



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Burns fans watch their high school boys basketball team play in the quarterfinals at the state 2A basketball championships on Thursday night at the Pendleton Convention Center.

BURNS: Senior players lost out on the chance to play two home games

Continued from 1A

classes. With no gym to use, the girls and boys teams traveled about 30 miles west to Crane or 30 miles east to Riley to practice. Point guard Madison Carson and wing Lexi Mace had vivid memories of the Riley practice, which took place on a slippery concrete rubber floor at an elementary school gym. “We practiced really slow that day,” Mace said. Although Harney County schools would reopen, Burns’ first few “home” games were moved to John Day and Vale. Still, a crowd of supporters traveled to each gym to cheer them on. “That’s the great thing about Burns. The parents still followed

us around,” boys head coach Mick Miller said. Although sports teams from the school aren’t averse to traveling — the closest Wapiti League team to Burns is 75 miles away — both coaches were disappointed that their senior players lost out on the chance to play two home games. “Regardless of the politics of it, I felt that we were robbed,” girls head coach Brandon McMullen said. Many of the players said focusing on the team kept them motivated and free from the distraction that swirled around their town. The results on the court showed — both teams won more than 20 games and made the state tournament field. The boys team rebounded from a two-point loss to Vernonia in

the quarterfinals to beat Heppner. They will play Imbler Saturday, the winner finishing fourth in the state. The girls have gone even further, beating Monroe Friday night to make it to the championship game for the second year in a row. Jake Thompson, the former girls coach and a social studies teacher at the high school, said teenagers have a natural ability to “flush things away” when they need to. Thompson used the refuge occupation as a teachable moment in his social studies class, but said such an event is better left outside the walls of a basketball gym and a camaraderie of a team huddle. Contact Antonio Sierra at asierra@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0836.

1-year spaceman: Joints ache, can’t sink basketball

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — Fresh from a year in space, NASA astronaut Scott Kelly said Friday his muscles and joints ache. His skin is so sensitive it burns when he sits or walks. And he can’t sink a basketball shot. He’s surprised — not necessarily about his basketball skills, but everything else. After his previous half-year space station mission five years ago, he wasn’t nearly this tired or sore. “Adjusting to space is easier than adjusting to Earth for me,” he said at his first postflight news conference Friday. Like other astronauts, he got taller in space. He said he gained 1½ inches. But he lost it almost as soon as he stood on solid ground. Kelly returned from the International Space Station on Wednesday, ending a 340-day mission that set a U.S. record. It took him a full day to get back home from the landing site in Kazakhstan to Houston. That’s when the aches and pains set in — this from the guy who hopped out of his space capsule and later promptly jumped into his backyard pool. Initially, he felt better than last

time, but that quickly changed. The 52-year-old astronaut said because his skin hasn’t had significant contact with anything for so long — in space, clothes just float around you — “it’s very, very sensitive. It’s almost like a burning feeling wherever I like sit or lie or walk. I’m not wearing these shoes all the time,” he said, kicking up his right foot, which sported a shiny black dress shoe. “I just wore them for you guys.” Thick running shoes are his preference these days; they make his feet “feel a little bit better.” As for the culture shock of being back on Earth, Kelly expects that will hit soon. “From having so little on the space station and so few choices about what you’re going to do every day, what’s available to you, to basically having just about anything,” he told reporters. His first food back on Earth? A banana he found on his bed aboard the plane. He didn’t realize the irony until he ate half of it; he cavorted around the space station a few weeks ago in a gorilla suit, a gag gift from his identical twin, Mark, a retired astronaut.

The genetic doubles — one in space, one on the ground — took part in medical studies throughout the flight. NASA wants to know how the body and mind adjust to long periods in space before sending astronauts to Mars; expeditions are planned for the 2030s. NASA’s chief space station scientist, Julie Robinson, said she’d ideally like 10 or 12 astronauts to spend extra-long periods in space to know what all the risks might be. Johnson Space Center physiologist Dr. John Charles said he was impressed Kelly managed to complete all his physical exercises — standing up suddenly, walking heel-to-toe, navigating an obstacle course — immediately after touchdown. He’d likely fare well on Mars, scrambling to get out of a spacecraft on his own, taking a fast spacewalk and settling in, according to Charles and Mark Kelly. “He’d be a good example of somebody who could probably make that trip to Mars for six months and then in a short period of time, do some reasonable work,” observed Mark Kelly. Round trip, a Mars mission would last 2½ years.

WORLD BRIEFLY

China cuts its economic growth target to 6.5-7 percent

BEIJING (AP) — China’s leadership cut this year’s growth target for its slowing economy to 6.5-7 percent and promised Saturday to open its oil and telecoms industries to private competitors as part of sweeping reforms aimed at boosting productivity and incomes. The growth target, down from last year’s “about 7 percent” and less than half of 2007’s peak of 14.2 percent, was included in a work report delivered by Premier Li Keqiang to China’s national legislature in front of nearly 3,000 delegates gathered in the cavernous Great Hall of the People.

Li, the top economic official, promised to press ahead with market-oriented reforms that will include opening the telecoms, petroleum and public utilities industries, though he failed to say whether foreign companies might be allowed in. He said private companies would receive the same treatment as state-owned enterprises in project approval, finance and tax policy.

“We must deepen reform across the board,” the premier said in a nationally televised speech. He said the market “must play a decisive role.”

The world’s second-largest economy has cooled steadily over the past five years as the ruling Communist Party tries to replace a worn-out model based on trade and investment with self-sustaining growth driven by domestic consumption. Growth in 2015 declined to a 25-year low of 6.9 percent and is forecast to drift lower this year.

Turkish-Russian tensions not felt in village near border

AL-ISSAWIYAH, Syria (AP) — In this Syrian mountain village perched above the Mediterranean, residents say they have enjoyed a measure of peace, even though they live near a border that has seen escalating tensions in recent months between Turkey and Russia.

The villagers, most of whom are members of Syria’s Turkmen ethnic minority, have formed their own militia, but they rely heavily on the Syrian army, said Al-Issawiyah’s mayor, Mustafa Yussef Kafé.

On Friday, hundreds of them lined up to receive a truckload of food, water and other humanitarian aid sent by Moscow, a longtime ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad. The delivery was part of a cease-fire that began last weekend in the 5-year-old civil war between Assad and the rebels trying to oust him from power.

“We live in peace here, and we are very grateful to Russia for the help it is offering,” the mayor told international reporters on a trip to the village organized by Russia’s foreign and defense ministries.

On Nov. 24, NATO-ally Turkey shot down a Russian Su-24 that it said ignored repeated warnings

and crossed into Turkish airspace from Syria for about 17 seconds. The two pilots of the Russian warplane ejected, but one was killed by Syrian rebel fire as he parachuted from his aircraft. One of two helicopters sent to the crash site to search for survivors was also hit by rebel fire, killing a serviceman.

Police question Brazil’s ex-president in corruption probe

SAO PAULO (AP) — Brazilian police hauled former President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva from his home and questioned him for about four hours Friday in a sprawling corruption case involving state-run oil company Petrobras that has already ensnared some of the country’s most-powerful lawmakers and businessmen.

The once-immensely popular president, who governed from 2003 to 2010 and remains a towering figure in Brazil, angrily denounced the morning raid as part of a campaign to sully his image, that of his party and that of his hand-picked successor, President Dilma Rousseff.

Rousseff also expressed her “total incoherence” with the operation, which she called unnecessary, although she appeared to distance herself from her one-time mentor by only briefly mentioning Silva in an address Friday afternoon.

“I felt like a prisoner this morning,” said Silva, who has expressed interest in possibly running for president again. “I have gone through many things, and I am not one to hold a grudge, but I don’t think our country can continue this way.”

At a rally late Friday in Sao Paulo, an emotional Silva insisted on his innocence. “If they are a cent more honest than I, then I will leave politics,” he pledged, his eyes welling with tears.

SpaceX launches satellite, but fails to land rocket on barge

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — SpaceX has another launch under its belt, but not another rocket landing.

The leftover first-stage booster hit the floating platform hard Friday, said SpaceX chief Elon Musk. The company never expected to nail this landing, he said, because of the faster speed of the booster that was required to deliver the satellite to an extra-high orbit.

SpaceX scored a rocket landing on the ground at Cape Canaveral in December, but has yet to nail a trickier barge landing at sea.

The good news, though, is that the unmanned Falcon 9 rocket successfully hoisted the broadcasting satellite for Luxembourg-based company SES.

It was the fifth launch attempt over the past few weeks; Sunday’s try ended with an engine shutdown a split second before liftoff. Friday’s sunset launch provided a stunning treat along the coast.

BUSINESS BRIEFLY

Chamber sets annual meeting

IRRIGON — The Irrigon Chamber of Commerce invites the public to its annual meeting. The no-host gathering is Wednesday with the meet and greet starting at 11:45 a.m. at Stokes Landing Senior Center, 195 N.W. Opal Place, Irrigon. The meal is \$8 for members and \$10 for non-members. In addition, people are reminded the chamber is holding its membership drive for both new members and renewals. For more information, contact 541-922-3857 or irrigonchamber@irrigonchamber.com.

Chamber lunch features agri-tourism consultant

BOARDMAN — Janet Dodson, a consultant for the EOVA (Eastern Oregon Visitor Association) Agri-Tourism Committee, is the guest speaker at the upcoming Boardman Chamber of Commerce luncheon.

The no-host gathering is Wednesday, March 16 at noon at the Port of Morrow, 2 Marine Drive, Boardman. The meal is \$12 per person.

Those who plan to attend need to RSVP by

Friday, March 11 by calling 541-481-3014.

Workshops feature social media

UMATILLA — A pair of upcoming workshops are designed to help businesses grow through the use of social media and provide tips to save time through the use of social media.

The free sessions are Wednesday, March 16 with Grow Your Business with

Email & Social Media Marketing from 1:30-4 p.m. and Social Media Time Savers from 7-8:30 p.m. Presented by Constant Contact and the Umatilla Chamber of Commerce, both workshops will be held at Umatilla Community Center, 201 Seventh St.

For more information or to register, contact Karen Hutchinson-Talaski at 541-922-4825 or karen@umatillachamber.net or visit www.constantcontact.com.

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