

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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Sports shorts

MLB studying raise of strike zone's bottom

NEW YORK (AP) — Baseball's strike zone could be getting a slight lift.

Major League Baseball is studying whether to raise the bottom of the strike zone from the hollow beneath the kneecap back to the top of the kneecap.

"I'm not in a position to predict whether it's going to happen or not," Rob Manfred said during an interview with The Associated Press on Monday on his first anniversary as baseball commissioner. "I think that the interest in the topic is really driven by the fact that if you look over time there has been a movement down of the strike zone, largely as a result of the way we evaluate the strike zone with umpires."

Davis has surgery, hopes to play in Super Bowl

CHARLOTTE, N.C. (AP) — All-Pro linebacker Thomas Davis had surgery Monday morning on his broken right forearm, but is expected to play in the Super Bowl on Feb. 7.

"My understanding is if everything goes well it is something he can mostly certainly play with," Panthers coach Ron Rivera said Monday. "So we are excited about that possibility."

Rivera did not know which forearm bone Davis broke.

He said the 11-year NFL veteran may need to wear a brace on his arm similar to the one worn by New England Patriots tight end Rob Gronkowski.

Davis broke his arm in the second quarter of Carolina's 49-15 win over the Arizona Cardinals on Sunday in the NFC championship. Davis said after the game he fully expected to play in the Super Bowl in about two weeks.

"I thank Oregon State for a great year. But it is in my best interest to pursue my education and football somewhere else."

— Seth Collins

Former Oregon State quarterback. Collins announced he would be transferring from Oregon State. The Beavers were 2-10 last season and Collins passed for 936 yards and six touchdowns with four interceptions. He led the Beavers in rushing with 380 yards and eight touchdowns.

THIS DATE IN SPORTS

1913 — Jim Thorpe gives up his track medals from the 1912 Olympics because he played as a professional. He had been paid \$25 for playing in a semipro baseball game.

1986 — The Chicago Bears win their first NFL championship since 1963 by setting a Super Bowl record for points scored in defeating the New England Patriots 46-10.

2008 — Maria Sharapova wins the Australian Open, beating Ana Ivanovic 7-5, 6-3 for her third Grand Slam singles title.

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

HERMISTON

Three Bulldogs win coveted titles

East Oregonian

HILLSBORO — The Hermiston Bulldogs completed the Reser's Tournament of Champions on Saturday evening, finishing in second place with 177 points.

Hermiston finished the tournament with three individual champions, with Valen Wyse at

152 pounds, Bob Coleman at 182 pounds, and Sam Colbray at 195 pounds. The team finished 24 points back of first-place Crook County.

At 152 pounds, Wyse advanced to the championship match as the No. 6 seed and faced No. 8 seed Cole Owens from Crook County. Wyse did not waste much time to grab the victory, as he earned the

victory with a pin at the 1:26 mark of the match.

Later at 182 pounds, the No. 2 seed Coleman faced off against the No. 1 seed Tyler Self from Glencoe. The match went the distance, and Coleman earned his 27th win of the season with a 4-3 decision over Self.

And finally at 195 pounds, the No. 1 seed Colbray needed overtime

to earn his win, defeating Century's Jamarcus Grant by 3-1 decision to move to 27-1 on the season.

Other placers for Hermiston included Liam Tarvin taking fifth place at 120 pounds, Andy Wagner taking fourth place at 126 pounds, Brock McDonough taking third at 170 pounds, and Beau Blake taking sixth at 285 pounds.

MILTON-FREEWATER

Pioneers see silver lining in loss

Mac-Hi basketball taking crucial steps toward ending playoff droughts

By MATT ENTRUP
East Oregonian

Two games, one story. Coming off wins in their Greater Oregon League opens, the Mac-Hi boys and girls basketball teams hosted Baker on Saturday in the next big test for how far the programs have come in a year. And although both squads were on the wrong end of the final score, both walked away knowing a state playoff berth is well within their grasp this season.

For a pair of teams that combined to go 1-11 in league play last season and haven't seen a state playoff game in any of their players' lifetimes, that's a very big deal.

The Mac-Hi boys, which last made the state postseason in 1995, were within a basket

of Baker and its 10 playoff appearances in the last 11 seasons with less than three minutes to play before the Bulldogs pulled away at the free throw line for a 57-51 win.

"We played well today and I'm proud of the guys' effort and their attitude, they're fighting and trying with a never-going-to-lose mentality," said boys coach Jordan Poyner. "Backs to the wall, we're going to fight until the very end, and that's all that we ask for."

"That's the goal, is being competitive top to bottom ... and having a chance to make something with the season, and those are the games that get you there."

The girls, which are hoping to end a playoff drought that stretches back to 1987, came

See PIONEERS/2B

Mac-Hi's Samantha Tveidt (33) races down-court during Saturday's game with the Baker Bulldogs in Milton-Freewater.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney



Mac-Hi's Hunter Yensen (22) goes up for a shot during Saturday's game with the Baker Bulldogs in Milton-Freewater.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

ECHO

Grizzlies rally to take down Cougars

14-3 run in fourth quarter lifts Helix

By SAM BARBEE
East Oregonian

For three quarters, the Helix Grizzlies couldn't figure out the Echo Cougars.

The Cougars held a 27-19 lead heading into the final period, mostly due to 19 Grizzly turnovers in the first three periods. But, somehow, Helix outscored Echo 14-3 fourth quarter and downed the Cougars 33-30 on Saturday.

"(The players) played great defense, and that's what's won us a lot of ballgames all year long," Helix coach Kirk Flerchinger said of the comeback. "We held 'em to, like, seven points, eight points in the second half total. That's our defense. That's how we win games."

Echo (9-10, 2-5 OOL) led by as many as 10 in the third quarter. Kelsey Ranger, who missed the first match up between Echo and Helix (a 45-29 Helix win) hit a 3-pointer with 5:20 remaining in the third quarter to put Echo up 27-17.

"Kelsey's a big deal for them," Flerchinger said.

Echo built its lead with an aggressive press and antsy first-half play from the Grizzlies (13-4, 6-1).

"Most of my timeouts were, 'Hey, guys, settle down. To win this game you gotta settled down and play defense. And you gotta score. Get the ball inside, and we'll score,'" Flerchinger said.



Echo's Hannah McCarty (14) rises for a layup in front of Griswold's Bethany Newtonson (24) and Sadie Wilson during the Grizzlies' 33-30 win Saturday in Echo.

Staff photo by Sam Barbee

That began to take effect in the fourth quarter.

Helix started the period on a 10-0 run to take a 29-27 lead, and Echo pulled back even on Hannah McCarty's runner with 2:55 on the clock. The Cougars took a brief lead when Lizzie Cox hit one of two free throws to move the count to 30-29, but Mize rebounded her own miss and scored with 51 seconds left to move Helix back in front at 31-30.

Echo's chance to take a lead with about 30 seconds left went begging, and the Cougars had to foul to stop the clock. Junior point guard Macey Tullis made both free throws with 7.8 seconds left, and Echo couldn't get a good shot at the buzzer to tie.

With the win, Helix stays in sole possession of second place in the OOL, a game back of Nixyaawii for first place. Flerchinger said he was satisfied with the win in Echo, as, in his experience, it's always a tough gym to win in.

For Echo, meanwhile, Swanson sees improvement, but Saturday's loss was "a heartbreaker."

"This was a heartbreaker, for everybody," Swanson said. "We were right on a two-game winning streak and we were playing together and playing tough. We gave them everything we had and just fell short."

GHS (13-4, 6-1) 5 8 6 14 — 33
EHS (9-10, 2-5) 9 13 5 3 — 30
HELIX — M. Mize 9, P. Flerchinger 9, S. Wilson 9, E. Fehrenbacher 4, M. Tullis 2, H. Christman, A. Krol, A. Wood, C. Bennett, B. Newtonson, M. Espy, K. Mize.
ECHO — H. McCarty 10, K. Ranger 8, T. Swaggert 5, E. Parks 4, L. Cox 3, D. Tarvin, S. Stone, L. Wiggins, B. Milbrodt.
3-pointers — GHS 0, EHS 3. Free throws — GHS 5-11, EHS 3-18. Fouls — GHS 16, EHS 15. Fouled out — P. Flerchinger (GHS), H. McCarty (EHS). Technical fouls — Helix bench.

But in the third quarter, the Grizzlies started to settle down. They started to work the ball into the post to Paden Flerchinger, Makenzie Mize and Sadie Wilson, all of whom are 5-foot-10 and all of whom are bigger than any player for Echo.

Despite the effort, Helix still trailed by eight heading into the

fourth quarter at 27-19. Helix's defense turned up, allowing just five third-quarter points, but its offense was still lagging behind, netting only two points.

"We try to go inside all the time," Flerchinger said. "We got big girls. We can throw four of them at you all night long. That's what we do."