

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

THURSDAY, JULY 20, 2017

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Logan Mead of Concord, California begins his ascent at the inaugural Nitro in the Blues hillclimb on July 24, 2016 outside of Pendleton.

Staff photo by Eric Singer

PENDLETON

Hillclimb ready for second go

Great dirt, hill bringing more riders to Pendleton

By ERIC SINGER
East Oregonian

When the Nitro in the Blues motorcycle hillclimb debuted just outside of Pendleton in 2016, event promoter Ron Dillon soon found out he had uncovered a hidden gem. The hill chosen for the event,

located on the Jim Whitney Ranch at 41095 Taylor Lane, drew rave reviews from riders throughout the three-day event, mainly for the quality of the dirt when wet. And since that event, word has spread around the hillclimber community and is set up to make the second Nitro in the Blues even better.

"We learned that this is seriously the best dirt in the West," said Dillon, of R&R Promotions based in Boise, Idaho. "We thought it would be rocky and slick but it's not. As long as it has water, it is amazing for the riders."

Dillon added that former North American Hillclimbers Association world champion Kerry Peterson of Yorba Linda, California dubbed it the "Chocolate Cake hill" last year, something that promoters ran with and turned into t-shirts and other apparel.

The event kicks off on Friday morning with semi-pro competition beginning at 8 a.m. that will run through approximately 2 p.m. Riders in that class include women, minibikes and old-timers.

See HILLCLIMB/2B

MLB

Paxton shines as Seattle wins

Mariners pitcher allows one run in seven innings

By KRISTIE RIEKEN
Associated Press

HOUSTON — Not many pitchers have been able to slow down the Houston Astros this season.

James Paxton has done it repeatedly.

Paxton had another strong start against Houston and rookie Ben Gamel powered the offense with a two-run homer to give the Seattle Mariners a 4-1 victory over the Astros on Wednesday.

"Paxton was outstanding today," manager Scott Servais said. "It's exactly what the doctor ordered. He was on top of his game."

Paxton (9-3) allowed six hits and one run in seven innings, after not allowing a run in his previous two starts against Houston this season. It's the fourth straight win for Paxton, who struck out seven.

"He's really good," Houston manager A.J. Hinch said. "His arm strength is at the top end of left-handed starters in the league ... a lot of the story today is just about how good he was. We couldn't quite break out and have a big inning against him."

Wednesday's performance improved Paxton to 2-0 with a 0.45 ERA and 20 strikeouts against the AL West-leading Astros this year.

"This was a big series for us and a big road trip, we went five out of

See MARINERS/2B



Seattle Mariners starting pitcher James Paxton delivers during the first inning of a baseball game against the Houston Astros, Wednesday, July 19, 2017, in Houston.

AP Photo/
Eric Christian Smith



MLS

Timbers thumped at home

Portland, Real Salt Lake tally seven yellow cards

Associated Press

PORTLAND — Joao Plata scored twice and Kyle Beckerman added a goal before receiving a red card in Real Salt Lake's 4-1 victory over the Portland Timbers on Wednesday night.



The eventful match featured seven yellow cards and three red cards.

Albert Rusnak also scored for Salt Lake (7-12-2), and Jack Barmby connected for Portland (7-8-6).

The action kicked off in the 10th minute, when Beckerman received a pass 25 yards from the Portland goal. With no defenders attempting to close in on him, the midfielder unleashed a right-footed rocket over leaping goalkeeper Jake Gleeson for his third goal of the season.

Salt Lake doubled the lead in the 50th minute and Portland got a consolation goal in second-half stoppage time, when Barmby hit a long, bouncing shot past goalkeeper Nick Rimando.

Tour de France

Aru falters, Froome soars in thin air of the Alps

Froome pads lead with fourth Tour win in sight

By JOHN LEICESTER & SAMUEL PETREQUIN
Associated Press

BRIANCON, France — One series of giant Tour de France mountains out of the way. One more to come. And one less rival for race leader

Chris Froome to watch quite so closely.

By sticking like fly-paper to the enterprising Romain Bardet, despite the French rider's efforts to distance him on the race's highest peak, Froome took a big step Wednesday toward a fourth Tour victory this weekend in Paris.

Italian Fabio Aru, on the other hand, fell behind on the barren slopes of scree and patchy grass in the thinning air of the mighty Col du Gali-

bier, one of the Tour's most fearsome Alpine climbs.

Like a yo-yo, the Italian repeatedly worked his way back to Froome's group of top contenders. But a last burst of speed from Bardet toward the top of the mountain pass, which rises 2,642 meters (8,668 feet) in altitude, proved decisive. Froome stayed with the French rider who stood next to him on the Paris podium last year, in second place. Aru did not.

On the long and hairy high-speed descent from there to the finish, they pedaled furiously to prevent Aru from catching them, whisking through the bends with no safety barriers and no margin for error. At their quickest, the riders descended at 75 kph (45 mph).

Rigoberto Uran, the Colombian who is making a habit at this Tour of being in the right place at the right time, always in Froome's

See TOUR/2B



AP Photo/Christophe Ena

Britain's Chris Froome, wearing the overall leader's yellow jersey, is followed by Italy's Fabio Aru as they climb Croix de Fer pass during the seventeenth stage of the Tour de France over 113.7 miles on Wednesday.

Sports shorts

Red Sox release 3B Sandoval

BOSTON (AP) — The Red Sox have officially released Pablo Sandoval because the third baseman didn't report after being designated for assignment last week.

It officially ends the Boston tenure for the once-celebrated free agent, who never was healthy enough to live up to the expectations that came with the \$95 million contract he signed in 2014.

With the Red Sox unable to find a team willing to take on part of his salary, the 2012 World Series MVP with the San Francisco Giants moves on after a total of 161 games, 575 at-bats, 136 hits and 14 homers for Boston but not a single one of them in the postseason.

Various media reports on Wednesday night indicated that Sandoval will re-sign with the Giants pending physical.



Sandoval

"He can help us a lot; we can help him. He wants to play in the playoffs and be competitive. He's a very talented player. I think if we get him — when we get him — I think (we're) top three in the West, easy."

— C.J. McCollum

Portland Trail Blazers guard speaking about Portland's interest in acquiring All-Star forward Carmelo Anthony, who has played his way out of favor with the New York Knicks.

Hillsboro Hops to host MiLB rookie league All-Star Game

HILLSBORO — The top players in the Northwest League and Pioneer League will descend on western Oregon on August 1.

The Hillsboro Hops' Ron Tonkin Field is the site for the Northwest League/Pioneer League All-Star Game, which pits the best players from both short season minor leagues against each other.

It's only the third year of the event, which debuted in 2015 in Spokane, Washington. The Northwest League is 2-0 so far in the meetings, winning the debut game 6-5 and then winning 11-5 in the 2016 game in Ogden, Utah.

Festivities include a Fan Fest presented by Intel and a home run derby aside from the game itself. Tickets are still available and range from \$10-22 a piece.



THIS DATE IN SPORTS

1858 — Fans are charged for the first time to see a baseball game. Approximately 1,500 fans pay 50 cents to see the New York All-Stars beat Brooklyn 22-18 at Fashion Race Course on Long Island.

2014 — Rory McIlroy completes a wire-to-wire victory in the British Open to capture the third leg of the career Grand Slam. McIlroy closes with a 1-under 71 for a two-shot victory over Sergio Garcia and Rickie Fowler. McIlroy joins Jack Nicklaus and Tiger Woods as the only players with three different majors at age 25 or younger.

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