



Photo by Michael Owen Baker/The Associated Press

People gather Sunday at a memorial for Kobe Bryant near Staples Center.

BRYANT

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NBA players were in tears during pregame warm-ups as crowds chanted “Kobe! Kobe!” Tiger Woods was unaware of the news during his final round at Torrey Pines in San Diego when he started hearing the gallery yell “Do it for Mamba,” referring to Bryant by his nickname.

The medical examiner’s office said specialists were working at the scene to recover the bodies, and investigators were trying to confirm identities. Federal transportation safety investigators were en route.

Bryant’s helicopter left Santa Ana shortly after 9 a.m. and circled for a time just east of Interstate 5, near Glendale. Air traffic controllers noted poor visibility around Burbank, just to the north, and Van Nuys, to the northwest.

After holding up the helicopter for other aircraft, they cleared the Sikorsky S-76 to proceed north along Interstate 5 through Burbank before turning west to follow U.S. Route 101, the Ventura Highway.

Shortly after 9:40 a.m., the helicopter turned again, toward the southeast, and climbed to more than 2,000 feet above sea level. It then descended and crashed into the hillside at about 1,400 feet, according to data from Flightradar24.

When it struck the ground, the helicopter was flying at about 160 knots (184 mph) and descending at a rate of more than 4,000 feet per minute, the Flightradar24 data showed.

At the time of the crash, the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department had grounded its own helicopters because of the poor weather conditions. The impact scattered debris over an area about the size of a football field, Villanueva said.

Among other things, investigators will look at the pilot’s history, the chopper’s maintenance history, and the records of its owner and operator, NTSB board member Jennifer Homendy said at a news conference.

Justin Green, an aviation attorney in New York who flew helicopters in the Marine Corps, said weather may have contributed to the crash. Pilots can become disoriented in low visibility, losing track of which direction is up. Green said a pilot flying an S-76 would be instrument-rated, meaning they could fly the helicopter without relying on visual cues from outside.

All around the world, people were glued to their phones and TV screens as news of the crash spread and networks broke into programming with live coverage. A visibly shaken LeBron James wiped his eyes with tissues and walked away alone from the Lakers plane that had just landed in Southern California.

Thousands of people gathered to mourn Bryant outside the Staples Center in downtown Los Angeles. Mourners in No. 24 jerseys mixed with those in fancy dress arriving at the downtown arena for Sunday evening’s Grammy Awards.

People carried flowers and chanted “Kobe!” and “MVP!” under giant video screens showing Bryant’s smiling face.

“This is where we needed to be,” said Naveen Cheerath, 31.

Bryant retired in 2016 as the third-leading scorer in NBA history, finishing two decades with the Lakers as a prolific shot-maker with a sublime all-around game and a relentless competitive ethic. He held that spot in the league scoring ranks until Saturday night, when the Lakers’ James passed him for third place during a game in Philadelphia, Bryant’s hometown.

MEN

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look at it after that. Sometimes it just doesn’t roll your way. Looked like it was going to.”

EOU caught a bad break on the rebound when the ball went out of bounds and was awarded to SOU. Video replay after showed the ball clearly went off of SOU’s Jordan Hunt.

SOU’s Teron Bradford hit two free throws on the other end with 3.8 seconds to go to ice the game.

EOU head coach Carlito Labarda Jr. lamented

that his team didn’t get a final opportunity after the missed call, though he said he doesn’t like to blame the officials.

“Maybe they do call it off SOU on that last play and we miss the shot and lose anyway. You don’t know what’s going to happen,” he said. “There’s a chance we still would have lost the game, but you get frustrated because you don’t get an opportunity, a fair opportunity to try to tie it or win it at the end.”

He said the team’s shooting, which was only 41% Saturday — 11% below the

team’s average percentage — was a major difference.

“If we shoot average, we probably win that game. Shooting is a big factor on whether we win or lose,” he said.

Schetzle scored 21 points to lead EOU. Brandon Porter added 12 points, and Heckard scored 11.

Eastern (10-10 overall, 4-7 CCC) visits Warner Pacific Friday.

“We’re still in the thick of things,” Labarda said of the team’s chances of earning a top-four seed in the CCC for the conference tournament. “We are not giving up.”

WOMEN

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middle of the pack in the conference.

Now, Eastern is 8-3 and firmly back in the conference title mix as it sits in third place and trails both NCU and Corban by just a game.

“We had a huge coming to Jesus moment,” Rachel Fielder, who had 12 points in Friday’s win and followed with 20 points and 10 rebounds Saturday, said of the change in the team since those losses. “We talked and just realized we weren’t playing Eastern basketball. We were almost afraid to let people down instead of just coming out and playing our game. Just a total mentality shift.”

Weissenfluh said the team is developing into a group that is confident but also relaxed, adding, “They’re just going out there, doing what they’re capable of doing, and not trying to do too much.

“When they put too much pressure on themselves, honestly it slows us down,” she said. “It overloads us. But when they can go out and play free, they do a lot better.”

Fielder also pointed to the defense as a key during the last three weeks.

“Clamps on defense and rebounding, and then just running. We’re going hard and attacking. It’s a different mentality now,” she said.

EOU led nearly the entire night Friday, taking the lead for good early with a 14-0 run that Emma Logan, who had 11 points and 14 rebounds, capped with a 3-pointer. EOU held a 32-21 lead at the half and twice led by as much as 16 points in the second half, the last time on a jumper by Fielder for a 49-33 lead with 9:46 to play.

Tech got as close as 52-45 with 4:31 on the clock with a Kylie Meadows basket, but Jane Nelson countered with a 3-pointer and then a 3-point play to push the lead back to 13 and quell the OIT threat.

Megan Still added 12 points for EOU.

On Saturday, Fielder led a charge off the bench, as Eastern’s bench players combined for 47 points in a rout that was not as close as the final score indicated.

Fielder, Jill Albright (12 points) and Whitney Meier (eight points) combined for 40 of those bench points for Eastern, which never trailed and led by as much as 39 points.

Taylor Stricklin added 14 points and Logan had 10.

“I would say that’s one of the benefits of having so many girls and so many good players, because any night anybody can go off,” Logan said. “Our bench always contributes and that’s what makes us be able to succeed.”

Eastern broke the game open in the second quarter when it held SOU without a point for the first 4:25 of the period and ended the quarter on a 10-2 run to take a 37-18 lead into the break on 3s by Fielder and Meier.

A layup by Albright and another 3 by Fielder gave EOU a 63-32 lead after three, and baskets by Logan and Kylie Smith and two from Stricklin to open the fourth put EOU ahead 71-32.

“I think a lot of it comes down to talk,” Logan said of the team’s defense. “Everybody ends up on different people all the time, and we were just talking more and rotating better, and that makes it so everyone can do their job better.”

EOU (14-7 overall, 8-3 CCC) visits Warner Pacific Friday.

Eastern goes 3-0

Observer staff

The Eastern Oregon University men’s wrestling team won three duals Saturday in Portland, defeating Embry-Riddle, 25-18, blasting Pacific 58-0, and topping Warner Pacific 34-20.

In Eastern’s matchup with ERAU, Blake McNall (1-0 at 141 pounds) and John Bittinger (15-10 at 157) each picked up wins by decision, and Keegan Mulhill later added a win by fall at 174.

The Mountaineers were tied with the Eagles heading into the final two matches, but Ryan Redford (197) earned a win in a tiebreaker round by a final of 4-3, and Noel Orozco (285) added a 10-0 major decision.

Eastern had just four matches on the mat against Pacific, and picked up wins

by fall from Nathaniel Rodriguez at 149 and Marco Retano at 184. Bittinger (18-3 at 157) and Josh Pine (16-0 at 165) won by technical fall. EOU claimed six additional wins by forfeit.

EOU and Warner Pacific split six matches, but EOU took advantage of three forfeits to come away with the win. On the mat, Pine (165) and Mulhill (174) won by fall, and Cade Woodward (285) earned an 8-0 major decision.

The Mountaineers host four duals Friday and Saturday.

The Eastern Oregon University women’s wrestling team’s dual at Southern Oregon Friday was canceled.

EOU will host University of Providence and Southern Oregon Saturday.

LOCAL SCHEDULE

Tuesday PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL
Baker at Powder Valley, 6 p.m.
Elgin vs. Joseph at Enterprise, 5:30 p.m.

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL
La Grande at Pendleton, 6:30 p.m.
Baker at Powder Valley, 7:30 p.m.
Elgin vs. Joseph at Enterprise, 7 p.m.

Wednesday PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL
Wallowa vs. Joseph at Enterprise, 6 p.m.

PREP BOYS BASKETBALL
Wallowa vs. Joseph at Enterprise, 7:30 p.m.

— Subject to change

Bobcat wrestlers take fourth

Observer staff

The Union/Cove wrestling team placed fourth and Enterprise took sixth Friday at the Grant Union tournament in John Day.

The Bobcats had three wrestlers claim titles and three more finish in second. Carter Blackburn (145 pounds) went a perfect 3-0, while Michael Day (220) won both his matches. Alleah Haydon was also 2-0 to win the girls 235 division.

Gage Martens (106) Jaxon Blackburn (132) both finished 2-1, and David Creech fell in his lone match, but finished second at 160B.

Dylan Frolander won both his matches to claim first in the 132C division for Enterprise, and Alex Albanez (120B) went 1-1 to take second.

Enterprise takes 14th in New Plymouth

The Outlaws took 14th Saturday at the RD Brown Invitational in New Plymouth, Idaho.

Alex Albanez and Trace Evans both had second-place finishes to lead the Outlaws. Albanez went 4-1 in the 120B division, winning his last two matches by fall, and Evans went 3-1 at 138, earning two wins by fall on the way to the final before losing a 6-0 deci-

sion to Trent Myers of New Plymouth.

Strong efforts in Halfway

Joe Lathrop and Ty Hammond each took top honors Saturday to lead Elgin to a third-place finish at the 1A state preview wrestling tournament in Halfway.

Lathrop and Hammond both finished 2-0. Lathrop (132 pounds) pinned both his opponents and defeated Crane’s Rixon Doman in the final, and Hammond got by Pine Eagle’s Kyle Roe by an 8-6 decision in the 152 final. Kenny Terry (126) placed second.

Joseph got a title out of Jonah Staigle in the heavyweight division, with Staigle winning his only match over Adrian’s Mats Ollenhauer by fall, while Ronny Morello took second at 170.

Wallowa’s Zeb Ramsden won all three matches to win the 145 title, and defeated Adrian’s Wade Bond by an 11-0 major decision in the final.

Imbler’s Garrett Burns took second at 113 to lead the Panthers.

Imbler, Enterprise, Elgin and Joseph/Wallowa head to the BEO Invite Saturday, while Union/Cove competes at Ilwaco, Washington.



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