

College Football

Oregon opens spring practice

Associated Press

EUGENE — Even though heralded transfer Vernon Adams has yet to join the Ducks, Oregon opened spring practice with several candidates looking to succeed Heisman Trophy-winning quarterback Marcus Mariota.

Junior Jeff Lockie, Mariota’s backup last season, led the quarterback group that went through drills Tuesday for the first of 15 practices ahead of the annual spring game on May 2.

Coach Mark Helfrich allowed reporters to watch the opening 10 minutes of the workout, which later had to be moved inside because of the threat of lightning. Mariota was among those who watched the Ducks practice in helmets but no pads.

Other quarterback prospects include sophomores Taylor Alie and Ty Griffin, and redshirt freshman Morgan Mahalak and freshman Travis Jonsen, who went by Travis Waller in high school and is already enrolled at Oregon.

Jonsen, a dual-threat quarterback who has been compared to Dennis Dixon, passed for 1,797 yards and 12 touchdowns while also running for 815 yards and 13 scores as a senior at Servite High School in Southern California.

Helfrich said the quarterback situation would shake out over the spring and fall, joking that he didn’t see maintaining a “five-way” competition.

Mariota opted to declare for the NFL draft with a year of eligibility remaining after a historic season with the Ducks. He won the school’s first Heisman and set a Pac-12 record with 58 total touchdowns while guiding Oregon to the national championship game in college football’s first playoffs.

Lockie is the only one in the group with experience, completing 21 of 27 passes for 207 yards and a touchdown last season.

Meanwhile, the Ducks are waiting on Adams, an FCS All-American at Eastern Washington, who announced he will come to Oregon for his final year of eligibility. NCAA rules allow players who have graduated to transfer to another school



Receiver Bralon Addison hauls in a pass during the University of Oregon opening day of college football spring practice at the Hatfield-Dowlin Complex in Eugene, Ore. Tuesday, March 31, 2015.

AP Photo/The Register-Guard, Brian Davies



Running back Thomas Tyner takes a hand-off from quarterback Travis Jonsen during the University of Oregon opening day of college football spring practice at the Hatfield-Dowlin Complex in Eugene, Ore. Tuesday, March 31, 2015.

AP Photo/The Register-Guard, Brian Davies

without having to sit out a season. Vernon is set to graduate in May.

“As a first day, our effort and our

attitude were excellent — I think across the country you’re gonna find 100 or however many guys that

say that,” Helfrich said. “We talk every single day about ‘Better.’ If we can continue to improve on all the things we talk about after practice and during practice, we’ll be in good shape.”

This spring, Oregon will see the return of receiver Bralon Addison, who missed all of last season after tearing the anterior cruciate ligament in his left knee during spring practice. Tyler Johnstone is also coming back after a torn ACL last fall.

Addison’s return this season is key for the Ducks, who will be without receiver Devon Allen because of an ACL injury he sustained on the opening kickoff of the Rose Bowl, and Darren Carrington, who faces suspension because of a failed drug test that kept him out of the national championship game.

“Mentally I was a little nervous, running around for the first time, but after a couple of drills, in my head I was fine. Physically it was more about getting in shape and getting my breathing back,” Addison said.

Charles Nelson, a special teams standout as a freshman last season who would turn into a key receiver with five touchdowns, is moving to defensive back following the graduation of corners Troy Hill and Ifo Ekpre-Olomu and safety Erick Dargan.

MLB

Hernandez, McClendon leave early in loss

Associated Press

GOODYEAR, Ariz. — Felix Hernandez left in the second inning of his final tuneup before Seattle’s opener. Mariners manager Lloyd McClendon didn’t last much longer.

McClendon was ejected in the fourth inning of Cleveland’s 8-6 win over Seattle on Tuesday.

Brandon Moss’ two-run homer in the first gave the Indians a 4-3 lead against King Felix, who allowed seven runs, five hits and two walks in 1 2-3 innings.

Michael Bourn had an RBI double in the third, Michael Brantley was hit by a pitch, and Carlos Santana’s two-run double finished Hernandez, who starts Monday’s opener against the Los Angeles Angels.

After Bruce Chen threw close to and then behind Rickie Weeks in the bottom half, plate umpire Alan Porter warned both benches. McClendon walked out of the dugout



and was ejected before he got to the third-base line.

“He threw behind him twice,” McClendon said. “If you think he’s throwing at him, you’ve got to eject him.”

McClendon went back to the dugout briefly, then realized there is no tunnel and the clubhouse is down the right-field line. Porter questioned McClendon’s presence and the manager, with large gestures, explained why he was on the field.

“He asked where I was going,” McClendon said. “I told him you threw me out, I have to get off the field.”

Indians manager Terry Francona

understood why his former teammate from the 1987 Cincinnati Reds was upset.

“I can understand why they were yelling,” Francona said. “But he (Chen) wasn’t going to hit him with a changeup. It was hot out.”

Destined for Triple-A Columbus, Chen and gave up a home run to Weeks leading off the game and allowed four runs and eight hits in 4 1-3 innings. He struck out five and walked none.

Francona is getting used to having three left-handed batters in Bourn, Jason Kipnis and Brantley at the top of the batting order.

“I wish we didn’t invite every left-hander but I don’t see a way to avoid it,” Francona said. “We want them to have the extra at-bats (when the lineup turns over). We’re going to have them bunched up somewhere.”

TRAINING ROOM

Mariners: OF Seth Smith is day to day with a sore ankle.



AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin

Seattle Mariners’ Felix Hernandez, right, walks off the field after being taken out of the game by manager Lloyd McClendon, left, who talks with catcher Mike Zunino during a spring training baseball game against the Cleveland Indians on Tuesday in Goodyear, Ariz.

Patriots owner takes witness stand in Hernandez murder trial

By MICHELLE R. SMITH
Associated Press

FALL RIVER, Mass. — New England Patriots team owner Robert Kraft testified Tuesday that his former star tight end Aaron Hernandez told him he was innocent when asked if he was involved in a 2013 killing.

Kraft was called by the prosecution in Hernandez’s murder trial over the June 17, 2013, slaying of Odin Lloyd, who was dating the sister of Hernandez’s fiancée.

He at times seemed uncomfortable on the stand, even when he was asked where he worked. He first said 1 Patriot Place, the address of Gillette Stadium, where the Patriots play. When asked what he did at work, he replied, “Whatever they ask me to do.” Then, asked if he ran a business, he replied: “We’re a packaging and paper business and private equity, and we have two sports teams.” He first listed the New England Revolution soccer team, then the Patriots.

Kraft was asked about the

events of June 19, two days after the killing. By then, Kraft said, there was a strong media presence at Gillette Stadium, including helicopters, which were covering the investigation.

Kraft said he found Hernandez in a weight room working out and pulled him into an adjacent office for a private talk.

“I understood there was an incident that had transpired, and I wanted to know whether he was involved, and if he was, any player that comes into our system, I consider part of our extended family, and I wanted to get him help,” he said.

“What did he say?” prosecutor William McCauley asked.

“He said he was not involved. That he was innocent and that he hoped that the time of the murder incident came out because he said he was in a club,” Kraft said.

Prosecutors have said Hernandez was at a bar earlier in the evening, then drove to Boston with two friends, picked up Lloyd and killed



AP Photo/The Boston Globe, Aram Boghosian, Pool

New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft testifies during the murder trial of former Patriots football player Aaron Hernandez, Tuesday, March 31, 2015, at Bristol County Superior Court in Fall River, Mass.

him in an industrial park.

Kraft said his conversation with Hernandez lasted five to 10 minutes.

Later, he saw him one last time at the stadium.

“He hugged and kissed me and thanked me for my concern,” Kraft said.

Hernandez signed a \$40 million contract with the Patriots in 2012, but as defense lawyer Michael Fee questioned him, Kraft said he

couldn’t remember whether it ran through the 2018 season.

“I don’t get into the details. I just knew we signed him,” he said, adding that Hernandez was signed because he was “a very good player.”

Hernandez watched closely during Kraft’s testimony, which lasted a little over 30 minutes.

Next to the stand was the Patriots’ director of security, Mark Briggs. He said he also

had a conversation with Hernandez on June 19.

“I asked him why he’d lawyered up,” he said.

The judge struck the comment from the record and instructed the jury that citizens do not have any obligation to speak with police.

Briggs said Hernandez told him that he had been with Lloyd at a club and they went their separate ways, so Hernandez gave him keys to a vehicle. He told him those keys were found in Lloyd’s pocket, Briggs said.

Investigators did find keys to an SUV Hernandez rented in Lloyd’s pocket.

Briggs said he asked Hernandez if he was involved in Lloyd’s killing, and Hernandez replied no. He said he then looked in his eyes and asked if he was telling the truth.

“He swore on his baby’s life that he was telling the truth,” Briggs said.

Briggs said the following day, Hernandez showed up at Gillette Stadium, and Briggs asked him to leave, which Hernandez did.

NASCAR

Bleeding tires cost Childress

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — NASCAR levied harsh penalties against Ryan Newman’s race team Tuesday after determining Richard Childress Racing manipulated the tires Newman used at Auto Club Speedway in California.

There had been rampant speculation throughout the Sprint Cup garage that teams were drilling tiny holes in their tires to allow air to escape during a race. The process is known as “bleeding tires” and NASCAR last week at Martinsville Speedway warned crew chiefs about the penalties that would be levied against any team caught.

Newman was one of four drivers to have his tires taken by NASCAR after the March 22 race at Fontana. The tires were sent for an independent inspection, and NASCAR said Tuesday that Newman’s tires were found to have violated a rule that “bars any modifications to the tire or wheel, including the valve stem hardware, that is used to release pressure.”

As a result, crew chief Luke Lambert was fined \$125,000 and suspended for the next six races. The suspension also includes the All-Star race in May. Lambert was also placed on probation through the end of the year.

Tire technician James Bender and engineer Philip Surgen were also suspended six races and placed on probation through Dec. 31.

Newman and car owner Childress were docked 75 points each. The penalty dropped Newman, runner-up to Kevin Harvick in last year’s championship finale, from sixth to 27th in the standings.

“NASCAR takes very seriously its responsibility to govern and regulate the rules of the sport in order to ensure competitive balance,” said Steve O’Donnell, NASCAR executive vice president. “We’ve been very clear that any modifications to race vehicle tires is an unacceptable practice and will not be tolerated.”

Torrey Galida, President of Richard Childress Racing, said the team was awaiting more information from NASCAR before deciding how to proceed.

“We understand the seriousness of the penalty. In fact, RCR has been one of the most outspoken opponents against ‘tire bleeding’ since the rumors began to surface last season,” Galida said in a statement. “Once NASCAR provides us with the specific details of the infraction we will conduct a further internal investigation, and evaluate our options for an appeal.”