

# EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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## THRIVING IN PARADISE

### Hermiston's Young will take talents to EWU

By ANNIE FOWLER  
East Oregonian

**H**ERMISTON — It's a thrower's paradise at Hermiston High School.

With three former college throwers on the track and field coaching staff, the sky's the limit for athletes looking to improve their technique and marks.

Bailey Young has grown up in the program, and the results speak for themselves — she has signed a letter of intent to throw at Eastern Washington University in Cheney, Washington.

"It's really exciting," said Young, whose scholarship will pay for her tuition. "Their throws coach (Marcia Mecklenburg) is really sweet. She calls and checks in on me. I'm excited to get to work with her. I really like the other throwers, and we have had some other Hermiston kids go there, so it must be pretty good."

Hermiston head coach Emilee Strot, who threw collegiately at Cal and Kentucky, said Eastern Washington is a good fit for Young.

"I think it's an amazing opportunity," Strot said. "She will be competing at the highest level. That environment will help her excel. It's close to home and she has great family support. On top of that, talking to their throws coach, I can tell she believes Bailey Jo has a high potential in the sport. Bailey needs that. All of that makes it a perfect opportunity for her."

When looking at schools, Young said she kept in mind the distance from home.

"There were a couple of schools in Arizona and Colorado talking to me," Young said. "I wanted my parents to be able to come and watch, and it has to have trees. I can't be in a place that is desert-ish. Eastern also has a really good biology program. I want to be a veterinarian, that has been a dream of mine."

The family element is part of Young's success. She has tremendous support from her parents, grandparents and extended family.

"Our schedule for the next three months is never ending,"



Hermiston's Bailee Young throws the javelin during a meet with Kennewick and Hanford on April 8, 2021, at Kennison Field. Young took third with a throw of 102-08. Young will continue her track career at Eastern Washington University.

Young said. "They divide and conquer. They try to get to everything and make sure everyone has someone there."

The shot put is Young's premier event, but she also throws discus and javelin. In college, Mecklenburg also would like her to try the hammer.

"I really love the shot put," Young said. "It's my favorite, 100%. Some people think you throw an 8-pound ball as far as you can, but I love to learn different techniques. It's fun to learn. I do the glide right now, but in college, we will see what Marcia wants me to do. She wants me to start working on the hammer when I get to college."

Young already has begun to work on the hammer. She occasionally goes to teammate Caden Hottman's house to throw. Hottman has signed to throw at Washington State, and holds the Hermiston school record in the discus at 183-11.

One of Young's goals

this season is to break coach Mykael Mannucci's school record in the shot put, which stands at 44-10 3/4. Young's top mark is 41-10. The other is to qualify for the 3A state meet.

"That is my goal, and she is super encouraging," Young said of Mannucci, who threw at University of Idaho. "I keep telling her I am going to break her record, she says 'I hope you do.'"

Strot said Young has the ability to break records and reach the state meet.

"I'm excited she has such big goals she has set for herself," Strot said. "She has put in the work in the past three-plus years to accomplish those goals."

That work includes endless hours in the weight room, where Young is one of the strongest girls at Hermiston High.

"The weightlifting program coach Strot has for the females is amazing," Young said. "I would not be the same athlete I am with-

out it. You want to be in the weight room. You know everyone, and they want to get better. It's hard to think I would be where I am today without that atmosphere."

Strot has seen the effects the weight training program has had on Young.

"I have had a really good relationship with her in the weight room and on the field," Strot said. "Her strength in the weight room has paid off in throwing the shot put. Her goals are definitely possible. She just needs to show up every day and compete."

Young also played basketball for the Bulldogs for four years. This season, they advanced to the Elite 8 of the 3A state tournament. Young was named to the all-tournament honorable mention team.

"We have such amazing coaching staffs for basketball and track," Young said. "We are super lucky at Hermiston. I don't think a lot of our athletes realize that."

## Senior breaks Hermiston High's discus record

By ANNIE FOWLER  
East Oregonian

RICHLAND, Wash. — Hermiston senior Caden Hottman made an early season statement on Saturday, March 19, at the Richland Jamboree.

Hottman unleashed a throw of 183 feet, 11 inches to win the discus throw and better his own school record of 181-6. He also won the shot put with a personal best mark of 51-5 1/2 — 3 feet better than Kamiakin's EJ Hawkins.

Hermiston's Ryker McDonald was second in the 100 meters in a time of 11.40 seconds, and was third in the shot put (44-10 3/4).

Freshman Jaysen Rodriguez ran a personal best 2:07.46 to finish second in the 800, while Landon Shilhanek ran a personal best 53.76 second to place third in the 400 meters.

In the girls division, sophomore Megan Joyce won the 3,200 in a personal best time of 12:15.52 — nearly 4 seconds ahead of the next runner. Teammate Alexia Serna was fourth in 12:27.30.

Senior Bailey Young placed second to Hanford's Katelyn Gelston in the shot put and discus.

Young threw a personal best 111-9 in the discus, and had a mark of 37-11 3/4 in shot put.

Brenna Cearns was third in the shot put (31-5 1/4) for the Bulldogs, while Eseta Sepeni was sixth in the discus (95-3).

In the 800, Hermiston sophomore Jaquelin Garcia Sandoval finished third with a personal best time of 2:30.51.

Senior Cydney Sanchez was second in the 1,600 in a time of 5:42.18.

For a fuller rundown of the track meet, visit eastoregonian.com.



Hottman

## ON THE SLATE

Schedule subject to change

TUESDAY, MARCH 22

Prep baseball

McNary at Pendleton, Red Lion

Tournament, 9 a.m.

Pilot Rock vs. North Bend, UVC

Spring Break Tournament,

12:30 p.m.

Hermiston at Pasco, 4 p.m.

Rex Putnam at Pendleton, Red

Lion Tournament, 4:30 p.m.

Prep softball

Pendleton vs. Clackamas, Hawks

Invitational, 8 a.m.

Vernonia at Irrigon (2), 11 a.m.

Knappa at Heppner/Lone (2),

1 p.m.

Oakridge at Pilot Rock (2), 1 p.m.

Pendleton vs. McDaniel, Hawks

Invitational, 2 p.m.

Sunnyside Christian (WA) at Echo/

Stanfield (2), 2:30 p.m.

Southridge at Hermiston, 4 p.m.

Boys soccer

Pasco at Hermiston, 7 p.m.

Prep tennis

Hermiston at Kamiakin, 4 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 23

Prep baseball

Red Lion Tournament at Pendleton,

TBD

Pilot Rock vs. Lost River, UVC

Spring Break Tournament, 10 a.m.

Prep softball

Oakridge at Weston-McEwen,

11 a.m.

THURSDAY, MARCH 24

Prep baseball

Riverside at White Salmon, 4 p.m.

Track and field

Heppner, Pilot Rock, Irrigon, Riv-

erside, Stanfield/Echo, Umatilla at

Bulldog Invite, Hermiston, TBD

FRIDAY, MARCH 25

Prep baseball

Chiawana at Hermiston (2), 4 p.m.

Prep softball

Pilot Rock vs. Burns, Union Spring

Bash, noon

Umatilla vs. Seaside, Seaside

Spring Break Tournament, noon

Umatilla vs. Valley Catholic, Sea-

side Spring Break Tournament,

4 p.m.

Hermiston at Hanford (2), 4 p.m.

Pilot Rock vs. Bonanza, Union

Spring Bash, 4:30 p.m.

College baseball

Southwestern Oregon at Blue

Mountain (2), noon

College softball

Blue Mountain at Yakima Valley

(2), 2 p.m.

## EOU women's lacrosse team continues to build up program

By DAVIS CARBAUGH  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Building a program involves much more than wins and losses.

In the Eastern Oregon University women's lacrosse team's second year as an official program, things are trending up as the Mountaineers continue to build their identity. While Eastern is still looking to improve its record, the Mountaineers have made significant strides under head coach Monica Plut.

"We've definitely made strides, we've recruited some great players and really have a great foundation of what we're building," Plut said. "That was the most important thing for me coming into this year, building that foundation for years to come and making sure it's stable."

The Mountaineers started off the season right, achieving a historic feat. Despite capturing one exhibition victory last season, Eastern entered this season without an official victory. That all changed in a 8-6 victory over Whitworth in the team's

season opener Feb. 12.

Eastern's two-point victory on the road was achieved in dramatic fashion, as the Mountaineers fought back after falling behind early on. Whitworth gained a 3-1 lead to start off the match, but Eastern strung together a resilient defensive effort moving forward.

The Mountaineers fought back in the next two periods to head into the fourth frame tied at 6-all. Goals from Samantha Buckley and Claire Bever put Eastern in the driver's seat on the way to the program's first official win.

Buckley was exceptional in the win, scoring a team-high four goals. The sophomore is one of four returners on this year's roster looking to lay the foundation of the program.

Brooklyn Wright, another freshman, recorded 17 saves in the team's first win of the season. Wright is a freshman that joined the program after a prep career at Ankeny High School in Iowa.

"I was very impressed with our girls that we pulled it off," Plut said. "Our goalie played



Alex Wittwer/EO Media Group, File

Eastern Oregon University's Maddisson Hoyt (2) approaches the goal Feb. 19, 2022, during the match against the Willamette University Bearcats at Community Stadium, La Grande. The Mountaineers lost 17-6.

amazingly in that game. It was definitely an improved effort and it was really exciting."

The Mountaineers have a large freshman class contributing this season, with nine of the 13 players participating in their first collegiate season. Eastern has leaned on the likes of Wright in goal, Kate McAfee in midfield, Sydney Vopat in midfield and Claire Bever in defense. Buckley, a sophomore, has been an anchor on offense for Eastern.

Through six games, Buckley and McAfee lead the team

with nine points and nine goals each.

"All of our freshmen have so much drive and athleticism and can play all over the field, which definitely helps," Plut said. "Every class that we're bringing in is more and more talented and more and more dedicated."

With a young team looking to improve every day, the Mountaineers measure their success by meeting goals on a shorter-term basis.

"For us the last two years, it's really been week-to-

week," Plut said. "We meet every week and talk about what our top four goals are for the week. Everyday at practice we talk about individual and team goals."

As the Eastern lacrosse program grows, so too does the sport in the Pacific Northwest. Most popular on the East Coast, lacrosse is still a foreign sport to many in East Oregon — this idea presents a challenge in recruiting for the Mountaineers.

"Recruiting can be tough," Plut said. "We live in a small town and lacrosse is a suburb or city sport. I push the adventure side of it, I love living here because of the mountains, snowboarding, the views. I focus a lot on that part and the team bonding"

Plut is a USA lacrosse coaching development trainer, traveling across the country for conventions and recruiting trips. The Mountaineers' coach noted that spreading the word about the program and getting Eastern on the map has been a positive factor in recruiting. She also visits local middle schools and high schools such as La Grande

and Elgin to teach lacrosse in physical education classes.

"There's definitely a push with me to get the sport growing locally, that's what I love to do," Plut said.

The Mountaineers officially stand at 1-5 at the midway point in the season, following two scrimmages at the Boise State Tournament this past weekend. Eastern is set to play five more games on the season, including two against Multnomah and one against Corban — the two schools are the lone Cascade Collegiate Conference teams with lacrosse programs.

While Eastern is still working toward improving the team's win total, the journey toward success is a day-by-day process.

"We've talked a lot about what success looks like this year. Right now, it's just to have fun and enjoy being around each other while playing our sport," Plut said. "We've really been focusing on making small tweaks and have fun while doing it. Everyone plays better when they're passionate about it and having a blast."