

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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PENDLETON

Passing attack in good hands

Pendleton wide receivers quickly building chemistry with new quarterback

By MATT ENTRUP
East Oregonian

Pendleton football coach Erik Davis was just starting to see his passing attack come together when an injury during the third game of the 2015 season sent the Buckaroos scrambling.

First-year starter Shaw Jerome was beginning to show his big-play potential on the outside and was on his way to becoming quarterback Kai Quinn's favorite target when the sophomore receiver was lost for the season with a broken collarbone that required emergency surgery.

Pendleton held on to win that game, but would experience victory just one more time the rest of the way.

"He got hurt in the La Grande game three games in, and he was kind of that go-to kid," Davis said of Jerome. "And so you lose that and you're scrambling a little bit."

"I was getting more comfortable with the offense right when it happened," Jerome said. "I was just starting to get comfortable with Kai and the other receivers, and it is what it is I guess."

At the time, Davis said he was confident the team could pick up the pieces. But even with a strong-armed two-year starter at quarterback, the Buckaroos' passing game struggled and the team averaged just 25 points a game while posting a 3-6 record.

With a healthy Jerome back in the fold, and all-conference senior Nick Lani (26 catches, 538 yards, 2 touchdowns) also returning, Davis is excited to see where the passing attack can take the Bucks in his fifth season on the sidelines.

The Buckaroos have six wide receivers Davis feels confident with, and some younger players starting to emerge that could work their way onto the field as well.

"There's a bunch of sophomores that are really pushing for time," he said. "I'm just excited about the depth at that position for sure."

Along with Lani and Jerome, junior Tanner Stephan and senior Sebastian Corona return with varsity experience. So does senior tight end



Pendleton wide receiver Shaw Jerome, right, works against Dillon McCorkle in a drill during football practice on Thursday at Pendleton High School. Jerome, a junior, was emerging as one of the team's top receivers before he had his sophomore season cut short due to injury.



Pendleton quarterback Nick Bower throws a pass during football practice on Thursday at Pendleton High School. Bower, a junior, will take over under center for his first varsity season in 2016.

Staff photo by Matt Entrup

Matt Fowler, who Davis said is athletic enough to set up outside and create mismatches with his 6-foot-1, 200-pound frame. Sophomore slot receiver Cam Sandford represents the fresh blood, and Davis said he's "quicker than a hiccup."

"He just brings a quickness to the game that we haven't seen on this varsity for quite awhile so we're real excited about him," Davis said.

All those targets won't do the Bucks any good if they can't get them the ball, but that's not something the Bucks are worried about.

Quinn is graduated, but junior Nick Bower appears ready to lead the offense and on Thursday during practice showed off a few of the reasons his head coach and teammates have expressed so much confidence in last year's backup and

junior varsity starter.

One play in particular stood out, as Bower dropped back during an 11-on-11 drill and spiraled a 40-yard bomb into the hands of a receiver streaking up the seam for a would-be touchdown.

"He's going to have a good arm. He's going to be able to put the ball in the air, and he's good at reading the field," said Lani of a few of Bower's strengths as a passer.

After taking a beating behind a porous JV offensive line, Bower (5-foot-11, 185 pounds) also packed on an extra 20 pounds of muscle during the offseason to prepare for what he hopes can be his breakout season.

"Varsity is a lot faster of a game and bigger guys, so just training and trying to get bigger for that," he said of his offseason goal.

"He never missed a weight room, never missed a workout, and honestly it shows in his physical attributes. He's grown so much since last year," Davis said. "I think he brings tremendous leadership by example."

Davis also is enamored with Bower's ability to understand the concepts behind the X's and O's, a trait that separates the good from the great at the highest levels, and said he'll be given some freedom to manage the game from the field.

See PHS PASSING/2B

NFL

Late pick propels Vikings

Boykin's interception sinks Seahawks in preseason

By TIM BOOTH
Associated Press

SEATTLE — Marcus Sherels intercepted Trevone Boykin's pass and returned it 53 yards for a touchdown with 1:23 left and the Minnesota Vikings beat the Seattle Seahawks 18-11 on Thursday night.



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11

With Boykin trying to lead Seattle to another late comeback for a second straight week, Sherels stepped in front of his pass intended for E.Z. Nwachukwu and went untouched for the deciding score. Seattle had pulled even at 11-11 when Troy-maine Pope scored on a 4-yard touchdown run with 12:49 left after his 27-yard run got the Seahawks deep in Minnesota territory and Steven Hauschka's 49-yard field goal later in the fourth quarter.

Boykin got Seattle to the Minnesota 5 in the closing seconds, before taking a sack and was unable to connect with Antwan Goodley in the end zone on the final play.

Adrian Peterson was a spectator for Minnesota, as expected. So too, unexpectedly, was quarterback Teddy Bridgewater, given the night off by the choice of coach Mike Zimmer. Shaun Hill started and played nearly

See SEAHAWKS/2B

MLB

Pujols, Escobar pace Angels

Los Angeles holds off rally to beat Seattle



By ABBEY MASTRACCO
Associated Press

ANAHEIM, Calif. — Albert Pujols drove in two runs, Yunel Escobar had three hits and scored twice, and the Los Angeles Angels held off a late rally and beat the Seattle Mariners 6-4 on Thursday night.

Mike Trout also scored twice as the Angels earned a split of the four-game series with just their second win in 14 games.

Fernando Salas gave up a two-run homer to Adam Lind in the ninth, but got Leonys Martin and Shawn O'Malley on grounders to end the game.

Pujols reached 95 RBIs with a two-run double in the eighth. He's second in the AL, five behind Toronto's Edwin Encarnacion. One night after his second five-hit game of the season, Escobar went 3 for 4

See MARINERS/2B



Seattle Mariners pitcher Hisashi Iwakuma, of Japan, returns to the mound after walking Los Angeles Angels' Mike Trout, advancing Yunel Escobar to second, background, during the first inning of a baseball game in Anaheim, Calif., Thursday, Aug. 18, 2016.

AP Photo/Reed Saxon

MLB approves sale of Mariners

Becomes first team to change control since 2012

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

HOUSTON — Major League Baseball owners approved the sale of a controlling stake in the Seattle Mariners from Nintendo of America to a group of minority owners led by Western Wireless Corp. founder John Stanton and retired Microsoft executive Chris Larson.

The sale was announced in April and approved Thursday. Baseball Commis-

See SALE/2B

Sports shorts

Billingsley leaving mark in Detroit

DETROIT — Former Eastern Oregon Mountaineer football standout Jace Billingsley continued to make his case for a spot on the Detroit Lions roster as his team took on the Cincinnati Bengals in a preseason game on Thursday night.

Billingsley, playing at wide receiver, was targeted a total of four times in the game and he finished with two catches for 33 yards. In two preseason games so far, Billingsley has totaled five catches for 66 yards and one touchdown. He is currently tied for second on the team in total catches.

The 23-year-old Billingsley was a four-year player at EOU and holds program records in receptions (242), receiving yards (2,522) all-purpose yards (5,911) and total career touchdowns (42).

FACES



Billingsley

"When it came down to it, (if) I got the suspension, the bigger outcome wasn't really worth it."

— James Harrison

Pittsburgh Steelers linebacker on his decision to meet with the NFL to discuss an alleged link to performance-enhancing drugs. It's a complete reversal from his earlier stance, and comes five days after the deadline the NFL imposed while threatening him and three other players with indefinite suspensions.

Straily picks up 9th win of season as Reds down Marlins

CINCINNATI — Dan Straily struck out seven batters and allowed just seven hits and two runs over six innings to earn his ninth win of the season as the Cincinnati Reds took down the Miami Marlins 5-4 on Thursday.

Straily (9-6) also earned his team-leading 15th quality start of the season on Thursday and lowered his ERA to 3.72 — the lowest mark since mid-June.

The Reds (51-69) have benefitted quite well from Straily's recent success, as the team has been victorious in eight of his last nine starts. "It is a special year for Straily," Reds manager Bryan Price said to the Associated Press. "He is solidifying his career."

He is next scheduled to pitch on Tuesday when the Reds host the Texas Rangers for a 4:10 p.m. first pitch.



THIS DATE IN SPORTS

1951 — Eddie Gaedel, a 65-pound, 3-foot-7 midget, makes his first and only plate appearance as a pinch-hitter for Frank Saucier of the St. Louis Browns. Gaedel, wearing No. 1/8, walks on four pitches by Detroit Tigers pitcher Bob Cain and is taken out for pinch-runner Jim Delsing. The gimmick by Browns owner Bill Veeck was completely legal, but later outlawed.

1995 — Mike Tyson starts his comeback, knocking out Peter McNeeley in 89 seconds at Las Vegas.

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