

Sports shorts

NFL hires first female official

NEW YORK (AP) — The NFL has hired Sarah Thomas to be its first female full-time game official.

Thomas, who has worked exhibition games, will be a line judge for the 2015 season.



The 41-year-old Thomas has been in the league's officiating development program and worked some team minicamps last year.

She's already broken ground in the officiating field as the first woman to work college games in 2007. She was the first female official on the FBS level and the first to officiate a bowl game, the 2009 Little Caesars Pizza Bowl in Detroit.

Shannon Eastin worked regular-season NFL games in 2012 as a replacement official, making her the first female to do so in any capacity. She also was a line judge.

The announcement was made Wednesday.

Crenshaw to retire after the Masters

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Tiger Woods and Jordan Spieth were already on the 18th green, ready to hit a few putts. Ben Crenshaw was back down the fairway, still 100 yards or so away, after driving his tee shot into a tree.

FACES

Yep, it's time for Gentle Ben to go. The two-time Masters champion will finally put away his clubs at age 63, after playing the tournament one last time with long-time caddie Carl Jackson by his side.

At every hole, they'll be remembering all the good times. The first green jacket in 1984. The out-of-nowhere victory in 1995, when Crenshaw collapsed into tears after making the final putt, remembering his mentor, Harvey Penick, who passed away just days earlier.

Crenshaw's final Masters will be his 44th, tied with Sam Snead and surpassed by only four other players — Gary Player, Arnold Palmer, Doug Ford and Raymond Floyd.

"The referees couldn't manage a White Castle."

— Mark Cuban

Dallas Mavericks owner on the state of college basketball. Cuban called collegiate basketball "uglier than ugly," and remarked that the game-style is worse than high school basketball. Cuban, like many recently, called for changes to make the game more exciting.

THIS DATE IN SPORTS
1962 — Arnold Palmer wins a three-way playoff, beating Gary Player and Dow Finsterwald in the Masters.
1978 — Gary Player shoots a final-round 64 to win his third Masters, edging Hubert Green, Rod Funseth and defending champion Tom Watson by a shot.
2008 — Colorado captain Joe Sakic scores his NHL-record eighth career playoff overtime goal in a 3-2 win over Minnesota in the opener of the Rockies' first-round series.

Contact us at 541-966-0838 or sports@eastoregonian.com

PENDLETON



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Pendleton's Gracie Lyon, Bailey Hillmick, Lauren Richards and Kiersten Murphy are locked in battle to become Pendleton's No. 1 pitcher.

Bucks hope to turn an ace

Roster battle stumps longtime Pendleton coach

By MATT ENTRUP
East Oregonian



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Pendleton's Kiersten Murphy winds up for a pitch Tuesday in Milton-Freewater.

Pendleton softball coach Tim Cary is no stranger to tough decisions.

As overseer of the most dominant run in program history, the two-time state champion skipper's record speaks for itself.

But as the Buckaroos prepare to open the home portion of its latest title-defense campaign, Cary's 11th season in the Pendleton dugout has him stumped.

That's because with just three games left before the start of league play, Cary has yet to name a starting pitcher.

"This is brand new territory for me and the pitchers," he said of the four players to have logged innings in the circle this season. "The hard part is figuring out who's going to be the number one. We may not have a number one. We're still not set on a rotation at all right now. ... They're all kind of in the same

boat right now.

"It's certainly been the longest we have basically gone through a tryout I guess, if we want to all it that, in my 11 years. We usually have it all figured out by now."

Cary said the problem isn't a lack of capable arms.

"We have a lot of talent there, we really do, but it's even talent."

Junior Gracie Lyon earned the opening-day start and has the best record as a starter this season at 2-1, but didn't throw a pitch above the junior varsity level last season.

"It's definitely a higher competition but the team has been great. It's definitely a great challenge for me," she said. "I think that competition is good and it's really pushing me to throw well."

Junior Kiersten Murphy has pitched the most innings (25) and entered the derby to replace 2014 workhorse Hailey

Kline with the most varsity experience, but knee surgery and Kline's steadiness limited her in-game opportunities as a sophomore.

She said her goal throughout the offseason was to be the team's No. 1, but she's also enjoying the roster battle.

"It's been different, but it's nice to see everyone get some innings and see how all the other teams hit off each other," she said. "It is (extra pressure) but it is what it is. I go out to pitch the game and see how it goes."

Sophomore Bailey Hillmick has allowed the fewest runs (9), but like Lyon and Murphy has already thrown the most varsity innings of her prep career after serving as the freshman team's hurler last season.

"The first game was a little bit nerve racking for me, but our second game that we went into I stepped in pretty confident and no nerves," said the cousin

See PITCHING/2B

PENDLETON

Pendleton wins league opener

Bucks working to fill void at the top

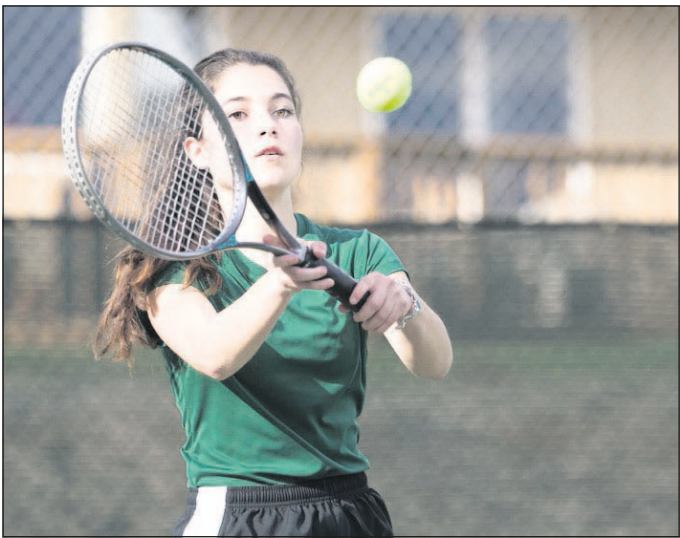
By ERIK SKOPIL
East Oregonian

With long-time No. 1 singles player and two-time state participant Jessica Clark gone due to graduation, Pendleton girls tennis coach Rocky Dillenburgh entered this spring unsure of who would man the team's top spot.

Through five team duals, the competition at the top hasn't become any less murky. Senior Meagan Flanagan and foreign exchange student Matilde Cittadini have played a match-by-match game of musical chairs for the Buckaroos' No. 1 position, and that might be all the better.

"I think they kind of challenge each other, which helps them both of course," Dillenburgh said at Wednesday's Columbia River Conference opening dual.

Both found success in Pendleton's 6-2 win over Hood River Valley at West Hills School. Cittadini got the nod in the top singles match, narrowly defeating the Eagles' Maddy Graham 6-3, 3-6, (12-8). Flanagan made short work of Ann Evans, winning 6-0, 6-3 in straight sets.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Matilde Cittadini, of Pendleton, gets ready to hit the ball during a tiebreaker with Hood River's Maddy Graham on Wednesday at West Hills Intermediate School.

Tennis	
	
Pendleton	Hood River
6	2

Both Flanagan and Cittadini have won four of five matches this season. But, it's been the duo's competition matches for the top spot that have often been the most strenuous.

"It's kind of funny because we both have different strengths and different weaknesses," Flanagan said. "Whenever we play it seems

to go on for hours, and it's exhausting."

"There's not one that's really good and one that's not good. It's kind of fun to play with someone that's as good as you," added Cittadini, a native of Sardinia, Italy.

Neither played varsity tennis for the Buckaroos last year. Flanagan was held out with a foot injury, while Cittadini was still in Italy.

"I kind of figured everybody left, all the seniors are gone, maybe I'll be No. 1," Flanagan said. "So when I

See BUCKS/2B

NBA

Blazers rout Timberwolves

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

PORTLAND — LaMarcus Aldridge had 24 points and 13 rebounds before sitting out the fourth quarter, and the Portland Trail Blazers beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 116-91 on Wednesday night.

Robin Lopez added 18 points for the Blazers, who have already captured the Northwest Division title but continue to battle for home-court advantage in the playoffs with four games left.

Andrew Wiggins had 29 points for the injury-depleted Timberwolves, who have lost eight straight and remain in the basement of the Western Conference.

Portland led by as many as 28 points and the Timberwolves, with just nine players available and playing the second of back-to-back games, were simply overwhelmed.

While the Blazers have already clinched the division, they're 1 1-2 games behind the Clippers and the Spurs for fourth place in the conference standings. The four teams with the best records get home-court advantage.

Portland had rested Aldridge, Nicolas Batum and Chris Kaman on Monday at Brooklyn, where it lost 106-96. It was a one-game East Coast road trip to make up a game originally for Jan. 26 that was postponed by bad

See BLAZERS/2B

