

SPORTS

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

FOLLOW US
 facebook.com/
DailyAstorianSports

Cupcakes aside, now it gets tougher for No. 7 Washington

By **TIM BOOTH**
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Enough with the cupcakes and empty calories.

After gorging on weak opponents for three weeks, No. 7 Washington gets its first real test when it travels to Colorado for Saturday's rematch of the Pac-12 title game from last season.

It's the second straight year in which the nonconference schedule for Washington (3-0) has left the Huskies looking good and proving little. Yes, they are very talented and probably worthy of being the overwhelming favorites in the Pac-12 North as the conference season begins for them this week.

But the quizzes Washington has faced so far against Rutgers, Montana and Fresno State haven't required much extra effort. That changes with the beginning of conference play, and for their part, the Huskies sound ready for the challenge.

Or as Washington coach Chris Petersen put it on Monday, "Away we go and now we start the hard part of our season."

"The one thing that you notice for the most part it everybody realizes league has started now and the intensity of those games kind of feel a little bit different," Petersen said. "It's not like kids play harder or don't play harder depending on the game ... but maybe leading up to it there is a little more focus. Everybody understands how competitive this league is that we play in."

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Oregon State QB Jake Luton back home after injury

CORVALLIS — Oregon State quarterback Jake Luton is back with the Beavers after taking a scary hit in their loss to Washington State and being removed from the field on a stretcher.

The school tweeted Saturday night that Luton had been released from Pullman Regional Hospital and returned to Corvallis. Luton had movement in all of his extremities, but after the game Oregon State coach Gary Andersen did not have an update on Luton's condition.

According to The Oregonian, Luton's father, Judd, posted on Facebook that his son had a "probable thoracic spine fracture." Luton himself tweeted his thanks for the messages of support.

Luton was injured when he was hit awkwardly by Washington State safety Jalen Thompson at the end of a 9-yard run early in the fourth quarter.

LB Peyton Pelluer of No. 18 Washington State out for season

SPOKANE, Wash. — Linebacker Peyton Pelluer of No. 18 Washington State broke his foot in Saturday's victory over Oregon State and is done for the season, likely ending the senior defensive leader's college career.

While Washington State does not disclose injuries and declined to confirm the reports, Pelluer's father, Scott, described the injury to The Seattle Times.

Pelluer, a 6-foot, 225-pound middle linebacker, left the Oregon State game early in the second quarter and did not return.

He was coming off a 14-tackle performance against Boise State that earned him Pac-12 defensive-player-of-the-week honors.

The Cougars host Nevada on Saturday.

Associated Press



AP Photo/Wilfredo Lee

Miami Marlins' Giancarlo Stanton rounds second base after hitting a home run against the Philadelphia Phillies.

MLB HOME RUN RECORD ON TRACK TO FALL TODAY

By **RONALD BLUM**
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Giancarlo Stanton's smacks, Aaron Judge's jolts and all those dizzying long balls helped Major League Baseball move another poke closer to the inevitable.

Nearly two decades after the height of the Steroids Era, the sport is on track to break its season record for home runs on Tuesday — and not just top the old mark, but smash it like one of those upper-deck shots that have become commonplace in the Summer of the Slugger.

There were 5,677 home runs hit through Monday, 16 shy of the record set in 2000.

Juiced balls? Watered-down pitching? Stanton's renaissance? Sensational starts by Judge and Cody Bellinger?

"I don't think that we are ever going to have a single explanation for exactly why we've seen so many," baseball Commissioner Rob Manfred said. "But players are bigger and stronger. They're playing a little differently, in terms of the way they swing. Pitchers throw harder. The one thing I remain comfortable with: Nothing about the baseball, according to our testing, is materially different."

There were 5,610 homers last year, an average of 2.31 per game, and this year's average of 2.53 projects to 6,139. That would be up 47 percent from 4,186 in 2014.

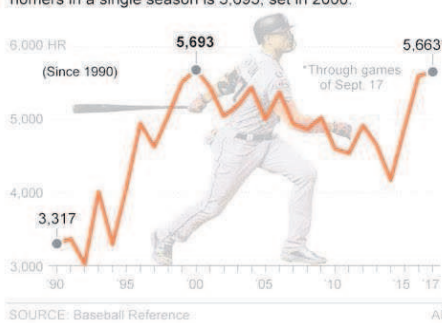
In just three years, home runs will have increased by 1,953 — an extra 149 miles of long balls at this year's average home run length of 400 feet, or 15 miles more than the driving distance between Philadelphia's Citizens Bank Park and Washington's Nationals Park.

"The game has changed," New York Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "From when I started, there's a lot less stolen bases, there's a lot less bunting, there's a lot less hitting-and-running. You don't give outs away, and you let guys swing the bat."

Already 108 players have hit 20 homers this year, just two shy of the record set last season — and up from 64 in 2015, according to the Elias Sports Bureau.

Long ball explosion

Balls are flying over fences at record rates as Major League Baseball is set to shatter its home run record. The record for homers in a single season is 5,693, set in 2000.



AP Photo/Frank Franklin II

New York Yankees' Aaron Judge hits a three-run home run against the Baltimore Orioles.

"The ball seems to soar from people that are hitting it farther than maybe they did a year ago ... and they kind of look like the same person," Minnesota manager Paul Molitor, a Hall of Famer hitter, said before Monday night's game at Yankee Stadium.

Along with sailing shots come strikeouts, which will set a record for the 10th consecutive year. There were 37,083 whiffs through Monday, an average of 8.25 per team per game that translates to 40,103 over the full season.

"The focus is hitting homers and tolerating strikeouts," Reggie Jackson said. "I don't really like all the strikeouts, and I was the king."

Baseball officials are worried about

decreasing action and have been alarmed by the strikeout rise. This year's total is up from 38,982 last year and headed to an increase of nearly 8,000 from the 32,189 in 2007. The strikeout spike coincides with a rise in fast-ball velocity; four-seamers have averaged 93.2 mph this year, up from 91.9 mph in 2008, according to MLB data.

"These bullpens are making it extremely difficult. From basically the starter on you're going to have elite, hard-throwing guys that are looking to strike you out every single time," said Baltimore's Mark Trumbo, last year's home run champion. "The game right now is as max effort as I've seen it. Guys are throwing harder. At the plate sometimes you have no choice. It's hard to steer the ball around when it's 98 miles an hour and up in the zone."

Jackson set a record with 2,597 career strikeouts, maxing at 171 in 1968. Six players already have reached 171 this year, led by the Yankees' Judge at 198. He could break Mark Reynolds' season record of 223, set in 2009.

"You'd have been on the bench," Jackson said. "But I don't know if you set a guy on the bench with 90 RBIs and 40 homers. That's Judge. You ain't going to sit that on the bench."

Steroids fueled the home run surge in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and power subsided after the start of drug testing with penalties in 2004. The home run average dropped in 2014 to its lowest level since 1992, then started rising during the second half of the 2015 season.

MLB has the UMass-Lowell's Baseball Research Center conduct periodic testing of baseballs and University of Illinois physics professor emeritus Alan Nathan consults as part of quality control. The sport has said repeatedly that baseballs fall within the specifications in the rules.

Manfred isn't worried some undetectable substance is fueling the new rise.

"I have never said that it's impossible there's something out there that we're missing," he said. "What I am saying is we're doing more, more frequently, less predictably, with better testing, and that's all you can do."

For 2nd straight season, Seahawks offense struggles

By **TIM BOOTH**
Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — If the script written by the Seattle Seahawks sounds familiar, that's because it's the same one from a year ago.

Two weeks. One touchdown. Plenty of handwringing in the Pacific Northwest about what's wrong with the Seahawks offense even as they sit at 1-1.

No, this isn't a flashback to 2016, when the exact scenario played out. It's where the Seahawks stand currently after Sunday's lackluster 12-9 win over San Francisco and heading into a Week 3 road trip to Tennessee. They are sputtering on offense, failing to convert on their limited red-zone opportunities and providing more work than they want for punter Jon Ryan.

If not for Russell Wilson escaping a potential third-down sack and Paul Richardson playing through



AP Photo/John Froschauer

Seattle Seahawks wide receiver Paul Richardson, left, is greeted by teammates Tyler Lockett and Rees Odhiambo after catching a pass for a touchdown against the San Francisco 49ers.

a dislocated finger to connect on a fourth quarter TD pass, the Seahawks may still be searching for their first touchdown.

"It was ugly, but that's football," Seattle wide receiver Doug Baldwin said. "When you grind it out like that, there's something special to that. It's

not pretty, we had a lot of mistakes, but for us to come out of there with a victory and to grind it out like we did, it's the beautiful part of the game."

What was beautiful to Baldwin appeared to be an unsightly slog to others. In a way, the victory over the 49ers only raised concerns rather than soothing any worries. It was one thing to struggle on the road against Green Bay in the season opener and lose to a team considered one of the favorites in the NFC. It's another to see some of the same problems emerge against rebuilding San Francisco.

Seattle coach Pete Carroll remained optimistic Monday that there was improvement from Week 1 to Week 2.

"I thought we did some things better than we did the week before. But we still didn't score enough points like we like to," Carroll said. "But we're working at it. Glad to get a win at home, would have liked it to have been a little bit different."

SCOREBOARD

PREP SPORTS SCHEDULE

TODAY

Volleyball — Astoria at Tillamook, 7 p.m.; Seaside at Valley Catholic, 7 p.m.; Warrenton at Catlin Gabel, 6 p.m.; Knappa at Faith Bible, 6:30 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Girls Soccer — Valley Catholic at Astoria, 7:15 p.m.; Scappoose at Seaside, 7:15 p.m.

Boys Soccer — Astoria at Valley Catholic, 7:15 p.m.; Seaside at Scappoose, 4:15 p.m.

THURSDAY

Volleyball — Banks at Astoria, 7 p.m.; Tillamook at Seaside, 7 p.m.; Warrenton at Clatskanie, 6 p.m.; Knappa at Naselle, 7 p.m.

FRIDAY

Football — Astoria at Valley Catholic, 7 p.m.; Seaside at Scappoose, 7 p.m.; Warrenton at Nestucca, 7 p.m.; Ilwaco at Toutle Lake, 7 p.m.; Naselle at Oakville, 7 p.m.

SATURDAY

Girls Soccer — Astoria at Seaside, 5:30 p.m.

Boys Soccer — Astoria at Seaside, 7:15 p.m.

Cross Country — 3-Course Challenge, 9 a.m.