

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

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PILOT ROCK

Rockets, Warriors match strengths

Pitching and defense key in semifinals wins for both teams

By MATT ENTRUP
East Oregonian

When the No. 2 Pilot Rock/Nixyaawii Rockets take the field for the 2A/1A state championship at OSU Softball Complex on Friday at 1 p.m., it will be with a considerable edge in title-game experience on their opponent.

No. 5 North Douglas (21-4) is making just its third championship appearance in school history, and its first since 2003.

But experience alone isn't going to be enough to give the Rockets (25-5) their third-straight state title, and when the teams step between the lines some pretty striking resemblances appear.

The game will be broadcast live online via the OSAA Radio Network. Here's a look at how the Rockets and Warriors match up coming in:

IN THE CIRCLE

Rockets senior Tehya Ostrom pitched her way to Co-Player of the Year honors in Special District 5, and will start her third championship game on the rubber.

She allowed just two runs in each of her last two title starts, and showed just how cool she is in a pinch by pitching out of two bases-loaded jams against Union in the semifinals.

Her counterpart for the Warriors is freshman Nicki Derrick, who more than makes up for what she lacks in experience with talent.

Derrick struck out 13 batters to lead North Douglas over No. 1 Kennedy in the semifinals and allowed just two runs on five hits to a lineup that was producing nearly 10 runs a game on average.

"I'm very excited for all of us," Derrick told *The News-Review* following the win over Kennedy. "Not only for me, but for all of our seniors who have been trying to get there (to the title game) for four years. To see them actually get there and be a part of it, that's really cool to me."



Pilot Rock's Tehya Ostrom pitches during Tuesday's state semifinal 2A/1A softball game against Union/Cove.

Staff photo by Kathy Aney

IN THE FIELD

Both squads ranked among the very best in 2A/1A when it came to keeping teams off the scoreboard in 2017.

The Rockets ranked No. 1 on defense for the third season in a row with just 74 runs surrendered (2.5 per game), and the Warriors rank third in scoring defense with 83 runs allowed (3.3 per game).

The Rockets used double plays to end innings twice in the semifinals, and made a couple of nice plays in the outfield as well to make sure Union had to work to earn all three of its runs. Pilot Rock has won nine games by shutout.

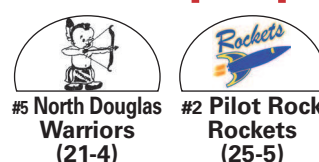
"Especially as a pitcher, that shows that your team has your back and they trust in you," said Ostrom after beating Union.

"We work hard on our defense. We're proud of our defense," added Rockets coach Darin Fitzpatrick. "We had the best defense in the state for the third year at our level, and the defense stepped up again today. They just played huge all the way around."

North Douglas may have saved its season in the field as well with diving grabs in the outfield and



2A/1A Championship



• Friday, 1 p.m.
• at OSU Softball Complex, Corvallis
• Online: OSAA Radio Network

runners caught getting greedy. The Warriors have shut out six opponents this season.

"That's something we've been talking about all year long," North Douglas coach Jesse Rice told *The News-Review*. "Defense will win ballgames, and today it really did."

AT THE PLATE

Prior to nail-biting semifinals wins, both teams were lighting up the scoreboard and the Rockets have put up 25 in three games while the Warriors have scored 20.

That production is slightly down from their season averages, rightfully so, where both teams' offenses averaged just below 10 runs a game.

Both teams are opportunistic as well, and were able to use some hard-hit singles to take advantage of opponents' mistakes in the semis.

North Douglas got a two-out rally going in the fifth inning against Kennedy with a pair of walks, followed by back-to-back singles to take a 3-0 lead.

The Rockets also jumped out in front 3-0 when errors by Union helped extend their rally.

Their one common opponent this season is Bonanza, which lost to Union in the quarterfinals 13-3 in five innings.

Pilot Rock beat Bonanza 8-0 in their one game during the Spring Break Bash in La Grande, and North Douglas swept a league doubleheader 6-5 and 9-6 on May 10 in Drain.

MILTON-FREEWATER

Pioneers settle on college decisions

Copeland, Fortune stay together at College of Idaho

By ERIC SINGER
East Oregonian

After the Mac-Hi softball team won its second consecutive state championship in 2015, sophomore Mallory Copeland posted a picture on her Instagram account that makes her laugh today.

The photo was of Copeland and Mac-Hi's star pitcher Collette Robert with the caption "Sad day, the last game I'll ever play with you. But who knows, maybe this wasn't the last game?"

And sure enough, Copeland's vision came true.



Staff photo by Eric Singer

Mac-Hi seniors Mallory Copeland, left, Micha Fortune, center, and Sydney Richwine, right, smile as they officially signed National Letters of Intent in a ceremony at the school gymnasium on Wednesday.

Copeland and fellow Pioneer teammate Micha Fortune signed to play softball at College of Idaho at a small

ceremony in the Mac-Hi gymnasium on Wednesday, joining Robert to make the Coyotes the Pioneers-lite.

"It feels amazing," Copeland said Wednesday. "I've had this dream ever since I was five and to have it accomplished and make all my hard work and wishes and dreams to play at that next level come true is special."

"And to be able to play with Collette and Micha again makes it even better."

Copeland, who will be studying psychology and visual arts, really burst onto the prep scene in 2016 when she was a first team all-state player and Greater Oregon League Player of the Year. As a senior this season, Copeland hit a team-high seven home runs and 36 RBI and hit for a .519 average while going 10-2 with a 2.84 ERA as a pitcher.

See PIONEERS/2B

NBA

Finals pick up where they left off

Golden State faces Cleveland for third time in championship series

By JOSH DUBOW
Associated Press

OAKLAND, Calif. — After a summer highlighted by Kevin Durant's decision to leave Oklahoma City for the star-laden Golden State Warriors, a six-month regular season and three rounds of playoffs, the NBA Finals are right back where they ended last June.

Not that anyone expected any different. Take III of the NBA Finals trilogy between Golden State and the Cleveland Cavaliers gives Stephen Curry and Draymond Green a chance to avenge last year's Warriors collapse and LeBron James the opportunity to add a fourth title in his chase of Michael Jordan's six.

Perhaps most noteworthy, it gives Durant the chance at a first championship and validation for his decision to leave the Thunder and join the league's latest super team.

See NBA FINALS/2B

Sports shorts

EOU basketball coach steps down

LA GRANDE — Just one year into his return to the Eastern Oregon men's basketball team, Isaac Williams is saying goodbye to the Mountaineers once again.

EOU announced on Wednesday that Williams stepped down as men's basketball coach to take the same position at Cal State Monterey Bay, a NCAA Division II program. Williams is an EOU alumnus, graduating in 2000, and previously coached the Mountaineers from 2009-2013 until leaving to take a position on the men's basketball staff at Boise State University. He returned to EOU this past season and led the Mountaineers to a 24-9 season and a trip back to the NAIA National Tournament.

Williams leaves with the best winning percentage in program history (.745), and his 120 wins is second most all-time.



Williams

"Just shows that racism will always be a part of the world, part of America ... No matter how much money you have, how famous you are, how much people admire you, being black in America is tough."

— LeBron James

The NBA star spoke with reporters on the eve of the NBA Finals after his home in Los Angeles was tagged with graffiti on Wednesday, where an unidentified person spray-painted a racial slur on the front gate. Police are investigating the incident.

Seahawks add needed depth to defensive backfield

RENTON, Wash. (AP) — The Seattle Seahawks added depth at defensive back Wednesday by signing safeties Marcus Cromartie and Jordan Simone.

Seattle also waived wide receiver Speedy Noil and running back Troymaine Pope to clear room on the 90-man roster.

Cromartie has appeared in 21 career games with one start, all with San Francisco. He also spent time in San Diego, Cleveland and Buffalo.

Simone took part in Seattle's rookie minicamp earlier this month as a tryout player. Simone is a Seattle-area native and was an honorable mention All-Pac-12 selection as a sophomore and junior at Arizona State. His senior season was cut short by injuries.

Noil was signed earlier this month after playing three seasons at Texas A&M.



THIS DATE IN SPORTS

1925 — Lou Gehrig bats for P.W. Wanninger in the eighth inning and replaces Wally Pipp at first to start his streak of 2,130 consecutive games.

1946 — Assault, ridden by Warren Merhtens, wins the Belmont Stakes to become the seventh horse to capture the Triple Crown.

1975 — Nolan Ryan of the California Angels pitches his fourth no-hitter to tie Sandy Koufax's record.

2012 — Alex Miklos hits a go-ahead RBI triple in the 21st inning as Kent State outlasts Kentucky 7-6 in the second-longest game in NCAA tournament history.

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