

Women's World Cup

Top teams all make knockout stage

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

VANCOUVER, British Columbia — The United States' bid for a third Women's World Cup title remains very much alive, as do the championship hopes of all five of the top-ranked teams in the world.

The knockout stage begins this weekend with all the powers still in place, although some that have shown vulnerabilities during a group-stage round that included its share of upsets and blowouts.

Some story lines to consider as the remaining 16 nations continue their trek toward the July 5 title game in Vancouver:

BUMPY ROAD: Sweden's path was already tough. It's about to get tougher.

The fifth-ranked team led by former U.S. coach Pia Sundhage will face top-ranked Germany in one of the early marquee matchups of the elimination stage.

Sweden drew Group D, the so-called Group of Death, to start the World Cup, joining No. 10 Australia, the second-ranked United States and perennial African champion Nigeria.

Sweden was surprised by Nigeria with a 3-3 draw in the opening match before playing to a scoreless tie with the U.S. The Swedes wrapped up the group stage with a 1-1 draw with Australia, concluding the group in third place.

Then the players had to wait until all the matches were done Wednesday to see if they had eked into the elimination round.

"I said before the matches we have four very good teams and that proved to be the case," Sundhage said. "We had the hardest group and didn't lose, but at the end of the day we didn't play well enough to win the group."

Whereas the match between the United States and Sweden was



John Woods/The Canadian Press via AP, File

In this June 8, 2015, file photo, Sweden's Nilla Fischer (5) celebrates with her team after scoring against Nigeria during the first half of a FIFA Women's World Cup soccer match in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Sweden drew Group D, the so-called Group of Death, with the United States, Australia and Nigeria. The path certainly doesn't get any easier for coach Pia Sundhage's fifth-ranked team, who will face top-ranked Germany to open the knockout stage at the Women's World Cup.

considered the premier game of the group stage, now the match Saturday between Germany and Sweden in Ottawa will be among the biggest of the knockout stage. The winner moves on to the quarterfinals to face the winner of third-ranked France's match Saturday against South Korea in Montreal.

Germany finished atop its group, opening with a 10-0 rout of the Ivory Coast, before a 1-1 draw with Norway and a 4-0 victory over Thailand.

GROUP D SURVIVORS: With its first-place finish in the Group of Death, the United States headed to Edmonton to face No. 28 Colombia, the surprise of the opening round after a 2-0 upset of France. Colombia, however, will be without its starting goalkeeper in the Monday match because of accumulated yellow cards.

Second-place Australia has a

challenging opponent in No. 7 Brazil, which won all of its group-stage matches. The two teams meet on Sunday in Moncton.

CAMEROON ADVANCES: Cameroon is the lowest-ranked team left.

As just the second African nation to advance out the group stage after Nigeria in 1999, Cameroon will face No. 16 China on Saturday in Edmonton.

China finished second in its group after a 2-2 draw with New Zealand. The match was courted controversy when coach Hao Wei was sent off the field after the referee ruled he had interfered with Ria Percival on the sideline. The replay was inconclusive whether Hao had stumbled.

Cameroon, ranked No. 53, secured its spot in the knockout round with a second-place finish in Group C after a 2-1 victory over Switzerland.

"We are still learning, we come here to learn," coach Enow Ngachu said.

The winner of the match between China and Cameroon advances to face the winner of match between the United States and Colombia.

HAPPY HOSTS: Canada scored just two goals in the opening stage at the World Cup, but it was enough to send the team through as the top finisher in its group.

The eighth-ranked Canadians opened the tournament in Edmonton in dramatic style after a gala opening ceremony: A 1-0 victory over China on a penalty kick in second-half stoppage time by star forward Christine Sinclair.

Canada played to a 0-0 draw with coach John Herdman's former team, New Zealand, before wrapping up the stage with a 1-all draw with the Netherlands.

Now it's on to No. 19 Switzerland in Vancouver on Sunday. Canadian midfielder Sophie Schmidt, who left the group finale in the 81st minute with an undisclosed injury, is expected to play.

"The tournament is a progression. You're seeing this with a lot of teams. The big players tend to step up in these rounds. That's the way to win, for it to happen," Herdman said Thursday.

ANOTHER UNDERDOG: Along with Cameroon and Colombia, South Korea drew a tough elimination-round opponent in France.

Les Bleues have been considered among the favorites at the Women's World Cup, but they showed vulnerability with a surprising 2-0 loss to Colombia. It was widely considered one of the greatest upsets in World Cup history.

South Korea, tied for eighth in the world with Canada, is making its second World Cup appearance and first trip to the knockout round.

College Baseball

Vandy returns to CWS Finals

ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — A couple of stars who led Vanderbilt to its first national championship put the Commodores in position to play for another one.

The defending champions returned to the College World Series finals after Walker Buehler and John Kilichowski combined on a five-hitter and Rhett Wiseman homered in a 7-1 victory over TCU on Friday night.

The Commodores (50-19) open the best-of-three title series Monday against the winner of Saturday's game between Virginia, last year's runner up, and Florida.

"They have a unique way of just keeping their eye on target and never getting off balance," Vandy coach Tim Corbin said. "I've said all along I feel like a parent that's in the back seat letting your kids drive the car because you trust them. And when you trust a group of kids, it's the greatest feeling a parent can have. And that's how I feel."

Buehler (5-2) allowed four hits and a run and struck out eight in 6 2/3 innings. His work during last year's title run led to his being the Los Angeles Dodgers' first-round draft pick this year, and Corbin had faith he could do the job Friday even though he hadn't pitched since June 1.

"I thought he was right on point," Corbin said. "You never know what's going to happen when a guy has that much time off."

All-EO Softball First Team



Colette Robert Mac-Hi, sr.
4A Player of the Year; GOL Player of the Year; 27-1 record; 0.77 ERA.



Tehya Ostrom Pilot Rock, soph.
1st team All-SD6; 12-2 record; 0.862 ERA; 95 strikeouts.



Jessica Lambert Weston-McEwen, jr.
1st team All-SD6; 15-7 record; 1.52 ERA; 170 strikeouts.



Mallory Copeland Mac-Hi, soph.
2nd team All-State; 1st team All-GOL; .494 batting average; 41 runs batted in.



Sara Weinke Pilot Rock, fr.
1st team All-SD6; .479 batting average; .507 on base percentage.



Darian Lindsey Pendleton, sr.
5A Player of the Year; CRC Player of the Year; .606 batting average; 13 home runs.



Micha Fortune Mac-Hi, soph.
1st team All-State; 1st team All-GOL; .417 batting average; 25 runs scored.



Ellie Richards Pendleton, jr.
2nd team All-State; 1st team All-CRC; .486 batting average; 52 runs scored.



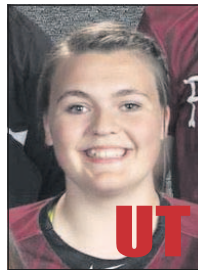
Alexis Morrison Pendleton, jr.
1st team All-State; 1st team All-CRC; .453 batting average; 9 home runs.



Tiah Grass Pendleton, sr.
1st team All-State; 1st team All-CRC; 11 home runs; 38 runs batted in.



Jenny Field Mac-Hi, jr.
1st team All-State; 1st team All-GOL; .408 batting average; 17 runs scored.



Abi Biggs Mac-Hi, jr.
1st team All-State; 1st team All-GOL; .517 batting average; 8 home runs.

All-EO Softball Second Team

• **Pitcher — Rebekka Holman (Pilot Rock) jr., 1st team All-SD6; 14-0 record; 1.05 ERA; 73 strikeouts.**

• **Pitcher — Kiersten Murphy (Pendleton) jr., 3rd team All-State; 1st team All-CRC; 14-4 record; 2.17 ERA; 67 strikeouts.**

• **Pitcher — Mackenzie Gonzales (Echo) soph., 2nd team All-EOL; 15-5 record; 2.37 ERA; 143 strikeouts.**

• **First base — Taylor Entze (Weston-McEwen) sr., 2nd team All-SD6; .439 batting average; 40 runs batted in.**

• **Catcher — Mykal Weissenfluh (Pendleton) sr., 1st team All-CRC; .329 batting average; 15 runs batted in.**

• **Infield — Stefanie Copeland (Mac-Hi) sr., 2nd team All-State; 1st team All-GOL; .329 batting average; 35 runs scored; 18 stolen bases.**

• **Infield — Payton Hergert (Pendleton) soph., 1st team All-CRC; .455 batting average; 6 home runs.**

• **Infield — Isabellew Dillow (Weston-McEwen) jr., 1st team All-SD6; .426 batting average; 50 runs scored.**

• **Outfield — Brooke Kralman (Mac-Hi) jr., 2nd team All-State; 1st team All-GOL; .397 batting average; 26 runs scored.**

• **Outfield — Jessica Pease (Weston-McEwen) sr., 1st team All-SD6; .287 batting average.**

• **Outfield — Rhyanne Oates (Pilot Rock) fr., 1st team All-SD6; .381 batting average.**

• **Utility — Mikayla Kopacz (Hermiston) jr., 3rd team All-State; 1st team All-CRC; .408 batting average; 7 doubles.**

ROBERT: Star player always put team, community first

Continued from 1B
to come.

Her beloved Pioneers were loaded for another run at the state championship coming off the program's first-ever title, but would need their ace in the circle to get there.

"I knew there was so much pressure and I had to get back in shape, so it was an early struggle for me," she said. "I was finally able to start throwing and hitting again in December, and I was in three or four times a week trying to get back into game shape."

She shed more than sweat, too, and credits intense sessions with La Grande physical therapist John Combe with getting her past her nagging injuries.

"It's like massage therapy, but it's not a massage. You're in tears the whole time," she said.

Based on her numbers, no one would have ever known she wasn't technically in "game shape" until the second half of her senior season.

As if there was any doubt, Robert cemented her status

as the most prolific softball player to ever pass through the halls at McLoughlin High with a staggering stat-line.

She pitched all 188 innings for the Pioneers (28-1), and while calling her own pitches from a seven-pitch arsenal set school records with 291 strikeouts and a .77 ERA. She only walked 12 of 664 batters faced, and surrendered just 75 hits all year — none of them home runs. Having already broken the school's batting mark as a junior with a .727 average, Robert led the team with a .624 clip while driving in 51 RBIs with 16 doubles, six home runs and two triples for a 1.059 slugging percentage. Christian said she's still working on the career-record totals for Robert, but most of major ones are sure to fall when the final tallies come in.

"It's kind of hard being proud of just yourself, because it is a team effort," she said. "I'm so proud that my team was able to help me out with that."

And it's that mindset that helps set Robert apart

from other ultra-talented youngsters, said Christian.

"It's rare to get those gems that come through, that is the overall package and isn't just about themselves," she said. "It's been pretty surreal, just watching her develop. She just really has matured overall and has really become a teammate and a leader and someone these kids look up to, the future pitchers and hitters. She's a real role model for these kids and I couldn't be prouder of her for the accomplishments she's had."

"We play for our community and Colette has embraced that. Colette has little kids coming up to her asking for autographs and they want to come to watch our practices."

Robert said she got her first autograph request following a game against Walla Walla this season, which meant as much to her as the nine-year-old requesting it.

"She had watched me at a different game and at practice, and she told her mom that she really wanted to meet me. So after the game she came up and had

me sign her visor for her," she said. "It was a really big surprise and it means a lot to me, because when I was younger I always asked a lot of girls that were older than me for their autographs and stuff. It means a lot to have someone looking up to me because it means that I'm actually doing something right for the community. I love giving back."

In that vein, Robert willingly gave up her Sundays this spring to get catcher Mallory Copeland better prepared to succeed her in the circle next season. All Copeland had to do was ask.

"That meant so much to me because she's close to my age and not many of your teammates will ask you for help," she said of the sophomore all-state backstop. "She was really nervous about next year but I know she's going to do awesome, either behind the plate or at pitcher, she's just that kind of player. She's just such a great girl, it's fun for me to be able to work with her."

Content the Pioneers will be in good hands as they

hunt for a third-straight 4A title, Robert is now turning her attention to fine tuning her pitches for the next level while playing for the Washington Explosion out of Walla Walla.

"I really am hoping to work on levels, because you've really got to keep it at the knees for hitters in college," she said. "And I'm going to be working on increasing the spin on my pitches because they will always beat a bat but speed won't."

One pitch she hopes will make the transition is a change-up that has been dubbed Mr. Nasty for its ability to humiliate batters.

"The team gets a kick out of it because I've seen maybe a handful of people be able to hit her change-up," Christian said of a pitch that drops a good 20 mph from her fastball. "It totally makes you look like a fool."

"The speed difference is pretty big. I throw, at my best, 68 and my change-up ranks around 42 to 45, so that's a huge difference," Robert said. "I've been talking to my pitching coach

a lot to pick out when a batter is way out in front."

Christian, who followed her own prolific career at Mac-Hi with a starring role on the Eastern Oregon University squads of the late 90's, said she has no doubt Robert's skill set and work ethic will serve her well with the Lobos.

"I've probably been a little tougher on her than others at times because I know what she's in for at the next level, and she can handle it," Christian said. "I've seen her hit a ball harder than anybody I've played against or with. Just little things like that leaves you shaking your head, like dang."

"It's scary how much at times she is so advanced, but I also know that she's going to get even better. College is a different sport, you're working all year round with your conditioning and your endurance and I know once she gets into a college program she's going to get even better."

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