

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

Pendleton pitcher Sauren Garton throws out a pitch April 20, 2021, during the second inning against the Redmond Panthers in Pendleton. Garton has signed to play at Dixie State University in St. George, Utah.

FROM BARN TO BIG LEAGUES

Pendleton's Garton signs to play softball at Dixie State

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — In a barn just outside of town, Sauren Garton takes cuts in the batting cage and works on her fastball.

The Pendleton softball player needed a place to hone her skills during the COVID-19 pandemic and the winter months, and the family barn was the perfect place.

Garton's hard work paid off. She recently signed to play at Dixie State University in St. George, Utah.

"I'm really, really excited," Garton said. "They have always been at the top of my list. After a tournament, I got in touch with the coach (Randy Simkins) and he made me an offer. I went on an official visit (at the end of September). I just felt so right. It was just so clean and felt so safe."

The outdoor activities that will be right out her front door also was a selling point for Garton.

"When I was thinking about where I wanted to go to college, I wanted somewhere warm, and that there was something else to do," Garton said. "I wanted outdoor things."

Garton was one of five players recently signed by Simkins.

"Our 2022 signing class has the chance to be special for Trailblazer softball," Simkins said in a press release. "They are all great people, very good students, extremely talented and have an unmatched work ethic. It will be a challenging journey for them because our graduating seniors have experienced tremendous success and have left a winning legacy."

The 5-foot-10 Garton, who pitches and plays second base, was signed as a pitcher for Dixie State. If given the chance, she'd also like to play in the outfield.

"Garton is a special talent who will come in and compete for innings right away with our pitching staff," Simkins said. "She has put up big strikeout numbers with her high school and college teams. She's also a very good hitter who will add depth to our lineup offensively. We're excited to see her compete at the DI level."

Garton shares the excitement.

"They are one of the most competitive



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

Pendleton's Sauren Garton steals third base before stealing home plate after a missed catch April 27, 2021, against the The Dalles Riverhawks in Pendleton.

teams," she said. "I also love the logo (a bison head) and the colors (red, white and blue), they are so American."

While her letter of intent says Dixie State University, by the time Garton gets to Dixie State, the name of the school will have changed to Utah Tech University.

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— Sauren Garton, Pendleton softball

"It's all tied around the ties to the Confederacy," Dixie State President Richard Williams told the Deseret News. "It first started with the Confederate flag, went to a Rebel nickname and to the mascot. Every president that had preceded me has had something that they've

had to change. We haven't changed the right thing, which is going to be the name of the institution."

A star from the start

Garton has played varsity softball for the Bucks since she was a freshman. Her sophomore year was wiped out by the pandemic, and her junior year was jam packed into just a few weeks.

"I'm excited for my senior year," Garton said. "We have a lot of seniors. My high school catcher is Bri Youncs. She has caught me from elementary school on. We work really well together."

During her junior year, Garton hurled 44 innings through 12 games and finished with a 6-0 record. She gave up 20 hits and seven earned runs, but struck out 95 and walked 18. She had an ERA of 1.114.

Garton and Kylie Parsons were named co-Pitchers of the Year in the Intermountain Conference. Garton also earned second-team all-state honors as a pitcher.

At the plate, Garton hit .476, with five singles, five doubles, six triples and four home runs. She also drove in 18 runs and scored 26 times.

The Bucks won the IMC regular-season title with a 9-0 record, but dropped an 8-4 game to Ridgeview in the district title game. They finished the season 15-2.

Garton has played summer ball in California, and this summer will join the The NorCal Choppers.

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NWAC delays basketball

Move made because
of COVID concerns

East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Blue Mountain Community College and the rest of the Northwest Athletic Conference will pause their winter sports seasons until the week of Jan. 17.

"We believe this decision is beneficial to our student-athletes, coaches and the athletic support staff, as the cancellation of games within the NWAC and across the athletic landscape continues," NWAC Executive Director Marco Azurdia said in a press release. "Our goal is to get our league games played as they are the most important games on the schedule, give our student-athletes a sense of normalcy as they work towards a championship opportunity, while being as safe as possible."

See NWAC, Page All

ON THE SLATE

Schedule subject to change

TUESDAY, JAN. 4

Prep girls basketball
Pilot Rock at Enterprise, 4 p.m.
Lewiston, Idaho at Hermiston, 5:45 p.m.
Spray/Mitchell/Wheeler at Echo, 6 p.m.
McLoughlin at Stanfield, 6 p.m.
Liberty Christian (Washington) at Irrigon, 6 p.m.
River View (Washington) at Umatilla, 6 p.m.
Nixyaawii at Griswold, 6 p.m.
Weston-McEwen at Heppner, 6 p.m.
Pendleton at La Grande, 7 p.m.

Prep boys basketball

Pilot Rock at Enterprise, 5:30 p.m.
Lewiston, Idaho at Hermiston, 7:30 p.m.
McLoughlin at Stanfield, 7:30 p.m.
Liberty Christian (Washington) at Irrigon, 7:30 p.m.
River View (Washington) at Umatilla, 7:30 p.m.
Nixyaawii at Griswold, 7:30 p.m.
Weston-McEwen at Heppner, 7:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 5

Prep boys basketball

Pendleton at Baker, 7 p.m.
Thursday, Jan. 6

Prep girls bowling

Hermiston at Kamiakin, 2:30 p.m.
Friday, Jan. 7

Prep girls basketball

Kennewick at Hermiston, 5:45 p.m.
Vale at Irrigon, 6 p.m.
Nyssa at Riverside, 6 p.m.
Union at Heppner, 6 p.m.
Stanfield at Pilot Rock, 6 p.m.
Nixyaawii at Imbler, 6 p.m.
Griswold at Cove, 6 p.m.
Sherman at Echo, 6 p.m.
Ione/Arlington at Condon, 6 p.m.
La Salle at Pendleton, 6:30 p.m.

Prep boys basketball

Pendleton at La Salle, 7:15 p.m.
Kennewick at Hermiston, 7:30 p.m.
Vale at Irrigon, 7:30 p.m.
Nyssa at Riverside, 7:30 p.m.
Union at Heppner, 7:30 p.m.
Stanfield at Pilot Rock, 7:30 p.m.
Griswold at Cove, 7:30 p.m.
Nixyaawii at Imbler, 7:30 p.m.
Sherman at Echo, 7:30 p.m.
Ione/Arlington at Condon, 7:30 p.m.
College women's basketball
EOU vs. Warner Pacific, 5:30 p.m.

College men's basketball

EOU vs. Warner Pacific, 7:30 p.m.

Preps boys wrestling

Echo/Stamfield, Heppner/Ione, Riverside at Jo-Hi Invitational, noon
Hermiston at Rollie Lane, Nampa, Idaho, TBD

College men's wrestling

EOU at Arizona Christian, 4 p.m.

SATURDAY, JAN. 8

Prep girls basketball
McLoughlin at Ontario, 3 p.m.
Heppner at Grant Union, 4 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Union, 4 p.m.
Elgin at Nixyaawii, 4 p.m.
Echo at Bickleton, 4 p.m.
Spray/Mitchell/Wheeler at Ione/Arlington, 4 p.m.
Weston-McEwen at Stanfield, 4 p.m.

Prep boys basketball

McLoughlin at Ontario, 4:30 p.m.
Heppner at Grant Union, 5:30 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Union, 5:30 p.m.
Elgin at Nixyaawii, 5:30 p.m.
Echo at Bickleton, 5:30 p.m.
Spray/Mitchell/Wheeler at Ione/Arlington, 5:30 p.m.
Weston-McEwen at Stanfield, 4 p.m.

College women's basketball

EOU vs. Multnomah, 3 p.m.

College men's basketball

EOU vs. Multnomah, 5 p.m.

Preps boys wrestling

Echo/Stamfield, Heppner/Ione, Riverside at Jo-Hi Invitational, noon
Hermiston at Rollie Lane, Nampa, Idaho, TBD

College men's wrestling

EOU at Embury-Riddle (Arizona), 6 p.m.

Prep swimming

Pendleton at Jay Rowen Invite, Redmond, TBD

MONDAY, JAN. 10

Prep girls basketball
Stanfield at Enterprise, 5 p.m.

Prep boys basketball
Stanfield at Enterprise, 6:30 p.m.