

NFL

# Seahawks hope to find solution for struggles vs. 49ers

By **TIM BOOTH**  
Associated Press

SEATTLE — When faced with adversity the past two seasons, the Seattle Seahawks were able to find solutions.

The big question is whether they can do it again this season, and it starts on Sunday when the Seahawks (4-5) host the San Francisco 49ers (3-6).

This week has created all kinds of concern. Have the Seahawks become soft and complacent since winning a title and negotiating huge salaries? Are they playing with the same effort that got them to consecutive Super Bowls? Or, have the Seahawks simply made too many mistakes against good teams?

Four of their five losses are to the Packers, Bengals, Panthers and Cardinals, who have a combined 30-6 record. Seattle has made glaring mistakes in all four games. Cutting down on errors would be a big help.

“That’s what I have hope in, that we’ve been able to come out of the trenches, out of the gutter so to speak, and fight our way out,” Seattle wide receiver Doug Baldwin said. “It’s a little deeper, it’s a little later in the season. We’re under .500 right now so it feels a little deeper but it’s nothing we can’t do.”

While Seattle attempts to begin a winning streak, the 49ers are hoping to build on an unexpected win two weeks ago over Atlanta. Blaine Gabbert’s first start in place



Seattle Seahawks quarterback Russell Wilson (3) is hit by Arizona Cardinals cornerback Justin Bethel just after getting a pass off during the second half of an NFL football game, Sunday, Nov. 15, 2015, in Seattle.

AP Photo/Stephen Brashear



San Francisco 49ers (3-6)



Seattle Seahawks (4-5)

• SUNDAY, 1:25 p.m.  
• at CenturyLink Field, Seattle  
• TV: FOX

of Colin Kaepernick was a success and the 49ers defense looked like the dominant unit it was in previous years.

Keeping it going in Seattle won’t be easy. The 49ers have lost five of their last six visits.

“It’s a great opportunity to go out there and start again this week and play football,” Gabbert said. “I don’t take those opportunities for granted, and I’m going to enjoy them.”

Here’s what else to watch for: UNLEASH THE BEAST: The

overwhelming feeling around the Seahawks was last week’s offensive game plan never got started because of penalty problems and falling behind 19-0. That limited Marshawn Lynch to eight carries. Expect Seattle to make Lynch a priority. His only 100-yard game of the season came against the 49ers when Seattle ran the ball nine times with Lynch on its opening touchdown drive.

BOWMAN’S BACK: Sunday will be NaVorro Bowman’s first game back in the stadium where he

suffered a career-threatening knee injury in the 2013 NFC championship game.

It’s a vivid memory that Bowman has been thinking about for a couple of weeks because the trajectory of his career changed when he was hurt in the fourth quarter of that championship game. He missed the 2014 season and said he’s still not 100 percent. Nonetheless, Bowman leads the NFC in tackles with 88.

“It will be very humbling for me just to approach it again and be able to just play on that field again and

have a good game,” Bowman said. THIRD-DOWN TROUBLE: Seattle was 1 of 8 on third downs against Arizona largely because the Seahawks were in third-and-long most of the game. Six of Seattle’s eight third-down attempts were 10 or more yards. The struggles on third down also led to the Seahawks defense being on the field for nearly 39 minutes.

For the season, Seattle is 21st in the league converting just under 36 percent of third downs. But they are converting 48.6 percent on third-and-8 or shorter.

ROAD WOES: The 49ers are 0-4 on the road including being outscored 74-13 in division losses at Arizona and St. Louis.

San Francisco hopes to change its fortunes being fresh off the bye week — even if the task is daunting in one of the league’s most raucous venues at CenturyLink Field against a team that has ruled this rivalry of late.

“I don’t put it on crowd noise, I don’t put it on those things, but just coming out rolling, just go,” Jim Tomsula said. “And that’s our focus this week. Just, let’s go.”

NASCAR

# Harvick primed to defend NASCAR championship

By **DAN GELSTON**  
Associated Press

HOMESTEAD, Fla. — Go ahead, just try and wrestle the NASCAR Sprint Cup championship away from Kevin Harvick.

No driver can put up a fight quite like the champ.

A former high school wrestler, Harvick has had a season’s worth of dustups just in the nine-race Chase alone. He’s sparred with Jimmie Johnson and absorbed the slings from critics who accused him of holding up a race to preserve his playoff spot.

Yet Harvick is still standing, back at Homestead-Miami and primed to join an elite group of drivers who have won back-to-back championships.

Richard Petty, Dale Earnhardt, Johnson, too. Those are just some of the greats who won consecutive titles.

Harvick has tried to diffuse talk that he’s the heavy favorite Sunday to hold off Martin Truex Jr., Jeff Gordon and Kyle Busch at the same track where he clinched his 2014 crown.

His rivals aren’t buying it. “He’s the favorite,” Gordon said. “We’re the sentimentals.”

Harvick proved his first-season success at Stewart-Haas Racing was no fluke, following up with three wins and a whopping 12 runner-up finishes this year. He survived two rough outings as the Chase began and finished third and second in his last two races.

“Coming into this week and dealing with the second opportunity has not been near as hard or near as stressful as it was last year,” Harvick said. “Having that playbook of what we did last year and knowing that you can tweak on that a little bit and knowing how to manage the week is something that you can’t put a price on that because you’ve been there, done that, and you have to try to get better each time.”

Tony Stewart has marveled at the season Harvick has put together at SHR and the determination that team has shown through three



Kevin Harvick interacts with his son Keelan in the garage before NASCAR Sprint Cup Series auto racing practice Friday, Nov. 20, 2015, at Homestead-Miami Speedway in Homestead, Fla.

AP Photo/Terry Renna

rounds of the elimination-format Chase.

“All four drivers are capable of winning this, but having a driver that’s been through it the previous year and knows how to handle it and knows what to expect, I mean, that’s a big advantage going into a week like this,” he said.

Harvick has long cited his wrestling experience for shaping him into the tenacious competitor he’s become in NASCAR. After starting out as an 86-pound freshman, Harvick quit his senior year — the last time he says he gave up any anything, and the reason he refused to count out his Chase chances after a bleak start.

Harvick was knocked out of the Chase opener at Chicagoland when he connected with Johnson and blew a tire. He later got into an altercation with Johnson in the motorhome lot and shoved the Hendrick Motorsports driver. The next week at New Hampshire, his team firmly believing he could reach the finish line, he ran out of gas and was seemingly out of contention.

Needing a win at Dover to advance to the next round, he led 355 laps at a track where he had never won and parked the No. 4

Chevrolet in victory lane.

Typical Harvick, mastering his Game 7 races like no other in the series.

Drama seems to follow him as much as the smoke that blows off the track during his victory burnouts.

At Talladega, Dale Earnhardt Jr. tried to stave off elimination with a win, but when Harvick refused to cede position as his engine failed, he triggered a race-ending accident that bounced NASCAR’s most popular driver from the playoffs.

Drivers were in an uproar. Harvick said he did what he had to do and NASCAR found no proof that he deliberately caused the crash to protect his position.

Harvick hasn’t noticed any hint of payback in the ensuing races.

“I don’t think anybody has done anything different,” he said. “I haven’t raced anybody different, and I think it’s just another race as far as that stuff goes.”

This Sunday is far from another race.

“When I sat at his house and we met and talked about doing this, that’s what we both said is, we wanted to be in a position where we could race for a championship, and not only for one year but do it for multiple years and keep

## Kenseth meets with Logano prior to NASCAR return

HOMESTEAD, Fla. (AP) — As Matt Kenseth weaved his way through a pack of autograph seekers, a man stood firmly in front of him and reached out to shake Kenseth’s hand.

“We all respect you, Matt,” the fan told Kenseth.

“Thanks, man,” he replied.

Kenseth returned to the race track for the first time since he was suspended for two races by NASCAR for intentionally wrecking Joey Logano as payback. The action drew the unprecedented penalty from NASCAR and ultimately cost Logano a spot in the Sunday’s championship field.

Before practice on Friday, Kenseth said he met with Logano at NASCAR’s request.

“I think everything will be fine there,” Kenseth said. “I mean, I wish none of it had happened, obviously. There’s probably certain things we’ll never agree on, but I think long-term it will be fine and we’ll work it out.”

things going,” crew chief Rodney Childers said.

All Harvick has to do is finish ahead of his three competitors and he’ll make history.

A year ago, he seized his opportunity with a relentless dash through the field, picking off car after car to win the race and claim his first championship.

Stewart threw his arms around Harvick and the close friends and teammates held each other tight for several moments. It was Stewart who in 2012 convinced Harvick that if he left RCR when his contract expired at the end of 2013, he could help Harvick win his first title.

Now, they’re poised to win it again.

College XC

# History awaits UO’s Cheserek with victory

By **CHRIS HANSEN**  
Eugene Register-Guard

Edward Cheserek will be chasing history Saturday morning as he navigates the grassy 10,000-meter NCAA cross country championship course at E.P. “Tom” Sawyer State Park in Louisville, Ky.

The Oregon junior from Kenya has been the most dominant cross country runner in the nation during his three seasons with the Ducks, and a win on Saturday will cement his status as one of the greatest of all time.

Already a two-time NCAA champion, Cheserek is attempting to be the first man to win three straight titles, joining distance legends Steve Prefontaine, Henry Rono and Gerry Lindgren as the only other three-time national champions in cross country.



Cheserek

“Sometimes when I’m chilling or relaxing, I always think about year to year and how the coaches have helped me accomplish a lot in my life,” Cheserek said. “I didn’t think (about winning multiple titles) when I came here but I got good coaches and good teammates and a good program and I was willing to work.”

The results speak for themselves.

Cheserek has won 12 of his last 14 cross country races, 13 of 17 overall, and is the only man to win three-straight Pac-12 championships.

He became Oregon’s first freshman to win an NCAA cross country championship in 2013 and has eight career NCAA titles between cross country, indoor track and outdoor track, a mark that is tied for sixth all time with Ohio State’s Jesse Owens and Arizona’s Lawi Lalang. With a win Saturday, he would tie Arkansas legends Mike Conley and Robert Howard for fourth all time with nine.

“Ed’s amazing,” Oregon sophomore teammate Travis Neuman said. “The stuff he does just on a daily basis is crazy. He’s so strong and he’s just kind of on another level. To have him helping out in workouts, seeing what he does as far as training goes, it’s really helpful and pretty cool to watch.”

Prefontaine, the Oregon icon, won his cross country titles in 1970, 1971 and 1973. He didn’t suit up for the Ducks during the 1972 season because it was an Olympic year and he had competed at the Summer Games in Munich.

The significance of being mentioned alongside Pre is not lost on Cheserek.

“I think it means a lot to me,” he said. “He’s someone when I came here, I had heard about him. He was a good runner and always kept working and it kept motivating me a lot when I was working. I read about him and I thought I needed to really, really work and maybe someday I can put my name on a list with him.”

MLB

# New Mariners GM continues active offseason with another trade

Associated Press

SEATTLE — New Seattle Mariners general manager Jerry Dipoto remained active with another trade on Friday, dealing outfielder Ramon Flores to the Milwaukee Brewers for infielder Luis Sardinas.



Sardinas, 22, was acquired by Milwaukee in January as part of the swap that sent pitcher Yovani Gallardo to Texas. Sardinas hit .196 with four RBIs in 36 games with the Brewers this season while playing second base, shortstop and third. He batted .282 with 17 doubles, 16 steals and 33 RBIs at Triple-A Colorado Springs.

The 23-year-old Flores batted .308 with 17 doubles, nine homers

and 41 RBIs at Triple-A this year in the New York Yankees and Seattle organizations. He made his big league debut on May 30 and hit .219 (7 for 32) in 12 games with the Yankees, who sent him to Seattle in the July trade that brought Dustin Ackley to New York.

Dipoto previously acquired right-hander Nate Karns from Tampa Bay, right-handed reliever Joaquin Benoit from San Diego, and center fielder Leonys Martin and right-handed reliever Anthony Bass from Texas.

Dipoto made finding an athletic center fielder a priority and believes he found his man in Martin.

“I think we get one of the premier defensive center fielders in baseball. He’s been among the best in the league over these last three years,” Dipoto said. “He’s

coming off of a down year and frankly that’s when you acquire guys. There was a soft spot in the ability to go acquire Leonys and we took advantage of that.”

Martin signed a \$15.5 million, five-year contract with the Rangers in May 2011 that included a \$5 million signing bonus. It was one of the largest-ever contracts for a Cuban defector at the time, before deals for guys like Jose Abreu and Yoenis Cespedes.

He defected after playing for Cuba’s national team in Japan at the FISU World University Championships in July and August, 2010.

Martin is coming off a down year with the Rangers but is excellent defensively and likely moves into the starting center field role.

Martin played in 92 games and hit just .219 in 95 games, missing

most of August and September after breaking a bone in his right hand, but still had 13 outfield assists. Martin was left off the Rangers postseason roster and then refused to go to Arizona for workouts.

Also Friday, Seattle designated left-hander Danny Hultzen for assignment and selected the contracts of infielder Patrick Kivlehan and outfielder Boog Powell from Triple-A Tacoma.

Hultzen, the second overall pick in the 2011 amateur draft, had shoulder surgery in October 2013 that caused him to miss the following season. The 25-year-old was 0-1 with a 3.38 ERA in three starts with Double-A Jackson this year, then went on the disabled list on May 26 because of a strained rotator cuff in his pitching shoulder and was sidelined for the rest of the season.