

NCAA Men's Tournament

Big Ten shines with Final Four in backyard

By GENARO C. ARMAS
Associated Press

MADISON, Wis. — After Michigan State clinched a spot in the Final Four last weekend, Wisconsin's Sam Dekker wrote something on Twitter that packed as much of a punch as one of his dunks.

"The Big Ten had a down year right?" Dekker asked.

If anyone had that perception, it certainly isn't the case with two teams in the Final Four — which is being in Indianapolis.

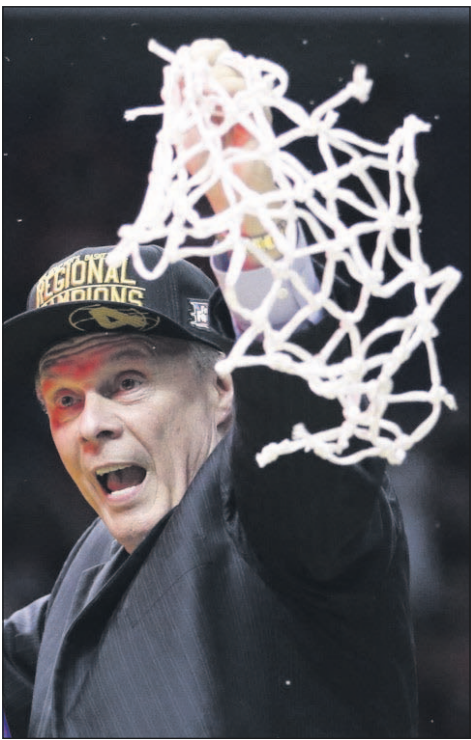
The Badgers play unbeaten Kentucky in one semifinal on Saturday night, with the Spartans facing Duke in the other.

Both Big Ten squads are underdogs going into their respective games.

Wisconsin coach Bo Ryan congratulated his friend and Michigan State counterpart Tom Izzo over the phone after the Spartans' beat Louisville on Sunday.

Now he's looking ahead. "Yeah we're proud of that, and then you move on, then you play," Ryan said. "I'm proud of this conference."

Commissioner Jim Delany sounded like a proud father when talking about the Big Ten's success. He is realistic, too. He knows that



Wisconsin head coach Bo Ryan holds the net following Wisconsin's 85-78 win over Arizona in a college basketball regional final, to advance to the Final Four, in the NCAA Tournament, Saturday in Los Angeles.

AP Photo/Jae C. Hong

Big Ten teams weren't quite successful in nonconference play in November and December, although the league won this year's challenge series with the Atlantic Coast Conference.

Some higher-profile Big Ten teams fell in the series, including Wisconsin's loss to Duke in Madison.

The regular-season title belonged to the Badgers. There was a logjam through the middle of the 14-team

league, with clubs beating up on each other.

In the end, only Maryland at No. 12 and Michigan State at No. 23 joined No. 3 Wisconsin in the AP Top 25 at the end of the regular season.

The AP poll at the end of the 2013-14 regular season had four Big Ten teams ranked, including three in the top 12. At one point in 2013-14, Ohio State, Wisconsin and Michigan State were all in the top five.

The previous season, four league teams finished in the top 10.

"It's funny. The last year, or last two years, we had four teams in the top 10 or 12. We moved teams to the Final Four, we were regarded as the strongest conference in those years," Delany said Tuesday in a phone interview.

"This year, we didn't have as much success in November and December," he added. "When I size up our league, I really didn't think we were quite as good as we had been. I didn't agree with the fact that we weren't pretty good — but I didn't think we were as good as we had been."

As it turns out, they were even better when the tournament started.

Wisconsin was the league's sole representative in the Final Four last season. Now the Badgers have company in Michigan State.

"Sure, we'd like to have an all-Big Ten final. That would be awesome for both of us," Izzo said on Tuesday. He has been gushing about the league's success all week.

"I did say all year, I tried to stick up for our league. Last year we were the best two, three, four teams, so that makes your conference better," Izzo said on Monday.

BUCKS: Cockburn moves behind plate, adds homer

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burn, who replaced O'Rourke Tuesday at home plate, and also the team as a whole for piecing together consecutive wins in their leader's absence.

"We're kind of rounding into shape a little bit," Whitten said. "We're starting to swing the bats better up and down the lineup. I think the guys are starting to feel a little more comfortable."

Pendleton finished with 10 hits Tuesday, receiving knocks from eight different players. The offensive surge was a stark contrast from most of the team's outings this season. The Bucks have been shut out three times this season and held to two or fewer runs in six of 10 games.

With play on the mound iffy at this point, the Buckaroos have struggled to keep opponents from scoring. Pendleton senior Brady Smith left the field after five solid innings with a 4-3 lead, but junior Jack Peterson coughed up the lead with two



Pendleton catcher Quinn Cockburn chases after a ball during Tuesday's game against La Grande at Bob White Field.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

runs that required the Bucks four-run sixth inning rally.

"I think we're going to give up some runs and we're going to have to score some runs to win," Whitten said. "If we don't score four or five runs in a game, I doubt we're going to win that game. I think that's what our season is going to come down to. I'd be surprise if we have a whole lot of shutouts."

Pendleton needed all of

its eight runs to ensure victory Tuesday. Morris opened the scoring with a solo home run in the top of the first. James Bradt gave Pendleton a two-run advantage with a two-out single that plated Kai Quinn from third base. After the Tigers hung three in the third, it was Morris' second homer, this time with lead-off hitter Kyler Lunny already on base, that gave Pendleton a 4-3 edge. Cock-

burn's home run and Smith's three-run double finished the Pendleton scoring.

"With this team we never feel out if it no matter what," Cockburn said. "We always think we have chance."

Cockburn made his varsity catching debut on Friday following O'Rourke's absence, but had caught during American Legion summer baseball this year.

"It's exciting," Cockburn said. "I'm glad to try to take the opportunity and do what I can with it. Hopefully Alex can come back, because he's a huge part of our team, not only defensively, but offensively well."

Pendleton travels to Walla Walla on Friday and then hosts the Blue Devils Saturday at 11 a.m.

PENDLETON 8, LA GRANDE 6					
LG	000032	1	6	8	1
PHS	100124	X	8	10	0

El Childs, Ryan Adams (2), Jake Workinger (5), Jon Gonzalez (6) and Jared Rodgers. Brady Smith, Jack Peterson (6), Wyatt Morris (7) and Quinn Cockburn. W — J. Peterson. L — J. Workinger. S — W. Morris.

2B — E. Childs (LG), R. Duncan (LG); Caden Smith (PHS). HR — Drew Hivley (LG); W. Morris 2 (PHS), Q. Cockburn (PHS).

BULLDOGS: Will resume delayed Redmond game on Friday

Continued from 1B

— one at first and one second — killing potential run-scoring opportunities before they got started.

RJ Robles started, but couldn't get out of the third, allowing seven runs (all earned) and walking five. Hayden Edmiston relieved him, throwing two-plus innings and allowing four runs (three earned) on four hits, three walks and a strikeout. Hawkins was impressed with how the sophomore battled through the tough assignment.

"He's a kid that can go

through the lineup once, maybe twice," Hawkins said of Edmiston. "He's done that twice for us now where we go, 'Hayden, go get out on the bump and eat up some innings,' and he does it. If you've ever seen Hayden, he's not smoking the ball, and he's not really a ptcher, but he gets out there and he battled his butt off today. I was really pleased with that, and we rewarded him by putting him in the field and giving him an at-bat."

But Hermiston didn't have many scoring chances. Lindell threw all five innings,

striking out seven and walking four while touching 90 miles per hour on the radar gun of the scouts.

Chase Root ended the no-hitter bid in the bottom of the third when his sharp grounder to short took a bad hop and found its way into left field, and Cole Smith added another knock in the fourth on a line-drive up the middle, but both times Hermiston would help Lindell out by getting picked off to end the third and then hitting into a 6-4 double play in the fourth.

West Linn scored three

in the first, highlighted by a two-run triple to the fence in right field by Brayden Pene.

Hermiston will continue its glare-shortened game against Redmond on Friday at 11 a.m. in The Dalles. The action will pick up right where it left off last week: with Redmond up 14-5 and Hermiston batting with runners and first and second with one out.

WEST LINN 13, HERMISTON 0					
WL	306640	—	13	10	1
HHS	000000	—	0	2	4

K. Lindell and C. Kinnman. R. Robles, H. Edmiston, C. Smith and L. Gammell.

2B: C. Kinnman (WL). 3B: C. Cosner (WL).

ROUNDUP: TigerScots win again

Continued from 1B

second and third during the next two at-bats. Kopacz doubled with two outs to drive in the speedy senior for the first run of the day. After moving to third, Kopacz then trotted home on a wild pitch to up the Bulldogs' lead to 2-0.

It would stay there until the fifth when Hinkley and Ashley Moser both reached on errors to lead off the inning, then Abi Drotzmann was beamed to pack the pillows. Kopacz reached on a fielder's choice that plated Hinkley, Ellery Jones flied out to right to plate Moser, then Almaguer helped herself with an RBI single.

Summit got its six in the bottom of the fifth to take a 6-5 lead, and Hermiston answered with two of their own.

Bobby Hofbauer reached on a hit-by-pitch, Hinkley singled, and Drotzmann was hit by a pitch an out later to load the bases. Kopacz mashed her second RBI double, plating Hofbauer and Drotzmann to take a 7-6 lead.

"We competed well," Hermiston head coach Kylee Lete said. "We made some mistakes on the bases, but the girls did a good job of battling and keep coming back when (Summit) would score runs."

SUMMIT 10, HERMISTON 9 (8)					
HHS	20003220	—	9	9	3
SHS	00006211	—	10	10	3

H. Nelson and A. Clemans. J. Almaguer, B. Naylor and J. Hinkley.

2B — M. Kopacz 2 (HHS).

WESTON-MCEWEN 11, DAYTON (WA) 5 — At Athena, the TigerScots used a big fifth inning to jump back ahead of Dayton for good on Tuesday in a non-league game.

Keegan Shepard hit a grand slam home run with no outs, her first of the season, and Weston-McEwen (6-1) added four more runs before it headed back out into the field with a 11-4 lead.

Isabelle Dillow led Weston-McEwen off in the fifth with a single, then Taylor Entze and Jessica Lambert reached on a dropped third strike and fielding error, respectively. Shepard brought them all home on the next at-bat.

Entze overcame blustery conditions to hold on for the win as both pitchers struggled with inconsistency, said Weston-McEwen coach Jeff Griggs.

Entze allowed only three hits and struck out six, but walked nine. Dayton's pitching duo combined to walk eight TigerScots.

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WESTON-MCEWEN 11, DAYTON (WA) 5					
DHS	0111101	—	R	H	E
WN	201080X	—	5	3	5

L. Ramirez, T. Laughery (5) and T. Frame.

Taylor Entze and Sydney Pearl. W — Entze. L — Ramirez.

2B — Isabelle Dillow, Peel (Weston-McEwen). HR — Keegan Shepard (Weston-McEwen).

Baseball

DUFUR 12, IRRIGON 4 — At Dufur, the Knights unbound in the fifth inning of a non-league loss on Tuesday.

Dufur (7-1), coming off its first loss of the season — 7-0 to Stanfield last Friday — plated nine runs in the fifth and added three more in

the third.

Fredy Vera relieved starter Austin Rice was victimized in his first action on the mound this spring, but assistant coach Jason Dunten said it wasn't a poor showing.

Rice allowed none of Dufur's runs.

DUFUR 12, IRRIGON 4					
IHS	1110001	—	R	H	E
DHS	000093X	—	12	13	1

Austin Rice, Fredy Vera (5), Nate Gumbert (5) and Cougar Kroske. Pence, Bales (4) and Korte. W — Bales. L — Vera.

2B — Hayden White (Irrigon); Uhalbe, Kortge, Bales, Pence, Sumner (Dufur). HR — Caldwell (Dufur).

HEPPNER 7, UNION 3 — At Heppner, Lane Wilhelm and Patrick Collins each batted 2 for 3 as Heppner held off Union for a non-league win on Tuesday.

Starter C.J. Kindle walked the first four batters in the third inning, ending his day, but Zac Irons was able to get Heppner (2-1) into the dugout with a 2-2 tie and the Mustangs scored four runs in the bottom of the frame to go up for good.

Collins, Wilhelm and Cord Flynn each had RBIs to boost Heppner's third.

HEPPNER 7, UNION 3					
UHS	0020010	—	R	H	E
JHS	024001X	—	3	3	7

J. Graves and J. Alexander. C.J. Kindle, Zac Irons (3), Patrick Collins (6) and Weston Putman. W — Irons. L — Graves.

2B — Putman (Heppner). 3B — Alexander (Union).

DESALES (WA) 6, MAC-HI 0 — At Milton-Freewater, Irish pitcher Cameron Richmond mowed through the Pioneer lineup Tuesday, striking out 13 batters, while allowing just four to reach base.

DeSales scored runs in the first, fourth, fifth and seventh to beat Mac-Hi, which never strung enough offense together to threaten Richmond or the Irish. Hunter Yensen and Jesus Vella recorded the only hits and also acted as the team's two pitchers during the game.

DESALES (WA) 6, MAC-HI 0					
DES	1002102	—	6	7	1
MHS	0000000	—	0	2	1

Cameron Richmond and Leaty. Hunter Yensen, Jesus Vella (5) and Jacob Chaney. W — C. Richmond. L — H. Yenson.

Boys Tennis

WALLA WALLA 8, PENDLETON 0 — At Pendleton, down to nine active members, multiple Buckaroos were forced to pull double duty in Tuesday's sweep at West Hill school Tuesday.

Top singles players Gareth Haugh and Jeremy Cochran teamed up to win Pendleton its only set of the night in the No. 1 doubles. Pendleton won the match's second set before falling 10-6 in a deciding tiebreaker.

Haug and Cocrahn each lost their single sets. Cochran, playing in the second singles and No. 4 player Lincoln Johnson fared the best of the singles players, winning five sets from the might Blue Devils.

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WALLA WALLA 8, PENDLETON 0

Singles

Micah Rambo (WHS) def. Gareth Haug (PHS) 6-2, 6-1

Noble Coleman (WHS) def. Jeremy Cochran (PHS) 6-2, 6-3

Gerrod Peck (WHS) def. Henry Holdman (PHS) 6-0, 6-1

Colton Norsworthy (WHS) def. Lincoln Johnson (PHS) 6-2, 6-3

Doubles

Parker Pantarlo and Cole Wolfiv (WHS) def. Gareth Haugh and Jeremy Cochran (PHS) 6-4, 3-6 (10-8)

Stewart Hawley and Eldon Griggs (WHS) def. Daniel Medina and Isaac Page 6-1, 6-1

Daniil Sokolov and Mark Bogley (WHS) def. Peter Wallace and Lincoln Johnson (PHS) 6-3, 6-2

WHL Playoffs

First Round Division Semifinals (Best-of-7)

EAST DIVISION CONFERENCE

East Division Brandon (1) vs. Edmonton (4)

(Brandon leads series 2-1)

Central Division Calgary (1) vs. Kootenay (4)

(Series tied 1-1)

Medicine Hat (2) vs. Red Deer (3)

(Medicine Hat leads series 2-0)

WESTERN CONFERENCE

B.C. Division Kelowna (1) vs. Tri-City (4)

(Kelowna leads series 3-0)

Friday, Mar. 27

Kelowna 6 Tri-City 0

Saturday, Mar. 28

Kelowna 3 Tri-City 0

Tuesday, Mar. 31

Kelowna 5, Tri-City 3

Wednesday, Apr. 1

Kelowna at Tri-City, 5:05 p.m.

Victoria (2) vs. Prince George (3)

(Victoria leads series 2-0)

U.S. Division Everett (1) vs. Spokane (4)

(Series tied 1-1)

Portland (2) vs. Seattle (3)

(Seattle leads series 2-1)

Saturday, Mar. 28

Seattle 4 Portland 3

Sunday, Mar. 29

Portland 3 Seattle 0

Tuesday, Mar. 31

Seattle 5, Portland 2

Thursday, Apr. 2

Portland at Seattle, 8:05 p.m.

Saturday, Apr. 4

Seattle at Portland, 7 p.m.

Tuesday, Apr. 7

x-Portland at Seattle, 8:05 p.m.

x — if necessary.

Local Slate

PREP BASEBALL	
Thursday	Pilot Rock at Sherman (DH), 3/5 p.m.
Friday	Riverside at Stanfield (DH), 1/3 p.m.
Friday	Vale at Umatilla (DH), 1/3 p.m.
Friday	Pendleton at Walla Walla (DH), 2/4 p.m.
Friday	Reynolds at Hermiston (DH), 3/4:30 p.m.
Saturday	Weston-McEwen at Union (DH), 11 a.m./1 p.m.
Saturday	Heppner at Irrigon (DH), 11 a.m./1 p.m.
Saturday	Mac-Hi at Yarnhill-Carlton, 1 p.m.
Saturday	Mac-Hi vs. Banks (at YC), 2:30 p.m.
PREP TRACK & FIELD	
Friday	Pendleton, Mac-Hi, Riverside, Umatilla, Stanfield, Irrigon, Pilot Rock, Weston-McEwen, Ione and Helix at Mac-Hi Carnival of Speed (Milton-Freewater), 11 a.m.
Friday	Hermiston at East County Classic (Gresham), 4 p.m.
Saturday	Heppner, Weston-McEwen, Condon/Wheeler, Ione, Echo, Arlington at Sherman County Invitational (Moro), 11 a.m.
Saturday	Riverside at Madras Infield, 11 a.m.
PREP BOYS GOLF	
Monday	Heppner at Pumpkin Ridge (Portland), Noon
Tuesday	

Mac-Hi at Wine Valley (Walla Walla), 2:30 p.m.

Friday
Hermiston, Pendleton at Eagle Ridge (Redmond), 9 a.m.
Echo,Heppner at Pendleton CC, 9 a.m.

PREP GIRLS GOLF

Friday
Echo,Heppner at Pendleton CC, 9 a.m.
Pendleton, Hermiston at Eagle Ridge (Redmond), 1:30 p.m.

PREP BOYS TENNIS

Thursday
Ione, Helix, Weston-McEwen at Stanfield, 4:30 p.m.

Mac-Hi at Pendleton, 4 p.m.

Friday
Riverside at Umatilla, 4 p.m.

PREP GIRLS TENNIS

Thursday
Pendleton at Mac-Hi, 4 p.m.
Condon/Wheeler at Sherman, 4 p.m.
Ione, Helix, Weston-McEwen at Stanfield, 4:30 p.m.

Friday
La Grande at Mac-Hi, 3 p.m.
Stanfield at Condon/Wheeler, 3 p.m.
Riverside at Umatilla, 4 p.m.

COLLEGE BASEBALL

Saturday
Columbia Basin at Blue Mountain (DH), 1 p.m.

COLLEGE SOFTBALL

Tuesday
College of Idaho at Eastern Oregon (DH), 3/5 p.m.

Friday
Walla Walla at Blue Mountain (DH), 2 p.m.
Eastern Oregon at Corban (DH), 2/4 p.m.

Saturday
Eastern Oregon at NW Christian (DH), 11 a.m./1 p.m.