

stuff shots

Blazers solid for next year

by MARK FLOYD
Sports Editor

The Portland Trail Blazers have never won a playoff series except during their 1977 championship year.

That is a rather startling statistic, considering that the Blazers have been in the playoffs for each of the last five years.

Here's another one. The Blazers doubled their total number of playoff losses at home with their two losses to Kansas City this season. Heretofore, the grand total had been one, a Memorial Coliseum loss to Seattle.

What causes Portland's April swoon? The Blazers have had two or three building years in a row now, but they are still a basically young team. And an inexperienced one at that.

Billy Ray Bates has become Portland's Mr. April, averaging better than 25 points a game despite his youth and inexperience. He simply thrives on the pressure. The rest of the Blazers are not quite so confident and therein lies the problem.

Kelvin Ransey is a rookie, albeit a good one, but a first year player nonetheless. Being a rookie can mean a lot of different things — a lack of experience, not being accustomed to playoff pressure, etc. But in the NBA, the biggest thing about being a rookie is adjusting to the rigors of an 82-game schedule.

In college, 30 games is just about maximum and the travel is nowhere near what goes on in the NBA. To suddenly be forced with the prospect of playing preseason games, then 82 regular season games, all just to get into the playoffs, is a very big adjustment.

Mychal Thompson is a player without a position. Offensively, he can play center and thrives with his back to the bucket. Defensively, however, he lacks the muscle to stay with the big men and lacks the wheels to stay with the small forwards. Thompson came under a lot of criticism for his "lazy" play, but he was asked to do a lot, taking over the center position.

Calvin Natt is another player without much experience who still doesn't understand his role. He gets criticized for shooting outside, yet the Blazers are crying for a good-shooting small forward. No wonder he is confused.

Bob Gross is another player who hasn't lived up to the management's expectations. But Gross is the kind of player who moves best without the ball and the new Portland offense isn't necessarily designed to fit his talents. He, above all the other Blazers, misses a Walton-like center who can pass the ball.

Kermit Washington, next to Bates, is the sparkplug of the Blazers, providing the team with some much-needed muscle. Washington, however, doesn't have much of a touch on the offensive end and that has hurt Portland at times. He would be more effective coming off the bench, but no one currently on the team can start and be productive.

Portland sorely missed the injured Jim Paxson in the Kansas City series. Paxson plays good defense, but more importantly, he was the glue which held the Blazers together. Portland certainly had an up-and-down series with the Kings, riding a crest of momentum at times, then tossing up a bundle of bricks during crucial moments. Paxson was the missing ingredient in the Blazer chemistry.

Portland fans were understandably heartbroken at the Blazers' loss to KC, but it wasn't really unexpected. Paxson was missing and the Blazers are woefully inexperienced in playoffs. Ransey is a rookie; Natt, Bates and, essentially Thompson, are second-year players. Paxson would have been a second-year player, leaving only Gross and Washington as veterans. And, despite his veteran status, Washington was seeing just his second year of playoff action.

The disappointment will go away. The experience will be invaluable.



Shelby Dries flies into the pit on a 15-foot long jump. Dries has been near the 15-foot mark all year and placed second in Sandy's win over Estacada Thursday. See page 1 for details.

Sandy places high at relays

The Sandy High track team continued to show its improvement this season by placing high at the Timber Valley League Relays Saturday at Oregon City.

The Pioneer girls placed second behind Oregon City and Sandy was third in the boys competition behind Oregon City and West Linn.

"We competed extremely well," Sandy coach Randy Hutchinson said. "We were strong where we thought we would be — we took first or second in all the throwing events."

"Second and third is one

spot better than last year, overall," he added. "That's what we were shooting for — middle of the pack or better. And we didn't really have that good a day in the rest of the field events, either."

The Sandy boys took first in the javelin relay, second in the shot put and discus relays and third in the long jump and two-mile relays. The Pioneers placed fourth in several events, including the sprint medley and the mile relay.

The outstanding individual mark was turned in by junior Steve Metelak, who turned in

a 52.9 quarter mile leg on the mile relay.

"All of the kids were at a PR (personal record) level or close to it," Hutchinson said.

The Pioneer girls also had a strong day in the throwing events, sweeping the javelin, discus and shot put relays. Sandy was first in the two-mile relay, second in the long jump and sprint medley and fourth in the distance medley.

The outstanding individual mark for the Sandy girls went to sophomore Paige Daugherty who had the best

discus throw in the meet with a mark of 112-3, a personal best.

Another best mark was recorded by freshman Sharon Jensen with a 15-10 long jump.

Rangers claim 6-2 win over listless glovemen

A lapse in concentration cost the Sandy High baseball its first Timber Valley League win, Tuesday, as Estacada claimed a 6-2 victory on its own field.

It was a game that the Pioneers expected to win, and should have won, but they failed to put it all together.

"It was a lack of total concentration," Sandy coach Curtis Heath said. "I guess we weren't motivated to go out and do the job. We had some silly little mental errors in the beginning of the game. It's not a question of Estacada being the better team."

The Rangers picked up a pair of runs in the first and two more in the third to take a 4-0 lead. Sandy finally got on the scoreboard in the top of the fourth when John Martin smacked a triple and scored on Troy Bangs' sacrifice fly.

But Estacada got a rally going in its half of the fourth and drove Sandy pitcher

Mike Contreras from the box. Kraig Gifford came on in relief and did a solid job — no runs, two hits and just one walk in three innings — but the Pioneers were staring at a 6-1 deficit.

They tried to rally in the ninth as Gifford doubled and scored on a single by Mo Contreras, but the rally fizzled there.

Estacada outthrew Sandy 10 to 7 and the Pioneers hurt their own cause by committing five errors.

"There have been too many people on base while we're in the field," Heath said. "We're just not keeping them off the bases, be it walks, hits or errors."

Sandy won the junior varsity game 12-11 and walked away with the freshmen contest 21-0.

The Pioneers record dropped to 0-2 in TVL play after the loss. Sandy had a game with Molalla last week, but it was called after four innings and will be made up in its entirety at a later date.

State park fees upped

Overnight camping in Oregon State Parks will cost \$1 more a night during the coming summer months, and a day use fee will be assessed at nine locations.

The increase in fees and establishment of a limited day use fee program, a major departure from park tradition, were approved during a meeting of the Oregon Transportation Commission.

Rule changes affecting both fees and management of some facilities were recommended following testimony at eight public hearings.

All overnight camping will increase \$1 per night from mid-May through September and fall back to current levels the rest of the year. The summer rates will range

from \$4 to \$7 for residents depending on the type of site desired.

The day use fee program will be implemented at nine parks. For the most part, fees will be assessed on the basis of \$1 per vehicle on summer weekends and holidays. Alternative collection methods may be used, however.

The new day use fee will be charged at Rooster Rock, Silver Falls, Champoe, Tou Velle, Armitage, Dabney, Detroit, Shore Acres and Melver State Parks.

Also approved were increased in some group and facility fees, reinstatement of a campsite reservation fee and park management changes at a number of locations.

Snowfall aids skiing

With the arrival of late spring snow, cross country skiing is once again possible on the lower slopes of Mt. Hood.

There was a base of approximately 14 inches through the weekend at Government Camp, opening skiing on many snow-covered roads, including Westleg, Summit and Snow Bunny.

Spring snow has a tenden-

cy to melt as quickly as it appears, however, so skiers traveling off the roads should be prepared to encounter rocks, stumps and trees.

Avalanche danger is high above 6,000 feet, moderate between 4,000 and 6,000 feet and low below 4,000 feet.

The snow level has dropped to approximately 3,200 feet, though trails at lower elevations may have snow.

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Prep of the Week:



MO CONTRERAS

Pioneer sophomore Mo Contreras, catcher on the SUHS baseball team, has been named Sandy High's athlete of the month for March. He hit better than 500 for the first month of the season. Congratulations, Mo!

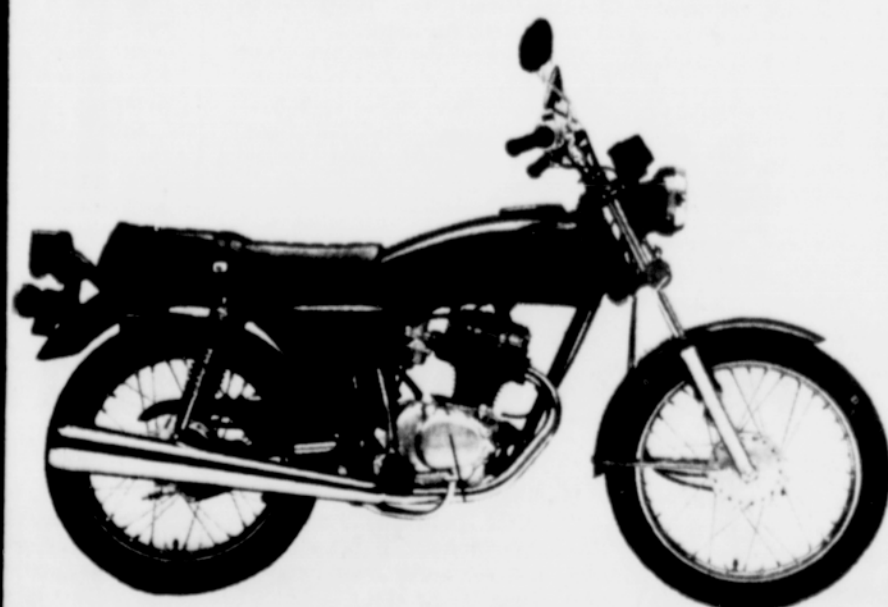


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