

EAST OREGONIAN SPORTS

TUESDAY, JANUARY 2, 2018

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PENDLETON

Bucks take first place behind four top finishers

Pendleton handily tops competitors at annual tournament

By ALEXIS MANSANAREZ
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — It's a constant in Pendleton during the holiday season.

In between Christmas and New Years Day, the Buckaroos welcome teams across Oregon, and even one from Washington, to the Rollin Schimmel Memorial Tournament. And just as the tournament itself takes place year in and year out at

Warberg Court, there's one team that remains unbeaten.

The Pendleton Buckaroos dominated the all-day event once again, and earned first place after racking up 247 points.

The efforts of Caleb Tremper (113), Alex Rendon (138), Brendon Bedolla (152) and Ian Bannister (160) — all of whom finished first in their respective weight classes — catapulted Pendleton above the rest of the competition, leaving a 60-plus point deficit between itself and second place Baker (184.5).

"We're getting better, I'm just happy to see us get better," head coach Fred Phillips said. "We're getting

older, we are still young — we only have two seniors — but I'm glad to see them get better. We're doing new moves and we're learning and actually putting things we work on in practice on the mat, which I'm happy to see.

"I saw a lot of things we have worked on in the last few weeks today that I was really happy to see their improvement as far as learning and being willing to learn new techniques," Phillips added. "A lot of them wrestled tough matches and wrestled pretty hard, too."

Tremper's first place finish set the tone for the rest of the Bucks, as he outlasted Kiez White of Mac-Hi to win

by a 17-7 major decision. It was his first and only bout of the day as he received byes in the previous three rounds.

The lull had little to no effect on Tremper's performance, as he had a 5-1 advantage after the second round and then extended his lead in the final round.

Both Tremper and White were taking a beating. White fell into the scorers table in the third round and Tremper had to fight off many of White's attacks.

In the final seconds of the bout, tensions were See SCHIMMEL/3B



Staff photo by Kathy Aney
Chris Chambers, of Pendleton, wrestles Ridgeview's Ethyne Reid to victory Saturday during the Rollin Schimmel Wrestling Tournament in Pendleton in the 132-pound class.

College Football Playoffs

Bama rolls into title game



AP Photo/Butch Dill
Alabama quarterback Jalen Hurts (2) and defensive lineman Da'Ron Payne (94) hoist the bowl trophy after defeating Clemson in the Sugar Bowl semi-final playoff game for the NCAA college football national championship in New Orleans.

By PAUL NEWBERRY
Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — The rubber match of the Alabama-Clemson trilogy was a total dud compared to the previous meetings.

Except to the Crimson Tide defense, which will remember it as a thing of beauty.

In a game where every yard was a struggle, the Bama defenders took matters into their own hands. The Tide's defense scored a pair of touchdowns just 13 seconds apart in the third quarter to turn an offensive slog into a 24-6 rout of defending national champion Clemson in the Sugar Bowl semifinal game Monday night.

"That was a relentless defensive attitude," said coach Nick Saban, who earned another shot at his record-tying sixth national title. "They were warriors out there on the field. I couldn't be more proud of the way a bunch of guys competed for 60 minutes."

It was quite a contrast to the teams' last two games, both

high-scoring classics with the national title on the line, not to mention the Rose Bowl semifinal that preceded it. Georgia knocked off Oklahoma 54-48 in a double-overtime thriller that wasn't decided until the Alabama was on its second possession in the Big Easy.

There would be no drama in the nightcap. With Deshaun Watson off to the NFL, top-ranked Clemson (12-2) simply had no answer for the Crimson Tide's latest group of defensive standouts, setting up an all-Southeastern Conference showdown for the national title — with Saban matched against his former defensive coordinator, Georgia coach Kirby Smart.

"I'm proud of the job he's done," Saban said.

Clemson was fortunate to be down only 10-3 at halftime against the fourth-ranked Tide (12-1), and actually closed the gap with a field goal after Jalen Hurts fumbled on the first play of the second half.

But any thoughts of a Tiger rally were snuffed out by the

time the third quarter was done.

It began with 308-pound defensive tackle Da'Ron Payne picking off a wobbly pass, the ball fluttering through the air after besieged Clemson quarterback Kelly Bryant was hit as a threw — a familiar sight on this night.

Payne rumbled 21 yards on the return, even showing off an impressive open-field move that eluded running back Travis Etienne's attempted tackle, and drew a 15-yard personal foul penalty when Tremayne Anchrum yanked him down with a horse collar.

After Alabama drove to a first down at the Clemson 1, Payne re-entered the game — presumably to add another big body for blocking purposes. That's certainly what Clemson was thinking, totally biting when Hurts faked the handoff.

Payne slipped open near the right pylon and hauled in the touchdown pass, even managing to get both feet down before the celebration commenced beyond the sideline.

"I've got gold hands,"

quipped Payne, who was picked as the game's defensive MVP.

A bit shell-shocked by that turn of events, Clemson was thoroughly demoralized after its next offensive play. Bryant's pass deflected off the hands of Deon Cain and was intercepted by linebacker Mack Wilson, who returned it 18 yards for another touchdown.

Just like that, Alabama had an 18-point lead.

They could've called it right then.

"Just incredibly disappointed in our performance," Clemson coach Dabo Swinney said. "But congratulations to Alabama. They were the better team today. No doubt about it."

The Tide, which began the season in Atlanta beating Florida State, will return to Mercedes-Benz Stadium next Monday night to face No. 3 Georgia and give Saban a shot at his sixth title, which would match Bear Bryant.

Saban has four championships in the last eight years at Alabama, along with a BCS title at LSU during the 2003 season.

Pro Basketball

McCollum leads Blazers over Bulls

Portland outlasts Chicago in overtime, will continue road tip in Cleveland on Tuesday

By DAN HAYES
Associated Press

CHICAGO — C.J. McCollum scored 25 of his 32 points after halftime, including the tiebreaking basket with 56.5 seconds remaining in overtime, and the Portland Trail Blazers beat the Chicago Bulls 124-120 on Monday night.



Al-Farouq Aminu added a season-high 24 points and Evan Turner also had his season best with 22 for Portland, which was without leading scorer Damian Lillard for a fifth straight game.

Kris Dunn scored 22 points and Nikola Mirotic had 18 points off the bench for Chicago, which blew a late lead for a

second straight game. The Bulls lost for only the fourth time in 14 games since Mirotic returned to the lineup.

Lauri Markkanen finished with 19 points, including a jumper from the corner that tied it at 120 with 1:14 left in overtime.

McCollum then made his short floater and added a pair of late free throws.

McCollum and Aminu, who made 5-of-6 3-pointers after halftime, carried the Blazers' offense as they rallied from a seven-point deficit.

After scoring four straight points to tie it at 112, McCollum missed two tries to pull ahead in the final 36 seconds of regulation.

Led by Mirotic and Bobby Portis, the Bulls' bench helped them overcome a sluggish start. Each had nine points in a second quarter in which Chicago's reserves outscored Portland's 18-7. Mirotic hit a deep 3-pointer with 5:21 left before the half to give the Bulls a 43-39 lead after they trailed by as many as 10 points early.

Portis finished with 14 points and seven rebounds. Neither Mirotic nor Portis played the final 7 1/2 minutes of regulation or overtime.

Pat Connaughton had 16 points for Portland.

Lillard missed his fifth straight game with a right hamstring strain. Expected to be a game-time decision, Lillard, who hasn't played since Dec. 20, was ruled out early. Portland coach Terry Stotts wasn't sure if Lillard would play on Tuesday at Cleveland.

Sports shorts

Thomas to make debut with Cavs against Portland

CLEVELAND (AP) — The agonizing wait to play again is over for Isaiah Thomas. Vengeance on the Celtics is still on hold.

Thomas, sidelined with a hip injury since last season's Eastern Conference finals, will make his debut for the Cleveland Cavaliers on Tuesday night against the Portland Trail Blazers.

After months of rehab, the All-Star point guard will take the floor for the first time with the Cavaliers, who acquired him last summer in the blockbuster trade that sent Kyrie Irving to the Celtics.

Coach Tyrone Lue said Thomas will come off the bench and initially will play limited minutes. Also, he will not play in back-to-back games as he builds up strength, which means he won't face the Celtics on Wednesday in Boston.



Thomas

"Every season's a little bit different. Every season you go through tests and challenges. It's going to try to pull you apart. It's going to test you, and it's going to test your mental toughness and our players hung in there."

— Sean McDermott

Buffalo's head coach said after the team clinched the AFC's sixth and final playoff berth ending a 17-year postseason drought — the longest in North America's four major professional sports.

Washington star DL Vita Vea declares for NFL draft

SEATTLE (AP) — Washington standout defensive lineman Vita Vea, the Pac-12 Conference defensive player of the year, has declared for the NFL draft.

Vea announced the expected decision in a lengthy post on social media on Monday. Vea hinted following Washington loss to Penn State in the Fiesta Bowl he would be leaving early for the NFL, where he's expected to be a first-round pick.

Vea nearly left Washington after his sophomore year but opted to stay for his junior season. He was a disruptive force on the defensive line and was voted the conference defensive player of the year by the league's coaches. He was the first Washington player named defensive player of the year in the conference since 1996 and just the fourth defensive player in school history to be player of the year.



Vea

THIS DATE IN SPORTS

1996 — No. 1 Nebraska demolishes No. 2 Florida 62-24 in the Fiesta Bowl to become the first repeat champion in 16 years.

2015 — Greg Ward throws three touchdowns in the final 3:41 of the Armed Forces Bowl, two after Houston recovered outside kicks, and completes a game-winning 2-point conversion as the Cougars beat Pittsburgh 35-34 with an improbable comeback. Pitt led 31-6 with 14 minutes left in the game when Houston goes on to the biggest comeback in an FBS game this season, and the third-largest in a bowl game.

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