

SPORTS

CONTACT US
 Gary Henley | Sports Reporter
 ghenley@dailyastorian.com

FOLLOW US
 facebook.com/
 DailyAstorianSports

Fishermen host Lions Friday in quarterfinals

The Daily Astorian

The Astoria Fighting Fishermen will host the Cottage Grove Lions Friday, in a quarterfinal game of the Class 4A football state playoffs.

Astoria is the No. 3 seed and has won eight in a row, while the Lions (9-0) are the No. 6 seed.

The winner will face either Cascade or South Umpqua in the semifinals, which will be played at a neutral site.

Kickoff is scheduled for 7 p.m. at CMH Field. Gates open at 5:30 p.m. for all spectators. Admission is \$6 for adults and \$4 for high school-age students and younger. Only OSAA-approved passes may be used for free admission.

All general admission tickets can be purchased in advance as the Astoria High School main office through Thursday this week, during normal school hours (8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.). Reserved ticket-holders may pur-

chase their normal reserved seats by Wednesday at 3 p.m. by contacting AHS athletic department Assistant Emily Delay at 503-325-3911, ext. 318, or via email, edelay@astoria.k12.or.us. Any available reserved seats will go on sale Thursday at 8 a.m. Reserved seats may be purchased for \$10 or \$8, based on availability and location. The school's main office will be closed Friday in honor of Veterans Day/Remembrance Day.



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Astoria's Samboy Tuimato will try to pump the Fishermen up for one more home victory Friday, when Astoria hosts Cottage Grove in a state quarterfinal game at CMH Field.

Lillard has 38 and Blazers hold off Suns



AP Photo/Craig Mitchelldyer

Portland Trail Blazers guard Damian Lillard, center, drives to the basket past Phoenix Suns center Alex Len during the first half.

By ANNE M. PETERSON
 AP Sports Writer

PORTLAND — The scoreboard may say victory, but Damian Lillard sees work to do.

Lillard scored 38 points, making key free throws in the waning seconds, and the Portland Trail Blazers held off the Phoenix Suns for a 124-121 victory on Tuesday night.

After leading by 18 points early, it shouldn't have been so close at the end, Lillard said.

"We talk about just being able to play the way we want to play for longer spans of time," he said. "We'll play really well for seven minutes, and then in four minutes we'll give up a 15-2 run and give up everything we just worked for. We got to continue to work

UP NEXT: TRAIL BLAZERS

- Portland Trail Blazers (5-3)
- at Los Angeles Clipper (6-1)
- Today, 7:30 p.m. TV: CSNW

on that. The good thing is, we're able to find a way to win games while we work on it."

CJ McCollum added 33 points for the Blazers, who have won three straight.

Lillard hit a 3-pointer with 6:45 left that put Portland in front 101-95. Eric Bledsoe made a free throw to pull Phoenix within 115-114 with just under a minute left, but he missed the second attempt that would have tied it and Lillard scored a layup on the other end.

Bledsoe hit two free throws to again get within a point, but Lillard was fouled with

13.3 seconds left and made both to put Portland up 119-116.

Devin Booker made a 3-pointer that pulled the Suns within 122-121 but Lillard again hit two free throws with 3.7 seconds left and Booker missed from some 25 feet has time ran out.

Bledsoe finished with 31 points and Booker had 23.

"It's not tough for us to come back, we come back a lot," Suns coach Earl Watson said. "That's what we do. Our team is really close and we have a lot of belief."

The Suns, who opened the season with four straight losses before winning two of their last three, were without Tyson Chandler because of personal reasons. Chandler has been in double-digit rebounds in three of the last four games.

NFL HALFWAY

Cowboys have built comfortable lead in NFC

By DAVE CAMPBELL
 AP Pro Football Writer

MINNEAPOLIS — How 'bout them Cowboys?

They've built a healthy lead on the rest of the NFC at the midpoint of this season, for starters. They've been playing like they're capable of finishing on top, too.

Defying so many of those pre-September predictions from the punditry, Dak Prescott and the Dallas Cowboys have followed a one-point loss in their opener with seven straight victories. This, of course, with an all-rookie backfield of Prescott and Ezekiel Elliott performing well beyond their years.

"We're so dynamic it's crazy," said two-time Pro Bowl wide receiver Dez Bryant, whose three-game absence due to a knee injury went largely unnoticed.

That's partly because of the polish and poise displayed by Prescott, the fourth-round draft pick from Mississippi State thrust into action when Tony Romo hurt his back during the preseason. The other significant factor in the first-half surge by the Cowboys, as sure a sign as any that it's sustainable, is the success Elliott has had carrying the ball behind that dominant offensive line built by three former first-round draft picks.

This fall has been so fruitful for Dallas that Romo isn't guaranteed to get the job back.

"It's hard for me to say it's Tony's team, it's my team or anybody's team," Prescott said. "It's a true team, and everybody is playing their part in it."

That fearsome five the Cowboys (7-1) can pass and run behind is not the only factor in their command of the NFC playoff race. Another reason they're ahead is the struggles by other contenders, namely Seattle and Minnesota, to solidify the blocking up front.

The Seahawks (5-2-1) have had trouble getting their offense going this year, with running back Marshawn Lynch now retired and Russell Wilson grinding through ankle and knee injuries that have hampered his mobility. The revamped line remains a work in progress.

The Vikings (5-3) had the NFL's last undefeated record, until their bye week arrived. Since then, they've lost all three straight games with issues on offense, defense and special teams all influencing the streak. With both starting tackles on injured reserve and left guard Alex Boone recovering from a concussion that kept him out of the overtime loss to Detroit on Sunday, the protection for quarterback Sam Bradford is going to be a yearlong concern.

After the crushing loss at home to the Lions, coach Mike Zimmer at least sounded satisfied that some confidence had been restored.

"I'm hopeful they'll continue to carry it forward through the rest of the season, because if we do that we're going to win some games," Zimmer said.

The Atlanta Falcons (6-3) have already escaped their October skid, having rallied to beat Green Bay by one point on Oct. 30 and breezed by Tampa Bay four days later. The league's highest-scoring team, at 34 points per game, has assembled more threats than just Julio Jones.

Officiating again story after mistakes in Seahawk's win

By TIM BOOTH
 AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE — Richard Sherman took the opportunity last week to criticize NFL officiating for what he deemed incorrect calls, almost daring the league to fine him for being so outspoken.

"Sometimes the truth is the truth, it's the truth," the All-Pro cornerback said last week. "It is what it is. This is basically reality TV, so I guess I'm good for ratings probably."

So it seemed almost fitting that just a few days after making some bold comments, Sherman was at the center of another officiating flap in Monday night's 31-25 win over the Buffalo Bills.

Once again, NFL refs were in the spotlight of a prime-time game that left the league scrambling to provide explanations of what happened and the mistakes that were made.

Any time Dean Blandino, the

NFL's head of officiating, has to send an explanatory tweet during a game about a mistake, it's not a good look for the league.

"We are absolutely going to address it," Blandino told NFL Network late Monday night. "Anytime you have a sequence like that at any point during the game, we want to see what happened and just walk through the steps of where the breakdown was. Regardless of the outcome of the game, we are going to address the situation with our crew."

Officiating controversy and Monday night games in Seattle have become almost a regular occurrence. For the third time in five seasons, the day after a Seattle Monday win was spent breaking down the role of officiating mistakes in the Seahawks' victory.

The latest black eye for the refs came when Walt Anderson's crew chose not to flag Sherman for unnecessary roughness as he attempted

to block Dan Carpenter's field goal attempt at the end of the first half. Sherman was penalized for being offside — and was determined to be unabated to the kicker — but the play was not stopped in time to prevent Sherman from getting a piece of the kick and crashing recklessly into Carpenter's legs.

"Whenever it comes to player safety, we want to look at these fouls," Blandino said. "It's something that we stress with our referees when it comes to the quarterbacks and the kickers with roughing the kicker and roughing the passer, so we certainly don't want to miss calls like that."

The fact that no unnecessary roughness call was made created a whole other set of problems — including an injury timeout against Buffalo that forced Carpenter off the field — that weren't handled well by Anderson's crew. Most damaging for the Bills was the play clock not being properly reset.



AP Photo/Butch Dill

Seattle Seahawks cornerback Richard Sherman (25) talks to an official in the first half of an NFL football game against the New Orleans Saints in New Orleans on Oct. 30. Richard Sherman spent last week criticizing what he believed were incorrect calls, only to be at the center of another officiating flap Monday night that this time went Seattle's way.