

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2022

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Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Hermiston's Isaac Corey (0) is fouled while trying to shoot Jan. 29, 2022, during Hermiston's 94-55 win over Southridge in Hermiston.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Stanfield's Mazie Reeser (5) leaps to rebound a ball during the second half Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2022, in Stanfield. The Tigers defeated the Enterprise Outlaws 40-31.

SPORTS SHOTS



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Hermiston's Adrianna Coleman (11) puts up a shot Jan. 29, 2022, during the second half of Hermiston's 74-65 win over Southridge in Hermiston.



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian

Riverside's Axel Gonzalez (40) puts up a shot during the first half Tuesday, Feb. 1, 2022, against the Stanfield Tigers in Stanfield. Riverside prevailed 47-43.



Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

Nixyaawii's Dylan Abrahamson (1) shoots during a league game Jan. 28, 2022, against Griswold in Mission. Nixyaawii beat the Grizzlies 86-11.

Timberwolves out to rebound after down season

By JEFF BUDLONG
For EO Media Group

PENDLETON — Entering his ninth season leading the Blue Mountain Community College baseball team, Brad Baker is eager to rid his squad of the bitter taste that last season's pandemic-impacted campaign left.

The Timberwolves limped to a 4-24 record, struggling all around the diamond.

"We played a ton of true freshmen last year, while a lot of teams were playing third-year guys," said Baker, whose squad was off to an above-.500 start two seasons ago before the pandemic shut down the season. "It was a weird year with COVID."

"Since I have been here, the team's record has improved each year until last year," Baker said. "We are looking to bounce back this year."

Baker returns 20 players with experience, and the Timberwolves are buoyed by a fall ball performance that saw them go 3-2. Add in some promising newcomers and there are expectations for improvement.

"We have a decent amount of returners and some good leadership," he said. "We don't have a glaring weakness, which is good."



Ben Lonergan/East Oregonian, File

Blue Mountain Community College's Kaden Boyle (22) leans to catch a pass as Walla Walla's Dalton Jones (8) slides safely into third base May 20, 2021. BMCC is looking to rebound in 2022 after a 2-24 record last year.

Baker was pleased with what he saw on the mound, an area that consistently hurt Blue Mountain last season when it often fell behind early and struggled to rebound. Cooper Marshall, Jake Allen and Jesse Theriot will help front the rotation. Theriot during the Timberwolves in strikeouts during the fall.

Offensively, Kaden Boyle hit more than .500 during the fall and showed marked improvement while playing in the infield. Boyle hit .205 with four doubles a season

ago. Tommy Whiles brings a left-handed bat to the lineup and can play first base or in the outfield. He hit at better than a .300 clip during fall ball.

What were growing pains a year ago have now transformed into improved leadership and camaraderie on the squad. Baker said many of his players learned from their first-year struggles and worked to improve over the offseason.

"They have stepped up and shown the new guys how things

are done and worked to change the culture from last year to this year," he said.

The Timberwolves were able to get through the fall season healthy, but COVID-19 has caused some issues since practice started in January. Just as the team was rounding into form, Baker missed a week of practice recently with his own COVID-19 battle.

"It has been tough to get the whole team out there consistently," Baker said.

The Timberwolves open the season Feb. 25 and Feb. 26 with two home games against Clackamas. Blue Mountain will benefit from a favorable early-season schedule that sees it play 14 consecutive home games during the month of March.

Baker plans to use the last weeks of practice to get his team up to speed on situational baseball as well as adjusting to being outdoors as winter begins to ease its grip on the region.

"We just need live at-bats and scrimmage opportunities will be very beneficial," he said.

Consistent improvement will be key this season as Baker wants to see his team get better each week. Blue Mountain has reached the playoffs just once in school history, but Baker said that serves as motivation for his team as it looks to add to it.

ON THE SLATE

SATURDAY, FEB. 5

Prep girls basketball
Burns at Riverside, 1:30 p.m.
Joseph at Nixyaawii, 1:30 p.m.
Echo at Bickleton, 2 p.m.
Ione/Arlington at Spray/Mitchell/Wheeler, 2 p.m.
Vale at Umatilla, 3 p.m.
Hermiston at Walla Walla, 3 p.m.
Nyssa at Irrigon, 3 p.m.
Heppner at Union, 4 p.m.
Griswold at Wallowa, 4 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Stanfield, 4 p.m.

Prep boys basketball
Vale at Umatilla, 2:30 p.m.
Burns at Riverside, 3 p.m.
Echo at Bickleton, 3:30 p.m.
Ione/Arlington at Spray/Mitchell/Wheeler, 3:30 p.m.
Nyssa at Irrigon, 4:30 p.m.
Joseph at Nixyaawii, 4:45 p.m.
Hermiston at Walla Walla, 5 p.m.
Heppner at Union, 5:30 p.m.
Griswold at Wallowa, 5:30 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Stanfield, 5:30 p.m.

Prep girls wrestling
Heppner, Pendleton, Echo/Stanfield, Irrigon, McLoughlin/Weston-McEwen, Pine Eagle, Riverside at Bank of Eastern Oregon Invitational, TBA
Hermiston at 3A MCC Districts, TBA

Prep girls wrestling
Pendleton/Griswold/Nixyaawii, Irrigon, Echo/Stanfield at Special District 4, West Albany High School, TBA

College baseball
Eastern Oregon at Linfield, 1 p.m.

College women's basketball
Blue Mountain at Columbia Basin, 2 p.m.
Eastern Oregon at Lewis-Clark State, 3 p.m.

College men's basketball
Blue Mountain at Columbia Basin, 4 p.m.
Eastern Oregon at Lewis-Clark State, 5 p.m.

College women's wrestling
Eastern Oregon at Southern Oregon, 6 p.m.

College men's wrestling
Eastern Oregon at Southern Oregon, 7 p.m.

SUNDAY, FEB. 6
College baseball
Eastern Oregon at Linfield, 1 p.m.