

SPORTS

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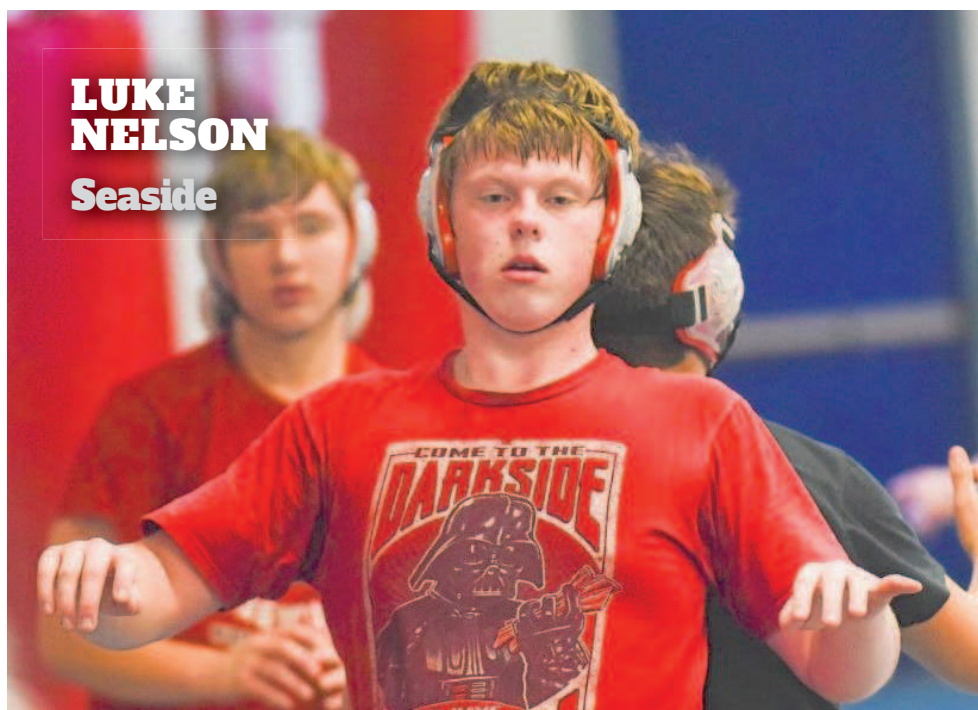
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Athletes of the Week



HALLE HELMERSEN
 Astoria

The 5-foot-6 sophomore reserve guard hit the biggest shot of the season for the Astoria Lady Fishermen in a 55-52 win over Banks Feb. 5. Her 3-pointer as time expired beat the Braves and pulled Astoria into a first-place tie with Banks in the Cowapa League standings. She scored 20 points off the bench, including nine in the first quarter. Three nights later, she scored a team-high 13 points in a win at Tillamook.



LUKE NELSON
 Seaside

The junior wrestler had the best finish for the Gulls in the District 1 tournament Feb. 8-9 in Tillamook. After a first-round bye at 220 pounds, Nelson won by technical fall (15-0 at 5:07) over Jackson Turner of Estacada, followed by a 7-1 decision over Tillamook's Dawson McKibbin in a semifinal match. Nelson lost to James Ellis of Banks in the title bout to finish second. Nelson is one of two Seaside wrestlers who qualified for the state tournament Feb. 22-23.

Lillard has 29 in Blazers' chippy 129-107 win over Warriors

By ANNE M. PETERSON
 Associated Press

PORTLAND — Damian Lillard scored 29 points and the Portland Trail Blazers snapped Golden State's five-game winning streak with a chippy 129-107 victory Wednesday night that included the late ejection of Warriors coach Steve Kerr.

Jake Layman added 17 points off the bench for the Blazers, who had eight players in double figures. The win snapped a two-game skid.

Kevin Durant and Stephen Curry each had 32 points for the Warriors, who rested DeMarcus Cousins following a victory at home over Utah the night before.

After a tight three quarters, Layman's long jumper gave Portland a 104-101 lead in the final period before Zach Collins blocked Damion Lee's layup on the other end.

Collins and Klay Thompson exchanged words, and the frustration spilled over to players from both sides. The two players were given offsetting technical fouls.

Portland led 110-103 before Draymond Green was called for a flagrant foul on Collins with 3:54 left. Kerr reacted angrily, throwing his clipboard to court and yelling at the officials before he was ejected.

Lillard made the three technical shots and Collins made his free throws to give Portland a 115-103 lead. Layman added a 3-pointer to all but seal the win.

In addition to Cousins, the Warriors rested guard Shaun Livingston and forward Andre Iguodala. Kerr said before the game that Cousins and Livingston got the night off because of the back-to-back games, and Iguodala was additionally a "little banged up."

King Felix entering critical last season of Seattle contract

By JACK MAGRUDER
 Associated Press

PEORIA, Ariz. — Every day for several years, Felix Hernandez has walked past large photos of himself and Randy Johnson — the Seattle Mariners' only Cy Young Award winners — in the hallway leading to the clubhouse of their spring training complex.

King Felix will make those walks for perhaps the last time this year, with a bigger goal as motivation.

"I know this is my final year, but I don't think I am done," the 33-year-old Hernandez said this week following Seattle's first spring training workout. "I think I can do a lot of good things, and it is going to be a push for my Hall of Fame career. It means a lot. Now Edgar (Martinez) is in the Hall of Fame. We'll see."

Hernandez, who has 168 victories and a career 3.34 ERA, is trying to reverse recent trends entering the final season of a seven-year contract that calls for a \$27 million salary. His fastball average velocity dropped to a career-low 90.4 mph last season as calculated by Fangraphs, and his ERA was a career-high 5.55 in 29 outings. He briefly was moved to the bullpen for his lone career relief appearance, a move that did not sit well.

But as spring training begins, Hernandez has a spot in the starting rotation, even if it is not as his cus-



Felix Hernandez throws against the Oakland Athletics last season.

AP Photo/Elaine Thompson

tomary No. 1.

"I don't care what happened last season," he said. "This is a new year. I came here ready to go. Let's see what is going to happen."

Yusei Kikuchi, Mike Leake and Marco Gonzales are the top three in the Mariners rotation, and left-hander Wade LeBlanc pitched well last season. Top prospect Jus-

tus Sheffield was acquired from the Yankees in the James Paxton deal, although he is likely to start the season in the minors.

Hernandez will look to recover from a second half in which he was 0-7 with a 6.44 ERA in his last 10 appearances. His percentage of swinging strikes was at a career low, and opponents' contact

on pitches in the strike zone was a career high.

"He's struggled the last few years. We'll see what it brings," Seattle manager Scott Servais said. "Felix is a competitor. He is a very proud player, like many veteran players are. He wants to get back to doing his thing. We are going to let him."

No pressure? Bailey's job is to keep champion Beavers on top

By ERIC OLSON
 Associated Press

Oregon State has won 111 of its last 130 baseball games, is coming off its third national championship since 2006 and its career coaching wins leader Pat Casey retired last fall.

Enter Pat Bailey, the 63-year-old interim head coach who hopes to earn the permanent job for 2020.

"People think there's a lot of pressure," Bailey said. "I'm going to be who I am. I can't be somebody else. In terms of the pressure part, I just think people a lot of times put undue pressure on themselves and make things out to be a lot bigger than what they are."

Bailey has been through this before, though not at this level. He was successor to Casey at George Fox College and won the Division III championship four years before he joined Casey's Oregon State staff in 2008.

As a high school coach in Oregon, Bailey replaced a two-time



Former Oregon State coach Pat Casey, left, celebrates with his associate head coach Pat Bailey after beating Arkansas for the NCAA College World Series baseball championship.

AP Photo/Nati Harnik

state champion coach at West Linn and led the program to a state runner-up finish before he left for George Fox.

Athletic director Scott Barnes named Bailey interim coach last September when Casey announced

he was retiring after 24 seasons. Casey remains as a senior associate athletic director. Bailey's task is to keep the Beavers doing what they've been doing.

"Our expectations are extremely high," he said.

The Beavers begin the defense of their national title in Surprise, Arizona, when the Division I season opens Friday. They open against New Mexico, play Gonzaga on Saturday and Minnesota, the team they beat in super regionals, on Sunday.

Kevin Abel, who as a freshman won a record four games in the College World Series and threw a two-hit shutout against Arkansas in Game 3 of the finals, heads a pitching staff that remains mostly intact. Bryce Fehmel, a 10-game winner last year, and Grant Gambrell are the Nos. 2 and 3 starters, and 16-save closer Jake Mulholland returns.

The Beavers posted some of the best numbers in program history last year, and six of the players from the everyday lineup are gone. They still have catcher Adley Rutschman, the 2018 CWS Most Outstanding Player and possible No. 1 pick in the Major League Baseball draft in June, along with first baseman Zak Taylor and outfielder Preston Jones.

SCOREBOARD

PREP SPORTS SCHEDULE TODAY

Girls basketball — Seaside at Banks, 6 p.m.
Boys basketball — Seaside at Banks, 7:30 p.m.; CRL playoff: Willamina at Warrenton, 7 p.m.; NWL playoff: Neah-Kah-Nie at Knappa, 7 p.m.

FRIDAY

Girls basketball — CRL playoff: Rainier or Willamina vs. Warrenton, 7 p.m., at Clatsop Community College.
Swimming — OSAA state meet, Tualatin, TBA
Wrestling — District 1/3A, at Warrenton, 3 p.m.; District 1/2A, at Toledo, TBA