

# EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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Samantha Flett/Eastern Oregon University Athletics, File  
**Samantha Buckley (5) of Eastern Oregon University maneuvers between a pair of Corban University players during a lacrosse match March 20, 2021. The Mountaineers completed the program's inaugural season with a 1-4 record. The 2022 season begins Saturday, Feb. 12, against Whitworth in Spokane.**

## Women's lacrosse announces schedule

By DAVIS CARBAUGH  
*The Observer*

LA GRANDE — The Eastern Oregon University women's lacrosse team is back in action for its second season as a program.

The university announced the team's 2022 schedule Feb. 1, a slate of 12 games. The Mountaineers are set to host five games at Community Stadium in La Grande this year and travel for the remainder of competitions.

Eastern is coming off its inaugural season in 2021, one year later than the program was expected to hit the field. The coronavirus pandemic canceled the 2020 season, setting the stage for 2021 as Eastern's first year of competition.

In a season still heavily impacted by the pandemic, the Mountaineers compiled a 1-4 record and competed in five seven-on-seven scrimmages. Eastern picked up its first win in program history on March 5 against Whitworth.

This season, the Mountaineers open up competition Saturday, Feb. 12, against Whitworth in Spokane. Eastern will host two straight home games on the weekend of Feb. 19, welcoming in Willamette and Linfield.

The Mountaineers travel for a handful of mid-season tournament matchups, facing Whitman and Whitworth on the weekend of Feb.

26 at the Whitman Classic in Walla Walla. After a road tilt against Corban, Eastern is set to travel to Boise to compete March 12 and 13 at the Boise State Tournament.

Eastern hosts Multnomah on March 19 and Whitman on March 20 on a back-to-back homestand at Community Stadium. The Mountaineers head to Tacoma to face Puget Sound on March 26 and conclude regular-season road competition on April 2 at Corban.

The Mountaineers conclude the regular season at home against Multnomah on April 16 at Community Stadium.

In Eastern's first season under head coach Monica Plut, the Mountaineers faced Corban three times and lost each contest. Eastern will have two chances at revenge against the Warriors this year, as well as welcoming first-year program Multnomah to the lacrosse scene.

Eastern has a young team, with 11 underclassmen on the roster. The Mountaineers return numerous key players from last year's roster, including junior Kiana Watchman and senior Lauren Kombol. Eastern announced last October the hiring of assistant coach Ryan McMillen, another new addition looking to build up the university's women's lacrosse program.

Eastern's opening game at Whitworth on Feb. 12 is set to start at noon.

## Oregon baseball gets new turf at PK Park

By JAMES CREPEA  
*The Oregonian*

EUGENE — Oregon baseball is going to look different on the field in more ways than one this season.

The Ducks will have an entirely new pitching rotation and several new starters in the field as well. They'll also be playing at a renovated PK Park, which had its FieldTurf replaced, the fences brought in slightly in the power alleys, a new videoboard installed in left field and the fence height made uniform throughout the park this offseason.

"It's coming along nicely," Oregon coach Mark Wasikowski said. "There's brand new turf out there. There's graphics all over the place. They just are beginning the videoboard and scoreboard. All of the changes and the updates and all of that stuff should be complete by the beginning of the season, first home game. Everything is on pace. It looks amazing."

The walls in left- and right-center have been moved in between 10 and 15 feet and the fence is now 6-1/2 feet tall across the entire outfield, compared to the previously

shorter wall in front of the Oregon bullpen in right field.

The hope is those changes will create more offense in the pitcher-friendly ballpark, specifically allowing more opportunities for triples since there will be fewer ground-rule doubles.

"It's going to allow outfielders to make more athletic plays, maybe rob some home runs," Wasikowski said. "It'll also allow for the ball that goes over an outfielder's head, instead of bouncing over the fence that we saw a lot of times, especially in right field with our short porch, I think what we're going to see now and what we've seen so far in the early going is that ball bounces and hits the fence."

"More triples in the ballpark or scoring a guy from first base on a ball that goes to the wall. That's a pretty exciting piece of the baseball game, the three-base play is the most exciting play in the game. To limit that is something we tried to get rid of, we tried to maximize that and I think we'll be able to do that."

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## EOU softball team aiming to build a winning culture

By DAVIS CARBAUGH  
*The Observer*

LA GRANDE — Spring is on the horizon, and the Eastern Oregon University softball team is gearing up for its 2022 season.

Third-year head coach Nicole Christian leads the way for the Mountaineers, who are aiming to surprise teams around the softball landscape. Coming off a trip to the conference tournament as the No. 5 seed last season, Eastern is aiming to establish itself near the top of the Cascade Collegiate Conference.

"We're really excited," Christian said. "I think the girls have been putting in the work in the weight room and we've been getting out on the turf. I think if we don't place in that top five or top six to make the CCC tournament, it would be a disappointment."

The Mountaineers finished 16-32 overall last season, compiling a 10-17 conference record. Eastern earned a trip to the conference championships, but ultimately came up short with back-to-back losses against Corban and the College of Idaho.

### Building depth

Eastern saw three players earn conference honors at the end of the season, two of which the team will be looking to replace this year. Catchers Jordan Henley and

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Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group, File  
**Eastern Oregon University pitcher Amanda Smith (14) delivers a pitch April 23, 2021, against the University of Providence at Peggy Anderson Softball Field, La Grande. Smith is set to lead Eastern's pitching rotation in 2022 as the Mountaineers look to contend in the Cascade Collegiate Conference.**



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