

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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Sports shorts

Concussions in NFL up 58 percent

(AP) — The NFL says reported concussions rose 58 percent in regular-season games to the highest number in any of the past four years.



The league issued its concussion data for 2015 on Friday, a little more than a week before the Super Bowl, but did not release any data about total injuries.

According to the NFL, there were 182 reported concussions from 2015 regular-season games, reversing a recent downward trend. There were 115 in 2014, 148 in 2013, and 173 in 2012.

A year ago, the league touted those decreases as a reflection of players changing the way they play football.

NFL Senior Vice President of Health and Safety Jeff Miller said the league is trying to figure out why concussion numbers rose so much this season.

Broncos fan signed to practice squad

ENGLEWOOD, Colo. (AP) — Last Sunday, Nick Kasa was like any other fan of the Denver Broncos.

On Super Bowl Sunday, he'll be one of the Denver Broncos.

FACES The tight end, out of football since the spring, got a phone call while sitting in the stands last weekend, watching the Broncos beat New England in the AFC title game.

He dropped his phone and cracked the screen — that's another story — but when he finally restored his service, he learned the Broncos wanted to sign him to the practice squad to help them get ready for the Super Bowl against Carolina.

"It's been pretty crazy. Kind of indescribable," said Kasa, who was signed Monday. "These guys have been working hard toward this for a long time. For me to come in at the end here, is just kind of an out-of-the-ordinary event. I'm honored to be here and ready to do whatever I can to help."

"Today I decided our team will stay in San Diego for the 2016 season and I hope for the long term in a new stadium."

— **Dean Spanos**
San Diego Chargers chairman telling fans that the Chargers would remain in San Diego for the upcoming season instead of moving to Los Angeles with the Rams. The Chargers still have until Jan. 15, 2017 to decide whether or not to move the team to Los Angeles, and will try and work out a new stadium with the city of San Diego until then.

THIS DATE IN SPORTS

1994 — The Dallas Cowboys, behind MVP Emmitt Smith and safety James Washington, beats Buffalo 30-13 for their second straight NFL title while giving the Bills four straight Super Bowl losses.

2010 — Andre Miller scores a career-high 52 points, including 25 in the fourth quarter and overtime, and Juwan Howard hits a jumper with 44.8 seconds left to lift the Portland Trail Blazers past the Dallas Mavericks 114-112.

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

HERMISTON

Hermiston breezes by Hood River



Hermiston's Sara Ramirez (33) rises for a layup in front of Hood River's Mykan Malone during Hermiston's 78-43 win Friday night at The Dawghouse.

Big first half helps Bulldogs to easy win

By SAM BARBEE
East Oregonian



At the varsity level, competition is generally very even. Parity, as it's known, usually prevents teams from treating games as glorified scrimmages where they can work on new plays, lineups or whatever.

That wasn't the case Friday night, when Hermiston thoroughly dominated the Hood River Valley Eagles 78-43 at The Dawghouse.

Anticipating an easy win over a team devoid of talent and numbers — Hood River (3-12, 0-2) suited just nine players — Bulldogs coach Steve Hoffert wanted to use Friday's game as an opportunity to try new rotations, new plays and the press. He liked what he saw.

"I tried to look for and look on

our reaction time to running a play, running a press, getting into something after a made basket, getting into this defense after a miss," he said. "We kept switching defense based on misses, makes and free throws. So I was looking for if we got into the position we were supposed to."

The Bulldogs (14-3, 2-0 CRC) dominated from the opening jump, scoring 30 first-quarter points en route to a 34-point halftime lead. Opening in a full-court press, something Hermiston had yet to do this season, the Bulldogs forced four Eagle turnovers in the first minute and a half of game time.

See HERMISTON/2B

HEPPNER

Knights knock off Mustangs

Irrigon back in CBC contention with win on Friday night

By ERIC SINGER
East Oregonian

When Heppner and Irrigon met on Jan. 8, the Mustangs handed the Knights their first home loss since February of 2012.

On Friday night, Irrigon returned the favor, handing the Mustangs their first home loss in just more than a year — Jan. 16, 2015 to be exact — with a 49-41 victory in Heppner.

So much for a home-court advantage, eh? "I thought the kids did a good job of understanding the time situations and played a pretty good first half," said Irrigon coach Mitch Thompson. "I thought we lost focus a little bit, our youth showed a bit and their experience and coaching showed in the second half, but I thought we had good leadership and I thought everyone did their job and did it the best they could."

Friday's game played out much like the first one did; the pace was fast, the play was physical and the outcome was up in the air until the last minute of play.

But this time Irrigon (13-5, 4-2 CBC) proved to be the better team on the night, as the Knights' offensive speed was difficult for Heppner to keep under control and their defensive quickness hampered the Mustangs from getting enough quality shot attempts to find a rhythm.

"At home, we thought we gave one away, and it really motivated us as a team especially defensively," said Irrigon senior guard Fredy Vera. "We prepared all week preparing for this one at practice and watching film and we executed really well."

The Knights led for almost all of the 32 minutes of game time, with Heppner's last lead coming at 9-8 late in the first quarter. From there, Irrigon grew the lead to 10 points and kept that cushion for most of the game.

But late in the fourth quarter, the Mustangs (15-2, 5-1) were able to creep back into the game with the help of missed free throws by the Knights. Irrigon had made only 1 of 5 to start the quarter, including three-straight missed attempts at the front end of one-and-one's.

Heppner got to within five points at 45-40 with one minute left in the game when Logan Grieb banked home a layup. And after an

See KNIGHTS/2B

Boys Hoops



Irrigon's Xavier Rambo shoots the ball over Heppner's Logan Grieb (5) and Weston Putnam in the Knights' 49-42 win against the Mustangs on Friday in Heppner.

PENDLETON

Buckaroos fall at home to Mountain View



Pendleton's Scott Chambers starts a match with Mountain View's Leslie Combs during a dual meet Friday at Warberg Court in the 145-pound weight class.

East Oregonian

The Pendleton Buckaroos came close to a home dual win on Friday night, but could not hang on as they fell to Mountain View 37-27.

The Buckaroos started slow as Mountain View raced out to a 22-6 lead in the first four duals as Jacob Banks at 285 pounds and Lane Evens at 106 pounds were the only Bucks to garner points. Banks defeated Reed Sehorn-Hurst with a 5-2 decision and Evens beat Carson Johnson

with a 3-2 decision.

But then the Buckaroos put some momentum together and got on a run, winning matches at 132 pounds (Alex Rendon), 138 pounds (Brendon Bedolla), 145 pounds (Scott Chambers), and 152 pounds (Morgan Holcomb) to grab a 23-22 lead.

But then J.D. Peters lost to Dylan Grell by a 12-7 decision at 160 pounds, and then Alex Gear (170 pounds) and Greg Lee (182 pounds) each lost by pin to boost Mountain View out 37-23.

Marcus Taylor finished for Pendleton at 195 pounds

with a 12-0 majority decision victory.

220 — Austin Keller (M) def. Jeff Priester, 3:39 (6-0)
285 — Jacob Banks (P) def. Reed Sehorn-Hurst by 5-2 dec. (6-3)
106 — Lane Evens (P) def. Carson Johnson by 3-2 dec. (6-6)
113 — Evan McLean (M) def. Chris Chambers by 18-2 TF, 3:30 (11-6)
120 — Connor Duhn (M) pins Blake Davis, 3:25 (17-6)
126 — Caleb Duhn (M) def. Koby Jones by 15-0 TF, 4:15 (22-6)
132 — Alex Rendon (P) def. Tristan Baker by 10-0 Maj. dec. (22-10)
138 — Brendon Bedolla (P) def. Noah Rivera by 12-7 dec. (22-13)
145 — Scott Chambers (P) def. Leslie Combs by 13-2 Maj. dec. (22-17)
152 — Morgan Holcomb (P) pins Jace Hornor, 2:27 (22-23)
160 — Dylan Grell (M) def. JD Peters by 12-7 dec. (25-23)
170 — Izaak Mofit (M) pins Alex Gear, 1:17 (31-23)
182 — Luke Schultz (M) pins Greg Lee, 1:55 — Marcus Taylor (P) def. Daniel Clark by 12-0 Maj. dec. (37-27)