

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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PREP FOOTBALL PREVIEW

Pendleton faces Putnam in SD1 opener

Bucks will have their hands full with the Kingsmen's offense

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Pendleton will open Special District 1 play Thursday, Sept. 15, hosting the Putnam Kingsmen. Game time is 5 p.m.

While both teams are 1-1 coming into the game, the Bucks used their two preseason games to prepare for league play. They beat 6A Southridge 27-26, then dropped a 35-19 game to 5A powerhouse Wilsonville last week.

"We are coming off a learning experience and a barometer to where we are at the 5A level," Pendleton coach Erik Davis said. "This is league now, and our emphasis is to keep our goal intact to be league champions. Round-Up week is where you hold your breath a bit. There is no school and the structure is different. We have had a great week of practice. I expect us to come out and play well Thursday."

The game will be played at Pendleton High School because the Pendleton Round-Up is at the Round-Up Grounds.

"Ever since we got the lights and the scoreboard, they have been willing to put us at home," Davis said of the league's scheduling group. "The kids like it up there. If there's 100 yards of grass field, we are willing to play anywhere."

The Bucks will get two-way lineman Tucker Pace back this week, who has been out with a knee injury. He adds depth to both lines, who will have their work cut out trying to keep Putnam's Wing-T offensive in check.

"They run an offense that is built off misdirection," Davis said. "It's a run-heavy offense, a lot of pulling offensive linemen. We have to play assignment football. You don't do



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Pendleton running back Payton Lambert (32) carries the ball for the Bucks on Friday, Sept. 10, 2021, during a 35-19 loss against Wilsonville at Pendleton High School.

your job, they can take it to the house and that can lead to some problems. We have seen it for the past 10 years. We are prepared. If our kids are in the right positions, we will be OK."

Last week, Putnam rallied from a two-touchdown deficit to beat Milwaukie 23-21.

Tyler Creswick finished with four catches for 124 yards and two touchdowns — the last being for 32 yards and the go-ahead touchdown with 5:33 left in the third.

Junior quarterback Konner Bickford threw for 155 yards and three touchdowns, while running back Austin Heslin ran for 54 yards on seven carries.

Kamiakin at Hermiston — The Bulldogs will have their hands full with the powerful Braves on Sept. 17.

Kamiakin knocked off three-time defending league champion Chiawana 46-24 on Sept. 10, handing the Riverhawks their first Mid-Columbia Conference loss in 19 games.

Henry Mercado threw for 234 yards and four touchdowns — an dean for another — for the Braves. Gabe Tahir, who also plays corner, caught four passes for 126 yards, and had a 42-yard touchdown run.

The Bulldogs are coming off a 35-14 nonleague loss to Sunnyside. Quarterback Chase Elliott had 87 yards rushing and 190 passing, with Caden Hottman catching touchdown passes of 11 and 28 yards.

Umatilla at Weston-mcEwen — The TigerScots open Blue Mountain Conference play Thursday against the Vikings, who opened the Chad Smith era with a 48-0 road win over

Irrigon last week.

W-M (1-0) had its game canceled last week, and coach Kenzie Hansell said his boys are ready to play.

"We are excited after playing Culver, and now we have another home game," Hansell said. "We've had two great weeks of practice. We are ready to get on the field in front of our home crowd."

Umatilla moved the ball at will against the Knights, and Hansell knows they are in for a battle up front.

"They are big and athletic," he said. "We look forward to them coming to our place."

Also on Sept. 17, Stanfield is at Heppner, McLoughlin is at Burns, Lyle/Wishram/Klickitat is at Ione/Arlington, Riverside is at Irrigon, and Huntington is at Echo.

Eastern hits the road to face Carroll

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

HELENA, Mont. — No. 13 Eastern Oregon heads into a road matchup against Carroll College (1-1) looking to maintain momentum.

"We're definitely excited," head coach Tim Camp said. "We have to get better at every asset of the game and limit mistakes."

The Mountaineers come into the matchup 2-0, winning close decisions over Montana Tech and Montana Western. Eastern jumped up from No. 18 to No. 13 in this week's National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics Week 1 coaches' poll and stands as the highest ranked Frontier Conference team. According to Camp, the high ranking is not causing any distractions in the locker room.

"There's always been high expectations with every Eastern team I've coached," he said. "The morale is high but the focus level is high. You have to take the rankings with a grain of salt."

Eastern has dominated the matchup lately, winning the last six head-to-head competitions with Carroll. The Mountaineers have won



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

Defensive back Brennen Hull (13), along with the rest of the Eastern Oregon University team cheers as Zak Donato scores a pick-six on Saturday, Sept. 4, 2021, against Montana Western at Community Stadium, La Grande. The Mountaineers head Helena, Montana, for a matchup with the Carroll College Saints on Sept. 18.

eight out of the last 11 games against Carroll, prior to which the Saints won 10 in a row.

Carroll lost to Montana Western 26-22 in its season opener, but bounced back with a 31-17 win over Montana Tech the following week.

"They have a very good coaching staff," Camp said. "I think the team that blocks better and tackles better will win."

Senior quarterback Kai Quinn has been a staple to Eastern's offense this

year, passing and running effectively in both game's this year. Quinn threw for 283 yards and four touchdowns in the 35-28 victory over Montana Western in Week 2, earning conference offensive player of week.

Quinn has been dangerous with his legs, averaging 67 rushing yards per game. He has also spread the love in the passing game, connecting with five different receivers for touchdowns so far this season. Redshirt senior Saige Wilkerson is leading the

way, totaling 88 receiving yards and one touchdown on 10 targets.

"We've shown that we can run on people and we've shown that we can pass on people, now we have to put it all together," Camp said.

The lethal linebacking duo of Zak Donato and Solo Taylor has been the anchor of Eastern's defense. Both players lead the team with 18 total tackles each, while Donato has recorded two interceptions and 2-1/2 tackles for loss. Taylor, a redshirt junior, has been a vocal leader for the defense this year and recorded the game-ending sack against Montana Western. The linebacker pair will look to stifle a Carroll offense that is averaging 26.5 points per game and 350 yards per contest.

Duncan Kraft has been a solid running back for Carroll this year, averaging 91 rushing yards per game. Kraft went off for 148 yards and three touchdowns in the victory over Montana Tech. He will be a key point of emphasis for Eastern's defense in the upcoming matchup.

Kickoff is set for noon at Nelson Stadium in Helena, Montana. The Carroll College athletics department will be livestreaming the game on its YouTube page.

ON THE SLATE

Thursday, Sept. 16
Prep football
Putnam at Pendleton (at PHS), 5 p.m.
Umatilla at Weston-McEwen, 7 p.m.
Prep volleyball
Grant Union at Heppner, 5 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Weston-McEwen, 6 p.m.
Union at Stanfield, 5 p.m.
Riverside at Irrigon, 5 p.m.
Umatilla at La Grande, 5:30 p.m.
Echo at Ione/Arlington, 5 p.m.
Prep girls soccer
Hermiston at Kamiakin, 7 p.m.
Stanfield/Echo at Riverside, 4 p.m.
Umatilla at Irrigon, 4 p.m.
Prep boys soccer
Prescott at McLoughlin, 4 p.m.
Umatilla at Irrigon, 6 p.m.
Prep slowpitch softball
Hermiston at West Valley (2), 4 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 17
Prep football
Hermiston at Chiawana, 7 p.m.
Stanfield at Heppner, 7 p.m.
McLoughlin at Burns, 7 p.m.
Lyle/Wishram/Klickitat at Ione/Arlington, 7 p.m.
Riverside at Irrigon, 7 p.m.
Huntington at Echo, 7 p.m.
Prep cross-country
Pendleton, McLoughlin, Nixyaawii, Riverside, Umatilla, Stanfield/Echo at Wallowa County Invitational, 3 p.m.
College volleyball
Yakima Valley at Blue Mountain, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 18
Prep cross-country
Hermiston at Oregon City Invite, 11:30 a.m.
Prep volleyball
Umatilla, Stanfield at Riverside Tournament, 10 a.m.
Girls prep soccer
Baker at Riverside, 1 p.m.
Prep boys soccer
Riverside at Catlin Gabel, 1 p.m.
College men's soccer
Blue Mountain at Columbia Basin, 2:15 p.m.
College women's soccer
Blue Mountain at Columbia Basin, noon
College football
EOU at Carroll College, noon

Monday, Sept. 20
Prep volleyball
Walla Walla Valley Academy at Weston-McEwen, 4 p.m.
Prep boys soccer
Baker at Pendleton, 4 p.m.

Tuesday, Sept. 21
Prep volleyball
The Dalles at Pendleton, 6:30 p.m.
Eisenhower at Hermiston, 7 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Stanfield, 6 p.m.
Ontario at McLoughlin, 6:30 p.m.
Irrigon at Umatilla, 5 p.m.
Riverside at Columbia White Salmon, 6:30 p.m.
Griswold at Nixyaawii, 5 p.m.
Condon at Echo, 5 p.m.
Ione/Arlington at Bickleton, 5 p.m.
Prep girls soccer
Chiawana at Hermiston, 7 p.m.
McLoughlin at Umatilla, 3 p.m.
Prep boys soccer
McLoughlin at Umatilla, 6 p.m.
Prep slowpitch softball
Sunnyside at Hermiston (2), 4 p.m.

SPORTS SHORT

La Grande wins thriller over Pendleton

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Late game heroics from Lamar Langidrik propelled La Grande to a narrow 1-0 victory on Tuesday, Sept. 14, over Pendleton at Community Stadium in La Grande.

La Grande completely controlled the tempo throughout the entirety of the game, but Pendleton looked dead set on holding its ground. The Tigers out shot the Buckaroos 25-5, but the game remained neck and neck until the

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final minutes.

Early on, La Grande set the tone with four shots on goal and 12 total shots in the first half. Junior Owen Rinker suffered a leg injury that looked like it might remove the star defender from the game, but he returned late in the first half. Rinker was key in defense for La Grande as Pendleton made a push

in the second half.

In the second half, both teams stepped on the gas and took more chances. The Buckaroos tallied four shots, while the Tigers tallied eight shots on goal and 13 total shots. With just under 20 minutes remaining in regulation, Renee Ortega Cruz rattled a shot off the crossbar that appeared to cross the line but was not ruled a goal.

Following the near goal, sparks began to fly as both teams took shots back and forth. With less than five minutes remaining in the game, Langidrik scored a header

in the box to put La Grande up 1-0. The Tigers were able to pass the ball effectively and hold off a late shot attempt to secure the victory.

Scott Train was an anchor in goal for Pendleton, tallying 15 saves. La Grande rallied 11 total corner kicks, keeping constant pressure on the Buckaroos.

The victory improves La Grande's record to 1-1 on the season, while Pendleton drops to 0-1. The Tigers will play at Fruitland High School on Sept. 18 and the Buckaroos faced Putnam at home on Sept. 15.



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group

Pendleton Buckaroo sophomore Renee Cruz headbutts a return in the match Tuesday, Sept. 14, 2021, at Community Stadium, La Grande, against rival La Grande High. The Tigers eked out a win against the Buckaroos 1-0 for their first win of the season.