



PLAYOFF AT PROVIDENCE PARK. Meleana "Mana" Shim of the Portland Thorns passes the ball during a match against Sky Blue FC at a National Women's Soccer League game held at Providence Park on July 2, 2016. The Thorns defeated Sky Blue 2-1 in the match; the win was the 12th of the team's 12-game unbeaten streak to start the 2016 season. Regardless of the outcome of the club's match against Sky Blue FC on September 25 in Piscataway, New Jersey, they have at minimum locked in second place in league play and a home playoff match. (AP Photo/Jan Landis)

Portland Thorns earn first-ever NWSL home playoff match

The Portland Thorns have qualified for the National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) playoffs. Regardless of the outcome of the club's match against Sky Blue FC on September 25 in Piscataway, New Jersey, they have at minimum locked in second place in league play and a home playoff match. The semifinal game at Providence Park is scheduled for Sunday, October 2 at 2:00pm.

The Thorns (11-3-5; 38 points) are currently just one point out of first place behind the Washington Spirit (12-4-3; 39 points). Two scenarios exist for the team to claim the NWSL Shield, which is awarded to the club with the best regular-season record. If Portland defeats Sky Blue and Washington loses or draws against the Chicago Red Stars this weekend, the 2016 NWSL Shield would belong to the Thorns; the second scenario is if the Thorns draw against Sky Blue and the Spirit lose to the Red Stars.

The Thorns — Meleana "Mana" Shim, Nadia Nadim, Jennifer Skogerboe, Christine Sinclair, Tobin Heath, and the others — have had a strong season so far. The club started with a 12-game unbeaten streak — seven wins, no losses, and five ties — which is the second-longest streak without a loss in NWSL history. The next seven games resulted in a 4-3-0 record that was capped with a three-game home-match string of wins.

Another record set in Portland this year is home attendance. In 10 matches held at Providence Park, 169,449 soccer-crazed Rose City fans have cheered on the players they love, averaging 16,945 per game. The squad this year also holds the best home record — 8-1-1 — in the league.

Providence Park is located at the corner of S.W. 18th Avenue and Morrison Street in Portland. To learn more, or to buy tickets to the October 2 playoff match, call (503) 553-5555 or visit <www.portlandthornsfc.com>.

Myanmar leader has questions for U.S. high school students

By Ben Nuckols
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The former political prisoner who is now the de facto leader of Myanmar (also known as Burma) used her visit to a Washington high school to solicit ideas about how to improve education in her country.

Aung San Suu Kyi told students at Roosevelt High School that she had never visited a public school in the U.S. While the students had prepared questions about her life and career, she spent just as much time quizzing them about their favorite teachers and subjects.

The longtime opposition leader in her country, Suu Kyi spent 15 years under house arrest while Myanmar was ruled by a military junta.

The 71-year-old Nobel Peace Prize laureate was elected last year and holds the titles of state counsellor and foreign minister.



TWO-WAY Q&A. Myanmar (also known as Burma) leader Aung San Suu Kyi, right, speaks to a small group of students at Roosevelt High School in Washington, D.C., during a forum. The former political prisoner who is now the de facto leader of the country used her visit to the northwest Washington high school to solicit ideas about how to improve education in her country. (AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta)

Return of snow leopards brings hope to remote Afghan region

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at a higher price in the market," said Mostapha Zaher, director general of the National Environment Protection Agency.

But back in Wakhan, the conservation efforts appear to be catching on.

At Qala-i-Panja High School, where students say they've never heard of the internet, they've embraced modern notions of wildlife preservation. A snow leopard cub stares down from a poster affixed to the otherwise bare walls.

"Since the ban on hunting was introduced, the numbers of wild animals are increasing here and that is attracting foreign tourists," said Simah, a 17-year-old who like many Afghans has no surname. "That can be good for the economy of Afghanistan."

The snow leopard is the national park's star attraction, even if most visitors are unlikely to see one. But the region also boasts wolves, brown

bears, red foxes, and the long-horned Marco Polo sheep — named for the 13th-century Italian explorer who spotted one on his journey to the Far East.

Only about 100 visitors reach Wakhan every year, most entering from Tajikistan during the summer months. Wakhan's poverty and isolation has insulated it from decades of war, but has also deterred all but the most adventurous travellers.

Frenchman Jocelyn Guitton, a European Union diplomat, arrived in August with plans to trek to the corridor's northeast and visit Kyrgyz nomads. He allows that it's "off the beaten track," but says he hopes tourism can bring "visibility and good practices" to the region.

Since declaring the national park two years ago, the government has been holding public meetings known as *shuras* throughout Wakhan to cultivate local support for the idea and to reassure residents who initially feared they might lose their land.

"It's a new concept for these people and it's a new concept for Afghanistan, so it takes time," said Ashley Vosper, a landscape expert at WCS who has taken part in the meetings.

Vosper says the park actually provides "brilliant protection" to residents by ensuring that no one else can use their land while bringing economic development to the region. "It can be a nice two-way balance," he said.

Zaher hopes Wakhan can one day rival Afghanistan's only other national park, in the central Bamiyan province, which attracts thousands of tourists each year to the crystal blue lakes of Band-i-Amir.

"When peace returns to Afghanistan — and it will, as no war lasts forever — Wakhan has great potential for ecotourism, for people who are interested in archaeology, anthropology; researchers interested in Afghanistan; people interested in glacial melt, mountaineering, the environment."

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