

SPORTS

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Athletes of the Week

(FOR THE WEEK OF FEB. 27-MARCH 4)



**MADDI
 UTTI**
 Seaside

Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian



**ATTIKIN
 BABB**
 Seaside

Damian Mulinix/For EO Media Group

The senior is saving her best for last.

Trailing 13-4 early in their Sweet 16 playoff game at Molalla, Utti went down hard after a foul, and left the game momentarily with injuries to her chin and wrist.

She returned, scored the first seven points of the second half, and led Seaside to a 38-31 win over the Indians. Utti led all scorers with 20 points.

Not by coincidence, Utti and the Gulls are taking part in their fourth straight state tournament.

Babb was in foul trouble in Seaside's first round state playoff game vs. Cascade, but the senior played a great second half, made some key free throws down the stretch and led the Gulls with 16 points, in a 68-49 win.

Babb had three fouls in the first half and was on the bench for much of the second quarter.

"We settled down in the second half and started running our offense a little better," Seaside coach Bill Westerholm said. "We got better looks, Attikin started running the baseline and hit a couple shots. We got the ball inside and got to the free-throw line, which gave us that cushion."



AP Photo/John Locher

California's Kameron Rooks, right, blocks a shot by Oregon State's Kendal Manuel (24) during the first half of an NCAA college basketball game in the first round of the Pac-12 men's tournament Wednesday in Las Vegas. California's Jabari Bird is on the left. Oregon State team ends its season with a 5-27 record.

Beavers season ends in Pac-12 tourney opener

By **JOHN MARSHALL**
 Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Jabari Bird scored 20 points and converted a key 3-point play with 54 seconds left, helping California grind out a 67-62 victory over Oregon State Wednesday in the first round of the Pac-12 Tournament.

Cal (20-11) labored for most of the game offensively and had a hard time containing Oregon State's Stephen Thompson Jr. The fifth-seeded Bears pulled it out behind Bird and a strong second half by Ivan Rabb, earning a spot in Thursday's quarterfinals against fourth-seeded Utah.

Rabb finished with 12 points and 13 rebounds after scoring two on 1-of-7 shooting in the first half.

Thompson had 25 points and hit 5 of 6 from 3-point range to keep Oregon State (5-27) in the game until late. The Beavers pulled within 59-57, but Bird was fouled on a layup and hit the free throw to put Cal up five.

The Bears came into the game knowing they couldn't afford a let-down against the 12th-seeded Beavers to maintain any hope of reaching the NCAA Tournament.

Cal won the two regular-season meetings against Oregon State by a combined 41 points, but the Beavers

were ready for the Bears in round three.

Oregon State opened the game by making three of its first four shots from 3-point range and hounded Cal defensively. The Beavers had an early 10-4 run to lead by eight and withstood a run by Cal to stay within 32-29 at halftime.

Oregon State continued to hang around, still within one after Cal forgot to guard Thompson on back-to-back 3-pointers midway through.

Even when the Bears tried to pull away, the Beavers stayed on their heels, keeping the game closer than expected.

Haniger won't go unnoticed after trade to Mariners

By **STEPHEN HAWKINS**
 Associated Press

PEORIA, Ariz. — Some people viewed young outfielder Mitch Haniger as a throw-in prospect in the offseason deal that got the Seattle Mariners top-notch shortstop Jean Segura.

The Mariners certainly never felt that way about Haniger, even though he has played in only 34 major league games.

Not only did Seattle want Segura in its lineup, general manager Jerry Dipoto and manager Scott Servais expect Haniger to be their starting right fielder this season.

"I feel blessed to be valued and that's something that Jerry and Scott told me when I got traded over here, that they really liked me as a player," Haniger said. "I'm not doing anything different now than I have in the past as far as work ethic. In my mind, I'm still fighting to make the team, to earn my spot."

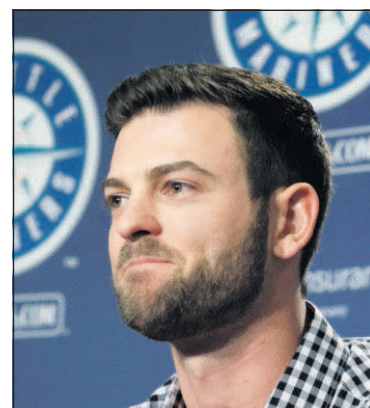
Haniger homered twice in his first seven spring training games with the Mariners, who acquired him last November in a five-player swap in which they also got reliever Zac Curtis from Arizona. Seattle traded away right-handed pitcher Taijuan Walker and shortstop Ketel Marte.

Before spending the final six weeks of last season with the Diamondbacks, Haniger hit .321 with 24 doubles, 25 homers and 96 RBIs in 129 minor league games.

"Haniger last year, by the numbers, was able to show that he was the best offensive player in the minor leagues," Dipoto said. "You put the numbers together and he produced more runs ... than any other hitter in minor league baseball."

Dipoto describes Haniger as having right-hand power that "really manifested itself similarly to Jean Segura once he made swing adjustments and really took off over the course of last year and a half." Segura hit .319 and led the NL with 203 hits last season.

As for his time in the majors with the Diamondbacks, when he hit .229 with five homers and 17 RBIs, Dipoto said that by any measure Haniger proved to be one of the three best defensive outfielders



AP Photo/Ted S. Warren

Seattle Mariners outfielder Mitch Haniger talks to reporters during the teams annual pre-season briefing in Seattle. Some viewed young outfielder Mitch Haniger as a throw-in prospect in the offseason deal that got the Seattle Mariners a top-notch shortstop. The Mariners never felt that way. Not only did they want Jean Segura in their lineup, they expect Haniger to be their starting right fielder after only 34 major league games.

in the big leagues.

Haniger's locker in the Arizona spring training clubhouse is next to that of third baseman Kyle Seager.

"He's coming into a good situation," said Seager, a stalwart on the Mariners roster that has drastically changed in the 1 1/2 years Dipoto has been the GM. "He's definitely a guy that's got a lot of upside, and looks like he can help a team on either end of the ball."

The 26-year-old Haniger was drafted 38th overall by the Milwaukee Brewers in 2012 and traded two years later to Arizona, where he started to rework his hitting mechanics. He advanced from Class A Visalia at the start of 2015 to the majors by the end of last season.

"When you get out there, it's like 'Wow, I've made it.' But for me, I would just put blinders on and started to say, 'OK, I'm playing the game I've always played,'" he said. "I'm playing against big-name guys, but at the same time, they're human, they're just like me. So that's kind of how I dumb everything down so that everything feels normal."

Cowboys to release quarterback Romo today

By **SCHUYLER DIXON**
 Associated Press

DALLAS — Tony Romo's star-crossed career as the starting quarterback for the Dallas Cowboys will soon be over.

A person with knowledge of the decision tells The Associated Press that the Cowboys will release Romo when the NFL year opens today. The person spoke to the AP on Wednesday on condition of anonymity because the team hasn't announced a decision on Romo, who will get a chance to pursue a starting job elsewhere.

Romo will leave the Cowboys as

the franchise leader in yards passing (34,183) and touchdowns (248). But he could never match the postseason success of Hall of Famers and multiple Super Bowl winners Roger Staubach and Troy Aikman.

A 10-year starter who joined the Cowboys as an undrafted free agent in 2003, Romo lost the job last season to rookie Dak Prescott after breaking a bone in his back in a preseason game.

When he was healthy again, Romo conceded the job to Prescott during a franchise-record 11-game winning streak. His departure has been expected ever since.

A trade was unlikely because Romo

turns 37 next month, carries a \$24 million salary cap hit and has missed most of the past two seasons with injuries. But he should be attractive as a free agent to contenders wanting a quarterback, a list that could include Denver and Houston.

A release will free about \$5 million in cap space for the Cowboys, who can split the dead money from a \$19 million hit over two seasons.

Romo was 78-49 as the starter, but his playoff debut 10 years ago illustrated the postseason struggles ahead when he infamously flubbed the snap on what could have been a winning field goal in Seattle.

SCOREBOARD

LOCAL PREP SCHEDULE

THURSDAY

Boys Basketball — OSAA 4A State Tournament: Gladstone vs. Seaside, 1:30 p.m., at Pacific University.
Girls Basketball — OSAA 4A State Tournament: Seaside vs. Cascade, 3:15 p.m., at Forest Grove HS.