

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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Pendleton's Sam Jennings throws the javelin during the IMC District Track and Field Championships on May 15, 2021, in Pendleton. Jennings has signed to throw at BYU. Kathy Aney/East Oregonian, File

Jennings is ranked No. 1 in the nation, holds PHS javelin record

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Sam Jennings spent a good amount of time looking at colleges and what they had to offer.

Pendleton's elite javelin thrower knew he found the right place at BYU, and the fact that Provo, Utah, has a half dozen or so miniature golf courses sweetened the deal.

"I took a trip to the University of Oregon," Jennings said. "The only words to describe it, is the best. That's what it is. There was a lot to consider when there's a choice to be made. BYU was a better fit. I love Provo. I have visited a handful of times in the past. I could see myself living there. It's green, it's nice, they have a million different things to do and there are like five mini golf courses."

Jennings, the No. 1-ranked prep javelin thrower in the country this spring with a throw of 209 feet, 5 inches at the La Grande Invite on April 8, made a visit to Provo in December.

His resume was quite impressive when he arrived on campus.

Jennings' personal best is 224-9 3/4, thrown on July 10, 2021, at the USA Track & Field Oregon Association Youth Track and Field Championships in Portland. Since it was out of season, the 209-5 stands as the Pendleton school record.

"When I went to BYU, it was with a bunch of other throwers," Jennings said. "We all ended up signing. I have never had so much fun with a group of athletes. I got to hang out with their (BYU) throws group. I hope they are still there when I get there. It is extremely exciting. I'm really looking forward to it."

One of those thrower is senior Cameron

Bates, who has thrown 225-3 1/2 for BYU, and is 24th in the college rankings this spring.

Jennings will graduate from Pendleton this spring, then will fulfill his mission for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints before he dons the blue and white of the BYU Cougars, where a full scholarship awaits him.

He expects to get his mission letter in the next few weeks.

"My availability date is July 17," Jennings said of his mission. "I will go serve my mission, then come back and throw. That's the best part of BYU, their

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— Sam Jennings, Pendleton high school

whole track team is returning missionaries. I will be a freshman in college at 21 or 22. I can't imagine going straight from high school to college with the wear and tear on the body. There is a difference between man strength and boy strength. I look at what they (current BYU throwers) did in high school and what they are doing now."

Jennings plans to get a business degree at BYU, and maybe a few other things.

"I want to study sports medicine and sports science," he said. "I thought coaching would be fun."

Pendleton's finest

With his throw at the La Grande Invite, Jennings broke his own school record of 198-11, which he set April 30, 2021.

"He is a great kid," Pendleton coach Larry Brizendine said. "He's a once-in-a-lifetime javelin thrower. He's No. 1 in the nation. It's a source of pride. He was OSAA Athlete of the Week. People might look at Pendleton in a different way. We are the real deal over here."

Geoff Herd previously held the school record at 186-10, set in 2009.

Brizendine said Jennings is more than an elite thrower. He is a true team guy.

"He was unanimously voted by the coaches to be a team captain this year," Brizendine said. "He is not cocky or arrogant. You would not know he was the top thrower in the nation. After we won districts last year, he said 'Briz, let's go do it again.'"

Jennings is not one to follow the rankings or compare himself to other throwers. He likes throwing in front of family and friends, and is enjoying his final year with the Bucks.

"It's an exciting time," he said. "It's my last season, I'd better enjoy it."

This year's 5A state track meet will be held at Hayward Field in Eugene.

Jennings placed fourth his freshman year at state with a throw of 181-7. There was no state meet in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2021 meet was not Oregon School Activities Association sanctioned.

Jennings won the 2021 state meet that was held in Wilsonville, with a throw of 190 feet.

"We have not been to Hayward in a while," Brizendine said. "Just as a coach, to walk in there, you get goose bumps just thinking of all the athletes who have competed there. I'm excited to see what they have done there, and hopefully with a whole bunch of kids with us."

Expect Jennings to be the first man on the bus.

SPORTS HIGHLIGHTS

Garton sets record for strikeouts

By ANNIE FOWLER
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — Sauren Garton struck out 37 batters on the day as Pendleton opened Intermountain Conference play on Friday, April 15, with a 5-0 and 3-1 sweep of The Dalles.

"They were good victories," Pendleton coach Tim Cary said. "They are a solid team all the way around. They were ranked third coming in."

After striking out 17 in the first game, Garton struck out a school record 20 in the second game.

Garton has struck out 126 batters in 54 innings this season.

"Sauren is absolutely amazing," Cary said. "I don't even know what to say about her. Thank goodness we have fantastic pitching, we couldn't score a run today. Thankful to her for keeping them off the board. Sauren has thrown well every single time out this year. She throws hard and she throws a variety of pitches. We are lucky to have her."

In the second game, the second-ranked Bucks scored one run in the second inning off a solo home run by Daisy Jenness, and the two runs scored in the third were off Riverhawk errors.

Melanie Boatman went 3-for-3 for the Bucks (10-1 overall), while Brie Younes was 2-for-3.

In the opener, Garton hit an RBI-triple in the fourth inning, while Sam Wilks hit a two-run double in the first inning as the Bucks jumped out to a 3-0 lead.

"It has been a good start for us so far," Cary said. "We just have to keep it going."

ON THE SLATE

TUESDAY, APRIL 19

Prep baseball

Umatilla at Riverside, 4 p.m.
Union at Stanfield/Echo, 4 p.m.
Kamiakin at Hermiston, 4 p.m.
Pilot Rock at Heppner, 4:30 p.m.
The Dalles at Pendleton, 4:30 p.m.

Prep softball

Kennewick at Hermiston, 4 p.m.
Umatilla at Echo/Stamfield JV, 4 p.m.
Irrigon at Heppner/Lone, 4 p.m.
Pendleton at The Dalles, 4:30 p.m.

Boys soccer

Kennewick at Hermiston, 7 p.m.

Prep tennis

La Grande at McLoughlin, 3 p.m.
Weston-McEwen at Riverside, 3:30 p.m.
Richland at Hermiston, 4 p.m.
Lone/Heppner at Stanfield/Echo, 4 p.m.

Prep lacrosse

Hermiston at Chiawana, 7:30 p.m.

Track and field

Heppner, Pilot Rock, Stanfield/Echo at District 2A-5 Preview, Weston-McEwen, 3:30 p.m.

College softball

Blue Mountain at Treasure Valley (2), 1 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 20

Track and field

MCC meet at Hermiston, 3:30 p.m.
Pendleton at Hood River Valley, TBD.

Prep golf

Hermiston at MCC pod, Horn Rapids Golf Course, noon.

Prep baseball

Liberty Christian at Irrigon, 4 p.m.

Prep tennis

Crook County boys at Pendleton, 3 p.m.
Pendleton girls at Crook County, 3 p.m.

College baseball

Blue Mountain at Wenatchee Valley (2), 1 p.m.

SPORTS SHORT

EOU softball earns Team of the Week honor

East Oregonian

LA GRANDE — The Eastern Oregon University Mountaineers softball team is the Under Armour Team of the Week for April 11-17, the Cascade Collegiate Conference announced Sunday afternoon, April 17.

The recognition came after the team went 4-0 in weekend play and secured a spot in the 2022 CCC Championship.

Despite a spring snowstorm that delayed EOU's departure from La Grande, the Mountaineers made it to Bellevue,

Washington, and took down the Eagles, 4-0. The sweep brought the team's overall record to 34-11 overall and 19-5 in league play. The Mountaineers' 34 wins are now the third most in a single season and a career best in a season for third-year head coach Nicole Christian.

Eastern also continues to receive votes in the NAIA Softball Coaches' Top-25 poll. With their spot locked in for the CCC Championships, the Mountaineers now have made the conference postseason each of the last two seasons. Eastern sits third

in the league standings behind No. 6 College of Idaho and No. 2 Oregon Tech entering the final two weeks of regular season action.

EOU will return home next weekend to face league leader No. 2 Oregon Tech for Senior Weekend. The series will take place Friday-Saturday, April 22-23, at Peggy Anderson Field. Day One action will begin at 2 p.m. for the doubleheader. Day Two action is set for an 11 a.m. start. It will be Senior Day and EOU will honor eight seniors between the two games.



Eastern Oregon University infielder Madison Stalder take a swing Friday, Feb. 15, 2022, against Northwest University in Bellevue, Washington. The Mountaineers swept the Eagles 4-0 in weekend play, earning a spot in 2022 Cascade Collegiate Conference and the Under Armour Team of the Week for April 11-17.

Isabella Evans/
Eastern Oregon University