

## College Basketball

## Timberwolves stumble, Mountaineers roll in league games

East Oregonian

MOSES LAKE, Wash. — Big Bend crashed the boards and used a plethora of extra chances to take down Blue Mountain 79-66 on Saturday in NWAC East men's basketball.

The Vikings (10-5, 2-0 East) used a 50-36 advantage in rebounds to score 21 second-chance points in the game while the Timberwolves (2-10, 0-2) totaled just nine in the category.

Jacob McCord was a force for Big Bend and finished with 24 points and 21 rebounds while also turning in three assists, three

steals and two blocks.

Joey Andrews also had a double-double for the Vikings with 14 points and 10 rebounds, and Big Bend shot 41.2 percent (28-68) from the field.

Jared Mathews led the way for Blue Mountain with a double-double of his own, and went for a team-high 19 points and 13 rebounds. La'Quan Hawkins added 17 points and three assists, and Isaiah Harris had 11 points and four steals and as a team BMCC shot 37.9 percent (25-66).

The T-Wolves will play at Yakima Valley on

Wednesday at 8 p.m.

**EASTERN OREGON 91, MULTNOMAH 71** — At La Grande, the Mountaineers shot 50 percent from the field to win 10th game in a row on Saturday in Cascade Collegiate Conference action.

Bryan McGriff led first-place Eastern (15-2, 8-0 CCC) with 28 points and 12 rebounds for his 10th double-double of the season, and Kentrell Washington added 16 points, three assists and two steals.

Eastern shot 65.6 percent from the field in the first half to lead 48-25 at halftime and

blocked seven shots in the game.

Eastern plays at second-place Oregon Tech on Friday at 7:30 p.m.

## WOMEN'S BASKETBALL

**BIG BEND 72, BLUE MOUNTAIN 69, OT** — At Moses Lake, Wash., the Vikings came from behind in the second half and did just enough in overtime to keep the Timberwolves hunting for their first league win on Saturday.

Big Bend (10-5, 2-0 East) used it defense and strong free throw shooting to erase a 40-33 halftime deficit with a big third quarter. Regulation ended with the score tied 65-65.

The Vikings went 26-of-39 at the free throw line in the game as BMCC (0-2, 2-7) was whistled for 29 fouls. The T-Wolves also turned the ball over 29 times as BBCC came away with 20 steals.

Sunnie Martinez and Hailey Garrity each scored 16 points to pace Big Bend.

Freshman guard Akira McGee had a double-double with 19 points and 11 rebounds for the T-Wolves, and Miah Slater added 13 points and seven rebounds.

Blue Mountain will play at Yakima Valley on Wednesday at 6 p.m.

**EASTERN OREGON 85, MULTNOMAH 49** — At La Grande, Eastern Oregon shot 40 percent beyond the 3-point line and got 52 points from its bench for a Cascade Collegiate Conference rout on Saturday.

Darian Gasseling helped lead the first-place Mountaineers (15-2, 8-0 CCC) to their 10th straight win with 14 points, six rebounds and five assists. Khadija Neumeyer added 11 points, and four more had nine apiece.

Next up is a road game on Friday at Oregon Tech that tips off at 5:30 p.m.

## CHAMPIONSHIP: Watson inspired by 2005 Rose Bowl

## Continued from 1B

quarter, but Watson got the ball last. Likely playing in his final college game, the junior quarterback threw for 420 yards and three touchdowns. In two games against Alabama and the most ferocious defense in college football, Watson has thrown for 825 yards and accounted for eight touchdowns.

Coach Dabo Swinney, the native Alabamian and former Crimson Tide walk-on receiver, has built an elite program at Clemson that was missing only one thing. Now the Tigers can check that box, too.

"Eight years ago we set out to put Clemson back on top," said Swinney, who can turn postgame interviews into a rousing sermon. "We came up a little short last year, but today on top of the mountain, the Clemson flag is flying."

After three quarters of vicious hits and tight defense, Tigers-Tide II ended up looking a lot like the first meeting when the teams combined for 40 points in the fourth quarter.

Clemson took its first lead when Watson found Mike Williams for a 4-yard touchdown a minute into the fourth quarter to make it 24-21.

The Tigers took a 28-24 lead with 4:38 left in the fourth quarter when Wayne Gallman surged in from a yard out.

The Tide's offense, which had gone dormant for most of the second half, came to life with the help of a sweet call from newly



AP Photo/David J. Phillip  
**Clemson head coach Dabo Swinney holds the championship trophy after the NCAA college football playoff championship game against Alabama Tuesday, Jan. 10, 2017, in Tampa, Fla. Clemson won 35-31.**

promoted offensive coordinator Steve Sarkisian. Receiver ArDarius Stewart took a backward pass from Jalen Hurts and fired a strike to O.J. Howard for 24 yards.

On the next play, Hurts broke free from a collapsing pocket and weaved his way through defenders for a 30-yard touchdown run to

make it 31-28 with 2:07 left.

More than enough time for Watson.

"I was calm," Watson said. He said he thought about Vince Young's last-second touchdown for Texas that derailed the Southern California's championship run in the 2005 championship game at the Rose Bowl. He told his team: "Let's go be great."

Watson hooked up with Williams and Jordan Leggett, who made great catches for big gains to get to first-and-goal with 14 seconds left.

A pass interference on Alabama made it first-and-goal at the 2 with six seconds left. Time for one more play to avoid a game-tying kick and potential overtime. Renfrow slipped away from the defense at the goal line and was alone for an easy toss. It was the walk-on receiver's second TD catch of the night, adding to the two he had last season against Alabama.

When it ended, Clemson's 315-pound defensive lineman Christian Wilkins did a cartwheel and Ben Boulware, one of the toughest linebackers in the country, was in tears.

The Tigers had snapped Alabama's 26-game winning streak and beaten a No. 1 team for the first time ever.

"It's been 35 long years!" Boulware screamed. "It's coming home baby! It's coming home!"



AP Photo/John Bazemore  
**ABOVE: Clemson's Hunter Renfrow catches a touchdown pass in front of Alabama's Tony Brown during the second half of the NCAA college football playoff championship game. AP Photo/John Bazemore**  
**BELOW: Clemson's Deshaun Watson is stopped near the goal line during the second half against Alabama. AP Photo/Chris O'Meara**

## BULLDOGS: Would be tough to keep rivalry going with Pendleton

## Continued from 1B

"You take the good with the bad to be honest, while a lot of school districts have declining enrollment, we are increasing enrollment, our district is healthy and our community is pretty happy about it," Usher said. "At the same time the move up will be tough for us with travel and possible missed class time for the student athletes."

In the most recent proposal, Hermiston would join the Mt. Hood Conference along with Portland-area schools including Barlow, Centennial, Central Catholic, Clackamas, David Douglas, Gresham, Oregon City and Reynolds. The amount of trips to the Portland area that would necessitate is concerning for Usher.

"As it is right now we do a lot of travel to the west side of the state for non-conference

games, but we do anticipate a significant increase in our travel expenses," Usher said. "And because the RPI and Colley Rankings force us to play teams in our state and in our classification, we would still continue to have half of our non-conference games played on the west side of the state."

"So for some of our team sports we'd be looking at anywhere from 13, 14, or 15 trips to the Portland area, which is a big concern for us."

Usher says his concerns are shared by several athletic directors from Mt. Hood Conference schools he's been in contact with.

"It was the topic of conversation at one of their meetings recently and it's not a move that they'll completely oppose, but it's not something they're all in favor of," Usher said. "When you start looking at traditional Tuesday and

Friday schedules for sports like volleyball, basketball, softball, and baseball, are they going to be excited about having to travel out to Hermiston on a Tuesday night? Probably not.

"I think that when it comes around, hopefully schools over that way would be open to some creative scheduling ideas to limit the amount of missed class time or else it could be devastating for the student-athletes."

At this point, the biggest question that remains is which classification will be the top group starting in 2018, as the OSAA committee is considering proposals with both five and six classifications. One other option being considered is a five classification model for all sports excluding football, which would have a six-classification system.

The latest proposal in that department still had Hermiston

in the 6A Mt. Hood Conference with the same schools minus Reynolds, which would move down to Class 5A because of lack of recent success and lower participation turnouts in comparison to other 6A schools. Usher says he and many athletic directors across the state are in favor of this proposal.

"One thing I like about it, and other AD's agree, is you end up getting rid of situations where schools like The Dalles have to go independent in football because of safety issues being low on numbers," he said. "Good example for us we consistently suited up one sophomore full-time and that was starting quarterback Andrew James, where if we go play schools like La Grande or Baker that have 700 kids fewer than us, they'll be consistently suiting up sophomores and freshmen.

"It creates some safety issues when you have some big, strong 17-18-year-old men going up against 15-year-old kids and that's tough to do."

Another consequence that could come out of a Hermiston move is the possible hiatus of the rivalry with Pendleton in some cases, mainly football. The two teams have met on the football field nearly every year since 1922, but as Pendleton projects an enrollment of 779 in 2018 it would remain in the second-highest classification and play its way out of Hermiston's schedule.

"It was something that was brought up with our boosters earlier, that it's a real possibility that last year could very well be the last time we host a football game against Pendleton for a while," Usher said. "We could end up in a situation where we're in a

nine- or 10-team league and we have eight or nine conference games. We wouldn't be playing them anymore, maybe not in any sports.

"Looking at non-conference opportunities, we're still going to be like we are now, forced to find in-state teams in the same classification as much as possible. If it provides opportunities to continue playing schools in a lower classification, then by all means we'll do that because it's a great way to minimize travel and costs."

The OSAA has seven more reclassification meetings scheduled this year starting on Jan. 30 and finishing up on Sept. 30, before making its final recommendation to the Executive Committee in October.

Contact Eric at [esinger@eastoregonian.com](mailto:esinger@eastoregonian.com) or (541) 966-0839. Follow him on Twitter @ByEricSinger.

## WRESTLING: Oregon Classic this weekend

## Continued from 1B

win the 2015-16 OSAA state championship match.

Jones won that one with a pin, and Flynn returned the favor on Saturday using a head and arm hold to stick Jones on the mat at the 3:15 mark. After initially falling behind 6-1, Flynn ended a spirited first round with a 7-6 lead. Heppner coach Mark Lemmon said Flynn was able to roll Jones into a cradle from the top starting position in Round 2, and the spent the next minute working for the pin without giving up any points.

Flynn won his first two matches by pin (1:06) over Enterprise's Drew Widener and a 19-3 technical fall over Culver's Cylus Hoke.

Antonucci wrestled his way into the final round with an injury default in the quarterfinals, then a pin (3:36) of Culver's

Johan Jaimes in the semis.

He ran up against defending district champion Shane Lund in the championship where he fell 5-0. The first round ended with a scoreless tie as the wrestlers fended off each others' shots. A takedown gave Lund the lead in the second round, and a reversal and penalty point on Antonucci in the third gave the match its final score.

Ranger went 4-2 with every match decided by pin. He made it to the third-place match with a pin (1:30) over Imbler's Seany Willis, but lasted just 51 seconds against Adrian's Marcus Furtado. Smith's placing came despite an 0-3 record.

Heppner will join several other local teams at the Oregon Classic on Friday-Saturday at Deschutes County Fairgrounds. Echo will wrestle at the Bonanza Tournament on Saturday.

## SEAHAWKS: Rawls sat in Week 6 win over Falcons

## Continued from 1B

For Rawls, that meant getting a significant dose of carries early on. In the final six games of the regular season, Rawls had more than 15 carries once. Rawls had 15 carries for 107 yards by halftime against the Lions. The dominance on the ground also gave Seattle a major advantage in time of possession, holding the ball for more than 36 minutes.

"We just haven't been able to get him enough opportunities," Carroll said. "You can see what happened, as soon as he gets going, and he gets feeling it, and he looks exactly like the guy that we saw last year. He just had a hard time getting rolling, for a number of whatever reasons, it doesn't matter now."

For Seattle's offensive line, that meant more straight ahead blocking and pushing around of a Detroit defensive front that finished the regular season 18th at stopping the run.

"I'm really fired up for the guys up front," Carroll said. "They had a lot of garbage come their way, a lot of talk about them, and they're really pumped up about what they did."

Whether Seattle can sustain that kind of success on the ground will be crucial against Atlanta. The Seahawks have just one playoff victory under Carroll when they rushed for less than 100 yards. And in that victory — last year's wildcard win at frigid Minnesota — the Seahawks finished with 97 yards on the ground.

The Seahawks had just 72 yards rushing in the Week 6 win over the Falcons. Rawls was a spectator that day while still recovering from a fracture in his leg and Wilson was limited to being a pocket passer dealing with a sprained MCL in his left knee. Christine Michael, now with Green Bay, was Seattle's leading rusher with 64 yards on 18 carries, but 21 of those yards came on one carry. His other 17 rushes

netted an average of 2.5 yards per attempt.

Stopping the run has not been one of the Falcons' strengths. Atlanta allowed at least 100 yards rushing in five of its last six games to finish off the regular season. And Seattle knows what the formula of getting the run game established does for the rest of the offense.

"It opens up everything for us," wide receiver Doug Baldwin said. "I've told you guys before that everything runs through our run game. When Thomas Rawls is doing that, they can't help but put another safety in the box, and then that gives us one-on-one matchups on the outside."

**UP NEXT**  
**SEAHAWKS** at **FALCONS**, Saturday, 1:35 p.m., Fox (opening line: Falcons, -4)

All-Pro quarterback Matt Ryan, a leading MVP contender, and wideout Julio Jones put up NFC South champion Atlanta's high-powered offense

against NFC West champion Seattle's "Legion of Boom" defense, which is missing injured safety Earl Thomas but still features Richard Sherman and Kam Chancellor.

In the first meeting, Ryan threw for three TDs, while Jones finished with seven catches for 139 yards and a score. But most memorable was an incompletion on fourth down with 90 seconds left, when Sherman grabbed Jones' arm on a deep pass. Definitely a 1-on-1 matchup to keep an eye on this time.

Also worth monitoring: How Atlanta's so-so defense deals with Seattle's offense, which seemed reborn as Thomas Rawls ran for 161 yards in a 26-6 win over Detroit in the wild-card round. Falcons head coach Dan Quinn used to be Seattle's defensive coordinator.

"Such a hard-nosed, tough coach, and his team embodies him out there," Seahawks defensive end Michael Bennett said. "It's like playing ourselves."