

Men's Basketball

Picking Olympic roster is tough task for Team USA

By BRIAN MAHONEY
AP Basketball Writer

TORONTO — In another Olympic sport, the U.S. might be dreaming of a gold-silver-bronze medals sweep. But in basketball, countries only get one.

“We could send over three teams, I think we’d be successful,” Golden State’s Klay Thompson said.

The Americans are so loaded with talent that their biggest challenge this summer might not be the games themselves, but rather determining which 12 players get seats on the plane to Rio de Janeiro.

“I’m sure it’s hard, but it’s a good problem to have,” Clippers star and two-time gold medalist Chris Paul said. “Other countries aren’t that fortunate to have a pool of this many great players to choose.”

USA Basketball chairman Jerry Colangelo faced a different problem not long ago.

“Someone made the point, ‘Look, you have so many players now, that’s a real problem,’” Colangelo said. “I said, ‘No, it was a real problem when I started in ‘05 when we didn’t have players who wanted to play.’ We were looking for players and now we have a big-time problem because supposedly



In this May 2, 2015, file photo, members of the Los Angeles Clippers bench celebrates after guard Chris Paul, center, hit a basket during a game against the San Antonio Spurs, in Los Angeles.

we have too many.” Colangelo said the selection of this team will “absolutely” be the toughest yet. The Americans list 31 Olympic finalists in their pool, including MVP winners Stephen Curry, Kevin Durant and LeBron James,, though James has said he is undecided about playing. Many of the players

were in Toronto for the All-Star Game, yet Colangelo said he isn’t looking for an All-Star team. “It’s not the 12 best players,” he said. “I’ll go back to where we started the whole thing is, it wasn’t going to be 12 All-Stars, it was going to be a team and we want complementary pieces on this team. So when

we end up picking up our 12, it could be revealing to say look, we took this guy and that guy because that’s the best blend of talents.” Paul was there when it started, part of the U.S. team that won bronze in the 2006 world basketball championship after Colangelo had revamped USA Basketball following the Americans’

third-place flop in Athens two years earlier. Teammates he recalled included Kirk Hinrich and Brad Miller, solid NBA contributors who would have no chance of making the team the U.S. will field in Brazil. Curry and Paul are among the point guard choices that include Russell Westbrook, Kyrie Irving, John Wall and Damian Lillard. For big men, there’s DeMarcus Cousins, Dwight Howard, Andre Drummond and Anthony Davis. And imagine being in Thompson’s spot. He played well for the Americans when they dominated the 2014 Basketball World Cup, is a great shooter and defender, and his game and demeanor fit perfectly for Colangelo and coach Mike Krzyzewski. Yet he figures to be competing with the likes of James, Durant, Carmelo Anthony, James Harden, Kawhi Leonard and Warriors teammate and NBA Finals MVP Andre Iguodala for a spot among the wings. And let’s not forget Paul George, an All-Star again and who has recovered from his broken leg in U.S. camp two years ago. He would seem to have a spot if he wants it. “It would be special for me. Olympics was always on my bucket list,” Thompson

said. “Won’t be the end of the world if I don’t make it, but it would be a true honor because I love playing for the USA. It’s one of the most fulfilling things you can do.” The Americans have traditionally favored smaller, versatile teams, but switched things up two years ago when they carried Drummond as an extra big. Colangelo doesn’t know which way they’ll go now. “No, because we’re loaded at the smalls and wings, but we’re better at the bigs. We’re deeper at the bigs than we’ve been,” he said. “So again, that’s kind of a high-class problem.” He isn’t rushing into any decisions, knowing injuries and contract situations always knock out some players. He plans to announce the U.S. team around the NBA draft in late June and will be watching candidates all season. And after years of stressing the “equity” of those who have played before, Colangelo can’t take that into account this time. Too many players have been on winning U.S. teams to let that be an advantage. “Now it’s down to who do we feel would be the best 12,” he said, “the best makeup in terms of 12 players to help us win another gold medal.”

CBC: Weston-McEwen, Stanfield kick off girls bracket

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was that once our season ended last season against (Weston-McEwen) we’re starting a new season,” said Stanfield coach Victor Baros. “So we’ve got to start like we’re playing a new season and we haven’t beaten them yet.”

Baros said the new season approach is more than a mindset.

“We went back to our conditioning. We’ve really been up-tempo, and really worked on our inside game, our blocking out and rebounds. We pretty much started the season again,” he said. “We know that Irrigon is a really good team and we’re going to have to come out with our best game to beat them.”

The Pilot Rock boys’ basketball players won’t be participating in the tournament, but they’ve been doing what they can to make sure the Rockets that are playing will be prepared.

The Pilot Rock girls have been practicing against the boys throughout the week in an effort to shake the team’s struggle against pressure defenses. “I think in a halfcourt



In this Dec. 19, 2015 file photo, Pilot Rock’s Kayla Deist looks to pass the ball guarded by Enterprise’s Reece Christman (25) and Madison Plew in Pilot Rock.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

set we match up well with anybody we’re going to play, the problem is their pressure has really gotten to us,” said Rockets coach Butch Wilson,

who team enters with the No. 2 seed. “They’re getting really pushed right now and they’re handling it well. It’s helped

us a lot. They’ve been under pressure all week.” Pilot Rock (16-8, 7-3) faces third seed Irrigon (9-12, 5-5) to close out Friday’s action with an 8:45 p.m. tip-off. The Rockets have beaten the Knights twice this season, but just by a combined three points. The winner will move on to play the winner of the late afternoon game pitting first seed Weston-McEwen (14-8, 10-0) against fourth seed Stanfield (10-12, 4-6) at 2:45 p.m. It’s a rematch of the last game of the regular season which the TigerScots won 43-30. Neither of the teams’ meetings this season has been close, and the TigerScots are entering on a seven-game winning streak. Stanfield backed into the postseason with three straight losses, but is coming off a 43-38 win over Culver on Tuesday in a tiebreaker game. The boys’ championship game will tip off Saturday at 4 p.m. with the girls’ championship to follow at 5:45 p.m. Contact Matt Entrup at (541) 966-0838 or mentrup@eastoregonian.com. Follow him on Twitter @mattentrup.

SMALL SCHOOLS: Big Sky begins district play Friday in Madras

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how many times you’ve been there, there’s always nerves.” Echo and Joseph split their season series with Echo winning their most recent game 62-46 on Jan. 30 in Echo. In the other first-round game, Helix (15-8, 8-4) plays Pine Eagle (3-18, 2-10) with the winner moving on to face second seed Powder Valley (15-7, 10-2) in the semis. The Grizzlies mauled the Spartans twice this season, including at 39-18 drubbing in the each team’s regular-season finale. Semifinals winners are guaranteed a state playoff game while the semifinals losers will square off for the third and final berth. The Nixyaawii boys (22-1, 12-0) are also the No. 1 seed on their half of the bracket, and will begin tournament play on Friday against the winner of today’s 2:15 p.m. game between Echo (8-15, 6-6) and Wallowa (5-15, 4-8). Echo won both meetings between the team this season, including a 42-41 nail-biter to close the regular season in Wallowa. Joseph (13-8, 9-3) plays Helix (4-20, 1-11) in the other first-round game with the winner moving on to face Powder Valley (16-5, 9-3) in the semifinals. Joseph has outscored Helix 109-66 in two games this season. The girls championship will be played on Saturday at 6:30 p.m. with the boys to follow at 8 p.m.

BIG SKY LEAGUE CONDON — The Condon/Wheeler girls basketball team started its current 13-game winning streak with a 39-18 win over Horizon Christian on Jan. 9. Friday at Madras High School the Knights will open their district tournament against Hawks, but Knights coach Kevin Gramson said it’ll be no easy road back to the state playoffs for his team. “The second half of the season we did beat all seven (Big Sky League) teams, but Horizon was the only one where it was closer than it was the first time around,” he said of the Knights’ 55-44 win on Jan. 29. “We certainly aren’t taking them lightly. We know it’ll be a battle but we can play our game and take care of business we should be alright.” After the Knights (22-2, 13-1 BSL), the Hawks (12-12, 8-6) are the team carrying the most momentum into the tournament having won their last five in a row. That stretch included a 42-39 win over Lone (14-8, 11-3) in the Cardinals’ final regular season game. Lone will face Arlington (17-9, 9-5) in the other semifinal game. The teams split their season series with each winning on their opponents’ court. The most recent meeting went to Lone 54-40 on Feb. 6 at Arlington. In the boys’ half of the bracket it’s No. 1 Sherman (20-4, 14-0) vs. No. 4 Horizon Christian (12-12, 8-6) and No. 2 South Wasco (20-4, 11-3) vs. No. 3 Dufur (14-10, 10-4).

The winners in Friday’s semifinals guarantee themselves a home state playoff game. The losers will meet on Saturday to determine the BSL’s third state bid, and would travel in the first round. The girls championship will be played Saturday at 3 p.m. with the winner securing a first-round bye and a home game in the second round. Contact Matt Entrup at mentrup@eastoregonian.com or (541) 966-0838. Follow him on Twitter @mattentrup.

PREPS: Pioneers must rely on ranking to make postseason

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in Madras with a 45-30 win that was highlighted by Connor Uhalde’s 21 points. Ione (4-19, 3-11 BSL) saw its season come to a close, but not before giving the Rangers (14-10, 10-4) their best shot. Led by Austin Carter, the Cardinals cut a 24-8 halftime deficit to 27-20 by the end of the third quarter. Carter finished with a double-double (12 points, 15 rebounds) and Jason Juarez added eight points and three steals.

Ione coach Brian Rust said Dufur had gone away from its pressure defense in the second and third quarters, but brought it back to pull away in the fourth. “I’m proud of my kids, they worked hard in this one,” Rust said. IHS (4-19) 4 4 12 10 — 30 DHS (14-10) 16 8 3 18 — 45 IONE — A. Carter 12, J. Juarez 8, D. McElligott 4, C. Hollis 3, W. McNary 3, L. Burright, A. Smythe, T. Epperson. DUFUR — C. Uhalde 21, B. Keever 12, T. Lucas 9, K. Bales 3, H. Pence, C. Crawford, E. Wetherbee. 3-pointers — IHS 4, DHS 1. Free throws — IHS 4-9, DHS 7-22. Fouls — IHS 17, DHS 16.

HORIZON CHRISTIAN 53, CONDON/WHEELER 32 — At Hood River, the Hawks (12-12, 8-6 BSL) moved on to the district bracket by beating the Knights (10-14, 6-8) on Wednesday. No details were reported. Condon/Wheeler’s season ended with four losses in its last five games. GIRLS BASKETBALL BAKER 57, MAC-HI 37 — At Baker City, Mac-Hi

must now depend on the OSAA ranking system to try and end its state postseason drought after losing to Baker on Wednesday. No details were reported. The Pioneers finished third in the Greater Oregon League, and could still earn a spot in the 24-team state playoffs if their OSAA ranking is high enough. At press time the Pioneers held the No. 23 spot. The last time Mac-Hi participated in the state postseason in girls basketball was 1987.

SCOREBOARD

Local slate	
PREP BOYS BASKETBALL	
Today	
Friday	Echo vs. Wallowa (at Baker City), 2:15 p.m.
Friday	Nixyaawii vs. TBD (at Baker City), TBA
Friday	Heppner vs. Weston-McEwen (at Pendleton Convention Center), 1 p.m.
Friday	Riverside at Nyssa, 6 p.m.
Friday	Hermiston at Hood River, 7 p.m.
Friday	The Dalles at Pendleton, 7 p.m.
Friday	Irrigon vs. Stanfield (at Pendleton Convention Center), 7 p.m.
Saturday	OOL third-place game (at Baker City), 2:30 p.m.
Saturday	CBC District Championship (at Pendleton Convention Center), 4 p.m.
Saturday	OOL District Championship (at Baker City), 8 p.m.
PREP GIRLS BASKETBALL	
Today	
Friday	Echo vs. Joseph (at Baker City), 1 p.m.
Friday	Helix vs. Pine Eagle (at Baker City), 6:30 p.m.
Friday	Powder Valley vs. Helix/Pine Eagle winner (at Baker City), 1 p.m.
Friday	Weston-McEwen vs. Stanfield (at Pendleton Convention Center), 2:45 p.m.
Friday	Arlington vs. Ione (at Madras), 3 p.m.
Friday	Nyssa at Umatilla, 5 p.m.
Friday	Condon/Wheeler vs. Horizon Christian (at Madras), 6 p.m.
Friday	Nixyaawii vs. Echo/Joseph winner (at Baker City), 6:30 p.m.
Friday	Hood River at Hermiston, 7 p.m.
Friday	Pendleton at The Dalles, 7 p.m.
Friday	Irrigon vs. Stanfield (at Pendleton Convention Center), 7 p.m.
Saturday	BSL third-place game (at Madras), Noon
Saturday	OOL third-place game (at Baker City), 1 p.m.
Saturday	BSL District Championship (at Madras), 3 p.m.
Saturday	CBC District Championship (at Pendleton Convention Center), 5:45 p.m.
Saturday	OOL District Championship (at Baker City), 6:30 p.m.
PREP WRESTLING	

Wisconsin at No. 8 Michigan St., 6 p.m.

Women's Top 25
Wednesday's Games

No. 1 Connecticut 88, Cincinnati 34

No. 4 Baylor 66, No. 17 Oklahoma St. 41

No. 6 Maryland 76, Michigan 56

No. 8 Texas 58, Kansas St. 51

West Virginia 63, No. 20 Oklahoma 55

Today's Games

Nebraska at No. 5 Ohio St., 3 p.m.

No. 25 Michigan St. at Rutgers, 4 p.m.

Vanderbilt at No. 22 Florida, 4 p.m.

Georgia at No. 3 South Carolina, 4 p.m.

No. 16 Kentucky at No. 14 Mississippi St., 4 p.m.

Ole Miss at No. 24 Tennessee, 4 p.m.

Virginia at No. 11 Louisville, 4 p.m.

No. 10 Florida St. at No. 23 Syracuse, 4 p.m.

No. 2 Notre Dame at Wake Forest, 4 p.m.

LSU at No. 12 Texas A&M, 6 p.m.

NBA

Wednesdays' Games

No games scheduled

Today's Games

Utah at Washington, 4 p.m.

Chicago at Cleveland, 5 p.m.

San Antonio at L.A. Clippers, 7:30 p.m.

Hockey

NHL

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic Division

GP W L OT Pts GF GA

Florida 57 33 18 6 72 160 134

Boston 57 31 20 6 68 174 158

Detroit 57 29 19 9 67 146 147

Tampa Bay 56 30 22 4 64 149 139

Montreal 58 27 27 4 58 159 161

Ottawa 58 26 26 6 58 165 182

Buffalo 58 23 28 7 53 137 162

Toronto 55 20 26 9 49 134 163

Metropolitan Division

GP W L OT Pts GF GA

Washington 55 41 10 4 86 184 126

N.Y. Rangers 57 32 19 6 70 166 148

N.Y. Islanders 55 30 19 6 66 161 141

New Jersey 58 29 22 7 65 130 136

Pittsburgh 55 28 19 8 64 142 141

Carolina 57 26 21 10 62 139 150

Philadelphia 56 25 21 10 60 137 151

Columbus 58 23 28 7 53 149 180

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Central Division

GP W L OT Pts GF GA

Chicago 61 38 18 5 81 175 142

Dallas 58 37 15 6 80 188 156

St. Louis 59 33 17 9 75 145 139

Colorado 60 30 26 4 64 161 166

Nashville 57 26 21 10 62 151 152

Minnesota 57 25 22 10 60 145 145

Winnipeg 56 25 28 3 53 143 162

Pacific Division

GP W L OT Pts GF GA

Los Angeles 56 33 20 3 69 154 134

Anaheim 56 29 19 8 66 136 137

San Jose 55 30 20 5 65 164 148

Arizona 56 26 24 6 58 151 171

Vancouver 56 22 22 12 56 133 157

Calgary 56 25 28 3 53 153 173

Edmonton 58 22 30 6 50 146 176

Tuesday's Games

Ottawa 2, Buffalo 1, SO

Philadelphia 6, New Jersey 3

Washington 3, Los Angeles 1

Carolina 2, Winnipeg 1

Boston 2, Columbus 1, OT

San Jose 4, Tampa Bay 2

St. Louis 2, Dallas 1, OT

Anaheim 5, Edmonton 3

Wednesday's Games

Chicago 5, N.Y. Rangers 3

Colorado 3, Montreal 2

Minnesota 5, Calgary 3

Today's Games

Washington at N.Y. Islanders, 4 p.m.

Detroit at Pittsburgh, 4 p.m.

N.Y. Rangers at Toronto, 4:30 p.m.

Carolina at Ottawa, 4:30 p.m.

Winnipeg at Tampa Bay, 4:30 p.m.

San Jose at Florida, 4:30 p.m.

Los Angeles at St. Louis, 5 p.m.

Boston at Nashville, 5 p.m.

Minnesota at Edmonton, 6 p.m.

Dallas at Arizona, 6 p.m.

Anaheim at Vancouver, 7 p.m.