

BRIEFLY
Mustangs to host 3-on-3 tournament

HEPPNER — The Heppner High School boys basketball program is sponsoring a 3-on-3 basketball tournament as part of the Heppner St. Patrick’s Day celebration. The tournament will be held Friday, March 18, starting a 6 p.m. at the Heppner High School gymnasium. The tournament is open to everyone. A team can have three or four people. Cost is \$10 per player, sign up at the door. Players are asked to arrive by 5:30 p.m.

— East Oregonian

Pro Football
Seahawks bring back punter on 4-year deal

Associated Press

RENTON, Wash. — The Seattle Seahawks continued to focus on retaining their own free agents by re-signing punter Jon Ryan to a four-year deal. Seattle announced the new contract with Ryan on Friday. Ryan is the longest tenured member of the Seahawks roster having joined the team in 2008. He is the last current Seattle player to have played for Mike Holmgren when he was coach of the Seahawks. Ryan may not have the best punting average in the NFL, but Seattle often calls on the veteran to punt directionally and with hang time to allow the coverage units to get downfield. Ryan averaged 45.7 yards per punt last season, with 24 inside the 20-yard line, but his net average of 37.3 was the lowest since 2011.

DUCKS:
8 blocks, 6 steals seal Oregon win

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of the Wildcats. Oregon won the only regular-season meeting with Arizona, ending the Wildcats’ 49-game home winning streak with an 83-75 victory in Tucson. The Ducks gave the Wildcats fits with their athleticism and ability to expose individual matchups, though Arizona also was missing Trier due to a broken right hand. Trier was back for the rematch, but the Ducks didn’t care. They flew past the Wildcats early, let them get back in it, then closed the first half with a flourish. Oregon did it with defense, getting eight blocked shots and six steals to set up its quick-hitting offense. The Ducks closed the half with a 15-2 run, capped by Brooks’ buzzer-beating dunk — in transition, of course — to lead 44-29. Arizona tried to make several runs in the second half, but the Ducks had an answer seemingly every time, usually with a dunk-and-trash-talk combo. The Wildcats finally put a dent into Oregon’s lead behind their defense, using a 10-2 run to pull to 65-60. The Ducks still seemed to be in control but struggled from the free throw line, missing 6 of 8 in the final 2:48 to set the stage for Arizona’s improbable game-tying sequence.

TIP INS
Oregon: The Ducks are 23-0 when leading or tied at the half. ... Benjamin had 12 points and eight rebounds despite spraining his ankle in the second half.
WHAT’S NEXT
Arizona awaits its NCAA Tournament fate on Selection Sunday. Oregon moves on Saturday night’s championship game against No. 12 Utah or No. 25 California.

College Football
Beavers excited for next chapter in football careers

By **STEVE GRESS**
Corvallis Gazette-Times

CORVALLIS — When the NFL draft takes place in late April, former Oregon State players Kyle Peko and Storm Barrs-Woods say they won’t be watching. They won’t be watching on TV, that is, but both will be waiting for their phones to ring with an NFL team on the other line. “I already said I’m not watching it,” Peko, a defensive lineman, said after going through Oregon State’s pro day. “If I get a call, I get a call.” Added Barrs-Woods, a running back: “I don’t want to put myself through that situation.” Both were part of a handful of players that worked out for NFL scouts on Friday. And both put in a lot of training to prepare for an NFL job interview. They are both glad the process is over. “At the beginning of training you want to be perfect and do everything right,” Peko said. “Then toward the end of the training, the closer you get to pro day you are ready to get it over with and be done



Associated Press

Oregon State’s Kyle Peko pulls down Michigan’s Ty Isaac during the 2015 season.

and let everything play out.” Barrs-Woods said he was relaxed for Friday’s audition. “Pressure to me is when you don’t know what you’re doing,” Barrs-Woods said. “I’ve done these drills hundreds of times, this is my field, well I’m not going to say my field but I’ve been here five years, I know the turf. “More than anything I’m glad it’s over.” Both, along with the others who took part Friday,

can get back to working more on their specific positions and on getting better with their techniques. There could also be some additional workouts with teams. Peko, who said he has been in contact with the Chargers, Steelers, Cardinals and Browns, said many have told him his best football is to come. Peko played just one year at Oregon State after dealing with academic eligibility issues.

“My body felt, I’m sure, a lot better than a lot of the four-year guys coming out this year,” Peko said. “... There are pros and cons not having exposure but I think I had a pretty good year to get to the next level and I think they believe it, too, so I’m excited.” Barrs-Woods is just the opposite as he missed the majority of his senior year due to injuries. Barrs-Woods said he took the month off after the season to heal up as

NASCAR

Johnson escapes injury after steering wheel comes off

By **MIKE CRANSTON**
Associated Press

AVONDALE, Ariz. — Jimmie Johnson escaped injury when his steering wheel came off and he crashed into the wall at full speed in NASCAR Sprint Cup qualifying Friday. Kyle Busch later won the pole for the race Sunday at Phoenix International Speedway. Johnson was on his second lap in the final round on the mile oval when he couldnt turn and his car rammed into the second-turn wall. The right front of the Hendrick Motorsports’ No. 48 car took the most damage and Johnson was able to climb out after the car slid onto

the grass. The six-time Cup champion was examined and released from the infield care center. Johnson didn’t explain the reason for the crash in media interviews, but later took to Twitter. “About qualifying, the steering wheel came off,” Johnson said. “I know my interview was vague, but wanted to tell the team first. I’m thankful for soft walls.” Johnson was helped by recent safety initiatives, including SAFER barriers and car improvements. “We’ll have to get to the bottom of it,” Johnson said. “Just a really hard impact to the outside wall. Thankful that we have SAFER barriers and soft walls. But very

disappointed because we had such a fast race car.” After the red flag to clean up the wreck, Busch won his 18th career pole with a lap of 138.387 mph. It’s Busch’s first pole at Phoenix since 2012. “We were getting our butts smokes a few years ago,” Busch said. “When this place was repaved we obviously struggled really bad. But we’ve known to do a really a big push on this place because it’s the second-to-last race in the Chase.” Carl Edwards qualified second and Daytona 500 champion Denny Hamlin third, giving Toyota the top three spots for the race Sunday. Kurt Busch was fourth. Johnson

qualified fifth, but will need to go to a backup car and will start in the back. Johnson teammate Dale Earnhardt Jr., who won November’s rain shortened race to end Kevin Harvick’s four-race win streak at Phoenix, failed to advance past the first round and will start 26th. The first round of qualifying including a bizarre red flag after Kasey Kahne’s car began smoking near the dash while he was running second. The Hendrick driver said he tried to turn the car off and it kept running. “I’m really confused,” he said. Kahne’s car was towed to the garage. He earned the 24th spot, but will need a new engine and will start at the rear Sunday.

Track & Field

Hill wins close 3,000 meters title at US Indoor Championships

By **ANNE M. PETERSON**
Associated Press

PORTLAND — Ryan Hill held off a charging Paul Chelimo to win the 3,000 meters at the U.S. indoor championships Friday night for his third national title and a spot next week in the world championships. Coming off a victory in the 3,000 at the Milrose Games, Hill finished in 7 minutes, 38.6 seconds at the Portland Convention Center for the second-fastest time in the world this year. The former North Carolina State standout won the two-mile race at the indoor championships last year, as well as 5,000 in the 2015 U.S. outdoor championships. Olympian Galen Rupp, the

American record holder in the event, finished a distant eighth after winning the U.S. Olympic Marathon Trials last month. He wanted to run in the nationals despite the grueling marathon because it was in his hometown. Chelimo finished close behind Hill in a personal-best 7:39, in a race that was fast from the start. With the finish Chelimo also earned a place in the IAAF world indoor championships, which will be staged on the same track in Portland. “If he had come up on my shoulder I could have leaned forward and gritted it out a little bit more,” Hill said. “But I knew going into the last lap I was going to have to give it my all.” Two-time Olympian Shannon

Rowbury won the women’s 3,000 in 8:55.65 on the first day of the two-day meet. In the other finals, Gwen Berry won the women’s weight throw at 79 feet, 10 3/4 inches, while Colin Dunbar won on the men’s side at 78-7 1/2. Christina Epps won the triple jump at 46-1 1/4. Ashton Eaton, the reigning Olympic gold medalist and world record holder in the decathlon, took part in a 60 heat and the long jump at nationals as a tune up for the worlds. But he got hit in the head with the crossbar for the pole vault — which was being staged next to the lane for the long jump — and required six stitches. He posted pictures on Twitter of his head wrapped in a bandage.

“I’m still waiting for pictures from when I had blood all over my hands and face. Someone has to have them,” he said on Twitter. Eaton finished last in his heat for the 60 and sixth in the long jump. He didn’t need to take part at nationals because he had already been invited to the world championships, where he’ll vie for his third straight gold medal in the heptathlon. He holds the world record in the event. His wife, Canadian Brianne Theisen-Eaton, will take part in the pentathlon. Sam Kendricks, the reigning outdoor national champion in the pole vault, won the indoor title with a leap of 19-4 1/4. Outdoor long jump champion Marquis Dendy won the indoor event with a leap of 27-7 1/4.

SPRING SPORTS: Pendleton, Hermiston baseball open Tuesday

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patrick said. “But we know we have a target on our backs this year.” One team that won’t be gunning for the Rockets is the team they beat in the championship, the previously mention Weston-McEwen TigerScots. The TigerScots have been bumped up to Class 3A this season, but that doesn’t mean they’re setting their sights any lower than the top rung of the ladder. “With 3A comes some different teams, different games, different game

schedule,” said coach Jeff Griggs, then added, “I think we’ll be competitive in the 3A from what I’ve seen in the past. We’ve watched the state games in the past and it’s a not a big jump in talent.” Hermiston will also open its softball season on Tuesday by hosting Ridgeview at 4 p.m., and every team in the region will have at least one game in the first week of play. Meanwhile on the baseball diamonds, Riverside gets first crack at claiming a win in 2016 when it hosts Dufur on Monday at 4 p.m.

The Pirates are coming off a 5-18 season, and second-year coach Jarrett Thompson said a lot of that was their own doing unfortunately. “This season I want to focus on playing clean ball,” he said. “I want to focus on not beating ourselves.” Pendleton and Hermiston each open their season on Tuesday at 4 p.m. with the Bucks hosting Hanford (WA) and the Bulldogs hosting Ridgeview. Both teams are looking for big things in 2016. Hermiston finished third in the Columbia River Conference last season, and

is itching to move into the top spot. “We gotta win. We gotta win now,” said second-year Bulldogs coach Lance Hawkins. “We haven’t had a CRC championship or an IMC championship since ’82. It’s time.” Pendleton’s most recent league title was 2014, and the Bucks made it to the semifinals in coach Greg Whitten’s final season last year. First-year head coach T.J. Haguewood said expectations remain high in 2016. “There’s always expectations for playoffs and to

compete for the state title,” he said. “We’ve had decades of successful baseball not because of one man but because of the community that supports the teams and develops the kids each year.” The first track meet of the season will be Thursday when Pendleton hosts 11 local teams and 18 total for the Buck Track Classic starting at noon. Golf and tennis also begin their seasons next week.

— East Oregonian reporters
Eric Singer and Sam Barbee
contributed to this report.

BLAZERS: Lillard starts slow, grateful for Curry comparisons

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against Utah, helping the Warriors improve to 29-0 at Oracle Arena this season. On Monday, Curry became the first player in NBA history with 300 3s in a season and his seven against the Trail Blazers pushed his total to 311. Damian Lillard returned to his Oakland roots to score 17 points on 5-of-19 shooting after missing 15 of his first 17 shots. Lillard made four 3-pointers and has the most 3s of any player in his first four seasons,

topping Thompson’s 784. Playing in his hometown, it was a far cry from how he lit up the Warriors for a career-high 51 points in that February rout. Lillard averaged 45.5 points on 54.5-percent shooting and 8.5 assists in the first two meetings and missed scoring 20 or more points in a fifth consecutive game against Golden State. The first half was a quite an offensive display by both teams. Portland scored 61 points and still trailed by 20 at halftime. Andre Iguodala hit two quick 3s

midway through the second quarter as the Warriors connected on 10 of their first 16 3-pointers and 14 of 25 by halftime. **STEPH COMPARISONS** Lillard was so good against Golden State the last time it prompted Steve Kerr to say, “He looked like Steph Curry out there.” “Honestly, I really appreciate it,” Lillard said before the game. “I forget who I said it to earlier this week, I loved Steve Kerr growing up with Bulls and with the Spurs. My second All-Star game in New York, he was the coach. I really appreci-

ated his speech to the team before the game, how he took the time to learn about each player.” Kerr recalled Lillard hitting “like five shots from about 40 feet.” “He was pulling up from so deep behind the line. I was being complimentary,” Kerr said. “When Steph makes 40-footers and then somebody else does that, it reminded me of Steph.” Not this time. **TIP-INS** Trail Blazers: Portland is 5-18 on Golden State’s home floor since the beginning of the 2003-04 season.