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***Eastern Washington University Athletics***

*Nov. 5, 2024*

***Contact:*** *Graden Benton — Athletic Communications Assistant (**gbenton@ewu.edu**)*

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**Chloe Pattison named Co-Offensive MVP, Missy Strasburg Coach of the Year**

(Six Eastern players earn All-Conference honors)

**FARMINGTON, Utah -** It has been a fantastic season for the Eagles, and they have been rewarded as such. EWU soccer earned six players on All-Conference teams in the Big Sky, as Chloe Pattison was named Co-Offensive MVP, and head coach of the Eagles Missy Strasburg was named Coach of the Year, announced by the conference today.

After finishing third in the Big Sky conference the Eagles had one of the biggest win improvements in the country. Eastern Washington soccer finished 9-5-4 overall, and 4-1-3 overall in conference. They clinched their first conference tournament appearance since 2019, and recorded a program record in win improvement (+7).

Junior Chloe Pattison was a catalyst for the Eagle offense this season. The Lake Stevens, Washington native led the Big Sky conference in goals scored (11), shots on goal (29), and points (25). Pattison would also record three assists this season, and two games with at least one goal and one assist. The junior was selected offensive player of the year for the fifth time ever, and the third player in Eagles history.

Pattison was dominant all season on the pitch, as she recorded a goal in five straight matches, and a brace in back-to-back matches. Pattison would total seven goals in her scoring stretch, and moved into a tie for eighth all-time on the Eastern scoring list (14). She was also named Big Sky Offensive Player of the Week three times this season.

This season was one of the best individual seasons for an Eagle player. Pattison climbed the Eagle record books while ranking fourth in single season goals scored (11), fifth in points (25), sixth in shots on goal (29), and tied 10th in total shots (10).

The coach of the year in the Big Sky conference Missy Strasburg turned some heads across the nation this year. In her fourth year at the helm the Eagles became the sixth team in school history to record nine wins in a season. EWU soccer also finished with only one loss in conference for the first time since 2017. Eastern earned four Big Sky Player of the Week awards this season, and matched the 2017 season with six players named to Big Sky All-Conference teams. Strasburg is the third Eastern coach ever to be named coach of the year in the Big Sky Conference.

After being picked eighth in the preseason poll, Strasburg and the Eagles would finish third in the Big Sky conference, and would earn a tie against the top two teams in the conference in Montana and Idaho. Eastern also earned wins against three Mountain West programs, defeating Hawaii, San Jose State, and UNLV.

EWU soccer was a team no one wanted to face this season. For the regular season, the Eagles finished first in the Big Sky conference in corners (98), Penalty kicks (5-6), shots on goal (131), tied first in assists (28), second in points (92), goals (32), scoring average (1.778), and shots (259). Eastern would also record five shutouts on the season, and two defenders would be named All-Conference in the Big Sky.

The junior Chloe Pattison and sophomore Kendall Moore would be named Big Sky All-Conference First Team. Moore took a huge jump to display balance all season on the offensive end, and would be the only person in the conference to record five goals and five assists. She would also add two game winning goals for the Eagles.

The Yakima, Washington native was the only player this season to record two assists in a match for the Eagles. Moore would finish tied for second in the conference with five assists. She also finished fourth in the conference with five goals, and 15 points.

Three Eagles were named Big Sky All-Conference Second Team. Junior goalkeeper Kamryn Willoughby, junior defender Riley Arribas, and freshman Iris Mattern

Willoughby was strong all season between the posts. The Lindon, Utah native started in all 18 matches for the Eagles, and helped record five shutouts for EWU this season. She would display great performances all year, recording 10 saves against rival Idaho, and recording five or more saves in a match six times this season. Willoughby would even earn a Defensive Player of the Week honor after her first shutout of the season against South Dakota.

The junior climbed the all-time Eagle goalkeeper record book this season. Willougby passed 200 career saves as an Eagle, and moved into sixth all-time in saves (215). The junior also moved into fourth all-time in career shutouts (8), and seventh all-time in goalkeeper minutes played (3621).

The junior Riley Arribas was reliable all year on the defensive end, but was able to show how dominant she could be on the attacking front when needed. Arribas finished tied for second in the conference with five assists, and would add a pair of goals this season as well.

The Aliso Viejo, California native finished fourth on the team with nine points and 27 total shots. Arribas finished third on the team in minutes played (1454), and moved into fifth all-time in Eagle single season assists (5), and moved into a tie for eighth all-time in career assists (8).

Freshman Iris Mattern became a playmaker right away for the Eagles this season. Mattern would finish third on the team in minutes played (1536), and was a huge piece of an Eastern defense that recorded five shutouts on the year. The Port Townsend, Washington native would record 11 full 90 minutes this season, and would only miss nine minutes in the last 11 matches of the season.

Junior Delani Walker would earn Big Sky Soccer All-Conference Honorable Mention. The Missoula, Montana native was a centerpiece for the Eastern offense this season. Walker finished tied for second in the conference with five assists, fifth in the conference with 21 shots on goal, and tied sixth with 40 total shots.

Walker would record at least three shots in a game five times this season, and would record two game winning goals in 1341 minutes played. The junior will appear in her 50th career game as an Eagle this week.

The Eagles look to win their third Big Sky postseason championship and clinch their third NCAA tournament berth. The last time EWU soccer won the conference tournament was in 2017 when they defeated Northern Colorado 2-1.

Eastern Washington soccer will travel to Missoula, Montana to face the #6 seed Portland State (4-8-4) in the conference quarterfinals Wednesday, November 6th at 10:00 pm. All matches of the tournament will be streaming on ESPN+.

**2024 Big Sky Individual Award Winners** **Co-Offensive MVP:** Chloe Pattison, Eastern Washington/Jen Estes, Montana
 **Defensive MVP:** Alyssa Peters, Idaho
 **Goalkeeper of the Year:** Bayliss Flynn, Montana
 **Newcomer of the Year:** Jen Estes, Montana\*

**Freshman of the Year:** Aliayha Saldana, Portland State

**Coach of the Year**: Missy Strasburg, Eastern Washington

**Golden Boot Award Winner:** Haylee Phoenix, Northern Arizona

\* - unanimous pick

**Big Sky Soccer All-Conference First Team** GK: Bayliss Flynn, Montana
 D: Alyssa Peters, Idaho

D: Ava Samuelson, Montana

D: Sydney Sharts, Sacramento State

D: Liv Frazier, Portland State

D: Charley Boone, Montana

MF: Abigail Lopez, Sacramento State

MF: Kendall Moore, Eastern Washington

MF: Maddie Ditta, Montana

MF: Annika Farley, Idaho

F: Chloe Pattison, Eastern Washington

F: Jen Estes, Montana

F: Haylee Phoenix, Northern Arizona

*Five defenders on the 1st team due to a tie*

**Big Sky Soccer All-Conference Second Team** GK: Kamryn Willoughby, Eastern Washington

D: Cassandra Herrman, Sacramento State

D: Kalo Iongi, Portland State

D: Iris Mattern, Eastern Washington

D: Riley Arribas, Eastern Washington

MF: Margo Schoesler, Idaho

MF: Joey Lujan, Northern Arizona

MF: Avery Ott, Northern Arizona

MF: Elle Frazier, Portland State

F: Chloe Seelhoff, Montana

F: Ali Swensen, Weber State

F: Aliayha Saldana, Portland State

**Big Sky Soccer All-Conference Honorable Mention** GK: Trinity Hale, Idaho State

GK: Trinity Corcoran, Northern Arizona

D: Cassidy Elicker, Idaho

D: Rebekah Reyes, Idaho

D: Samantha Kearns, Weber State

MF: Hannah Alfaro-Black, Idaho

MF: Carly Whalen, Montana

MF: Lucy Quinn, Portland State

MF: Madelyn Dougherty, Sacramento State

MF: Ellie Farber, Sacramento State

F: Sammie Sofonia, Weber State

F: Karli Yoshida-Williams, Idaho

F: Delani Walker, Eastern Washington

*Minimum 3 votes needed for honorable mention*

**ABOUT EASTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY ATHLETICS**

*Eastern Washington University Athletics sponsors 14 intercollegiate sports, six for men and eight for women, both as learning opportunities for its most athletically talented students and as an enhancement to student and community life. Eastern is affiliated with Division I of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and is a member of the Big Sky Conference, an association of 10 regional schools with comparable enrollments and academic goals.*

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**Building trust: The heart of EWU soccer’s success**

(Junior defender Becca Gaido describes the growth in the Eagles this season)

**CHENEY, Wash. –** This season has been a historical one for EWU soccer. As they prepare for their first conference tournament match since 2019, junior defender Becca Gaido reflects on the 2024 regular season.

“I think it has been really uplifting as a whole because I saw it last year. I knew the players on our team were capable of this, and I knew we could do this. We were just not getting the results we thought we deserved. I think this year it just kind of all came together for us. We put in a lot of work in the winter and spring that most people do not see. So it is really nice to see that it paid off, and has been uplifting for everybody,” described Gaido.

A Redding, California native, Gaido has had a fantastic season of her own. Playing and starting in all 18 matches this season, the junior defender has been a centerpiece on the defensive end for the Eagles.

Gaido said she has seen a difference this year with the team. Their playing style is a big reason.

“They put a lot of trust in us to play out of the back, and that just affects all the way up the field. Our forwards are even influencing that, and are being more impactful, like checking in for the back and the ball more. Everyone is working harder for each other off the ball. It is helping everyone else that is on the ball.”

After playing in only four matches her freshman year two years ago, Gaido has only missed 13 minutes of action this season, and leads the team in minutes played (1599). However, she says she is not the only one stepping up and playing some big minutes this season.

“I do not think a lot of thought goes into it, especially on my part. There are a bunch of players playing full 90 minutes for the team right now, especially when we get deeper into the season. A bunch of attacking players are playing a lot of minutes and covering a lot of ground. We all put in a lot of work in preseason and throughout the summer. We are really diligent with the summer package and staying fit to come into the season.”

College athletics and recruiting can always be tough on a coach and a player. Gaido however, found Eastern Washington and the coaching staff to be a perfect fit for her.

“I just wanted to play soccer and I was brought into what head coach Missy Strasburg was trying to do, and I would say she was probably the one that got me to come here. She seemed very straight forward and up front, and sometimes that is hard to find in college athletics. I just wanted to play.”

The back line has played tremendously for the Eagles, as you can even see some of the back end on the attacking front. Gaido has recorded a career high five shots this season, with two of them on goal.

Gaido said the flexibility of the team and their offense has contributed to a lot of their success this season.

“A lot of teams are seeing how threatening our offense can be and how productive and unpredictable it is. They start to sit back a little bit, which gives the people in the back a little bit more time on the ball. Our coaches give us the freedom to push up a little bit higher up the field. It is also because we have chemistry now. We know that as a back line we have each other's backs as one of us goes a bit farther up.”

It has shown on the pitch as well. Eight different players have recorded at least one goal for the Eagles this season. The team chemistry has been displayed the entire season, especially on the defensive end. Defenders Iris Mattern, Riley Arribas, and goalkeeper Kamryn Willoughby have been able to grow and trust one another as the season has progressed.

“I think we grew a lot in the spring together as the four of us got more and more solidified back there, and we just played a lot together. We did a lot of stuff this year like splitting up the attackers and the defenders at the beginning of practice and doing some drills. I think stuff like that builds a lot of chemistry, and I think the coaches put a lot of trust in us to build out of the back. We put a lot of trust in each other as well, and I think that helped build a good foundation for us.”

Gaido said wins are made in the offseason. The spring and winter were super important for the team. What people may forget about however, is the student in the student athlete.

The junior is currently studying Biology Pre-Med. While time management can be tough at times, she can attribute her on and off-field success to the University and the coaching staff for providing the help they need during the academic year.

“Anyone that wants to do it, can do it. I think you have to be smart with your time, and it is definitely possible. It is challenging especially during the season. During the season the coaches are helping us with proctoring on the road at times. My teachers have been great this year, so that has not been an issue as well. It is really nice when everyone is trying to help you out and help accommodate you which makes it possible.”

Eastern Washington soccer will travel to Missoula, Montana for their first conference tournament since 2019. The Eagles will face the #6 seed Portland State (4-8-4) in the conference quarterfinals Wednesday, November 6th at 10:00 pm.

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**Coaching beyond the game and learning along the way**

(In his first year at EWU, Hayden Hollinger has helped elevate Eastern soccer)

**CHENEY, Wash. –** Like many athletes know, the love for a sport starts young. Watching your favorite player, playing on multiple local teams, or just being thrown into it by your parents. What many athletes do not know is the path that those athletes take once they are submerged with it.

In his first year as an assistant coach for the EWU soccer team, Hayden Hollinger has seen the team take new heights. Eastern Washington women’s soccer posted the best win improvement in team history (+7), and finished the regular season 9-5-4, and third in the Big Sky conference.

Before EWU, Hollinger made coaching stops across the Division I level including schools like Oklahoma State, Kentucky, and The Citadel. The love for soccer grew for Hollinger, but not in a way he anticipated it to be.

““Soccer is all I have ever done. I did not play any other sports growing up, and I was lucky enough to be a part of a professional youth academy when I was growing up in Scotland. As I grew up I started to hear about opportunities to get a soccer scholarship and move to America and be able to study and play at a good level. At home it was either play or study.”

The opportunity to play in America for the Scotland native came with a scholarship from Hartwick College, in Oneonta, New York. In 2014, he made the move to America.

Hollinger would play at Hartwick for two seasons, before transferring to St. Mary’s University in San Antonio, Texas. Hollinger would be elected as team captain and graduate in 2018. Throughout his playing experience, Hollinger found a new perspective of the game he grew up playing since he was three years old.

“It was a different experience for me but it put things into perspective and helped me mature to see what I valued in terms of people and education, and more than just soccer as the game. I did not enjoy my playing experience so much, so for me to find other things to enjoy outside of that and enjoy the full experience was the ultimate goal. I was able to find so much value in my time outside of soccer and to me that was so important.” described Hollinger.

After his college playing career, his path to coaching took an interesting route. It would come from a former teammate and friend who also went to Hartwick.

“We ended up working for the same club in South Carolina, and I did not really know if coaching was what I was going to get into. But, I just loved it, and I have been so fortunate to connect with good people which has helped me to take the next steps in my coaching journey.”

Hollinger would start coaching at the club level. From 2018-2019 he worked as an academy coach and international liaison for Global Premier Soccer. He would also serve as an Academy Director for the Commonwealth Soccer Club from 2021-2022.

From there, Hollinger would break into the college ranks for coaching and work as a graduate assistant at The Citadel from 2019-2021 while earning his masters degree in Business Administration. He would then make two power four conference stops at Kentucky and Oklahoma State, before coming to Eastern in November of 2023.

“I think starting at The Citadel was so important for me. I was around excellent coaches and even better people at a place that was so gritty and based on working for everything. To then be at Kentucky and seeing the resources available and everything that comes with a SEC or power four school, it was very interesting. I quickly learned that there are many ways to be successful as a college coach."

Hollinger focused on defensive units, while directing player development. He also assisted in preparing scouting reports, video analysis, along with assisting in the team's recruiting strategy.

“For me, being around different coaches and learning so many different things from them and continuing to learn and refine what I really value helps shape me as a coach and person. I have experienced a lot of things for myself, and it has been very important. Whether that is working with a staff that has won multiple Big 12 titles in a top 50 program, coaches with professional and coach education backgrounds, to working at the Citadel with a head coach who has worked his way up as a head coach at divisions I, II, and III, these experiences in a relatively short time have helped me learn so quickly about what it takes to be effective at the D1 level” said Hollinger

This path has led him to Eastern Washington University. The fit was exactly what Hollinger was looking for. It is also a great place for players to thrive in his eyes.

“Here, we have everything within a hours drive, which is good from a recruiting standpoint and makes Cheney a desirable place to play. It is a nice college town, and it is a great environment to be around.”

Hollinger’s networking with EWU was made through head coach Missy Strasburg. He was really excited about the similar backgrounds the two have shared, and how they both spoke about the game.

“I met Missy at a camp last summer a few months before I ended up getting hired here. I was really excited from our conversations as there was a lot that we could connect on. She has a clear idea of what she wants from our team. Obviously Nate Ulness as well. A different background that adds value to the balance of our staff, having been a head coach, and being able to learn from each other. It just felt like a good fit for me to add to this team.”

The fit has appeared to fit like a glove. This season, the Eagles rank in the top half of many offensive categories across the Big Sky, and have been one of the most improved teams across the country. It has not come easy though for Eastern, as Hollinger said they had to put the work in early, even in the spring.

“You can see collectively as a team they are gritty and willing to work. The new things we have added this year, they have been able to take them on so well. They have been very coachable, and this spring allowed us to kickstart the season, where sometimes you are in the mode of a reset and go again.”

This season, the Eagles did not lose back-to-back matches, and have recorded a goal in 17 of the 18 matches this season. As a team, they have recorded five shutouts, and were able to take down Mountain West opponents like Hawaii, San Jose State, and UNLV.

“They care a lot for one another. The new players for the fall have added so much value to our returners who have been excellent throughout the whole year, including the spring. It is a group of brilliant people and that is more important than their qualities as players. They have pushed us to a new level and is so important to the consistency that we have been able to play with, which can be seen with the results that have come from the performances throughout the year .”

EWU soccer finished 4-1-3 in conference, and finished with one loss in conference play for the first time since the 2017 season. Eastern also finished the regular season with nine wins, and it is the sixth time ever an Eagle team has earned nine wins in a season.

“The fall goes by so quickly and it has been such a blast. I love getting ready for games and seeing the players compete. To see them take the things from training, and put those live in the games has been awesome.”

It has not been just the success on the field that has brought Hollinger so much joy. From the bus, the airport, to team meals, being able to connect has been the biggest thing in his eyes for the Eagles this season

“Being around the team and the relationships we have been able to build and continue to develop through the fall has been really good. The coffee trips on the mornings of game days and time during travel and meals, those are the important times outside of the time on the pitch. It has been so fun to be a part of, and I'm excited for us all to keep it going."

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