear you out,” Davis said. “They have a running back who is kind of a load. Defensively, we have to match their physicality and maybe try to wear their big guys down.”

That Southridge running back is Cypress Albright (5-8, 200), who averaged seven yards a carry last year. He also lines up at linebacker.

Quarterback JC Klee, in his second year as starter, will have options with receivers in Nathan Aviles, Omar Carranza and Alisjah Tucker. All three also play in the secondary, and combined for 75 tackles last season.

The Skyhawks, coming off their seventh consecutive losing season, are looking for their first winning season since 2013. One area they need to shore up to accomplish that goal is ball control. They turned the ball over 17 times in six games last year.

The first game of the season always is a question mark for teams, but it gives them an opportunity to see what works.

“We are untested under Friday night lights,” Davis said. “We'll see what we can do.”

## Injuries plague Dawgs before football season starts

Hermiston loses 4 starters for most of the season

By ANNIE FOWLER  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Bulldogs haven't even kicked off the season but their injured reserve list looks like an end-of-season tally.

Hermiston, which is down four key players, will host Kamiakin in their Mid-Columbia Conference season opener Friday, Sept. 3.

“Since we have been in the Tri-City league, there have been injuries,” Hermiston coach David Faaeteete said. “(Andrew) James

tears his shoulder up, Chase (Elliott) breaks his leg, then COVID happens. Now we lose four seniors before the season even starts.”

That list includes linebacker Koi Mikami (knee), receiver KJ Ramirez (foot), running back Thomas Reagan (knee) and defensive end Ryker McDonald (medical issue).

“When Koi told me at practice, I almost lost it,” Faaeteete said. “He's pretty positive. He's trying to find a way to get through it and be there for his teammates. It's tough to put in all this time and work to be sidelined. It sucks. As a coach, it's tough.”

Reagan, who is a speedster, will be sorely missed in the backfield.

“He is one of our explosive guys,” Faaeteete said. “We are going to have to rely on our young backs to give us something.”

McDonald, who also comes out of the backfield, will leave a gaping hole on both sides of the ball.

“It's hard to be an athlete and a Type 1 Diabetic,” Faaeteete said. “It's tough for them. I think it hurts him more not to be there for his teammates.”

Ramirez hopes to return midseason, but it will depend on how quickly his foot heals.

Despite the setbacks, the Bulldogs move forward.

“Those four guys are giant contributors to the squad,” Faaeteete said. “We will find out what we really

have in the cupboard. Young guys will get to play early and often.”

With all that said, the Bulldogs will have their hands full with the Braves, who are ranked No. 7 in the MaxPreps preseason poll.

“They are pretty solid,” Faaeteete said. “They looked good in the 7-on-7 league. Coach (Scott) Biglin always has them working hard. He has a good group. He has tons of kids and athletes. He was three deep at wide receiver, and they are athletes.”

Hermiston does return Elliott at quarterback, Sam Cadenas on both sides of the line, and Caden Hottman at linebacker.

The Bulldogs also got a transfer by the way of Texas

in 6-foot-6, 235-pound senior Kael Hottman, who will play tight end and defensive end.

“He is getting more confident as he is learning the system,” Faaeteete said.

While there are players in place, Faaeteete is still filling in the pieces around them.

“We have been able to pare things down, and we are still evaluating kids in the roles that they can best serve our program,” he said. “We have guys but they are young. We will have first-game jitters, but we can't give up big plays and we have to stop the run. What you are going to see on Friday is us doing the best with what we have, and trying to put points on the board.”

## Pilot Rock will be tested by Cove in season opener Sept. 2

Rockets are young but talented

By ANNIE FOWLER  
East Oregonian

PILOT ROCK — The football season opens Thursday, Sept. 2, and Pilot Rock kicks things off hosting Cove in an 8-man showdown.

“I'm so glad we get to play,” said Rockets coach Mike Baleztena, whose team was supposed to play in a jamboree last week.

The Leopards went 0-3 in their makeshift spring season, while the Rockets went 4-2 after dropping

their first two games of the season.

Baleztena lost five seniors off last year's team, but returns sophomore quarterback Jace Otteson, sophomore receiver/defensive back Austin Ford, senior running back/linebacker Wyatt Stillman, and a couple of beefy sophomore linemen Broc Erickson and Tanner Bedard. Sophomore James Lunzman also returns at center.

“We are still young, but they are a little bit bigger and stronger,” Baleztena said. “They are solid players and they are smart. They remind me of the

team from three years ago.”

The Leopards have some size on their line, with three guys tipping the scales between 260 and 280 pounds, but the real issue will be stopping the speedy Rockets.

“The whole plan when they are 280 is to try and stay away from that bunch of guys and make it a speed game,” Baleztena said.

Games on tap for Friday include Heppner at Toledo, McLoughlin at College Place, Ione-Arlington at Perrydale, Colton at Stanfield, Culver at Weston-McEwen, Echo at Joseph and Lyle/Wishram/Klickitat at Riverside.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

**Pilot Rock's Jace Otteson (11) runs the ball during the first half against the Imbler Panthers on Thursday, March 18, 2021. The Rockets defeated Imbler 30-24.**

### SPORTS SHORT

## EOU kicker Zachary Cahill earns NAIA honor

East Oregonian

LA GRANDE — Eastern Oregon University kicker Zachary Cahill received recognition from the National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics for his performance in the opening week of the 2021 season.

The NAIA on Monday, Aug. 30 released its first National Player of the Week award winners for the new season. Cahill made the debut list as the Special Teams Player of the Week.

Cahill's kicking proved key in the opener for No. 18 EOU in its 26-24 road win over Montana Tech.

Cahill was 4-4 in field goal attempts with two coming from 40-plus yards out. He also nailed both PAT attempts to finish the game 6-for-6 in scoring attempts.

For the game, Cahill finished with 14 points and nailed what was the game-winning field goal in the final minute from 42 yards out.

For his efforts, the Frontier

Conference Special Teams Player of the Week award also went to Cahill.

Cahill joins JD Woods of Baker University and Dylan Martinez of College of Idaho as the recipients of the NAIA National Player of the Week list. Woods was named for offense, while Martinez was tabbed to the defense.

The Mountaineers will play their home opener Saturday, Sept. 4, when they take on the Montana Western Bulldogs. Kickoff is set for 1 p.m. at Community Stadium.



Esma Oribio/Eastern Oregon University

**Eastern Oregon University kicker Zachary Cahill was named the NAIA Special Teams Player of the Week for the week of Aug. 30, 2021. Cahill was 4-4 in field goal attempts in the first week of the season.**

### ON THE SLATE

Thursday, Sept. 2

Prep football

Irrigon at Baker JV, 7 p.m.  
Cove at Pilot Rock, 7 p.m.

Prep volleyball

South Wasco County, Irrigon at Heppner, 4 p.m.  
Pilot Rock at Imbler, 6 p.m.  
Stanfield at Griswold, 4 p.m.  
Umatilla at Griswold, 4 p.m.  
Umatilla vs. Stanfield at Griswold, 5:30 p.m.  
Lyle/Wishram at Ione/Arlington, 5 p.m.

Prep girls soccer

Ontario at Pendleton, 4 p.m.  
McLoughlin at Riverside, 4 p.m.

Prep boys soccer

Pendleton at Ontario, 3 p.m.  
McLoughlin at Riverside, 6 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 3

Prep football

Pendleton at Southridge, 7 p.m.  
Kamiakin at Hermiston, 7 p.m.  
Heppner at Toledo, 7 p.m.  
McLoughlin at College Place, 7 p.m.  
Ione/Arlington at Perrydale, TBD  
Lyle/Wishram/Klickitat at Riverside, 7 p.m.  
Colton at Stanfield, 5 p.m.  
Echo at Joseph, 7 p.m.  
Culver at Weston-McEwen, 7 p.m.

Prep volleyball

Delphian at Weston-McEwen, 5 p.m.  
Echo at Joseph, 5 p.m.

Prep girls soccer

Trout Lake at Stanfield/Echo, 4 p.m.

Prep cross-country

Pendleton, Hermiston at Hanford jamboree, 5 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 4

Prep volleyball

Weston-McEwen at East vs. West Tournament at Heppner, 9 a.m.  
Pendleton at McKay Tournament, 7 a.m.  
Powder Valley at Nixyaawii, 10 a.m.  
Powder Valley at Griswold, 1 p.m.  
Ione/Arlington at Prairie City/Burnt River, TBD  
Irrigon at Stanfield, 9 a.m.  
Elgin at Stanfield, 10:30 a.m.  
Joseph at Stanfield, noon  
Elgin vs. Irrigon, at Stanfield, 12:45 p.m.  
Wallowa at Echo, 9 a.m.  
Union at Echo, 10:30 a.m.  
Prescott at Echo, noon

Prep girls soccer

Hanford at Hermiston, noon  
Prep cross-country  
Heppner, Umatilla at The Ultimook Race, Tillamook, 11:30 a.m.