

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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1B

Prep Softball/Baseball

Defense key to Buckaroos' success

Several local teams poised for deep playoff runs

By ERIC SINGER & Matt ENTRUP
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — No stranger to the OSAA softball postseason, the Pendleton Buckaroos are poised for another deep run in the 5A bracket after drawing a No. 3 seed and home game for today's first round.

The Bucks make their 12th consecutive postseason appearance, and of the last five state championships, Pendleton has played in three, winning it all in 2012 and 2014.

One thing all of those Pendleton teams over the years have been able to point to as a reason for their success has been defense and pitching.

During its championship seasons, the Bucks allowed just six total runs in eight state playoff games.

In reaching at least the state semifinals each of the last three seasons Pendleton allowed just 19 total runs in 11 postseason games, an average of 1.7 per game.

As impressive as those numbers are over a short period, the 2017 Buckaroos have been playing championship level defense all season.

Behind junior starting pitcher Lauren Richards, the Columbia River Conference Pitcher of the Year, Pendleton has allowed just 49 runs while going 23-4 for an average of 1.8 per game.

Next closest in 5A is No. 2 Marist Catholic at 2.3.

Pendleton's first-round opponent is No. 14 Corvallis, the No. 6 team out of the Mid-Willamette Conference with a record of 9-15. The Spartans punched their final-bracket ticket with a 9-3 upset of Thurston in the play-in round.

Pendleton's allowed nine runs in a game this season just once, a 9-8 loss to Hood River on April 22. In the eight games since then they've outscored opponents 74-11 while going 7-1.

First pitch is scheduled for 4:30 p.m.



Hermiston's Sam Atilano slides into home plate as Pendleton catcher Kila Solomon gets ready to tag during a game on May 2.



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Standfield's Dylan Grogan winds up for a pitch during a game against Westen-McEwen in Stanfield.



Staff photo by Eric Singer
Westen-McEwen shortstop Char-mayne Bennett reaches to haul in a fly ball during Saturday's district game against Irrigon in Athena.

No. 15 HERMISTON at No. 2 MARIST CATHOLIC — At Eugene, the Hermiston softball team finds itself back in the 5A state tournament for the first time since 2013 when the Bulldogs were state runners-up.

It'll be a tough road for a championship game return, though, as the Bulldogs slot into the 2017 tournament as the No. 15 seed after turning in a 10-16 overall record and a 3-9 mark in the CRC.

Up first for Hermiston is the No. 2 seed Marist Catholic, which

comes in with the most potent offense in the state. Led by reigning Class 5A Player of the Year and University of Oregon signee Lauren Burke, the Spartans put up 311 runs this year for an average of just over 13 per game.

The Spartans also allow an average of just 2.3 runs per game, which means Hermiston's offense will need contributions from every spot in the lineup and will need to find ways to manufacture runs.

Hermiston will also need another strong performance from

pitcher Julissa Almaguer, a first-team All-CRC selection who has led the Bulldogs to big wins over Hood River and Hillsboro over the past three weeks.

First pitch is set for 5 p.m. at Marist Catholic High School in Eugene.

No. 2 PILOT ROCK/NIXY-AAWII vs. No. 15 REGIS — At Pilot Rock, the Rockets start their road to a third straight state championship on Wednesday when they host the Regis Rams.

The No. 2 seed Rockets (22-5) come into the state tournament as winners of 10 of their last 11 games, though most recently fell 3-2 in nine innings to Union/Cove in the Special District 6 title game. But things have been trending upward for Pilot Rock since reigning 2A/1A Player of the Year Bekah Roe returned to the lineup after missing numerous games with a concussion as the Rockets offense is averaging more than 10 runs per game over that 11-game stretch.

See **PLAYOFFS/2B**

MLB

Nationals crush four home runs in rout of Mariners



AP Photo/Manuel Balce Ceneta
Washington Nationals Bryce Harper (34) waves to the crowd after hitting a home run during the fourth inning of a baseball game against the Seattle Mariners in Washington, Tuesday, May 23, 2017. Nationals Ryan Zimmerman (11) waits on deck.



Offense stays quiet in Seattle's fourth straight loss

By IAN QUILLEN
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Joe Ross was at his best on Tuesday night, when even his worst might have done the job for the Washington Nationals.

Ross (2-0) allowed one run over a career high-tying eight innings in his return from the minors, Anthony Rendon homered twice and drove in five runs, and the Nationals completed a 10-1 rout over the Seattle Mariners.

"There's really nothing more that you can ask for as a starter," said Ross, who struggled in three April starts before being optioned to Triple-A Syracuse on May 2. "It kind of just takes a good amount of pressure off my shoulders."

	
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Bryce Harper added his 14th homer and Jayson Werth hit his seventh off Chris Bergman (1-2), who allowed all of the Nationals' runs and 14 of their 15 hits.

He was chased following an eight-run fourth, in which Rendon doubled before hitting his second homer of the game and seventh of the season.

"I don't know," Rendon said, trying to explain the Nationals' nine-hit, 11-batter inning. "I guess we were swinging at good pitches."

Ryan Zimmerman also had three hits.

Ross was demoted following his last two starts in April, in which he allowed five earned runs in each while failing to

complete five innings.

This time, he looked more of the 2015-16 vintage that had pitched to sub-4 ERAs in each season. He yielded five hits and a walk while striking out six, and retired 12 straight batters after a leadoff hit.

Ross finished by striking out the side in the eighth, catching long reliever Emilio Pagan looking on his 102nd pitch.

Mike Zunino homered in sixth in his return from his own minor league stint.

Robinson Cano went 0 for 3 in his first game back from the disabled list following a thigh injury as Seattle dropped its fourth straight.

"It was good to have Robby out there," Mariners manager Scott Servais said. "I know he's not at 100 percent and trying to work his way through it, but was good to have him out there tonight."

Rendon's second-inning homer
See **MARINERS/2B**

Sports shorts

Former Seahawks star found dead

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Hall of Fame defensive tackle Cortez Kennedy has died in Orlando.

Police say the 48-year-old former Seattle Seahawks star was found dead on Tuesday morning.

Orlando Police Department public information officer Wanda Miglio said the circumstances surrounding his death are still unknown, but that there is nothing suspicious about his death.

One of the best defensive linemen of his generation, Kennedy was a star in his 11 seasons in the NFL with the Seahawks. He became the second Seattle player inducted into the Pro Football Hall of Fame in 2012.

Kennedy was an eight-time Pro Bowler and won the NFL Defensive Player of the Year award in 1992.



Kennedy

"I always planned all my celebrations. Now I can go a little overboard without getting cussed out by the head coach."

— Emmanuel Sanders

Denver Broncos wide receiver in response to Tuesday's announcement that the NFL owners voted to give players more leeway to celebrate after a touchdown. Players will be able to use the ball as a prop, celebrate in groups and go to the ground as part of their celebration without drawing a penalty. Owners also shortened overtime periods to 10 minutes.

Three local players selected for Sweets Showcase

WALLA WALLA — Three locals have been chosen for the Walla Walla Sweets Showcase Game to take place at Borleske Stadium on May 30.

Pendleton senior Wyatt Morris, Pendleton junior Daniel Naughton and Mac-Hi junior Jesus Vela will play for the high school all-stars that will take on the Sweets in a controlled scrimmage.

Proceeds from the event will benefit Walla Walla Valley youth baseball and softball. First pitch is scheduled for 7:05 p.m.

The Sweets play a 59-game regular season in the West Coast League, a developmental summer league for collegiate players.

Opening night is June 2 against the Wenatchee AppleSox.



THIS DATE IN SPORTS

1935 — In the first major league night game, the Reds beat the Philadelphia Phillies 2-1 before 25,000 fans in Cincinnati.

1986 — The Montreal Canadiens win their 23rd Stanley Cup, beating Calgary 4-3 in five games.

2009 — Brazil's Helio Castroneves becomes the ninth driver to win the Indianapolis 500 three times. Castroneves pulls away over the final laps to beat Dan Wheldon of England and Danica Patrick, who eclipsed her fourth-place finish as a rookie in 2005 by crossing the strip of bricks in third.

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