

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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1B

HERMISTON

Parity permeates district brackets



Hermiston's Kenny Bevan wrestles Greg Lee, of Pendleton, in the 195-pound class during a dual meet at the Dawg House on Feb. 1 in Hermiston.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Hermiston prepares to host SD4 championships

By MATT ENTRUP
East Oregonian

When wrestlers arrive at the Dawg House on Friday for the Special District 4 championships, they'll be greeted by the sight of a banner-filled wall that signifies a decade of dominance by their hosts.

Hermiston's 10 state championships might intimidate some of the freshmen and first-timers, but should only serve as motivation for the many state hopefuls on the nine teams represented.

Eight wrestlers will be looking to defend SD4 titles, but just 24 of the district's 56 state qualifiers are back from last season. The top four in each weight class move on, and eight of the district's nine teams come into the meet with a serious title contender in at least one weight.

"I think each team has their individual front-runners that are going to go out and score a lot of points, that they expect to get in the finals and score a lot of points," said Hermiston coach Kyle Larson. "Throughout the district it seems like everybody's going to come and fight, so we're just getting ready to get in there and score a lot of bonus

See DISTRICTS/2B

Prep Basketball

League races come down to the wire

CBC boys have three teams tied for second

By ERIC SINGER
East Oregonian

Mother nature has not been kind to prep basketball teams this season, especially in Eastern Oregon, throwing down snowstorm after snowstorm and sprinkling in enough freezing rain and ice to cancel numerous games throughout the season.

And as the spring season creeps closer and Eastern Oregon grows more and more anxious to thaw, the end of the prep basketball season is nearly upon us. The local teams at the 3A/2A/1A level each are finishing out the regular season schedules and while some are ready for the end to come, many are scrambling to qualify for their respective district tournaments or playing for a better seeding.

Though, none of the races may be closer than what is happening in the 2A Columbia Basin Conference's boys league currently, where four teams are competing for the three berths into the district tournament.

The Stanfield Tigers (15-1, 5-0) have all but clinched the No. 1 seed with three games left to play, though the current-No. 1 ranked team is favored to win each of those three games. But behind the Tigers, Heppner, Weston-



Staff photo by E.J. Harris

In this file photo, Stanfield's Dylan Grogan lays the ball in guarded by Grant Union's Billy Copenhaver Dec. 8, 2016 in Umatilla.

McEwen, and Pilot Rock are all deadlocked with a 3-3 league record with two games left to play for all three.

Depending on how things play out this weekend, two of those three teams could easily clinch those final two spots, or the CBC could end up with a three-way tie for the final two berths to force a tiebreaker.

On the girls side of the

CBC, Weston-McEwen (5-1), Pilot Rock (4-2), and Culver (3-2) are the likely three teams to make the district tournament this year, but all three teams are still fighting for the No. 1 seed and the bye to the finals. Weston-McEwen has the easiest road to No. 1, just needing to win out against Stanfield and Culver this weekend to clinch it.

Let's take a look at the

rest of the district races:

3A EASTERN OREGON LEAGUE

The boys EOL race has been much more interesting this season with the addition of Irrigon and Burns, and currently four teams have clinched their spots in the district tournament. However, the order of those four teams could change dramatically depending on this weekend's games.

As it stands now, Umatilla sits atop the EOL with a 6-2 record, one game ahead of both Burns and Irrigon at 5-3 and then Nyssa coming in at 5-4. It's been quite the turnaround for Umatilla, who finished the 2015-16 season in third place with a 3-6 league record.

Umatilla has the easiest road to the No. 1 seed, as it takes on Riverside and Vale this weekend, both of which sit in the basement of the league with a combined 4-13 record. Meanwhile, Irrigon finishes up with a tougher slate at home against Nyssa on Friday night and then hits the road to Burns on Saturday.

On the girls side, only Irrigon (5-3) will advance into the district tournament from the local schools, joining Vale (6-1), Nyssa (6-3) and Burns (5-3). Irrigon, which has put together a solid season in its first go-round at the 3A level, could help its seeding this weekend as it faces Nyssa at home on Friday and then Burns on the road on Saturday.

See LEAGUE RACES/2B

Men's College Basketball



AP Photo/Young Kwak

Gonzaga forward Killian Tillie (33) dunks in front of Santa Clara forward Nate Kratch during the second half of an NCAA college basketball game in Spokane, Wash., Saturday, Feb. 4, 2017.

Maturity helps Gonzaga's rise to top of rankings

Transfers making the difference

By NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS
Associated Press

SPOKANE, Wash. — If there is a single word that sums up No. 1 Gonzaga this season, it is maturity.

Coach Mark Few and his players talk often about the poise of this year's Zags, who have blown out many of their opponents and are on pace to finish the regular season undefeated.

Gonzaga (24-0, 12-0 West Coast Conference) starts three transfer students from power conference programs, along with veterans Przemek Karnowski and Josh Perkins.

All those players have plenty of college basketball experience, and it shows.

"There are a lot of leaders in this group," Perkins said. "We get everybody's best shot. This group is ready for it."

Guard Nigel Williams-Goss, who leads a balanced Gonzaga attack that averages 85 points per game, said the Zags are mature enough to avoid being swallowed up by hype.

"We don't feel any pressure," Williams-Goss said. "Our motto is: 'Get better every week.'"

The Zags have a big game this weekend at No. 20 Saint Mary's, which is shaping up as the biggest remaining obstacle to an undefeated regular season. The last team to do that was Kentucky in 2015.

Gonzaga is also just one win away from its 10th consecutive 25-win season.

See GONZAGA/2B

Sports shorts

Oakley ejected from MSG

NEW YORK (AP) Former Knicks star Charles Oakley was forcefully removed from his seats at Madison Square Garden and arrested after an altercation near team owner James Dolan.



Oakley

Oakley shoved security guards before they pulled him away from his seat behind the baseline during the first quarter of the Knicks' 119-115 loss to the Los Angeles Clippers on Wednesday night. Fans chanted "Oakley! Oakley!" in support of the popular power forward. The 53-year-old Oakley played for the Knicks from 1988-98, helping them reach the NBA Finals, but has a poor relationship with the team because of his criticism of Dolan, the Madison Square Garden chairman.

"We're looking at a tremendous number of teams and the difference between the top teams and bubble teams is really thin. ... It is going to be an extremely difficult process for the committee this year because of the parity."

— Bruce Rasmussen
NCAA Tournament selection committee vice chair at a meeting to determine the top 16 seeds in the men's tournament, which will be announced Saturday. The entire field will be announced March 12.

No. 9 Arizona holds off Stanford

TUCSON, Ariz. (AP) — Allonzo Trier scored 22 points, including 12 of 12 from the free throw line, and No. 9 Arizona escaped with a 74-67 victory over Stanford on Wednesday night.

Trier's biggest offensive output since he returned to the team six games ago came in his first start of the season.

Lauri Markkanen emerged from a three-game shooting slump to make a 3-pointer that gave the Wildcats the lead for good, 70-67, with 1:40 to go.

Trier added two free throws with 23.7 seconds to go.

Arizona (22-3, 11-1 Pac-12) led most of the game but never by more than four points.

Reid Travis led Stanford (12-12, 4-8) with 26 points. Arizona beat the Cardinal by 39 at Stanford on Jan. 1.



THIS DATE IN SPORTS

1912 — The U.S. Tennis Association amends the rules for the men's singles championship play. The defending champion is required to play through the tournament instead of waiting for the tournament to produce a challenger.

1992 — Magic Johnson, playing for the first time since announcing his retirement on Nov. 7, scores a game-high 25 points and hands out nine assists to lead the West to a 153-113 win over the East in the NBA All-Star Game at the Orlando Arena.

2011 — The Cleveland Cavaliers' losing streak reaches 26, matching the 1976-77 NFL Tampa Bay Buccaneers' record for consecutive incompetence with a 103-94 loss to the Detroit Pistons.

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