

NBA Playoffs

Blazers, Hornets can cap comebacks, Raptors also can advance



Portland Trail Blazers forward Maurice Harkless reacts after being called for a foul during Game 5 of a first-round NBA playoff series against the Los Angeles Clippers, Wednesday, April 27, 2016, in Los Angeles.

By BRIAN MAHONEY AP Basketball Writer

Last time they came home, Portland and Charlotte were still just trying to win a game.

This time, they're looking to win a series.

After engineering big turnarounds with three straight victories, the Trail Blazers and Hornets will be playing for spots in the second round when they host Game 6s on Friday night.

The tough part for them, as Clippers coach Doc Rivers says, is not getting too caught up thinking ahead with the opportunity

they have.

"It's hard to keep your focus in closeouts," Rivers said. "That's typically why Game 7s are played so well, because no one is thinking about it anymore."

Portland can knock out Rivers' Clippers, while Charlotte tries to eliminate Miami. The Clippers and Heat quickly got halfway to the conference semifinals, and now they're just hoping to hold on.

The Toronto Raptors can also wrap up their series against the Pacers — and win a seven-game series for the first time in franchise history — but they're on the

road.

The Blazers and Hornets will be in their own buildings, trying to join the short list of teams who have come back from 2-0 deficits to win a seven-game series. Only 16 teams have done it, none since Memphis against the Clippers in 2013.

Clippers at Trail Blazers, Portland leads 3-2. 10:30 p.m. EDT, ESPN.

Playing without the injured Chris Paul and Blake Griffin, the Clippers seemed to wear down in the fourth quarter of Game 5 after it was tied at 71 through three.

Damian Lillard scored 16 of his 22 points in the final period as the Blazers pulled away for a 108-98 victory.

Rivers is reminding his players to have great resolve and embrace their difficult challenge. They did it last year in the same situation, winning Game 6 in San Antonio before taking Game 7 of a classic first-round series back home.

"Our guys have confidence in knowing that they've been in this situation before," Rivers said. "The memory helps us know it can be done, but other than that we have to go play better basketball."

RAMIREZ: Will switch to point guard at CWU

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she felt like there was finally a fit with the NCAA Division II program.

"I wanted to stay a little bit closer (to home)," she said. "They get to play a lot of good teams in the NCAA and that's a lot of peoples' dream, and that was one of mine and where I wanted to be."

Ramirez will make the move from shooting guard to point guard with the Wildcats, a minor adjustment she's well equipped for. In Ramirez the Wildcats are getting a player that averaged 14.2 points, 6.3 rebounds, 3.1 assists and 2.8 steals per game as a senior and was named Columbia River Conference Co-Player of the Year as well as to the second team All-State roster.

Steve Hoffert, her coach at Hermiston all four years, said Ramirez is definitely a unique talent whose doggedness will serve her well at the

next level.

"Quite honestly I think there's very few athletes that could have completed a season and gone through that pain and the things that she's gone through, and still be as good as she is," he said. "I'm very fortunate as a coach to have somebody with that kind of dedication, mentality and determination."

Ramirez said her pain isn't the type that will leave with rest, and she'll likely have to manage it the rest of her career.

"I used to say I wanted to go to the WNBA, but now that I think about it I don't know if I could last that long playing," she said. "But I'm going to try as hard as I can these next four years."

The Wildcats are entering their third season under coach Jeff Harada, and posted their first winning season in the last decade in 2015-16 with a 17-12 record that got them into the Great Northwest Athletic Confer-

ence tournament.

In her four varsity seasons at Hermiston Ramirez was part of a record 90 wins in the Purple and Gold, and helped bring back four state trophies. She said she'll take those same high expectations with her to Ellensburg.

"Whenever I went to practice I would always try working hard. It's just a mindset. Every time I went to practice, every time I played a game, it's always 100 percent in my head," she said.

"When I go to college I feel like everybody's going to have the same mindset. They're going to want to win, they're going to want a championship, and going in there with that mindset will help me a lot with my teammates. They know that I want that same thing."

"I told Coach Harada, 'You're getting a very good guard, you're getting a very good shooter, but you're getting somebody who's going to compete for you

every night whether you're winning or losing, every night whether she's having a good night or a bad night. You're not going to be able to take that part away from her, and you can't coach that and you can't make your players do what she does,'" Hoffert said.

And as Ramirez searches for better ways to deal with her playing-related pain, she plans to study a field that could help with pain of a different sort.

She hopes to become a counselor to those dealing with drug and alcohol addictions.

"I've had experiences with having problems like that in my life in my family and I just want to reach out to people who need help," she said.

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PREPS: Dawgs tennis dominates at Baker City

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Hermiston included Grace Blackhurst with a 107, Lexi Lambert with a 110, Sonja Peterson with a 111, and Sydney Adams with a 114.

Pendleton and Hermiston will now prepare for the district tournament on May 9-10 at Indian Creek Hood River.

TENNIS

HERMISTON 6, BAKER 3 — At Baker City, the Hermiston Bulldogs girls tennis team dominated the Baker Bulldogs in a match-up on Thursday afternoon.

"All of the girls just came out focused and ready to play and that was the big thing," said Hermiston coach Jason Sivey. "It was a great competition and it definitely got us ready for our big Invite at the Capital Tournament (at Boise, Idaho)."

"It was a great competition," said Hermiston coach Jason Sivey. "It definitely got us ready for our big invitational at the Capital tournament

Hermiston took three of four singles matches and swept the doubles matches from Baker, before losing both mixed doubles matches to the Bulldogs. Hermiston's lone singles loss was at the No. 1 slot where Katelyn Millard dropped a pro set 8-1 to Baker's Gracie Huggins.

- Singles: Gracie Huggins (B) def. Katelyn Millard 8-1; Jaycee Ternes (H) def. Stella Bowers 8-5; Lindsey McAllister (H) def. Hollis Robb 8-3; Sydney Moore (H) def. Madi Turner 8-0. Doubles: Chy Peterson/McKenzie Hill (H) def. Hannah Wilson/Lena Bowers 8-5; Kylie Markwick/Whitney McMahon (H) def. Josie Bryant/Hannah Johnson 8-2; Adrian Stewart/Lindsey McAllister (H) def. Tori Gentilly/Alex Wachtell 8-3. Mixed Doubles: Breana Wadekamper/Judah Jensen (H) lost 9-4; Reed Middleton/Hayden Cisne (H) lost 8-1.

Athlete of the Week

Twenty questions with Micha Fortune

East Oregonian

- East Oregonian: Favorite sports team? Micha Fortune: Oregon Ducks. Favorite athlete? Marcus Mariota. Favorite sports memory? Going to California for Little League majors softball regionals. Favorite movie/book? Where the Red Fern Grows. Favorite musical genre? Country. Favorite band/performer? Jason Aldean. Favorite restaurant? Sub Shop No. 38 (Milton-Freewater). Favorite snack food? Flamin' Hot Funyuns. Favorite game food? Sunflower seeds (ranch or dill). Favorite beverage? Water or Gatorade.

- Water or Gatorade. Favorite flavor? Gatorade. Favorite family recipe? Mom's macaroni salad. Dream job? Veterinarian. Favorite color? Green. What will you miss most about Mac-Hi? How small the school is. You know mostly everybody and everybody is really nice. If you could have a super power, what would it be? Teleportation. If you could be any animal, what would it be? Dog. Favorite game show? Idiotest. Favorite board game? Quelf. Favorite teacher? Ms. Ashland (English).

BASEBALL: Robles, Cockburn slated for game one

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swept their four meetings in 2013 to make them 3-3 at Bob White Field the last three seasons.

There are no secret weapons when these two teams meet, and the players are familiar with the strengths and weaknesses of their opponent.

"We've played Hermiston throughout the summer and stuff, and these guys have been playing together for a while," said Pendleton coach T.J. Haguewood, who will be coaching his first War on 84 games today. "Regardless of who's out there we've got to be able to see the ball and hit the ball and execute our game plan."

"I think our boys will be ready to play. We've had a good couple weeks of practice and we've got a great

group of kids. They go out and play the game the right way and get after it."

Hermiston is scheduled to start lefty R.J. Robles and righty Tyler Sexton on the mound, although Hawkins wasn't sure who would start the first game.

Robles was responsible for Hermiston's lone win over the Bucks last season with a 15-strikeout gem for an 8-2 win in Hermiston. He's thrown a perfect game already this season.

Pendleton has brought in some left-handed pitchers to throw batting practice this week, but Haguewood said that's something they've done several times throughout the season just to keep batters ready.

"I think our approaches at the plate have been a lot better, that last week or two we've swung the bats really

good," Haguewood said of an offense that is averaging five runs a game in CRC play.

The Bucks are scheduled to throw righties Quinn Cockburn and James Bradt, who started their split at The Dalles over the weekend, but could go with Kai Quinn who pitched two innings on Tuesday or Nick Lani, who started a game against Hood River.

"Just when I think I've figured something out about Pendleton, I'm wrong," said Hawkins, whose Bulldogs are averaging 4.3 runs a game in the CRC. "So I know those guys are going to prepare their players like they do year after year. We could try and sit here and figure out things, but we're going to have to do what we do well. We're going to pitch well, we're going to play great defense, and we're

going to try to scratch some runs out.

"They're going to be ready, and I know we're going to be ready, and I expect two great baseball games."

First pitch is scheduled for 4 p.m., but there will be ceremonial first pitches tossed out at 3:50 p.m. by residents of McKay Creek Estates, an assisted living facility in Pendleton.

It's part of the facility's baseball theme this month, and residents will be honored guests at the games.

"It's exciting for our boys to be able to see them there and represent them," Haguewood said.

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SOFTBALL: Defense key for Buckaroos today

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we're going to have to play our best to beat them.

"We knew coming in it's a very, very tough league and we kind of figured everybody is going to beat up on each other, and that's kind of what's happened."

Both teams enter the game with the kind of firepower at the plate that could see the scoreboard light up early and often. Pendleton is averaging 6.3 runs a game in league play and Hermiston is averaging six even. Alexis

Morrison and Kalan McGlothran each hit home runs in Pendleton's 6-0 win over The Dalles on Tuesday, and Ellery Jones and Rebecca Englebrecht each went yard in Hermiston's 9-4 win over Hood River on Saturday.

"We've just been really hitting the ball really well, which is awesome," Greenough said. "You obviously don't win games if you don't score runs so it's been great to see that. They've been really aggressive on the bases, they're having fun with each

other, especially recently.

"However, Pendleton's very good. We know that they can hit the ball very hard so it's going to be two good games so I'm really looking forward to it."

Kiersten Murphy and Lauren Richards will throw for the Bucks while Julissa Almaguer and Taylor Betz have been Hermiston's hurlers in doubleheaders this season, but Cary said the key will be not who's in the circle but how well their defense backs them up.

"I think the key for either team is going to be to just limit your mistakes," he said. "I think both teams will be able to feed off the other team making mistakes, and that's usually where those extra runs come from."

First pitch is scheduled for 3 p.m. at Pendleton's Steve Cary Field.

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SCOREBOARD

Local Slate

Table with 4 columns: Sport, Date/Time, Location, Score. Includes PREP BASEBALL, PREP SOFTBALL, PREP TRACK & FIELD, PREP GOLF, and PREP TENNIS.

Table with 4 columns: Sport, Date/Time, Location, Score. Includes PREP LACROSSE, PREP RUGBY, COLLEGE RODEO, COLLEGE BASEBALL, and MLB AMERICAN LEAGUE.

Table with 4 columns: Sport, Date/Time, Location, Score. Includes NATIONAL LEAGUE, TODAY'S GAMES, and WESTERN CONFERENCE.

Table with 4 columns: Sport, Date/Time, Location, Score. Includes NBA PLAYOFFS, TODAY'S GAMES, NHL PLAYOFFS, and WESTERN CONFERENCE.

Advertisement for Athlete of the Week: Micha Fortune, Mac-Hi Softball Player. Includes text about his performance and a photo of him playing softball.