

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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PENDLETON BASKETBALL

COACHES STEP DOWN

Porter says time is right to leave, Dong takes AD job in Idaho

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — It's always hard to lose coaches. Pendleton Athletic Director Mike Somnis is having to replace three coaches heading into the 2022-23 school year as volleyball coach Amanda Lapp, girls basketball coach Kevin Porter and boys basketball coach Zach Dong are stepping down.

Lapp gave her notice last fall when the season was over, and Somnis expects to announce a new hire in the coming weeks.

The two basketball jobs were a bit more shocking, but Somnis said the coaches are leaving for the right reasons.

"We are pretty bummed out about it," Somnis said of his basketball coaches. "They are stepping down to spend time with family, and Zach got a new job. The coaching thing can be really time consuming. Those jobs are open until April 15. We are hoping we can get some good people to apply."

Dong also teaches physical education and health at Pendleton High School. Somnis said his loss will be felt in the classroom.

"Losing a guy like Zach as a teacher is tough," Somnis said. "He is a good teacher. Coaching is important, but it's never as important as your day job."

Porter, who has been at the helm for the past six years, said he thought the time was right to step away.

"I thought we did some really good things with the program," Porter said. "I enjoyed the kids a great deal. I thought it was time for someone else to take the reins and expand the program. I just didn't want to leave with nothing in the cupboard. There are some good players left in the system, and they are moving down to 4A and a new league. I didn't want to leave it in worse condition than when I found it."

Porter started off as a volunteer assistant coach when his daughter was a sophomore in high school. He had coached her and her friends

in AAU from fifth grade through eighth grade, with a good amount of success.

"That is a tough dynamic," Porter said of coaching his daughter. "If you try and tell yourself you can 100 percent separate that, you are fooling yourself. She created a pretty tight bond with my assistant Kim Taber (who is also stepping down)."

"When we got to high school, we did a much better job and learned to enjoy the game together," Porter continued. "There were a lot of 24-hour basketball days at our house. As I look back on it, in that dad-basketball coaching relationship, I think we did a really good job."

Porter's first two years with the Bucks resulted in back-to-back Columbia River Conference district titles.

In six years, Porter amassed a 43-11 CRC/Intermountain Conference record, and was 73-54 overall. The Bucks made the state playoffs five times. There weren't any state playoffs in 2021 because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Porter earned three all-conference coaching honors in six seasons, with the last coming in 2021.

A farmer by day, Porter said he will miss being on the bench.

"I could see myself on the sidelines until I'm 80 years old," Porter said. "I will miss it dearly. I have second guessed my decision every day since I told Mike I was stepping down. Maybe I will get involved again at the youth level. I don't think I am done completely."

Going home

Dong is moving to Kimberly, Idaho, where he will be the school's athletic director.

"I have enjoyed my time here," Dong said. "The driving force behind the decision was getting closer to family. Nothing more than getting closer to family. We didn't think it would be that big of a deal moving away and not having family close. You need to have that support system."

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Photos by Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

TOP: Pendleton boys basketball coach Zach Dong cheers his team on during a game on Dec. 21, 2021. ABOVE: Pendleton girls basketball coach Kevin Porter talks to his team during a game on June 3, 2021, against Redmond. He and Dong in April 2022 announced they are leaving their positions.

Mac-Hi's Leber earns spot on GOL first team

Rhoads, Perkins earn second-team honors

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

MILTON-FREEWATER — McLoughlin senior Emma Leber earned first-team honors in the Greater Oregon League, while two teammates were named to the second team.

Leber, a 6-foot-1 forward, led the Pioneers with 12.5 points a game, along with 8.5 rebounds, three blocks and 1.8 steals.

Senior guard Darby Rhoads was named to the second team, along with sophomore guard Madi Perkins.

Rhoads averaged 10.5 points, 6.3 rebounds, three assists and 2.5 steals per game. Perkins chipped in 10.4 points, 3.3 rebounds and 2.4 steals.

The Pioneers finished 2-4 in GOL play, and 8-11 overall. They lost their 4A state-play-in game to Hidden Valley 57-32.

GREATER OREGON LEAGUE

Player of the Year: Zojie Ramos, jr., Baker

Coach of the Year: Jason Ramos, Baker

First team: Rylee Elms, sr., Baker; Macey Moore, jr., Baker; MaKen-na Shorts, jr., La Grande; Emma Leber, sr., McLoughlin; Grace Neer, sr., La Grande.

Second Team: Darby Rhoads, sr., McLoughlin; Madi Perkins, so., McLoughlin; Brooklyn Jaca, jr., Baker; Kayle Collman, fr., La Grande; Kira Evans, so., Ontario.



Rhoads



Perkins

Mac-Hi did not have any boys earn all-league honors.

The boys Player of the Year was Devin Bell of La Grande. Coach of the Year honors went to Mark Carollo of La Grande.

Don't wait around to try fly-fishing



GARY LEWIS

ON THE TRAIL

I met a guy once, one of the best casters I ever saw. He could put a fly in your pocket at 65 feet and then put the fly in his own pocket on the next cast without stripping any line. He had learned to fly-cast at a city-owned casting pond, then perfected his craft in the backyard. It was 15 years, he told me, from when he first picked up a fly rod to when he decided he was good enough to go fishing. It was some time after that he caught his first fish. Hey, it worked for him.

Last spring a friend of mine that I started in fly-fishing came out from Alabama to fish with me again. He brought his son along and it was fun to watch the 25-year-old putting his southern fly fishing skills to work in Oregon. They worked on their presentations and their attitude toward the water and they started to catch fish — rainbows and brown trout.

The beauty of fly-fishing is



Brian R. Smith/Contributed Photo

A brown trout taken on the middle Deschutes River in spring 2021.

it gives you exactly what you demand of it. The art of the angle can be complex or simple, technical or sublime.

Last year, over a Zoom presentation to a fly-fishing club, I talked to a guy who said he was going to go fishing again as soon as COVID-19 was over. Meanwhile he was going to sit in on video fly-tying and travel discussions. I'm guessing that is what he wanted from fly-fishing, for the time.

A friend of mine was treasurer

for a fly-fishing club in Portland. I invited him once on a dry fly trip to Chile and he was ready to buy his airline ticket when his fear of being found out kicked in. He was not as skilled as he wanted to be, he said. He confessed his casting skills were sub-par and his knowledge of bugs was lacking.

"I'm just not ready for a trip like that, Gary," he said. "Invite me next year. Maybe next year I'll be ready."

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