

College Basketball

Beavers advance in Pac-12 tourney

By JIM HOEHN
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Resilient USC refused to go away, but Oregon State coach Scott Rueck said his eighth-ranked Beavers can benefit from the closer-than-expected battle.

Jamie Weisner scored 20 points and Ruth Hamblin and Sydney Wiese added 17 apiece to lead Oregon State to a 63-53 victory over USC on Friday night in the Pac-12 tournament quarterfinals.

“We had to execute down the stretch and get stops and it had to be timely,” Rueck said. “I think that just gives us confidence going forward that we can finish a game out like this. We leaned on all of our strengths down the stretch. That only can help our confidence.”

The Beavers (26-4) advance to Saturday’s semifinals against the winner of Washington (21-9) and No. 11 Stanford (24-6).

Hamblin, a 6-6 senior center, scored on a half hook from the lane to put Oregon State up 58-48 with 5:37 remaining. Sophomore guard Sadie Edwards, a transfer from Connecticut, answered with five straight points to pull the Trojans within 58-53 with 3:20 left.

Wiese’s 3-pointer with 2:48 remaining put Oregon State up 61-53.

“Syd’s three I thought was the shot of the game tonight,” Rueck said. “I really thought that corner three iced it, although you can never ice a game with time left, but she did.”

Edwards had 20 points for the Trojans (19-13) and Temi Fagbenle added 10.

“I thought we had a few opportunities in the game to tie it up and really make a game out of it, but they stepped up to the challenge and were able to knock down some huge, huge shots down the stretch,” said USC coach Cynthia Cooper-Dyke.

All of Oregon State’s



Oregon State's Jamie Weisner, right, drives around Southern California's Sadie Edwards in the Pac-12 women's tournament Friday in Seattle.

WOMEN'S BASKETBALL



Oregon St.
63



USC
53

points came from its starters, with Weisner, Hamblin and Wiese accounting for all but nine.

“Well, defending any of the three of those was giving us particularly a lot of trouble,” Cooper-Dyke said. “You know, when you talk about Weisner and Wiese and Hamblin, you pick your poison.”

Oregon State was never able to put the Trojans away, despite shooting 53 percent compared with 38 percent for USC and a 40-25 rebound advantage. Hamblin pulled down 12 rebounds and Weisner added 10.

“I would have liked it to have been slightly different, but that’s the silver lining in it right there, Rueck said. “And credit SC for playing a great game. They made it close.”

Oregon State led by

double digits on several occasions in the first half. Hamblin scored down low to put the Beavers up 34-22 with 4:54 left in the second quarter, but the Trojans pulled within 36-31, holding Oregon State without a field goal the rest of the half.

Edwards scored on a drive to open the third quarter to cut the lead to 36-33. Weisner responded with eight consecutive points, including a pair of 3-pointers, to put the Beavers up 44-33.

TIP-INS:
USC: The Trojans lost to Oregon State for the first time in four tournament meetings. Fagbenle scored in double figures for the 24th time this season.

Oregon State: The Beavers have won 16 of their last 17. The lone defeat was 76-54 on Feb. 26 in the next-to-last game of the regular season.

UP NEXT
USC awaits a possible post-season bid.

Oregon State plays either Washington or No. 11 Stanford on Saturday in the Pac-12 tournament semifinals.

Pro Basketball



Toronto Raptors' Cory Joseph, center, shoots on Portland Trail Blazers' Ed Davis, center left, during the first half in Toronto on Friday.

Lillard scores 50 points, but Blazers fall short in Toronto

By PAUL ATTFIELD
Associated Press

TORONTO — DeMar DeRozan set an NBA record by making 24 straight free throws on his way to a season-high 38 points and the Toronto Raptors overcame a huge game from Damian Lillard to beat the Portland Trail Blazers 117-115 on Friday night for their franchise-record 12th straight home win.

Lillard scored 50 points, one shy of his career high set last month in a 137-105 win over Golden State.

DeRozan went 24 for 25 from the free-throw line, both career highs. Kyle Lowry had 28 points and Jonas Valanciunas had 17 points and 10 rebounds for Toronto.

Portland lost the season series to Toronto for the first time since 1996-97. C.J. McCollum added 24 for Portland, but he and Lillard were the only Blazers in double figures.

Despite carrying a 90-77 lead into the fourth quarter, the Raptors allowed Portland back into the game when they missed eight of their first 11 shots from the floor. Portland went on a 10-0 run

NBA



Raptors
117



Trail Blazers
115

to cut the lead to just three points with 6:18 left.

The Trail Blazers cut the lead to two points on a couple of occasions, but the Raptors went shot for shot to stay in front. Gerald Henderson cut the lead to 108-105 with 2:08 to play, but Patrick Patterson responded with a 3-pointer 21 seconds later to push the lead out to six.

Lillard’s 3-pointer with 20 seconds to go brought the Trail Blazers to within three, but Lowry converted 1 of 2 free throws right after. Alan Crabbe made a finger roll with 8.3 seconds remaining, but Toronto responded with two free throws from DeRozan.

Another 3-pointer from Lillard, his sixth of the night, made the last 2.2 seconds uncomfortable for the Raptors, but DeRozan was sent to the free-throw line once again, registering his only miss of the night, to close out the game.

DeRozan started at small forward instead of shooting guard for the first time this season to accommodate Nick Powell, but he didn’t let it affect his rhythm, scoring 17 points in the first quarter. Lillard responded with 12 of his own, including a 40-foot basket at the buzzer to close Toronto’s lead to 31-30 after 12 minutes.

The Trail Blazers’ scoring touch deserted them somewhat in the second quarter. They missed 12 of their first 16 shots from the floor in the quarter, while 10 points from Lowry helped the Raptors establish a 58-52 lead at the half.

TIP-INS:
Trail Blazers: Lillard has now scored at least 30 points in nine of his last 11 games, and he averaged 29.8 points during the month of February. He wasn’t selected for the All-Star Game in Toronto. Raptors coach Dwane Casey put Lillard’s recent hot streak down to the All-Star snub. “He’s playing with a huge chip on his shoulder,” Casey said. “He won’t admit it, but he is.”

UP NEXT:
Trail Blazers: Visit Detroit on Sunday.

MLS

For a change, expansion isn’t in forefront of 2016 MLS season

By TIM BOOTH
AP Sports Writer

For a change, the product on the field is the main focus heading into a new Major League Soccer season.

Previous hot topics like expansion and labor negotiations are secondary heading into the 2016 season that begins this weekend with all 20 teams in action. After celebrating its 20th anniversary a year ago with an appreciation for the ups and downs that got MLS to age 20, the league is now moving into its next stage of continuing growth while competing with other leagues around the world.

“We’re launching sort of the next generation in the life span of our league,” MLS Commissioner Don Garber said. “We’re embarking on a plan that hopefully allows us to achieve our goal of being one of the top leagues in the world and doing it with great players and really deeply connected clubs.”

Expansion has been the hot topic for a number of

years, but entering 2016 it’s tempered. No new untapped markets. No flashy debuts in major metropolitan areas.

Those are still on the horizon for MLS with the upcoming additions of Atlanta (2017), Los Angeles (2018), Minnesota (TBD) and possibly David Beckham’s Miami project, if it can ever gain traction. Not to mention continued interest from markets like San Antonio, St. Louis and Sacramento vying to be among those MLS includes on its path to at least 28 franchises.

But for this year, the soccer itself will take the spotlight. Coupled with the Copa America taking place in June and the Olympics in August, soccer has a chance to be at the center of the conversation for much of the late spring and summer.

“I think it’s going to be one of the biggest summers of soccer in the history of our sport in this country,” Garber said. “Copa America will be a mini World Cup. I think it will set the stage for



In this Dec. 6, 2015, file photo, Portland Timbers raise the trophy after defeating the Columbus Crew 2-1 in the MLS Cup championship soccer game in Columbus, Ohio.

an eventual bid for the World Cup in 2026.”

Here are things to watch as MLS begins its 21st season:

CASCADIA CHAMPIONS: It seemed inevitable that an MLS Cup champion would eventually come from the soccer-crazed Pacific Northwest.

The Timbers capped a memorable run to the title

just as good again, returning the majority of its key pieces from that title run, including midfielder Diego Valeri and striker Fanendo Adi.

BORDER BATTLE: The three Canadian clubs could all be among the best this season. Toronto finally made the playoffs in 2015 thanks to league MVP Sebastian Giovinco, along with American standouts Michael Bradley and Jozy Altidore. Montreal welcomed Didier Drogba into the fold during the summer and made a powerful late run into the postseason. And Vancouver was near the top of the Western Conference all season.

Giovinco, Bradley and Altidore are all back with Toronto; Drogba is ready for a full season in Montreal; and Vancouver may have among the deepest rosters in the league. It could be the year a Canadian club makes a run at the title.

BEASTS OF THE EAST: New York Red Bulls put together a masterful run last season to win the

Supporters’ Shield before getting bounced in the playoffs by Columbus. The Red Bulls return very much intact while many other teams in the East have questions to answer. Toronto and Montreal may be ready to rise, and New England, led by Lee Nguyen, could be the type of team to jump from fifth last season to the top of the conference.

But don’t sleep on Columbus after Kei Kamara led the Crew to the MLS Cup final last season.

BEST IN THE WEST: The Western Conference again appears to be significantly deeper than the East. Consider that Portland may be the fifth- or sixth-best team at the beginning of the season. Vancouver could end up being the class, but young FC Dallas is only going to get better with experience after nearly making the MLS Cup final. Sporting Kansas City may have the best midfield in the league, and the talent in Seattle’s starting 11 can rival anyone in the league.

MLB

Baxter’s home run hands Mariners first loss of Spring Training

Associated Press

PHOENIX — Mike Baxter hit a two-run homer in off the batter’s eye screen behind center field during the Seattle Mariners’ 5-2 loss to the Milwaukee Brewers on Friday.

Wily Peralta and Chris Capuano each pitched two scoreless innings for the Brewers, who have allowed three runs in two wins to start the exhibition season.

“We were efficient. Guys have locked into their deliveries pretty well and quickly,” Milwaukee manager Craig Counsell said. “We’re getting ahead in counts,

letting the defense do the work and the result has been some quick innings.”

Mariners starter Taijuan Walker allowed one run and two hits in two innings.

Hernan Perez had two hits, including an RBI single, and Andy Wilkins hit his first home run of spring training, a two-run drive off Myckol Gueaie that traveled more than 400 feet and landed halfway up the grass berm in right field.

“First hit of the spring and it went a long way and felt great,” said Wilkins, who was the property of Baltimore, Texas, Seattle and Milwaukee from Dec. 2-23. “I’ve



Seattle
2



Milwaukee
5

gone through a lot in my career, and you can’t worry about decisions you can’t control. All you can do is try to do something to make those decisions harder.”

Eric Young Jr. hit an RBI single in the sixth. Seth Smith singled in both of his at-bats.

STARTING TIME
Mariners: Walker, who won 11 games for Seattle last year including five straight starts in June

and July, breezed through the first but loaded the bases in the second with one out before escaping with one run allowed.

“Arm felt good. The fastball command wasn’t where I want it to be, but I got out of a jam that could have been a lot worse,” Walker said. “I want to command the fastball and change and make sure I have a curveball I can count on.”

Brewers: Peralta, the favorite to be the opening-day starter, faced the minimum six batters. A leadoff single to Smith in the second was wiped out by one of Milwaukee’s two double plays.

“He threw all his pitches well and made some good sliders to left-handed hitters,” Counsell said. “It was a quick outing but he did what he wanted to do.”

FOR THE DEFENSE
Seattle shortstop Luis Sardinas leaped to rob Aaron Hill of a line drive single in the third. ... Baxter, Seattle’s left fielder, stretched out in a head-long dive to stab a Colin Walsh drive headed for the left-center field gap in the seventh.

UP NEXT
Mariners: LHP Wade Miley gets a start against the Los Angeles Angels in Tempe. Joel Peralta is also expected to pitch.