

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29, 2022

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SPORTS SHOTS



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
Blue Mountain Community College's Jaelyn Brainard leaps with the ball toward the basket Wednesday, Jan. 26, 2022, during the Timberwolves' 60-45 win over the Yakima Valley Yaks at BMCC, Pendleton.



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian
Hermiston's Tyler Lin (in white) goes up for a shot despite pressure from Pasco defenders during a conference game Jan. 21, 2022, at the Dawg House in Hermiston. The Hermiston Bulldogs beat the Pasco Bulldogs 84-72.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian
Stanfield's Alexis Shelby puts up a shot Tuesday, Jan. 25, 2022, against the McLoughlin Pioneers at McLoughlin High School in Milton-Freewater. The Tigers defeated the Pioneers 53-45.



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian
Hermiston's Lindsay Pasena Littlesky faces Kamiakin defenders during a conference game Tuesday, Jan. 25, 2022, at the Dawg House in Hermiston. Kamiakin won 60-59.

Hunter remembers era of the hunting hound

By EMRY DINMAN
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA — On a cold January morning, the snow from a recent storm largely melted, Brian Hergert sat inside the living room of his cozy Walla Walla home, surrounded by houseplants in every corner and furnishings he's fashioned out of antlers and animal hides.

In a few hours, he would be headed to his property out in the country, ready to be back in nature after staying home for a few days. Outside, two coonhounds, Maisie and Tracker, howl at newcomers and passing cats before curling up again for a nap inside their chain-link kennel.

An avid hunter, Hergert has been running hounds since the early '80s. Before the practice was largely banned by voters more than a decade later, his hounds often helped him hunt big game predators, including cougars, in the Blue Mountains.

"We used to take, in a good year, I'd kill six, seven cats," Hergert said. "It was nothing to take out 40, 50 cats out of the Blues from here to Dayton between me and my friends."

In 1996, however, Washington state joined Oregon in outlawing the use of hounds to hunt or pursue black bear, cougars or bobcats, with some exceptions. On a wall in a nearby hallway, Hergert has hung several photos from that year commemorating the last recreational hunt of cougars with his hounds.

That initiative, which also largely criminalized the use of bait to attract black bears, was approved by Washington voters by a comfortable margin, marking what many saw as a sea change for hunters in the state.

Management of large predators has remained politically contentious in the decades since, often flared by increased human-cougar interactions, livestock predation and rare but high-profile fatal attacks.

But recently, debate over

what to do with cougars in the Blue Mountains in particular has increased for a different reason: dwindling elk populations.

The Blue Mountain elk herd is estimated to consist of around 3,500 animals, according to reporting by the Lewiston Tribune, well below the population objective of 5,500 currently set by the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife.

The herd's calves also often are not surviving to maturity.

A 2021 study by the Washington Department of Fish & Wildlife monitored 125 elk calves with radio collars — by mid-November, only 11 still were known to be alive. While a number of factors such as a recent harsh winter and drought have contributed to the high mortality rate, cougars are believed to have accounted for 54 of those deaths.

While some have called for reducing elk hunting in the area to protect the herd, the study's findings have prompted calls to extend cougar-hunting season in the Blue Mountains as well as for the Fish & Wildlife to use hounds to hunt the big cats for management purposes, which is allowed under the 1996 law.

For Hergert, calls to increase cougar hunting are long overdue.

Hergert's hounds

While the veteran hunter has owned as many as six hunting dogs at one time, these days he just keeps the two: a redtick-treering walker mix named Maisie, and a redtick-bluetick mix named Tracker.

Hergert grew up hunting birds with his dad and brother, and when he began using hounds, he started with small game. He had permission to run his dogs through the ditches alongside farm ground out near Waitsburg and elsewhere, chasing down raccoons.

"But they're just kind of greasy, stinky deals," Hergert said. "But big cats, they're good eating."

It wasn't long before Hergert

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ON THE SLATE

Schedule subject to change

SATURDAY, JAN. 29

College baseball

Eastern Oregon vs. Oklahoma Panhandle State, Glendale, Arizona, 9 a.m.
Eastern Oregon Vs. Benedictine Mesa, Glendale, Arizona, 1 p.m.

College men's wrestling

Eastern Oregon at Clackamas Open, 9 a.m.

College women's wrestling

Big Bend at Eastern Oregon, noon

College women's basketball

Blue Mountain at Big Bend, 2 p.m.
Corban at Eastern Oregon, 3 p.m.

College men's basketball

Blue Mountain at Big Bend, 4 p.m.
Corban at Eastern Oregon, 5 p.m.

Prep girls basketball

Nixyaawii at Powder Valley, 2 p.m.
Echo at Horizon Christian/Hood River, 2 p.m.
Riverside at Nyssa, 3 p.m.
Southridge at Hermiston, 3:15 p.m.
Umatilla at Burns, 3:30 p.m.
Heppner at Stanfield, 4 p.m.
Ontario at McLoughlin, 4 p.m.
Weston-McEwen at Grant Union, 4 p.m.
Pendleton at Crook County, 4:30 p.m.
Imbler at Griswold, 6 p.m.

Prep boys basketball

Echo at Horizon Christian/Hood River, 3:30 p.m.
Nixyaawii at Powder Valley, 3:30 p.m.
Umatilla at Burns, 3:30 p.m.
Riverside at Nyssa, 4:30 p.m.
Southridge at Hermiston, 5 p.m.

Umatilla at Burns, 5 p.m.

Weston-McEwen at Grant Union, 5:30 p.m.

Heppner at Stanfield, 5:30 p.m.

Imbler at Griswold, 5:30 p.m.

Ontario at McLoughlin, 5:30 p.m.

Prep boys wrestling

Heppner, Pendleton, Irrigon, Echo/Stanfield, Hermiston, McLoughlin/Weston-McEwen, Riverside at Irrigon JV Invite, 9 a.m.

SUNDAY, JAN. 30

College women's wrestling

Eastern Oregon at Washington State, 3 p.m.
Monday, Jan. 31

Prep girls basketball

Umatilla at Nyssa, 5 p.m.
Irrigon at Riverside, 6 p.m.

Prep boys basketball

Umatilla at Nyssa, 6:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, FEB. 1

Prep girls basketball

Umatilla at Vale, 3 p.m.
Bickleton at Echo, 5 p.m.
Pendleton at The Dalles, 5:30 p.m.
Enterprise at Stanfield, 5:30 p.m.
Hermiston at Kennewick, 5:45 p.m.
Nixyaawii at McLoughlin, 6 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Weston-McEwen, 6 p.m.

Prep boys basketball

Umatilla at Vale, 4:30 p.m.
Bickleton at Echo, 6:30 p.m.
Pendleton at The Dalles, 7 p.m.
Hermiston at Kennewick, 7:30 p.m.
Nixyaawii at McLoughlin, 7:30 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Weston-McEwen, 7:30 p.m.

SPORTS SHORT

EOU women's wrestling ranked NO. 17 in latest NAIA poll

East Oregonian

LA GRANDE — The National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics released its latest weekly Coaches' Top-20 poll on Thursday, Jan. 27, ranking the Eastern Oregon University women's wrestling program at No. 17 in the nation.

The Mountaineers dropped one spot from their previous No. 16 ranking last week. The team compiled five individual wrestlers

ranked in the top 20 in the NAIA.

Sophomore Olivia Robinson led the way with a No. 5 ranking at the 170-pound level, while senior Dempsey Talkington came in at No. 6 at the 155-pound level. Junior Morgan Shines (130) and sophomore Stephanie Blankenship (109) were both ranked No. 13 in their respective weight classes. Senior Macy Higa earned a No. 16 ranking at the 123-pound division.

Eastern received 52 votes as a team, the fourth highest ranking

for a Cascade Collegiate Conference program. Southern Oregon is slated at No. 3, Menlo College is ranked No. 6 and Providence came in at No. 12. Corban is just behind Eastern at No. 20.

The Mountaineers have not wrestled since the Oregon Wrestling Classic on Jan. 15, but are gearing up for one of the team's biggest duals of the season. Eastern will travel to face No. 3 Southern Oregon in Ashland on Feb. 5. Wrestling is slated to begin at 6 p.m.



Andrew Cutler/The Observer, File

Eastern Oregon University's Morgan Shines fights for position against Southern Oregon's Jordan Robson in November 2021. Shines is ranked ninth at 130 pounds in the Jan. 27, 2022, NAIA Coaches' Top-20 poll for women's wrestling.