

SPORTS

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Albany Democrat-Herald

Freshman wide receiver Isaiah Hodgins participates in a scrimmage at Summit High School in Bend.

Freshman receiver to make debut for OSU

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

CORVALLIS — Freshman Isaiah Hodgins gave a peek at his future in Oregon State's spring game. The 6-foot-4 early enrollee from Northern California pulled down a 38-yard pass from junior transfer quarterback Jake Luton in the first quarter, setting the stage for a 6-yard TD reception by Jordan Villamin.

For Saturday's season opener at Colorado State, Hodgins makes his Beavers debut atop the depth chart at receiver opposite Villamin.

"When I first got here I was definitely more immature as a player, more immature physically and mentally for the game of football. Since then my IQ for football has just jumped. From reading safeties and corners and coverages to knowing different playbooks and different routes to run. My body has definitely gotten more physically dominating," Hodgins said.

Overall, the Beavers are in transition at the receiver position. The top receiver from last season, Victor Bolden, has graduated. Hunter Jarmon, who was expected to be one of the team's best options, decided to leave the Beavers early for a pro baseball career.

Dynamic playmaker Seth Collins, who missed the final two games of last season because of a serious illness, was moved to slot receiver in fall camp. But he has a finger injury and won't play on Saturday, making way for sophomore Trevon Bradford to top the season-opening depth chart.

Villamin, a senior, is the leading returner at the position. After a promising sophomore year, he finished last season with just 21 catches for 253 yards and a touchdown.

Hodgins, considered a four-star recruit, originally committed to Washington State but was also pursued by Oregon and Nebraska. As a senior at Berean Christian High School last season he caught 94 passes for 1,521 yards and 21 touchdowns.

SEASON OPENER

• Oregon State Beavers at Colorado State Rams
• Saturday, 11:30 a.m.
TV: CBSN

Football 'jam' tonight at CMH

The Daily Astorian

The local football season unofficially kicks off tonight at CMH Field, where the Astoria Fishermen are hosting a six-school jamboree, with the varsity teams starting at 6 p.m.

Admission is \$5 per person, \$2 for seniors or high school age and younger.

In addition to the Fishermen, participating teams include Clatskanie, Ilwaco, Mark Morris, Seaside and Warrenton.

Each team will scrimmage against all five opponents, for a total of 36 offensive plays (each Washington state team can participate in 40 total plays).

MORE FREEDOM

Titans believe Mariota is ready to blossom at QB in his 3rd season

By TERESA M. WALKER
Associated Press

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The kid gloves are off for Marcus Mariota.

The Tennessee Titans believe Mariota is ready to blossom as a quarterback in his third NFL season, so they're giving him a bit more responsibility. They're trusting Mariota to make sure the Titans have the right play called before snapping the ball.

Oh, the quarterback won't be stepping to the line, surveying the defense and flipping mentally through the whole playbook. Coach Mike Mularkey has asked Mariota to use those valuable seconds before the ball hits his hands to counter a defense ready to blitz or positioned to blow up what the Titans previously called in to the quarterback.

"Putting more on his plate that he can hopefully get us to the right play," Mularkey said. "Not a lot, but just enough to maybe save us a couple of snaps."

Mariota, the 2014 Heisman Trophy winner and the No. 2 pick overall in the 2015 draft, has earned his coaches' trust after his first two seasons. Injuries have been his biggest challenge so far. Knee injuries cost four games as a rookie, and Mariota missed the 2016 season finale after breaking his right leg in a Dec. 24 loss at Jacksonville.

On the field, Mariota has put together a resume that ranks among the league's best. He already has thrown multiple touchdown passes in 16 games. The only quarterbacks to have more games with two or more touchdown passes in their first two seasons were Hall of Famer Dan Marino (22) and Oakland's Derek Carr (17).

Now Mariota is going into his second full season with Mularkey and offensive coordinator Terry Robiskie, and Mularkey says the quarterback's familiarity with the playbook has helped the Titans work faster this offseason and preseason.

Mariota, a Hawaii native, is a quiet workaholic who's at the job early every morning. Mularkey warns not to be fooled by Mariota's easygoing demeanor.

"You wouldn't expect him to be able to do what he does," Mularkey said. "He can pick you apart. He can beat you with his feet. He can do a lot of things. He does all his talking with his play, and I like that."

So do his teammates, especially after the Titans went from an NFL-worst 3-13 in Mariota's rookie season to 9-7 in his second. Wide receiver Harry Douglas said they see Mariota's competitive streak on the field. Mariota only speaks when needed, but Douglas said the quarterback makes clear exactly what he wants without being derogatory or critical.

"He shows his teammates respect, and because of that, man, we appreciate him 100 percent," Douglas said. "We'll run through a wall for him."

In 2016, Mariota ranked 10th in the NFL with a 95.6 passer rating. He also threw 26 touchdown passes with nine interceptions.

Mariota has been at his best inside an opponent's 20, where he leads the NFL with a 114.6 passer rating over the past two seasons; he has yet to be intercepted in that area. The Titans scored touchdowns on 72 percent of their red-zone trips to lead the NFL last season.

But Mariota completed only 61.2 percent of his passes overall, putting him 20th among the league's top passers. That's why the quarterback has focused on being more consistent.

Tennessee Titans quarterback Marcus Mariota attempts a pass against the Carolina Panthers in the first half of an NFL preseason game in Nashville, Tenn.

AP Photo/Mark Zaleski

McGregor's future is healthy, wealthy, bright after bout

By GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Conor McGregor has already won.

Even if the loquacious Irishman takes the one-sided beating that most expect him to receive from Floyd Mayweather in the boxing spectacle of the summer, the UFC champion has earned life-changing wealth simply by getting into the Vegas ring. Getting knocked out wouldn't change that the most famous man in mixed martial arts would still have an unprecedented perch as a powerful player in two combat sports.

UFC President Dana White puts it succinctly: "Conor can do whatever Conor wants to do with his life after this. Everything is possible. He's the unicorn."

McGregor seems constantly mindful of the enormity of what he has achieved simply by making this showdown happen, and it fills him with glee. With no competitive boxing experience since adolescence, McGregor managed to talk his way into a



AP Photo/John Locher
Floyd Mayweather Jr., left, and Conor McGregor.

MAYWEATHER VS. MCGREGOR

- Saturday, 6 pm (main card)
- Floyd Mayweather (boxing) vs. Conor McGregor (MMA)
- Showtime pay-per-view

pay-per-view fight with Mayweather, the unbeaten champion in the final bout of a perfect 21-year career.

A fight that started as a barstool argument and turned into a social

media phenomenon has improbably evolved into a real, actual sporting event that will create untold millions in wealth, much of it going into the fighters' pockets. There's no telling just how much it will be yet, but McGregor is widely expected to make between \$75 million and \$150 million, depending on pay-per-view sales.

"It's absolutely amazing to be involved in it," said McGregor, whose cocky public veneer often gets lowered in private. "I'm very grateful. The city of Las Vegas is going to benefit massively from it, as is (Mayweather). Everyone involved, we're all living good. Life is so good, and I'm grateful."

Sure, an embarrassing loss would hurt McGregor's pride, and a brutal knockout could be physically damaging. The enormity of the challenge he's facing appeared to be on his mind during a subdued performance at the final news conference Wednesday.

But if he loses, he'll have plenty of time for healing and strategizing on his new 100-foot yacht in Ibiza starting next week.

Bookies will lose millions if McGregor wins by knockout

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS — Conor McGregor is making a lot of wise guys nervous in this gambling city. Should he somehow manage to knock out Floyd Mayweather Jr. in the early rounds Saturday night, the city's bookmakers would lose millions of dollars in the biggest single event loss in the history of sports betting.

McGregor fans have flooded sports books with \$100 bills backing the mixed martial arts fighter, and even a late surge of money on Mayweather might not be enough to balance the books.

The big bettors are putting their money on Mayweather, who is 49-0 as a pro. But so many McGregor fans are betting small amounts that the betting slips at William Hill were 18-1 in the Irish fighter's favor.