

PENDLETON ROUND-UP

Defending champ Kimzey keeps conquering

By WILL DENNER
East Oregonian

After his first two PRCA seasons ended in bull riding championships, Sage Kimzey believes he still has plenty to accomplish in the sport.

The 22-year-old from Strong City, Oklahoma burst onto the PRCA scene in 2014, becoming only the second rookie and first since Bill Cornell in 1963 to win the gold buckle. He followed that up with a repeat world title in 2015, proving that his rookie season was no fluke.

With such a strong start in one of the world’s most dangerous and unpredictable sports, the natural question becomes, when is the fall after the peak? To Kimzey, his peak has yet to come.

“The farther I get into my career I feel like the better I ride bulls,” he said.

“The end goal is to be remembered as the best ever. To do that I’d have to win nine world titles.”

Kimzey is referring to Don Gay, who won eight PRCA bull riding titles between 1974 and 1984 – a record that still stands to this day. As the current PRCA bull riding earnings leader by nearly \$60,000 this season, Kimzey can keep chipping away at Gay’s record with another NFR win in December.

But before another NFR run, Kimzey is at Pendleton Round-Up this week, where he took the bull riding crown last year. Kimzey posted 83 points in Wednesday’s first round, setting him in position



Sage Steele Kimzey rides Damn It’s Good to an 83 during the Bull Riding competition at Wednesday’s Pendleton Round-Up.

to defend his title in today’s final. Even after crossing Round-Up off his win list last year, Kimzey still feels the buzz of the grounds when he comes to town.

“San Antonio in the winter, Houston, Calgary, Cheyenne and Pendleton are pretty much the cream of the crop – the ones that you show up to,” Kimzey said. “They have that rich rodeo history. They have just the feeling when you get there that all the greats have

walked through the same gates that you’re walking in to go compete.”

In the past two years at Round-Up, Kimzey didn’t get to see much outside of the grounds. This year, however, with a break between Wednesday roughstock and Saturday’s finals, Kimzey has a little more time on his hands. He and his girlfriend dined at Hamley Steakhouse Wednesday night, before walking around downtown taking in the sights and sounds of Pendleton.

Typically Kimzey’s traveling partner, Joseph McConnell, a bull rider from Bloomfield, New Mexico, would be on the road with him. But McConnell suffered a groin injury at the Ellensburg Rodeo over Labor Day weekend, sidelining him for at least a month.

Since the two met while competing at the 2011 National High School Finals Rodeo, McConnell has followed Kimzey’s quick ascension. They finally joined up

as riding partners in July, following through on plans first discussed in high school.

When the two sat down to talk at Cheyenne Frontier Days in late July, McConnell was impressed by how driven Kimzey remained.

“He said, ‘I have goals to go out there, set and conquer,’” McConnell remembers.

A lot has happened to both bull riders since they first met, but McConnell said stardom hasn’t changed Kimzey one bit. When McConnell’s father passed away earlier this year, Kimzey called him to express his condolences.

“He called asking about it and I told him,” McConnell said. “He was heartbroken and said, ‘Man, I’m so sorry.’ But his personality in bull riding? No it hasn’t changed. I think he’s actually bettered himself this year.”

And for Kimzey, who no longer has the benefit of being the newcomer, the rodeo world expects him to keep up this run. He hears them, and has raised his own expectations. Anything short of a win he considers a disappointment.

“Everybody just sees the surface a young kid that’s just blessed with all the talent,” Kimzey said. “No, I’ve worked for 18 years to get to the position I’m in ... To see all those tough times pay in to what my life goal was at such a young age is just incredible.”

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Skunkcap, Two Tone rallies to win Indian relay consolation finals

East Oregonian

Speed is only a small part of the equation needed to win an Indian relay race at the Pendleton Round-Up.

Where victory is gained or lost comes during the horse exchanges, and Jon Marc Skunkcap used two perfect ones to win the consolation finals for the Two Tone team during Friday’s performance of the 106th Pendleton Round-Up.

It was his second win of the week after he won his heat on Thursday, but the team’s three-round time placed them into the consolation race against Smoke Ranch Express, Umatilla Express and Piikuni Express.

Skunkcap took the lead from the gun, and Piikuni’s Narcis Reeves used a quick first exchange to jump from last to second as they tore off from in front of the south grandstand for their



Narcis Reeves with the Piikuni Express out of Browning, Mont., gets help from his teammate during a horse transfer in the Indian Relay race Friday at the Pendleton Round-Up.

second lap. Coming into the third turn, Skunkcap’s horse pulled

wide and Reeves as well as Umatilla’s John Redman and Smoke Ranch’s Gabe Moses

passed him on the inside. Skunkcap was the only rider to come out of the final

exchange clean, though, his feet barely touching the dirt as he leapt from one horse to another and back into the lead. He pulled away for victory over Piikuni, Smoke Ranch and Umatilla in that order.

“It’s been OK,” Skunkcap, who is Shoshone Bannock, said of his week. “There’s been a little drama here and there, but nothing different than relay always goes.”

He said the wide turn on Lap 2 wasn’t something that concerned him much at the time.

“He still held it though. As long as he holds it that’s all I care about,” he said of the smooth entry to the pits. “He’s a brand new horse. We broke not this last spring but the year before that. So we’ve put a lot of work into him and he’s a straight relay horse. It’s his second time on this track, he’ll get it down and he’ll be OK next time.” Skunkcap said he

couldn’t have won without his catchers and muggers as well, and was eager to put on a good show in Pendleton.

“It ain’t just about me,” he said. “It’s about my tribe and my Indian heritage and everything. It’s not about me making a name for myself, it’s about showing everybody what we can do, what we all do, and how we do it. We come here and we do it well.”

Skunkcap also took part in the six-rider Chiefs race later in the performance which was won in five lengths by Reeves over Redman. Results of the Ladies’ race were not available at press time.

The championship race between Abrahamson Relay (Scotty Abrahamson), Marchand Express (Fran Marchand), Marchand Relay (Riley Prescott) and Cedar Ridge (Josh Thompson).

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College Football

Can Nebraska slow Freeman?

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

EUGENE — Nebraska certainly took note when Oregon’s Royce Freeman got his season rolling last weekend with over 200 yards rushing.

“Just one missed assignment or one missed tackle and he’s hitting his head on the goalpost,” Huskers line-backer Michael Rose-Ivey said.

The No. 22 Ducks (2-0) visit Memorial Stadium on Saturday to face the Huskers (2-0), the biggest nonconference game of the season for both teams.

After 87 yards rushing with two touchdowns in Oregon’s opener, a 53-28 victory over lower-tier UC Davis, Freeman collected 207 yards on 21 carries and two scores against the Cavaliers last Saturday at Autzen Stadium. The Ducks won 44-26.

The highlight was an 85-yard touchdown run, a career best.

“I don’t feel I have to prove myself to anybody,” Freeman said afterward. “But against UC Davis last week I fell short of my standards.”

It was the second time that Freeman broke the 200-yard mark in his career. It was his 18th career game with 100-plus yards, and the 10th time he’s gone over 100 in his last 11.

The effort moved him into third on Oregon’s career rushing list with 3,495 yards, passing Derek Loville’s 3,296 set from 1986-89. He needs 129 more to move into

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#22 Oregon Ducks (2-0)

• Saturday, 12:30 p.m.

• at Memorial Stadium Lincoln, Neb.

• TV: ABC

N

Nebraska Cornhuskers (2-0)

second. Freeman epitomizes the speed in Oregon’s hyperdrive offense, which he says looks like its hitting a stride.

“We’ve definitely found our rhythm. There were a lot of times out there where Virginia wasn’t even set and we were snapping the ball,” Freeman said. “That always works to our benefit. If we can go faster from here on out, that’d be great.”

The 230-pound power back ran for 1,836 yards as a sophomore last season to break LaMichael James’ season record at Oregon. If he can duplicate the effort, he could break James’ career mark (5,082).

Freeman, who hails from Imperial, California, burst on the scene as a true freshman, rushing for 1,365 yards — a Pac-12 true freshman record — and 18 touchdowns. He also caught a touchdown pass. As a result, he was named the league’s freshman of the year on offense.

Now a junior, Freeman is getting some Heisman buzz along with plenty of speculation he may bolt early for the NFL.

“It’s pretty amazing,” Freeman said about making his way to the top of Oregon’s

record lists. “It’s a good feeling knowing the previous backs that came before me and all the hard work they put in at this university. Knowing of those guys and actually talking to some of them personally, to have the ability to pass them makes me feel good.”

Just as Nebraska will be Freeman’s biggest test, Freeman and the Ducks will be the Huskers’ biggest challenge of the season. The defense was sound in the first two games of the season against overmatched Fresno State and Wyoming. The Huskers rank in the top 25 nationally in scoring defense (13.5 points per game) and against the run (81 yards per game), and they are tied for the national lead with seven interceptions.

Oregon’s offense is averaging 276 yards on the ground so far this season. And Freeman isn’t the lone weapon for the Ducks: Olympian Devon Allen is starting at wide receiver, and new quarterback Dakota Prukop has thrown six touchdowns this season, while averaging 301 passing yards a game.

Nebraska coach Mike Riley was coach at Oregon State Freeman’s freshman year when he gained 140 yards against the Beavers in a 47-19 Oregon victory in the state’s 2014 Civil War rivalry game.

“They want to give them the football,” Riley said this week. “And you have to stop him, otherwise that’s what you’re going to see all the time.”

Beavers regroup during week off

By ANNE M. PETERSON
Associated Press

CORVALLIS — Oregon State is back and ready for Idaho State after an early-season week off.

The timing may not have been ideal, but coach Gary Andersen said the team embraced it, learning from its opening-game loss to Minnesota. The Beavers led 23-17 going into the fourth quarter, but the Gophers scored a pair touchdowns to win it 30-23.

“It was a great opportunity for us to be able to teach and go back and look at ourselves and truly evaluate ourselves, and keep trying to build the youth,” Andersen said this week. “For us, the bye came at a very good time.”

Despite the loss, there were plenty of positives to build on for Saturday’s Idaho State (1-1) game at Reser Stadium.

Quarterback Darrel Garretson threw for 228 yards and three touchdowns in his debut. Garretson sat out last season under NCAA rules after transferring from Utah State.

Former quarterback Seth Collins made his debut at wide receiver and had five catches for 57 yards. And running back Ryan Nall showed his versatility, rushing for 71 yards on 13 carries with eight catches for 80 yards.

Fellow Pac-12 North team Stanford also had a second-week bye.

“Ideally, would you

Idaho St. Bengals (1-1)

Oregon St. Beavers (0-1)

• Saturday, 2 p.m.

• at Reser Stadium, Corvallis

• TV: PACN

like a bye in the middle of the year if your team is where you want it to be and you’re on a roll? There’s no question about that. But for my team it was a good time,” Andersen said.

Oregon State has dropped 10 straight games dating back to last season.

SCOUTING THE BENGALS: The Big Sky team defeated Simon Fraser, a GNAC team from British Columbia, 47-3 in the opener, but fell 56-7 at Colorado last weekend. Idaho State is 0-25 against FBS teams since beating Utah State in 2000.

“The casualty of any 49-point loss is morale,” Bengals coach Mike Kramer said this week. “That’s the biggest casualty. I started this off today by stating no moping. ‘No moping allowed. I don’t want to hear it.’”

GLOBE OF DEATH? When Andersen was an assistant at Idaho State in 1992-93, the Bengals had a play called “The Globe of Death” for kickoff returns. The return players would form a tight cluster together around the ball then scatter, all faking a carry, causing confusion among the tacklers. The play gave Idaho State the win in the final

22 seconds of a 1992 game against Boise State.

NEW DIGS: Oregon State is opening the Terrace, a new fan experience adjacent to the Valley Football Center overlooking the north end zone, where local food, wine and beer will be showcased. The Terrace is one of many improvements that Beavers have made through the Victory Through Valley project, which included expanding and renovating the football center with new locker rooms, offices for staff and medical facilities.

“That locker room and this facility (were) built with expectations, and they (the players) are responsible to go out there and represent Beaver Nation the right way,” Andersen said.

LAST MEETING: The only time the two teams have met was in 2007. Sean Canfield threw for 353 yards and three touchdowns in a 61-10 Beavers’ victory at home. Sammie Stroughter caught nine passes for 160 yards and two scores.

DAY OFF: Last week for the bye Andersen watched football. A lot of it. He started in at 9 a.m. While he mostly watched for fun, one game stood out as something he could draw inspiration from: Central Michigan’s upset of Oklahoma State.

“I didn’t even take the dog for a walk, so I did nothing but watch football,” he said. “It was a good day.”