

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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A9

Being sick with COVID-19 is no joke



ANNIE FOWLER

FOWLER'S FOCUS

I'm back! You may have noticed I was missing from the sports page, or maybe not, but it's certainly good to be back in front of my computer.

I'd like to say I was on a great African safari, or soaking up the sun in Florida, but I have been battling COVID-19 and pneumonia since the middle of January.

Where I caught this, who knows. I don't go anywhere or see many people. One of life's little mysteries.

I texted the area coaches to let them know I would be gone for a while, but a lot of my friends don't even know that I spent 5-1/2 days in the hospital in isolation, let alone that I was sick.

In hindsight, I probably should have gone to the doctor when I first started feeling sick on Jan. 11. I am a stubborn old gal, so it wasn't until Jan. 19 that my hubby, Scott, took me to the emergency department. That's when all the bad news came.

My oxygen level was at 70, which I found out is super duper bad. So off to the hospital in an ambulance I went. It was my first ambulance ride. It was bumpy and cold. I do not recommend this mode of travel.

I spent the first 2-1/2 days flat on my back, on 100% oxygen. It was a treat to get out of bed and sit in a chair with my feet up the rest of my stay. Each day that my oxygen levels got better, my doctor would give me a high-five. On my final day, he congratulated me on beating COVID-19 and said he did not want to see me again. He was a fun guy.

The interesting part of this hospital stay was that my doctor told me I might be there with them even if I had been vaccinated. He told me they have seen several vaccinated people come through with COVID-19.

With the blessing of my regular doctor, I have been putting off the vaccine while dealing with a circulation issue in my right leg. The worry of blood clots is the main issue.

I still have bruises on my tummy where they gave me countless doses of heparin and

other things to keep me alive. The key word here is "alive."

The night Scott took me to the ER, I went in to change out of my jammies and into clothes. I laid down on the bed because I had zero energy. A few days later, he told me he thought he had lost me that night. I was ash gray and lifeless. After 32 years, you aren't getting rid of me that easily.

The first week home from the hospital was spent avoiding the rest of the world so my poor lungs could heal and not pick up another evil virus.

I still have a wicked cough that sometimes can be controlled with my inhaler, and sometimes not. I have gone on small excursions to get my lungs working. These wear me out, but there's always time for a nap.

While I was battling to catch my breath, longtime Riverside Athletic Director and boys and girls basketball coach Clair Costello was in the same boat I was, and it wasn't a luxury yacht.

Costello said he knew he was sick on Jan. 9. By Jan. 16, he was on a plane to Hillsboro because no local hospital had space for him.

His oxygen levels were down to 74, and his asthma made it even worse.

"I spent eight days in the ICU and three days in a regular room," he said. "The first three days, they didn't know if I would make it or not. I told them no ventilator. I have had the flu, but nothing like this. It was no fun. I had the shots, but it didn't make a difference."

Costello, 65, was released from the hospital Jan. 27 and was in quarantine until Jan. 30. He returned to the sidelines Feb. 1 at Stanfield, with an extra team member in tow — an oxygen tank.

"I'm on oxygen for another two weeks," he said. "I'm having some fun with that. I can't go 20 minutes without the oxygen."

Like my hubby, Costello's wife, Cheryl, and daughters, Carly and Caitlin, spent days worrying before he recovered enough to return home.

I can laugh about this experience now, but this COVID-19 thing is no joke.

Annie Fowler is the sports reporter for the East Oregonian and in her career has covered high school sports, rodeo and Tri-City Americans hockey.

MAKING HISTORY

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

PUNE, India — An Eastern Oregon University soccer player recently helped the Philippines women's national soccer team make history.

Kiara Fontanilla, a goalkeeper for the Mountaineers, played a part in the team's magical run at the AFC Women's Asian Cup. A dramatic victory in penalty kicks over Chinese Taipei on Jan. 30 sealed the Philippines' spot in the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, marking the first time the country ever qualified for the tournament.

The Philippines' run started in the group stage, with the team looking to earn enough points to make the knockout stages. The team started with a narrow 1-0 victory over Thailand on Jan. 21 to secure three points — forward Chandler McDaniel scored the game-winning goal in the 81st minute.

In the team's second matchup, Fontanilla earned her first career start at the international level against one of the toughest teams in the tournament. Fontanilla started in net against Australia, ranked No. 11 in the FIFA women's soccer rankings.

Up against one of the strongest teams in the tournament, Fontanilla and the Philippines held Australia scoreless in the first half. Australia picked up the pace in the second half and won 4-0 after controlling



Eastern Oregon University Athletics/Contributed Photo, File
Kiara Fontanilla readies to clear the ball in front of the Eastern Oregon University goal during a match in the 2021 spring season. Fontanilla helped the Philippines earn a spot in the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup, marking the first time the country has ever qualified for the tournament.

possession for 75% of the match.

A 6-0 win over Indonesia in the Philippines' third match of the AFC group stage ensured the team's spot in the knockout rounds.

Matched up against Chinese Taipei, the Philippines had their hands full in a low-scoring match. Both teams went back and forth with chances, but played out a scoreless first half. Quinley Quezada scored the opening goal in the 49th minute off a volley, giving Philippines a 1-0 lead. However, Chinese Taipei's Zhuo Li-ping scored an equalizer off an incredible long shot from outside the box in the 82nd minute.

After 30 minutes of scoreless extra time, the Philippines' fate would come down to a series of penalty kicks.

Both teams converted three out of their first five attempts, leaving the game up for grabs. Ping shot the sixth penalty for Chinese

Taipei, but her shot was saved by goalkeeper Olivia Davies McDaniel. With the game on the line, the Philippines' Sarina Bolden drilled a shot into the left side of the net to send the team through to the semifinals and clinch the country's first World Cup appearance. Players and coaches alike embraced on the field as history was made.

The Philippines went on to lose 2-0 to No. 19 South Korea in the semifinals, ending the team's hopes of winning the AFC Women's Asian Cup. Nonetheless, the team achieved its ultimate goal of earning a spot in the FIFA Women's World Cup.

The Philippines are one of six teams currently eligible for the World Cup, with other continents still in the qualifying stages. The 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup is set to take place across Australia and New Zealand, with group stages scheduled to begin in late July 2023.

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