

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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A10

Hermsiton's Gribskov, Cadenas win state wrestling titles

Eseta Sepeni becomes first Hermiston female wrestler to place at state

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

TACOMA, Wash. — Winning a state wrestling championship is no easy feat, but two Hermiston wrestlers added their names to the school's champions' wall after winning titles Saturday, Feb. 20, at the 3A state tournament at the Tacoma Dome.

Jaxson Gribskov became the first Hermiston wrestler to win a Washington state title when he won by a 12-4 major decision over Deklen Agloinga of Mead at 182 pounds.

Senior Sam Cadenas, who pinned his first three opponents at state, was pushed in the 285-pound champion-



The Hermiston Bulldogs celebrate their second-place finish in the 3A state wrestling team standings on Saturday, Feb. 19, 2022, in Tacoma, Washington.

ship match before he came away with a 5-4 decision over Burak Bowers of Bonney Lake.

To top off the weekend, the Bull-

dogs finished second in the team stands with 171 points. Mead won the team title with 236.5 points.

"Everyone contributed," Hermis-

ton coach Kyle Larson said. "We are just really happy."

The fact that Gribskov made the trip to state is impressive, to say the least.

He lost in the first round of regionals the week before, then had to win five loser-out matches to earn a berth. He won all five matches to finish third and punched his ticket to state.

In his title match, Gribskov dominated Agloinga from the start. He led 5-2 after the first period, 8-2 after two, and recorded two takedowns in the third to seal the win.

Gribskov left the mat in tears of joy.

"He was so happy," Larson said. "He just broke down. He went to his team and they gave him a big hug. He made it happen. When he got off the mat, he said, 'Coach if you would have told me I would have been a state champion 3 weeks ago,

I wouldn't have believed you.' I hope the rest of them see that. Buy into the program, trust your coach and good things will happen."

To reach the finals, Gribskov knocked off top-ranked Navarre Dixon of Lincoln 7-6. Gribskov went into state ranked eighth.

"Now I'm No. 1," Gribskov said. Gribskov said he went into state hoping to place.

"I was literally going there hoping I could get top six or top four and I came out a state champion," he said. "First from Hermiston — that's crazy. You would think there would be others. I was getting pretty fired up before the match. It was awesome, a great environment and great energy."

Gribskov said he couldn't control the tears.

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Pendleton Rhythmic Mode dancers perform Friday, Feb. 18, 2022, during halftime of a basketball game at Pendleton High School.

Rhythmic Mode performs at Hearts in Motion

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Pendleton High School's Rhythmic Mode dance team has been entertaining fans at basketball games for more than 30 years.

Fans will get another chance to watch the team perform Saturday, Feb. 26, at the 34th annual Hearts in Motion competition at Pendleton High School.

The competition includes dance teams from kindergarten to high school, with Rhythmic Mode competing against teams from Grant Union, Hermiston and Molalla.

"Just having the opportunity to have a competition again is a big step," said Rhythmic Mode coach Debbie Kishpaugh. "COVID kind of killed our program last year. There was a lot of hard work and nothing to show for it. Last year at this time, we were working on tennis courts in Stillman Park with masks on. It was really, really tough."

This year Rhythmic Mode is in a rebuilding phase with one senior, two juniors, one sophomore and seven freshmen.

They recently went to Canby and placed third in the 5A division and received the Greatest Showman Award for showmanship (costumes and facial expressions).

The Hearts in Motion serves as a fundraiser for Rhythmic Mode to help defray



Members of the Pendleton Rhythmic Mode perform Friday, Feb. 18, 2022, during halftime of a basketball game at Pendleton High School.

costs of traveling to the state competition, which this year is March 19 at Oregon City High School.

"They moved it from the (Memorial) coliseum (in Portland)," Kishpaugh said. "The magic will be that we have state, which we haven't had in two years. That is a long time in the life of a kid. They are resentful and angry. They feel cheated. Two years have been stolen from the kids, in my opinion."

Admission is \$10 for adults, and \$5 for those 12 and younger. Doors open at 10 a.m., with dancing beginning at 11 a.m.

There also will be a raffle with items donated by local merchants.

Rhythmic Mode team members are Natalie Bentley, Miranda Case, Madi Ericson, Paige Gard, Madelyn Lieuellen, Ava Redding, Sammie Stills, Aubrey Wadlington, Cassie Wiegand, Gabe Gorbett and Asia Tachella.

EOU BASKETBALL

Teams head to championships with high hopes

By DAVIS CARBAUGH
The Observer

LA GRANDE — As winter's end gradually approaches, basketball season is reaching its culmination.

The Eastern Oregon University men's basketball team has overcome a series of obstacles under first-year interim head coach Chris Kemp, while the women's team sparked a major run in the second half of the season to finish near the top of the Cascade Collegiate Conference.

"I think our guys are playing the best basketball they've played all year," Kemp said. "I have high hopes that we're peaking at the right time."

Overcoming adversity

The Eastern men's season has been far from predictable.

Just four games into the year, the program's all-time leading scorer, Max McCullough, suffered a season-ending injury. Experienced guard Paul Pennington was injured early on as well, missing the first half of the year. The injuries were a recipe for disaster for a first-year coach, but the Mountaineers buckled down and found a way to succeed.

Transfers Phillip Malatare and Xavier Lovelace have stepped up in a big way, helping the Mountaineers clinch a spot in the 2022 conference tournament.

Eastern will enter the tournament as the No. 6 seed in the conference and face Lewis-Clark State on the road in the opening round. The Mountaineers lost to the Warriors 76-72 on Dec. 17 and 65-55 on Feb. 5. Eastern wrapped up the regular season with a 12-10 conference record.

Kemp noted that Malatare and Lovelace have been the team's two most solid contributors this season, as expected when the program signed the transfers. Malatare is averaging 19 points and 5.7 rebounds per game, while Lovelace is putting up 13.2 points and 8.3 rebounds per contest.

Kemp expressed that the team's success and mentality have been spawned from much more than the team's top scorers. Rotation players including Preston Chandler, Pennington, Justin Jeske, Cooper Lumsden, Zane Wright and Ismael Valdez also have contributed to the team's success.

"A lot of those returners have stepped into newer roles and really blossomed," he said. "That whole returning group has been a huge plus for us, just how they've played together and gelled as a group."

In the wake of early-season injuries and the COVID-19 pandemic playing a big role in player availability, the Mountaineers managed to secure a winning record. As the postseason approaches rapidly, the team is as healthy as it can be and has its eyes set on a playoff push.

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ON THE SLATE

TUESDAY, FEB. 22

Prep boys basketball

Pendleton at Hood River Valley, 5:45 p.m.
1A state playoffs: Trinity Academy at lone/Arlington (at lone), 6 p.m.

Prep girls basketball

3A state play-in game: Peninsula at Hermiston, 7 p.m. (loser out)
Pendleton at Hood River, 7:30 p.m.

College women's basketball

Warner Pacific at Eastern Oregon, Cascade Collegiate Conference Tournament, Quinn Coliseum, 7 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 23

Prep girls basketball

1A state playoffs: North Clackamas Christian at lone/Arlington (at Arlington), 6 p.m.

College men's basketball

Walla Walla at Blue Mountain, 7:30 p.m.
Eastern Oregon at Lewis-Clark State, Cascade Collegiate Conference Tournament, 7 p.m.

College women's basketball

Walla Walla at Blue Mountain, 5:30 p.m.

THURSDAY, FEB. 24

Prep girls wrestling

Riverside at state tournament, Culver, 9 a.m.

College softball

Eastern Oregon at Menlo College (2), 10 a.m.

FRIDAY, FEB. 25

Prep girls basketball

Pendleton at Baker, 7 p.m.

Prep boys basketball

2A state playoffs: Stanfield at Western Christian, 6 p.m.
2A state playoffs: Bandon at Heppner, 6 p.m.

1A state playoffs: Nixyaawii vs. TBD

College softball

Eastern Oregon at William Jessup, noon
Eastern Oregon vs. Hope International, Rocklin, California, 4 p.m.

SATURDAY, FEB. 26

Prep wrestling

Pendleton at 5A state tournament, Ridgeview High School, 9 a.m.
McLoughlin at 4A state tournament, Cascade High School, 9 a.m.
Riverside, Irrigon at 3A state tournament, La Pine High School, 9 a.m.
Heppner/lone, Echo at 2A state tournament, Culver High School, 9 a.m.

Prep girls basketball

1A state playoffs: Echo vs. TBD
1A state playoffs: Nixyaawii vs. TBD
2A state playoffs: Stanfield at Vernonia, 1 p.m.

College men's basketball

Big Bend at Blue Mountain, 4 p.m.

College women's basketball

Big Bend at Blue Mountain, 2 p.m.

College baseball

Eastern Oregon at Lewis-Clark State (2), noon

College women's lacrosse

Eastern Oregon at Whitman, 10 a.m.

SUNDAY, FEB. 27

College women's wrestling

Eastern Oregon at Cascade Collegiate Conference Championships, Great Falls, Montana, TBA

College baseball

Eastern Oregon at Lewis-Clark State (2), 11 a.m.

College softball

Eastern Oregon vs. Marymount California, Rocklin, California (2), 10 a.m.

College women's lacrosse

Eastern Oregon vs. Whitworth, Walla Walla, 1 p.m.