

# EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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## COUNTDOWN TO LAUNCH

### Rockets football team under new leadership with Munkers

By ANNIE FOWLER  
East Oregonian

PILOT ROCK — Shane Munkers grew up playing football in Heppner. Now, he wants to share his passion and knowledge of the game with the next generation.

Munkers recently was hired as the head football coach at Pilot Rock High School, where he was an assistant coach for four years.

“Really, I just missed coaching,” said Munkers, who played on the 1992 Heppner state championship team. “There are a lot of kids out here who need a positive influence in their life. I thought I could fill that for some of them.”

Munkers replaces Mike Baleztena, who stepped down after last season to spend more time with his family. He coached the Rockets for seven seasons.

This past fall, Pilot Rock started the season 2-0 before injuries and suspensions depleted the roster. The Rockets finished 2-5.

“They had a lot of success under Mike,” Munkers said. “Those are some big shoes to fill, for sure.”

By day, Munkers is assistant vice president at US Bank in Pendleton, where



Yasser Marte/East Oregonian

**Pilot Rock High School's new head football coach Shane Munkers stands outside the school Friday, June 10, 2022. Munkers was the assistant coach of the Rockets for four years.**

he has been a commercial credit analyst for 24 years, but football is where his heart is.

“It’s the best sport in the world,” he said. “I know most of the players,” he said. “I was an assistant coach, but I stepped away two years ago. I coached middle school basketball for seven

years, I gave that up two years ago too.”

Munkers is encouraged by the 24 players who said they would play this season.

The Rockets, who play eight-man football, have a handful of starters returning, but they will need to find a quarterback after Jace Otteson transferred to

Pendleton in January.

“That’s a position we need to fill for sure,” Munkers said. “We will have pretty good-sized linemen. I played in Heppner for Greg Grant. I was a 175-pound offensive and defensive lineman. If you coach them right, anyone can be successful on the offensive line.”

Among the returning players are Austin Ford, Efen Castro, Brave Pereira, Broc Erickson, James Lunzmann and Tanner Bedard.

Munkers has gotten a head start on the season, watching film of opposing teams.

“I know most of the coaches in the league already,” he said. “We have a tough schedule to start the season. We have Adrian Week 2. We start with Imbler, and they have some big kids.”

Munkers already has his assistant coaches in place with Joe Byrnes, who has been with the program for a few years, superintendent Troy Jerome, and his son, Cade Munkers, who played for the Rockets and graduated in 2019.

Munkers also has been in touch with Grant.

“Not so much about Xs and Os, but guiding me on how to build a program and make Pilot Rock football important again,” he said. “I want them to have fun and make them better people. You build relationships with the guys you play with. It’s a brotherhood. That’s what we would like to build out here.”

### Racing at the Butte



Photos By Kathy Aney/East Oregonian

**Toby Murphy competes in the children's portion of the one-mile run Saturday, June 11, 2022, as part of the Butte Challenge at Hermiston's Butte Park.**



**Denise Jones competes Saturday, June 11, 2022, in the Butte Challenge 10K at Hermiston's Butte Park. Jones won the women's 10K with a time of 51 minutes, 46 seconds.**



**Brian Frazier competes Saturday, June 11, 2022, in the Butte Challenge 10K on at Butte Park, Hermiston. Frazier crossed the line first with a time of 45 minutes, 19 seconds.**

### SOCCER

## 4 Dawgs earn MCC honors

By ANNIE FOWLER  
East Oregonian

HERMISTON — The Hermiston Bulldogs had four players named to the Mid-Columbia Conference soccer team, with two on the second team and two on the honorable mention team.

Senior forward Sam Cadenas and junior midfielder Faber Ortiz were named to the second team, while freshman forward Renee Medrano and senior defender Brandon Madrigal were selected to the honorable mention team.

Cadenas, a team captain with Ortiz, scored five goals and had one assist. He was the No. 2 scorer for the Bulldogs. He also was voted Most Inspirational by his teammates.

Ortiz, voted team MVP



Cadenas



Madrigal



Medrano



Ortiz

by his teammates, had three goals and two assists.

“He’s a utility man and can play anywhere on the field,” Hermiston coach Rich Harshberger said. “He has an engine that won’t quit.”

Madrigal played almost every minute of every game and helped the Bulldogs to four shutouts. He had one goal and two assists.

“He’s able to match up with opposition strikers and shut them down,” Harshberger said.

Medrano led the Bulldogs in scoring with nine goals and two assists. He is the only player in the MCC to score on Pasco this season in the run of play.

Chiawana’s Fernando Lopez-Vega was named MCC Player of the Year by the conference coaches.

Coach of the Year honors went to Pasco’s Matt Potter, who led the Bulldogs to the MCC regular-season title, and a third-place finish in the 4A state tournament.

## Mac-Hi players selected to GOL teams

By ANNIE FOWLER  
East Oregonian

MILTON-FREEWATER — McLoughlin’s Cooper Waltermire earned Greater Oregon League first-team honors, while Cooper Yensen and Javi Esparza were named to the second team.

The Pioneers finished the season 3-9 in GOL play and 9-13 overall. They lost their 4A state play-in game to Henley 8-2.

State champion La Grande (28-1) dominated the first team with eight players chosen. The Tigers’ shortstop/pitcher Devin Bell was named the Player of the Year.

Waltermire, the Pioneers’ shortstop, led the team with a .393 batting average. He had 22 hits, seven of which were doubles. He also had 15 RBIs



Esparza



Waltermire



Esparza



Waltermire

and scored 18 runs.

Yensen threw a team-high 45 1/3 innings, striking out 43 and walking 39. He had an ERA of 8.029.

Esparza, who played catcher and pitched for Mac-Hi, hit .339 from his lead-off position. He had 20 hits, with three doubles and two triples. He scored a team-high 27 runs. On the mound, he threw 23 1/3 innings with a 6.30 ERA. He struck out 32



Yensen

and walked 24.

Mac-Hi had two softball players earn GOL honors. Senior Darby Rhoads and freshman Rylee Herndon were named second-team infielders.

The Pioneers finished the season 2-10 in league play and 6-14 overall.

Ontario’s Annabelle Navarrete was named Player of the Year, while La Grande’s Cody Bowen was named Coach of the Year.



## Good Shepherd Outreach & Events

### June is National Safety Month

Get ready for wildfire smoke events by planning ahead! Stay up to date on local info, pay attention to home filters and air cleaners, and keep some respirator masks on hand. For more information on air quality alerts, current air quality conditions, and forecasts, visit [AirAlerts.org](http://AirAlerts.org)

### Virtual Healthy Cooking on a Budget

class for people of all ages and families who want to learn how to cook healthy on a budget! Second Tuesday of each month through November.

### Virtual/In-Person Powerful Tools for Caregivers

6-week series to show caregivers the benefit of self-care skills. Starts June 16th, 3-5pm

### Save the Date: Family Health & Fitness Day + 5K Fun Run

September 24 from 9am - 1pm at Hermiston High School

**GOOD SHEPHERD**  
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